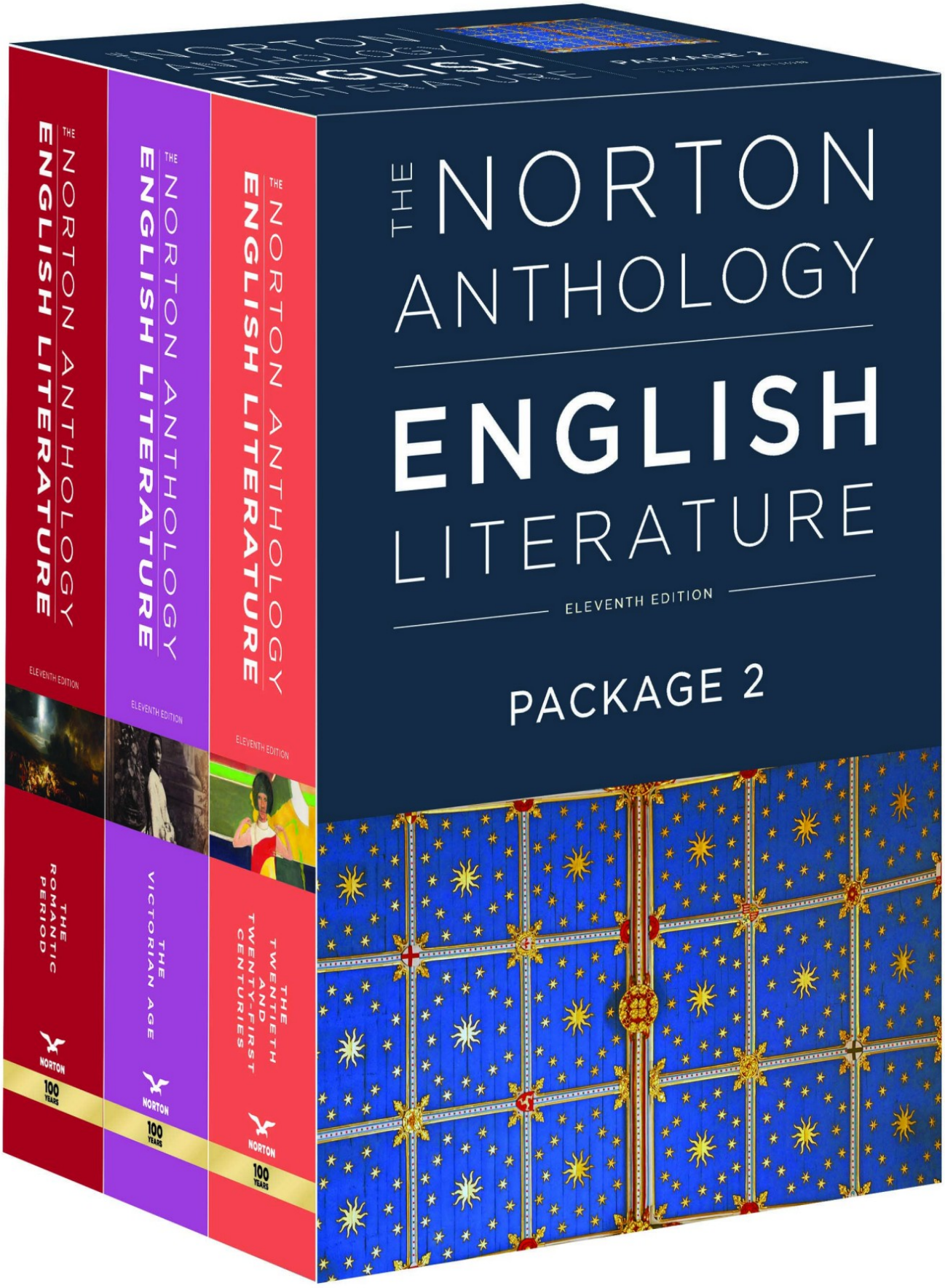
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Preface

The Norton Anthology of English Literature is a massive cultural space. In it the selections are in conversation, echoing and imitating, and also expanding, contracting, observing, playing, arguing, and dissenting, among a host of other responses. To enter this space as a reader is to recognize that works of literature, even the greatest of them, are never strictly solitary. They belong to larger communities, and within these communities they participate in ongoing dialogues. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* represents one such community, formed by a shared relation to the English language as it emerged in the British Isles and has evolved, changed shape, and spread over the centuries. Literary relations often cross boundaries from one language to another, but their interactions tend to be most concentrated and intense within a shared linguistic community—a community that can be both massive and intimate, both cohesive and fractured, but always part of a wider world.

With this Eleventh Edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, a new generation of editors has assumed the principal responsibility for revising each of the periods of this community. The result is the most thoroughgoing rethinking in the anthology's long and storied life. Though the great landmarks remain, familiar and beloved works of literature find themselves in unfamiliar and sometimes surprising company. It is our hope that fresh perceptions and new conversations will arise out of these changes in the overall anthology environment.

M. H. Abrams, the distinguished literary critic who brought together the original team of editors more than sixty years ago and, with characteristic insight, diplomacy, and humor, oversaw the first seven editions of the anthology, understood that scholarly discoveries and the shifting interests of readers constantly alter the landscape of literary history. As he said, "A vital literary culture is

always on the move." Thus, for example, the First Edition included just 6 women writers. But the sustained work of scholars over the decades has recovered dozens of significant authors who had been marginalized or neglected by a male-dominated literary tradition and has deepened our understanding of those women writers who managed, against considerable odds, to claim a place in that tradition. The Eleventh Edition includes 119 women writers. So too the First Edition included no writers of color and 8 writers whose origins lay outside the British Isles. This edition features 49 writers of color and 78 writers from beyond Britain. Significant change is apparent as well in the expansion of selections from writers already present in earlier editions, including Anne Finch, Margaret Cavendish, Lucy Hutchinson, Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince, Charles Darwin, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Philip Larkin, and Seamus Heaney. And it is strikingly manifested in the host of writers who appear in these volumes for the first time, among them Clemence of Barking, Meir of Norwich, "John Mandeville," the anonymous author of the Welsh *Lady of the Fountain*, Hester Pulter, the anonymous authors of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments*, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Mary Seacole, Rabindranath Tagore, Mohandas Gandhi, Mulk Raj Anand, Elizabeth Bowen, Arundhati Roy, Ali Smith, and Rachel Cusk.

Such rethinking extends, of course, beyond individual writers to the larger community of the anthology. The geographical space occupied by that community has continued to expand. For centuries now English literature has not been confined to the British Isles; it is a global phenomenon. Though on pragmatic grounds, we have followed the lead of most college courses in distinguishing between English and American literature, we have, in keeping with the multinational, multicultural, and hugely expansive character of the language, incorporated a substantial number of texts by authors from other countries, among them Phillis Wheatley, Samson Occom, Dean Mahomet, Mary Seacole, Rabindranath Tagore, Toru Dutt, and Bessie Head.

This border-crossing is not a phenomenon of modernity only. It is fitting that among the first works here is *Beowulf*, a powerful epic written in the Germanic language known as Old English about a singularly restless Scandinavian hero. *Beowulf*'s translator in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Seamus Heaney, is one of the great contemporary masters of English literature—he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995—but it would be misleading to call him an "English poet" for he was born in Northern Ireland and was not in fact English. It would be still more misleading to call him a "British poet," as if the British Empire were the most salient fact about the language he spoke and wrote in or the culture by which he was shaped. What matters is that the language in which Heaney wrote is English, and this fact links him powerfully with the authors assembled in these volumes, a linguistic community that stubbornly refuses to fit comfortably within any firm geographical or ethnic or national boundaries.

So too do other authors and texts in the anthology lie outside familiar boundaries: in the twelfth century, the noblewoman Marie de France wrote her short stories in an Anglo Norman dialect at home on both sides of the channel; in the sixteenth century William Tyndale, in exile in the Low Countries and inspired by German religious reformers, translated the New Testament from Greek and thereby changed the course of the English language; in the seventeenth century Aphra Behn touched readers with a story that moves from Africa, where its hero is born, to South America, where Behn herself may have witnessed some of the tragic events she describes; and early in the twentieth century Joseph Conrad, born in Ukraine of Polish parents, wrote in eloquent English a novella whose brooding vision of European colonialism in Africa is trenchantly challenged in our pages by Caryl Phillips, born in St. Kitts, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, born in Nigeria.

These contemporary responses to *Heart of Darkness* point to a further, quite crucial feature of this edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature.* Within the cultural space defined by English literature, the nature and the parameters of the conversation are

constantly changing. Eloquent voices call into question the stance of works that had once been viewed as morally impeccable. Authors whose literary style or identity had condemned them to marginality are reappraised and celebrated as centrally important. Historical events that had been overlooked or dismissed as irrelevant come to seem essential to a full understanding of a period and its writing. Topics that few or none had explicitly raised emerge as vital not only to contemporary readers but also to writers of the past who turn out to have engaged with them in significant ways.

Alert to these changes in the cultural conversation, the editors of the Eleventh Edition have not only included many new works but have also taken full advantage of a key feature introduced at the anthology's origin and developed and expanded over the years: the topical cluster. These groupings of short texts, on a wide range of subjects keyed to each period, enable readers to explore the boundaries between writing that was clearly understood at the time it was created as "literary" and writing that, for various reasons, fell outside this category. The boundaries are explored outside of the clusters as well, in the presence of Ottobah Cugoano alongside Samuel Johnson, for example, or of Mohandas Gandhi alongside Rudyard Kipling. The question of what constitutes literature is an open one, and, as the *Norton Anthology* makes clear, the answers are constantly being revised.

The topical clusters serve many additional purposes. They allow a sharp focus on issues that captured the imagination and focused the energy of a community of writers, such as "God's Body" in the Middle Ages, "Crisis of Authority" in the Early Seventeenth Century, or "Science, Speculation, and Experiment" in the Romantic Period. They introduce key writing practices, forms, and artistic movements —such as the commonplace book in the Sixteenth Century, the novel in the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century, and digital literature in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries—that help define a period. They assemble a range of voices that speak out on such crucial subjects as "Britain and Transatlantic Slavery" in the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century, "Settler Colonialism" in the

Victorian Age, and "Nation, Race, and Language" in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries. Here as elsewhere in the *Norton Anthology* the conversation not only illuminates adjacent works but extends across the periods. The texts in "England and the World," the topic forming a bridge between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, illuminate the two Shakespeare plays, *Othello* and *The Tempest,* and at the same time open up into the major topics on empire in the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century and the Victorian Age. So too in the Victorian Age "The Promise and Price of Industrialization," with its section on environmental degradation, leads into "Environmental Literature and Climate Change" in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries.

The presence in this latter topic of powerful contemporary voices —Ben Okri, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Patience Agbabi, and others—reminds us that literature can be a call to action as well as a mode of reflection and representation. The way we live our lives, including the actions we take or fail to take, depends upon our understanding of the world and of ourselves, and that understanding is and has always been shaped by the stories we tell, the pictures we draw, the songs we sing. Art making in its myriad forms is one of the essential attributes of humanity; it helps to define us as a species. The astonishingly evocative paintings on the walls of caves from 35,000 years ago, together with even older sculptured figures and bone flutes, bear witness to the foundational nature of our impulse to represent the world and to make sense of our experience through art. This is what the world looks and feels like to us, the pictures say; this is what we love and what we fear; this is how we register our sense of beauty and tell our stories; this is how we make or hope to make things happen; this is who we are. The artists who created the images sometimes pressed their hands to the wall and blew pigment around them, leaving their prints on the walls like signatures: remember us, the handprints tell us; we were here once.

Verbal art making almost certainly reaches at least as far back in our collective past as these archaic images, but it could leave no material trace for future generations until writing was invented,

some five thousand years ago in Mesopotamia. From this moment onward, works of literature have helped at once to define and to explore what it means to be human. The Mesopotamian tablets in which words were first inscribed were devised at a time when cities were developing and their inhabitants turned to storytellers to reflect on the human condition. At every point since then our species has looked to its writers for the special guidance that comes from artistic representation. For a host of reasons—from alarming fissures in our social and political order, to the astonishing advances in artificial intelligence, to the critical state of our planet—there has never been a moment in which the written outpouring of the human imagination has been more important than it is now. There is much talk at the moment about a crisis of the humanities, but the more important issue we face is a crisis of the human. In order to confront this crisis —to orient ourselves, to know more fully who we are, and, above all, to respond creatively to the challenges we face—we need literature.

PERIOD-BY-PERIOD REVISIONS

Volume A: The Middle Ages

Edited by Julie Orlemanski and James Simpson, this period, huge in its eight-century scope and immensely varied in its voices, offers exciting surprises, many new to this edition. The heart of the Old English portion is the great elegiac epic *Beowulf,* in the acclaimed translation by Seamus Heaney. Many texts in the anthology resonate with *Beowulf* in various ways. And while *Beowulf* is set in Scandinavia, two new texts offer contrasting responses to the Scandinavian invasions of England from the eighth to the early eleventh centuries: King Alfred's call to resuscitate learning ("Preface to *Pastoral Care*"); and the "Sermon to the English" by Wulfstan of York, which is addressed to Christian listeners under attack by polytheistic invaders. Literature of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries—a key sub-period between the Old and Middle English sections—offers an illuminating cluster on the genre of romance,

with four subtle narratives (one new) by Marie de France; a rich new text translated from Welsh, *The Lady of the Fountain*; three texts about Tristan and Ysolt; and *Sir Orfeo*, a comedic version of the Orpheus and Eurydice story. Also new is a selection from the life of the learned, feisty Saint Catherine of Alexandria, by a female author, Clemence of Barking. As always, the Middle English section offers a generous selection from *The Canterbury Tales*. The *Tales* are presented from the new edition by David Lawton, with additional modifications for ease of reading. Among other notable additions is a cluster focused on religious exclusions: fierce expressions of Christian/Jewish relations by the persecuted and persecutors (respectively Meir of Norwich and the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*) and a text that defines and deepens the divisions between Christian and Muslim (*The King of Tars*). "What the Animals Say" includes, alongside brilliant bird poems by Chaucer and Henryson, a selection from the vivacious debate poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*, in a new translation by Simon Armitage, and a text about a wolf-man by Marie de France. At every point we strive to render these texts, written in a variety of languages, accessible to readers of Modern English. All the relevant Middle English texts (notably all works by Chaucer) are presented in modernized spelling wherever such modernization does not injure meter or rhyme. Plentiful, discreet glosses offer consistent aid.

Volume B: The Sixteenth Century

New to this period, edited by Tiffany Stern and Stephen Greenblatt, are Isabella Whitney, Anne Cooke Bacon, Margaret Tyler, Anne Dowriche, Mary Cheke, and Anne Southell, who add their voices to those of Mary Tudor, Lady Jane Grey, Mary, Queen of Scots, and Elizabeth I. New as well is a cluster that reproduces an influential practice widespread in this period: the "commonplace book." Texts, often surprising, striking, and always memorable, are grouped according to miscellaneous topics, ranging from "Aging," "Death," and "Drink" to "Tobacco," "Trade," and "Women." Not only will readers enjoy this diverse array, but we hope they will be

encouraged to assemble their own commonplace books. Included for the first time too is Shakespeare's remarkable late romance *The Tempest,* with its haunting blend of shipwreck, magic, enslavement, and forgiveness. This play, together with *Othello*, offers readers insight into the period's fascination with encountering those it regarded as "other." "England and the World," a topical cluster that serves as a bridge to the Early Seventeenth Century, suggests that this fascination was only beginning. In addition to texts by Thomas Hariot and Walter Ralegh, it includes, new to the anthology, portions of a letter by William Strachey about a momentous wreck of English ships on the Bermudas; a generous selection from Richard Ligon's *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, the first account of the English colonization of Barbados and the rise of the sugar industry that would change the global economy forever; and a selection from John Smith's *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles*.

Volume B: The Early Seventeenth Century

At the heart of this period, edited by Julie Crawford and Katharine Maus, is John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, presented complete. New to the Eleventh Edition is Canto 5 of Lucy Hutchinson's contemporaneous epic poem *Order and Disorder*, which offers a different account of Adam and Eve's fall and its aftermath. The Eleventh Edition also offers other selections from Hutchinson's work, including from her translation of Lucretius and her elegies; three poems by the (relatively) newly discovered Hester Pulter; a wholly revised entry on Margaret Cavendish, including a much more substantive and representative selection from her mind-bending utopia *The Blazing World*; and a fully revised entry on Aemilia Lanyer, which offers a new selection from her most ambitious poem, "Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum." Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* appears in its entirety, offering a rich intertext for the two Shakespeare plays and Richard Ligon's and John Smith's colonial fantasies. The revised cluster "Crisis of Authority" includes the full text of a petition women presented to the House of Commons in February 1641, arguing for

their rights as citizens. The period also offers new poems by Donne, Jonson, Herbert, Wroth, Crashaw, Lovelace, and Philips.

Volume C: The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century

This volume, edited by Courtney Weiss Smith and James Noggle, situates eighteenth-century British literature in a global context. New to the period are the stories of Scheherazade and Ali Baba from the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, a work of complex global provenance, as well as writing by Phillis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho, Samson Occom, Dean Mahomet, and "Ossian" (a medieval Gaelic bard ventriloquized by an eighteenth-century Scotsman). Five new topical clusters address themes and issues whose legacies shape our world today. "Global Commerce and Empire" and "Britain and Transatlantic Slavery" explore the violent histories of this period and literature's role in helping people grapple with them. This edition also offers more work by women writers, including Anne Finch, Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Collier, Charlotte Lennox, and Frances Burney; and a new cluster featuring explorations of gender and sexuality, with works such as Hannah Snell's *The Female Soldier* and Henry Fielding's *The Female Husband*. Also new are clusters on the histories of science and of sentimental emotion. The Eleventh Edition shows that classic works long in the anthology—such as Behn's *Oroonoko*, Congreve's *The Way of the World*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*, Johnson's *Rasselas*, and influential poetry by Dryden, Pope, and Gray—become even more interesting when read alongside a wider and more diverse array of voices.

Volume D: The Romantic Period

Edited by Eric Eisner and Deidre Lynch, this volume contains new texts that demonstrate just how conscious Romantic-period authors were of living in an expanded, interconnected world. The "Revolution

Controversy" cluster has been retitled "An Age of Revolutions," registering its inclusion of material on the conflict that led to Haiti's independence and its development as the first Black republic. Also new is William Blake's *America: A Prophecy,* which approaches revolution through a transatlantic frame. Additions to the cluster "Slavery and the Literature of Abolition" deepen coverage of the painful interval between the British Parliament's abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and its abolition of slavery in Britain's Caribbean colonies in 1833: significantly expanding the excerpt from Mary Prince's 1831 *History*, the volume also includes an excerpt from a periodical dedicated to anti-slavery and working-class resistance written and published in 1817 by Robert Wedderburn, the son of a Scottish Jamaican planter and an African-born enslaved woman. A new cluster, "Science, Speculation, and Experiment," showcases the striking forms science writing could take in this period of tremendous scientific advances and controversy. It gathers texts by scientist-poet Erasmus Darwin, natural history writer Gilbert White, astronomer Caroline Herschel, and others. The representation of writing by women continues to increase, with new texts by Charlotte Smith, Dorothy Wordsworth, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon. A substantial new excerpt from the "London cantos" of Byron's *Don Juan* enlivens the presentation of Romantic writers' fascination with modern urban experience. The volume now concludes with poems by Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, author of the first books of English-language poetry published in India, whose work reinvents popular Romantic models in assembling an idiom for an Indian national identity.

Volume E: The Victorian Age

Edited by Rachel Ablow and Catherine Robson, this volume has been substantially revised, as signaled by "Great Britain's Imperial Mission," a major topic that includes the following sections: "Slavery, Abolition, and the Plantation System"; "India: The 'Jewel in the Crown'"; "Settler Colonialism: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa"; and "The British Isles: Ireland, Scotland, Wales." One of the

first new entries is a sizable excerpt from *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole*, the memoir of a Jamaican nurse and businesswoman who ministered to British soldiers during the Crimean War. Seacole's text anchors a host of additions that highlight the extent and literary consequences of British imperial aggression. The much-expanded opening cluster provides important historical context for both Seacole's text and the writings that follow, among them work by Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mohandas Gandhi from India; Tekahionwake/E. Pauline Johnson and Susanna Moodie from Canada; and Olive Schreiner from South Africa. Another major addition is the novella *The Lifted Veil*, by George Eliot, which introduces the central concerns of nineteenth-century realism. Also new are texts focused on the environmental and human consequences of industrialization—by Friedrich Engels, Henry Mayhew, Elizabeth Gaskell, Adelaide Procter, and Thomas Hardy. And we offer longer excerpts from Charles Darwin's major works, as well as a wider range of perspectives on gender and sexuality in the period. Newly added are poems by major authors that address issues of empire (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Tennyson, Christina Rossetti), as well as texts for two women writers whose work was central to the period: Amy Levy and Augusta Webster.

Volume F: The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

This volume, edited by Aarthi Vadde and Jahan Ramazani, has undergone substantial revision. Major highlights include two new clusters. The first, "Environmental Literature and Climate Change," addresses the impact of environmental crises on how writers, including J. G. Ballard, Bessie Head, Ben Okri, Arundhati Roy, and Robert Macfarlane, have depicted the convergence of nature and culture. A special subsection of poetry captures the richness of verse responding to human-caused climate change; it includes anthology favorites such as Seamus Heaney and Simon Armitage alongside newcomers such as Pascale Petit and Vahni Capildeo. The second cluster, "Born-Digital Literature," features works composed on and for the computer screen by writers who have used digital media to

push the boundaries of poetic and narrative form. Poets bpNichol and Caroline Bergvall make their anthology debut here as do novelists Ali Smith, Teju Cole, and David Mitchell. Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* continue to serve as exemplars of the modernist novel, with Conrad's novella now framed by responses from Caryl Phillips and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. New to the Eleventh Edition are Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls,* which join Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* to provide a varied look at modern drama. We have increased the selections for Claude McKay and contemporary poet Patience Agbabi as well as added a new poem by Philip Larkin. In response to reader requests, the short story "The Demon Lover" by Elizabeth Bowen now appears in "Voices from World War II" while Una Marson and Samuel Selvon join the celebrated cluster "Nation, Race, and Language." Indian novelist Mulk Raj Anand and British novelist Rachel Cusk appear here for the first time, and Zadie Smith is now represented by "The Embassy of Cambodia."

COMPLETE LONGER TEXTS

As in past editions, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Eleventh Edition, includes a generous selection of complete longer texts:

Beowulf (Heaney translation)

The Lady of the Fountain

The York Play of the Crucifixion

The Wakefield Second Shepherds' Play

The King of Tars

The Croxton Play of the Sacrament

Sir Orfeo

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (Armitage translation)

Everyman

Thomas More, *Utopia*

Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* and *Hero and Leander*

William Shakespeare, *Othello* and *The Tempest*

Ben Jonson, *Volpone*

John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*

John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*

William Congreve, *The Way of the World*

John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*

Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina*

Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas*

William Blake, *Vision of the Daughters of Albion, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* and *America: A Prophecy*

Jane Austen, *Love and Friendship*

Byron, *Manfred*

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Speckled Band*

Rudyard Kipling, *The Man Who Would Be King*

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

James Joyce, *The Dead*

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*

Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls*

The presence of so many complete longer works highlights the anthology's extraordinary value when compared to the cost of purchasing each of these works individually. And through the inclusion of hundreds of brilliant poems and prose pieces, these works are integrated into a much larger vision of the literary achievements of their periods. Indeed, the six volumes by themselves constitute a small but surprisingly comprehensive library.

VISUAL IMAGES

Now, as in the past, cultures define themselves through language. But the central importance of visual media in contemporary culture has heightened our awareness of the ways in which songs and stories have always been closely linked to the images that societies

have produced and viewed. The Eleventh Edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* features fifty-six pages of color plates (in seven color inserts) and more than 120 black-and-white illustrations throughout the volumes, including six maps. In selecting visual material—from the Sutton Hoo treasure of the seventh century to Yinka Shonibare's *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle* in the twenty-first century—the editors sought to provide images that illuminate the culture of a particular literary period; that conjure up, whether directly or indirectly, the literature of the section; and that relate specifically to works in the anthology.

EDITORIAL PROCEDURES AND FORMAT

The Eleventh Edition adheres to the principles that have always characterized *The Norton Anthology of English Literature.* Period introductions, headnotes, and annotations are designed to enhance students' reading and, without imposing an interpretation, to give students the information they need to understand each text. The aim of these editorial materials is to make the anthology self-sufficient, so that it can be read anywhere—in a coffeeshop, on a bus, under a tree. The availability of the ebook makes this aim even easier to realize.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature prides itself on both the scholarly accuracy and the readability of its texts. To ease students' encounter with some works, we have normalized spelling and capitalization in texts up to and including the Romantic period—for the most part they now follow the conventions of modern English. We leave unaltered, however, texts in which such modernizing would change semantic or metrical qualities. From the Victorian period onward, we have used the original spelling and punctuation. We continue other editorial procedures that have proved useful in the past. After each work, we cite the date of first publication on the right; in some instances, this date is followed by the date of a revised edition for which the author was responsible. Dates of composition, when they differ from those of publication and

when they are known, are provided on the left. We use square brackets to indicate titles supplied by the editors for the convenience of readers. Whenever a portion of a text is omitted, we indicate that omission with three asterisks. If the omitted portion is important for following the plot or argument, we provide a brief summary within the text or in a footnote. Finally, we have reconsidered annotations throughout and increased the number of marginal glosses for archaic, dialect, or unfamiliar words.

The Eleventh Edition includes the useful Literary Terminology appendix, an alphabetical glossary with examples from works in the anthology. We have also updated the General Bibliography, as well as the period and author bibliographies, which appear online.

New and Expanded Resources for Students and Instructors

For the Eleventh Edition, we have added exciting new resources and improved and updated existing resources to make them more useful and easy to find online.

THE NORTON EBOOK READER

Dynamic new features exclusive to the Norton Ebook Reader platform offer students a supportive, accessible environment for thoughtful reading—all at a great price. Readers of the ebook will find it easy to highlight, take notes, search, read offline, and more. In addition to audio recorded by the anthology editors, the anthology's period introductions feature embedded videos that help situate the literature of a particular time and place and highlight overarching themes.

Annotation tools encourage close reading, and instructors can even embed their own content for students directly on the page. An introduction to annotation—available in the Norton Ebook Reader and enriched with videos—walks students through the general *what*s, *why*s, and *how*s of annotation before they delve into the anthology.

Along with these interactive features, the Norton Ebook Reader includes page numbers and selections that match those of the Full Edition print books. The Full Edition includes all selections in the Shorter Edition (and more). Page references corresponding to the Shorter Edition also appear in the margins of relevant selections, making the digital edition more versatile than ever. Many of the black-and-white images in the print anthology appear in color in the ebook.

To access and learn more about the Norton Ebook Reader for *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, reach out to your Norton representative or contact us at literature@wwnorton.com.

STUDENT SITE

The Student Site for *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* features the videos from the Norton Ebook Reader, a curated selection of links to Spotify recordings, and more. Access to this site

is available with all new copies of the book or as an affordable standalone purchase option for students with used copies.

TEACHING RESOURCES

Extensive materials are available to adopters to help with course preparation. These include:

- ***Teaching with*** **The Norton Anthology of English Literature:** ***A Guide for Instructors.*** In addition to new thematic tables of contents, this downloadable file features "Quick Read" summaries, teaching notes, and writing suggestions for authors, works, and clusters.
- **Reading Comprehension Quizzes.** Norton Testmaker brings high-quality testing and quizzing materials online. Quizzes feature multiple-choice questions on often-taught works and can be easily exported to Microsoft Word or as Common Cartridge files for your LMS.
- **Image Files.** All the images from the anthology are available in PowerPoint with alt text and in JPEG format.

PACKAGE OPTIONS WITH THE NORTON LIBRARY

Select a paperback from our new series of classics to bundle for free with *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Edited and produced with the same care that Norton devotes to its anthologies, volumes in the Norton Library include enticing introductions and helpful but unobtrusive annotations by leading scholars. Visit wwnorton.com/norton-library for a complete list of titles and to request examination copies.

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STEPHEN GREENBLATT

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VOLUME D: The Romantic Period

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

VOLUME D

ELEVENTH EDITION

The Romantic Period 1785–1832

Sir Brooke Boothby, by Joseph Wright. For more information about this image, see the Image Gallery for this volume.

1787: Establishment of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Trade in Slaves

1789–1815: Revolutionary and Napoleonic period in France.—1789: Revolution begins with the assembly of the Estates General in May and the storming of the Bastille on July 14.—1793: King Louis XVI executed; England joins the alliance against France.—1793–94: Reign of Terror under Robespierre.—1804: Napoleon crowned emperor.—1815: Napoleon defeated at Waterloo

1807: British slave trade outlawed (slavery abolished throughout the empire, the West Indies included, twenty-six years later)

1811–20: The Regency—George, Prince of Wales, acts as regent for George III, who has been declared incurably insane

1819: Peterloo Massacre

1820: Accession of George IV

1830: Accession of William IV

1832: Passage of the Reform Bill in Parliament

The Romantic period, though by far the shortest, is at least as complex and diverse as any other period in British literary history, and it is, tellingly, demarcated differently than any of the other eras that literary historians and anthologists include in their timelines. By convention, the boundaries delimiting those other epochs are either set by the reigns of monarchs (so that we have the "Elizabethan" and "Victorian" ages named for two long-reigning queens) or conceptualized as coinciding with the openings and closings of centuries (as with the volume of this Norton anthology titled "The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries"). The date usually serving as the terminus of the Romantic age, 1832, represents a contrast to this pattern, strongly associated as it is with a signal political event, the first major reform of the British Parliament. A diverse range of dates have been identified as marking off the beginning of the Romantic period, but, almost always, each of these too is associated with an event of tremendous political and social impact. As some scholars tell it, the new era began in 1776, the year Americans declared their independence; others single out 1783, when shattering military defeat at the hands of those Americans dealt a blow to the credibility of Britain's ruling elites; and many settle on 1789, the year that launched democratic revolution in France, ushered in decades of fierce political unrest in Britain in its turn, and laid the ground for a war between the British and French Empires and their allies that would envelop an entire generation and take almost the whole of the globe as its theater.

Although politics has often provided a framework for the Romantic period, as such arrangements for periodization suggest, the fascination and provocation that this moment of cultural watershed presents for students of literary history have equally to do with another peculiarity in its construction: the Romantic is also the sole period that is named after a literary form, the romance. A great scholarly achievement of the later eighteenth century had been the recovery from obscurity of the medieval romances, previously ignored by literary historians more concerned with classical

influences, and the Romantic period witnessed a reevaluation of those wild verse-tales of adventure, chivalry, and love. Exactly the traits—their barbarous deviations from probability and rationality, their unabashed fictionality, the fantasies they induced in their readers—that once justified medieval romances' fall into oblivion were seen anew, as commentators moved from lauding the room for idealization and visionary imagination that romance had afforded premodern writers to proposing that *modern* literature should follow suit and become, in one sense, more romantic, too. At a moment when real political events themselves seemed to entail improbabilities and impossibilities (for example the common people proclaiming independence from their rulers), that rehabilitation of romance was, in addition, spurred by the period's probing of the relation between what William Godwin, in a subtitle to his 1794 novel *Caleb Williams*, called "Things as They Are" and the alternative worlds that imagination could summon into being. "What is now proved was once, only imagin'd," William Blake declared in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in 1790. His declaration is imbued with the new sense of power that poets, those professional imaginers, were inclined to claim at this moment, when the literary imagination appeared in new ways both to speak to and to guide historical change, and when political philosophy gained a new authority in and through poetry and fiction.

The appeal of romance in this era of rapid change may also have stemmed from the way the scenarios of travel, wandering, and boundary crossing on which romance plots had traditionally depended could now give literary shape to new kinds of mobility and experiences of dislocation. Fascinated by stories of journeys of all kinds, Romantic-era writers and readers displayed a special interest in characters estranged from home or conspicuously on the move—outcasts and exiles, questers or refugees, literary types advertised in the very titles of such texts as Frances Burney's novel *The Wanderer* (1814) or Byron's best-selling poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812–18), based on his own travels and subtitled "a romaunt" (an archaic spelling of "romance"). Writers found that the wayfaring

elements of earlier epic and romance narratives could be repurposed not only as a means through which to test ideals of personal or political independence, or to explore psychological dynamics of transgression and alienation, but as a medium registering the unsettled conditions of modern life. When the Londoner John Keats, in his sonnet "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again," addresses "romance" as "queen of far-away," he underscores the temptation to escapism afforded by romance's embrace of terrains of fantasy. At the same time, like many writers of the period, Keats (whose own brother and sister-in-law would emigrate to Kentucky) repeatedly experiments with romance as a form that, by interweaving the familiar and the exotic, could imaginatively accommodate the real ways "here" and "far away" had become linked in an era of global commerce and empire.

To many observers, the streets of London themselves, crowded with the comings and goings of vehicles and pedestrians, conveyed a dizzying sense of motion, giving urbanites and visitors alike the impression that the pace of life had accelerated: with more than one million inhabitants by 1801, London was far and away Europe's most populous city, and its population would nearly double again by 1840. The expanding metropolis was the capital of a colonial power whose elaborate administrative and trading apparatus was being built up around the globe, including in India, the Caribbean, Australia, and parts of Africa and North America. The advent of industrial machinery in this period created vast wealth for some and altered the nature of work for many, drawing migrants from the countryside to towns and cities, while emigration, ramping up especially after 1800, took huge numbers of Britons to overseas colonies and former colonies. But the largest scale of movement of people in the period involved horrific forms of involuntary displacement. Millions of people were taken from Africa to the Americas and sold as property, and the labor of enslaved persons became a significant engine in the British economy. Meanwhile, the American Revolution and then the Napoleonic Wars, from 1793 to 1815, took British soldiers and sailors to battles far away, then left many surviving veterans shattered,

impoverished, and alone, like William Wordsworth's "Discharged Soldier," a "ghostly figure" returned from the tropics whom Wordsworth encounters wandering the public road.

The recognition that Romantic writers and readers experienced a world at once expanded and complexly interconnected, and that different writers and readers experienced this globality from wildly distinct perspectives, translates into important questions about the geographic and national boundaries implied by designations such as "English literature of the Romantic period." Unsurprisingly, the meanings of "English" and "Englishness" were themselves being contested and reshaped in this moment of new contacts and pressures. In the Romantic period, literary criticism—and literary anthologies—presented national literary traditions as vitally bound up with a concept of national identity and a shared language community (such an understanding helped lay the historical basis for modern anthologies like the Norton). Yet this impetus linking literary expression and national self-definition also propelled writing that asserted Irish or Scottish or Welsh identity in contrast to English-ness, or that foregrounded the complex hybridity "British" identity could enclose. Such non-*English* writing proved among the period's most popular and influential, as well as the most exportable to the United States and elsewhere: Robert Burns's poetry in Scottish dialect; Walter Scott's verse and novels of the Scottish border; Thomas Moore's re-packaging of traditional Irish song; Maria Edgeworth's fiction exploring Irish national identity, written in the time of the unsuccessful 1798 Irish uprising against English rule and the 1801 Act of Union linking Great Britain and Ireland. Likewise in this period, a self-consciously American literature was developing through a lively transatlantic back and forth with British writing.

As scholars have shown a greater wariness of dissolving differences of geography, identity, experience, or language under an all-encompassing rubric of "English" Romanticism, they have also argued for expanding, or re-expanding, a literary canon formerly centered on introspective lyric poems inspired by poets' encounters with objects in or features of the natural world. Abolitionist songs,

ballads and ballad imitations, versified fairy tales (Letitia Landon's "Fairy of the Fountains"), city poems, poems in which nature does not prompt a human speaker's meditation but rather speaks itself (John Clare's "Swordy Well," Anna Barbauld's "Mouse's Petition"), and in prose, travelogues, political pamphlets, Gothic novels, science writing, and historical romances—all now get numbered among the forms of Romantic literature, a more capacious category than it was in the past. And whereas earlier criticism, especially during the third quarter of the twentieth century, developed accounts of a unified Romanticism by extrapolating from the writings of the six male poets that it had singled out for attention (Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge in the first generation, and Byron, Shelley, and Keats in the second), twenty-first-century scholars are readier to stress the friction among these figures, whose poetic and social aspirations divided as well as united them. We are also readier to foreground the crucial role the work of women writers played in making this exciting period what it was: among the most popular and most innovative writers of the period were women novelists, such as Edgeworth, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen; women poets, such as Barbauld and Felicia Hemans; and such women as Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, and Landon, who made their mark both in poetry and in fiction.

Attention to the international dimensions of British Romantic–period writing has long been trained on the crucial impact of the American and French Revolutions, and the extraordinary and vital circuit of ideas and influences connecting Romanticism in Britain with developments in French and German literature and philosophy. More recent scholarship has demonstrated how much insight into the energies and exchanges shaping the literary production of the period can be gained by including the Caribbean, the Pacific, Africa, and India, as well as North and South America, along with Europe in these frameworks of Romantic-era writing. The writing produced in and around the Haitian Revolution; the political agitation, in London's radical underground, of the Afro-Carib activist Robert Wedderburn; the writing of the Calcutta-based Anglo-Indian writer

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, drawing on influences from British Romantics like Landon, Byron, and Moore, along with Sanskrit and Persian poetry—all highlight with particular vividness the interaction and recombination of divergent traditions, languages, and styles animating so much of the period's literature.

REVOLUTION AND REACTION

During the Romantic era, England was experiencing the ordeal of change from a primarily agricultural society, where wealth and power had been concentrated in the landholding aristocracy, to a modern industrial nation. And this change occurred, as mentioned earlier, in a context of revolution—in America, then France, then Haiti—of counterrevolution, of war, of economic cycles of inflation and depression, and of the constant threat to the social structure from imported revolutionary ideologies to which the ruling classes responded by repressing traditional liberties.

English liberals and radicals alike responded with enthusiasm to the early period of the French Revolution, marked by the freeing of prisoners held in the Bastille (a detested jail in Paris) and the passage, by France's newly formed National Assembly, of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, laying out principles of universal liberty and equality. Three important books epitomize the radical social thinking stimulated by the Revolution. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) justified the Revolution against Edmund Burke's attack in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791–92) also advocated for England a democratic republic that was to be achieved, if lesser pressures failed, by popular revolution. More important as an influence on Wordsworth and Percy Shelley was Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), which foretold an inevitable but peaceful evolution of society to a final stage in which property would be equally distributed and government would wither away. But English sympathizers dropped off as the Revolution followed its increasingly grim course: the accession to power by Jacobin extremists, intent on purifying the new French Republic by purging it of its enemies; the "September Massacres" of the imprisoned nobility in 1792, followed by the execution of the king and queen; the new republic's invasion of the Rhineland and the Netherlands, which brought England into the war against France; the

guillotining of thousands in the Reign of Terror under Robespierre; and, after the execution in their turn of the men who had directed the Terror, the emergence of Napoleon, first as dictator then as emperor of France. As Wordsworth wrote in *The Prelude*,

> become Oppressors in their turn,
> Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
> For one of Conquest, losing sight of all
> Which they had struggled for. . . .

Napoleon, the brilliant tactician whose rise through the ranks of the army had seemed to epitomize the egalitarian principles of the Revolution, had become an arch-aggressor, a despot, and would-be founder of a new imperial dynasty. By 1800 English liberals found they had no side they could wholeheartedly espouse. Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815 proved to be the triumph, not of progress and reform, but of reactionary despotisms throughout continental Europe. In this year, accordingly, the debates about the legitimacy of the ruling class and about patrician degeneracy that figures such as Godwin, Paine, and Wollstonecraft had launched in the early 1790s returned with a vengeance.

From start to finish, this was a period of harsh, repressive measures. Public meetings were prohibited in 1795, the right of habeas corpus (the legal principle protecting individuals from arbitrary imprisonment) was suspended for the first time in over a hundred years, and advocates of even moderate political change were charged with treason. Efforts during these war years to repeal the laws that barred Protestants who did not conform to the Anglican Church from the universities and government came to nothing: in the new climate of counterrevolutionary alarm, it was easy to portray even a slight abridgment of the privileges of the Church as a measure that, validating the Jacobins' campaigns to de-Christianize France, would aid the enemy cause. Another early casualty of this counterrevolution was the movement to abolish the slave trade, a cause supported initially by a wide cross-section of

English society. In the 1780s and 1790s numerous writers, both White (Anna Letitia Barbauld, Coleridge, and Hannah More) and Black (Ottobah Cugoano and Olaudah Equiano), attacked the greed of the owners of the West Indian sugar plantations and detailed the horrors of the traffic in African flesh that provided them with their labor power. But the bloodshed that accompanied political change in France strengthened the hand of apologists for slavery, by making any manner of reform seem the prelude to violent insurrection. Parliament rejected a bill abolishing the trade in 1791, and sixteen years—marked by slave rebellions and by the planters' brutal reprisals—elapsed before it passed a new version of the bill.

The frustration of the abolitionist cause is an emblematic chapter in the larger story of how a reactionary government sacrificed hopes of reform while it mobilized the nation's resources for war. Yet this was the very time when economic and social changes were creating a desperate need for corresponding changes in political arrangements. For one thing, new classes inside England—manufacturing rather than agricultural—were beginning to demand a voice in government proportionate to their wealth. The "Industrial Revolution"—the shift in manufacturing that resulted from the invention of power-driven machinery to replace hand labor—had begun in the mid-eighteenth century with improvements in machines for processing textiles, and was given immense impetus when James Watt redesigned the steam engine in 1765. In the succeeding decades steam replaced wind and water as the primary source of power for all sorts of manufacturing processes, beginning that dynamic of ever-accelerating economic expansion and technological development that we still identify as the hallmark of the modern age. A new laboring population massed in sprawling mill towns such as Manchester, whose population increased by a factor of five in fifty years. In agricultural communities the destruction of home industry was accompanied by the acceleration of the process of enclosing open fields and wastelands (usually, in fact, "commons" that had provided the means of subsistence for entire communities) and incorporating them into larger, privately owned holdings. Enclosure

was by and large necessary for the more efficient methods of agriculture required to feed the nation's growing population (although some of the land that the wealthy acquired through parliamentary acts of enclosure they in fact incorporated into their private estates). But enclosure was socially destructive, breaking up villages, creating a landless class who either migrated to the industrial towns or remained as farm laborers, subsisting on starvation wages and the little they could obtain from parish charity. The landscape of England began to take on its modern appearance—the hitherto open rural areas subdivided into a checkerboard of fields enclosed by hedges and stone walls, with the factories of the cities casting a pall of smoke over vast areas of cheaply built houses and slum tenements. Meanwhile, the population was increasingly polarized into what Benjamin Disraeli later called the "Two Nations"—the two classes of capital and labor, the rich and the poor.

No attempt was made to regulate this shift from the old economic world to the new, since even liberal reformers were committed to the philosophy of laissez-faire. Often identified with the moral philosopher Adam Smith's 1776 treatise *The Wealth of Nations* (though Smith's position there is more nuanced), this theory of "let alone" holds that the general welfare can be ensured only by the free operation of economic laws; the government should maintain a policy of strict noninterference and leave people to pursue, unfettered, their private interests. On the one hand, laissez-faire thinking might have helped pave the way for the long-postponed emancipation of the slave population of the West Indies; by 1833, when Parliament—having banned the transatlantic traffic in slaves in 1807—finally declared an end to slavery itself across the empire, the anomaly that their unfree labor represented for the new economic and social orthodoxies evidently had become intolerable. But for the great majority of the laboring class at home, the results of laissez-faire and the "freedom" of contract it secured were inadequate wages and long hours of work under harsh discipline and in sordid conditions. Investigators' reports on the coal mines, where male and female children of ten or even five years of age were

harnessed to heavy coal-sledges that they dragged by crawling on their hands and knees, read like scenes from Dante's *Inferno.* With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the nation's workforce was enlarged by demobilized troops at the very moment when demand for manufactured goods, until now augmented by the needs of the military, fell dramatically. The result was an unemployment crisis that persisted through the 1820s. Because the workers had no vote and were prevented by law from unionizing, their only recourses were petitions, protest meetings, and riots, to which the ruling class responded with even more repressive measures. The introduction of new machinery into the mills resulted in further loss of jobs, provoking sporadic attempts by the displaced workers to destroy the machines. After one such outbreak of "Luddite" machine breaking, the House of Lords—despite Byron's eloquent protest—passed a bill (1812) making death the penalty for destroying the frames used for weaving in the stocking industry. In 1819 hundreds of thousands of workers organized meetings to demand parliamentary reform. In August of that year, a huge but orderly assembly at St. Peter's Field, Manchester, was charged by saber-wielding troops, who killed at least nine (some historians attribute as many as fifteen deaths to the violence) and injured hundreds more; this was the notorious "Peterloo Massacre," so named with sardonic reference to the Battle of Waterloo.

Suffering was largely confined to the poor, however, while the landed classes and industrialists prospered. So did many merchants, who profited from the new markets opened up as the British Empire expanded aggressively, compensating with victories against the French for the traumatic loss of America in 1783. England's merchants profited, too, thanks to the marketing successes that, over time, converted once-exotic imports from these colonies into everyday fare for the English. In the eighteenth century tea and sugar had been transformed in this way, and in the nineteenth century other commodities followed suit: the Indian muslin, for instance, that was the fabric of choice for gentlemen's cravats and fashionable ladies' gowns, and the laudanum (Indian opium

dissolved in alcohol) that so many ailing writers of the period appear to have found irresistible. The West End of London and new seaside resorts like Brighton became in the early nineteenth century consumers' paradises, sites where West Indian planters and nabobs (a Hindi word that entered English as a name for those who owed their fortunes to Indian gain) could be glimpsed displaying their purchasing power in a manner that made them moralists' favorite examples of nouveau riche vulgarity. The word *shopping* came into English usage in this era. Britain's sense of its modernity and sophistication was reflected not only in such displays of consumer goods, but also in the growth of new institutions and media catering to a public seen as consumers of intellectual culture. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, British scientists were leading participants in a "second scientific revolution" (as Coleridge called it), involving transformative developments in astronomy, geology, chemistry, physics, and biology. While radical publishers circulated cheap editions of treatises whose science challenged religious orthodoxy, at the high end of science publication, elegantly illustrated luxury volumes on such topics as botany or explorers' travels became prized possessions for the well-to-do. Public lecture halls and popular "galleries" showcased science and technology both as useful knowledge and as commercialized entertainment spectacles, further enabling British men and women to understand themselves as participants in progress.

But progress had its limits. French revolutionary principles were feared by English conservatives almost as much for their challenge to the "proper" ordering of the relations between men and women as for their challenge to traditional political arrangements. Yet the account of what it meant to be English that developed in reaction to this challenge—an account emphasizing the special virtues of the English sense of home and family—was in its way equally revolutionary. In an unprecedented way, the war that the English waged almost without intermission between 1793 and 1815 had a "home front." The menaced sanctuary of the domestic fireside became the symbol of what the nation's military might was

safeguarding. What popularity the monarchy held onto during this turbulent period was thus a function not of the two King Georges' traditional exercise of a monarch's sovereign powers but instead of the publicity, tailored to suit this nationalist rhetoric, that emphasized each one's domestic bliss within a "royal family." Conceptions of proper femininity altered as well under the influence of this new idealization and nationalization of the home, this project (as Burke put it) of "binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties."

And that alteration both put new pressures on women and granted them new opportunities. As in earlier English history, women in the Romantic period were provided only limited schooling, were subjected to a rigid code of sexual behavior, and (especially after marriage) were bereft of legal rights. In this period women began, as well, to be deluged by books, sermons, and magazine articles that insisted vehemently on the physical and mental differences between the sexes and instructed women that, because of these differences, they should accept that their roles in life involved child rearing, housekeeping, and nothing more. (Of course, in tendering this advice promoters of female domesticity conveniently ignored the definitions of duty that industrialists imposed on the poor women who worked in their mills.) Yet a paradoxical byproduct of the connections that the new nationalist rhetoric forged between the well-being of the state and domestic life was that the identity of the patriot became one a woman might attempt, with some legitimacy, to claim. Within the framework created by the new accounts of English national identity, a woman's private virtues now had a public relevance. They had to be seen as crucial to the nation's welfare. Those virtues might well be manifested in the work of raising patriotic sons, but, as the thousands of women in this period who made their ostensibly natural feminine feelings of pity their alibi for participation in abolitionism demonstrated, they could be turned to nontraditional uses as well.

The new idea that, as the historian Linda Colley has put it, a woman's place was not simply in the home but also in the nation

could also justify or at least extenuate the affront to proper feminine modesty represented by publication—by a woman's entry into the public sphere of authorship. "Bluestockings"—educated women—remained targets of masculine scorn. This became, nonetheless, the first era in literary history in which women writers began to compete with men in their numbers, sales, and literary reputations. These female authors had to tread carefully, to be sure, to avoid suggesting that (as one male critic fulminated) they wished the nation's "affectionate wives, kind mothers, and lovely daughters" to be metamorphosed into "studious philosophers" and "busy politicians." And figures like Wollstonecraft, who in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* grafted a radical proposal about gender equality onto a more orthodox argument about the education women needed to be proper mothers, remained exceptional. Later women writers tended cautiously to either ignore her example or define themselves against it.

Only in the Victorian period would Wollstonecraft's cause of women's rights rally enough support for substantial legal reform to begin, and that process would not be completed until the twentieth century. In the early nineteenth century the pressures for political reform focused on the rights of men, as distinct from women. From 1785 on, the year in which Prime Minister William Pitt (who would soon shift his political allegiances) proposed in vain a bill for parliamentary reform, middle-class and working-class men, entering into strategic and short-lived alliances, made the restructuring of the British electoral system their common cause. Finally, at a time of acute economic distress, the first Reform Bill was passed in 1832. It did away with the rotten boroughs (depopulated areas whose seats in the House of Commons were at the disposal of a few noblemen), redistributed parliamentary representation to include the industrial cities, and extended the franchise. Although about half the middle class, almost all the working class, and all women remained without a vote, the principle of the peaceful adjustment of conflicting interests by parliamentary majority had been firmly established.

Reform was to go on, by stages, until Britain acquired universal adult suffrage in 1928.

THE NEW POETRIES: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Writers working in this period, from 1785 to 1832, did not think of themselves as constituting a group of "Romantic" authors. It was Victorian critics who first wrote of the previous generation as the Romantics and promoted the term as a description for a period of recent, modern rather than premodern, history. Contemporaries, by contrast, treated these writers as independent individuals or else grouped them (usually maliciously, but with some basis in fact) into a number of separate "schools" or "sects": the "Lake School" of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Robert Southey (a "sect of poets," the critic Francis Jeffrey sniped, determined to be "*dissenters* from the established systems in poetry and criticism" and valuing themselves highly "for having broken loose from the bondage of ancient authority"); the "Cockney School," a derogatory term for vulgar Londoners Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, and associated writers who had pretensions beyond their station, including Keats; and the impious "Satanic School" of Leigh Hunt (again), Percy Shelley, and Byron. At the start of the period, the satirist Richard Polwhele also practiced this name calling as he cataloged the sphere of "female literature": the aim of his 1797 *The Unsex'd Females* was, by naming and shaming, to firmly distinguish the virtuous lady writers of his moment from the "Amazonian band" formed by Wollstonecraft and her followers, a group who, so Polwhele complained, had sacrificed their feminine charms for lead roles in revolutionary polemicizing.

The proliferation of schools and sects suggests the fault lines running through this fractious literary world. Where agreement could be found was around the proposition that this was a watershed moment in literary history. "Literature, well or ill conducted," the satirist Thomas James Mathias proclaimed in the book that inspired Polwhele's, "is the great engine by which . . . all civilized states must ultimately be supported or overthrown." Radicals concurred with

conservatives like Mathias in this conviction that literature was where the action was—that literature in effect *was* action—even as they disagreed on the meaning to be ascribed to that very term (a term formerly synonymous with learning in general, only in this period did *literature* begin to settle down into that modern meaning that confines it exclusively to artistic expression, works of the imagination particularly). Introducing *The New Cambridge History of the English Romantic Period*, James Chandler highlights, as a defining characteristic of the Romantic age, how often this era's most talented men gravitated to poetry in particular. They confirmed poetry's elevated cultural status by abandoning other careers, the ministry in Coleridge's case, the law in Sir Walter Scott's, medicine in Keats's. Even George Canning, Tory leader of Britain's House of Commons, published in 1823 a *Collected Poems.* In his 1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth unfavorably contrasted what the "Man of Science" could do as a benefactor of humanity with what the "Poet" could, whose vocation it was to "bind together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time." "The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is Poetry," Percy Shelley declared.

The "most eccentric feature of this entire culture," literary historian Stuart Curran suggests, was that it was "simply mad for poetry." To a degree inconceivable in the twenty-first century, poetry back then penetrated everyday life, as something appearing in daily papers alongside news stories and notices of bankruptcies, deaths, and marriages, and as something to be memorized, sung, transcribed into commonplace books, and made the basis of parlor games on long winter's evenings. The calling of poet beckoned to many: among those hordes of devoted readers, many were eager—too eager, their reviewers complained—to become authors in turn, imagining that verse might provide their springboard to fame. If those enthusiasms laid the ground for confident declarations like Shelley's and Wordsworth's, they also, inevitably, generated a backlash, the more so as the new poetries of the Romantic period

rode to this cultural prominence on the back of a media culture that at this moment was reaching increasing numbers of readers more quickly than ever before. Indeed, as Mathias's word *engine* suggests, with the expansion of modern publishing, it had begun to appear as though modern writing, too, had started to conform to the accelerated production rhythms of the Industrial Revolution. (The nervousness aroused by these developments, anticipations of the twentieth century's mass culture, is also registered in Wordsworth's Preface, which proposes as one cause of the "almost savage torpor" found among Wordsworth's countrymen and women, city-dwellers especially, the "rapid communication of intelligence" provided by the new popular press.) The spectacle of new sorts of people enlisting as authors and the multiplication of new venues for their writings generated gloomy warnings about overproduction and an accompanying debasement of artistic standards.

The genius poet was therefore shadowed throughout the Romantic period's literary discussion by a less admirable double, the Grub Street hack. *Poet* could in this era designate the visionary and universal benefactor profiled in Wordsworth's Preface and Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*, but it also evoked an impoverished and pretentious truant from a more honest trade, a misguided *romantic scribbler.* (That last phrase, often bandied about in this era, reminds us that even as the term *romantic* became synonymous with an admirable responsiveness to the promptings of imagination, it never completely shed its association with a deplorable and impractical deviation from common sense.) As Mary Robinson mischievously pointed out, it was a mistake to equate "the airy throne / Of bold imagination, rapture fraught / Above the herds of mortals" with a desolate mountaintop or isolated green dell, even though the period's poetic speakers tended to picture themselves in such sublime settings. The poet's haunt was in mundane reality likely to be a shabby, low-rent attic. Many motives drove the poets who in this era tried to make poetry new by reviving what was old and who thereby contrived to bypass the eighteenth-century poets whose heirs they were supposed to be: their medievalisms and primitivisms were, for a start, reactions against the neoclassical canons of good

taste, as well as expressions of a new nationalism. But certainly ideas about the literary past's exemption from the commercial pressures of the present also helped make the outmoded old romances a radically new source of inspiration for this period, precisely because of rather than despite their historical distance. The energy invested at this moment in the scholarly investigation and poetic imitation of the ballads being sung or chanted by common people in the streets and fields suggests something similar. It registers the fascination that the participants in literate culture who listened in on these performances were inclined to ascribe to a cultural form whose origins predated the invention of the printing press and the advent of a print market. The ballad was transmitted by word of mouth and not by commercial exchange.

The double image of the poet—product of an era that both idealized poetry and fretted over its standing in modern, commercial society—is an important context for the questions centering Wordsworth's 1802 Preface, his retroactive statement of the principles guiding him in the poems he contributed to *Lyrical Ballads.* "What is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet?" The questions were the more urgent because in a fractious period, there was increased pressure on the aesthetic sphere to act as a site in which human beings could rediscover the commonalities linking them as humans, as Wordsworth's definition of the poet as a figure of unification, "bind[ing] together . . . the vast empire of human society," suggests. One way to approach the period's new poetries and isolate some of the distinctive trends that were precipitated out of a welter of reforms and radical innovations is to start by tracing the shifting conceptions of poet and poetry that emerged then. If by taking this approach we take our cue from Wordsworth's Preface, we should also acknowledge that his manifesto for a new poetics can be deemed representative only to a limited extent. Wordsworth would have wished it otherwise, but during this era of revolution definitions of good poetry, like definitions of the good society, were sure to create as much contention as consensus.

Contrasting Views of the Romantic Poet. On the left, Henry Fuseli, "The Poet's Vision," unused design for frontispiece to William Cowper's *Poems* (1807). On the right, Henry Heath, "Fine Arts, Pt. 1: Poetry," published August 8, 1826.

Concepts of the Poet and the Poem

Seeking a stable foundation on which social institutions might be constructed, eighteenth-century British philosophers had devoted much energy to demonstrating that human nature must be everywhere the same, because it everywhere derived from individuals' shared sensory experience of an external world that could be objectively represented. As the century went on, however, philosophers began emphasizing—and poets began developing a new language for—individual variations in perception and the capacity the receptive consciousness has to filter and to re-create reality. This was a shift Wordsworth registered when in his Preface he located the source of a poem not in outer nature but in the psychology of the individual poet. What distinguished the poems of *Lyrical Ballads* from

the popular poetry of the day, Wordsworth declared, vindicating his own departures from those norms, is that "[t]he feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling." Wordsworth maintained, in continuation, that "[A]ll good poetry," was, at the moment of composition, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." Other contemporary discussions of poetry concurred with this account by referring likewise to the mind, emotions, and imagination of the poet for the origin, content, and defining attributes of a poem. "The poet, the man of strong feelings, gives us only an image of his mind, . . . marking the impression which nature had made on his own heart," Wollstonecraft wrote in an essay that appeared in the *Monthly Magazine* the year before the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads.* Though Romantic poetry is interchangeable for many modern readers with "nature poetry" (an equation that William Godwin, her widower, endorsed when he reprinted Wollstonecraft's essay under a new title, "On Poetry, and Our Relish for the Beauties of Nature"), this characterization of Romantic poetics risks downplaying the poets' emphatic attention to the operations of consciousness. Certainly, many poets participated enthusiastically in the touring of picturesque scenery that was a new leisure activity of their age. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, the Lake School, even set up their households in the midst of that scenery, announcing in their residential arrangements as well as their works their antipathy to "the increasing accumulation of men in cities" and faith in the restorative powers of a benevolent Nature. Even so, it is fair to say that when the great Romantic lyrics—Smith's *Beachy Head*, Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," Keats's "Nightingale"—remark on an aspect of the natural scene, this attention to the external world serves only as stimulus to the most characteristic human activity, that of thinking.

Infused with this emphasis, the lyric poem written in the first person, which for much of literary history was regarded as a minor kind, thus became for many among the Romantics a major form and was often described as the most essentially poetic of all the genres. And in many Romantic lyrics the "I" is no longer a conventionally

typical lyric speaker, such as the Petrarchan lover or Cavalier gallant of Elizabethan and seventeenth-century love poems, but one who shares recognizable traits with the poet. The experiences and states of mind expressed by the lyric speaker often accord closely with the known facts of the poet's life.

This reinvention of the lyric complicated established understandings of the gender of authorship. It may not be an accident, some critics suggest, that Wordsworth in his Preface defines poetry as "the real language of men" and the Poet as a "man speaking to men": Wordsworth, who began to publish when women such as Robinson and Charlotte Smith occupied the vanguard of the new personal poetry, might have decided that to establish the distinctiveness of his project he needed to counterbalance his emphasis on his feelings with an emphasis on those feelings' "manly" dignity. This is not to say that women writers' relationship to the new ideas about poetry was straightforward either. In one of her prefaces Smith says that she anticipates being criticized for "bringing forward 'with querulous egotism,' the mention of myself." For many female poets the other challenge those ideas about poetry posed might have consisted in their potential to reinforce the old, prejudicial idea that their sex—traditionally seen as creatures of feeling rather than intellect—wrote about their own experiences because they were capable of nothing else. For male poets the risks of poetic self-revelation were different—and in some measure they were actively seized by those who, like Coleridge and Percy Shelley, intimated darkly that the introspective tendency and emotional sensitivity that made someone a poetic genius could also lead him to melancholy and madness.

It was not only the lyric that registered these new accounts of the poet. Byron confounded his contemporaries' expectations about which poetic genre was best suited to self-revelation by inviting his audience to equate the heroes of *Childe Harold, Manfred*, and *Don Juan* with their author, and to see these fictional protagonists' experiences as disclosing the deep truths of his secret self. Wordsworth's *Prelude* represents an extreme instance of this tendency to self-reference. Though the poem, half a century in the

making, is of epic length and seriousness, its subject is not, as is customary in an epic, history on a world-changing scale but the growth of the poet's mind: "a thing unprecedented in Literary history that a man should talk so much about himself," Wordsworth admitted.

Spontaneity and the Impulses of Feeling

In traditional poetics, poetry had been regarded as supremely an art—an art that in modern times was practiced by poets who had assimilated classical precedents, were aware of the "rules" governing the kind of poem they were writing, and (except for the happy touches that, as Alexander Pope said, are "beyond the reach of art") deliberately employed tested means to achieve premeditated effects on an audience. But in her 1797 *Monthly Magazine* essay, Wollstonecraft foretold a shift in aesthetic doctrine when she wrote that "[t]he silken wings of fancy are shrivelled by rules," and that "a desire of attaining elegance of diction occasions an attention to words, incompatible with sublime, impassioned thoughts." In Wordsworth's account in the Preface, although the composition of a poem originates from "emotion recollected in tranquillity" and may be preceded and followed by reflection, the immediate act of composition must be spontaneous—impulsive, artless, and free from rules. Keats listed as an "axiom" a similar proposition—that "if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all."

On occasion in this period's discussions of poetics, this interest in a poetry that came naturally could act in concert with that nostalgia, already discussed, which abandoned the prosaic here-and-now for the more romantic possibilities housed in a remote, preliterate past. For instance, for many poets of the period, the ancient bard, a composite figure resembling at once the biblical prophets, Homer, Milton, and the harp-playing patriots whom eighteenth-century antiquarians had located in a legendary Dark Ages Britain, was a charismatic role model. Imagining the songs a bard might have sung in long-ago times made it easier to conceive an alternative to the

mundane language of modernity—a natural, oral poetry, blissfully unconscious of modern decorums and artificial conventions and sublimely irreducible to rule or measure. (Though they chafed against this expectation, writers from the rural working class—Robert Burns and later John Clare—could be expected, by virtue of their perceived distance from the restraint and refinement of civilized discourse, to play a comparable role inside modern culture, that of peasant poet or natural genius.) When, after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, writers like Byron and Percy and Mary Shelley traveled to Italy, taking these bardic ideals with them, they became enthralled with the arts of the *improvisatore* and *improvisatrice*, men and women whose electrifying oral performances of poetry involved no texts but those of immediate inspiration. One writer who praised and emulated that rhapsodic spontaneity, Percy Shelley, thought it "an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study." He suggested instead that these were the products of an unconscious creativity: "A great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb."

The emphasis in this period on unlabored art and on the spontaneous activity of the imagination producing it, and the premium placed on the immediacy of the relationship between author and poem, are linked to a belief in the essential role of passion. According to this view (which connects the literary productions of the Romantic period to the poetry and fiction of sensibility written earlier in the eighteenth century), the intuitive feelings of "the heart" had to supplement the judgments of the purely logical faculty, "the head." "Deep thinking," Coleridge wrote, "is attainable only by a man of deep feeling"; hence, "a metaphysical solution that does not tell you something in the heart is grievously to be suspected as apocryphal."

The Bard. Frontispiece by Thomas Rowlandson for Edward Jones, *The Bardic Museum of Primitive British Literature* (1802), a collection of traditional Welsh melodies. Rowlandson pictures the bard as a figure unifying his community.

Glorification of the Ordinary

In his 1818 lecture "On the Living Poets" Hazlitt declared the poetry of the Lake School, with Wordsworth at its head, to be the literary equivalent of the French Revolution, a translation of political change into poetical experiment. "Kings and queens were dethroned from their rank and station in legitimate tragedy or epic poetry, as they were decapitated elsewhere. . . . The paradox [these poets] set out with was that all things are by nature, equally fit subjects for poetry; or that if there is any preference to give, those that are the meanest [that is, most humble] and most unpromising are the best." Furthermore, as Hazlitt pointed out, the Lake School had done more than take the subjects of serious poems from the lives of humble country folk; it overtly elicited a genteel audience's sympathies for the disgraced, outcast, and delinquent—"convicts, female vagrants, gypsies . . . idiot boys and mad mothers," in Hazlitt's list. To some extent Hazlitt's analogizing between poetic and political experiments suggests more about him than the living poets he discusses: an avid youthful reader of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he sounds as though he took to heart the Swiss-French philosopher's advocacy of a simplicity of manners against aristocratic corruption. Still, Hazlitt would have found support for his characterization of the Lake School from Wordsworth's statement in the Preface that his aim in *Lyrical Ballads* was "to choose incidents and situations from common life." For Wordsworth's polemical purposes, it was in "humble and rustic life" that a natural language—"a language really spoken by men" and "incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature"—was to be found, and the speech of rustics was in the Preface promoted as a cure for the ailments of the overcivilized.

Hazlitt would have known as well that later eighteenth-century writers had already experimented with the simple treatment of simple subjects. Burns had with great success represented "the rural scenes and rural pleasures of [his] natal Soil," and in a language aiming to be true to the rhythms of the Scots language. Women poets, too—Barbauld, Robinson—assimilated to their poems the subject matter of everyday life. Many later eighteenth-century writers had taken their cue from the stark simplicity of the popular ballad: the ballad's appeal for an up-market, metropolitan readership,

capitalized on by eighteenth-century collections like Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, was in a part a function of the contrast between the primitive plainness and outright crudity of these song traditions and the tame, elaborate poetic diction defining poetry's modern milieu.

Once it had arrived on this scene Wordsworth's Preface of 1802 underwrote such poetic practice with a theory that inverted the traditional hierarchy of poetic genres, subjects, and styles. It elevated humble life and the plain style, which in earlier theory were appropriate only for the pastoral, the genre at the bottom of the traditional hierarchy, into the principal subject and medium for poetry in general. Byron reacted with scorn to this poetic program and facetiously summoned ghosts from the eighteenth century to help him protest against what *he* perceived as Wordsworth's bathos:

> "Peddlers," and "Boats," and "Wagons"! Oh! ye
> shades
> Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?

Yet Wordsworth's project was not simply to represent the world as it is but, as he explained in his Preface, to throw over "situations from common life . . . a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect." No one can read his poems without noticing the reverence with which he invests words that for earlier writers had been derogatory—words such as *common*, *ordinary*, *everyday*, *humble*. Wordsworth's aim was to shatter the lethargy of custom so as to refresh our sense of wonder in the everyday and the lowly.

In the eighteenth century Samuel Johnson had said that "wonder is a pause of reason"—"the effect of novelty upon ignorance." But for many Romantics, to arouse in the sophisticated mind that sense of wonder presumed to be felt by the ignorant and the innocent—to renew the universe, Percy Shelley wrote, "after it has been blunted by reiteration"—was a major function of poetry. Commenting on the imaginative quality of Wordsworth's early verse, Coleridge remarked

in *Biographia Literaria*: "To combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances, which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar . . . this is the character and privilege of genius." Contributing to this poetry of the child's-eye view, Barbauld wrote a poem centered on an observer's effort to imagine the unknowable perspective of a being for whom thought and sensation are not yet begun—a "little invisible being who is expected soon to become visible" but is still in its mother's womb.

The Supernatural, the Romance, and Psychological Extremes

There was a counterpoint to this poetry devoted to reviving the wonder of the familiar—"characters and incidents such as will be found in every village and its vicinity"—and proposing the authenticity of that local knowledge that long familiarity brings: a poetry that instead was founded on frank violation of natural laws and the ordinary course of events and that thereby cultivated the romantic in the understanding of that term that was to the forefront during the Romantic period itself. Coleridge contrasts these two sorts of poem when in *Biographia Literaria* he describes the division of labor organizing his collaboration with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads*: his responsibility was poetry in which "the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural, or at least romantic." Stories of bewitchings, hauntings, and possession—shaped by antiquated treatises on demonology, folklore, and Gothic novels—supplied Coleridge in poems such as *Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Christabel*, and "Kubla Khan" with the means of impressing on readers a sense of occult powers and unknown modes of being.

Poems like these, as Coleridge's epithet "romantic" suggests, were often grouped together by contemporaries under the medievalizing rubric "romance." On the one hand romances were writings that turned, in their quest for set- tings conducive to supernatural happenings, to distant pasts, faraway, exotic places, or both—Keats's "perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn" or the China of "Kubla Khan." On the other hand romance also named a homegrown, native tradition of literature, made unfamiliar and alien by the

passage of time. For many authors, starting with Horace Walpole, whose *Castle of Otranto* (1764) began the tradition of Gothic fiction, writing under the banner of romance meant reclaiming their national birthright: a literature of imagination— associated, above all, with Spenser and the Shakespeare of fairy magic and witchcraft—that had been forced underground by the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason. As Byron had done in his romance *Childe Harold*, Keats drew on a stanzaic form associated with Spenser in writing *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the poem in which he proved himself a master of that Romantic mode that establishes a medieval setting for events violating our sense of realistic probability. The Romantic period's "medieval revival" was also promoted by women: Robinson, for instance (author of "Old English," "Monkish," and "Gothic" Tales), as well as Letitia Landon, Felicia Hemans, and others, women who often matched the arch-medievalist Sir Walter Scott in the historical learning they brought to their compositions.

The "addition of strangeness to beauty" that Walter Pater near the end of the nineteenth century would identify as a key Romantic tendency is seen not only in this concern with the exotic and archaic landscapes of romance but also in an interest in the mysteries of mental life and determination to investigate psychological extremes. Coleridge and Thomas De Quincey shared an interest in dreams and nightmares and in the altered consciousness they experienced under their addiction to opium. In his odes, as in the quasi-medieval "ballad" "La Belle Dame sans Merci," Keats recorded strange mixtures of pleasure and pain with extraordinary sensitivity, pondering the destructive aspects of sexuality and the erotic quality of the longing for death. And Byron made repeated use of the fascination of the forbidden and the appeal of the terrifying yet seductive Satanic hero.

There were, of course, writers who resisted these poetic engagements with fantasized landscapes and strange passions. Significant dissent came from some women writers, who, given accounts of their sex as especially susceptible to the delusions of romantic love, had particular reason to continue the Enlightenment program and promote the rational regulation of emotion. Barbauld wrote a poem gently advising the young Coleridge not to prolong his

stay in the "fairy bower" of romance but to engage actively with the world as it is. Often satirical when she assesses characters who imagine themselves the pitiable victims of their own powerful feelings, Jane Austen had her heroine in *Persuasion*, while conversing with a melancholy, Byron-reading young man, caution him against overindulgence in Byron's "impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony" and "prescribe" to him a "larger allowance of prose in his daily study." And yet this heroine, having "been forced into prudence in her youth," has "learned romance as she grew older." The reversal of the sequence that usually orders the story line of female socialization suggests a receptivity to romance's allure—the allure of the improbable—that links Austen to the spirit of the age.

Individualism and Alienation

Another feature of Byron's poetry that attracted notice and, in some quarters, censure was its insistence on his or his hero's self-sufficiency. Hazlitt, for instance, borrowed lines from Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* to object to Byron's habit of spurning human connection "[a]s if a man were author of himself, / And owned no other kin." The audacious individualism that Hazlitt questions in this passage from *The Spirit of the Age* was, however, central to the celebrations of creativity occupying many Romantic-period writers. Indeed, in the Preface, Wordsworth had already characterized his poetic experimentation in *Lyrical Ballads* as an exercise in artistic self-sufficiency. The Preface has been read as a document in which Wordsworth, proving himself a self-made man, arranges for his disinheritance—arranges to cut himself off, he says, "from a large portion of the phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets." The German philosophers who generated many of the characteristic ideas of European Romanticism had likewise developed an account of how individuals might author and create themselves. In the work of Immanuel Kant and others, the human mind was described as creating the universe it perceived and so creating its own experience. Mind is "not passive," Kant's admirer Coleridge wrote, but "made in

God's image, and that too in the sublimest sense—the Image of the *Creator*." And Wordsworth declared in *The Prelude* that the individual mind "[e]ven as an agent of the one great mind, / creates, creator and receiver both." The Romantic period, the epoch of free enterprise, imperial expansion, and boundless revolutionary hope, was also an epoch of individualism in which philosophers and poets alike put an extraordinarily high estimate on human potentialities.

In representing this expanded scope for individual initiative, much poetry of the period redefined heroism and made a ceaseless striving for the unattainable its crucial element. Viewed by moralists of previous ages as sin or lamentable error, longings that can never be satisfied—in Percy Shelley's phrase, "the desire of the moth for a star"—came to be revalued as the glory of human nature. "Less than everything," Blake announced, "cannot satisfy man." Discussions of the nature of art developed similarly. The German philosopher Friedrich Schlegel's proposal that poetry "should forever be becoming and never be perfected" supplied a way to understand the unfinished, "fragment" poems of the period ("Kubla Khan" most famously) not as failures but instead as confirmations that the most poetic poetry was defined as much by what was absent as by what was present: the poem, in this understanding, was a fragmentary trace of an original conception that was too grand ever to be fully realized. This defiant attitude toward limits also made many writers impatient with the conceptions of literary genre they inherited from the past. The result was that, creating new genres from old, they produced an astonishing variety of hybrid forms constructed on fresh principles of organization and style: "elegiac sonnets," "lyrical ballads," the poetic autobiography of *The Prelude*, Percy Shelley's "lyric drama" of cosmic reach, *Prometheus Unbound*, and (in the field of prose) the "historical novels" of Scott and the complex interweaving of letters, reported oral confessions, and interpolated tales that is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*

In this context many writers' choice to portray poetry as a product of solitude and poets as loners might be understood as a means of reinforcing the individuality of their vision. (The sociability of the extroverted narrator of *Don Juan*, who is forever buttonholing

"the gentle reader," is exceptional—Byron's way of harkening back to the satire of the eighteenth century.) And the appeal that nature poetry had for many writers of the period can be attributed to a determination to idealize the natural scene as a site where the individual could find freedom from social laws, an idealization that was easier to sustain when nature was, as often in the era, represented not as cultivated fields but as uninhabitable wild wastes, unplowed uplands, caves, and chasms. Rural *community,* threatened by the enclosures that were breaking up village life, was a tenuous presence in poetry as well.

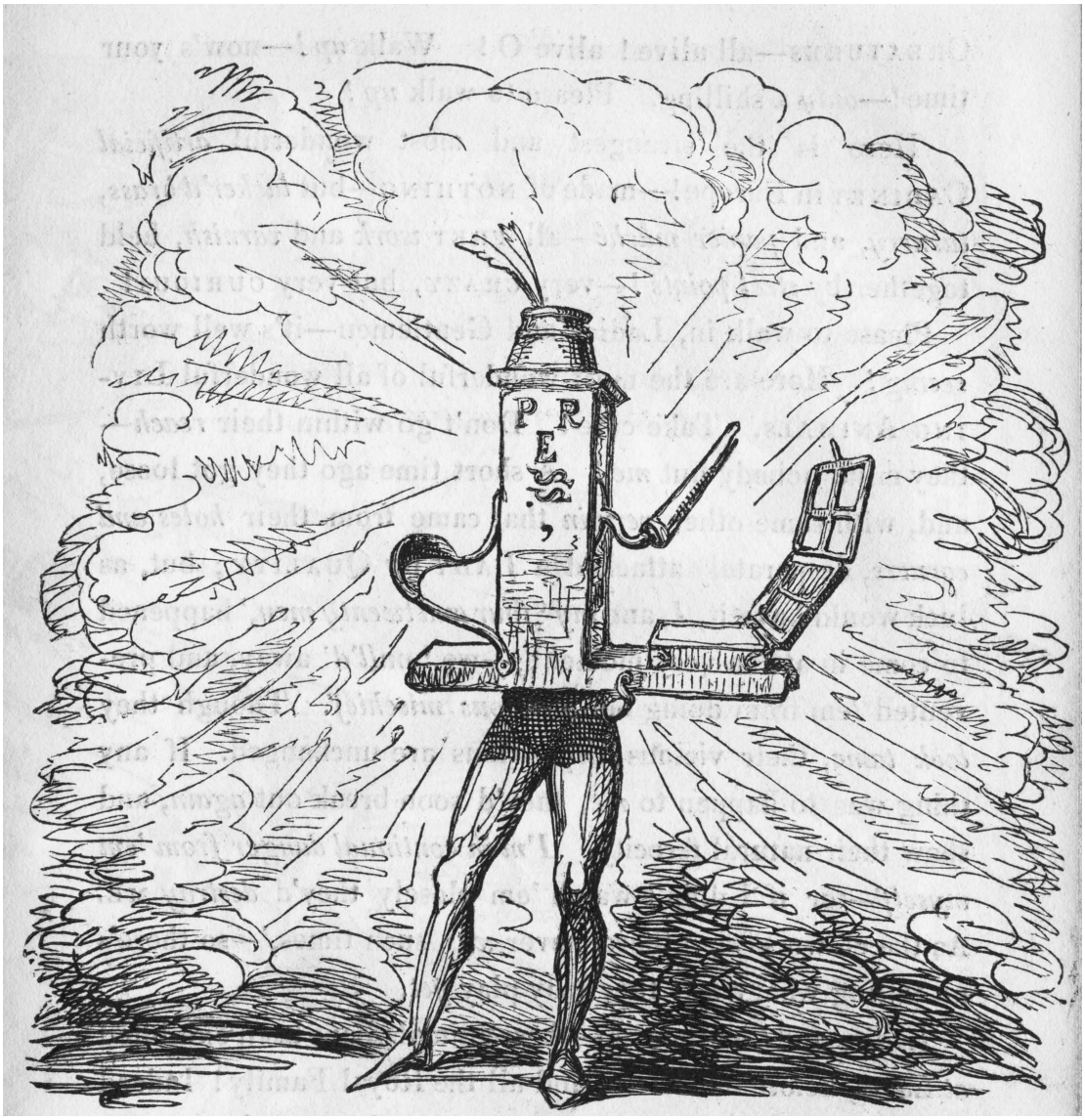
Wordsworth's imagination is typically released, for instance, by the sudden apparition of a single figure, stark and solitary against a natural background; the terms *solitary*, *by one self*, *alone* sound through his poems. In the poetry of Coleridge, Shelley, and Byron (before *Don Juan* launched Byron's own satire on Byronism), the desolate landscapes are often the haunts of disillusioned visionaries and accursed outlaws, figures whose thwarted ambitions and torments connect them, variously, to Cain, the Wandering Jew, Satan, and even Napoleon. A variant of this figure is Prometheus, the hero of classical mythology, who is Satan-like in setting himself in opposition to God, but who, unlike Satan, is the champion rather than the enemy of the human race. Mary Shelley subjected this hero, central to her husband's mythmaking, to ironic rewriting in *Frankenstein*: Victor Frankenstein, a "Modern Prometheus," is far from championing humankind. For other women writers of the period, and for Shelley in her later novels, the equivalent to these half-charismatic, half-condemnable figures of alienation is the woman of "genius." In a world in which—as Wollstonecraft complained in the *Rights of Woman*—"all women are to be levelled by meekness and docility, into one character of . . . gentle compliance," the woman who in "unfeminine" fashion claimed a distinctive individuality did not gain authority but risked ostracism. As for the woman of genius, in writings by Robinson, Hemans, and Landon particularly, her story was often told as a modern variation on ancient legends of the Greek Sappho, the ill-fated female poet who had triumphed in poetry but died of love. Pressured by the emergent Victorianism of the 1820s

and playing it safe, Hemans especially was careful to associate genius with self-inflicted sorrow and happiness with a woman's embrace of her domestic calling.

WRITING IN THE MARKETPLACE AND THE LAW COURTS

Even Romantics who wished to associate literature with isolated poets holding mute converse with their souls had to acknowledge that in real life the writer did not dwell in solitude but confronted, and was accountable to, a crowd. For many commentators the most revolutionary aspect of the age was the spread of literacy and the dramatic expansion of the potential audience for literature. This revolution, like the revolution in France, occasioned a conservative reaction: the worry, frequently expressed as books ceased to be written exclusively for an elite, that this bigger audience (by 1830, about half of England's population of fourteen million) would be less qualified to judge or understand what it read. Beginning in the 1780s, more members of the working classes had learned to read as a result of lessons provided in Sunday schools (informal sites for the education of the poor that long antedated state-supported schools). At the same time reading matter became more plentiful and cheaper, thanks to innovations in retailing—the cut-rate sales of remaindered books and the spread of circulating libraries where volumes could be "rented"—and thanks to technological developments. By the end of the period, printing presses were driven by steam engines, and the manufacture of paper had been mechanized; publishers had mastered publicity, the art (as it was called) of "the puff." Surveying the consequences of these changes, Coleridge muttered darkly about that "misgrowth," "a Reading Public," making it sound like something freakish and pathological. Books had become a big business, one enrolling increasing numbers of individuals who found it possible to do without the assistance of wealthy patrons and who, accordingly, looked to this public for their hopes of survival. A few writers became celebrities, invested with a glamour that formerly had been reserved for royalty and that we nowadays save for movie stars. This was the case for the best-selling Byron, particularly, whose enthusiastic public

could by the 1830s purchase dinner services imprinted with illustrations from his life and works.



Printing Press. George Cruikshank's image of a printing press in human form, superhero and harbinger of modern liberty, opens William Hone's satiric pamphlet *The Political Showman—At Home!* (1821).

How such popular acclaim was to be understood and how the new reading public that bestowed it (and took it away) could possibly be reformed or monitored when, as Coleridge's term *misgrowth*

suggests, its limits and composition seemed unknowable: these were pressing questions for the age. Opponents of the French Revolution and political reform at home pondered a frightening possibility: if "events . . . [had] made us a world of readers" (as Coleridge put it, thinking of how newspapers had proliferated in response to the political upheavals), it might also be true that readers could *make* events in turn, that the new members of the audience for print would demand a part in the drama of national politics. Conservatives were well aware of arguments conjecturing that the Revolution had been the result of the invention of the printing press three centuries before. They certainly could not forget that Paine's *Rights of Man*—not the reading matter for the poor the Sunday-school movement had envisioned—had sold an astonishing two hundred thousand copies in a year.

However, the British state had lacked legal provisions for the prepublication censorship of books since 1695, which was when the last Licensing Act had lapsed. Throughout the Romantic period therefore the Crown tried out other methods for policing reading and criminalizing certain practices of authoring and publishing. Paine was in absentia found guilty of sedition, for instance, and in 1817 the radical publisher William Hone narrowly escaped conviction for blasphemy. Another government strategy was to use taxes to inflate the prices of printed matter and so keep political information out of the hands of the poor without exactly violating the freedom of the press. In the meantime worries about how the nation would fare now that "the people" read were matched by worries about how to regulate the reading done by women. In 1807 the bowdlerized edition was born, as the Reverend Thomas Bowdler and his sister Henrietta produced *The Family Shakespeare*, concocting a Bard who, his indelicacies expurgated, could be sanctioned family fare.

Commentators who condemned the publishing industry as a scene of criminality also cited the frequency with which, during this chaotic time, best-selling books ended up republished in unauthorized, "pirated" editions. Novels were the pirates' favorite targets. But the radical underground of London's printing industry also appropriated one of the most politically daring works of Percy

Shelley, *Queen Mab*, and by keeping it in print, and accessible in cheap editions, thwarted attempts to posthumously sanitize the poet's reputation. And in 1817 Southey, by then a Tory and the kingdom's poet laureate, was embarrassed to find his insurrectionary drama of 1794, *Wat Tyler*, published without his permission. There was no chance, Southey learned, that the publishers who had filched his play and put this souvenir of his youthful radicalism into circulation would be punished. The court refused to grant an injunction, citing the precedent that there could be no protection for publications deemed injurious to the public.

OTHER LITERARY FORMS

Prose

Although we now know the Romantic period as an age of poetry, centered on works of imagination, nonfiction prose forms—essays, reviews, political pamphlets—flourished during the epoch, as writers seized the opportunity to speak to and for the era's new audiences. In eighteenth-century England, prose, particularly in the urbane, accessible style that writers such as Joseph Addison and David Hume cultivated in their essays, had been valued as the medium of sociable exchange that could integrate different points of view and unify the public space known as the "republic of letters." That ideal of civil discussion came under pressure in the Romantic period, however, since by then many intellectuals were uncertain whether a republic of letters could survive the arrival of those new readers, "the people," and whether in this age of class awareness such a thing as a unified public culture was even possible. Those uncertainties are never far from the surface in the masterpieces of Romantic prose—a category that ranges from the pamphleteering that drew Burke, Wollstonecraft, and Paine into the Revolution controversy of the 1790s, to the periodical essays, with suggestive titles like *The Watchman* and *The Friend*, in which Coleridge turned controversialist, to the magazine writing of Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and De Quincey in the 1820s.

The issue of how the writer should relate to audience—as watchman or friend?—was especially tricky, because this period, when so many more people defined themselves as readers, saw the emergence of a new species of specialist reader. This was the critic, who, perhaps problematically, was empowered to tell all the others what to read. Following the establishment in 1802 of the *Edinburgh Review* and in 1809 of the *Quarterly Review*, a new professionalized breed of book reviewer claimed a degree of cultural authority to which eighteenth-century critics had never aspired. Whereas later-

eighteenth-century periodicals such as the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review* had aimed to notice almost everything in print, the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* limited themselves to about fifteen books per issue. The selectivity enabled them to make decisive statements about what would count as culture and what would fall beyond the pale. They also conceptualized criticism as a space of discipline, in which the reputations of the writers under review were as likely to be marred as they were to be made. The stern Latin motto of the *Edinburgh* (founded by lawyers) translates as "the judge is condemned when the guilty go free." The continuing tension in the relations between criticism and literature and doubt about whether critical prose can be literature—whether it can have artistic value as well as social utility—are legacies from the Romantic era. Hazlitt wondered self-consciously in an essay on criticism whether his was not in fact a critical rather than a poetical age and whether "no great works of genius appear, because so much is said and written about them."

Hazlitt participated importantly in another development. In 1820 the founding editor of the *London Magazine* gathered a group of writers, Hazlitt, Lamb, and De Quincey, who in the *London*'s pages collectively developed the Romantic form known as the familiar essay: intimate-feeling commentaries, often presented as if prompted by incidents in the authors' private lives, on an eclectic range of topics, from pork to prizefighting. In some of his essays, Hazlitt modeled an account of subjective response to works of art as most important not for how, for instance, this response prepares individuals for public citizenship, but for what it helps them discover about their personality. For their essays Lamb and De Quincey developed a style that harkened back to writers who flourished before the republic of letters and who had more idiosyncratic eccentricities than eighteenth-century decorum would have allowed. Though these essayists were very differently circumstanced from the Romantic poets who were their friends—paid by the page and writing to a deadline, for a start—their works thus parallel the poets' in also turning toward the subjective. One consequence of the essayists' cultivation of intimacy and preference for the impressionistic over the

systematic is that, when we track the history of prose to the 1820s, we see it end up in a place very different from the one it occupies at the start of the Romantic period. Participants in the Revolution controversy of the 1790s had claimed to speak for all England. By the close of the period the achievement of the familiar essay was to have brought the medium of prose within the category of "the literary"—but by distancing it from public life.

Drama

Whether the plays composed during the Romantic period can qualify as literature has been, by contrast, more of a puzzle. England throughout this period had a vibrant theatrical culture. Theater criticism, practiced with flair by Hazlitt and Lamb, emerged as a new prose genre; actors like Sarah Siddons and Edmund Kean numbered the poets among their admirers and found their way into Romantic poetry; Mary Robinson was known as an actor before she was known as an author. But there were many restrictions limiting what could be staged in England and many calls for reform. As places where crowds gathered, theaters were always closely watched by suspicious government officials. The English had habitually extolled their theater as a site of social mixing—a mirror to the political order in that it supplied all the classes in the nation (those who, depending on how their tickets were priced, frequented the box, the pit, or the gallery) with another sort of representative assembly. But during this era *dis*order seemed the rule: riots broke out at Covent Garden in 1792 and 1809. The link between drama and disorder was one reason that new dramas had to meet the approval of a censor before they could be performed, a rule in place since 1737. Another restriction was that only the theaters royal (in London, Drury Lane, and Covent Garden) had the legal right to produce "legitimate" (spoken word) drama, leaving the other stages limited to entertainments—pantomimes and melodramas mainly—in which dialogue was by regulation always combined with music. An evening's entertainment focused on legitimate drama would not have been so different. The stages and auditoriums of the two theaters royal were huge spaces, which

encouraged their managers to favor grandiose spectacles or, more precisely, multimedia experiences, involving musicians, dancers, and artists who designed scenery, besides players and playwrights.

This theatrical culture's demotion of *words* might explain why the poets of the era, however stage-struck, found drama uncongenial. Nonetheless, almost all tried their hands at the form, tempted by the knowledge that the plays of certain of their (now less esteemed) contemporaries—Hannah Cowley and Charles Maturin, for example—had met with immense acclaim. Some of the poets' plays were composed to be read rather than performed: "closet dramas," such as Byron's *Manfred*, Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, and most of Joanna Baillie's *Plays on the Passions*, permitted experimentation with topic and form. Others were written expressly for the stage, but their authors were hampered by their inexperience and tendency, exacerbated by the censorship that encouraged them to seek safe subject matter in the past, to imitate the style of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. There were exceptions to this discouraging record. Coleridge's tragedy *Remorse*, for instance, was a minor hit and ran for twenty nights in 1813. Despite his reputation for ethereal lyrics, the most capable dramatist among the poets was, surprisingly, Percy Shelley. His powerful tragedy *The Cenci* (1820), the story of a monstrous father who rapes his daughter and is murdered by her in turn, was deemed unstageable on political rather than artistic or technical grounds. It had no chance of getting by the Examiner of Plays; indeed, by thematizing the unspeakable topic of incest, Shelley predicted his own censoring.

The Novel

Novels at the start of the Romantic period were immensely popular but—as far as critics and some of the form's half-ashamed practitioners were concerned—not quite respectable. Loose in structure, they seemed to require fewer skills than other literary genres. This genre lacked the classic pedigree claimed by poetry and drama. It attracted (or so detractors declared) an undue proportion of readers who were women, and who, by consuming its escapist

stories of romantic love, risked developing false ideas of life. It likewise attracted (so some of these same critics complained) too many *writers* who were women. (By the 1780s women were publishing as many novels as men.) Because of its popularity, the form also focused commentators' anxieties about the expansion of the book market and commercialization of literature: hence late-eighteenth-century reviewers of new novels often sarcastically described them as mass-produced commodities, not authored exactly, but instead stamped out automatically in "novel-mills." Matters changed decisively, however, starting around 1814. Reviews of Scott's *Waverley* series of historical novels and then a review that Scott wrote of Austen's *Emma* declared a renaissance—"a new style of novel." By this time, too, the genre had its historians, who delineated the novel's origins and rise and in this manner established its particularity against the more reputable literary forms. It was having a canon created for it too; figures like Barbauld and Scott compiled and introduced collections of the best novels. So equipped, the novel began to endanger poetry's long-held monopoly on literary prestige.

There had in fact been earlier signs of these new ambitions for the genre, although reviewers did not then know what to make of them. The last decade of the eighteenth century saw bold experiments with novels' form and subject matter—in particular, new ways of linking fiction with philosophy and history. Rather than, as one reviewer put it, contentedly remaining in a "region of their own," some novels showed signs of having designs on the real world. The writers now known as the Jacobin novelists used the form to test political theories and represent the political upheavals of the age. Thus in *Caleb Williams, or, Things as They Are*, William Godwin (husband of Mary Wollstonecraft, father of Mary Shelley) set out, he said, to "write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he had read it, shall ever be exactly the same": the result was a chilling novel of surveillance and entrapment in which a servant recounts the persecutions he suffers at the hands of the master whose secret past he has detected. (The disturbing cat-and-mouse game between the two gets rewritten two decades

later as the conclusion to *Frankenstein*, a novel that, among many other things, represents Shelley's tribute to the philosophical fictions of her parents.) Loyalists attacked the Jacobins with their own weapons and, in making novels their ammunition, contributed in turn to enhancing the genre's cultural presence.

Another innovation in novel writing took shape, strangely enough, as a recovery of what was old. Writers whom we now describe as the Gothic novelists revisited the romance, the genre identified as the primitive forerunner of the modern novel, looking to a medieval (that is, "Gothic") Europe that they pictured as a place of gloomy castles, devious Catholic monks, and stealthy ghosts. These authors—first Walpole, followed by Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, Matthew Lewis, and the hugely popular Ann Radcliffe—developed for the novel a repertory of settings and story lines meant to purvey to readers the pleasurable terror of regression to a premodern, prerational state. This Gothic turn was another instance of the period's "romance revival," another variation on the effort to renew the literature of the present by reworking the past. Gothic fiction was thus promoted in terms running parallel to those in accounts of the powers of poetry: when novels break with humdrum reality, Barbauld explained, "our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers."

Possibly this "new world" was meant to supply Romantic-period readers with an escape route from the present and from what Godwin called "things as they are." Certainly, the pasts that Gothic novelists conjure up are conceived of in fanciful, freewheeling ways; it is comical just how often a Radcliffe heroine who is supposed to inhabit sixteenth-century France can act like a proper English girl on the marriage market in the 1790s. But even that example of anachronism might suggest that some Gothic novelists were inviting readers to assess their stories as engaging the questions of the day. Gothic horrors gave many writers a language in which to examine the nature of power—the elements of sadism and masochism in the relations between men and women, for instance. And frequently the Gothic novelists probe the very ideas of historical accuracy and

legitimacy that critics use against them, and meditate on who is authorized to tell the story of the past and who is not.

The Novel. Illustration by James Northcote of a scene in William Hayley's didactic poem *The Triumphs of Temper* (1781): the heroine's maiden aunt has just caught her in possession of a novel and seized the book as "filthy trash"—while secretly intending to keep it for herself.

The ascendancy of the novel in the early nineteenth century is in many ways a function of fiction writers' new self-consciousness about their relation to works of history. By 1814 the novelist and historian

encroached on each other's territory more than ever. This was not exactly because nineteenth-century novelists were renewing their commitment to probability and realism (although, defining themselves against the critically reviled Gothic novelists, many were) but rather because the nature of things historical was also being reinvented. In light of the French Revolution, history's traditional emphasis on public affairs and great men had begun to give way to an emphasis on beliefs, customs, everyday habits—the approach we now identify with social history. Novelists pursued similar interests: in works like *Castle Rackrent*, Maria Edgeworth, for instance, provides an almost anthropological account of the way of life of a bygone Ireland. The only novelist before Scott whom the influential *Edinburgh Review* took seriously, Edgeworth builds into her "national tales" details about local practices that demonstrate how people's ways of seeing are rooted in the particularities of their native places. Scott learned from her, incorporating her regionalism into his new style of historical novels, in which, with deeply moving results, he also portrayed the past as a place of adventure, pageantry, and grandeur.

Scott and Edgeworth establish the master theme of the early-nineteenth-century novel: the question of how the individual consciousness intermeshes with larger social structures, of how far character is the product of history and how far it is not. Jane Austen's brilliance as a satirist of the English leisure class often prompts literary historians to compare her works to witty Restoration and eighteenth-century comedies. But she too helped bring this theme to the forefront of novel writing, devising new ways of articulating the relationship between the psychological history of the individual and the history of society and, with unsurpassed psychological insight, creating unforgettable heroines who live in time and change. As with other Romantics, Austen's topic is revolution—revolutions of the mind. The momentous event in her fictions, which resemble Wordsworth's poetry in finding out the extraordinary in the everyday, is the change of mind that creates the possibility of love. Contrasting his own "big bow-wow strain" with Austen's nuance, Scott wrote that Austen "had a talent for describing

the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with." Nineteenth-century reviewers of his triumphant *Waverley* series were certain that Scott's example foretold the future of novel writing. He, however, recognized the extent to which Austen had also changed the genre in which she worked, by developing a new novelistic language for the workings of the mind in flux.

The Romantic Period

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1773 Anna Letitia Aikin (later Barbauld), *Poems*	**1773** East India Act brings large portions of the Indian subcontinent under British government control
1774 J. W. von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*	
	1775 American War of Independence (1775–83)
1776 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*	
1778 Frances Burney, *Evelina*	
1779 Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets* (1779–81)	
	1780 Gordon Riots in London

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1781 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason.* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions.* J. C. Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers*	
	1783 William Pitt becomes prime minister (serving until 1801 and again in 1804–06)
1784 Charlotte Smith, *Elegiac Sonnets*	**1784** Death of Samuel Johnson. Warren Hastings and Sir William Jones found the Asiatic Society in Calcutta
1785 William Cowper, *The Task*	
1786 William Beckford, *Vathek.* Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*	
	1787 W. A. Mozart, *Don Giovanni.* Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade founded

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1789 Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation.* William Blake, *Songs of Innocence*	**1789** Fall of the Bastille (beginning of the French Revolution)
1790 Joanna Baillie, *Poems.* Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*	**1790** J. M. W. Turner first exhibits at the Royal Academy
1791 William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye.* Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man.* Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*	**1791** Revolution in St.-Domingue (modern Haiti)
1792 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*	**1792** September Massacres in Paris. First gas lights in Britain
1793 William Godwin, *Political Justice*	**1793** Execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. France declares war against Britain (and then Britain against France). The Reign of Terror

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1794 Blake, *Songs of Experience.* Godwin, *Caleb Williams.* Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*	**1794** The fall of Robespierre. Trials for high treason of members of the London Corresponding Society
	1795 Pitt's Gagging Acts suppress freedom of speech and assembly in Britain
1796 Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk*	
	1797 Mary Wollstonecraft dies from complications of childbirth
1798 Baillie, *Plays on the Passions,* vol. 1. Bentham, *Political Economy.* Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population.* William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*	**1798** Rebellion in Ireland
1800 Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent.* Mary Robinson, *Lyrical Tales*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1801 Parliamentary Union of Ireland and Great Britain
1802–03 Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*	**1802** Treaty of Amiens. *Edinburgh Review* founded. John Constable first exhibits at the Royal Academy
	1804 Napoleon crowned emperor. Founding of the republic of Haiti
1805 Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*	**1805** The French fleet defeated by the British at Trafalgar
1807 Wordsworth, *Poems in Two Volumes.* Charlotte Smith, *Beachy Head*	**1807** Abolition of the slave trade
1808 Goethe, *Faust*, part I	**1808** Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphonies 5 and 6
	1809 *Quarterly Review* founded

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1811 Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*	**1811** The Prince of Wales becomes regent for George III, who is declared incurably insane
1812 Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, cantos 1 and 2. Felicia Hemans, *The Domestic Affections*. Barbauld, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*	**1812** War between Britain and the United States (1812–15)
1813 Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. Byron, *The Giaour*	**1813** Renewal of charter of East India Company, with "pious clause," authorizing missionary activity on the Indian subcontinent
1814 Scott, *Waverley.* Wordsworth, *The Excursion*	
	1815 Napoleon defeated at Waterloo. Corn Laws passed, protecting economic interests of the landed aristocracy
1816 Byron, *Childe Harold*, cantos 3 and 4. Coleridge,	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
Christabel, "Kubla Khan." Percy Shelley, *Alastor*	
1817 Byron, *Manfred.* Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* and *Sibylline Leaves.* John Keats, *Poems*	**1817** *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* founded. Death of Princess Charlotte. Death of Jane Austen
1818 Austen, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey.* Keats, *Endymion.* Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey.* Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*	
1819 Byron, *Don Juan*, cantos I and II. Percy Shelley, *The Mask of Anarchy*	**1819** "Peterloo Massacre" in Manchester
1820 John Clare, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life.* Keats, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems.* Percy Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*	**1820** Death of George III; accession of George IV. *London Magazine* founded
1821 Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.* Percy Shelley,	**1821** Deaths of Keats in Rome and Napoleon at St. Helena

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
Adonais. Clare, *The Village Minstrel*	
	1822 Franz Schubert, Unfinished Symphony. Death of Percy Shelley in the Bay of Spezia, near Lerici, Italy
1823 Charles Lamb, *Essays of Elia*	
1824 Letitia Landon, *The Improvisatrice*	**1824** Death of Byron in Missolonghi
1825 William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*	
1826 Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*	
1827 Clare, *The Shepherd's Calendar*	
1827 Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, *Poems*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1828 Hemans, *Records of Woman*	**1828** Parliamentary repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts excluding Dissenters from state offices
	1829 Catholic Emancipation
1830 Charles Lyell, *Principles of Geology* (1830–33). Alfred Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*	**1830** Death of George IV; accession of William IV. Revolution in France
	1832 First Reform Bill
1835 Clare, *The Rural Muse*	

Balladry and Ballad Revivals

Through the eighteenth century many commentators (Joseph Addison in his *Spectator* essays of 1711 most famously) proposed that polished modern poetry might not hold its own when compared to "darling songs of the common people" such as "The Children in the Wood" or "Chevy Chase." By the end of the century authors and scholars not only haunted the city streets where Addison had encountered itinerant ballad singers hawking the crudely printed broadsides that contained those songs, hunting for the "majestic simplicity" that Addison had celebrated, they also headed to remote, undeveloped parts of Britain and to the border regions between the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands and between Scotland and England especially. They made a systematic effort to write down and then put into print the words to the tunes and chants they heard there. These were the stages by which literary culture began to engage, sometimes squeamishly, with an oral culture associated with sensational stories (of infanticide, bloody feuds, supernatural events, illicit sex) and with illiterate and barely literate people—the unnamed shepherds and old servant women, for instance, who served as the sources for Sir Walter Scott's ballad collection *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–03).

Through popular ballads, these collectors sought an alternative to the refinement and elegance that were supposed to regulate eighteenth-century literary culture. In the people who remembered and performed them, they hoped to encounter living relics of a lost past, closer to nature than modern times: a hope that made Romantic-period ballad scholarship a dry run for the discipline of folklore that would come onto the scene at the nineteenth century's end. It was "in the first ages of society," the professor of Rhetoric at Edinburgh University Hugh Blair declared in 1765, that poetry was "most glowing and animated." Ballad revivals seemed a way to

recover the primal energies that poetry was thought to have lost as a consequence of Enlightenment, the standardization of the English language, and the triumph of good taste.

Ballads are tricky to locate historically. This is because these narrative poems have a complicated relationship to authorship. Those who sing or recite them invariably change, even recompose, them, and, accordingly, when one speaks of "Sir Patrick Spens," one is actually speaking of a number of poems telling the same story in different words. In different localities, different versions will prevail. Early editions of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* presented ballads as belonging to medieval literature. This presentation registered the impact of theories, like the one that Thomas Percy elaborated as the compiler of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), that proposed that the songs sung by eighteenth-century balladeers actually represented the corrupted remnants of a romantic literature of the Middle Ages. Ballads, Percy and his followers insisted, were originally the works of court minstrels who enjoyed a social centrality denied to modern poets; balladry decisively predated the commercial networks established with the advent of print technology. Scholars nowadays place the origin of much of the ballad canon later, from the seventeenth century on, and they believe print has played a larger part in the transmission of oral culture across time than eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collectors were willing to accept.

Arranging for ballads to head up the Romantic period, as this edition does, is a way to acknowledge how generative balladry was for Romantic poetics. It fueled the interest that many Romantic poets took in the sound effects that might reconnect printed poetry to the living voice. It prompted the sort of experimentation with genres that Wordsworth and Coleridge signaled with their title *Lyrical Ballads*. It also fueled the primitivism of the period: authors' and readers' nostalgia for a lost world shaped by the immediate contact between singers and their auditors, and not by the mediation of an impersonal market in printed books.

Their basis in song lends ballads their distinctive features: their regular meter and use of refrain and repetition; their characteristic stanzaic form ("ballad stanzas" are quatrains of alternating four-beat and three-beat lines, with a rhyme scheme abcb). As Addison recognized, the stark simplicity of the ballads helps them take hold of their audience's imaginations. They haunt us—and continue to be performed by modern musicians—not just because of their tunes but also because these pared-down narratives enigmatically refuse to elaborate on the dramatic incidents at their centers.

Though the spelling has been modernized, the texts we give here as examples of ballads are based on those provided in books that Romantic authors would have read. Near the end of the nineteenth century, Francis James Child synthesized the work of previous ballad scholars in his comprehensive and still-standard collection *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1888–92); the numbers under which Child lists these ballads are provided in the notes.

Lord Randall[1]

"O where ha'e ye been, Lord Randall my son?
O where ha'e ye been, my handsome young man?"
"I ha'e been to the wild wood: mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain° wald° lie down."

"Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randall my son?
Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?"
"I dined wi' my true love: mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

"What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randall my son?
What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?"
"I gat eels boiled in broo:° mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting and fain wald lie down."

"What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randall my son?
What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?"
"O they swelled and they died: mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting and fain wald lie down."

"O I fear ye are poisoned, Lord Randall my son!
O I fear ye are poisoned, my handsome young man!"

"Oh yes, I am poisoned: mother, make my bed
soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wald lie down."

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Child, no. 12D. From Scott's *Minstrelsy* (1803).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *gladly* Return to reference °
- °: *would*Return to reference °
- °: *broth*Return to reference °

Bonny Barbara Allan[1]

It was in and about the Martinmas° time,
When the green leaves were a-fallin’;
That Sir John Graeme in the West Country
Fell in love with Barbara Allan.

He sent his man down through the town
To the place where she was dwellin’:
“O haste and come to my master dear,
Gin° ye be Barbara Allan.”

O hooly,° hooly rase° she up,
To the place where he was lyin’,
And when she drew the curtain by:
“Young man, I think you’re dyin’.”

“O it’s I’m sick, and very, very sick,
And ’tis a’ for Barbara Allan.”
“O the better for me ye sal° never be,
Though your heart’s blood were a-spillin’.

“O dinna ye mind,[2] young man,” said she,
“When ye the cups were fillin’,
That ye made the healths gae° round and round,
And slighted Barbara Allan?”

He turned his face unto the wall,
And death with him was dealin’:
“Adieu, adieu, my dear friends all,
And be kind to Barbara Allan.”

And slowly, slowly, rase she up,

And slowly, slowly left him;
And sighing said she could not stay,
Since death of life had reft° him.

She had not gane° a mile but twa,°
When she heard the dead-bell knellin',
And every jow° that the dead-bell ga'ed°
It cried, "Woe to Barbara Allan!"

"O mother, mother, make my bed,
O make it soft and narrow:
Since my love died for me today,
I'll die for him tomorrow."

Endnotes

- Note 1: Child, no. 84A. From Allan Ramsay's *The Tea-Table Miscellany; or ... choice songs, Scots and English* (10th ed., 1740). In 1666 the diarist Samuel Pepys, whose collection of broadside ballads is preserved at Magdalene College, Cambridge University, reported the "perfect pleasure" with which he heard an actress sing "her little Scotch song of Barbary Allen."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Don't you remember.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *November 11*Return to reference °
- °: *if*Return to reference °
- °: *gently* Return to reference °
- °: *rose*Return to reference °
- °: *shall*Return to reference °
- °: *go*Return to reference °
- °: *deprived*Return to reference °
- °: *gone* Return to reference °

- °: *two*Return to reference °
- °: *stroke* Return to reference °
- °: *made*Return to reference °

The Wife of Usher's Well[1]

There lived a wife at Usher's Well,
And a wealthy wife was she;
She had three stout and stalwart sons,
And sent them o'er the sea.

They hadna' been a week from her,
A week but barely ane,[°]
When word came to the carlin[°] wife
That her three sons were gane.[°]

They hadna' been a week from her,
A week but barely three,
When word came to the carlin wife
That her sons she'd never see.

"I wish the wind may never cease
Nor fashes[°] in the flood,
Till my three sons come hame[°] to me,
In earthly flesh and blood."

It fell about the Martinmas,[°]
When nights are long and mirk,[°]
The carlin wife's three sons came hame,
And their hats were o' the birk.[2]

It neither grew in sike[°] nor ditch,
Nor yet in ony sheugh,[°]
But at the gates o' Paradise
That birk grew fair eneugh.

"Blow up the fire, my maidens,

Bring water from the well:
For a' my house shall feast this night,
Since my three sons are well."

And she has made to them a bed,
She's made it large and wide,
And she's ta'en her mantle her about,
Sat down at the bedside.

Up then crew the red, red cock,
And up and crew the gray.
The eldest to the youngest said,
" 'Tis time we were away."[3]

The cock he hadna' crawed but once,
And clapped his wings at a',
When the youngest to the eldest said,
"Brother, we must awa'.°

"The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,°
The channerin'° worm doth chide:
Gin° we be missed out o' our place,
A sair pain we maun bide.[4]

"Fare ye weel,° my mother dear,
Fareweel to barn and byre.°
And fare ye weel, the bonny lass
That kindles my mother's fire."

Endnotes

- Note 1: Child, no. 79A. From Scott's *Minstrelsy* (1802), which bases its text "on the recitation of an old woman" living in West Lothian, a rural district to the west of Edinburgh.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Birch. Those returning from the dead were thought to wear vegetation on their heads.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The dead must return to their graves at cock-crow.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A sore pain we must abide.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *one*Return to reference °
- °: *old*Return to reference °
- °: *gone*Return to reference °
- °: *disturbances*Return to reference °
- °: *home*Return to reference °
- °: *November 11*Return to reference °
- °: *dark*Return to reference °
- °: *field*Return to reference °
- °: *furrow*Return to reference °
- °: *away*Return to reference °
- °: *dawn*Return to reference °
- °: *fretting*Return to reference °
- °: *if*Return to reference °
- °: *well*Return to reference °
- °: *cow house*Return to reference °

The Three Ravens[1]

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Down a down, hay down, hay down
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
With a down
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as black as they might be,
With a down, derry, derry, derry, down, down.[2]

The one of them said to his mate,
"Where shall we our breakfast take?"

"Down in yonder green field
There lies a knight slain under his shield.

"His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So well they can their master keep.

"His hawks they fly so eagerly,°
There's no fowl° dare him come nigh."

Down there comes a fallow° doe,
As great with young as she might go.°

She lifted up his bloody head,
And kissed his wounds that were so red.

She got him up upon her back,
And carried him to earthen lake.°

She buried him before the prime;[3]
She was dead herself ere evensong time.

God send every gentleman
Such hawks, such hounds, and such a lemman.[°]

25

Endnotes

- Note 1: Child, no. 26A. The text is that of the first version to appear in print, in Thomas Ravenscroft's songbook *Melismata* (1611), reprinted in Joseph Ritson's *Ancient Songs* (1790).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The following stanzas take the same pattern with the repetition of the first line and the refrains.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The first hour of the morning.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *fiercely*Return to reference °
- °: *bird*Return to reference °
- °: *red-brown*Return to reference °
- °: *walk*Return to reference °
- °: *pit*Return to reference °
- °: *mistress*Return to reference °

Sir Patrick Spens[1]

The king sits in Dumferline town,
Drinking the blude-reid° wine:
"O whar will I get a guid sailor
To sail this ship of mine?"

Up and spak an eldern° knicht,
Sat at the king's richt knee:
"Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
That sails upon the sea."

The king has written a braid° letter
And signed it wi' his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick read,
A loud lauch° lauched he;
The next line that Sir Patrick read,
The tear blinded his ee.°

"O wha° is this has done this deed,
This ill deed done to me,
To send me out this time o' the year,
To sail upon the sea?

"Make haste, make haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid ship sails the morn."
"O say na° sae,° my master dear,
For I fear a deadly storm.

"Late late yestre'en I saw the new moon
Wi' the auld° moon in her arm,

And I fear, I fear, my dear master,
That we will come to harm."

O our Scots nobles were richt laith°
To weet° their cork-heeled shoon,°
But lang owre° a' the play were played
Their hats they swam aboon.°

O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi' their fans into their hand,
Or e'er they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land.

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi' their gold kembs° in their hair,
Waiting for their ain° dear lords,
For they'll see thame na mair.°

Half o'er,° half o'er to Aberdour
It's fifty fadom° deep,
And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi' the Scots lords at his feet.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Child, no. 58A. From Percy's *Reliques* (1765), where Percy declares himself sure that the ballad has a basis in history but fails to pinpoint just when "this fatal expedition happened that proved so destructive to the Scottish nobles." The version in Scott's *Minstrelsy* (1803) includes a stanza that describes Sir Patrick Spens's ship as bound for Norway, where Spens is to collect the daughter of the Norwegian king.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *bloodred* Return to reference °
- °: *ancient* Return to reference °
- °: *broad* Return to reference °
- °: *laugh* Return to reference °
- °: *eye* Return to reference °
- °: *who* Return to reference °
- °: *not* Return to reference °
- °: *so* Return to reference °
- °: *old* Return to reference °
- °: *loath* Return to reference °
- °: *wet* Return to reference °
- °: *shoes* Return to reference °
- °: *ere* Return to reference °
- °: *above* Return to reference °
- °: *combs* Return to reference °
- °: *own* Return to reference °
- °: *more* Return to reference °
- °: *halfway over* Return to reference °
- °: *fathoms* Return to reference °

The Dæmon-lover[1]

"O where have you been, my long, long love,
  This long seven years and mair?"
"O I'm come to seek my former vows,
  Ye granted me before."

"O hold your tongue of your former vows,
  For they will breed sad strife;
O hold your tongue of your former vows,
  For I am become a wife."

He turned him right and round about,
  And the tear blinded his e'e;°
"I wad never hae trodden on Irish ground,
  If it had not been for thee."

"I might hae had a king's daughter,
  Far, far beyond the sea;
I might have had a king's daughter,
  Had it not been for love o' thee."

"If ye might have had a king's daughter,
  Yer sel ye had to blame;
Ye might have taken the king's daughter,
  For ye kend° that I was nane."

"O faulse are the vows of womankind,
  But fair is their faulse bodie;
I never wad hae trodden on Irish ground,
  Had it not been for love o' thee."

"If I was to leave my husband dear,
  And my two babes also,

O what have you to take me to,
  If with you I should go?”

“I hae seven ships upon the sea,
  The eighth brought me to land;
With four-and-twenty bold mariners,
  And music on every hand.”

She has taken up her two little babes,
  Kissed them baith cheek and chin;
“O fair ye weel, my ain two babes,
  For I’ll never see you again.”

She set her foot upon the ship,
  No mariners could she behold;
But the sails were o’ the taffetie,
  And the masts o’ the beaten gold.

She had not sailed a league, a league,
  A league but barely three,
When dismal grew his countenance,
  And drumlie° grew his e’e.

The masts, that were like the beaten gold,
  Bent not on the heaving seas;
But the sails, that were o’ the taffetie,
  Fill’d not in the east land breeze.

They had not sail’d a league, a league,
  A league but barely three,
Until she espied his cloven foot,
  And she wept right bitterlie.

“O hold your tongue of your weeping,” says he,
  “Of your weeping now let me be;
I will shew you how the lilies grow
  On the banks of Italy.”

"O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,
That the sun shines sweetly on?"
"O yon are the hills of heaven," he said,
"Where you will never win."

"O whaten a mountain is yon," she said,
"All so dreary wi' frost and snow?"
"O yon is the mountain of hell," he cried,
"Where you and I will go."

And aye when she turn'd her round about,
Aye taller he seem'd for to be;
Until that the tops o' that gallant ship
Nae taller were than he.

The clouds grew dark, and the wind grew loud,
And the levin° fill'd her e'e;
And waesome wail'd the snaw-white sprites
Upon the gurlie° sea.

He struck the tap-mast wi' his hand,
The fore-mast wi' his knee;
And he brake that gallant ship in twain,
And sank her in the sea.

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Child, no. 243F. From Scott's *Minstrelsy* (5th ed., 1812), a ballad contributed by Scott's friend William Laidlaw, who took it down from the recitation of one Walter Grieve and also "improved" it with four stanzas (6, 12, 17, 18) of his own authoring: the authenticity that balladry promised was sometimes an object of fabrication. In the United States, this ballad has been handed

down with the title “The House Carpenter,” the trade of the husband whom the woman leaves behind.
Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *eye*Return to reference °
- °: *knew*Return to reference °
- °: *troubled*Return to reference °
- °: *lightning*Return to reference °
- °: *stormy*Return to reference °

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD
1743–1825

Anna Barbauld, born Anna Letitia Aikin, received an unusual education from her father, who was a minister and a teacher at the Warrington Academy in Lancashire, the great educational center for the Nonconformist community, whose religion barred them from admission to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. During the eighteenth century Dissenting academies such as Warrington had developed a modern curriculum in the natural sciences as well as in modern languages and English literature. This progressive educational program deviated significantly from the curriculum, scarcely altered since the sixteenth century, that was supplied by the old universities. The benefits Barbauld received from her exposure to an educational system that the Dissenters had designed with their sons in mind are suggested by the astounding versatility of her literary career.

She made her literary debut in 1773 with *Poems* and *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose*, the latter co-written with her brother John. The books immediately established her as a leading author. Her marriage the next year to Rochemont Barbauld, a Dissenting minister like her father, and their decision to set up a boys' school together therefore struck the critic Samuel Johnson as squandering this woman's own unusual education: "Miss [Aikin] was an instance of early cultivation, but in what did it terminate?" Thereafter, until Rochemont Barbauld's increasing mental instability necessitated the

closing of their school, Barbauld divided her time between writing and teaching the younger boys. Because of the popularity of Barbauld's *Lessons for Children* (1778–79) and *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781), William Hazlitt was recording a common experience when he recalled that he read her books "before those of any other author . . . , when I was learning to spell words of one syllable." This writing for child audiences registered Barbauld's Enlightenment faith in human potential.

Her fame continued to grow in the 1790s, and in 1797 the up-and-coming poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge walked forty miles to meet her. During this decade Barbauld contributed poetry to her brother John's *Monthly Magazine*, published her "Epistle to William Wilberforce" attacking British involvement in the slave trade, and wrote pamphlets that opposed the war with France and campaigned for the repeal of the Test Acts that had barred participation in the public life of the nation to Nonconformists (those men who would not subscribe, as "tests" of their loyalty, to the thirty-nine Articles of the Established Church). She accompanied this writing with editing, producing editions of William Collins's poems (1797) and the novelist Samuel Richardson's letters (1804). Her fifty-volume compilation *The British Novelists* (1810) was the first attempt to establish a national canon in fiction and thereby do for the novel what Samuel Johnson's *Works of the English Poets* (1779–81) had done for poetry. Its introductory essay, "On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing," makes a pioneering argument for the educational and artistic value of the still disreputable genre.

Barbauld's last major work was *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812), a long poem that despairs over the war with France (then in its seventeenth year) and the corruption of English consumer society. (An excerpt may be found in "Romantic Literature and Wartime," on p. 755 of this volume.) Critics were unnerved, even disgusted, by the poem's apocalyptic vision of a future in which England, its pride humbled, would lie in ruins—the more so because of its author's gender. The Tory critic John Wilson Croker thus warned Barbauld "to desist from satire": it was not up to a "lady-

author" to sally forth from her knitting and say how "the empire might . . . be saved." Despite this abuse, Barbauld did not stop writing. She continued, as had long been her practice, to circulate work in manuscript and published a few poems in magazines. The posthumous collection of Barbauld's *Works* that her niece Lucy Aikin brought out in 1825 contained several previously unpublished pieces.

A Summer Evening's Meditation[1]

'Tis past! The sultry tyrant of the south
Has spent his short-lived rage; more grateful° hours
Move silent on; the skies no more repel
The dazzled sight, but with mild maiden beams
Of tempered lustre court the cherished eye
To wander o'er their sphere; where, hung aloft,
Dian's bright crescent, like a silver bow
New strung in heaven, lifts high its beamy horns
Impatient for the night, and seems to push
Her brother° down the sky. Fair Venus shines
Even in the eye of day; with sweetest beam
Propitious shines, and shakes a trembling flood
Of softened radiance from her dewy locks.
The shadows spread apace; while meekened[2] Eve,
Her cheek yet warm with blushes, slow retires
Through the Hesperian gardens of the west,
And shuts the gates of day. 'Tis now the hour
When Contemplation from her sunless haunts,
The cool damp grotto, or the lonely depth
Of unpierced woods, where wrapt in solid shade
She mused away the gaudy hours of noon,
And fed on thoughts unripened by the sun,
Moves forward; and with radiant finger points
To yon blue concave swelled by breath divine,
Where, one by one, the living eyes of heaven
Awake, quick kindling o'er the face of ether
One boundless blaze; ten thousand trembling fires,
And dancing lustres, where the unsteady eye,
Restless and dazzled, wanders unconfined
O'er all this field of glories; spacious field,

And worthy of the Master: he, whose hand
With hieroglyphics elder than the Nile
Inscribed the mystic tablet, hung on high
To public gaze, and said, "Adore, O man!
The finger of thy God." From what pure wells
Of milky light, what soft o'erflowing urn,
Are all these lamps so fill'd? these friendly lamps,
For ever streaming o'er the azure deep
To point our path, and light us to our home.
How soft they slide along their lucid spheres!
And silent as the foot of Time, fulfill
Their destined courses: Nature's self is hushed,
And, but° a scattered leaf, which rustles through
The thick-wove foliage, not a sound is heard
To break the midnight air; though the raised ear,
Intensely listening, drinks in every breath.
How deep the silence, yet how loud the praise!
But are they silent all? or is there not
A tongue in every star, that talks with man,
And woos him to be wise? nor woos in vain:
This dead of midnight is the noon of thought,
And Wisdom mounts her zenith with the stars.
At this still hour the self-collected soul
Turns inward, and beholds a stranger there
Of high descent, and more than mortal rank;
An embryo God; a spark of fire divine,
Which must burn on for ages, when the sun,—
Fair transitory creature of a day!—
Has closed his golden eye, and wrapt in shades
Forgets his wonted journey through the east.

Ye citadels of light, and seats of Gods!
Perhaps my future home, from whence the soul,
Revolving° periods past, may oft look back
With recollected tenderness on all
The various busy scenes she left below,

Its deep-laid projects and its strange events,
As on some fond and doting tale that soothed
Her infant hours—O be it lawful now
To tread the hallowed circle of your courts,
And with mute wonder and delighted awe
Approach your burning confines. Seized in thought,
On Fancy's wild and roving wing I sail,
From the green borders of the peopled Earth,
And the pale Moon, her duteous fair attendant;
From solitary Mars; from the vast orb
Of Jupiter, whose huge gigantic bulk
Dances in ether like the lightest leaf;
To the dim verge, the suburbs of the system,
Where cheerless Saturn[3] 'midst his watery moons
Girt with a lucid zone,° in gloomy pomp,
Sits like an exiled monarch: fearless thence
I launch into the trackless deeps of space,
Where, burning round, ten thousand suns appear,
Of elder beam, which ask no leave to shine
Of our terrestrial star, nor borrow light
From the proud regent of our scanty day;
Sons of the morning, first-born of creation,
And only less than Him who marks their track,
And guides their fiery wheels. Here must I stop,
Or is there aught beyond? What hand unseen
Impels me onward through the glowing orbs
Of habitable nature, far remote,
To the dread confines of eternal night,
To solitudes of vast unpeopled space,
The deserts of creation, wide and wild;
Where embryo systems and unkindled suns
Sleep in the womb of chaos? fancy droops,
And thought astonished stops her bold career.
But O thou mighty mind! whose powerful word
Said, thus let all things be, and thus they were,[4]

Where shall I seek thy presence? how unblamed
Invoke thy dread perfection?
Have the broad eyelids of the morn beheld thee?
Or does the beamy shoulder of Orion
Support thy throne? O look with pity down
On erring, guilty man! not in thy names
Of terror clad; not with those thunders armed
That conscious Sinai felt, when fear appalled
The scattered tribes;[5]—thou hast a gentler voice,
That whispers comfort to the swelling heart,
Abashed, yet longing to behold her Maker.

But now my soul, unused to stretch her powers
In flight so daring, drops her weary wing,
And seeks again the known accustomed spot,
Drest up with sun, and shade, and lawns, and streams,
A mansion fair, and spacious for its guest,
And full replete with wonders. Let me here,
Content and grateful, wait the appointed time,
And ripen for the skies: the hour will come
When all these splendours bursting on my sight
Shall stand unveiled, and to my ravished sense
Unlock the glories of the world unknown.

1773

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem looks backward to poems such as William Collins's "Ode to Evening" (1748), Anne Finch's "A Nocturnal Reverie" (1713), and even to Milton's description in book 2 of *Paradise Lost* of Satan's daring navigation of the realm of Chaos. At the same time Barbauld's excursion-and-return structure anticipates the high flights (and returns) of later lyrics by Coleridge, Percy

Shelley, and Keats. But her account of the journey, with its references to Diana's crescent (line 7) and Venus's sweetest beams (10 and 11) is *differently* gendered: this soul that launches "into the trackless deeps" (82) is clearly female. Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Softened, made meek.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Saturn marked the outmost bounds of the solar system until the discovery of Uranus in 1781.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An echo of Genesis 1:3.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: When God came down to deliver the Ten Commandments "there were thunders and lightnings . . . so that all the people . . . trembled" (Exodus 19:16).Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *pleasing*Return to reference °
- °: *Apollo*Return to reference °
- °: *except for*Return to reference °
- °: *meditating on*Return to reference °
- °: *belt*Return to reference °

Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq., on the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade[1]

Cease, Wilberforce, to urge thy generous aim!
Thy Country knows the sin, and stands the shame!
The Preacher, Poet, Senator in vain
Has rattled in her sight the Negro's chain;
With his deep groans assail'd her startled ear,
And rent the veil that hid his constant tear;
Forc'd her averted eyes his stripes to scan,
Beneath the bloody scourge laid bare the man,
Claim'd Pity's tear, urg'd Conscience' strong control,
And flash'd conviction on her shrinking soul.
The Muse too, soon awak'd, with ready tongue
At Mercy's shrine applausive° paeans rung;
And Freedom's eager sons, in vain foretold
A new Astrean reign,° an age of gold:
She knows and she persists—Still Afric bleeds,
Uncheck'd, the human traffic still proceeds;
She stamps her infamy to future time,
And on her harden'd forehead seals the crime.
  In vain, to thy white standard gathering round,
Wit, Worth, and Parts and Eloquence are found:
In vain, to push to birth thy great design,
Contending chiefs, and hostile virtues join;
All, from conflicting ranks, of power possest
To rouse, to melt, or to inform the breast.
Where seasoned tools of Avarice prevail,
A Nation's eloquence, combined, must fail:
Each flimsy sophistry by turns they try;
The plausive° argument, the daring lie,

The artful gloss, that moral sense confounds,
Th’ acknowledged thirst of gain that honour wounds:
Bane of ingenuous minds, th’ unfeeling sneer,
Which, sudden, turns to stone the falling tear:
They search assiduous, with inverted skill,
For forms of wrong, and precedents of ill;
With impious mockery wrest the sacred page,
And glean up crimes from each remoter age:
Wrung Nature’s tortures, shuddering, while you tell,
From scoffing fiends bursts forth the laugh of hell;
In Britain’s senate, Misery’s pangs give birth
To jests unseemly, and to horrid mirth—
Forbear!—thy virtues but provoke our doom,
And swell th’ account of vengeance yet to come;
For, not unmark’d in Heaven’s impartial plan,
Shall man, proud worm, contemn his fellow-man?
And injur’d Afric, by herself redrest,
Darts her own serpents at her Tyrant’s breast.
Each vice, to minds deprav’d by bondage known,
With sure contagion fastens on his own;
In sickly languors melts his nerveless frame,
And blows to rage impetuous Passion’s flame:
Fermenting swift, the fiery venom gains
The milky innocence of infant veins;
There swells the stubborn will, damps learning’s fire,
The whirlwind wakes of uncontrol’d desire,
Sears the young heart to images of woe,
And blasts the buds of Virtue as they blow.°
Lo! where reclin’d, pale Beauty courts the breeze,
Diffus’d on sofas of voluptuous ease;
With anxious awe, her menial train around,
Catch her faint whispers of half-utter’d sound;
See her, in monstrous fellowship, unite
At once the Scythian, and the Sybarite;[2]
Blending repugnant vices, misallied,

Which *frugal* nature purpos'd to divide;
See her, with indolence to fierceness join'd,
Of body delicate, infirm of mind,
With languid tones imperious mandates urge;
With arm recumbent wield the household scourge;
And with unruffled mien, and placid sounds,
Contriving torture, and inflicting wounds.
  Nor, in their palmy walks and spicy groves,
The form benign of rural Pleasure roves;
No milk-maid's song, or hum of village talk,
Sooths the lone Poet in his evening walk:
No willing arm the flail unwearied plies,
Where the mix'd sounds of cheerful labour rise;
No blooming maids and frolic swains are seen
To pay gay homage to their harvest queen:
No heart-expanding scenes their eyes must prove
Of thriving industry, and faithful love:
But shrieks and yells disturb the balmy air,
Dumb sullen looks of woe announce despair,
And angry eyes through dusky features glare.
Far from the sounding lash the Muses fly,
And sensual riot drowns each finer joy.
  Nor less from the gay East, on essenc'd wings,
Breathing unnam'd perfumes, Contagion springs;
The soft luxurious plague alike pervades
The marble palaces, and rural shades;
Hence, throng'd Augusta° builds her rosy bowers,
And decks in summer wreaths her smoky towers;
And hence, in summer bow'rs, Art's costly hand
Pours courtly splendours o'er the dazzled land:
The manners melt—One undistinguish'd blaze
O'erwhelms the sober pomp of elder days;
Corruption follows with gigantic stride,
And scarce vouchsafes his shameless front to hide:
The spreading leprosy taints ev'ry part,
Infects each limb, and sickens at the heart.

Simplicity! most dear of rural maids,
Weeping resigns her violated shades:
Stern Independance from his glebe° retires,
And anxious Freedom eyes her drooping fires;
By foreign wealth are British morals chang'd,
And Afric's sons, and India's, smile aveng'd.
  For you, whose temper'd ardour long has borne
Untir'd the labour, and unmov'd the scorn;
In Virtue's fasti° be inscrib'd your fame,
And utter'd yours with Howard's honour'd name,[3]
Friends of the friendless—Hail, ye generous band!
Whose efforts yet arrest Heav'n's lifted hand,
Around whose steady brows, in union bright,
The civic wreath, and Christian's palm unite:
Your merit stands, no greater and no less,
Without, or with the varnish of success;
But seek no more to break a Nation's fall,
For ye have sav'd yourselves—and that is all.
Succeeding times your struggles, and their fate,
With mingled shame and triumph shall relate,
While faithful History, in her various page,
Marking the features of this motley age,
To shed a glory, and to fix a stain,
Tells how you strove, and that you strove in vain.

1791

Endnotes

- Note 1: On April 18, 1791, the politician and humanitarian Wilberforce (1759–1833) presented a motion in the House of Commons to abolish the slave trade. The motion was rejected a day later by a vote of 163 to 88. Sixteen years passed before the trade was outlawed in the British West Indies (1807), and

another twenty-six before slavery itself was abolished (1833).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, the contraries of pastoral wildness and effeminate voluptuousness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: John Howard (1726–1790), philanthropist and prison and public health reformer.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *approving*Return to reference °
- °: *reign of justice*Return to reference °
- °: *false*Return to reference °
- °: *bloom*Return to reference °
- °: *London*Return to reference °
- °: *cultivated land*Return to reference °
- °: *records*Return to reference °

The Rights of Woman[1]

Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
Woman! too long degraded, scorned, opprest;
O born to rule in partial° Law's despite,
Resume thy native empire o'er the breast!

Go forth arrayed in panoply° divine;
That angel pureness which admits no stain;
Go, bid proud Man his boasted rule resign,
And kiss the golden sceptre of thy reign.

Go, gird thyself with grace; collect thy store
Of bright artillery glancing from afar;
Soft melting tones thy thundering cannon's roar,
Blushes and fears thy magazine° of war.

Thy rights are empire: urge no meaner claim,—
Felt, not defined, and if debated, lost;
Like sacred mysteries, which withheld from fame,
Shunning discussion, are revered the most.

Try all that wit and art suggest to bend
Of thy imperial foe the stubborn knee;
Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend;
Thou mayst command, but never canst be free.

Awe the licentious, and restrain the rude;
Soften the sullen, clear the cloudy brow:
Be, more than princes' gifts, thy favours sued;—
She hazards all, who will the least allow.

But hope not, courted idol of mankind,
On this proud eminence secure to stay;

Subduing and subdued, thou soon shalt find
Thy coldness soften, and thy pride give way.

Then, then, abandon each ambitious thought,
Conquest or rule thy heart shall feebly move,
In Nature's school, by her soft maxims taught,
That separate rights are lost in mutual love.

ca. 1792–95 1825

Endnotes

- Note 1: A response—seemingly favorable until the last two stanzas—to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). In chapter 4 of *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft had singled out Barbauld's poem "To a Lady with Some Painted Flowers" as evidence that even women of sense were capable of adopting the masculine-centered gender code that identified the feminine with the ornamental and the frivolous.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *biased*Return to reference °
- °: *suit of armor*Return to reference °
- °: *storehouse of arms*Return to reference °

To a Little Invisible Being Who Is Expected Soon to Become Visible

Germ of new life, whose powers expanding slow
For many a moon their full perfection wait,—
Haste, precious pledge of happy love, to go
Auspicious borne through life's mysterious gate.

What powers lie folded in thy curious frame,—
Senses from objects locked, and mind from thought!
How little canst thou guess thy lofty claim
To grasp at all the worlds the Almighty wrought!

And see, the genial season's warmth to share,
Fresh younglings° shoot, and opening roses glow!
Swarms of new life exulting fill the air,—
Haste, infant bud of being, haste to blow!°

For thee the nurse prepares her lulling songs,
The eager matrons count the lingering day;
But far the most thy anxious parent longs
On thy soft cheek a mother's kiss to lay.

She only asks to lay her burden down,
That her glad arms that burden may resume;
And nature's sharpest pangs her wishes crown,
That free thee living from thy living tomb.

She longs to fold to her maternal breast
Part of herself, yet to herself unknown;
To see and to salute the stranger guest,
Fed with her life through many a tedious moon.

Come, reap thy rich inheritance of love!
Bask in the fondness of a Mother's eye!
Nor wit nor eloquence her heart shall move
Like the first accents of thy feeble cry.

Haste, little captive, burst thy prison doors!
Launch on the living world, and spring to light!
Nature for thee displays her various stores,
Opens her thousand inlets of delight.

If charmed verse or muttered prayers had power,
With favouring spells to speed thee on thy way,
Anxious I'd bid my beads° each passing hour,
Till thy wished smile thy mother's pangs o'erpay.°

ca. 1795? 1825

Notes

- °: *young plants*Return to reference °
- °: *bloom*Return to reference °
- °: *offer a prayer*Return to reference °
- °: *more than compensate*Return to reference °

Inscription for an Ice-House[1]

Stranger, approach! within this iron door
Thrice locked and bolted, this rude arch beneath
That vaults with ponderous stone the cell; confined
By man, the great magician, who controuls
Fire, earth and air, and genii of the storm,
And bends the most remote and opposite things
To do him service and perform his will,—
A giant sits; stern Winter; here he piles,
While summer glows around, and southern gales
Dissolve the fainting world, his treasured snows
Within the rugged cave.—Stranger, approach!
He will not cramp thy limbs with sudden age,
Nor wither with his touch the coyest flower
That decks thy scented hair. Indignant hero,
Like fettered Sampson when his might was spent
In puny feats to glad the festive halls
Of Gaza's wealthy sons;[2] or he who sat
Midst laughing girls submiss, and patient twirled
The slender spindle in his sinewy grasp;[3]
The rugged power, fair Pleasure's minister,
Exerts his art to deck the genial board;°
Congeals the melting peach, the nectarine smooth,
Burnished and glowing from the sunny wall;
Darts sudden frost into the crimson veins
Of the moist berry; moulds the sugared hail;[4]
Cools with his icy breath our flowing cups;
Or gives to the fresh dairy's nectared bowls
A quicker zest. Sullen he plies his task,
And on his shaking fingers counts the weeks
Of lingering Summer, mindful of his hour

To rush in whirlwinds forth, and rule the year.

30

1795 1825

Endnotes

- Note 1: Predating the modern refrigerator by centuries, buildings called icehouses were fashionable additions to the grounds of 18th-century manor houses. The ice they stored, usually obtained in winter from nearby ponds or rivers, would be used during the summer to preserve food, chill drinks, or make ice cream. Barbauld's inscription was composed for the icehouse built by a family friend, the reform-minded member of Parliament William Smith.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Judges 16 the Israelite hero Sampson is captured by the Philistines following his betrayal by his wife, Delilah, who has cut his hair and robbed him of his strength. As Sampson's hair begins to grow back, he regains his powers, and his captors foolhardily arrange for him to entertain them in their temple with his feats of strength.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Barbauld refers to the episode in the adventures of Hercules in which the hero, in humiliating servitude under the queen of Lydia, puts down his weapons and assists Omphale and her waiting women with their spinning.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An echo of James Thomson's description in *The Seasons* (1743) of how the "grim tyrant," Winter, "arms his winds with all-subduing frost / Moulds his fierce hail, and treasures up his snows, / With which he now oppresses half the globe" (lines 898–901).Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *dining table*Return to reference °

Washing-Day

... and their voice,
Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
And whistles in its sound.[1]

The Muses are turned gossips; they have lost
The buskined° step, and clear high-sounding phrase,
Language of gods. Come then, domestic Muse,
In slipshod measure loosely prattling on
Of farm or orchard, pleasant curds and cream,
Or drowning flies, or shoe lost in the mire
By little whimpering boy, with rueful face;
Come, Muse; and sing the dreaded Washing-Day.
Ye who beneath the yoke of wedlock bend,
With bowed soul, full well ye ken° the day
Which week, smooth sliding after week, brings on
Too soon;—for to that day nor peace belongs
Nor comfort;—ere the first gray streak of dawn,
The red-armed washers come and chase repose.
Nor pleasant smile, nor quaint device of mirth,
E'er visited that day: the very cat,
From the wet kitchen scared, and reeking hearth,
Visits the parlour,—an unwonted° guest.
The silent breakfast-meal is soon dispatched;
Uninterrupted, save by anxious looks
Cast at the lowering sky, if sky should lower.
From that last evil, O preserve us, heavens!
For should the skies pour down, adieu to all
Remains of quiet: then expect to hear
Of sad disasters,—dirt and gravel stains
Hard to efface, and loaded lines at once

Snapped short,—and linen-horse° by dog thrown down,
And all the petty miseries of life.
Saints have been calm while stretched upon the rack,
And Guatimozin[2] smiled on burning coals;
But never yet did housewife notable
Greet with a smile a rainy washing-day.
—But grant the welkin° fair, require not thou
Who call'st thyself perchance the master there,
Or study swept or nicely dusted coat,
Or usual 'tendance;—ask not, indiscreet,
Thy stockings mended, though the yawning rents
Gape wide as Erebus;° nor hope to find
Some snug recess impervious: shouldst thou try
The 'customed garden walks, thine eye shall rue
The budding fragrance of thy tender shrubs,
Myrtle or rose, all crushed beneath the weight
Of coarse checked apron,—with impatient hand
Twitched off when showers impend: or crossing lines
Shall mar thy musings, as the wet cold sheet
Flaps in thy face abrupt. Woe to the friend
Whose evil stars have urged him forth to claim
On such a day the hospitable rites!
Looks, blank at best, and stinted courtesy,
Shall he receive. Vainly he feeds his hopes
With dinner of roast chicken, savoury pie,
Or tart or pudding:—pudding he nor tart
That day shall eat; nor, though the husband try,
Mending what can't be helped, to kindle mirth
From cheer deficient, shall his consort's brow
Clear up propitious:—the unlucky guest
In silence dines, and early slinks away.
I well remember, when a child, the awe
This day struck into me; for then the maids,

I scarce knew why, looked cross, and drove me from them;
Nor soft caress could I obtain, nor hope
Usual indulgencies; jelly or creams,
Relic of costly suppers, and set by
For me, their petted one; or buttered toast,
When butter was forbid; or thrilling tale
Of ghost or witch, or murder—so I went
And sheltered me beside the parlour fire:
There my dear grandmother, eldest of forms,
Tended the little ones, and watched from harm,
Anxiously fond, though oft her spectacles
With elfin cunning hid, and oft the pins
Drawn from her ravelled stocking, might have soured
One less indulgent.—
At intervals my mother's voice was heard,
Urging dispatch: briskly the work went on,
All hands employed to wash, to rinse, to wring,
To fold, and starch, and clap,° and iron, and plait.
Then would I sit me down, and ponder much
Why washings were. Sometimes through hollow bowl
Of pipe amused we blew, and sent aloft
The floating bubbles; little dreaming then
To see, Montgolfier,[3] thy silken ball
Ride buoyant through the clouds—so near approach
The sports of children and the toils of men.
Earth, air, and sky, and ocean, hath its bubbles,[4]
And verse is one of them—this most of all.

1797

Endnotes

- Note 1: Loosely quoted from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* 2.7.160–62.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The last Aztec emperor (Cuanhtémoc, d. 1525), who was tortured and executed by the Spanish conquistadors.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Brothers Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Étienne Montgolfier successfully launched the first hot-air balloon, at Annonay, France, in 1783.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 1.3.77: "The earth hath bubbles, as the water has."Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *tragic, elevated*Return to reference °
- °: *know*Return to reference °
- °: *unaccustomed*Return to reference °
- °: *drying rack*Return to reference °
- °: *sky*Return to reference °
- °: *the underworld*Return to reference °
- °: *flatten*Return to reference °

The Caterpillar

No, helpless thing, I cannot harm thee now;
Depart in peace, thy little life is safe,
For I have scanned thy form with curious eye,
Noted the silver line that streaks thy back,
The azure and the orange that divide
Thy velvet sides; thee, houseless wanderer,
My garment has enfolded, and my arm
Felt the light pressure of thy hairy feet;
Thou hast curled round my finger; from its tip,
Precipitous descent! with stretched out neck,
Bending thy head in airy vacancy,
This way and that, inquiring, thou hast seemed
To ask protection; now, I cannot kill thee.
Yet I have sworn perdition to thy race,
And recent from the slaughter am I come
Of tribes and embryo nations: I have sought
With sharpened eye and persecuting zeal,
Where, folded in their silken webs they lay
Thriving and happy; swept them from the tree
And crushed whole families beneath my foot;
Or, sudden, poured on their devoted° heads
The vials of destruction.°—This I've done,
Nor felt the touch of pity: but when thou,—
A single wretch, escaped the general doom,
Making me feel and clearly recognise
Thine individual existence, life,
And fellowship of sense with all that breathes,—
Present'st thyself before me, I relent,
And cannot hurt thy weakness.—So the storm
Of horrid war, o'erwhelming cities, fields,
And peaceful villages, rolls dreadful on:

The victor shouts triumphant; he enjoys
The roar of cannon and the clang of arms,
And urges, by no soft relentings stopped,
The work of death and carnage. Yet should one,
A single sufferer from the field escaped,
Panting and pale, and bleeding at his feet,
Lift his imploring eyes,—the hero weeps;
He is grown human, and capricious Pity,
Which would not stir for thousands, melts for one
With sympathy spontaneous:—'Tis not Virtue,
Yet 'tis the weakness of a virtuous mind.

ca. 1816? 1825

Notes

- °: *doomed*Return to reference °
- °: *pesticide*Return to reference °

Science, Speculation, and Experiment

The Romantic period in literature coincided with an era of innovative experiments, ambitious theorizing, and sometimes wild speculation in the realms of science and technology. New technologies began to transform the social and physical landscape: steam power and mechanization sped production in factories and mines starting in the 1770s; gas lighting illuminated city streets starting in the early 1800s; by 1830, the first intercity railroad, connecting Manchester and Liverpool, had begun operation. As the British Empire expanded its political and commercial reach, scientific expeditions were dispatched around the globe, from the South Seas to the Arctic. William Herschel's discovery of the planet Uranus in 1781 enlarged the known solar system; his observations of nebulae, made in collaboration with his sister Caroline, gave insight into the birth and implosion of stars. A new approach to the life sciences was emerging, connecting the study of all kinds of organisms, from humans to plants—the term *biology* itself dates from around 1800. Chemistry coalesced in this period into a systematic science, and electricity was harnessed for novel experiments decomposing matter into elements or, famously, making the muscles of corpses twitch—seeming to suggest an electrical basis to animation.

The modern concept of the professional scientist was only just taking shape in the early nineteenth century, however; indeed, the very term *scientist* did not appear until the 1830s. *Natural philosophy* was the long-standing term still in use for research in physics, chemistry, and astronomy, though the inquiries of the "natural philosopher" typically ranged well beyond those disciplines in pursuit of the fundamental principles of both nature and mind. Exemplary in this regard was the polymathic Joseph Priestley (1733–1804), a Dissenting minister and educator, whose scientific discoveries

included photosynthesis and what we now call oxygen: author of over a hundred works, he wrote influentially on topics from electricity and chemistry to political theory, theology, grammar, and world history. The two poems by Priestley's friend Anna Letitia Barbauld that introduce this cluster take the natural philosopher's life of thought, writing, and experiment as their subject.

Traditionally, the sciences of botany, zoology, mineralogy, and geology fell into the separate category of "natural history." Appealing to the era's love of collecting, practiced by travelers in exotic locales or on a leisurely ramble close to home, the study of natural history, botany especially, became a popular craze; the subject was also a gold mine for publishers. In the *Natural History of Selborne* (1789), the clergyman Gilbert White drew on his observations of local nature, carefully recorded in daily journals, for chatty, essayistic descriptions of animal behavior and plant life that would be a prime influence on later ecological writing and thought, including that of poets such as John Clare. Poetry not only drew on scientific descriptions of natural beauty, but could be treated as in itself a medium for popularizing scientific ideas, as in the scientist-poet Erasmus Darwin's botanical epic *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), which renders Carl Linnaeus's taxonomy of flowers into heroic couplets.

This cluster aims to provide a sense of the wide variety of the period's science writing—the diversity of forms, audiences, and functions these examples have begun to suggest. Alongside excerpts from White's prose and Darwin's poetry, we include Caroline Herschel's 1787 letter to the Royal Society announcing her discovery of a new comet, a technical report of her findings which also rhetorically adjusts for her position as a woman writing to the all-male community of her brother William's "astronomical friends." We also include an excerpt from the brilliant chemist Humphry Davy's public lectures at the new Royal Institution in London (founded 1799), a key center for scientific activity. The final excerpt, from Mary Somerville's *On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences* (1834), shows how, on the cusp of the Victorian period, science was beginning to cohere into the disciplinary structures more familiar to

us; she envisions a broad popular appeal for scientific learning, cutting across class and gender divisions.

Margaret Bryan. Though excluded from the official scientific establishment, women writers in the Romantic period played an important role in broadening the audience for new scientific knowledge, especially through their authorship of popular educational works. Pictured in this frontispiece to Margaret Bryan's textbook *A Compendious System of Astronomy* (1797) is the author, quill in hand, accompanied by her two daughters, emphasizing Bryan's role as mother as well as writer and educator (she headed a London school for girls).

While, in the eighteenth century, serious scientific research was considered principally the domain of men—especially the gentleman amateur, with leisure and wealth for such pursuits—our cluster also reflects the participation of a wider range of characters in Britain's scientific culture. Women could be crucial contributors to scientific discovery, as Caroline Herschel's accomplishments attest, and women writers played an especially important role in disseminating scientific knowledge, especially through works aimed at general audiences, such as Somerville's, or works for children. Though often facing skepticism grounded in class prejudice, men without the class background for a university degree could also make their mark in scientific research: these included Davy, whose formal education extended only to grammar school, and Davy's one-time assistant Michael Faraday (1791–1867), the pioneer of electromagnetism, who grew up in poverty.

But the notion of science is in flux in the period, with competing frameworks for understanding scientific inquiry itself. Radicals such as Priestley had an Enlightenment faith in the capacity of science to become, as he wrote in 1774, the "means, under God, of extirpating *all* error and prejudice," giving "the English hierarchy (if there be anything unsound in its constitution) . . . reason to tremble even at an air-pump, or an electrical machine." Especially following the French Revolution, conservatives painted such thinking as both ludicrous and dangerous; in 1791, a mob declaring loyalty to "church and king" rampaged through Priestley's Birmingham lab and library.

The confident vision of progress Davy sets out in his 1802 Royal Institution lecture is in some ways as sweeping as Priestley's, but likely far more comforting to his upper-class audience: appealing to a sense of national pride, Davy portrayed the astounding "new powers" of the scientist as providing a wealth of material benefits for society. Davy's assignment of wizardlike powers to the scientist would be ironically echoed in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* the classic critique of outsized scientific ambition.

Frequently across the period's science writing, the rewards of scientific inquiry are framed in aesthetic terms, as connected to what Davy calls "the love of the beautiful and sublime," to pleasure and to awe. While some scientific thinkers pushed toward a thoroughgoing materialism—holding that everything existing, including consciousness, is reducible to physical phenomena—others reacted against such a mechanistic picture. For many, science was understood as a means of appreciating nature seen as God's providential creation. The clergyman William Paley's treatise *Natural Theology,* which offered the intricacy and "beauty" of living organisms as proof of a beneficent Creator, was set university reading.

At the same time, the communication of scientific knowledge was often designed to be not just useful, but entertaining; science books and periodicals, lectures, exhibits, and live demonstrations were after all competing in the marketplace—along with imaginative literature and popular entertainments of all kinds—for a share of the public's attention, and their appeal to the audience's aesthetic capacity for wonder, curiosity and pleasure can be understood in these terms as well. The selections in this cluster often blur the boundaries we are now accustomed to draw between the literary and the scientific; they can be approached both as documents in the history of science and as literary artifacts in their own right.

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD

The poet Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743–1825) formed a close friendship with the scientist and scholar Joseph Priestley in the intellectual circle around the Warrington Academy, the Nonconformist institution where Barbauld's father was a member of the faculty and where Priestley taught beginning in 1761. It is a revealing measure of the extraordinary range of Priestley's interests that this major contributor to scientific knowledge was in fact hired at Warrington as a tutor in classical and modern languages. During his time at Warrington, he also taught and published on history, published a widely used grammar textbook, and initiated influential curricular reforms. In 1767, Priestley moved to Leeds to take up a post as minister for a Dissenting congregation; there, he continued his scientific research and writing, while in other publications entering the fray of theological and political controversies. The poems that follow, occasioned by Barbauld's visits to the Priestley family in Leeds, offer a glimpse of the multifaceted intellectual labor on view in the household of the "natural philosopher." For more on Barbauld, see pp. 41–42, above.

The Mouse's Petition[1]

Found in the trap where he had been confined all night by Dr. Priestley, for the sake of making experiments with different kinds of air

"Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos."
—Virgil

Oh hear a pensive prisoner's prayer,
For liberty that sighs;
And never let thine heart be shut
Against the wretch's cries.

For here forlorn and sad I sit,
Within the wiry gate;
And tremble at th' approaching morn,
Which brings impending fate.

If e'er thy breast with freedom glow'd,
And spurn'd a tyrant's chain,
Let not thy strong oppressive force
A free-born mouse detain.

Oh do not stain with guiltless blood
Thy hospitable hearth;
Nor triumph that thy wiles betray'd
A prize so little worth.

The scatter'd gleanings of a feast
My frugal meals supply;
But if thine unrelenting heart
That slender boon deny,

The cheerful light, the vital air,
Are blessings widely given;
Let nature's commoners enjoy
The common gifts of heaven.

The well-taught philosophic mind
To all compassion gives;
Casts round the world an equal eye,
And feels for all that lives.

If mind, as ancient sages taught,[2]
A never dying flame,
Still shifts through matter's varying forms,
In every form the same,

Beware, lest in the worm you crush
A brother's soul you find;
And tremble lest thy luckless hand
Dislodge a kindred mind.

Or, if this transient gleam of day
Be *all* of life we share,
Let pity plead within thy breast
That little *all* to spare.

So may thy hospitable board
With health and peace be crown'd;
And every charm of heartfelt ease
Beneath thy roof be found.

So, when destruction lurks unseen,
Which men, like mice, may share,
May some kind angel clear thy path,
And break the hidden snare.

ca. 1771 1773

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The imagined speaker in this poem (the petitioning mouse) is destined to participate in just the sort of experiment that would lead Priestley, in a few years, to the discovery of the gas we now know as oxygen (Priestley's more cumbersome term, involving a then-current theory positing a substance called "phlogiston" supposedly released by combustion, was "dephlogisticated air"). Tradition has it that when Barbauld showed him the lines, Priestley set the mouse free. According to Barbauld's modern editors, the poem was many times reprinted and was a favorite to assign students for memorizing. The Latin epigraph is from the *Aeneid* 6.853, "To
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lines 29–36 play on the idea of transmigration of souls, a doctrine that Priestley believed until the early 1770s.Return to reference 2

An Inventory of the Furniture in Dr. Priestley's Study

A map of every country known,[1]
With not a foot of land his own.
A list of folks that kicked a dust
On this poor globe, from Ptol. the First;[2]
He hopes,—indeed it is but fair,—
Some day to get a corner there.
A group of all the British kings,
Fair emblem! on a packthread swings.
The Fathers, ranged in goodly row,[3]
A decent, venerable show,
Writ a great while ago, they tell us,
And many an inch o'ertop their fellows.
A Juvenal[4] to hunt for mottos;
And Ovid's tales of nymphs and grottos.[5]
The meek-robed lawyers, all in white;
Pure as the lamb,—at least, to sight.
A shelf of bottles, jar and phial,°
By which the rogues he can defy all,—
All filled with lightning keen and genuine,
And many a little imp he'll pen you in;
Which, like Le Sage's sprite, let out,
Among the neighbours makes a rout;[6]
Brings down the lightning on their houses,
And kills their geese, and frights their spouses.
A rare thermometer, by which
He settles, to the nicest pitch,
The just degrees of heat, to raise
Sermons, or politics, or plays.
Papers and books, a strange mixed olio,

From shilling touch° to pompous folio;
Answer, remark, reply, rejoinder,
Fresh from the mint, all stamped and coined here;
Like new-made glass, set by to cool,
Before it bears the workman's tool.
A blotted proof-sheet, wet from Bowling.[7]
—"How can a man his anger hold in?"—
Forgotten rimes, and college themes,
Worm-eaten plans, and embryo schemes;—
A mass of heterogeneous matter,
A chaos dark, nor land nor water;—
New books, like new-born infants, stand,
Waiting the printer's clothing hand;—
Others, a motley ragged brood,
Their limbs unfashioned all, and rude,
Like Cadmus' half-formed men appear;[8]
One rears a helm, one lifts a spear,
And feet were lopped and fingers torn
Before their fellow limbs were born;
A leg began to kick and sprawl
Before the head was seen at all,
Which quiet as a mushroom lay
Till crumbling hillocks gave it way;
And all, like controversial writing,
Were born with teeth, and sprung up fighting.
"But what is this," I hear you cry,
"Which saucily provokes my eye?"—
A thing unknown, without a name,
Born of the air and doomed to flame.

ca. 1771 1825

Endnotes

- Note 1: The maps, historical charts, books, and scientific apparatus are all part of the "furniture" (furnishings) of Joseph Priestley's study.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Ptolemy I (ca. 367–283 B.C.E.), founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The works of the Catholic Church Fathers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Roman satirist.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ovid's *Metamorphoses.*Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In René LeSage's *Le Diable boîteux* (1707), a laboratory-created spirit lifts the roofs from the neighbors' houses, exposing their private lives and creating havoc.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Presumably a local printer.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Armed men created when Cadmus sowed the earth with the teeth of a dragon he had killed (Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 3.95–114).Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *vial*Return to reference °
- °: *cheap pamphlet*Return to reference °

CAROLINE HERSCHEL

The accomplishments of Caroline Herschel (1750–1848), both as an assistant to her older brother William—England's most lauded astronomer—and as an astronomer in her own right, have been the subject of important discussion in the history of science about what kinds of work gets valued, and how, in accounts of scientific discovery. (The sibling relationship has often been compared to the gifted Dorothy Wordsworth's devoted relationship to her famous brother William.) When, at age twenty-two, Caroline arrived in England from her native Hanover in what is now Germany, it was not a scientific but a musical career she had in her sights: the Herschels were a family of musicians, and William, then chief organist at the Octagon Chapel in Bath, had asked his sister to join him, with the idea of training her as his vocal accompanist. The invitation offered Caroline an escape from a confining life of drudgery in her family home. A remarkably quick study, Caroline was soon appearing to acclaim in vocal performances on the Bath stage. In the following years, however, music was sidelined for both siblings, as William's hobby of making astronomical investigations grew into an all-consuming occupation. William's stunning discovery of the planet Uranus, in 1781, made him a celebrity; after he accepted a royal pension, Caroline moved with him, in 1782, to a newly constructed observatory near Windsor Castle. Caroline learned the mathematics required to keep records of astronomical observations and to carry out laborious calculations. In addition to running the household until William's marriage in 1788, Caroline stayed up through often frigid nights, managing the equipment and data, and in spare moments, she spent time "minding the skies" (in her own phrase) with a telescope William presented her specifically for "comet hunting." In 1787, Caroline was granted her own royal pension of fifty pounds per annum—the first British woman scientist to receive a salary.

Despite the modesty of her address to her "brother's astronomical friends," Caroline's report to the Royal Society of her discovery of a new comet—notably, made when William is away—asserts her scientific and mathematical capabilities in what was understood to be a male domain. The letter marks a milestone as the first paper by a woman read at the society, which would not admit women as fellows until the twentieth century. If the comet itself was not especially "grand or striking" in appearance, it caused excitement as "the first lady's comet," as the novelist Frances Burney commented in her diary after viewing it from the Royal Observatory. Herschel would go on to discover a further seven comets, though perhaps her more significant contribution came in the joint labor with her brother that took the number of known nebulae from less than a hundred to over two thousand, providing the basis for a deeper understanding of the processes shaping the cosmos.

An Account of a New Comet

SIR,

In consequence of the friendship which I know to exist between you and my Brother, I venture to trouble you in his absence with the following imperfect account of a comet.[1]

The employment of writing down the observations, when my Brother uses the 20-feet reflector, does not often allow me time to look at the heavens; but as he is now on a visit to Germany, I have taken the opportunity of his absence to *sweep* in the neighbourhood of the sun, in search of comets;[2] and last night, the 1st of August, about 10 o'clock, I found an object very much resembling in colour and brightness the 27th nebula of the *Connoissance des Temps*,[3] with the difference however of being round. I suspected it to be a comet; but a haziness coming on, it was not possible intirely to satisfy myself as to its motion till this evening. I made several drawings of the stars in the field of view with it, and have inclosed a copy of them, with my observations annexed, that you may compare them together.

August 1, 1786, 9 h. 50', the object in the center is like a star out of focus, while the rest are perfectly distinct, and I suspect it to be a comet.[4]

10 h. 33', fig. 2. the suspected comet makes now a perfect isosceles triangle with the two stars *a* and *b*.[5]

11 h. 8', I think the situation of the comet is now as in fig. 3.; but it is so hazy that I cannot sufficiently see the small star *b* to be assured of the motion.

By the naked eye the comet is between the 54th and 53d Ursæ majoris, and the 14th, 15th, and 16th Comæ Berenices,[6] and makes an obtuse triangle with them, the vertex of which is turned towards the south.

August 2. 10 h. 9', the comet is now, with respect to the stars *a* and *b*,[7] situated as in fig. 4. therefore the motion since last night is evident.

10 h. 30', another considerable star *c* may be taken into the field with it, by placing *a* in the center; when the comet and the other star will both appear in the circumference, as in fig. 5.

These observations were made with a Newtonian sweeper of 27 inches focal length, and a power of about 20, the field of view is 2° 12'. I cannot find the stars *a* and *c* in any catalogue; but suppose they may easily be traced in the heavens; whence the situation of the comet, as it was last night at 10 h. 33', may be pretty nearly ascertained.

You will do me the favour of communicating these observations to my brother's astronomical friends.

I have the honour to be, &c.

CAROLINE HERSCHEL

Endnotes

- Note 1: The report is addressed to physician and scientist Sir Charles Blagden (1748–1820), then secretary of the Royal Society.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  "Sweep": a telescopic scan of a segment of the night sky, with the telescope held at a fixed elevation so that celestial objects drift across the field. "Reflector": a type of telescope, sometimes called "Newtonian," relying on mirrors rather than lenses to avoid color distortion. The Herschels' telescopes, sold to astronomers across Europe, were famous for their precision and power; the 20-foot reflector, one of the largest telescopes extant at the time, was considered a marvel.
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An almanaclike compendium of "ephemerides," or tables giving positions in the sky for astronomical objects over a

sequence of dates, published annually in France since 1679. "Nebula": stellar cloud of dust and gas.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: In her diary for August 1, Herschel wrote, "I have counted one hundred nebulae to-day, and this evening I saw an object which I believe will prove to-morrow night to be a comet"; on August 2, she wrote, "The object of last night *is a comet.*" Astronomers identify the comet as Comet C/1786 P1 (Herschel).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Herschel drew detailed diagrams, or figures, plotting her observed data.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Constellations neighboring each other (the Latin names translate as "Great Bear" and "the Hair of Berenice").Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  A doubt having arisen about the identity of the stars marked *a* and *b* in the figures, I have examined that part of the heavens in which the comet was the 1st of August, in order to settle this point, but find so many small stars in that neighbourhood that I have not been able to fix on any of them that will exactly answer these figures; and as they were drawn from observations made by moonlight, twilight, hazy weather, and very near the horizon, it would not be at all surprising if a mistake had been made: however, as these figures were only given with a view to show the motion of the comet, the conclusion of the change of place, which was drawn from
  Return to reference 7

GILBERT WHITE

One of the most enduringly popular works of nature writing in the English language, Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* (1789) is a country clergyman's affectionate, wonder-filled account of the plant and animal life of the Hampshire village where he spent almost his entire life. The book demonstrates White's proposition that "all nature is so full, that that district produces the greatest variety which is the most examined." Relying on decades' worth of his observational journals, White (1720–1793) frames the text as a series of letters to two friends, the wealthy amateur naturalist Daines Barrington and the eminent zoologist Thomas Pennant, both of whom White had met through the London bookshop of his brother Benjamin, a printer—from whom White also learned that books on natural history tended to sell briskly. The original edition's full title, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, reflects White's inclusion of an account of local sites of historical interest; this was generally dropped from later editions. *Selborne*'s initial reception can be gauged from its influence on other writers in this anthology, including Dorothy Wordsworth and John Clare; Charlotte Smith and Erasmus Darwin both cite White as an authority. Nineteenth-century audiences elevated White's work into a cherished classic, sending it through an astonishing number of editions. For Victorian readers, the book offered at once a nostalgic picture of the rural English parish, and a model of attention to the natural world they could emulate and apply to their own environs.

Selborne inspired later conservation efforts, and many critics have argued White helped initiate modern "ecological" literature. *Selborne* evolves, though, from a tradition of nature writing stretching from the classical *Eclogues* and *Georgics* of Virgil through the eighteenth-century poet James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730). The twentieth-century modernist Virginia Woolf remarked that White's skill with detail and scene setting reflects the vibrancy of

another eighteenth-century genre—the novel—with the difference that "the story of Selborne is a vegetable, an animal story. The gossip is about the habits of vipers and the love interest is supplied chiefly by frogs." As Woolf observed, White finds a world of delight in the very small. Despite his interest in what he calls the "wonderful spirit of sociality in the brute creation," and in the "artistry" animals can display, such as birds' songs or nest building, White's evocation of animal character does not reduce animals to mere projections of human personality: rather, he marvels at their difference from the human, and does not shy away from nature's violence, as the ending to our selection on the language of birds demonstrates.

From The Natural History of Selborne

March 9, 1772

As a gentleman and myself were walking on the 4th of last November round the sea-banks at Newhaven,[1] near the mouth of the Lewes river, in pursuit of natural knowledge, we were surprised to see three house-swallows gliding very swiftly by us. That morning was rather chilly, with the wind at north-west; but the tenor of the weather for some time before had been delicate, and the noons remarkably warm. From this incident, and from repeated accounts which I meet with, I am more and more induced to believe that many of the swallow kind do not depart from this island, but lay themselves up in holes and caverns, and do, insect-like and bat-like, come forth at mild times, and then retire again to their *latebrae*.[2] Nor make I the least doubt but that, if I lived at Newhaven, Seaford, Brighthelmstone, or any of those towns near the chalk cliffs of the Sussex coast, by proper observations, I should see swallows stirring at periods of the winter, when the noons were soft and inviting, and the sun warm and invigorating. And I am the more of this opinion from what I have remarked during some of our late springs, that though some swallows did make their appearance about the usual time, viz. the 13th or 14th of April, yet, meeting with an harsh reception, and blustering cold north-east winds, they immediately withdrew, absconding for several days, till the weather gave them better encouragement.[3]

* * *

Sept. 9, 1778

FROM the motion of birds, the transition is natural enough to their notes and language, of which I shall say something. Not that I would pretend to understand their language like the vizier, who, by the recital of a conversation which passed between two owls,

reclaimed a sultan,[1] before delighting in conquest and devastation; but I would be thought only to mean that many of the winged tribes have various sounds and voices adapted to express their various passions, wants, and feelings, such as anger, fear, love, hatred, hunger, and the like. All species are not equally eloquent; some are copious and fluent, as it were, in their utterance, while others are confined to a few important sounds; no bird, like the fish kind, is quite mute, though some are rather silent. The language of birds is very ancient, and like other ancient modes of speech, very elliptical; little is said, but much is meant and understood.

The notes of the eagle kind are shrill and piercing; and about the season of nidification[2] much diversified, as I have been often assured by a curious observer of Nature, who long resided at Gibraltar, where eagles abound. The notes of our hawks much resemble those of the king of birds. Owls have very expressive notes; they hoot in a fine vocal sound, much resem- bling the *vox humana*,[3] and reducible by a pitch-pipe to a musical key. This note seems to express complacency and rivalry among the males; they use also a quick call and an horrible scream; and can snore and hiss when they mean to menace. Ravens, besides their loud croak, can exert a deep and solemn note that makes the woods to echo; the amorous sound of a crow is strange and ridiculous; rooks, in the breeding season, attempt sometimes, in the gaiety of their hearts, to sing, but with no great success; the parrot- kind have many modulations of voice, as appears by their aptitude to learn human sounds; doves coo in an amorous and mournful manner, and are emblems of despairing lovers; the woodpecker sets up a sort of loud and hearty laugh; the fern-owl or goat-sucker, from the dusk till daybreak, ser- enades his mate with the clattering of castanets. All the tuneful *passeres*[4] express their complacency by sweet modulations, and a variety of melody. The swallow, as has been observed in a former letter, by a shrill alarm bespeaks the attention of the other *hirundines*,[5] and bids them be aware that the hawk is at hand. Aquatic and gregarious birds, especially the nocturnal, that shift their quarters in the dark, are very noisy and loquacious; as

cranes, wild-geese, wild-ducks, and the like; their perpetual clamour prevents them from dispersing and losing their companions.

In so extensive a subject, sketches and outlines are as much as can be expected: for it would be endless to instance in all the infinite variety of the feathered nation. We shall therefore confine the remainder of this letter to the few domestic fowls of our yards, which are most known, and therefore best understood. And first, the peacock, with his gorgeous train, demands our attention; but, like most of the gaudy birds, his notes are grating and shocking to the ear; the yelling of cats, and the braying of an ass, are not more disgustful. The voice of the goose is trumpet-like, and clanking; and once saved the Capitol at Rome, as grave historians assert: the hiss also of the gander is formidable and full of menace, and "protective of his young." [6] Among ducks the sexual distinction of voice is remarkable; for while the quack of the female is load and sonorous, the voice of the drake is inward, and harsh, and feeble, and scarce discernible. The cock turkey struts and gobbles to his mistress in a most uncouth manner; he hath also a pert and petulant note when he attacks his adversary. When a hen turkey leads forth her young brood, she keeps a watchful eye: and if a bird of prey appear, though ever so high in the air, the careful mother announces the enemy with a little inward moan, and watches him with a steady and attentive look; but, if he approach, her note becomes earnest and alarming, and her outcries are redoubled.

No inhabitants of a yard seem possessed of such a variety of expression, and so copious a language, as common poultry. Take a chicken of four or five days old, and hold it up to a window where there are flies, and it will immediately seize its prey with little twitterings of complacency; but if you tender it a wasp or a bee, at once its note becomes harsh and expressive of disapprobation and a sense of danger. When a pullet is ready to lay, she intimates the event by a joyous and easy soft note. Of all the occurrences of their life, that of laying seems to be the most important; for no sooner has a hen disburdened herself, than she rushes forth with a clamorous kind of joy, which the cock and the rest of his mistresses

immediately adopt. The tumult is not confined to the family concerned, but catches from yard to yard, and spreads to every homestead within hearing, till at last the whole village is in an uproar. As soon as a hen becomes a mother, her new relation demands a new language; she then runs clucking and screaming about, and seems agitated as if possessed. The father of the flock has also a considerable vocabulary; if he finds food, he calls a favourite concubine to partake; and if a bird of prey passes over, with a warning voice he bids his family beware. The gallant chanticleer[7] has, at command, his amorous phrases and his terms of defiance. But the sound by which he is best known is his crowing: by this he has been distinguished in all ages as the countryman's clock or larum, as the watchman that proclaims the divisions of the night. Thus the poet elegantly styles him

> The crested cock, whose clarion sounds
> The silent hours.[8]

A neighbouring gentleman one summer had lost most of his chickens by a sparrow-hawk, that came gliding down between a faggot pile[9] and the end of his house to the place where the coops stood. The owner, inwardly vexed to see his flock thus diminishing, hung a setting net adroitly between the pile and the house, into which the caitiff dashed, and was entangled. Resentment suggested the law of retaliation; he therefore clipped the hawk's wings, cut off his talons, and fixing a cork on his bill, threw him down among the brood-hens. Imagination cannot paint the scene that ensued; the expressions that fear, rage, and revenge inspired, were new, or at least such as had been unnoticed before. The exasperated matrons upbraided, they execrated, they insulted, they triumphed. In a word, they never desisted from buffeting their adversary till they had torn him in a hundred pieces.

1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: Town on the Sussex coast, some sixty miles from Selborne.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Refuges (from the Latin for hiding places). Throughout *Selborne,* White is preoccupied by the mystery of where swallows go between their annual "disappearance" in the fall and their return in the spring—do they overwinter by hibernating on English territory, as White (mistakenly) insists, or do they migrate to distant shores? Charlotte Smith's "The Swallow" (see p. 82, below) muses on the same question, citing White.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The detailed observational journals White keeps over many years attune him to the seasonal rhythms and habitual behaviors of the species he observes, but also allow him to recognize the surprise of departures from pattern.Return to reference 3
- Note 1: White cites the retelling of an Arabian folktale in Joseph Addison and Richard Steele's journal *Spectator* 521 (Oct. 17, 1712). In the story, a vizier (top minister or official) who pretends to understand the language of birds uses his purported translation of the owls' conversation as an indirect means to deliver moral advice to the sultan, and so "reclaim" him from his propensity to violence.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Nest building. White's brother John, a chaplain at the British naval base at Gibraltar on the Spanish coast, was a source for comparative observations of bird activity.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: From the Latin for "human voice," a name for a musical tone produced by a specific pipe organ setting, or "stop," thought to resemble the sound of human singing.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In White's usage, the first recorded by the *OED*, the order of perching birds, or songbirds.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Members of the *Hirundinidae* (swallows) family of songbirds, including swallows and martins.Return to reference 5
- Note 6:

According to legend, when the Gauls laid siege to Rome in the 4th century B.C.E., a sneak attack under cover of night was foiled by the honking of the geese, sacred to Juno, who lived in the temple dedicated to the goddess on the city's Capitoline Hill. The quoted phrase is from the "Spring" section of James Thomson's *The Seasons*, where it describes not the gander but the "stately-sailing swan" (lines 775–79). White's debt to Thomson's catalogs of birds and beasts is significant. Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Rooster.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Milton, *Paradise Lost* 7.443–44. White again nods to earlier poetic catalogs of birds, here Milton's catalog of birds at the creation.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Pile of sticks.Return to reference 9

ERASMUS DARWIN

The physician and intellectual Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802) maintained many scientific hobbies, including botany, a field whose popularity in the eighteenth century owed much to the work of the Swedish scientist Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778). Linnaean taxonomies, or modes of classifying different plant and animal species, provided a systematic organization for the study of the natural world; by enlisting "Imagination under the banner of Science," Darwin's 1789 poem *The Loves of the Plants* sought to make Linnaeus's scheme more appealing and digestible for readers, especially the young ladies for whom botany was considered an elegant and safe scientific pastime.

Linnaeus had arranged plants into various classes according to their number and arrangement of reproductive organs ("male" stamens and "female" pistils), on analogy to human sexuality and marriage. Darwin's poem playfully follows this sexual analogy—scandalizing some readers—but at the same time, its imagination of a plant-world organized around pleasure also suggests a more serious engagement with the notion that plants might indeed "love," and with questions of plant sensation and sentience to which other flower-obsessed Romantic poets frequently recur. In 1791, *The Loves of the Plants* was included as part 2 of *The Botanic Garden,* whose other sections, under the title *The Economy of Vegetation,* distill into lofty verse scientific discoveries in astronomy, geology, chemistry, and other fields, and then expand on these theories in spiraling speculative prose footnotes. Though Darwin's ornate style fell out of fashion—Byron dismisses "flimsy Darwin's pompous chime"—his works remained a source of ideas and inspiration for later writers: Mary Shelley credits Darwin's speculation on reanimation with one germ of the story for *Frankenstein;* his thinking about evolution in his later treatise *Zoonomia, or the Laws of*

Organic Life (1794–96) in some respects anticipates that of his famous grandson, Charles.

From The Loves of the Plants

Proem[1]

GENTLE READER!
Lo, here a Camera Obscura[2] is presented to thy view, in which are lights and shades dancing on a whited canvas, and magnified into apparent life!—if thou art perfectly at leisure for such trivial amusement, walk in, and view the wonders of my Inchanted Garden.

Whereas P. Ovidius Naso,[3] a great Necromancer in the famous Court of Augustus Cæsar , did by art poetic transmute Men, Women, and even Gods and Goddesses, into Trees and Flowers; I have undertaken by similar art to restore some of them to their original animality, after having remained prisoners so long in their respective vegetable mansions; and have here exhibited them before thee. Which thou may'st contemplate as diverse little pictures suspended over the chimney of a Lady's dressing-room, *connected only by a slight festoon of ribbons.*[4] And which, though thou may'st not be acquainted with the originals, may amuse thee by the beauty of their persons, their graceful attitudes, or the brilliancy of their dress.

FAREWELL.

Canto I

Descend, ye hovering Sylphs! aerial Quires,[5]
And sweep with little hands your silver lyres;
With fairy footsteps print your grassy rings,
Ye Gnomes! accordant to the tinkling strings;
While in soft notes I tune to oaten reed
Gay hopes, and amorous sorrows of the mead.—
From giant Oaks, that wave their branches dark,
To the dwarf Moss, that clings upon their bark,

What Beaux and Beauties crowd the gaudy groves,
And woo and win their vegetable Loves.[6]
How Snowdrops cold, and blue-eyed Harebels blend
Their tender tears, as o'er the stream they bend;
The lovesick Violet, and the Primrose pale
Bow their sweet heads, and whisper to the gale;
With secret sighs the Virgin Lily droops,
And jealous Cowslips hang their tawny cups.
How the young Rose in beauty's damask pride
Drinks the warm blushes of his bashful bride;
With honey'd lips enamour'd Woodbines[7] meet,
Clasp with fond arms, and mix their kisses sweet.—

Stay thy soft-murmuring waters, gentle Rill;
Hush, whispering Winds, ye rustling Leaves, be still;
Rest, silver Butterflies, your quivering wings;
Alight ye Beetles, from your airy rings;
Ye painted Moths, your gold-eyed plumage furl,
Bow your wide horns, your spiral trunks uncurl;
Glitter, ye Glow-worms,[8] on your mossy beds;
Descend, ye Spiders, on your lengthened threads;
Slide here, ye horned Snails, with varnish'd shells;
Ye Bee-nymphs, listen in your waxen cells!

BOTANIC MUSE! who in this latter age
Led by your airy hand the Swedish sage,
Bade his keen eye your secret haunts explore
On dewy dell, high wood, and winding shore;
Say on each leaf how tiny Graces dwell;
How laugh the Pleasures in a blossom's bell;
How insect Loves arise on cobweb wings,
Aim their light shafts, and point their little stings.

* * *

Weak with nice° sense, the chaste Mimosa stands,

From each rude touch withdraws her timid hands;[9]
Oft as light clouds o'er-pass the Summer-glade,
Alarm'd she trembles at the moving shade;
And feels, alive through all her tender form,
The whisper'd murmurs of the gathering storm;
Shuts her sweet eye-lids to approaching night,
And hails with freshen'd charms the rising light.
Veil'd, with gay decency and modest pride,
Slow to the mosque she moves, an eastern bride;
There her soft vows unceasing love record,
Queen of the bright seraglio° of her Lord.—
So sinks or rises with the changeful hour
The liquid silver in its glassy tower.
So turns the needle to the pole it loves,
With fine librations[1] quivering, as it moves.

* * *

Where frowning Snowden bends his dizzy brow
O'er Conway, listening to the surge below;[2]
Retiring Lichen[3] climbs the topmost stone,
And drinks the aerial solitude alone.—
Bright shine the stars unnumber'd *o'er her head*,
And the cold moon-beam gilds her flinty bed;
While round the rifted rocks hoarse whirlwinds breathe,
And dark with thunder sail the clouds *beneath*.—
The steepy path her plighted swain pursues,
And tracks her light steps o'er th' imprinted dews;
Delighted Hymen° gives his torch to blaze,
Winds round the craggs, and lights the mazy ways;
Sheds o'er their *secret* vows his influence chaste,
And decks with roses the admiring waste.

1789, 1791

Endnotes

- Note 1: A preface or preamble.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From the Latin for "dark room"; an optical device consisting of a room or box with a single hole to admit light. Light passing through the hole projects inverted images onto a whitened wall or canvas opposite.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ovid (43 B.C.E.–18 C.E.), Roman poet whose *Metamorphoses* recounts myths of the transformation of persons into flowers or animals.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Comparing the poem's images to pictures in a lady's dressing-room, Darwin evokes the setting of Pope's mock-epic *The Rape of the Lock* (1717), a clear antecedent. Darwin's advertisement proposes the poem's general design is to lead readers from "the looser analogies, which dress out the imagery of poetry, to the stricter ones, which form the ratiocination of philosophy."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An alternate spelling of "choirs," possibly also punning on a quire of paper (a collection of sheets, or a small book made from folded sheets of paper). "Sylphs": spirits of the air, as "Gnomes" (line 4) are imaginary creatures of the earth. Derived from 17th-century occult writings, sylphs, gnomes, and other "sprites" are part of Pope's machinery in *The Rape of the Lock*.Return to reference 5
- Note 6:
  "Vegetable loves." Linneus, the celebrated Swedish naturalist, has demonstrated that all flowers contain families of males or females, or both; and on their marriages has constructed his invaluable system of Botany [*Darwin's note*]. Linnaeus's system classes plants by "marriages," a figure for the distribution of "male" and "female" reproductive organs in their flowers. Thus the sensitive plant or Mimosa below belongs to the class "Polygamy," having "male or female flowers on one or more plants, which have at the same time flowers of both sexes"; th

class "Polyandria" has many stamens in one flower; in the class
Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Honeysuckle. The other plants mentioned in lines 11–16 are common wildflowers.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Small beetles related to American fireflies; the female of the European glow-worm is wingless and has a brighter light than the male.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  *Mimosa.** * * The sensitive plant. Of the class Polygamy, one house. Naturalists have not explained the immediate cause of the collapsing of the sensitive-plant; the leaves meet and close in the night during the sleep of the plant, or when exposed to much cold in the day-time, in the same manner as when they are affected by external violence, folding their upper surfaces together, and in part over each other like scales or tiles; so as to expose as little of the upper surface as may be to the air; but do not indeed collapse quite so far, since I have found, when touched in the night during their sleep, they fall still further; especially when touched on the
  Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Oscillations (usually applied to the optical effect by which the moon can sometimes appear to wobble, as viewed from earth). Darwin compares the sensitive plant's opening toward the sun to the action of mercury in a thermometer, or a compass needle drawn magnetically toward the earth's pole.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mount Snowdon overlooks the town and river Conway (Welsh spelling Conwy) in Wales.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Lichen. * * * Calcareum. Liver-wort. Clandestine Marriage. This plant is the first that vegetates on naked rocks, covering them with a kind of tapestry, and draws its nourishment perhaps chiefly from the air; after it perishes, earth enough is left for the mosses to root themselves; and after some ages a soil is produced sufficient for the growth of more succulent and large vegetables. In this manner perhaps the whole earth has been

gradually covered with vegetation, after it was raised out of the primeval ocean by subterraneous fires [*Darwin's note*].

"Clandestine Marriage" represents "cryptogams," plants, such as lichens or ferns, that reproduce by distributing spores. With no visible flowers, their reproductive organs are "hidden." In the geological speculation with which the footnote concludes, Darwin combines two then-current theories of the formation of the earth's geological features, one (the Neptunian) holding they were created by the force of oceans that were imagined to have once submerged all land, the other (the Vulcanian) holding they were created by centuries of volcanic action.
Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *delicate, shy*Return to reference °
- °: *harem*Return to reference °
- °: *god of marriage*Return to reference °

HUMPHRY DAVY

Among the most accomplished experimental scientists of his era, Humphry Davy (1778–1829) was also a gifted orator with a talent for showmanship. Davy's popular public lectures, beginning in 1801, before the fashionable audiences of both men and women at London's Royal Institution introduced cutting-edge research in chemistry and electricity, fields then making astonishingly rapid advances—and well suited to live demonstrations. Just a few years earlier, in 1799, the Italian scientist Alessandro Volta had invented an electric battery, known as the "Voltaic pile," that allowed experimenters to decompose compound substances into elements by introducing an electric charge. Davy would soon isolate elements including potassium and sodium through this means. The large electrical apparatuses Davy had constructed in the Royal Institution from 1803 on contributed to a new image of the scientific genius as the master of powerful laboratory devices.

Just twenty-two when he was hired by the Royal Institution, Davy had previously been employed at the Pneumatic Institute in Bristol, run by the doctor and radical thinker Thomas Beddoes, who hoped inhaled gases might provide inexpensive miracle cures for the poor. There, Davy conducted pathbreaking experiments on the effects of nitrous oxide, or "laughing gas," testing the gas on himself and on friends, including the poets Coleridge and Robert Southey. In the concluding section of this excerpt from his 1802 Royal Institution lecture, Davy distances himself and his vision of science from the radicalism of Beddoes, who had already been mercilessly satirized in the conservative press as a "quack-pneumatic." At the same time, elements of Davy's argument for the value of scientific research—and its links to imagination, beauty, and pleasure—closely track the expansive arguments for the value of poetry Wordsworth had made in his Preface to the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads,* proofs of which Davy had helped correct as it went to press. In his preface,

Wordsworth had contrasted the poet and the "man of science," assigning the poet the more vital unifying role in a modernity that seemed to be dividing into many separate zones of knowledge and experience; for Davy, science assumes this unifying role. Yet as Davy surely would have noticed, Wordsworth had also imported the language of Davy's scientific practice in casting his volume as an "experiment" testing the effects of a new kind of poetry on his readers.

From A Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Chemistry

Chemistry is that part of natural philosophy which relates to those intimate actions of bodies upon each other, by which their appearances are altered, and their individuality destroyed.[1]

This science has for its objects all the substances found upon our globe. It relates not only to the minute alterations in the external world, which are daily coming under the cognizance of our senses, and which in consequence, are incapable of affecting the imagination, but likewise to the great changes, and convulsions in nature, which, occurring but seldom, excite our curiosity, or awaken our astonishment.

The phenomena of combustion, of the solution of different substances in water, of the agencies of fire; the production of rain, hail, and snow, and the conversion of dead matter into living matter by vegetable organs, all belong to chemistry; and, in their various and apparently capricious appearances, can be accurately explained only by an acquaintance with the fundamental and general chemical principles.

Chemistry, considered as a systematic arrangement of facts, is of later origin than most of the other sciences; yet certain of its processes and operations have been always more or less connected with them; and, lately, by furnishing new instruments and powers of investigation, it has greatly contributed to increase their perfection, and to extend their applications.[2]

* * *

[I]t is difficult to examine any of our common operations or labours without finding them more or less connected with chemistry. By means of this science man has employed almost all the

substances in nature either for the satisfaction of his wants or the gratification of his luxuries. Not contented with what is found upon the surface of the earth, he has penetrated into her bosom, and has even searched the bottom of the ocean for the purpose of allaying the restlessness of his desires, or of extending and increasing his power. He is to a certain extent ruler of all the elements that surround him; and he is capable of using not only common matter according to his will and inclinations, but likewise of subjecting to his purposes the ethereal principles of heat and light. By his inventions they are elicited from the atmosphere; and under his control they become, according to circumstances, instruments of comfort and enjoyment, or of terror and destruction.[3]

To be able indeed to form an accurate estimate of the effects of chemical philosophy, and the arts and sciences connected with it, upon the human mind, we ought to examine the history of society, to trace the progress of improvement, or more immediately to compare the uncultivated savage with the being of science and civilization.

Man, in what is called a state of nature, is a creature of almost pure sensation. Called into activity only by positive wants, his life is passed either in satisfying the cravings of the common appetites, or in apathy, or in slumber. Living only in moments he calculates but little on futurity. He has no vivid feelings of hope, or thoughts of permanent and powerful action. And unable to discover causes, he is either harassed by superstitious dreams, or quietly and passively submissive to the mercy of nature and the elements. How different is man informed through the beneficence of the Deity, by science and the arts! Knowing his wants, and being able to provide for them, he is capable of anticipating future enjoyments, and of connecting hope with an infinite variety of ideas. He is in some measure independent of chance or accident for his pleasures. Science has given to him an acquaintance with the different relations of the parts of the external world; and more than that, it has bestowed upon him powers which may be almost called creative; which have enabled him to modify and change the beings surrounding him, and by his

experiments to interrogate nature with power, not simply as a scholar, passive and seeking only to understand her operations, but rather as a master, active with his own instruments.

* * *

As a branch of sublime philosophy, chemistry is far from being perfect. It consists of a number of collections of facts connected together by different relations; but as yet it is not furnished with a precise and beautiful theory. Though we can perceive, develope, and even produce, by means of our instruments of experiment, an almost infinite variety of minute phænomena, yet we are incapable of determining the general laws by which they are governed; and in attempting to define them, we are lost in obscure, though sublime imaginations concerning unknown agencies. That they may be discovered, however, there is every reason to believe. And who would not be ambitious of becoming acquainted with the most profound secrets of nature, of ascertaining her hidden operations, and of exhibiting to men that system of knowledge which relates so intimately to their own physical and moral constitution?

The future is composed merely of images of the past, connected in new arrangements by analogy, and modified by the circumstances and feelings of the moment; our hopes are founded upon our experience; and in reasoning concerning what may be accomplished, we ought not only to consider the immense field of research yet unexplored, but likewise to examine the latest operations of the human mind, and to ascertain the degree of its strength and activity.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century very little was known concerning the philosophy of the intimate actions of bodies on each other;[4] and before this time, vague ideas, superstitious notions, and inaccurate practices, were the only effects of the first efforts of the mind to establish the foundations of chemistry. Men either were astonished and deluded by their first inventions so as to become visionaries, and to institute researches after imaginary things, or they employed them as instruments for astonishing and deluding others, influenced by their dearest passions and interests,

by ambition, or the love of money. Hence arose the dreams of alchemy concerning the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life.[5] Hence, for a long while the other metals were destroyed or rendered useless by experiments designed to transmute them into gold; and for a long while the means of obtaining earthly immortality were sought for amidst the unhealthy vapours of the laboratory. These views of things have passed away, and a new science has gradually arisen. The dim and uncertain twilight of discovery, which gave to objects false or indefinite appearances, has been succeeded by the steady light of truth, which has shown the external world in its distinct forms, and in its true relations to human powers. The composition of the atmosphere, and the properties of the gases, have been ascertained; the phænomena of electricity have been developed; the lightnings have been taken from the clouds; and lastly, a new influence has been discovered, which has enabled man to produce from combinations of dead matter effects which were formerly occasioned only by animal organs.[6]

The human mind has been lately active and powerful; but there is very little reason for believing that the period of its greatest strength is passed; or even that it has attained its adult state. We find in all its exertions not only the health and vigour, but likewise the awkwardness of youth. It has gained new powers and faculties; but it is as yet incapable of using them with readiness and efficacy. Its desires are beyond its abilities; its different parts and organs are not firmly knit together, and they seldom act in perfect unity.

Unless any great physical changes should take place upon the globe, the permanency of the arts and sciences is rendered certain, in consequence of the diffusion of knowledge by means of the invention of printing; and those words which are the immutable instruments of thought, are become the constant and widely-diffused nourishment of the mind, the preservers of its health and energy. Individuals, in consequence of interested motives or false views, may check for a time the progress of knowledge; moral causes may produce a momentary slumber of the public spirit; the adoption of wild and dangerous theories, by ambitious or deluded

men, may throw a temporary opprobrium on literature; but the influence of true philosophy will never be despised; the germs of improvement are sown in minds even where they are not perceived, and sooner or later the spring-time of their growth must arrive.

In reasoning concerning the future hopes of the human species, we may look forward with confidence to a state of society in which the different orders and classes of men will contribute more effectually to the support of each other than they have hitherto done. This state indeed seems to be approaching fast; for in consequence of the multitiplication of the means of instruction, the man of science and the manufacturer are daily becoming more nearly assimilated to each other. The artist who formerly affected to despise scientific principles, because he was incapable of perceiving the advantages of them, is now so far enlightened, as to favour the adoption of new processes in his art, whenever they are evidently connected with a diminution of labour. And the increase of projectors,[7] even to too great an extent, demonstrates the enthusiasm of the public mind in its search after improvement. The arts and sciences also are in a high degree cultivated, and patronized by the rich and privileged orders. The guardians of civilization and of refinement, the most powerful and respected part of society, are daily growing more attentive to the realities of life; and, giving up many of their unnecessary enjoyments in consequence of the desire to be useful, are becoming the friends and protectors of the labouring part of the community. The unequal division of property and of labour, the difference of rank and condition amongst mankind, are the sources of power in civilized life, its moving causes, and even its very soul; and in considering and hoping that the human species is capable of becoming more enlightened and more happy, we can only expect that the great whole of society should be ultimately connected together by means of knowledge and the useful arts; that they should act as the children of one great parent, with one determinate end, so that no power may be rendered useless, no exertions thrown away. In this view we do not look to distant ages, or amuse ourselves with

brilliant, though delusive dreams concerning the infinite improveability of man, the annihilation of labour, disease, and even death.[8] But we reason by analogy from simple facts. We consider only a state of human progression arising out of its present condition. We look for a time that we may reasonably expect, for a bright day of which we already behold the dawn.

So far our considerations have been general; so far we have examined chemistry chiefly with regard to its great agency upon the improvement of society, as connected with the increasing perfection of the different branches of natural philosophy and the arts. At present it remains for us only to investigate the effects of the study of this science upon particular minds, and to ascertain its powers of increasing that happiness which arises out of the private feelings and interests of individuals.

* * *

The appearances of the greater number of natural objects are originally delightful to us, and they become still more so, when the laws by which they are governed are known, and when they are associated with ideas of order and utility. The study of nature, therefore, in her various operations must be always more or less connected with the love of the beautiful and sublime;[9] and in consequence of the extent and indefiniteness of the views it presents to us, it is eminently calculated to gratify and keep alive the more powerful passions and ambitions of the soul, which, delighting in the anticipation of enjoyment, is never satisfied with knowledge; and which is as it were nourished by futurity, and rendered strong by hope.

In common society, to men collected in great cities, who are wearied by the constant recurrence of similar artificial pursuits and objects, and who are in need of sources of permanent attachment, the cultivation of chemistry and the physical sciences may be eminently beneficial.[1] For in all their applications they exhibit an almost infinite variety of effects connected with a simplicity of

design. They demonstrate that every being is intended for some definite end or purpose. They attach feelings of importance even to inanimate objects; and they furnish to the mind means of obtaining enjoyment unconnected with the labour or misery of others.

To the man of business, or of mechanical employment, the pursuit of experimental research may afford a simple pleasure, unconnected with the gratification of unnecessary wants, and leading to such an expansion of the faculties of the mind as must give to it dignity and power. To the refined and fashionable classes of society it may become a source of consolation and of happiness, in those moments of solitude, when the common habits and passions of the world are considered with indifference. It may destroy diseases of the imagination, owing to too deep a sensibility; and it may attach the affections to objects, permanent, important, and intimately related to the interests of the human species. Even to persons of powerful minds, who are connected with society by literary, political, or moral relations, an acquaintance with the science that represents the operations of nature cannot be wholly useless. It must strengthen their habits of minute discrimination; and by obliging them to use a language representing simple facts, may tend to destroy the influence of terms connected only with feeling. The man who has been accustomed to study natural objects philosophically, to be perpetually guarding against the delusions of the fancy, will not readily be induced to multiply words so as to forget things. From observing in the relations of inanimate things fitness and utility, he will reason with deeper reverence concerning beings possessing life; and perceiving in all the phenomena of the universe the designs of a perfect intelligence, he will be averse to the turbulence and passion of hasty innovations, and will uniformly appear as the friend of tranquillity and order.[2]

1802

Endnotes

- Note 1: “Natural philosophy” encompassed the study of physics and chemistry.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The work of the great French chemist Antoine Lavoisier (1743–1794) in particular had begun transforming chemistry into a newly systematic science in the last decades of the 18th century. Along with more precise laboratory equipment, the “new instruments and powers” Davy mentions include Volta’s battery, which by 1800 had already enabled the English scientist William Nicholson (1753–1815) to decompose water into hydrogen and oxygen.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Davy’s description of the scientific researcher as penetrating nature’s hiding places follows in the tradition associated with Francis Bacon (1561–1626), a founder of the “new science” in the 17th century. The gendered rhetoric reappears in ironic form in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: Victor Frankenstein’s teacher, M. Waldman, sounds a good deal like Davy when he directs Victor to the study of chemistry, claiming that modern chemists “have indeed performed miracles. They penetrate into the recesses of nature, and show how she works in her hiding places. They have acquired new and almost unlimited powers . . .”—powers which Victor, of course, will take too far.
  Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, how different chemical substances interact to produce reactions.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Alchemists sought the “philosopher’s stone,” a substance that according to legend could turn ordinary metals into silver or gold. Some thought the stone, once discovered, could also be used to create an “elixir of life” that would undo the effects of age.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Davy refers to such advances as Priestley’s and Lavoisier’s work on gases, including the discovery of oxygen; Benjamin Franklin’s famous channeling of lightning with a key on a kite; and the experiments in animal electricity of Luigi Galvani (1737–1798), Volta, and others.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:

The term *projector* could refer in a neutral sense to anyone launching an enterprise or invention, but was frequently associated with quacks, cons, or those taken with "wild impracticable schemes," as Samuel Johnson explained in his *Dictionary* (1755). Jonathan Swift's 1726 satire *Gulliver's Travels* (part 3, chap. 5) hilariously depicts an academy full of delusive "projectors" wasting away their years on absurd schemes and useless or unworkable inventions.
Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Among other targets, the dig at "delusive dreams" seems aimed at Davy's former employer Beddoes, as well as at radical philosopher William Godwin's theory of "perfectibility" and his speculation that humans might one day, through advances in knowledge, attain immortality.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Key categories of 18th-century aesthetic theory, as in Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare Wordsworth's complaint in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* about the desensitizing effects of routinized life in crowded cities (see p. 341 in this volume).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Critics of the French Revolution dismissively labeled it a dangerous "innovation."Return to reference 2

MARY SOMERVILLE

Born and raised in Scotland, Mary Somerville (1780–1872) developed a passion for mathematics at a young age, somewhat to the alarm of her traditionalist family, and later to the chagrin of her first husband, a distant relative and officer in the Russian navy. With her second husband, the physician William Somerville, who shared and encouraged her scientific interests, she developed a social network that included many prominent scientists and writers, among them the novelist Maria Edgeworth and the poet and playwright Joanna Baillie. Somerville's *On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences* (1834) presented a synoptic view of the state of the art of contemporary astronomy and physics, designed to reach a varied audience in direct, lucid prose while sacrificing neither rigor nor elegance. Quickly acknowledged as a classic, it went through nine editions in Somerville's lifetime, each updated to keep pace with emerging knowledge. Baillie told Somerville that her achievement in *On the Connexion* "has done more to remove the light estimation in which the capacity of women is too often held, than all that has been accomplished by the whole sisterhood of poetical damsels and novel-writing authors."

Somerville's book is often noted as providing the occasion for the first appearance of the word *scientist* in print, in a glowing *Quarterly Magazine* review by Cambridge professor William Whewell. As the historian James Secord points out, though, Whewell had come up with the term (partly at Coleridge's suggestion), "on analogy with tobacconist," to denote the supposedly narrower sphere of a "mere" practitioner, in contrast to the supposedly more general, theoretical perspective of the scientific philosopher; Whewell in fact compliments Somerville by including her in this latter, more prestigious category, as *more* than a scientist. As Secord observes, Whewell's gender-bound reasoning further identifies her clarity of style and capacity for synthesis as advantages of her possessing a

"woman's mind," rising serenely above the worldly affairs with which men were supposedly concerned.

From On the Connexion of the Physical Sciences

* * *

In tracing the connection of the physical sciences, astronomy affords the most extensive example of their union. In it are combined the sciences of number and quantity, of rest and motion. In it we perceive the operation of a force which is mixed up with every thing that exists in the heavens or on earth; which pervades every atom, rules the motions of animate and inanimate beings, and is as sensible in the descent of a rain drop as in the falls of Niagara, in the weight of the air as in the periods of the moon. Gravitation not only binds satellites to their planet, and planets to the sun, but it connects sun with sun throughout the wide extent of creation, and is the cause of the disturbances, as well as of the order, of nature: since every tremour it excites in any one planet is immediately transmitted to the farthest limits of the system, in oscillations, which correspond in their periods with the cause producing them, like sympathetic notes in music, or vibrations from the deep tones of an organ.

The heavens afford the most sublime subject of study which can be derived from science. The magnitude and splendour of the objects, the inconceivable rapidity with which they move, and the enormous distances between them, impress the mind with some notion of the energy that maintains them in their motions, with a durability to which we can see no limit. Equally conspicuous is the goodness of the great First Cause, in having endowed man with faculties, by which he can not only appreciate the magnificence of his works, but trace, with precision, the operation of his laws, use the globe he inhabits as a base wherewith to measure the magnitude and distance of the sun and planets, and make the

diameter of the earth's orbit the first step of a scale by which he may ascend to the starry firmament. Such pursuits, while they ennoble the mind, at the same time inculcate humility, by showing that there is a barrier which no energy, mental or physical, can ever enable us to pass: that, however profoundly we may penetrate the depths of space, there still remain innumerable systems, compared with which, those apparently so vast must dwindle into insignificance, or even become invisible; and that not only man, but the globe he inhabits,—nay, the whole system of which it forms so small a part,—might be annihilated, and its extinction be unperceived in the immensity of creation.

It must be acknowledged, that a complete acquaintance with physical astronomy can be attained by those only, who are well versed in the higher branches of mathematical and mechanical science, and that they alone can appreciate the extreme beauty of the results, and of the means by which these results are obtained. It is nevertheless true, that a sufficient skill in analysis to follow the general outline,—to see the mutual dependence of the different parts of the system, and to comprehend by what means some of the most extraordinary conclusions have been arrived at,—is within the reach of many who shrink from the task, appalled by difficulties, which, perhaps, are not more formidable than those incident to the study of the elements of every branch of knowledge. There is a wide distinction between the degree of mathematical acquirement necessary for making discoveries, and that which is requisite for understanding what others have done.

* * *

1834, 1835

CHARLOTTE SMITH
1749–1806

The melancholy of Charlotte Smith's poems was no mere literary posture. After her father married for the second time, she herself was married off, at the age of fifteen, and bore a dozen children (three of whom died in infancy or childhood), before permanently separating from her husband, Benjamin Smith, because of his abusive temper, infidelities, and financial irresponsibility. She began writing to make money when her husband was imprisoned for debt in 1783. Her first book, *Elegiac Sonnets, and Other Essays by Charlotte Smith of Bignor Park, Sussex,* came out in 1784 and went through nine expanding editions in the following sixteen years.

Frontispiece to the 1788 edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, showing the "Queen of the Silver Bowl."

Beginning with the 1788 publication of *Emmeline,* Smith also enjoyed considerable success as a novelist, rapidly producing nine more novels within the decade, including *Desmond* (1792), *The Old Manor House* (1793), *The Banished Man* (1794), and *The Young Philosopher* (1798). She also wrote books for children and, once, for the stage. The liberal political views espoused in her novels made the books key contributions to the Revolution Controversy in Britain. This was also the case with her eight-hundred-line blank verse poem *The Emigrants* (1793), which both evokes the suffering endured by political refugees from France and links their plight to that of the poet herself, who as a woman has discovered the emptiness of her native land's "boast / Of equal law." Such views earned Smith a place of dishonor, alongside Mary Wollstonecraft and Anna Letitia Barbauld, in Richard Polwhele's conservative satire *The Unsex'd Females* (1797), which scolds her for having suffered "her mind to be infected with the Gallic mania."

The sonnet as a form, after its great flourishing in the Renaissance in the hands of Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton, dropped out of fashion in the eighteenth century. It was, Samuel Johnson declared in his *Dictionary* (1755), "not very suitable to the English language." Its revival toward the end of that century—by Coleridge in the 1790s; Wordsworth (who wrote some five hundred sonnets beginning in 1802); and in the next generation, Shelley and Keats—was largely the result of Smith's influential refashioning Full p. D-77Shorter p. 42of the sonnet as a medium of mournful feeling. In the introduction to his privately printed "sheet of sonnets" in 1796, Coleridge noted that "Charlotte Smith and [William Lisle] Bowles are they who first made the Sonnet popular among the present English," but in fact, in his *Fourteen Sonnets* of 1789 Bowles was simply following in Smith's footsteps.

In that commentary on the sonnet Coleridge made Smith his principal example when he remarked that "those Sonnets appear to

me the most exquisite, in which moral Sentiments, Affections, or Feelings, are deduced from, and associated with, the scenery of Nature." Subsequently, of course, the connecting of feelings and nature became recognized as a central theme and strategy in Romantic literature, especially in the lyric poetry we associate with Coleridge and Wordsworth. But Smith's engagement with nature differs in illuminating ways from theirs. This is in part because of its quasi-scientific insistence on the faithful rendering of detail (one of Smith's sonnets is addressed to the "goddess of botany") and because of the otherness and multitudinousness in the natural world which that detail discloses. This carefully realized close-up view of nature is central to her masterpiece, the posthumously published *Beachy Head* (1807), where it gets combined, to startling effect, with a sense of the vast—immense vistas of geological time, for instance, or the distances covered by ships voyaging between Britain and her Asian colonies. Named for the headland forming the southernmost point in Sussex, the likely beachhead for the French invasion that early nineteenth-century English people anticipated fearfully, *Beachy Head* brings together personal memories, natural history, and national history in a mix that is without parallel in the period.

From Elegiac Sonnets

Written at the Close of Spring

The garlands fade that Spring so lately wove,
  Each simple flower, which she had nursed in dew,
Anemonies,[1] that spangled every grove,
  The primrose wan, and hare-bell mildly blue.
No more shall violets linger in the dell,
  Or purple orchis variegate the plain,
Till Spring again shall call forth every bell,
  And dress with humid hands her wreaths again.—
Ah! poor humanity! so frail, so fair,
  Are the fond visions of thy early day,
Till tyrant passion, and corrosive care,
  Bid all thy fairy colors fade away!
Another May new buds and flowers shall bring;
Ah! why has happiness—no second Spring?

1784

Endnotes

- Note 1: Anemonies. *Anemony Nemeroso.* The wood Anemony [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 1

To Sleep

Come, balmy Sleep! tired nature's soft resort!
  On these sad temples all thy poppies shed;
And bid gay dreams, from Morpheus'[1] airy court,
  Float in light vision round my aching head!
Secure of all thy blessings, partial[2] Power!
  On his hard bed the peasant throws him down;
And the poor sea boy, in the rudest hour,
  Enjoys thee more than he who wears a crown.[3]
Clasp'd in her faithful shepherd's guardian arms,
  Well may the village girl sweet slumbers prove
And they, O gentle Sleep! still taste thy charms,
  Who wake to labor, liberty, and love.
But still thy opiate aid dost thou deny
To calm the anxious breast; to close the streaming
  eye.

1784

Endnotes

- Note 1: Greek god of dreams.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Friendly, but also biased.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast / seal up the ship boy's eyes, and rock his brains / In cradle of the rude impetuous surge? Shakespeare's *Henry IV* [*Smith's note*]. It was "imperious surge" in the original.Return to reference 3

To the North Star[1]

(Supposed to Be Written by Werter)

To thy bright beams I turn my swimming eyes,[2]
  Fair, fav'rite planet! which in happier days
Saw my young hopes, ah! faithless hopes!—arise;
  And on my passion shed propitious rays!
Now nightly wandering mid the tempests drear
  That howl the woods, and rocky steeps among,
I love to see thy sudden light appear
  Thro' the swift clouds—driv'n by the wind along:
Or in the turbid water, rude and dark,
  O'er whose wild stream the gust of Winter raves,
Thy trembling light with pleasure still I mark,
  Gleam in faint radiance on the foaming waves!
So o'er my soul short rays of reason fly,
Then fade:—and leave me, to despair and die!

1786, 1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: This and the following sonnet were placed third and fifth, respectively, in a sequence of five sonnets Smith identified as "supposed to be written by Werter." *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel featuring a suicidally love-sick hero, was a pan-European phenomenon.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "The greater Bear, favourite of all of the constellations; for when I left you of an evening, it used to shine opposite your window." *Sorrows of Werter. Volume Second* [*Smith's note*]. Ursa Major, commonly known as the Big Dipper, is oriented near

(but does not in fact include) the North Star.Return to reference 2

By the Same

(Just before his death)

Why should I wish to hold in this low sphere[1]
'A frail and feverish being?'[2] Wherefore try
Poorly from day to day to linger here,
Against the powerful hand of destiny?
By those who know the force of hopeless care,
On the worn heart—I sure shall be forgiven,
If to elude dark guilt, and dire despair,
I go uncall'd—to mercy and to Heaven!
Oh thou! to save whose peace I now depart,
Will thy soft mind, thy poor lost friend deplore,
When worms shall feed on this devoted heart,[3]
Where even thy image shall be found no more?
Yet may thy pity mingle not with pain,
For then thy hapless lover—dies in vain!

1786, 1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: "May my death remove every obstacle to your happiness. Be at peace, I intreat you be at peace." *Sorrows of Werter. Volume Second* [*Smith's note*]. The speaker opposes the "low sphere" of earth to a heavenly higher sphere.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Milton, *Comus* 1.8.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Smith's note cites as inspiration for this line Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Eloise* (1761), like *The Sorrows of Young Werther* a foundational epistolary novel of sensibility.Return to reference 3

To Night[1]

I love thee, mournful, sober-suited Night!
When the faint moon, yet lingering in her wane,
And veil'd in clouds, with pale uncertain light
Hangs o'er the waters of the restless main.
In deep depression sunk, the enfeebled mind
Will to the deaf cold elements complain,
And tell the embosom'd grief, however vain,
To sullen surges and the viewless wind.
Though no repose on thy dark breast I find,
I still enjoy thee—cheerless as thou art;
For in thy quiet gloom the exhausted heart
Is calm, though wretched; hopeless, yet resign'd.
While to the winds and waves its sorrows given,
May reach—though lost on earth—the ear of
Heaven!

1788

Endnotes

- Note 1: This sonnet is one of several of those included in the *Elegiac Sonnets* to have appeared initially in one of Smith's novels—in this case, *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788), where, speaking in a "low, but extremely expressive voice," the novel's romantic hero, Godolphin, recites these lines, "addressed to Night," on the deck of a boat making a nighttime crossing of the English Channel.Return to reference 1

Written in the Church-Yard at Middleton in Sussex[1]

Press'd by the Moon, mute arbitress of tides,
  While the loud equinox its power combines,
  The sea no more its swelling surge confines,
But o'er the shrinking land sublimely rides.
The wild blast, rising from the Western cave,
  Drives the huge billows from their heaving bed;
  Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead,
And breaks the silent sabbath of the grave!
With shells and sea-weed mingled, on the shore
  Lo! their bones whiten in the frequent wave;
  But vain to them the winds and waters rave;
They hear the warring elements no more:
While I am doom'd—by life's long storm opprest,
To gaze with envy on their gloomy rest.

1789

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Middleton is a village on the margin of the sea, in Sussex, containing only two or three houses. There were formerly several acres of ground between its small church and the sea, which now, by its continual encroachments, approaches within a few feet of this half ruined and humble edifice. The wall, which once surrounded the churchyard, is entirely swept away, many of the graves broken up, and the remains of bodies interred washed into the sea: whence human bones are found among the sand and shingles on the shore [*Smith's note*].
  Return to reference 1

To Fancy

Thee, Queen of Shadows!—shall I still invoke,
  Still love the scenes thy sportive pencil drew,
When on mine eyes the early radiance broke
  Which shew'd the beauteous, rather than the true!
Alas! long since, those glowing tints are dead,
  And now 'tis thine in darkest hues to dress[1]
The spot where pale Experience hangs her head
  O'er the sad grave of murder'd Happiness!
Thro' thy false medium then, no longer view'd,
  May fancy'd pain and fancy'd pleasure fly,
    And I, as from me all thy dreams depart,
Be to my wayward destiny subdu'd;
  Nor seek perfection with a poet's eye,
    Nor suffer anguish with a poet's heart!

1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: Make ready, prepare.Return to reference 1

On Being Cautioned against Walking on an Headland Overlooking the Sea, Because It Was Frequented by a Lunatic

Is there a solitary wretch who hies
  To the tall cliff, with starting pace or slow,
And, measuring, views with wild and hollow eyes
  Its distance from the waves that chide below;
Who, as the sea-born gale with frequent sighs
  Chills his cold bed upon the mountain turf,
With hoarse, half-utter'd lamentation, lies
  Murmuring responses to the dashing surf?
In moody sadness, on the giddy brink,
  I see him more with envy than with fear;
He has no *nice felicities* that shrink[1]
  From giant horrors; wildly wandering here,
He seems (uncursed with reason) not to know
The depth or the duration of his woe.

1797

Endnotes

- Note 1: " 'Tis delicate felicity that shrinks / when rocking winds are loud." Walpole [*Smith's note*]. Smith is citing Horace Walpole's 1768 tragedy *The Mysterious Mother* I.70.Return to reference 1

To the Insect of the Gossamer[1]

Small, viewless Aeronaut,[2] that by the line
Of Gossamer suspended, in mid air
Float'st on a sun beam—Living Atom, where
Ends thy breeze-guided voyage;—with what design
In Aether[3] dost thou launch thy form minute,
Mocking the eye?—Alas! before the veil
Of denser clouds shall hide thee, the pursuit
Of the keen Swift[4] may end thy fairy sail!—
Thus on the golden thread that Fancy weaves
Buoyant, as Hope's illusive° flattery breathes,
The young and visionary Poet leaves
Life's dull realities, while sevenfold wreaths
Of rainbow-light around his head revolve.
Ah! soon at Sorrow's touch the radiant dreams
dissolve!

1797

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  A long endnote accompanied this sonnet in *Elegiac Sonnets an Other Poems*: "The almost imperceptible threads floating in the air, towards the end of Summer or Autumn, in a still evening, sometimes are so numerous as to be felt on the face and hand It is on these that a minute species of spider convey themselve from place to place; sometimes rising with the wind to a great height in the air." Smith continues by quoting descriptions of th phenomenon from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the scientis poet Erasmus Darwin's *The Economy of Vegetation* (1791). (Fo more on Darwin, see above, pp. 65–68.) She then turns to

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where Mercutio imagines the [Return to reference 1]
- Note 2: *Aeronaut* can designate both a human balloonist, who floats through the air, and the kind of spider that does the same.[Return to reference 2]
- Note 3: Air. The term was still sometimes used to designate the regions of space above the clouds or the refined, pure atmosphere breathed in heaven.[Return to reference 3]
- Note 4: An insect-eating bird.[Return to reference 4]

Notes

- °: *illusory*[Return to reference °]

The Sea View[1]

The upland shepherd, as reclined he lies
  On the soft turf that clothes the mountain brow,
Marks the bright sea-line mingling with the skies;
  Or from his course celestial, sinking slow,
  The summer-sun in purple radiance low,
Blaze on the western waters; the wide scene
  Magnificent, and tranquil, seems to spread
Even o'er the rustic's breast a joy serene,
  When, like dark plague-spots by the Demons shed,
Charged deep with death, upon the waves, far seen,
  Move the war-freighted ships; and fierce and red,
  Flash their destructive fire.—The mangled dead
And dying victims then pollute the flood.
Ah! thus man spoils Heaven's glorious works with
  blood!

1797

Endnotes

- Note 1: Suggested by the recollection of having seen, some years since, on a beautiful evening of Summer, an engagement between two armed ships, from the high down called the Beacon Hill, near Brighthelmstone [*Smith's note*]. Smith is referring to a location near Brighton.Return to reference 1

The Swallow[1]

The gorse[2] is yellow on the heath,
The banks with speed well[3] flowers are gay,
The oaks are budding; and beneath,
The hawthorn soon will bear the wreath,
The silver wreath of May.

The welcome guest of settled Spring,
The Swallow too is come at last;
Just at sun-set, when thrushes sing,
I saw her dash with rapid wing,
And hail'd her as she pass'd.

Come, summer visitant, attach
To my reed° roof your nest of clay,
And let my ear your music catch
Low twittering underneath the thatch
At the gray dawn of day.

As fables tell, an Indian Sage,[4]
The Hindostani woods among,
Could in his desert hermitage,
As if 'twere mark'd in written page,
Translate the wild bird's song,

I wish I did his power possess,
That I might learn, fleet bird, from thee,
What our vain systems only guess,
And know from what wide wilderness
You came across the sea.

I would a little while restrain

Your rapid wing, that I might hear
Whether on clouds that bring the rain,
You sail'd above the western main,
The wind your charioteer.

In Afric, does the sultry gale
Thro' spicy bower, and palmy grove,
Bear the repeated Cuckoo's tale?
Dwells *there* a time, the wandering Rail
Or the itinerant Dove?[5]

Were you in Asia? O relate,
If there your fabled sister's woes
She seem'd in sorrow to narrate;
Or sings she but to celebrate
Her nuptials with the rose?[6]

I would enquire how journeying long,
The vast and pathless ocean o'er,
You ply again those pinions strong,
And come to build anew among[7]
The scenes you left before;

But if, as colder breezes blow,
Prophetic of the waning year,
You hide, tho' none know when or how,
In the cliff's excavated brow,[8]
And linger torpid here;

Thus lost to life, what favouring dream
Bids you to happier hours awake;
And tells, that dancing in the beam,
The light gnat hovers o'er the stream,
The May-fly on the lake?

Or if, by instinct taught to know

Approaching dearth of insect food;
To isles and willowy aits° you go,[9]
And crouding on the pliant bough,
Sink in the dimpling flood:

How learn ye, while the cold waves boom
Your deep and ouxy couch above,
The time when flowers of promise bloom,
And call you from your transient tomb,
To light, and life, and love?

Alas! how little can be known,
Her sacred veil where Nature draws;
Let baffled Science humbly own,
Her mysteries understood alone,
By *Him* who gives her laws.

1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: This poem appeared posthumously in 1807 both in the last of Smith's books for children, the ornithological handbook *The History of Birds*, and in her *Beachy Head, Fables, and Other Poems*, the source of the text used here.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Gorse-Furze.—Ulex Europæus. Called so in many counties of England [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Veronica chamœdrys.—This elegant flower, though not celebrated like the Primrose, Cowslip, and Daisy, is in all its varieties one of the most beautiful of our indigenous plants [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: There are two or three fables that relate the knowledge acquired by some Indian recluse, of the language of birds [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Cuckoo, the Rail, and many species of Doves, are all emigrants [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5

- Note 6:
  Alluding to the Ovidian fable of the Metamorphosis of Procne and Philomela into the Swallow and the Nightingale; and to the oriental story of the Loves of the Nightingale and the Rose; which is told with much elegant extravagance in the Botanic Garden [*Smith's note*]. Smith's reference to Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), later included in his 1791 *Botanic Garden*, may be to a long footnote to canto 1, line 320, or to canto 4, lines 309–20. She couples Darwin's book with the fable of rape and female revenge found in book 6 of the classical Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. For more on Darwin, see pp. 65–68, above.
  Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  Accurate observers have remarked, that an equal number of these birds return every year to build in the places they frequented before; and that each pair set immediately about repairing a particular nest [*Smith's note*]. Although swallows' return to their nests is a well-known sign of spring, 18th- and early-19th-century scientists were mystified by where the birds might be during their absence. The matter was debated vigorously by figures such as Gilbert White, author in 1789 of *The Natural History of Selborne*, which Smith mentions in her note to line 58 (see pp. 62–65, above). Some debaters opted for migration, and others, hibernation, the "torpid state" Smith
  Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Many persons have supported the idea, that the Hirundines linger concealed among rocks and hollows in a torpid state, and that all do not emigrate [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Another opinion is, that the Swallows, at the time they disappear, assemble about rivers and ponds, and a number of them settling on the pliant boughs of willow and osier, sink by their weight into the water; at the bottom of which they remain torpid till the ensuing spring. For the foundation of these various

theories, see “White’s History of Selbourne” [*Smith’s note*].Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *thatched*Return to reference °
- °: *small islands*Return to reference °

Beachy Head[1]

On thy stupendous summit, rock sublime!
That o'er the channel rear'd, half way at sea
The mariner at early morning hails,[2]
I would recline; while Fancy should go forth,
And represent the strange and awful hour
Of vast concussion;[3] when the Omnipotent
Stretch'd forth his arm, and rent the solid hills,
Bidding the impetuous main flood rush between
The rifted shores, and from the continent
Eternally divided this green isle.
Imperial lord of the high southern coast!
From thy projecting head-land I would mark
Far in the east the shades of night disperse,
Melting and thinned, as from the dark blue wave
Emerging, brilliant rays of arrowy light°
Dart from the horizon; when the glorious sun
Just lifts above it his resplendent orb.
Advances now, with feathery silver touched,
The rippling tide of flood; glisten the sands,
While, inmates of the chalky clefts that scar
Thy sides precipitous, with shrill harsh cry,
Their white wings glancing in the level beam,
The terns, and gulls, and tarrocks, seek their food,[4]
And thy rough hollows echo to the voice
Of the gray choughs,[5] and ever restless daws,
With clamour, not unlike the chiding hounds,
While the lone shepherd, and his baying dog,
Drive to thy turfy crest his bleating flock.

The high meridian° of the day is past,

And Ocean now, reflecting the calm Heaven,
Is of cerulean hue; and murmurs low
The tide of ebb, upon the level sands.
The sloop, her angular canvas shifting still,
Catches the light and variable airs
That but a little crisp the summer sea,
Dimpling its tranquil surface.

Afar off,
And just emerging from the arch immense
Where seem to part the elements, a fleet
Of fishing vessels stretch their lesser sails;
While more remote, and like a dubious spot
Just hanging in the horizon, laden deep,
The ship of commerce richly freighted, makes
Her slower progress, on her distant voyage,
Bound to the orient climates, where the sun
Matures the spice within its odorous shell,
And, rivalling the gray worm's filmy toil,[6]
Bursts from its pod the vegetable down;[7]
Which in long turban'd wreaths, from torrid heat
Defends the brows of Asia's countless castes.
There the Earth hides within her glowing breast
The beamy adamant,[8] and the round pearl
Enchased° in rugged covering; which the slave,
With perilous and breathless toil, tears off
From the rough sea-rock, deep beneath the waves.
These are the toys of Nature; and her sport
Of little estimate in Reason's eye:
And they who reason, with abhorrence see
Man, for such gaudes and baubles, violate
The sacred freedom of his fellow man—
Erroneous estimate! As Heaven's pure air,
Fresh as it blows on this aërial height,
Or sound of seas upon the stony strand,

Or inland, the gay harmony of birds,
And winds that wander in the leafy woods;
Are to the unadulterate taste more worth
Than the elaborate harmony, brought out
From fretted stop° or modulated airs
Of vocal science.—So the brightest gems,
Glancing resplendent on the regal crown,
Or trembling in the high born beauty's ear,
Are poor and paltry, to the lovely light
Of the fair star,° that as the day declines
Attendent on her queen, the crescent moon,
Bathes her bright tresses in the eastern wave.
For now the sun is verging to the sea,
And as he westward sinks, the floating clouds
Suspended, move upon the evening gale,
And gathering round his orb, as if to shade
The insufferable brightness, they resign
Their gauzy whiteness; and more warm'd, assume
All hues of purple. There, transparent gold
Mingles with ruby tints, and sapphire gleams,
And colours, such as Nature through her works
Shews only in the ethereal canopy.
Thither aspiring Fancy fondly soars,
Wandering sublime thro' visionary vales,
Where bright pavilions rise, and trophies, fann'd
By airs celestial; and adorn'd with wreaths
Of flowers that bloom amid elysian bowers.
Now bright, and brighter still the colours glow,
Till half the lustrous orb within the flood
Seems to retire: the flood reflecting still
Its splendor, and in mimic glory drest;
Till the last ray shot upward, fires the clouds
With blazing crimson; then in paler light,
Long lines of tenderer radiance, lingering yield
To partial darkness; and on the opposing side
The early moon distinctly rising, throws

Her pearly brilliance on the trembling tide.

The fishermen, who at set seasons pass
Many a league off at sea their toiling night,
Now hail their comrades, from their daily task
Returning; and make ready for their own,
With the night tide commencing:—The night tide
Bears a dark vessel on, whose hull and sails
Mark her a coaster[9] from the north. Her keel
Now ploughs the sand; and sidelong now she leans,
While with loud clamours her athletic crew
Unload her; and resounds the busy hum
Along the wave-worn rocks. Yet more remote
Where the rough cliff hangs beetling° o'er its base,
All breathes repose; the water's rippling sound
Scarce heard; but now and then the sea-snipe's[1] cry
Just tells that something living is abroad;
And sometimes crossing on the moonbright line,
Glimmers the skiff, faintly discern'd awhile,
Then lost in shadow.

Contemplation here,
High on her throne of rock, aloof may sit,
And bid recording Memory unfold
Her scroll voluminous—bid her retrace
The period, when from Neustria's hostile shore°
The Norman launch'd his galleys, and the bay
O'er which that mass of ruin[2] frowns even now
In vain and sullen menace, then received
The new invaders; a proud martial race,
Of Scandinavia[3] the undaunted sons,
Whom Dogon, Fier-a-bras, and Humfroi led
To conquest: while Trinacria to their power
Yielded her wheaten garland; and when thou,

Parthenope! within thy fertile bay
Receiv'd the victors—

In the mailed ranks
Of Normans landing on the British coast
Rode Taillefer; and with astounding voice
Thunder'd the war song daring Roland sang
First in the fierce contention: vainly brave,
One not inglorious struggle England made—
But failing, saw the Saxon heptarchy[4]
Finish for ever.——Then the holy pile,[5]
Yet seen upon the field of conquest, rose,
Where to appease heaven's wrath for so much blood,
The conqueror bade unceasing prayers ascend,
And requiems for the slayers and the slain.
But let not modern Gallia° form from hence
Presumptuous hopes, that ever thou again,
Queen of the isles! shalt crouch to foreign arms.
The enervate sons of Italy may yield;
And the Iberian, all his trophies torn
And wrapp'd in Superstition's monkish weed,
May shelter his abasement, and put on
Degrading fetters. Never, never thou!
Imperial mistress of the obedient sea;
But thou, in thy integrity secure,
Shalt now undaunted meet a world in arms.

England! 'twas where this promontory rears
Its rugged brow above the channel wave,
Parting the hostile nations, that thy fame,
Thy naval fame was tarnish'd, at what time
Thou, leagued with the Batavian,° gavest to France[6]
One day of triumph—triumph the more loud,
Because even then so rare. Oh! well redeem'd,
Since, by a series of illustrious men,

Such as no other country ever rear'd,
To vindicate her cause. It is a list
Which, as Fame echoes it, blanches the cheek
Of bold Ambition; while the despot feels
The extorted sceptre tremble in his grasp.

From even the proudest roll° by glory fill'd,
How gladly the reflecting mind returns
To simple scenes of peace and industry,
Where, bosom'd in some valley of the hills
Stands the lone farm; its gate with tawny ricks°
Surrounded, and with granaries and sheds,
Roof'd with green mosses, and by elms and ash
Partially shaded; and not far remov'd
The hut of sea-flints built; the humble home
Of one, who sometimes watches on the heights,[7]
When hid in the cold mist of passing clouds,
The flock, with dripping fleeces, are dispers'd
O'er the wide down; then from some ridged point
That overlooks the sea, his eager eye
Watches the bark that for his signal waits
To land its merchandize:—Quitting for this
Clandestine traffic his more honest toil,
The crook abandoning, he braves himself
The heaviest snow-storm of December's night,
When with conflicting winds the ocean raves,
And on the tossing boat, unfearing mounts
To meet the partners of the perilous trade,
And share their hazard. Well it were for him,
If no such commerce of destruction known,
He were content with what the earth affords
To human labour; even where she seems
Reluctant most. More happy is the hind,°
Who, with his own hands rears on some black moor,
Or turbary,° his independent hut
Cover'd with heather, whence the slow white smoke

Of smouldering peat arises——A few sheep,
His best possession, with his children share
The rugged shed when wintry tempests blow;
But, when with Spring's return the green blades rise
Amid the russet heath, the household live
Joint tenants of the waste° throughout the day,
And often, from her nest, among the swamps,
Where the gemm'd sun-dew grows, or fring'd buck-bean,[8]
They scare the plover,[9] that with plaintive cries
Flutters, as° sorely wounded, down the wind.
Rude, and but just remov'd from savage life
Is the rough dweller among scenes like these,
(Scenes all unlike the poet's fabling dreams
Describing Arcady[1])—But he is free;
The dread that follows on illegal acts
He never feels; and his industrious mate
Shares in his labour. Where the brook is traced
By crowding osiers,° and the black coot[2] hides
Among the plashy reeds, her diving brood,
The matron wades; gathering the long green rush[3]
That well prepar'd hereafter lends its light
To her poor cottage, dark and cheerless else
Thro' the drear hours of Winter. Otherwhile
She leads her infant group where charlock° grows
"Unprofitably gay,"[4] or to the fields,
Where congregate the linnet and the finch,
That on the thistles, so profusely spread,
Feast in the desert; the poor family
Early resort, extirpating with care
These, and the gaudier mischief of the ground;
Then flames the high rais'd heap; seen afar off
Like hostile war-fires flashing to the sky.[5]
Another task is theirs: On fields that shew
As° angry Heaven had rain'd sterility,

Stony and cold, and hostile to the plough,
Where clamouring loud, the evening curlew[6] runs
And drops her spotted eggs among the flints;
The mother and the children pile the stones
In rugged pyramids;—and all this toil
They patiently encounter; well content
On their flock bed[7] to slumber undisturb'd
Beneath the smoky roof they call their own.
Oh! little knows the sturdy hind, who stands
Gazing, with looks where envy and contempt
Are often strangely mingled, on the car°
Where prosperous Fortune sits; what secret care
Or sick satiety is often hid,
Beneath the splendid outside: *He* knows not
How frequently the child of Luxury
Enjoying nothing, flies from place to place
In chase of pleasure that eludes his grasp;
And that content is e'en less found by him,
Than by the labourer, whose pick-axe smooths
The road before his chariot; and who doffs
What *was* an hat; and as the train pass on,
Thinks how one day's expenditure, like this,
Would cheer him for long months, when to his toil
The frozen earth closes her marble breast.
Ah! who *is* happy? Happiness! a word
That like false fire,° from marsh effluvia born,
Misleads the wanderer, destin'd to contend
In the world's wilderness, with want or woe—
Yet *they* are happy, who have never ask'd
What good or evil means. The boy
That on the river's margin gaily plays,
Has heard that Death is there.—He knows not Death,
And therefore fears it not; and venturing in
He gains a bullrush, or a minnow—then,
At certain peril, for a worthless prize,

A crow's, or raven's nest, he climbs the boll°
Of some tall pine; and of his prowess proud,
Is for a moment happy. Are *your* cares,
Ye who despise him, never worse applied?
The village girl is happy, who sets forth
To distant fair, gay in her Sunday suit,
With cherry colour'd knots, and flourish'd shawl,
And bonnet newly purchas'd. So is he
Her little brother, who his mimic drum
Beats, till he drowns her rural lovers' oaths
Of constant faith, and still increasing love;
Ah! yet a while, and half those oaths believ'd,
Her happiness is vanish'd; and the boy
While yet a stripling, finds the sound he lov'd
Has led him on, till he has given up
His freedom, and his happiness together.
I once was happy, when while yet a child,
I learn'd to love these upland solitudes,
And, when elastic as the mountain air,
To my light spirit, care was yet unknown
And evil unforseen:—Early it came,
And childhood scarcely passed, I was condemned,
A guiltless exile, silently to sigh,
While Memory, with faithful pencil, drew
The contrast; and regretting, I compar'd
With the polluted smoky atmosphere
And dark and stifling streets, the southern hills
That to the setting Sun, their graceful heads
Rearing, o'erlook the frith,° where Vecta[8] breaks
With her white rocks, the strong impetuous tide,
When western winds the vast Atlantic urge
To thunder on the coast.—Haunts of my youth!
Scenes of fond day dreams, I behold ye yet!
Where 'twas so pleasant by thy northern slopes
To climb the winding sheep-path, aided oft

By scatter'd thorns: whose spiny branches bore
Small woolly tufts, spoils of the vagrant lamb
There seeking shelter from the noon-day sun;
And pleasant, seated on the short soft turf,
To look beneath upon the hollow way
While heavily upward mov'd the labouring wain,°
And stalking slowly by, the sturdy hind
To ease his panting team, stopp'd with a stone
The grating wheel.

Advancing higher still
The prospect widens, and the village church
But little, o'er the lowly roofs around
Rears its gray belfry, and its simple vane;
Those lowly roofs of thatch are half conceal'd
By the rude arms of trees, lovely in spring,[9]
When on each bough, the rosy-tinctur'd bloom
Sits thick, and promises autumnal plenty.
For even those orchards round the Norman Farms,
Which, as their owners mark the promis'd fruit,
Console them for the vineyards of the south,
Surpass not these.

Where woods of ash, and beech,
And partial copses, fringe the green hill foot,
The upland shepherd rears his modest home,
There wanders by, a little nameless stream
That from the hill wells forth, bright now and clear,
Or after rain with chalky mixture gray,
But still refreshing in its shallow course,
The cottage garden; most for use design'd,
Yet not of beauty destitute. The vine
Mantles the little casement; yet the briar
Drops fragrant dew among the July flowers;
And pansies rayed, and freak'd and mottled pinks
Grow among balm, and rosemary and rue;

There honeysuckles flaunt, and roses blow
Almost uncultured:° Some with dark green leaves
Contrast their flowers of pure unsullied white;
Others, like velvet robes of regal state
Of richest crimson, while in thorny moss
Enshrined and cradled, the most lovely, wear
The hues of youthful beauty's glowing cheek.—
With fond regret I recollect e'en now
In Spring and Summer, what delight I felt
Among these cottage gardens, and how much
Such artless nosegays, knotted with a rush
By village housewife or her ruddy maid,
Were welcome to me; soon and simply pleas'd.

An early worshipper at Nature's shrine,
I loved her rudest scenes—warrens,° and heaths,
And yellow commons, and birch-shaded hollows,
And hedge rows, bordering unfrequented lanes
Bowered with wild roses, and the clasping woodbine
Where purple tassels of the tangling vetch[1]
With bittersweet, and bryony inweave,[2]
And the dew fills the silver bindweed's[3] cups.—
I loved to trace the brooks whose humid banks
Nourish the harebell, and the freckled pagil;[4]
And stroll among o'ershadowing woods of beech,
Lending in Summer, from the heats of noon
A whispering shade; while haply there reclines
Some pensive lover of uncultur'd flowers,°
Who, from the tumps° with bright green mosses clad,
Plucks the wood sorrel,[5] with its light thin leaves,
Heart-shaped, and triply folded; and its root
Creeping like beaded coral; or who there
Gathers, the copse's pride, anémones,[6]
With rays like golden studs on ivory laid

Most delicate: but touch'd with purple clouds,
Fit crown for April's fair but changeful brow.

Ah! hills so early loved! in fancy still
I breathe your pure keen air; and still behold
Those widely spreading views, mocking alike
The Poet and the Painter's utmost art.
And still, observing objects more minute,
Wondering remark the strange and foreign forms
Of sea-shells; with the pale calcareous° soil
Mingled, and seeming of resembling substance.[7]
Tho' surely the blue Ocean (from the heights
Where the downs westward trend, but dimly seen)
Here never roll'd its surge. Does Nature then
Mimic, in wanton mood, fantastic shapes
Of bivalves, and inwreathed volutes,[8] that cling
To the dark sea-rock of the wat'ry world?
Or did this range of chalky mountains, once[9]
Form a vast basin, where the Ocean waves
Swell'd fathomless? What time these fossil shells,
Buoy'd on their native element, were thrown
Among the imbedding calx:° when the huge hill
Its giant bulk heaved, and in strange ferment
Grew up a guardian barrier, 'twixt the sea
And the green level of the sylvan weald.[1]

Ah! very vain is Science' proudest boast,
And but a little light its flame yet lends
To its most ardent votaries; since from whence
These fossil forms are seen, is but conjecture,
Food for vague theories, or vain dispute,
While to his daily task the peasant goes,
Unheeding such inquiry; with no care
But that the kindly change of sun and shower,
Fit for his toil the earth he cultivates.

As little recks the herdsman of the hill,
Who on some turfy knoll, idly reclined,
Watches his wether° flock, that deep beneath
Rest the remains of men, of whom is left[2]
No traces in the records of mankind,
Save what these half obliterated mounds
And half fill'd trenches doubtfully impart
To some lone antiquary; who on times remote,
Since which two thousand years have roll'd away,
Loves to contemplate. He perhaps may trace,
Or fancy he can trace, the oblong square
Where the mail'd legions, under Claudius,[3] rear'd
The rampire,° or excavated fosse° delved;
What time the huge unwieldy Elephant[4]
Auxiliary reluctant, hither led,
From Afric's forest glooms and tawny sands,
First felt the Northern blast, and his vast frame
Sunk useless; whence in after ages found,
The wondering hinds, on those enormous bones
Gaz'd; and in giants[5] dwelling on the hills
Believed and marvell'd.—

Hither, Ambition come!
Come and behold the nothingness of all
For which you carry thro' the oppressed Earth,
War, and its train of horrors—see where tread
The innumerous° hoofs of flocks above the works
By which the warrior sought to register
His glory, and immortalize his name.—
The pirate Dane,[6] who from his circular camp
Bore in destructive robbery, fire and sword
Down thro' the vale, sleeps unremember'd here;
And here, beneath the green sward, rests alike
The savage native,[7] who his acorn meal

Shar'd with the herds, that ranged the pathless
woods;
And the centurion, who on these wide hills
Encamping, planted the Imperial Eagle.°
All, with the lapse of Time, have passed away,
Even as the clouds, with dark and dragon shapes,
Or like vast promontories crown'd with towers,
Cast their broad shadows on the downs: then sail
Far to the northward, and their transient gloom
Is soon forgotten.

But from thoughts like these,
By human crimes suggested, let us turn
To where a more attractive study courts
The wanderer of the hills; while shepherd girls
Will from among the fescue[8] bring him flowers,
Of wonderous mockery; some resembling bees
In velvet vest, intent on their sweet toil,[9]
While others mimic flies,[1] that lightly sport
In the green shade, or float along the pool,
But here seen perch'd upon the slender stalk,
And gathering honey dew. While in the breeze
That wafts the thistle's plumed seed along,
Blue bells wave tremulous. The mountain thyme[2]
Purples the hassock° of the heaving mole,
And the short turf is gay with tormentil,[3]
And bird's foot trefoil, and the lesser tribes
Of hawkweed;[4] spangling it with fringed stars.—
Near where a richer tract of cultur'd land
Slopes to the south; and burnished by the sun,
Bend in the gale of August, floods of corn;
The guardian of the flock, with watchful care,[5]
Repels by voice and dog the encroaching sheep—
While his boy visits every wired trap[6]
That scars the turf; and from the pit-falls takes

The timid migrants,[7] who from distant wilds,
Warrens, and stone quarries, are destined thus
To lose their short existence. But unsought
By Luxury yet, the Shepherd still protects
The social bird,[8] who from his native haunts
Of willowy current, or the rushy pool,
Follows the fleecy crowd, and flirts and skims,
In fellowship among them.

Where the knoll
More elevated takes the changeful winds,
The windmill rears its vanes; and thitherward
With his white load,° the master travelling,
Scares the rooks rising slow on whispering wings,
While o'er his head, before the summer sun
Lights up the blue expanse, heard more than seen,
The lark sings matins; and above the clouds
Floating, embathes his spotted breast in dew.
Beneath the shadow of a gnarled thorn,
Bent by the sea blast[9] from a seat of turf
With fairy nosegays strewn, how wide the view![1]
Till in the distant north it melts away,
And mingles indiscriminate with clouds:
But if the eye could reach so far, the mart
Of England's capital, its domes and spires
Might be perceived.—Yet hence the distant range
Of Kentish hills,[2] appear in purple haze;
And nearer, undulate the wooded heights,
And airy summits,[3] that above the mole°
Rise in green beauty; and the beacon'd ridge
Of Black-down[4] shagg'd with heath, and swelling rude
Like a dark island from the vale; its brow
Catching the last rays of the evening sun
That gleam between the nearer park's old oaks,

Then lighten up the river, and make prominent
The portal, and the ruin'd battlements[5]
Of that dismantled fortress; rais'd what time
The Conqueror's successors fiercely fought,
Tearing with civil feuds the desolate land.
But now a tiller of the soil dwells there,
And of the turret's loop'd and rafter'd halls
Has made an humbler homestead—Where he sees,
Instead of armed foemen, herds that graze
Along his yellow meadows; or his flocks
At evening from the upland driv'n to fold.—

In such a castellated mansion once
A stranger chose his home; and where hard by
In rude disorder fallen, and hid with brushwood
Lay fragments gray of towers and buttresses,
Among the ruins, often he would muse.—
His rustic meal soon ended, he was wont
To wander forth, listening the evening sounds
Of rushing milldam,[6] or the distant team,
Or night-jar, chasing fern-flies:[7] the tir'd hind
Pass'd him at nightfall, wondering he should sit
On the hill top so late: they from the coast
Who sought by-paths with their clandestine load,°
Saw with suspicious doubt, the lonely man
Cross on their way: but village maidens thought
His senses injur'd; and with pity say
That he, poor youth! must have been cross'd in love
—

For often, stretch'd upon the mountain turf
With folded arms, and eyes intently fix'd
Where ancient elms and firs obscured a grange,°
Some little space within the vale below,
They heard him, as complaining of his fate,
And to the murmuring wind, of cold neglect

And baffled hope he told.—The peasant girls
These plaintive sounds remember, and even now
Among them may be heard the stranger's songs.

Were I a Shepherd on the hill
  And ever as the mists withdrew
Could see the willows of the rill
Shading the footway to the mill
  Where once I walk'd with you—

And as away Night's shadows sail,
  And sounds of birds and brooks arise,
Believe, that from the woody vale
I hear your voice upon the gale
  In soothing melodies;

And viewing from the Alpine height,
  The prospect dress'd in hues of air,
Could say, while transient colours bright
Touch'd the fair scene with dewy light,
  'Tis, that *her* eyes are there!

I think, I could endure my lot
  And linger on a few short years,
And then, by all but you forgot,
Sleep, where the turf that clothes the spot
  May claim some pitying tears.

For 'tis not easy to forget
  One, who thro' life has lov'd you still,
And you, however late, might yet
With sighs to Memory giv'n, regret°
  The Shepherd of the Hill.

Yet otherwhile it seem'd as if young Hope
Her flattering pencil gave to Fancy's hand,
And in his wanderings, rear'd to sooth his soul

Ideal bowers of pleasure.—Then, of Solitude
And of his hermit life, still more enamour'd,
His home was in the forest; and wild fruits
And bread sustain'd him. There in early spring
The Barkmen[8] found him, e'er the sun arose;
There at their daily toil, the Wedgecutters[9]
Beheld him thro' the distant thicket move.
The shaggy dog following the truffle hunter,[1]
Bark'd at the loiterer; and perchance at night
Belated villagers from fair or wake,
While the fresh night-wind let the moonbeams in
Between the swaying boughs, just saw him pass,
And then in silence, gliding like a ghost
He vanish'd! Lost among the deepening gloom.—
But near one ancient tree, whose wreathed roots
Form'd a rude couch, love-songs and scatter'd rhymes,
Unfinish'd sentences, or half erased,
And rhapsodies like this, were sometimes found—

Let us to woodland wilds repair
While yet the glittering night-dews seem
To wait the freshly-breathing air,
Precursive of the morning beam,
That rising with advancing day,
Scatters the silver drops away.

An elm, uprooted by the storm,
The trunk with mosses gray and green,
Shall make for us a rustic form,
Where lighter grows the forest scene;
And far among the bowery shades,
Are ferny lawns and grassy glades.

Retiring May to lovely June
Her latest garland now resigns;

The banks with cuckoo-flowers[2] are strewn,
  The woodwalks blue with columbines,[3]
And with its reeds, the wandering stream
Reflects the flag-flower's[4] golden gleam.

There, feathering down the turf to meet,
  Their shadowy arms the beeches spread,
While high above our sylvan seat,
  Lifts the light ash its airy head;
And later leaved, the oaks between
Extend their boughs of vernal green.

The slender birch its paper rind
  Seems offering to divided love,
And shuddering even without a wind
  Aspens, their paler foliage move,
As if some spirit of the air
Breath'd a low sigh in passing there.

The Squirrel in his frolic mood,
  Will fearless bound among the boughs;
Yaffils[5] laugh loudly thro' the wood,
  And murmuring ring-doves tell their vows;
While we, as sweetest woodscents rise,
Listen to woodland melodies.

And I'll contrive a sylvan room
  Against the time of summer heat,
Where leaves, inwoven in Nature's loom,
  Shall canopy our green retreat;
And gales that "close the eye of day"[6]
Shall linger, e'er they die away.

And when a sere and sallow hue
  From early frost the bower receives,
I'll dress the sand rock cave for you,

And strew the floor with heath and leaves,
That you, against the autumnal air
May find securer shelter there.

The Nightingale will then have ceas'd
To sing her moonlight serenade;
But the gay bird with blushing breast,[7]
And Woodlarks[8] still will haunt the shade,
And by the borders of the spring
Reed-wrens[9] will yet be carolling.

The forest hermit's lonely cave
None but such soothing sounds shall reach,
Or hardly heard, the distant wave
Slow breaking on the stony beach;
Or winds, that now sigh soft and low,
Now make wild music as they blow.

And then, before the chilling North
The tawny foliage falling light,
Seems, as it flits along the earth,
The footfall of the busy Sprite,
Who wrapt in pale autumnal gloom,
Calls up the mist-born Mushroom.

Oh! could I hear your soft voice there,
And see you in the forest green
All beauteous as you are, more fair
You'd look, amid the sylvan scene,
And in a wood-girl's simple guise,
Be still more lovely in mine eyes.

Ye phantoms of unreal delight,
Visions of fond delirium born!
Rise not on my deluded sight,
Then leave me drooping and forlorn

To know, such bliss can never be,
Unless Amanda loved like me.

The visionary, nursing dreams like these,
Is not indeed unhappy. Summer woods
Wave over him, and whisper as they wave,
Some future blessings he may yet enjoy.
And as above him sail the silver clouds,
He follows them in thought to distant climes,
Where, far from the cold policy of this,
Dividing him from her he fondly loves,
He, in some island of the southern sea,[1]
May haply build his cane-constructed bower
Beneath the bread-fruit, or aspiring palm,
With long green foliage rippling in the gale.
Oh! let him cherish his ideal bliss—
For what is life, when Hope has ceas'd to strew
Her fragile flowers along its thorny way?
And sad and gloomy are his days, who lives
Of Hope abandon'd!

Just beneath the rock
Where Beachy overpeers the channel wave,
Within a cavern mined by wintry tides
Dwelt one,[2] who long disgusted with the world
And all its ways, appear'd to suffer life
Rather than live; the soul-reviving gale,
Fanning the bean-field, or the thymy° heath,
Had not for many summers breathed on him;
And nothing mark'd to him the season's change,
Save that more gently rose the placid sea,
And that the birds which winter on the coast
Gave place to other migrants; save that the fog,
Hovering no more above the beetling cliffs
Betray'd not then the little careless sheep[3]
On the brink grazing, while their headlong fall

Near the lone Hermit's flint-surrounded home,
Claim'd unavailing pity; for his heart
Was feelingly alive to all that breath'd;
And outraged as he was, in sanguine youth,
By human crimes, he still acutely felt
For human misery.

Wandering on the beach,
He learn'd to augur from the clouds of heaven,
And from the changing colours of the sea,
And sullen murmurs of the hollow cliffs,
Or the dark porpoises,[4] that near the shore
Gambol'd and sported on the level brine
When tempests were approaching: then at night
He listen'd to the wind; and as it drove
The billows with o'erwhelming vehemence
He, starting from his rugged couch, went forth
And hazarding a life, too valueless,
He waded thro' the waves, with plank or pole
Towards where the mariner in conflict dread
Was buffeting for life the roaring surge;
And now just seen, now lost in foaming gulphs,
The dismal gleaming of the clouded moon
Shew'd the dire peril. Often he had snatch'd
From the wild billows, some unhappy man
Who liv'd to bless the hermit of the rocks.
But if his generous cares were all in vain,
And with slow swell the tide of morning bore
Some blue swol'n cor'se° to land; the pale recluse
Dug in the chalk a sepulchre—above
Where the dank sea-wrack° mark'd the utmost tide,
And with his prayers perform'd the obsequies
For the poor helpless stranger.

One dark night
The equinoctial wind blew south by west,

Fierce on the shore;—the bellowing cliffs were shook
Even to their stony base, and fragments fell
Flashing and thundering on the angry flood.
At day-break, anxious for the lonely man,
His cave the mountain shepherds visited,
Tho' sand and banks of weeds had choak'd their way.—
He was not in it; but his drowned cor'se
By the waves wafted, near his former home
Receiv'd the rites of burial. Those who read
Chisel'd within the rock, these mournful lines,
Memorials of his sufferings, did not grieve,
That dying in the cause of charity
His spirit, from its earthly bondage freed,
Had to some better region fled for ever.

1806 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: This is the longest of several works left in manuscript when Smith died in October 1806. It was published in the posthumous volume *Beachy Head, Fables, and Other Poems* the following year. It is not known to what degree Smith considered the poem finished.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In crossing the Channel from the coast of France, Beachy-Head is the first land made [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Alluding to an idea that this Island was once joined to the continent of Europe, and torn from it by some convulsion in Nature. I confess I never could trace the resemblance between the two countries. Yet the cliffs about Dieppe, resemble the chalk cliffs on the Southern coast. But Normandy has no likeness whatever to the part of England opposite to it [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Terns. *Sterna hirundo*, or Sea Swallow. Gulls. *Larus canus.* Tarrocks. *Larus tridactylus* [*Smith's note*].Return to

reference 4

- Note 5: Gray choughs. *Corvus Graculus*, Cornish Choughs, or, as these birds are called by the Sussex people, Saddle-backed Crows, build in great numbers on this coast [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, to produce silk.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Cotton. *Gossypium herbaceum* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Diamonds, the hardest and most valuable of precious stones. For the extraordinary exertions of the Indians in diving for the pearl oysters, see the account of the Pearl fisheries in Percival's *View of Ceylon* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Ship that sails along the coast.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In crossing the channel this bird is heard at night, uttering a short cry, and flitting along near the surface of the waves. The sailors call it the Sea Snipe; but I can find no species of sea bird of which this is the vulgar name. A bird so called inhabits the Lake of Geneva [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pevensey Castle [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  The Scandinavians (modern Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Lapland, &c.) and other inhabitants of the north, began towards the end of the 8th century, to leave their inhospitable climate in search of the produce of more fortunate countries.
  —The North-men made inroads on the coasts of France; and carrying back immense booty, excited their compatriots to engage in the same piratical voyages: and they were afterwards joined by numbers of necessitous and daring adventurers from the coasts of Provence and Sicily.
  —In 844, these wandering innovators had a great number of vessels at sea; and again visiting the coasts of France, Spain,
  Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The seven kingdoms of Saxon England.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Battle Abbey was raised by the Conqueror, and endowed with an ample revenue, that masses might be said night and day for the souls of those who perished in battle [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6:
  In 1690, King William being then in Ireland, Tourville, the French admiral, arrived on the coast of England. His fleet consisted of seventy-eight large ships, and twenty-two fire-ships. Lord Torrington, the English admiral, lay at St. Helens, with only forty English and a few Dutch ships; and conscious of the disadvantage under which he should give battle, he ran up between the enemy's fleet and the coast, to protect it. The queen's council, dictated to by Russel, persuaded her to order Torrington to venture a battle. The orders Torrington appears to have obeyed reluctantly: his fleet now consisted of twenty-two Dutch and thirty-four English ships. Evertson, the Dutch
  Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The shepherds and labourers of this tract of country, a hardy and athletic race of men, are almost universally engaged in the contraband trade, carried on for the coarsest and most destructive spirits, with the opposite coast. When no other vessel will venture to sea, these men hazard their lives to elude the watchfulness of the Revenue officers, and to secure their cargoes [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Sun-dew. *Drosera rotundifolia.* Buck-bean. *Menyanthes trifoliatum* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Plover. *Tringa vanellus* [*Smith's note*]. Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Arcadia, an imagined land of peace and simplicity.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Coot. *Fulica aterrima* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A reedy plant burned for light.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "With blossom'd furze, unprofitably gay." Goldsmith [*Smith's note*]. Smith is citing Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted*

Village, line 194.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: The Beacons formerly lighted up on the hills to give notice of the approach of an enemy. These signals would still be used in case of alarm, if the Telegraph [the signaling apparatus] now substituted could not be distinguished on account of fog or darkness [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Curlew. *Charadrius oedienemus* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A bed stuffed with tufts of wool.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Vecta. The Isle of Wight, which breaks the force of the waves when they are driven by southwest winds against this long and open coast. It is somewhere described as "Vecta shouldering the Western Waves" [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Every cottage in this country has its orchard; and I imagine that not even those of Herefordshire, or Worcestershire, exhibit a more beautiful prospect, when the trees are in bloom, and the "Primavera candida e vermiglia," is every where so enchanting [*Smith's note*]. Smith is quoting Petrarch's sonnet 310, "pure and ruddy spring." Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Vetch. *Vicia sylvatica* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Bittersweet. *Solatium dulcamara.* Bryony. *Bryonia alba* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bindweed. *Convolvulus septum* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Harebell. *Hyacinthus non scriptus.* Pagil. *Primula veris* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sorrel. *Oxalis acetosella* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Anémones. *Anemóne nemorosa.* It appears to be settled on late and excellent authorities, that this word should not be accented on the second syllable, but on the penultima. I have however ventured the more known accentuation, as more generally used, and suiting better the nature of my verse [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 6

- Note 7:
  Among the crumbling chalk I have often found shells, some quite in a fossil state and hardly distinguishable from chalk. Others appeared more recent; cockles, muscles, and periwinkles, I well remember, were among the number; and some whose names I do not know. A great number were like those of small land snails. It is now many years since I made these observations. The appearance of sea-shells so far from the sea excited my surprise, though I then knew nothing of natural history. I have never read any of the late theories of the earth, nor was I ever satisfied with the attempts to explain many of the phenomena which call forth conjecture in those
  Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Spiral-shelled mollusks such as periwinkles. "Bivalves": hinge-shelled mollusks such as clams and oysters.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The theory here slightly hinted at, is taken from an idea started by Mr. White [*Smith's note*]. Smith is referring to Gilbert White, author of *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789; see p. 62, above).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Sussex Weald, a wooded tract of land between the North and South Downs.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: These downs are not only marked with traces of encampments, which from their forms are called Roman or Danish; but there are numerous tumuli [burial mounds] among them. Some of which having been opened a few years ago, were supposed by a learned antiquary to contain the remains of the original natives of the country [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That the legions of Claudius [10 B.C.E.–54 C.E.] were in this part of Britain appears certain. Since this emperor received the submission of Cantii, Atrebates, Irenobates, and Regni, in which latter denomination were included the people of Sussex [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4:

In the year 1740, some workmen digging in the park at Burton in Sussex, discovered, nine feet below the surface, the teeth and bones of an elephant; two of the former were seven feet eight inches in length. There were besides these, tusks, one of which broke in removing it, a grinder not at all decayed, and a part of the jaw-bone, with bones of the knee and thigh, and several others. Some of them remained very lately at Burton House, the seat of John Biddulph, Esq. Others were in possession of the Rev. Dr. Langrish, minister of Petworth at that period, who was present when some of these bones were taken up, and gave it as his opinion, that they had

Return to reference 4

- Note 5: The peasants believe that the large bones sometimes found belonged to giants, who formerly lived on the hills. The devil also has a great deal to do with the remarkable forms of hill and vale: the Devil's Punch Bowl, the Devil's Leaps, and the Devil's Dyke, are names given to deep hollows, or high and abrupt ridges, in this and the neighbouring county [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The incursions of the Danes were for many ages the scourge of this island [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Aborigines of this country lived in woods, unsheltered but by trees and caves; and were probably as truly savage as any of those who are now termed so [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The grass called Sheep's Fescue (*Festuca ovina*), clothes these Downs with the softest turf [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: *Ophrys apifera*, Bee Ophrys, or Orchis found plentifully on the hills, as well as the next [*Smith's note*]. Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *Ophrys muscifera.* Fly Orchis. Linnæus, misled by the variations to which some of this tribe are really subject, has perhaps too rashly esteemed all those which resemble insects,

as forming only one species, which he terms Ophrys insecti fera. See *English Botany* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 1

- Note 2:
  Blue bells. *Campanula rotundifolia.* Mountain thyme. *Thymus serpyllum.* "It is a common notion, that the flesh of sheep which feeds upon aromatic plants, particularly wild thyme, is superior in flavour to other mutton. The truth is, that sheep do not crop these aromatic plants, unless now and then by accident, or when they are first turned on hungry to downs, heaths, or commons; but the soil and situations favourable to aromatic plants, produce a short sweet pasturage, best adapted to feeding sheep, whom nature designed for mountains, and not for turnip grounds and rich meadows. The attachment of bees to this, and other aromatic plants, is well
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Tormentil. *Tormentilla reptans* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Bird's foot trefoil. *Trifolium ornithopoides.* Hawkweed. *Hieracium*, many sorts [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The downs, especially to the south, where they are less abrupt, are in many places under the plough; and the attention of the shepherds is there particularly required to keep the flocks from trespassing [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Square holes cut in the turf, into which a wire noose is fixed, to catch Wheatears. Mr. White [*Natural History of Selborne*] says, that these birds (*Motacilla oenanthe*) are never taken beyond the river Adur, and Beding Hill; but this is certainly a mistake [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 6
- Note 7: These birds are extremely fearful, and on the slightest appearance of a cloud, run for shelter to the first rut, or heap of stone, that they see [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Yellow Wagtail. *Motacilla flava.* It frequents the banks of rivulets in winter, making its nest in meadows and corn-fields. But after the breeding season is over, it haunts downs and sheepwalks, and is seen constantly among the

flocks, probably for the sake of the insects it picks up. In France the shepherds call it *La Bergeronette,* and say it often gives them, by its cry, notice of approaching danger [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 8

- Note 9: The strong winds from the south-west occasion almost all the trees, which on these hills are exposed to it, to grow the other way [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 9
- Note 1: So extensive are some of the views from these hills, that only the want of power in the human eye to travel so far, prevents London itself being discerned. Description falls so infinitely short of the reality, that only here and there, distinct features can be given [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A scar of chalk in a hill beyond Sevenoaks in Kent, is very distinctly seen of a clear day [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The hills about Dorking in Surry; over almost the whole extent of which county the prospect extends [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This is an high ridge, extending between Sussex and Surry. It is covered with heath, and has almost always a dark appearance. On it is a telegraph [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In this country there are several of the fortresses or castles built by Stephen of Blois [king of England, 1135–54], in his contention for the kingdom, with the daughter of Henry the First, the empress Matilda. Some of these are now converted into farm houses [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the water in the dammed millstream.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  Dr. Aikin remarks, I believe, in his essay "On the Application of Natural History to the Purposes of Poetry," how many of our best poets have noticed the same circumstance, the hum of th Dor Beetle (*Scaraboeus stercorarius*) among the sounds heard by the evening wanderer. I remember only one instance in which the more remarkable, though by no means uncommon

noise, of the Fern Owl, or Goatsucker, is mentioned. It is called the Night Hawk, the Jar Bird, the Churn Owl, and the Fern Owl from its feeding on the *Scaraboeus solstitialis*, or Fern Chafer, which it catches while on the wing with its claws, the middle to of which is long and curiously serrated, on purpose to hold [Return to reference 7]

- Note 8: As soon as the sap begins to rise, the trees intended for felling are cut and barked. At which time the men who are employed in that business pass whole days in the woods [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 8]
- Note 9: The wedges used in ship-building are made of beech wood, and great numbers are cut every year in the woods near the Downs [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 9]
- Note 1: Truffles are found under the beech woods, by means of small dogs trained to hunt them by the scent [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 1]
- Note 2: Cuckoo-flowers. *Lychnis dioica.* Shakespeare describes the Cuckoo buds as being yellow [*Love's Labor's Lost* 5.2.871]. He probably meant the numerous Ranunculi, or March marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) which so gild the meadows in Spring; but poets have never been botanists. The Cuckoo flower is the *Lychnis floscuculi* [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 2]
- Note 3: Columbines. *Aquilegia vulgaris* [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 3]
- Note 4: Flag-flower. *Iris pseudacorus* [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 4]
- Note 5: Yaffils. Woodpeckers (*Picus*); three or four species in Britain [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 5]
- Note 6: "And liquid notes that close the eye of day." Milton [Sonnet 1, "O Nightingale"]. The idea here meant to be conveyed is of the evening wind, so welcome after a hot day of Summer, and which appears to sooth and lull all nature into tranquillity [*Smith's note*].[Return to reference 6]
- Note 7: The Robin (*Motacilla rubecula*), which is always heard after other songsters have ceased to sing [*Smith's note*].[Return

to reference 7

- Note 8: The Woodlark (*Alauda nemorosa*), sings very late [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Reed-wrens (*Motacilla arundinacea*), sing all the summer and autumn, and are often heard during the night [*Smith's note*]. Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An allusion to the visionary delights of the newly discovered islands [Polynesia], where it was at first believed men lived in a state of simplicity and happiness; but where, as later enquiries have ascertained, that exemption from toil, which the fertility of their country gives them, produces the grossest vices; and a degree of corruption that late navigators think will end in the extirpation of the whole people in a few years [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In a cavern almost immediately under the cliff called Beachy Head, there lived, as the people of the country believed, a man of the name of Darby, who for many years had no other abode than this cave, and subsisted almost entirely on shell-fish. He had often administered assistance to shipwrecked mariners; but venturing into the sea on this charitable mission during a violent equinoctial storm, he himself perished. As it is above thirty years since I heard this tradition of Parson Darby (for so I think he was called): it may now perhaps be forgotten [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sometimes in thick weather the sheep feeding on the summit of the cliff, miss their footing, and are killed by the fall [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dark porpoises. *Delphinus phocœna* [*Smith's note*].Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *dawn*Return to reference °
- °: *noon*Return to reference °
- °: *enclosed*Return to reference °

- °: *stringed instrument* Return to reference °
- °: *Venus* Return to reference °
- °: *projecting* Return to reference °
- °: *Normandy* Return to reference °
- °: *France* Return to reference °
- °: *Dutch* Return to reference °
- °: *historical record* Return to reference °
- °: *haystacks* Return to reference °
- °: *peasant* Return to reference °
- °: *peat bog* Return to reference °
- °: *uncultivated land* Return to reference °
- °: *pretending to be* Return to reference °
- °: *willows* Return to reference °
- °: *wild mustard* Return to reference °
- °: *as if* Return to reference °
- °: *carriage* Return to reference °
- °: *will-o'-the-wisp* Return to reference °
- °: *trunk* Return to reference °
- °: *firth, inlet* Return to reference °
- °: *wagon* Return to reference °
- °: *uncultivated* Return to reference °
- °: *land for breeding* Return to reference °
- °: *wildflowers* Return to reference °
- °: *hillocks, mounds* Return to reference °
- °: *chalky* Return to reference °
- °: *lime* Return to reference °
- °: *male sheep* Return to reference °
- °: *rampart* Return to reference °
- °: *ditch* Return to reference °
- °: *countless* Return to reference °
- °: *the Roman standard* Return to reference °
- °: *tuft of grass* Return to reference °
- °: *load of grain* Return to reference °
- °: *cliff* Return to reference °
- °: *smuggled goods* Return to reference °
- °: *farm* Return to reference °

- °: *recall with regret* Return to reference °
- °: *abounding in thyme* Return to reference °
- °: *corpse* Return to reference °
- °: *refuse from the sea* Return to reference °

MARY ROBINSON
1757?–1800

Mary Robinson, whom the *Dictionary of National Biography*, at the beginning of a long entry, describes as "actress, author, and mistress of George, Prince of Wales," lived a more sensational life than any other poet of the period, Byron and Shelley included. Her father was a Bristol whaler, her mother a woman of "genteel background" who, after her husband deserted the family, ran a school for girls. At fifteen Mary was married to Thomas Robinson, an articled law clerk who seemed a good match but quickly proved a gambler and libertine; he was arrested for debt, and Mary and her infant daughter spent a year with him in debtors' prison, where, to pass the time, she began writing poetry. Her first pieces appeared in a two-volume *Poems* published under the patronage of the Duchess of Devonshire in 1775.

In December 1776, accepting a long-standing invitation of David Garrick, the actor-manager of the Drury Lane theater, Robinson made her stage debut as Juliet, and for the next four years she was constantly before the public—in thirty or more principal roles, nine of them in plays by Shakespeare. A beauty and leader of fashion, she attracted many suitors and was painted by many of the leading portraitists of the day, including George Romney, Thomas Gainsborough, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, president of the Royal Academy. At a command performance of *The Winter's Tale* in December 1779, playing the role of Perdita, Robinson captivated the

teenaged prince of Wales and, after negotiating financial compensation in the form of a £20,000 bond (because she would have to give up her acting career), became his mistress. As a royal mistress, she was even more exposed to the public eye than she had been on the stage; years after the prince abandoned her, ribald speculation about the erotic adventures of "Perdita" continued to engross gossip columnists and satiric cartoonists. Robinson's attempt, following the prince's desertion, to sue for the promised £20,000 failed, but through the efforts of the Whig parliamentarian Charles James Fox, another famous man who may have been her lover, she received an annuity from the prince of £500 per year. At twenty-five she formed an attachment with Banastre Tarleton, an army officer who had just returned from the war in America and was embarking on a career in Parliament. That attachment lasted ten years, until Tarleton married an heiress. Robinson was by this time in poor health and, as a consequence of either a miscarriage (in some accounts) or rheumatic fever (in others), was paralyzed from the waist down. Even in this condition she made a striking public figure, as four liveried servants, covering their arms with long white sleeves, bore her from the opera house to her waiting carriage. A savvy self-publicist, she appears to have been well aware of the part she played in the spectacle that was fashionable London, accepting and even embracing (in the words of her modern editor, Judith Pascoe) her role as "the most attractive object in a large urban display."

Literature became Robinson's principal activity and source of income when she was in her early thirties. In 1788 and 1789, writing under the pen name "Laura Maria" and sending her verse to the papers the *World* and the *Oracle*, she entered into a passionate poetical correspondence with "Della Crusca" (pseudonym of the poet Robert Merry, who had already participated in a similar public flirtation in the periodical press, in the series of love poems he exchanged with "Anna Matilda," the poet Hannah Cowley). When, in her *Poems* of 1791, Robinson reprinted some of these "effusions" of feeling, she attracted six hundred subscribers. In 1796 she contributed to the English revival of the sonnet with her Petrarchan

series *Sappho and Phaon.* In the 1790s she also authored seven novels, beginning in 1792 with *Vacenza, or The Dangers of Credulity.* She succeeded Robert Southey in the influential office of poetry editor of the *Morning Post* in 1799. Other writings by Robinson include her political tracts *Impartial Reflections on the Present Situation of the Queen of France* (1793) and *Thoughts on the Condition of Women, and on the Injustice of Mental Subordination* (1799) and her posthumous *Memoirs* (1801), an autobiography whose description of a woman's poetic vocation makes it (like Robinson's critical discussion of the Greek poet of passion Sappho) exceptional in an era now better known for its models of masculine artistry.

Robinson is one of the accomplished writers of blank verse in the 1790s (as in "London's Summer Morning") as well as one of the most irrepressibly musical in many different forms of rhyme. Outspokenly liberal in its politics, good-humored, satirical, and sentimental by turns, her late verse in particular exemplifies what Stuart Curran calls "the new realism that will impel English poetry into the nineteenth century." *Lyrical Tales* (1800), the final volume of Robinson's poetry to be published in her lifetime, appeared the month before the second edition of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*—from the same publisher and printer and in exactly the same format and typography (Wordsworth, in reaction, tried to change his own title to *Poems by W. Wordsworth*). Robinson's "The Poor Singing Dame" is modeled on the most popular of Wordsworth's 1798 ballads, "Goody Blake and Harry Gill." Wordsworth in turn based one of his pieces ("The Seven Sisters; or, The Solitude of Binnorie") on the elaborate metrical scheme of Robinson's "The Haunted Beach," a poem that prompted Coleridge to exclaim to Southey, when he first saw it in the *Morning Post*, "the Metre—ay! that Woman has an Ear." Coleridge admired her "undoubted Genius," and Robinson returned the compliment in one of her last poems, "To the Poet Coleridge," a shrewd reading of "Kubla Khan" sixteen years before it first got into print.

January, 1795[1]

Pavement slipp'ry, people sneezing,
Lords in ermine, beggars freezing;
Titled gluttons dainties carving,
Genius in a garret starving.

Lofty mansions, warm and spacious;
Courtiers cringing and voracious;
Misers scarce the wretched heeding;
Gallant soldiers fighting, bleeding.

Wives who laugh at passive spouses;
Theatres, and meeting-houses;
Balls, where simp'ring misses languish;
Hospitals, and groans of anguish.

Arts and sciences bewailing;
Commerce drooping, credit failing;
Placemen° mocking subjects loyal;
Separations, weddings royal.

Authors who can't earn a dinner;
Many a subtle rogue a winner;
Fugitives for shelter seeking;
Misers hoarding, tradesmen breaking.°

Taste and talents quite deserted;
All the laws of truth perverted;
Arrogance o'er merit soaring;
Merit silently deploring.

Ladies gambling night and morning;
Fools the works of genius scorning;

Ancient dames for girls mistaken,
Youthful damsels quite forsaken.

Some in luxury delighting;
More in talking than in fighting;
Lovers old, and beaux decrepid;
Lordlings empty and insipid.

Poets, painters, and musicians;
Lawyers, doctors, politicians:
Pamphlets, newspapers, and odes,
Seeking fame by diff'rent roads.

Gallant souls with empty purses;
Gen'rals only fit for nurses;
School-boys, smit with martial spirit,
Taking place of vet'ran merit.

Honest men who can't get places,
Knaves who shew unblushing faces;
Ruin hasten'd, peace retarded;
Candor spurn'd, and art rewarded.

1795 1806

Endnotes

- Note 1: First published in the *Morning Post* as the work of "Portia."Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *political appointees*Return to reference °
- °: *going bankrupt*Return to reference °

London’s Summer Morning

Who has not wak’d to list the busy sounds
Of summer’s morning, in the sultry smoke
Of noisy London? On the pavement hot
The sooty chimney-boy, with dingy face
And tatter’d covering, shrilly bawls his trade,
Rousing the sleepy housemaid. At the door
The milk-pail rattles, and the tinkling bell
Proclaims the dustman’s° office; while the street
Is lost in clouds impervious. Now begins
The din of hackney-coaches, waggons, carts;
While tinmen’s shops, and noisy trunk-makers,
Knife-grinders, coopers, squeaking cork-cutters,
Fruit-barrows, and the hunger-giving cries
Of vegetable venders, fill the air.
Now ev’ry shop displays its varied trade,
And the fresh-sprinkled pavement cools the feet
Of early walkers. At the private door
The ruddy housemaid twirls the busy mop,[1]
Annoying the smart ’prentice, or neat girl,
Tripping with band-box[2] lightly. Now the sun
Darts burning splendor on the glitt’ring pane,
Save where the canvas awning throws a shade
On the gay merchandise. Now, spruce and trim,
In shops (where beauty smiles with industry)
Sits the smart damsel; while the passenger°
Peeps through the window, watching ev’ry charm.
Now pastry dainties catch the eye minute
Of humming insects, while the limy snare[3]
Waits to enthral them. Now the lamp-lighter
Mounts the tall ladder, nimbly venturous,

To trim the half-fill'd l while at his feet
The pot-boy[4] yells discordant! All along
The sultry pavement, the old-clothes-man cries
In tone monotonous, and side-long views
The area for his traffic: now the bag
Is slily open'd, and the half-worn suit
(Sometimes the pilfer'd treasure of the base
Domestic spoiler), for one half its worth,
Sinks in the green abyss. The porter now
Bears his huge load along the burning way;
And the poor poet wakes from busy dreams,
To paint the summer morning.

1795–1800 1800

Endnotes

- Note 1: An echo of Jonathan Swift's urban pastoral "A Description of the Morning" (1709), in which Moll whirls "her mop with dex'trous airs" (line 7).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Box for hats, gloves, and the like.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sticky substance used to catch insects.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Servant from a nearby pub.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *trash collector's*Return to reference °
- °: *passerby*Return to reference °

The Poor Singing Dame

Beneath an old wall, that went round an old castle,
For many a year, with brown ivy o'erspread,
A neat little hovel, its lowly roof raising,
Defied the wild winds that howl'd over its shed:
The turrets, that frown'd on the poor simple dwelling,
Were rock'd to and fro, when the tempest would roar,
And the river, that down the rich valley was swelling,
Flow'd swiftly beside the green step of its door.

The summer sun gilded the rushy roof slanting,
The bright dews bespangled its ivy-bound hedge,
And above, on the ramparts, the sweet birds were chanting,
And wild buds thick dappled the clear river's edge.
When the castle's rich chambers were haunted and dreary,
The poor little hovel was still and secure;
And no robber e'er enter'd, nor goblin nor fairy,
For the splendors of pride had no charms to allure.

The Lord of the castle, a proud surly ruler,
Oft heard the low dwelling with sweet music ring,
For the old Dame that liv'd in the little hut cheerly,
Would sit at her wheel, and would merrily sing:
When with revels the castle's great hall was resounding,
The old Dame was sleeping, not dreaming of fear;
And when over the mountains the huntsmen were bounding

She would open her lattice, their clamors to hear.

To the merry-ton'd horn she would dance on the threshold,
And louder, and louder, repeat her old song:
And when winter its mantle of frost was displaying,
She caroll'd, undaunted, the bare woods among:
She would gather dry fern, ever happy and singing,
With her cake of brown bread, and her jug of brown beer,
And would smile when she heard the great castle-bell ringing,
Inviting the proud—to their prodigal cheer.

Thus she liv'd, ever patient and ever contented,
Till envy the Lord of the castle possess'd,
For he hated that poverty should be so cheerful,
While care could the fav'rites of fortune molest;
He sent his bold yeomen with threats to prevent her,
And still would she carol her sweet roundelay;
At last, an old steward relentless he sent her—
Who bore her, all trembling, to prison away!

Three weeks did she languish, then died broken-hearted,
Poor Dame! how the death-bell did mournfully sound!
And along the green path six young bachelors bore her,
And laid her for ever beneath the cold ground!
And the primroses pale 'mid the long grass were growing,
The bright dews of twilight bespangled her grave,
And morn heard the breezes of summer soft blowing
To bid the fresh flow'rets in sympathy wave.

The Lord of the castle, from that fatal moment
When poor singing Mary was laid in her grave,
Each night was surrounded by screech-owls appalling,
Which o’er the black turrets their pinions would wave!
On the ramparts that frown’d on the river, swift flowing,
They hover’d, still hooting a terrible song,
When his windows would rattle, the winter blast blowing,
They would shriek like a ghost, the dark alleys among!

Wherever he wander’d they follow’d him crying,
At dawnlight, at eve, still they haunted his way!
When the moon shone across the wide common they hooted,
Nor quitted his path till the blazing of day.
His bones began wasting, his flesh was decaying,
And he hung his proud head, and he perish’d with shame;
And the tomb of rich marble, no soft tear displaying,
O’ershadows the grave of the Poor Singing Dame!

1799–1800 1800

The Haunted Beach

Upon a lonely desart Beach,
  Where the white foam was scatter'd,
A little shed uprear'd its head,
  Though lofty barks° were shatter'd.
The sea-weeds gath'ring near the door
  A somber path display'd;
And, all around, the deaf'ning roar
Re-echo'd on the chalky shore,
  By the green billows made.

Above a jutting cliff was seen
  Where Sea Birds hover'd, craving;
And all around the craggs were bound
  With weeds—for ever waving.
And here and there, a cavern wide
  Its shad'wy jaws display'd;
And near the sands, at ebb of tide,
A shiver'd mast was seen to ride
  Where the green billows stray'd.

And often, while the moaning wind
  Stole o'er the Summer Ocean,
The moonlight scene was all serene,
  The waters scarce in motion;
Then, while the smoothly slanting sand
  The tall cliff wrapp'd in shade,
The Fisherman beheld a band
Of Spectres gliding hand in hand—
  Where the green billows play'd.

And pale their faces were as snow,

And sullenly they wander'd;
And to the skies with hollow eyes
They look'd as though they ponder'd.
And sometimes, from their hammock shroud,
They dismal howlings made,
And while the blast blew strong and loud
The clear moon mark'd the ghastly crowd,
Where the green billows play'd!

And then above the haunted hut
The Curlews screaming hover'd;
And the low door, with furious roar,
The frothy breakers cover'd.
For in the Fisherman's lone shed
A murder'd man was laid,
With ten wide gashes in his head,
And deep was made his sandy bed
Where the green billows play'd.

A shipwreck'd Mariner was he,
Doom'd from his home to sever;
Who swore to be through wind and sea
Firm and undaunted ever!
And when the wave resistless roll'd,
About his arm he made
A packet rich of Spanish gold,
And, like a British sailor bold,
Plung'd where the billows play'd!

The Spectre band, his messmates brave,
Sunk in the yawning ocean,
While to the mast he lash'd him fast,
And brav'd the storm's commotion.
The winter moon upon the sand
A silv'ry carpet made,
And mark'd the Sailor reach the land,

And mark’d his murd’rer wash his hand
Where the green billows play’d.

And since that hour the Fisherman
Has toil’d and toil’d in vain;
For all the night the moony light
Gleams on the specter’d main!
And when the skies are veil’d in gloom,
The Murd’rer’s liquid way
Bounds o’er the deeply yawning tomb,
And flashing fires the sands illume,
Where the green billows play!

Full thirty years his task has been
Day after day more weary;
For Heav’n design’d his guilty mind
Should dwell on prospects dreary.
Bound by a strong and mystic chain,
He has not pow’r to stray;
But destin’d mis’ry to sustain,
He wastes, in Solitude and Pain,
A loathsome life away.

1800

Notes

- °: *ships*Return to reference °

The Poet’s Garret

Come, sportive fancy! come with me, and trace
The poet’s attic home! the lofty seat
Of the heav’n-tutor’d nine!° the airy throne
Of bold imagination, rapture fraught
Above the herds of mortals. All around
A solemn stillness seems to guard the scene,
Nursing the brood of thought—a thriving brood
In the rich mazes of the cultur’d brain.
Upon thy altar, an old worm-eat board,
The pannel of a broken door, or lid
Of a strong coffer, plac’d on three-legg’d stool,
Stand quires of paper, white and beautiful!
Paper, by destiny ordain’d to be
Scrawl’d o’er and blotted; dash’d, and scratch’d, and torn;
Or mark’d with lines severe, or scatter’d wide
In rage impetuous! Sonnet, song, and ode,
Satire, and epigram, and smart charade;
Neat paragraph, or legendary tale,
Of short and simple metre, each by turns
Will there delight the reader.

On the bed
Lies an old rusty° suit of “solemn black,”—
Brush’d thread-bare, and, with brown, unglossy hue,
Grown somewhat ancient. On the floor is seen
A pair of silken hose, whose footing bad
Shews they are trav’llers, but who still bear
Marks somewhat *holy.* At the scanty fire
A chop turns round, by packthread strongly held;
And on the blacken’d bar a vessel shines

Of batter'd pewter, just half fill'd, and warm,
With Whitbread's bev'rage pure.[1] The kitten purs,
Anticipating dinner; while the wind
Whistles thro' broken panes, and drifted snow
Carpets the parapet with spotless garb,
Of vestal coldness. Now the sullen hour
(The fifth hour after noon) with dusky hand
Closes the lids of day. The farthing light
Gleams thro' the cobwebb'd chamber, and the bard
Concludes his pen's hard labour. Now he eats
With appetite voracious! nothing sad
That he with costly plate, and napkins fine,
Nor china rich, nor fork of silver, greets
His eye or palate. On his lyric board
A sheet of paper serves for table-cloth;
An heap of salt is serv'd,—oh! heav'nly treat!
On ode Pindaric![2] while his tuneful puss
Scratches his slipper for her fragment sweet,
And sings her love-song soft, yet mournfully.
Mocking the pillar Doric, or the roof
Of architecture Gothic, all around
The well-known ballads flit, of Grub-street fame![3]
The casement, broke, gives breath celestial
To the long dying-speech; or gently fans
The love-inflaming sonnet. All around
Small scraps of paper lie, torn vestiges
Of an unquiet fancy. Here a page
Of flights poetic—there a dedication—
A list of dramatis personæ, bold,
Of heroes yet unborn, and lofty dames
Of perishable compound, light as fair,
But sentenc'd to oblivion![4]

On a shelf,
(Yclept[5] a mantle-piece) a phial stands,

Half fill'd with potent spirits!—spirits strong,
Which sometimes haunt the poet's restless brain,
And fill his mind with fancies whimsical.
Poor poet! happy art thou, thus remov'd
From pride and folly! for in thy domain
Thou can'st command thy subjects; fill thy lines;
Wield th' all-conqu'ring weapon heav'n bestows
On the grey goose's wing![°] which, tow'ring high,
Bears thy sick fancy to immortal fame!

1800 1806

Endnotes

- Note 1: Beer from Samuel Whitbread's brewery.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The tablecloth is an ode written in the manner of the classical Greek poet Pindar (ca. 518–438 B.C.E.).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Originally the name for a London street (now Milton Street) that through the 18th century was often inhabited by third-rate authors churning out writing for money. The term came to designate literary hackwork generally.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From Alexander Pope's *Dunciad* (1743); compare the description of the dunce in chief, at a moment of writer's block: "Round him much Embryo, much Abortion lay, / Much future Ode, and abdicated Play" (1.121–22).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Called; the word was an archaism in Robinson's time, associated with antiquated poetry.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *the muses*Return to reference °
- °: *shabby*Return to reference °
- °: *goose-quill pen*Return to reference °

To the Poet Coleridge[1]

Rapt in the visionary theme!
  Spirit divine! with thee I'll wander,
Where the blue, wavy, lucid stream,
  'Mid forest glooms, shall slow meander!
With thee I'll trace the circling bounds
  Of thy new Paradise extended;
And listen to the varying sounds
  Of winds, and foamy torrents blended.

Now by the source which lab'ring heaves
  The mystic fountain, bubbling, panting,
While gossamer° its net-work weaves,
  Adown the blue lawn slanting!
I'll mark thy *sunny dome*, and view
Thy *caves of ice*, thy fields of dew!
Thy ever-blooming mead, whose flow'r
Waves to the cold breath of the moonlight hour!
Or when the day-star, peering bright
On the grey wing of parting night;
While more than vegetating pow'r
Throbs grateful to the burning hour,
As summer's whisper'd sighs unfold
Her million, million buds of gold;
Then will I climb the breezy bounds,
  Of thy new Paradise extended,
And listen to the distant sounds
  Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

Spirit divine! with thee I'll trace
Imagination's boundless space!
With thee, beneath thy *sunny dome,*

I'll listen to the minstrel's lay,
Hymning the gradual close of day;
In *caves of ice* enchanted roam,
Where on the glitt'ring entrance plays
The moon's-beam with its silv'ry rays;
Or, when the glassy stream,
That through the deep dell flows,
Flashes the noon's hot beam;
The noon's hot beam, that midway shows
Thy flaming temple, studded o'er
With all Peruvia's° lustrous store!
There will I trace the circling bounds
Of thy new Paradise extended!
And listen to the awful sounds,
Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

And now I'll pause to catch the moan
Of distant breezes, cavern-pent;
Now, ere the twilight tints are flown,
Purpling the landscape, far and wide,
On the dark promontory's side
I'll gather wild flow'rs, dew besprent,°
And weave a crown for thee,
Genius of Heav'n-taught poesy!
While, op'ning to my wond'ring eyes,
Thou bidst a new creation rise,
I'll raptur'd trace the circling bounds
Of thy rich Paradise extended,
And listen to the varying sounds
Of winds, and foaming torrents blended.

And now, with lofty tones inviting,
Thy nymph, her dulcimer swift smiting,
Shall wake me in ecstatic measures!
Far, far remov'd from mortal pleasures!
In cadence rich, in cadence strong,

Proving the wondrous witcheries of song!
I hear her voice! thy *sunny dome*,
Thy *caves of ice*, aloud repeat,
Vibrations, madd'ning sweet,
Calling the visionary wand'rer home.
She sings of thee, O favor'd child
Of *minstrelsy*, sublimely wild!
Of thee, whose soul can feel the tone
Which gives to airy dreams *a magic* all thy own!

Oct. 1800 1801

Endnotes

- Note 1: This poem is a tribute to, and running commentary on, Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," which Robinson read in manuscript (Coleridge drafted it in 1797 but did not publish it until 1816).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *filmy cobweb*Return to reference °
- °: *Peru's*Return to reference °
- °: *sprinkled*Return to reference °

The Savage of Aveyron[1]

'Twas in the mazes of a wood,
The lonely wood of AVEYRON,
I heard a melancholy tone:—
It seem'd to freeze my blood!
A torrent near was flowing fast,
And hollow was the midnight blast
As o'er the leafless woods it past,
While terror-fraught I stood!
O! mazy woods of AVEYRON!
O! wilds of dreary solitude!
Amid thy thorny alleys rude
I thought myself alone!
I thought no living thing could be
So weary of the world as me,—
While on my winding path the pale moon shone.

Sometimes the tone was loud and sad,
And sometimes dulcet, faint, and slow;
And then a tone of frantic woe:
It almost made me mad.
The burthen was "Alone! alone!"
And then the heart did feebly groan;—
Then suddenly a cheerful tone
Proclaim'd a spirit glad!
O! mazy woods of AVEYRON!
O! wilds of dreary solitude!
Amid your thorny alleys rude
I wish'd myself—a traveller alone.

"Alone!" I heard the wild boy say,—
And swift he climb'd a blasted oak:

And there, while morning's herald woke,
He watch'd the opening day.
Yet dark and sunken was his eye,
Like a lorn° maniac's, wild and shy,
And scowling like a winter sky,
Without one beaming ray!
Then, mazy woods of AVEYRON!
Then, wilds of dreary solitude!
Amid thy thorny alleys rude
I sigh'd to be—a traveller alone.

"Alone, alone!" I heard him shriek,
'Twas like the shriek of dying man!
And then to mutter he began,—
But, O! *he could not speak!*
I saw him point to Heav'n, and sigh,
The big drop trembl'd in his eye;
And slowly from the yellow sky,
I saw the pale morn break.
I saw the woods of AVEYRON.
Their wilds of dreary solitude:
I mark'd their thorny alleys rude,
And wish'd to be—a traveller alone!

His hair was long and black, and he
From infancy *alone* had been:
For since his fifth year he had seen,
None mark'd his destiny!
No mortal ear had heard his groan,
For him no beam of Hope had shone:
While sad he sigh'd—"*alone, alone!*"
Beneath the blasted tree.
And then, O! woods of AVEYRON,
O! wilds of dreary solitude,
Amid your thorny alleys rude
I thought myself a traveller—alone.

And now upon the blasted tree
He carv'd *three* notches, broad and long,
And all the while he sang a song—
Of nature's melody!
And though of words he nothing knew,
And, though his dulcet tones were few,
Across the yielding bark he drew,
Deep sighing, notches THREE.
O! mazy woods of AVEYRON,
O! wilds of dreary solitude,
Amid your thorny alleys rude
Upon this BLASTED OAK no sun beam shone!

And now he pointed one, two, three;
Again he shriek'd with wild dismay;
And now he paced the thorny way,
Quitting the blasted tree.
It was a dark December morn,
The dew was frozen on the thorn:
But to a wretch so sad, so lorn,
All days alike would be!
Yet, mazy woods of AVEYRON,
Yet, wilds of dreary solitude,
Amid your frosty alleys rude
I wish'd to be—a traveller alone.

He follow'd me along the wood
To a small grot° his hands had made,
Deep in a black rock's sullen shade,
Beside a tumbling flood.
Upon the earth I saw him spread
Of wither'd leaves a narrow bed,
Yellow as gold, and streak'd with red,
They look'd like streaks of blood!
Pull'd from the woods of AVEYRON,

And scatter'd o'er the solitude
By midnight whirlwinds strong and rude,
To pillow the scorch'd brain that throbb'd alone.

Wild berries were his winter food,
With them his sallow lip was dy'd;
On chestnuts wild he fed beside,
Steep'd in the foamy flood.
Chequer'd with scars his breast was seen,
Wounds streaming fresh with anguish keen,
And marks where other wounds had been
Torn by the brambles rude.
Such was the boy of AVEYRON,
The tenant of that solitude,
Where still, by misery unsubdued,
He wander'd *nine long winters*, all alone.

Before the step of his rude throne,
The *squirrel* sported, tame and gay;
The *dormouse* slept its life away,
Nor heard his midnight groan.
About his form a garb he wore,
Ragged it was, and mark'd with gore,
And yet, where'er 'twas folded o'er,
Full many a spangle shone!
Like little stars, O! AVEYRON,
They gleam'd amid thy solitude;
Or like, along thy alleys rude,
The summer dew-drops sparkling in the sun.

It once had been a lady's vest,°
White as the whitest mountain's snow,
Till ruffian hands had taught to flow
The fountain of her breast!
Remembrance bade the WILD BOY trace
Her beauteous form, her angel face,

Her eye that beam'd with Heavenly grace.
  Her fainting voice that blest,—
When in the woods of AVEYRON,
  Deep in their deepest solitude,
  Three barb'rous ruffians shed her blood,
And mock'd, with cruel taunts, her dying groan.

  Remembrance trac'd the summer bright,
When all the trees were fresh and green,
When lost, the alleys long between,
  The lady past the night:
She past the night, bewilder'd wild,
She past it with her fearless child,
Who raised his little arms, and smil'd
  To see the morning light.
While in the woods of AVEYRON,
  Beneath the broad oak's canopy.
  She mark'd aghast the RUFFIANS THREE,
Waiting to seize the traveller alone!

  Beneath the broad oak's canopy
The lovely lady's bones were laid;
But since that hour no breeze has play'd
  About the blasted tree!
The leaves all wither'd ere the sun
His next day's rapid course had run,
And ere the summer day was done
  It winter seem'd to be:
And still: O! woods of AVEYRON,
  Amid thy dreary solitude
  The oak a sapless trunk has stood,
To mark the spot where MURDER foul was done!

  From HER the WILD BOY learn'd "ALONE,"
She tried to say, *my babe will die!*
But angels caught her parting sigh,

The BABE her *dying tone.*
And from that hour the BOY has been
Lord of the solitary scene,
Wand'ring the dreary shades between,
Making his dismal moan!
Till, mazy woods of AVEYRON,
Dark wilds of dreary solitude,
Amid your thorny alleys rude
I thought myself alone.
And could a wretch more wretched be,
More wild, or fancy-fraught than he,
Whose melancholy tale would pierce AN HEART OF STONE.

1801

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In remarks prefacing this poem on its first publication in the *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson*, Robinson's daughter and posthumous editor explained that her mother, then in her final illness, wrote it after reading "various accounts of a SAVAGE BOY, lately discovered in the *Forest* of *Aveyron* [in southern France] and said then to be existing in Paris. Frequent instances of this kind have occurred in the history of Man, and conjecture has almost uniformly been bewildered respecting the origin of such figures. In countries where BANDITTI have been known to reside, imagination may be allowed the exercise of its powers; and Reason may ruminate on the possibility, as well as the probability, of such an interesting history as that of THE SAVAGE OF AVEYRON."

  In 1799 hunters at last captured this feral boy, who for several years had been spotted living alone in the woods, subsisting on acorns and roots. He appeared at that point to be about twelve years old. Efforts to educate Victor, as he came to

be called, to teach him speech and attach him to social life, began soon after. Largely unsuccessful, these efforts were nevertheless watched closely, in the hope that they would resolve longstanding controversies about the boundaries and potential of human nature. The mystery of Victor's origins was never solved. He died, still an inmate of the Paris Institution for the Deaf and Mute, in 1828.
Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *forlorn*Return to reference °
- °: *cave, grotto*Return to reference °
- °: *robe, gown*Return to reference °

WILLIAM BLAKE
1757–1827

What William Blake called his "Spiritual Life" was as varied, free, and dramatic as his "Corporeal Life" was simple, limited, and unadventurous. His father was a London tradesman. His only formal education was in art: at the age of ten he entered a drawing school, and later he studied for a time at the school of the Royal Academy of Arts. At fourteen he entered an apprenticeship for seven years to a well-known engraver, James Basire, and began reading widely in his free time and trying his hand at poetry. At twenty-four he married Catherine Boucher, daughter of a market gardener. She was then illiterate, but Blake taught her to read and to help him in his engraving and printing. In the early and somewhat sentimentalized biographies, Catherine is represented as an ideal wife for an unorthodox and impecunious genius. Blake, however, must have been a trying domestic partner, and his vehement attacks on the torment caused by a possessive, jealous female will, which reached their height in 1793 and remained prominent in his writings for another decade, probably reflect a troubled period at home. The couple was childless.

The Blakes for a time enjoyed a moderate prosperity while Blake gave drawing lessons, illustrated books, and engraved designs made by other artists. When the demand for his work slackened, Blake in 1800 moved to a cottage at Felpham, on the Sussex seacoast, to take advantage of the patronage of the wealthy amateur of the arts

and biographer William Hayley (also a supporter of Charlotte Smith), who with the best of narrow intentions tried to transform Blake into a conventional artist and breadwinner. But the caged eagle soon rebelled. Hayley, Blake wrote, "is the Enemy of my Spiritual Life while he pretends to be the Friend of my Corporeal."

At Felpham in 1803 occurred an event that left a permanent mark on Blake's mind and art—an altercation with one John Schofield, a private in the Royal Dragoons. Blake ordered the soldier out of his garden and, when Schofield replied with threats and curses against Blake and his wife, pushed him the fifty yards to the inn where he was quartered. Schofield brought charges that Blake had uttered seditious statements about king and country. Because England was at war with France, sedition was a hanging offense. Blake was acquitted—an event, according to a newspaper account, "which so gratified the auditory that the court was . . . thrown into an uproar by their noisy exultations." Nevertheless Schofield, his fellow soldier Cock, and other participants in the trial haunted Blake's imagination and were enlarged to demonic characters who play a sinister role in *Jerusalem.* The event exacerbated Blake's sense that ominous forces were at work in the contemporary world and led him to complicate the symbolic and allusive style by which he veiled the radical religious, moral, and political opinions that he expressed in his poems.

The dominant literary and artistic fashion of Blake's youth involved the notion that the future of British culture would involve the recovery, through archaeology as well as literary history, of an all but lost past. As an apprentice engraver who learned to draw by sketching the medieval monuments of London churches, Blake began his artistic career in the thick of that antiquarianism. It also informs his early lyric poetry. *Poetical Sketches*, published when he was twenty-six, suggests Blake's affinities with a group of later eighteenth-century writers that includes Thomas Warton, poet and student of Middle English romance and Elizabethan verse; Thomas Gray, translator from Old Icelandic and Welsh and author, in 1757, of "The Bard," a poem about the English conquest of Wales; Thomas

Percy, the editor of the ballad collection *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765); and James Macpherson, who came before the public in the 1760s claiming to be the translator of the epic verse of a third-century Gaelic bard named Ossian. Like these figures, Blake located the sources of poetic inspiration in an archaic native tradition that, according to the prevailing view of national history, had ended up eclipsed after the seventeenth century, when French court culture, manners, and morals began their cultural ascendancy. Even in their orientation to a visionary culture, the bards of Blake's later Prophetic Books retain an association with this imagined version of a primitive past.

Poetical Sketches was the only book of Blake's to be set in type according to customary methods. In 1788 he began to experiment with relief etching, a method that he called "illuminated printing" (a term associating his works with the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages) and used to produce most of his books of poems. Working directly on a copper plate with pens, brushes, and an acid-resistant medium, he wrote the text in reverse (so that it would print in the normal order) and also drew the illustration; he then etched the plate in acid to eat away the untreated copper and leave the design standing in relief. The pages printed from such plates were colored by hand in watercolors, often by Catherine Blake, and stitched together to make up a volume. This process was laborious and time-consuming, and Blake printed very few copies of his books; for example, of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* only twenty-eight copies (some of them incomplete) are known to exist; of *The Book of Thel,* sixteen; of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* nine; and of *Jerusalem,* five.

To read a Blake poem without the pictures is to miss something important: Blake places words and images in a relationship that is sometimes mutually enlightening and sometimes turbulent, and that relationship is an aspect of the poem's argument.* In this mode of relief etching, he published *Songs of Innocence* (1789), then added supplementary poems and printed *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794). The two groups of poems represent the world as

it is envisioned by what he calls "two contrary states of the human soul."

Gradually Blake's thinking about human history and his experience of life and suffering articulated themselves in the "Giant Forms" and their actions, which came to constitute a complete mythology. As Blake's mythical character Los said, speaking for all imaginative artists, "I must Create a System or be enslaved by another Man's." This coherent but constantly altering and enlarging system composed the subject matter first of Blake's "minor prophecies," completed by 1795, and then of the major prophetic books on which he continued working until about 1820: *The Four Zoas, Milton,* and *Jerusalem.*

In his sixties Blake gave up poetry to devote himself to pictorial art. In the course of his life, he produced hundreds of paintings and engravings, many of them illustrations for the work of other poets, including a representation of Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrims, a superb set of designs for the Book of Job, and a series of illustrations of Dante, on which he was still hard at work when he died. At the time of his death, Blake was little known as an artist and almost entirely unknown as a poet. In the mid-nineteenth century he acquired a group of admirers among the Pre-Raphaelites, who regarded him as a precursor. Since the mid-1920s Blake has finally come into his own, both in poetry and in painting, as one of the most dedicated, intellectually challenging, and astonishingly original artists. His marked influence ranges from William Butler Yeats, who edited Blake's writings and modeled his own system of mythology on Blake's, to Allen Ginsberg and other Beat writers, Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, and the graphic novels of the present day.

The explication of Blake's cryptic prophetic books has been the preoccupation of many scholars. Blake wrote them in the persona, or "voice," of "the Bard! / Who Present, Past, & Future sees"—that is, as a British poet who follows Spenser, and especially Milton, in a lineage going back to the prophets of the Bible. "The Nature of my Work," he said, "is Visionary or Imaginative." What Blake meant by the key terms *vision* and *imagination,* however, is often

misinterpreted by taking literally what he, speaking the traditional language of his great predecessors, intended in a figurative sense. "That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot," he declared, "is not worth my care." Blake was a born ironist who enjoyed mystifying his well-meaning but literal-minded friends and who took a defiant pleasure in shocking the dull and complacent "angels" of his day by being deliberately outrageous in representing his work and opinions.

Blake declared that "all he knew was in the Bible" and that "The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art." This is an exaggeration of the truth that all his prophetic writings deal, in various formulations, with some aspects of the overall biblical plot of the creation and the Fall, the history of the generations of humanity in the fallen world, redemption, and the promise of a recovery of Eden and of a New Jerusalem. These events, however, Blake interprets in what he calls "the spiritual sense." For such a procedure he had considerable precedent, not in the neoplatonic and occult thinkers with whom some modern commentators align him, but in the "spiritual" interpreters of the Bible among the radical Protestant sects in seventeenth-and eighteenth-century England. In *The French Revolution, America: A Prophecy, Europe: A Prophecy*, and the trenchant prophetic satire *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*—all of which Blake wrote in the early 1790s while he was an ardent supporter of the French Revolution—he, like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and a number of radical English theologians, represented the contemporary revolution as the purifying violence that, according to biblical prophecy, portended the imminent redemption of humanity and the world. In Blake's later poems Orc, the fiery spirit of violent revolution, gives way as a central personage to Los, the type of the visionary imagination in the fallen world.

BLAKE'S MYTHMAKING

Blake's first attempt to articulate his full myth of humanity's present, past, and future was *The Four Zoas,* begun in 1796 or 1797. A passage from the opening statement of its theme exemplifies the long verse line (what Blake called "the march of long resounding

strong heroic verse") in which he wrote his Prophetic Books and will serve also to outline the Books' vision:

> Four Mighty Ones are in every Man; a Perfect Unity
> Cannot Exist, but from the Universal Brotherhood of Eden,
> The Universal Man. To Whom be Glory Evermore, Amen. . . .
> Los was the fourth immortal starry one, & in the Earth
> Of a bright Universe Empery attended day & night
> Days & nights of revolving joy, Urthona was his name
> In Eden; in the Auricular Nerves of Human life
> Which is the Earth of Eden, he his Emanations propagated. . . .
> Daughter of Beulah, Sing
> His fall into Division & his Resurrection to Unity.

Blake's mythical premise, or starting point, is not a transcendent God but the "Universal Man" who is God and who incorporates the cosmos as well. (Blake elsewhere describes this founding image as "the Human Form Divine" and names him "Albion.") The Fall, in this myth, is not the fall of humanity away from God but a falling apart of primal people, a "fall into Division." In this event the original sin is what Blake calls "Selfhood," the attempt of an isolated part to be self-sufficient. The breakup of the all-inclusive Universal Man in Eden into exiled parts, it is evident, serves to identify the Fall with the creation—the creation not only of man and of nature as we ordinarily know them but also of a separate sky god who is alien from humanity. Universal Man divides first into the "Four Mighty Ones" who are the Zoas, or chief powers and component aspects of humanity, and these in turn divide sexually into male Spectres and female Emanations. (Thus in the quoted passage the Zoa known in the unfallen state of Eden as Urthona, the imaginative power, separates into the form of Los in the fallen world.) In addition to

Eden there are three successively lower "states" of being in the fallen world, which Blake calls Beulah (a pastoral condition of easy and relaxed innocence, without clash of "contraries"), Generation (the realm of common human experience, suffering, and conflicting contraries), and Ulro (Blake's hell, the lowest state, or limit, of bleak rationality, tyranny, static negation, and isolated Selfhood). The fallen world moves through the cycles of its history, successively approaching and falling away from redemption, until, by the agency of the Redeemer (who is equated with the human imagination and is most potently operative in the prophetic poet), it will culminate in an apocalypse. In terms of his controlling image of the Universal Man, Blake describes this apocalypse as a return to the original, undivided condition, "his Resurrection to Unity."

What is confusing to many readers is that Blake alternates this representation of the Fall (as a fragmentation of the one Primal Man into separate parts) with a different kind of representation, in terms of two sharply opposed ways of seeing the universe. In this latter mode the Fall is a catastrophic change from imaginative insight (which sees the cosmos as unified and humanized) to sight by the physical eye (which sees the cosmos as a multitude of isolated individuals in an inhuman and alien nature). In terms of this distinction, the apocalypse toward which Blake as imaginative artist strives unceasingly will enable men and women once again to envision all beings as participant in the individual life that he calls "the Universal Brotherhood of Eden"—that is, a humanized world in which all individuals, in familial union, can feel at home.

The text for Blake's writings is that of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake,* edited by David V. Erdman and Harold Bloom (rev. ed., 1982), with the exception of *America: A Prophecy*, for which the text is *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, 2nd ed., edited by Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant (2008). Blake's erratic spelling and punctuation have been altered when the original form might mislead the reader. The editors are grateful for the expert advice of Joseph Viscomi, Robert Essick, and Alexander S. Gourlay in editing the selections from Blake.

Endnotes

- Note *: Readers who want to explore Blake's artwork in greater depth will find much to examine at the Blake Archive (https://blakearchive.org).Return to reference *

All Religions Are One[1]

The Voice of one crying in the Wilderness[2]

The Argument. As the true method of knowledge is experiment the true faculty of knowing must be the faculty which experiences. This faculty I treat of.

PRINCIPLE 1st. That the Poetic Genius is the true Man, and that the body or outward form of Man is derived from the Poetic Genius. Likewise that the forms of all things are derived from their Genius, which by the Ancients was call'd an Angel & Spirit & Demon.

PRINCIPLE 2d. As all men are alike in outward form, So (and with the same infinite variety) all are alike in the Poetic Genius.

PRINCIPLE 3d. No man can think write or speak from his heart, but he must intend truth. Thus all sects of Philosophy are from the Poetic Genius, adapted to the weaknesses of every individual.

PRINCIPLE 4. As none by travelling over known lands can find out the unknown, So from already acquired knowledge Man could not acquire more. Therefore an universal Poetic Genius exists.

PRINCIPLE 5. The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of the Poetic Genius, which is everywhere call'd the Spirit of Prophecy.

PRINCIPLE 6. The Jewish & Christian Testaments are An original derivation from the Poetic Genius. This is necessary from the confined nature of bodily sensation.

PRINCIPLE 7th. As all men are alike (tho' infinitely various), So all Religions & as all similars have one source.

The true Man is the source, he being the Poetic Genius.

1788

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This and the following two selections are early illuminated works, probably etched in 1788. They are directed both against 18th-century Deism, or "natural religion" (which bases its religious tenets not on scriptural revelation but on evidences of God in the natural or "organic" world), and against Christian orthodoxy, whose creed is based on a particular Scripture. In this selection Blake ironically accepts the Deistic view that all particular religions are variants of the one true religion but rejects the Deists' "Argument" that this religion is grounded on reasoning from sense experience. He attributes the one religion instead to the innate possession by

  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Applied in the Gospels (for example, Matthew 3:3) to John the Baptist, regarded as fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 39:3. Blake applies the phrase to himself, as a later prophetic voice in an alien time.Return to reference 2

There Is No Natural Religion[1]

[*a*]

The Argument. Man has no notion of moral fitness but from Education. Naturally he is only a natural organ subject to Sense.

I. Man cannot naturally Percieve but through his natural or bodily organs.

II. Man by his reasoning power can only compare & judge of what he has already perciev'd.

III. From a perception of only 3 senses or 3 elements none could deduce a fourth or fifth.

IV. None could have other than natural or organic thoughts if he had none but organic perceptions.

V. Man's desires are limited by his perceptions; none can desire what he has not perciev'd.

VI. The desires & perceptions of man, untaught by any thing but organs of sense, must be limited to objects of sense.

Conclusion. If it were not for the Poetic or Prophetic character the Philosophic & Experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, & stand still unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again.

1788

Endnotes

- Note 1: In this selection Blake presents his version of English empiricism, which derives all mental content (including the evidences from which, in "natural religion," reason is held to prove the existence of God) from perceptions by the physical senses.Return to reference 1

There Is No Natural Religion[1]

[*b*]

I. Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception; he percieves more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover.

II. Reason, or the ratio[2] of all we have already known, is not the same that it shall be when we know more.

[III lacking]

IV. The bounded is loathed by its possessor. The same dull round even of a universe would soon become a mill with complicated wheels.

V. If the many become the same as the few when possess'd, More! More! is the cry of a mistaken soul. Less than All cannot satisfy Man.

VI. If any could desire what he is incapable of possessing, despair must be his eternal lot.

VII. The desire of Man being Infinite, the possession is Infinite & himself Infinite.

Application. He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio only sees himself only.

Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is.

1788

Endnotes

- Note 1: In this third document Blake presents his assertions (in opposition to those in the preceding tract) that knowledge is not limited to the physical senses, but is as unbounded as the infinite desires of humankind and its godlike capacity for infinite vision.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: In Latin *ratio* signifies both "reason" and "calculation." Blake applies the term derogatorily to the 18th-century concept of reason as a calculating faculty whose operations are limited to sense perceptions.Return to reference 2

From Songs of Innocence and of Experience[1]

SHEWING THE TWO CONTRARY STATES OF THE HUMAN SOUL

Endnotes

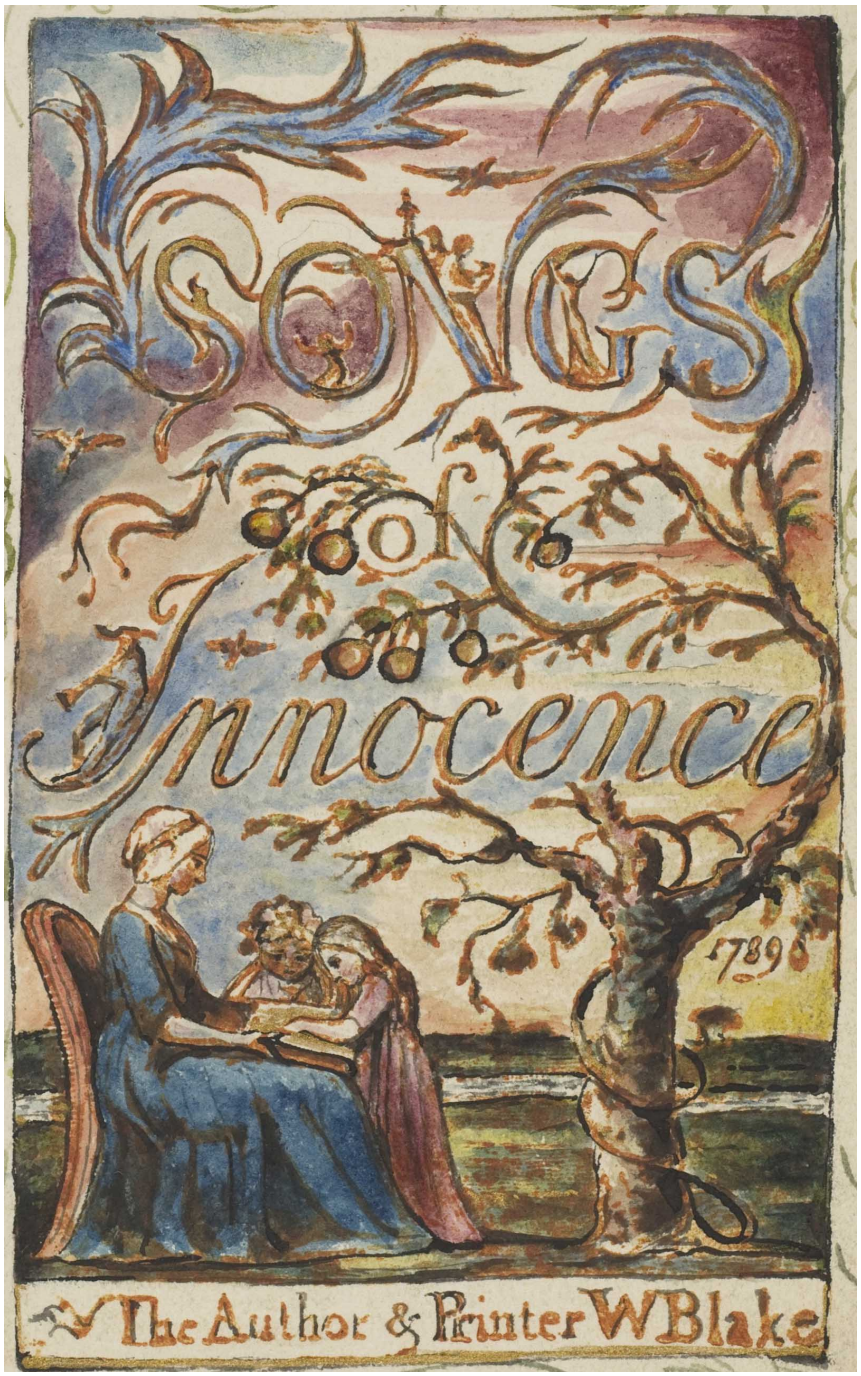
- Note 1:
  Songs of Innocence was etched in 1789, and in 1794 was combined with additional poems under the title *Songs of Innocence and of Experience;* this collection was reprinted at various later times with varying arrangements of the poems. In his songs of innocence Blake assumes the stance that he is writing "happy songs / Every child may joy to hear," but they do not all depict an innocent and happy world; many of them incorporate injustice, evil, and suffering. These aspects of the fallen world, however, are represented as they appear to a "state" of the human soul that Blake calls "innocence" and that he expresses in a simple pastoral language, in the

  Return to reference 1

From Songs of Innocence

Introduction

Piping down the valleys wild
Piping songs of pleasant glee
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me,



Separate title page for *Songs of Innocence* (1789), *Songs of Innocence and of Experience,* plate 3, copy Y, ca. 1801.

Pipe a song about a Lamb;
So I piped with merry chear;

Piper pipe that song again—
So I piped, he wept to hear.

Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe
Sing thy songs of happy chear;
So I sung the same again
While he wept with joy to hear.

Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read—
So he vanish'd from my sight.
And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

1789

The Ecchoing Green

The Sun does arise,
And make happy the skies.
The merry bells ring
To welcome the Spring.
The sky-lark and thrush,
The birds of the bush,
Sing louder around,
To the bells' chearful sound.
While our sports shall be seen
On the Ecchoing Green.

Old John with white hair
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say:
Such, such were the joys.
When we all, girls & boys,
In our youth-time were seen,
On the Ecchoing Green.

Till the little ones weary
No more can be merry
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end:
Round the laps of their mothers,
Many sisters and brothers,
Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest;
And sport no more seen,

On the darkening Green.

30

1789

The Lamb[1]

Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,
By the stream & o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee!
He is callèd by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb;
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child;
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are callèd by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: The opening of this poem mimes the form of the catechistic questions and answers customarily used for children's religious instruction.Return to reference 1

The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And pointing to the east, began to say:

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice,
Saying: Come out from the grove, my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me;
And thus I say to little English boy:
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee.

And then I’ll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

1789

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep![1]
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd, so I said,
Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's
bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight!
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & Jack,
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: The child's lisping attempt at the chimney sweeper's street cry, "Sweep! Sweep!"Return to reference 1

The Divine Image

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
All pray in their distress,
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is God, our father dear:
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity, a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew.
Where Mercy, Love, & Pity dwell,
There God is dwelling too.

1789

Holy Thursday[1]

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two & two, in red & blue & green;
Grey headed beadles[2] walkd before with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow.

O what a multitude they seemd, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among.
Beneath them sit the agèd men, wise guardians of the poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.[3]

ca. 1784 1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: A special day during the Easter season when the poor (frequently orphaned) children of the charity schools of London —sometimes as many as 6,000—marched in a procession to a service at St. Paul's Cathedral.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lower church officers, one of whose duties is to keep order.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare Hebrews 13:2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."Return to reference 3

Nurse’s Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast
And everything else is still.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away
Till the morning appears in the skies.

No, no, let us play, for it is yet day
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky, the little birds fly
And the hills are all coverd with sheep.

Well, well, go & play till the light fades away
And then go home to bed.
The little ones leaped & shouted & laugh’d
And all the hills ecchoèd.

ca. 1784

1789

Infant Joy

I have no name,
I am but two days old.
What shall I call thee?
I happy am,
Joy is my name.
Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy but two days old,
Sweet joy I call thee;
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while—
Sweet joy befall thee.

1789

On Anothers Sorrow

Can I see anothers woe,
And not be in sorrow too.
Can I see anothers grief,
And not seek for kind relief.

Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrows share,
Can a father see his child,
Weep, nor be with sorrow fill'd.

Can a mother sit and hear,
An infant groan an infant fear—
No no never can it be.
Never never can it be.

And can he who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small birds grief & care
Hear the woes that infants bear—

And not sit beside the nest
Pouring pity in their breast,
And not sit the cradle near
Weeping tear on infants tear.

And not sit both night & day,
Wiping all our tears away.
O! no never can it be.
Never never can it be.

He doth give his joy to all.
He becomes an infant small.

He becomes a man of woe
He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not, thou canst sigh a sigh,
And thy maker is not by.
Think not, thou canst weep a tear,
And thy maker is not near.

O! he gives to us his joy,
That our grief he may destroy
Till our grief is fled & gone
He doth sit by us and moan

1789

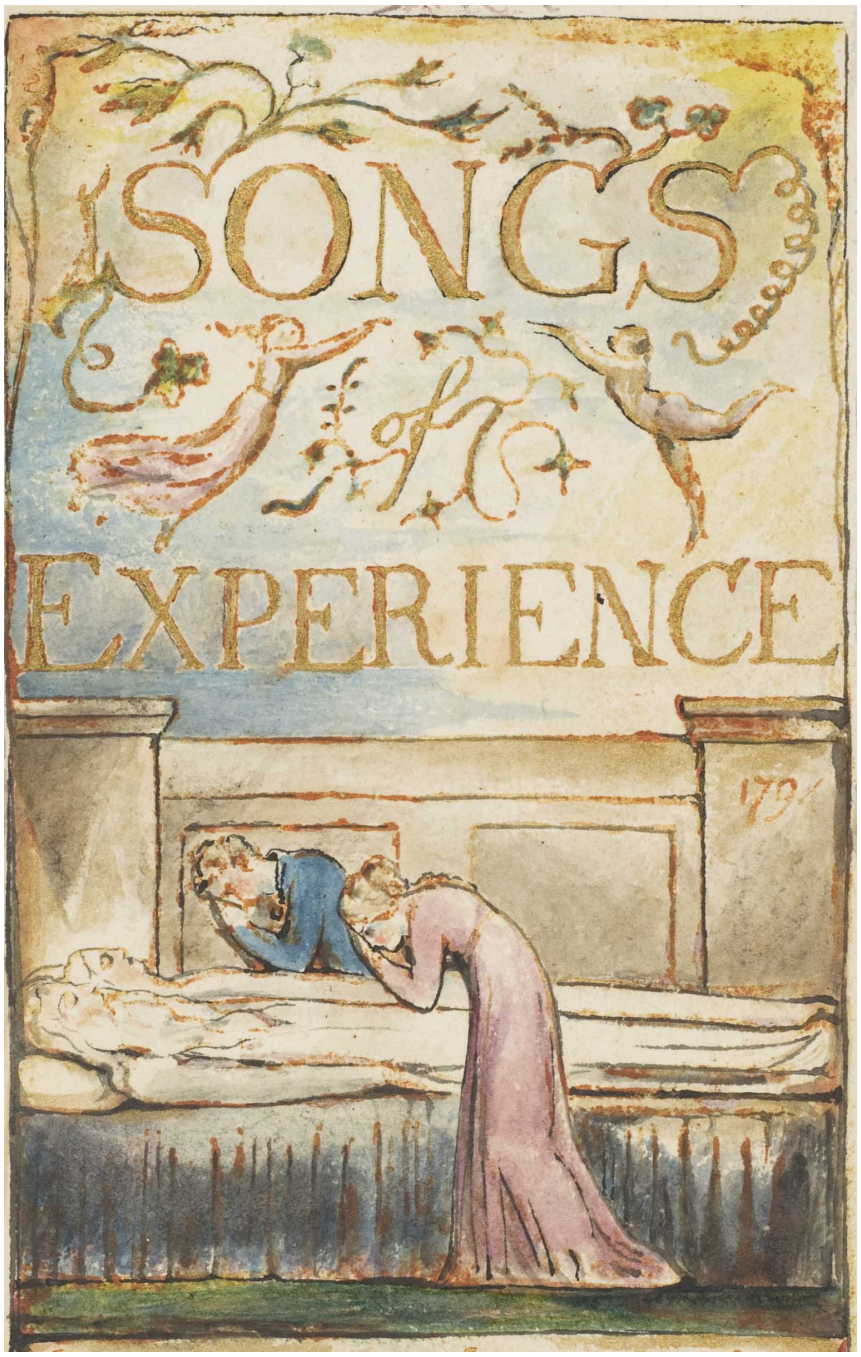
From Songs of Experience

Introduction

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walk'd among the ancient trees;[1]

Calling the lapsèd Soul[2]
And weeping in the evening dew,
That might controll[3]
The starry pole,
And fallen, fallen light renew!

O Earth, O Earth, return!
Arise from out the dewy grass;



Separate title page for *Songs of Experience* (1794) *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, plate 29, copy Y, ca. 1801.

Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

Turn away no more;
Why wilt thou turn away?
The starry floor
The watry shore[4]
Is giv'n thee till the break of day.

1794

Endnotes

- Note 1: Genesis 3:8: "And [Adam and Eve] heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." "The Bard," or poet-prophet, whose imagination is not bound by time, has heard the voice of the Lord in Eden.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The syntax leaves it ambiguous whether it is "the Bard" or "the Holy Word" who calls to the fallen ("lapsèd") soul and to the fallen earth to stop the natural cycle of light and darkness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The likely syntax is that "Soul" is the subject of "might controll."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Blake's recurrent symbolism the starry sky ("floor") signifies rigid rational order and the sea signifies chaos.Return to reference 4

Earth's Answer[1]

Earth rais'd up her head,
From the darkness dread & drear.
Her light fled:
Stony dread!
And her locks cover'd with grey despair.

Prison'd on watry shore
Starry Jealousy does keep my den,
Cold and hoar
Weeping o'er
I hear the Father of the ancient men.[2]

Selfish father of men,
Cruel, jealous, selfish fear!
Can delight
Chain'd in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear?

Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower
Sow by night,
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

Break this heavy chain
That does freeze my bones around;
Selfish! vain!
Eternal bane!
That free Love with bondage bound.

1794

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Earth explains why she, the natural world, cannot by her unaided endeavors renew the fallen light.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: This is the character that Blake later named "Urizen" in his prophetic works. He is the tyrant who binds the mind to the natural world and also imposes a moral bondage on sexual desire and other modes of human energy.Return to reference 2

The Clod & the Pebble

Love seeketh not Itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care;
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

So sang a little Clod of Clay,
Trodden with the cattle's feet;
But a Pebble of the brook,
Warbled out these metres meet:

Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight;
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.

1794

Holy Thursday

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak & bare,
And their ways are fill'd with thorns;
It is eternal winter there.

For where-e'er the sun does shine,
And where-e'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appall.

1794

The Chimney Sweeper

A little black thing among the snow
Crying 'weep, 'weep, in notes of woe!
Where are thy father & mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow;
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy, & dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

1790–92 1794

Nurse's Song

When the voices of children are heard on the green
And whisperings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home my children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise;
Your spring & your day are wasted in play,
And your winter and night in disguise.

1794

The Sick Rose

O Rose, thou art sick.
The invisible worm
That flies in the night
In the howling storm

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

1794

The Fly

Little Fly
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brush'd away

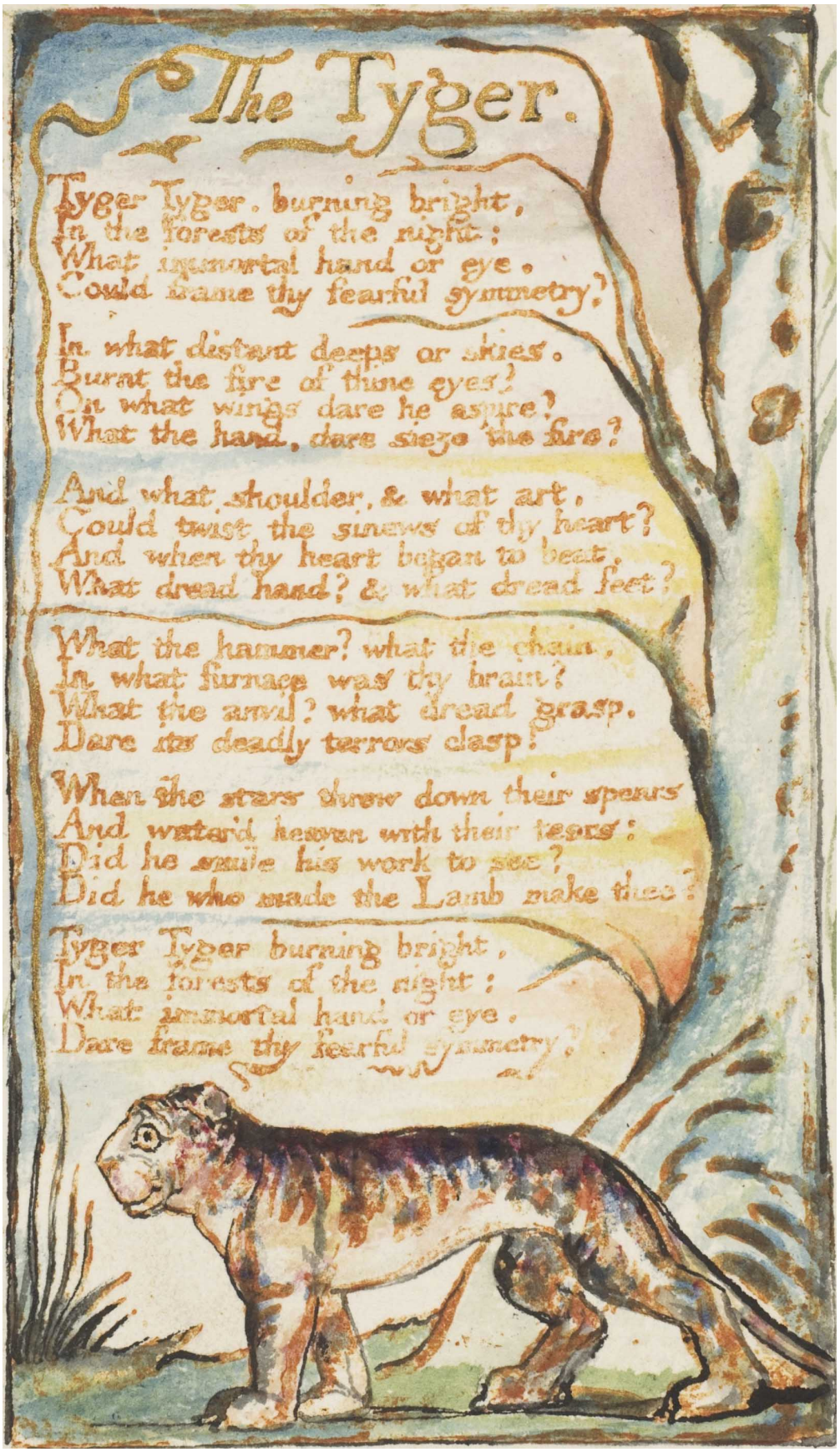
Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance
And drink & sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength & breath,
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly,
If I live,
Or if I die.

1794


The Tyger.
Tyger Tyger. burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye.
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare sieze the fire?
And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?
What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp.
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!
When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye.
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

"The Tyger," *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, plate 42, copy Y, ca. 1801.

The Tyger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears[1]
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

1790–92 1794

Endnotes

- Note 1: “Threw down” is ambiguous and may signify that the stars either “surrendered” or “hurled down” their spears.Return to reference 1

My Pretty Rose Tree

A flower was offerd to me;
Such a flower as May never bore,
But I said, I've a Pretty Rose-tree,
And I passed the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my Pretty Rose-tree,
To tend her by day and by night.
But my Rose turnd away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.

1794

Ah! Sun-flower

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

1794

The Garden of Love

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore,

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys & desires.

1794

London

I wander thro' each charter'd[1] street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,[2]
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear:

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear,[3]
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.[4]

1794

LONDON

I wander thro' each charterd street,
Near where the charterd Thames does flow
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

"London," *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, plate 46, copy Y, ca. 1801.

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Given liberty," but also, ironically, "preempted as private property, and rented out."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The various meanings of *ban* are relevant (political and legal prohibition, curse, public condemnation) as well as "banns" (marriage proclamation).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Most critics read this line as implying prenatal blindness, resulting from a parent's venereal disease (the "plagues" of line 16) by earlier infection from the harlot.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the older sense: "converts the marriage bed into a bier." Or possibly, because the current sense of the word had also come into use in Blake's day, "converts the marriage coach into a funeral hearse."Return to reference 4

The Human Abstract[1]

Pity would be no more,
If we did not make somebody Poor;
And Mercy no more could be,
If all were as happy as we;

And mutual fear brings peace,
Till the selfish loves increase;
Then Cruelty knits a snare,
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,
And waters the ground with tears;
Then Humility takes its root
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade
Of Mystery over his head;
And the Catterpiller and Fly
Feed on the Mystery.

"The Human Abstract," *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, plate 47, copy Y, 1825.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,
Ruddy and sweet to eat;

And the Raven his nest has made
In its thickest shade.

The Gods of the earth and sea,
Sought thro' Nature to find this Tree,
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the Human Brain.

1790–92

1794

Endnotes

- Note 1: The matched contrary to "The Divine Image" in *Songs of Innocence.* The virtues of the earlier poem, "Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love," are now represented as possible marks for exploitation, cruelty, conflict, and hypocritical humility.Return to reference 1

Infant Sorrow

My mother groand! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt,
Helpless, naked, piping loud;
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swadling bands;
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.

1794

A Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I waterd it in fears,
Night & morning with my tears;
And I sunnèd it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright.
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veild the pole;
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretchd beneath the tree.

1794

To Tirzah[1]

Whate'er is Born of Mortal Birth
Must be consumèd with the Earth
To rise from Generation free;
Then what have I to do with thee?[2]

The Sexes sprung from Shame & Pride,
Blow'd° in the morn, in evening died;
But Mercy changd Death into Sleep;
The Sexes rose to work & weep.

Thou, Mother of my Mortal part,
With cruelty didst mould my Heart,
And with false self-deceiving tears
Didst bind my Nostrils, Eyes, & Ears.

Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay
And me to Mortal Life betray.
The Death of Jesus set me free;
Then what have I to do with thee?

ca. 1805

Endnotes

- Note 1: Tirzah was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel and is conceived by Blake in opposition to Jerusalem, capital of the southern kingdom of Judah, whose tribes had been redeemed from captivity. In this poem, which was added to late versions of *Songs of Experience*, Tirzah is represented as the mother—in the realm of material nature and "Generation"—of the mortal body, with its restrictive senses.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Echoing the words of Christ to his mother at the marriage in Cana, John 2:4: “Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.”Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *blossomed*Return to reference °

A Divine Image[1]

Cruelty has a Human Heart
And Jealousy a Human Face,
Terror, the Human Form Divine,
And Secrecy, the Human Dress.

The Human Dress is forgèd Iron,
The Human Form, a fiery Forge,
The Human Face, a Furnace seal'd,
The Human Heart, its hungry Gorge.°

1790–91

Endnotes

- Note 1: Blake omitted this poem from all but one copy of *Songs of Experience,* probably because "The Human Abstract" served as a more comprehensive and subtle contrary to "The Divine Image" in *Songs of Innocence.*Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *mouth, stomach*Return to reference °

Visions of the Daughters of Albion This work, dated 1793 on the title page, is one of Blake's early illuminated books, and like his later and longer works is written in what Blake called "the long resounding strong heroic verse" of seven-foot lines. Unlike the timid heroine in Blake's earlier *The Book of Thel*, the virgin Oothoon dares to break through into adult sexuality (symbolized by her plucking a marigold and placing it between her breasts) and sets out joyously to join her lover, Theotormon, whose realm is the Atlantic Ocean. She is stopped and raped by Bromion, who appears as a thunderstorm (1.16–17). The jealous Theotormon, condemning the victim as well as the rapist, binds the two "back to back" in a cave and sits weeping on the threshold. The rest of the work consists of monologues by the three characters, who remain fixed in these postures. Throughout this stage tableau the Daughters of Albion serve as the chorus who, in a recurrent refrain, echo the "woes" and "sighs" of Oothoon, but not her call to rebellion.

This simple drama is densely significant, for as Blake's compressed allusions indicate, the characters, events, and monologues have diverse areas of application. Blake's abrupt opening word, which he etched in very large letters, is *Enslav'd*, and the work as a whole embodies his view that contemporary men, and even more women, in a spiritual parallel to shackled African people, are in bondage to oppressive concepts and codes in all aspects of perception, thought, social institutions, and actions. As indicated by the refrain of the Daughters of Albion (that is, contemporary Englishwomen), Oothoon in one aspect represents the sexual disabilities and slavelike status of all women in a male-dominated society. But as "the soft soul of America" (1.3) she is also the revolutionary nation that had recently won political emancipation, yet continued to tolerate an agricultural system that involved the enslavement of Black people and to acquiesce in the crass economic exploitation of her "soft American plains." At the same time Oothoon is represented in the situation of an enslaved Black female who has been branded, whipped, raped, and impregnated by her master.

Correlatively, the speeches of the boastful Bromion show him to be not only a sexual exploiter of women and a cruel and acquisitive slave owner but also a general proponent of the use of force to achieve mastery in wars, in an oppressive legal system, and in a religious morality based on the fear of hell (4.19–24). Theotormon is represented as even more contemptible. Broken and paralyzed by the prohibitions of a puritanical religion, he denies any possibility of achieving "joys" in this life, despairs of the power of intellect and imagination to improve the human condition and, rationalizing his own incapacity, bewails Oothoon's daring to think and act other than he does.

Oothoon's long and passionate oration that concludes the poem (plates 5–8) celebrates a free sexual life for both women and men. Blake, however, uses this open and unpossessive sexuality to typify the realization of all human potentialities and to represent an outgoing altruism, as opposed to an enclosed self-centeredness, "the self-love that envies all." To such a suspicious egotism, as her allusions indicate, Oothoon attributes the tyranny of uniform moral laws imposed on variable individuals, a rigidly institutional religion, the acquisitiveness that drives the system of commerce, and the property rights in another person that are established by the marriage contract.

Blake's poem reflects some prominent happenings of the years of its composition, 1791–93. This was not only the time when the revolutionary spirit had moved from America to France with tremendous consequences in England, but also the time of rebellions by enslaved Africans in the Western Hemisphere and of widespread debate in England about the abolition of the slave trade. Blake, while composing the *Visions*, had illustrated the sadistic punishments inflicted on rebellious slaves in his engravings for J. G. Stedman's *A Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (see David Erdman, *Blake: Prophet against Empire,* chapter 10). Blake's championing of women's liberation parallels some of the views expressed in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published in 1792 by Mary Wollstonecraft, whom Blake knew

and admired, and for whom he had illustrated a book the year before.

Visions of the Daughters of Albion

The Eye sees more than the Heart knows.

PLATE iii[1]

The Argument

I loved Theotormon
And I was not ashamed
I trembled in my virgin fears
And I hid in Leutha's[2] vale!

I plucked Leutha's flower,
And I rose up from the vale;
But the terrible thunders tore
My virgin mantle in twain.

Frontispiece, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), plate 1, copy P, ca. 1815

PLATE 1

Visions

ENSLAV'D, the Daughters of Albion weep: a trembling lamentation
Upon their mountains; in their valleys, sighs toward America.

For the soft soul of America, Oothoon[3] wandered in woe,
Along the vales of Leutha seeking flowers to comfort her;
And thus she spoke to the bright Marygold of Leutha's vale:

"Art thou a flower! art thou a nymph! I see thee now a flower,
Now a nymph! I dare not pluck thee from thy dewy bed!"

The Golden nymph replied: "Pluck thou my flower Oothoon the mild.
Another flower shall spring, because the soul of sweet delight
Can never pass away." She ceas'd & closd her golden shrine.

Then Oothoon pluck'd the flower saying, "I pluck thee from thy bed,
Sweet flower, and put thee here to glow between my breasts,
And thus I turn my face to where my whole soul seeks."

Over the waves she went in wing'd exulting swift delight;
And over Theotormon's reign took her impetuous course.

Bromion rent her with his thunders. On his stormy bed
Lay the faint maid, and soon her woes appalld his thunders hoarse.

Bromion spoke. "Behold this harlot here on Bromion's bed,
And let the jealous dolphins sport around the lovely maid;
Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north & south:
Stampt with my signet[4] are the swarthy children of the sun:
They are obedient, they resist not, they obey the scourge:
Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent.

PLATE 2

Now thou maist marry Bromion's harlot, and protect the child
Of Bromion's rage, that Oothoon shall put forth in nine moons' time."[5]
Then storms rent Theotormon's limbs; he rolld his waves around,
And folded his black jealous waters round the adulterate pair;
Bound back to back in Bromion's caves terror & meekness dwell.

At entrance Theotormon sits wearing the threshold hard
With secret tears; beneath him sound like waves on a desart shore

The voice of slaves beneath the sun, and children bought with money,
That shiver in religious caves beneath the burning fires
Of lust, that belch incessant from the summits of the earth.

Oothoon weeps not: she cannot weep! her tears are locked up;
But she can howl incessant, writing her soft snowy limbs,
And calling Theotormon's Eagles to prey upon her flesh.[6]

"I call with holy voice! kings of the sounding air,
Rend away this defiled bosom that I may reflect
The image of Theotormon on my pure transparent breast."

The Eagles at her call descend & rend their bleeding prey;
Theotormon severely smiles; her soul reflects the smile,
As the clear spring mudded with feet of beasts grows pure & smiles.

The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs.

"Why does my Theotormon sit weeping upon the threshold,
And Oothoon hovers by his side, perswading him in vain?
I cry, 'Arise O Theotormon, for the village dog
Barks at the breaking day, the nightingale has done lamenting,

The lark does rustle in the ripe corn, and the Eagle returns
From nightly prey, and lifts his golden beak to the pure east,
Shaking the dust from his immortal pinions to awake
The sun that sleeps too long. Arise my Theotormon, I am pure;
Because the night is gone that clos'd me in its deadly black.'
They told me that the night & day were all that I could see;
They told me that I had five senses to inclose me up,
And they inclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle,
And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red round globe hot burning,
Till all from life I was obliterated and erased.
Instead of morn arises a bright shadow, like an eye
In the eastern cloud,[7] instead of night a sickly charnel house,
That Theotormon hears me not! to him the night and morn
Are both alike: a night of sighs, a morning of fresh tears;

PLATE 3

And none but Bromion can hear my lamentations.

"With what sense is it that the chicken shuns the ravenous hawk?
With what sense does the tame pigeon measure out the expanse?
With what sense does the bee form cells? have not the mouse & frog
Eyes and ears and sense of touch? yet are their habitations

And their pursuits as different as their forms and as their joys.
Ask the wild ass why he refuses burdens, and the meek camel
Why he loves man; is it because of eye, ear, mouth, or skin,
Or breathing nostrils? No, for these the wolf and tyger have.
Ask the blind worm the secrets of the grave, and why her spires
Love to curl round the bones of death; and ask the rav'nous snake
Where she gets poison, & the wing'd eagle why he loves the sun,
And then tell me the thoughts of man, that have been hid of old.[8]

"Silent I hover all the night, and all day could be silent,
If Theotormon once would turn his loved eyes upon me.
How can I be defild when I reflect thy image pure?
Sweetest the fruit that the worm feeds on, & the soul prey'd on by woe,
The new wash'd lamb ting'd with the village smoke, & the bright swan
By the red earth of our immortal river:[9] I bathe my wings,
And I am white and pure to hover round Theotormon's breast."

Then Theotormon broke his silence, and he answered:

"Tell me what is the night or day to one o'erflowd with woe?

Tell me what is a thought? & of what substance is it made?
Tell me what is a joy? & in what gardens do joys grow?
And in what rivers swim the sorrows? and upon what mountains

PLATE 4

Wave shadows of discontent? and in what houses dwell the wretched
Drunken with woe, forgotten, and shut up from cold despair?

"Tell me where dwell the thoughts, forgotten till thou call them forth?
Tell me where dwell the joys of old! & where the ancient loves?
And when will they renew again & the night of oblivion past?
That I might traverse times & spaces far remote and bring
Comforts into a present sorrow and a night of pain.
Where goest thou, O thought? to what remote land is thy flight?
If thou returnest to the present moment of affliction
Wilt thou bring comforts on thy wings and dews and honey and balm,
Or poison from the desart wilds, from the eyes of the envier?"

Then Bromion said, and shook the cavern with his lamentation:

"Thou knowest that the ancient trees seen by thine eyes have fruit;

But knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
To gratify senses unknown? trees beasts and birds unknown:
Unknown, not unpercievd, spread in the infinite microscope,
In places yet unvisited by the voyager, and in worlds
Over another kind of seas, and in atmospheres unknown?
Ah! are there other wars, beside the wars of sword and fire?
And are there other sorrows, beside the sorrows of poverty?
And are there other joys, beside the joys of riches and ease?
And is there not one law for both the lion and the ox? [1]
And is there not eternal fire, and eternal chains?
To bind the phantoms of existence from eternal life?"

Then Oothoon waited silent all the day and all the night,

PLATE 5

But when the morn arose, her lamentation renewd.
The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs.

"O Urizen![2] Creator of men! mistaken Demon of heaven:
Thy joys are tears! thy labour vain, to form men to thine image.
How can one joy absorb another? are not different joys
Holy, eternal, infinite! and each joy is a Love.

"Does not the great mouth laugh at a gift? & the narrow eyelids mock
At the labour that is above payment? and wilt thou take the ape
For thy councellor? or the dog for a schoolmaster to thy children?
Does he who contemns poverty, and he who turns with abhorrence
From usury, feel the same passion, or are they moved alike?
How can the giver of gifts experience the delights of the merchant?
How the industrious citizen the pains of the husbandman?
How different far the fat fed hireling with hollow drum,
Who buys whole corn fields into wastes,[3] and sings upon the heath:
How different their eye and ear! how different the world to them!
With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer?
What are his nets & gins° & traps? & how does he surround him
With cold floods of abstraction, and with forests of solitude,
To build him castles and high spires, where kings & priests may dwell?
Till she who burns with youth, and knows no fixed lot, is bound
In spells of law to one she loaths; and must she drag the chain
Of life, in weary lust? must chilling murderous thoughts obscure

The clear heaven of her eternal spring? to bear the wintry rage
Of a harsh terror, driv'n to madness, bound to hold a rod
Over her shrinking shoulders all the day, & all the night
To turn the wheel of false desire, and longings that wake her womb
To the abhorred birth of cherubs in the human form
That live a pestilence & die a meteor & are no more;
Till the child dwell with one he hates, and do the deed he loaths,
And the impure scourge force his seed into its unripe birth
E'er yet his eyelids can behold the arrows of the day?[4]

"Does the whale worship at thy footsteps as the hungry dog?
Or does he scent the mountain prey, because his nostrils wide
Draw in the ocean? does his eye discern the flying cloud
As the raven's eye? or does he measure the expanse like the vulture?
Does the still spider view the cliffs where eagles hide their young?
Or does the fly rejoice because the harvest is brought in?
Does not the eagle scorn the earth & despise the treasures beneath?
But the mole knoweth what is there, & the worm shall tell it thee.
Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering church yard,

PLATE 6

And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave?
Over his porch these words are written: 'Take thy bliss O Man!
And sweet shall be thy taste & sweet thy infant joys renew!'

"Infancy, fearless, lustful, happy! nestling for delight
In laps of pleasure; Innocence! honest, open, seeking
The vigorous joys of morning light, open to virgin bliss,
Who taught thee modesty, subtil modesty? Child of night & sleep,
When thou awakest wilt thou dissemble all thy secret joys,
Or wert thou not awake when all this mystery was disclos'd?
Then com'st thou forth a modest virgin, knowing to dissemble,
With nets found under thy night pillow to catch virgin joy,
And brand it with the name of whore, & sell it in the night,
In silence, ev'n without a whisper, and in seeming sleep.[5]
Religious dreams and holy vespers light thy smoky fires;
Once were thy fires lighted by the eyes of honest morn.
And does my Theotormon seek this hypocrite modesty,
This knowing, artful, secret, fearful, cautious, trembling hypocrite?

Then is Oothoon a whore indeed! and all the virgin joys
Of life are harlots, and Theotormon is a sick man's dream,
And Oothoon is the crafty slave of selfish holiness.

"But Oothoon is not so; a virgin fill'd with virgin fancies
Open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears.
If in the morning sun I find it, there my eyes are fix'd

PLATE 7

In happy copulation; if in evening mild, wearied with work,
Sit on a bank and draw the pleasures of this free born joy.

"The moment of desire! the moment of desire! The virgin
That pines for man shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
In the secret shadows of her chamber; the youth shut up from
The lustful joy shall forget to generate & create an amorous image
In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.[6]
Are not these the places of religion? the rewards of continence?
The self enjoyings of self denial? Why dost seek religion?
Is it because acts are not lovely, that thou seekest solitude,

Where the horrible darkness is impressed with
reflections of desire?

"Father of Jealousy,[7] be thou accursed from the earth!
Why hast thou taught my Theotormon this accursed
thing?
Till beauty fades from off my shoulders, darken'd and
cast out,
A solitary shadow wailing on the margin of non-entity.

"I cry, Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as
the mountain wind!
Can that be Love, that drinks another as a sponge
drinks water?
That clouds with jealousy his nights, with weepings all
the day,
To spin a web of age around him, grey and hoary!
dark!
Till his eyes sicken at the fruit that hangs before his
sight.
Such is self-love that envies all! a creeping skeleton
With lamplike eyes watching around the frozen
marriage bed.

"But silken nets and traps of adamant[8] will Oothoon
spread,
And catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious
gold;
I'll lie beside thee on a bank & view their wanton play
In lovely copulation bliss on bliss with Theotormon:
Red as the rosy morning, lustful as the first born
beam,
Oothoon shall view his dear delight, nor e'er with
jealous cloud
Come in the heaven of generous love; nor selfish
blightings bring.

"Does the sun walk in glorious raiment on the secret floor

PLATE 8

Where the cold miser spreads his gold? or does the bright cloud drop
On his stone threshold? does his eye behold the beam that brings
Expansion to the eye of pity? or will he bind himself
Beside the ox to thy hard furrow? does not that mild beam blot
The bat, the owl, the glowing tyger, and the king of night?
The sea fowl takes the wintry blast for a cov'ring to her limbs,
And the wild snake the pestilence to adorn him with gems & gold.
And trees & birds & beasts & men behold their eternal joy.
Arise you little glancing wings, and sing your infant joy!
Arise and drink your bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!"[9]

Thus every morning wails Oothoon, but Theotormon sits
Upon the margind ocean conversing with shadows dire.

The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, & eccho back her sighs.

1791–93 1793

Endnotes

- Note 1: The plate numbers identify the page, each with its own pictorial design, as originally printed by Blake. These numbers are reproduced here because they are frequently used in references to Blake's writings.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In some poems by Blake, Leutha is represented as a female figure who is beautiful and seductive but treacherous.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The name is adapted by Blake from a character in James Macpherson's pretended translations, in the 1760s, from the ancient British bard Ossian. After her husband goes off to war, Macpherson's Oithona is abducted, raped, and imprisoned by a rejected suitor.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A small seal or stamp. The allusion is to the branding of enslaved people.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pregnancy enhanced the market value of an enslaved female in America.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The implied parallel is to Zeus's punishment of Prometheus for befriending the human race, by setting an eagle to devour his liver.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The contrast is between the physical sun perceived by the constricted ("inclos'd," line 32) sensible eye and "the breaking day" (line 24) of a new era perceived by Oothoon's liberated vision.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Oothoon implies that "thoughts" (powers of conceiving a liberated life in a better world) are as innate to human beings as instinctual patterns of behavior are to other species of living things.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: "Immortal river": may refer to the "river" that "went out of Eden" (Genesis 2:10). "Red earth": the etymological meaning of the Hebrew name *Adam* (see *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 2.13, p. 150).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The last line of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* proclaims: "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: This is the first occurrence of the name "Urizen" in Blake (the name can be pronounced either as "your reason" or as an

echo of "horizon"). Oothoon's liberated vision recognizes the error in the way God is conceived in conventional religion.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Probably a compressed allusion both to the wealthy landowner who converts fertile fields into a game preserve and to the army recruiting officer ("with hollow drum") who strips the land of its agricultural laborers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The reference is to the begetting of children, both in actual slavery and in the metaphoric slavery of a loveless marriage, from generation to generation.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Oothoon contrasts the natural, innocent sensuality of an infant to the sort of modesty characterizing the adult virgin, a false modesty that, Mary Wollstonecraft had observed in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, is "merely a respect for the opinion of the world."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Blake is describing masturbation.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, Urizen (5.3), the God who prohibits the satisfaction of human desires.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A legendary stone believed to be unbreakable. (The name is derived from the Greek word for diamond.)Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This last phrase is also the concluding line of "A Song of Liberty," appended to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.*Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *snares*Return to reference °

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell This, the most immediately accessible of Blake's longer works, is a vigorous, deliberately outrageous, and at times comic onslaught against timidly conventional and self-righteous members of society as well as against stock opinions of orthodox Christian piety and morality. The seeming simplicity of Blake's satiric attitude, however, is deceptive.

Initially, Blake accepts the terminology of standard Christian morality ("what the religious call Good & Evil") but reverses its values. In this conventional use Evil, which is manifested by the class of beings called Devils and which consigns wrongdoers to the orthodox Hell, is everything associated with the body and its desires and consists essentially of energy, abundance, actions, and freedom. Conventional Good, which is manifested by Angels and guarantees its adherents a place in the orthodox Heaven, is associated with the Soul (regarded as entirely separate from the body) and consists of the contrary qualities of reason, restraint, passivity, and prohibition. Blandly adopting these conventional oppositions, Blake elects to assume the diabolic persona—what he calls "the voice of the Devil"—and to utter "Proverbs of Hell."

But this stance is only a first stage in Blake's complex irony, designed to startle the reader into recognizing the inadequacy of conventional moral categories. As he also says in the opening summary, "Without Contraries is no progression," and "Reason and Energy" are both "necessary to Human existence." It turns out that Blake subordinates his reversal of conventional values under a more inclusive point of view, according to which the real Good, as distinguished from the merely ironic Good, is not abandonment of all restraints but a "marriage," or union of the contraries, of desire and restraint, energy and reason, the promptings of Hell and the denials of Heaven—or as Blake calls these contraries in plate 16, "the Prolific" and "the Devouring." These two classes, he adds, "should be enemies," and "whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence." Implicit in Blake's satire is the view that the good and abundant life consists in the sustained tension, without victory or suppression, of co-present oppositions.

When Blake composed this unique work in the early 1790s, his city of London was teeming with religious mystics, astrologers, and sometimes bawdy freethinkers who were determined to challenge the established Church's monopoly on spirituality and who were reviving the link, created in the seventeenth century, between enthusiasm in religion and political revolution. The work is also a response to the writings of the visionary Swedish theologian Emanuel Swedenborg, whom Blake had at first admired but then had come to recognize as a conventional Angel in the disguise of a radical Devil. In plate 3 the writings of Swedenborg are described as the winding clothes Blake discards as he is resurrected from the tomb of his past self, as a poet-prophet who heralds the apocalyptic promise of his age. Blake shared the expectations of a number of radical English writers, including the young poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, that the French Revolution was the violent stage that, as the biblical prophets foresaw, immediately preceded the millennium. The double role of *The Marriage* as both satire and revolutionary prophecy is made explicit in "A Song of Liberty," which Blake etched in 1792 and added as a coda.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

PLATE 2

The Argument

Rintrah[1] roars & shakes his fires in the burdend air;
Hungry clouds swag on the deep.

Once meek, and in a perilous path,
The just man kept his course along
The vale of death.
Roses are planted where thorns grow,
And on the barren heath
Sing the honey bees.

Then the perilous path was planted,
And a river, and a spring,
On every cliff and tomb;
And on the bleached bones
Red clay[2] brought forth;

Till the villain left the paths of ease,
To walk in perilous paths, and drive
The just man into barren climes.

Now the sneaking serpent walks
In mild humility,
And the just man rages in the wilds
Where lions roam.

Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burdend air;
Hungry clouds swag on the deep.

PLATE 3

As a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent, the Eternal Hell revives. And lo! Swedenborg[3] is the Angel sitting at the tomb; his writings are the linen clothes folded up. Now is the dominion of Edom, & the return of Adam into Paradise; see Isaiah xxxiv & XXXV Chap.[4]

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.

Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

PLATE 4

The Voice of the Devil

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors:

1. That Man has two real existing principles; Viz: a Body & a Soul.

2. That Energy, calld Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, calld Good, is alone from the Soul.

3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True:

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul; for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discernd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.

2. Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.

3. Energy is Eternal Delight.

PLATE 5

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.

And being restraind, it by degrees becomes passive, till it is only the shadow of desire.

The history of this is written in *Paradise Lost,*[5] & the Governor or Reason is call'd Messiah.

And the original Archangel, or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is calld the Devil or Satan, and his children are call'd Sin & Death.[6]

But in the Book of Job, Milton's Messiah is call'd Satan.[7]

For this history has been adopted by both parties.

It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out; but the Devil's account is, that the Messi[PLATE 6]ah fell, & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss.

This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on;[8] the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he who dwells in flaming fire. Know that after Christ's death, he became Jehovah.

But in Milton, the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio[9] of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!

Note. The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it.

A Memorable Fancy[1]

As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius, which to Angels look like torment and insanity, I collected some of their Proverbs; thinking that as the sayings used in a nation mark its character, so the Proverbs of Hell

shew the nature of Infernal wisdom better than any description of buildings or garments.

When I came home, on the abyss of the five senses, where a flat sided steep frowns over the present world, I saw a mighty Devil[2] folded in black clouds, hovering on the sides of the rock; with cor[PLATE 7]roding fires he wrote the following sentence now perceived by the minds of men, & read by them on earth:

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?

Proverbs of Hell[3]

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.
Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead.
The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.
Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.
He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.
The cut worm forgives the plow.
Dip him in the river who loves water.
A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.
He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star.
Eternity is in love with the productions of time.
The busy bee has no time for sorrow.
The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock; but of wisdom, no clock can measure.
All wholsom food is caught without a net or a trap.
Bring out number, weight, & measure in a year of dearth.

No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.
A dead body revenges not injuries.
The most sublime act is to set another before you.
If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.
Folly is the cloke of knavery.
Shame is Pride's cloke.

PLATE 8

Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.
The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.
The nakedness of woman is the work of God.
Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.
The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword, are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man.
The fox condemns the trap, not himself.
Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth.
Let man wear the fell of the lion, woman the fleece of the sheep.
The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.
The selfish smiling fool & the sullen frowning fool shall be both thought wise, that they may be a rod.
What is now proved was once only imagin'd.
The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit watch the roots; the lion, the tyger, the horse, the elephant, watch the fruits,

The cistern contains; the fountain overflows.
One thought fills immensity.
Always be ready to speak your mind, and a base man will avoid you.
Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.
The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow.

PLATE 9

The fox provides for himself, but God provides for the lion.
Think in the morning, Act in the noon, Eat in the evening, Sleep in the night.
He who has sufferd you to impose on him knows you.
As the plow follows words, so God rewards prayers.
The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.
Expect poison from the standing water.
You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.
Listen to the fool's reproach! it is a kingly title!
The eyes of fire, the nostrils of air, the mouth of water, the beard of earth.
The weak in courage is strong in cunning.
The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow, nor the lion the horse, how he shall take his prey.
The thankful reciever bears a plentiful harvest.
If others had not been foolish, we should be so.
The soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.

When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius; lift up thy head!
As the catterpiller chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.
To create a little flower is the labour of ages.
Damn braces; Bless relaxes.
The best wine is the oldest, the best water the newest.
Prayers plow not! Praises reap not!
Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!

PLATE 10

The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet Proportion.
As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt to the contemptible.
The crow wish'd every thing was black, the owl that every thing was white.
Exuberance is Beauty.
If the lion was advised by the fox, he would be cunning.
Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement are roads of Genius.
Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.
Where man is not, nature is barren.
Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd.
Enough! or Too much.

PLATE 11

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity.

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood,

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounced that the Gods had ordered such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

PLATE 12

A Memorable Fancy

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert that God spake to them; and whether they did not think at the time that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition.

Isaiah answer'd: "I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded, & remain confirm'd, that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences, but wrote."

Then I asked: "Does a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make it so?"

He replied: "All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm perswasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm perswasion of any thing."

Then Ezekiel said: "The philosophy of the East taught the first principles of human perception. Some nations held one principle for the origin & some another; we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the first principle and all the others merely derivative, which was the cause of our despising the Priests & Philosophers of other countries, and prophecying that all Gods [PLATE 13] would at last be proved to originate in ours & to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius; it was this that our great poet, King David, desired so fervently & invokes so pathetically, saying by this he conquers enemies & governs kingdoms; and we so loved our God, that we cursed in his name all the deities of surrounding nations, and asserted that they had rebelled; from these opinions the vulgar came to think that all nations would at last be subject to the Jews."

"This," said he, "like all firm perswasions, is come to pass, for all nations believe the Jews' code and worship the Jews' god, and what greater subjection can be?"

I heard this with some wonder, & must confess my own conviction. After dinner I ask'd Isaiah to favour the world with his lost works; he said none of equal value was lost. Ezekiel said the same of his.

I also asked Isaiah what made him go naked and barefoot three years? He answered, "the same that made our friend Diogenes,[4] the Grecian."

I then asked Ezekiel why he eat dung, & lay so long on his right & left side?[5] He answered, "the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite; this the North American tribes practise, & is he honest who resists his genius or conscience only for the sake of present ease or gratification?"

PLATE 14

The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life;[6] and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite and holy, whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.

This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.[7]

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

PLATE 15

A Memorable Fancy

I was in a Printing house[8] in Hell & saw the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation.

In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a cave's mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave.

In the second chamber was a Viper folding round the rock & the cave, and others adorning it with gold, silver, and precious stones.

In the third chamber was an Eagle with wings and feathers of air; he caused the inside of the cave to be infinite; around were numbers of Eagle-like men, who built palaces in the immense cliffs.

In the fourth chamber were Lions of flaming fire, raging around & melting the metals into living fluids.

In the fifth chamber were Unnam'd forms, which cast the metals into the expanse.

There they were receiv'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries.[9]

PLATE 16

The Giants[1] who formed this world into its sensual existence, and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity; but the chains are the cunning of weak and tame minds which have power to resist energy; according to the proverb, the weak in courage is strong in cunning.

Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the other, the Devouring; to the Devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so; he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole.

But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer as a sea received the excess of his delights.

Some will say, "Is not God alone the Prolific?" I answer, "God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men."

These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries [PLATE 17] to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence.

Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.

Note. Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says, "I came not to send Peace but a Sword."[2]

Messiah or Satan or Tempter was formerly thought to be one of the Antediluvians[3] who are our Energies.

A Memorable Fancy

An Angel came to me and said: "O pitiable foolish young man! O horrible! O dreadful state! consider the hot burning dungeon thou art preparing for thyself to all eternity, to which thou art going in such career."

I said: "Perhaps you will be willing to shew me my eternal lot, & we will contemplate together upon it and see whether your lot or mine is most desirable."

So he took me thro' a stable & thro' a church & down into the church vault at the end of which was a mill; thro' the mill we went, and came to a cave; down the winding cavern we groped our tedious way till a void boundless as a nether sky appeared beneath us, & we held by the roots of trees and hung over this immensity, but I said: "If you please, we will commit ourselves to this void, and see whether Providence is here also, if you will not I will." But he answered: "Do not presume, O young man, but as we here remain, behold thy lot which will soon appear when the darkness passes away."[4]

So I remaind with him sitting in the twisted [PLATE 18] root of an oak; he was suspended in a fungus which hung with the head downward into the deep.

By degrees we beheld the infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city; beneath us at an immense distance was the sun, black but shining; round it were fiery tracks on which revolv'd vast spiders, crawling after their prey, which flew, or rather swum in the infinite deep, in the most terrific shapes of animals sprung from corruption; & the air was full of them, & seemed composed of them; these are Devils, and are called Powers of the air. I now asked my companion which was my eternal lot? He said, "Between the black & white spiders."

But now, from between the black & white spiders a cloud and fire burst and rolled thro the deep, blackning all beneath, so that the nether deep grew black as a sea & rolled with a terrible noise. Beneath us was nothing now to be seen but a black tempest, till looking east between the clouds & the waves, we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire, and not many stones' throw from us appeared and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent. At last to the east, distant about three degrees, appeared a fiery crest above the waves. Slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks till we discovered two globes of crimson fire, from which the sea fled away in clouds of

smoke. And now we saw it was the head of Leviathan;[5] his forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tyger's forehead; soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam, tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward [PLATE 19] us with all the fury of a spiritual existence.

My friend the Angel climb'd up from his station into the mill. I remain'd alone, & then this appearance was no more, but I found myself sitting on a pleasant bank beside a river by moon light, hearing a harper who sung to the harp, & his theme was: "The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind."

But I arose, and sought for the mill, & there I found my Angel, who surprised asked me how I escaped?

I answerd: "All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics: for when you ran away, I found myself on a bank by moonlight hearing a harper. But now we have seen my eternal lot, shall I shew you yours? He laughd at my proposal; but I by force suddenly caught him in my arms, & flew westerly thro' the night, til we were elevated above the earth's shadow; then I flung myself with him directly into the body of the sun. Here I clothed myself in white, & taking in my hand Swedenborg's volumes, sunk from the glorious clime, and passed all the planets till we came to Saturn. Here I staid to rest & then leap'd into the void between Saturn & the fixed stars.[6]

"Here," said I, "is your lot, in this space, if space it may be calld." Soon we saw the stable and the church, & I took him to the altar and open'd the Bible, and lo! it was a deep pit, into which I descended, driving the Angel before me. Soon we saw seven houses of brick;[7] one we enterd; in it were a [PLATE 20] number of monkeys, baboons, & all of that species, chaind by the middle, grinning and snatching at one another, but withheld by the shortness of their chains. However, I saw that they sometimes grew numerous, and then the weak were caught by the strong, and with a grinning aspect, first coupled with & then devourd, by plucking off first one limb and then another till the body was left a helpless trunk. This, after grinning & kissing it with seeming fondness, they devourd too;

and here & there I saw one savourily picking the flesh off of his own tail. As the stench terribly annoyd us both, we went into the mill, & I in my hand brought the skeleton of a body, which in the mill was Aristotle's Analytics.[8]

So the Angel said: "Thy phantasy has imposed upon me, & thou oughtest to be ashamed."

I answerd: "We impose on one another, & it is but lost time to converse with you whose works are only Analytics."

Opposition is true Friendship.

PLATE 21

I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning.

Thus Swedenborg boasts that what he writes is new; tho' it is only the Contents or Index of already publish'd books.

A man carried a monkey about for a shew, & because he was a little wiser than the monkey, grew vain, and conceiv'd himself as much wiser than seven men. It is so with Swedenborg; he shews the folly of churches & exposes hypocrites, till he imagines that all are religious, & himself the single [PLATE 22] one on earth that ever broke a net.

Now hear a plain fact: Swedenborg has not written one new truth. Now hear another: he has written all the old falshoods.

And now hear the reason: He conversed with Angels who are all religious, & conversed not with Devils, who all hate religion, for he was incapable thro' his conceited notions.

Thus Swedenborg's writings are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further.

Have now another plain fact: Any man of mechanical talents may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen[9] produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's, and from those of Dante or Shakespear, an infinite number.

But when he has done this, let him not say that he knows better than his master, for he only holds a candle in sunshine.

A Memorable Fancy

Once I saw a Devil in a flame of fire, who arose before an Angel that sat on a cloud, and the Devil utterd these words:

"The worship of God is, Honouring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the [PLATE 23] greatest men best. Those who envy or calumniate great men hate God, for there is no other God."

The Angel hearing this became almost blue; but mastering himself, he grew yellow, & at last white, pink, & smiling, and then replied:

"Thou Idolater, is not God One? & is not he visible in Jesus Christ? and has not Jesus Christ given his sanction to the law of ten commandments, and are not all other men fools, sinners, & nothings?"

The Devil answer'd; "Bray a fool in a mortar with wheat, yet shall not his folly be beaten out of him.[1] If Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree. Now hear how he has given his sanction to the law of ten commandments: did he not mock at the sabbath, and so mock the sabbath's God?[2] murder those who were murderd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery?[3] steal the labor of others to support him? bear false witness when he omitted making a defence before Pilate?[4] covet when he pray'd for his disciples, and when he bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such as refused to lodge them?[5] I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus was all virtue, and acted from im[PLATE 24]pulse, not from rules."

When he had so spoken, I beheld the Angel, who stretched out his arms embracing the flame of fire, & he was consumed and arose as Elijah.[6]

Note. This Angel, who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend; we often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense, which the world shall have if they behave well.

I have also The Bible of Hell,[7] which the world shall have whether they will or no.

One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression.

1790–93

1790–93

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Rintrah plays the role of the angry Old Testament prophet Elijah as well as of John the Baptist, the voice "crying in the wilderness" (Matthew 3), preparing the way for Christ the Messiah. It has been plausibly suggested that stanzas 2–5 summarize the course of biblical history to the present time. "Once" (line 3) refers to Old Testament history after the Fall; "Then" (line 9) is the time of the birth of Christ. "Till" (line 14) identifies the era when Christianity was perverted into an institutional religion. "Now" (line 17) is the time of the wrathful portent of the French Revolution. In this final era the hypocritical serpent represents the priest of the "angels" in
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Hebrew the literal meaning of *Adam*, or created man. The probable reference is to the birth of the Redeemer, the new Adam.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), Swedish scientist and religious philosopher, had predicted, on the basis of his visions, that the Last Judgment and the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven would occur in 1757. This was precisely the year of Blake's birth. Now, in 1790, Blake is thirty-three, the age at which Christ had been resurrected from the tomb;

correspondingly, Blake rises from the tomb of his past life in his new role as imaginative artist who will redeem his age. But, Blake ironically comments, the works he will engrave in his resurrection will constitute the Eternal Hell, the contrary brought into simultaneous being by Swedenborg's limited New Heaven. Return to reference 3

- Note 4:
  Isaiah 34 prophesies "the day of the Lord's vengeance," a time of violent destruction and bloodshed; Isaiah 35 prophesies the redemption to follow, in which "the desert shall . . . blossom as the rose," "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert," and "no lion shall be there," but "an highway shall be there . . . and it shall be called The way of holiness" (see "The Argument," lines 3–11, 20). Blake combines with these chapters Isaiah 63, in which "Edom" is the place from which comes the man whose garments are red with the blood he has spilled; for as he says, "the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: What follows, to the end of this section, is Blake's "diabolical" reading of Milton's *Paradise Lost.*Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Satan's giving birth to Sin and then incestuously begetting Death upon her is described in *Paradise Lost* 2.745ff.; the war in heaven, referred to three lines below, in which the Messiah defeated Satan and drove him out of heaven, is described in 6.824ff.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the Book of Job, Satan plays the role of Job's moral accuser and physical tormentor.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Possibly John 14:16–17, where Christ says he "will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter . . . Even the Spirit of truth."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The Latin *ratio* means both "reason" and "sum." Blake applies the term to the 18th-century view, following the empiricist philosophy of John Locke, that the content of the

mind, on which the faculty of reason operates, is limited to the sum of the experience acquired by the five senses.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Blake parodies Swedenborg's accounts, in his *Memorable Relations*, of his conversations with the inhabitants during his spiritual trips to heaven.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The "mighty Devil" is Blake, as he sees himself reflected in the shiny plate on which he is etching this very passage with "corroding fires," that is, the acid used in the etching process. See also the third from last sentence in plate 14.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A "diabolic" version of the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament, which also incorporates sly allusions to 18th-century books of piety such as Isaac Watts's *Divine Songs.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Greek Cynic (4th century C.E.), whose extreme repudiation of civilized customs gave rise to anecdotes that he had renounced clothing. In Isaiah 20:2–3 the prophet, at the Lord's command, walked "naked and barefoot" for three years.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Lord gave these instructions to the prophet Ezekiel (4:4–6).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Genesis 3:24, when the Lord drove Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, he had placed Cherubim and a flaming sword at the eastern end "to keep the way of the tree of life."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See n. 2, p. 152, above.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A covert pun runs through this section: workers, ink-blackened, who did the dirty work in the printing houses of the period were humorously known as "printer's devils."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In this "Memorable Fancy" Blake allegorizes his procedure in designing, etching, printing, and binding his works of imaginative genius.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In this section human creative energies, called "the Prolific," in their relation to their indispensable contrary, "the

Devourer."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Matthew 10:34. The parable of the sheep and the goats is in Matthew 25:32–33.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Those who lived before Noah's Flood.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  The "stable" is where Jesus was born, which, allegorically, leads to the "church" founded in his name and to the "vault" where this institution effectually buried him. The "mill" in Blake is a symbol of mechanical and analytic philosophy; through this the pilgrims pass into the twisting cave of rationalistic theology and descend to an underworld that is an empty abyss. The point of this Blakean equivalent of a carnival funhouse is that only after you have thoroughly confused yourself by this tortuous approach, and only if you then (as in the next two paragraphs) stare at this topsy-turvy emptiness long enough, will the void gradually assume the semblance of
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The biblical sea monster.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the Ptolemaic world picture, Saturn was in the outermost planetary sphere; beyond it was the sphere of the fixed stars.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The "seven churches which are in Asia," to which John addresses the Book of Revelation 1:4. Blake now forces on the angel his own diabolic view of angelic biblical exegesis, theological speculation and disputation, and Hell.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Aristotle's treatises on logic.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Jakob Boehme (1575–1624), a German shoemaker who developed a theosophical system that has had persisting influence on both theological and metaphysical speculation. Paracelsus (1493–1541), a Swiss physician and a pioneer in empirical medicine, was also a prominent theorist of the occult. Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Proverbs 27:22: "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." "Bray": pound into small pieces.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mark 2:27: "The sabbath was made for man."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare John 8:2–11.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare Matthew 27:13–14.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Matthew 10:14: "Whosoever shall not receive you . . . when ye depart . . . shake off the dust of your feet."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In 2 Kings 2:11 the prophet Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven," borne by "a chariot of fire."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, the poems and designs that Blake is working on.Return to reference 7

PLATE 25

A Song of Liberty[1]

1. The Eternal Female groand! it was heard over all the Earth.

2. Albion's[2] coast is sick, silent; the American meadows faint!

3. Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers and mutter across the ocean. France, rend down thy dungeon![3]

4. Golden Spain, burst the barriers of old Rome!

5. Cast thy keys, O Rome,[4] into the deep down falling, even to eternity down falling,

6. And weep.[5]

7. In her trembling hands she took the new born terror, howling.

8. On those infinite mountains of light now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea,[6] the new born fire stood before the starry king![7]

9. Flag'd with grey brow'd snows and thunderous visages, the jealous wings wav'd over the deep.

10. The speary hand burned aloft, unbuckled was the shield, forth went the hand of jealousy among the flaming hair, and [PLATE 26] hurl'd the new born wonder thro' the starry night.

11. The fire, the fire, is falling!

12. Look up! look up! O citizen of London, enlarge thy countenance! O Jew, leave counting gold! return to thy oil and wine. O African! black African! (Go, wingèd thought, widen his forehead.)

13. The fiery limbs, the flaming hair, shot like the sinking sun into the western sea.

14. Wak'd from his eternal sleep, the hoary element[8] roaring fled away:

15. Down rushd, beating his wings in vain, the jealous king; his grey brow'd councellors, thunderous warriors, curl'd veterans,

among helms, and shields, and chariots, horses, elephants; banners, castles, slings and rocks,

16. Falling, rushing, ruining! buried in the ruins, on Urthona's dens;

17. All night beneath the ruins; then, their sullen flames faded, emerge round the gloomy king,

18. With thunder and fire, leading his starry hosts thro' the waste wilderness [PLATE 27] he promulgates his ten commands, glancing his beamy eyelids over the deep in dark dismay,

19. Where the son of fire in his eastern cloud, while the morning plumes her golden breast,

20. Spurning the clouds written with curses, stamps the stony law[9] to dust, loosing the eternal horses from the dens of night, crying:

"Empire is no more! and now the lion & wolf shall cease."[1]

Chorus

Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn, no longer in deadly black, with hoarse note curse the sons of joy. Nor his accepted brethren, whom, tyrant, he calls free, lay the bound or build the roof. Nor pale religious letchery call that virginity, that wishes but acts not!

For every thing that lives is Holy.

1792

1792

Endnotes

- Note 1: Blake etched this poem in 1792 and sometimes bound it as an appendix to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* It recounts the birth, manifested in the contemporary events in France, of the flaming Spirit of Revolution (whom Blake later called Orc), and describes his conflict with the tyrannical sky god (whom

Blake later called Urizen). The poem ends with the portent of the Spirit of Revolution shattering the ten commandments, or prohibitions against political, religious, and moral liberty, and bringing in a free and joyous new world.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: England's.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The political prison, the Bastille, was destroyed by the French revolutionaries in 1789.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The keys of Rome, a symbol of papal power.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Echoing, among others, John 11:35 ("Jesus wept") and Revelation 18:11 (which states that at the fall of Babylon, "the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn for her").Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The legendary continent of Atlantis, sunk beneath the sea, which Blake uses to represent the condition before the Fall.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Blake often uses the stars, in their fixed courses, as a symbol of the law-governed Newtonian universe.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The sea, which to Blake represents a devouring chaos.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, the Ten Commandments (verse 18), which the "finger of God" had written on "tables [tablets] of stone" (Exodus 31:18).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare Isaiah's prophecy, 65:17–25, of "new heavens and a new earth," when "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock."Return to reference 1

America: A Prophecy Dated 1793, the year in which Britain and other European monarchies went to war against revolutionary France, Blake's *America: A Prophecy* looks back to an earlier revolution, and an earlier British war, folding the historical events and leading figures of the American War of Independence (1775–83) into the evolving world-historical myth Blake would continue to elaborate in subsequent "prophetic" books. Radiating through this work are the order-shattering energies of "fiery" Orc, the newborn spirit of revolution and "fierce" desire previewed in the previous year's "Song of Liberty" (see p. 160, above). Bursting free of the chains that fetter him at the text's start, Orc furiously protests all kinds of unfreedom, psychological as well as physical. Orc tears (or melts) down the structures he confronts, but he is also a force of life and regeneration, seeking "to renew the fiery joy" that has been hidden by restrictive moral codes or the throttling of imagination and its expression. Through Orc, then, when the Americans stand up against tyranny, their defiance of authority takes shape as a broader attack on the "stony law" of sexual as well as political repression, and a broader assertion of the principle, also expressed in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* that "every thing that lives is Holy." In opposition to Orc and to the American rebels stand the "Guardian Prince" and "Angels" of "Albion" (another name for England), representatives of the British establishment and the government of King George III, and behind these in turn is Blake's mythic figure Urizen, the aged, jealous guardian of "law-built heaven." These respond with both wrath and alarm to the flaming vision of the "terror" Orc and his liberatory proclamations.

America engages both the figurative repertoire of American colonial writers and political cartoonists expressing their resistance to British rule and the language of biblical prophecy in the Old and the New Testaments. Prophecy was a popular mode in Blake's moment, which abounded with millenarian predictions of a coming apocalypse and rebirth. This text's prophetic stance aims to shake readers out of accustomed modes of seeing in the present: on

America's final plate, the gates of perception that the monarchical powers desperately try to hold closed are instead opened by Orc's consuming flames. The drama of its war story takes place in large part through a clash of contrasting perspectives the reader must navigate, including visually on the page, in the relation of Blake's words and design. Blake's transatlantic engagement with the American Revolution during the moment of revolutionary "terror" in France encourages his audience both to consider the continuities between these revolutions and to distinguish each from the other.

America: A Prophecy

Lambeth[1]

Printed by William Blake in the year 1793.

Preludium

PLATE 1

The shadowy daughter of Urthona stood before red Orc,[2]
When fourteen suns had faintly journey'd o'er his dark abode:
His food she brought in iron baskets, his drink in cups of iron;[3]
Crown'd with a helmet & dark hair the nameless female stood;
A quiver with its burning stores, a bow like that of night,
When pestilence is shot from heaven; no other arms she need:
Invulnerable tho' naked, save where clouds roll round her loins,
Their awful folds in the dark air; silent she stood as night;
For never from her iron tongue could voice or sound arise;
But dumb till that dread day when Orc assay'd his fierce embrace.

"Dark virgin," said the hairy youth, "thy father stern abhorr'd;

Rivets my tenfold chains while still on high my spirit soars;[4]
Sometimes an eagle screaming in the sky, sometimes a lion,
Stalking upon the mountains, & sometimes a whale I lash
The raging fathomless abyss, anon a serpent[5] folding
Around the pillars of Urthona, and round thy dark limbs,
On the Canadian wilds I fold, feeble my spirit folds.
For chaind beneath I rend these caverns; when thou bringest food
I howl my joy: and my red eyes seek to behold thy face
In vain! these clouds roll to & fro, & hide thee from my sight."

PLATE 2

Silent as despairing love, and strong as jealousy,
The hairy shoulders rend the links, free are the wrists of fire;
Round the terrific loins he siez'd the panting struggling womb;
It joy'd: she put aside her clouds & smiled her first-born smile;
As when a black cloud shews its light'nings to the silent deep.

Soon as she saw the terrible boy then burst the virgin cry.

"I know thee, I have found thee, & I will not let thee go;[6]

Thou art the image of God who dwells in darkness of Africa:
And thou art fall'n to give me life in regions of dark death.[7]
On my American plains I feel the struggling afflictions
Endur'd by roots that writhe their arms into the nether deep:
I see a serpent in Canada, who courts me to his love;
In Mexico an Eagle, and a Lion in Peru;
I see a Whale in the South-sea, drinking my soul away.
O what limb rending pains I feel, thy fire & my frost
Mingle in howling pains, in furrows by thy lightnings rent;
This is eternal death; and this the torment long foretold."[8]

PLATE 3

A prophecy

The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent[9]
Sullen fires across the Atlantic glow to America's shore:
Piercing the souls of warlike men, who rise in silent night,
Washington, Franklin, Paine & Warren, Gates, Hancock & Green[1]
Meet on the coast glowing with blood from Albion's fiery Prince.

Washington spoke; "Friends of America look over the Atlantic sea;
A bended bow is lifted in heaven, & a heavy iron chain
Descends link by link from Albion's cliffs across the sea to bind
Brothers & sons of America, till our faces pale and yellow;
Heads deprest, voices weak, eyes downcast, hands work-bruis'd,
Feet bleeding on the sultry sands, and the furrows of the whip
Descend to generations that in future times forget.
_____"[2]

The strong voice ceas'd; for a terrible blast swept over the heaving sea;
The eastern cloud rent; on his cliffs stood Albion's wrathful Prince,
A dragon form clashing his scales; at midnight he arose,
And flam'd red[3] meteors round the land of Albion beneath.
His voice, his locks, his awful shoulders, and his glowing eyes

PLATE 4

Appear to the Americans upon the cloudy night.

Solemn heave the Atlantic waves between the gloomy nations

Swelling, belching from its deeps red clouds & raging fires.
Albion is sick. America faints! enrag'd the Zenith grew,[4]
As human blood shooting its veins all round the orbed heaven,
Red rose the clouds from the Atlantic in vast wheels of blood
And in the red clouds rose a Wonder o'er the Atlantic sea;
Intense! naked! a Human fire fierce glowing, as the wedge
Of iron heated in the furnace; his terrible limbs were fire
With myriads of cloudy terrors, banners dark & towers
Surrounded; heat but not light went thro' the murky atmosphere.

The King of England looking westward trembles at the vision.

PLATE 5

Albion's Angel stood beside the Stone of night,[5] and saw
The terror like a comet, or more like the planet red
That once inclos'd the terrible wandering comets in its sphere.
Then Mars thou wast our center, & the planets three flew round
Thy crimson disk; so e'er the Sun was rent from thy red sphere;[6]

The Spectre glowd his horrid length staining the temple long
With beams of blood; & thus a voice came forth, and shook the temple:

PLATE 6

"The morning comes, the night decays, the watchmen leave their stations;
The grave is burst, the spices shed, the linen wrapped up;
The bones of death, the cov'ring clay, the sinews shrunk & dry'd,
Reviving shake, inspiring move, breathing! awakening![7]
Spring like redeemed captives when their bonds & bars are burst;
Let the slave grinding at the mill run out into the field;
Let him look up into the heavens & laugh in the bright air;
Let the inchained soul shut up in darkness and in sighing,
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years.
Rise and look out, his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open.
And let his wife and children return from the opressor's scourge:
They look behind at every step & believe it is a dream.[8]
Singing, 'The Sun has left his blackness, & has found a fresher morning

And the fair Moon rejoices in the clear & cloudless night:
For Empire is no more, and now the Lion & Wolf shall cease.' "[9]

PLATE 7

In thunders ends the voice. Then Albion's Angel wrathful burnt
Beside the Stone of Night; and like the Eternal Lion's howl
In famine & war, reply'd, "Art thou not Orc, who serpent-form'd
Stands at the gate of Enitharmon to devour her children;
Blasphemous Demon, Antichrist, hater of Dignities;
Lover of wild rebellion, and transgresser of God's Law;
Why dost thou come to Angels' eyes in this terrific form?"[1]

PLATE 8

The terror answerd: "I am Orc, wreath'd round the accursed tree:
The times are ended; shadows pass, the morning 'gins to break;
The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands,
What night he led the starry hosts thro' the wide wilderness:

That stony law I stamp to dust:[2] and scatter religion abroad
To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves;
But they shall rot on desart sands, & consume in bottomless deeps,
To make the desarts blossom, & the deeps shrink to their fountains,[3]
And to renew the fiery joy, and burst the stony roof,
That pale religious letchery, seeking Virginity,
May find it in a harlot, and in coarse-clad honesty
The undefil'd tho' ravish'd in her cradle night and morn:
For every thing that lives is holy,[4] life delights in life;
Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.
Fires inwrap the earthly globe, yet man is not consumd;
Amidst the lustful fires he walks; his feet become like brass,
His knees and thighs like silver, & his breast and head like gold."[5]

PLATE 9

"Sound! sound! my loud war-trumpets & alarm my Thirteen Angels![6]
Loud howls the eternal Wolf! The eternal Lion lashes his tail!
America is darkned; and my punishing Demons terrified
Crouch howling before their caverns deep like skins dry'd in the wind.

They cannot smite the wheat, nor quench the fatness of the earth,
They cannot smite with sorrows, nor subdue the plow and spade,
They cannot wall the city, nor moat round the castle of princes.
They cannot bring the stubbed oak to overgrow the hills.
For terrible men stand on the shores, & in their robes I see
Children take shelter from the lightnings: there stands Washington
And Paine and Warren with their foreheads reard toward the east
But clouds obscure my aged sight. A vision from afar!
Sound! sound! my loud war-trumpets & alarm my thirteen Angels:
Ah vision from afar! Ah rebel form that rent the ancient
Heavens! Eternal Viper self-renew'd,[7] rolling in clouds
I see thee in thick clouds and darkness on America's shore.
Writhing in pangs of abhorred birth; red flames the crest rebellious
And eyes of death; the harlot womb oft opened in vain
Heaves in enormous circles, now the times are return'd upon thee,
Devourer of thy parent, now thy unutterable torment renews.
Sound! sound! my loud war trumpets & alarm my thirteen Angels,

Ah terrible birth! a young one bursting! where is the weeping mouth?
And where the mother's milk? instead those ever-hissing jaws
And parched lips drop with fresh gore: now roll thou in the clouds
Thy mother lays her length outstretch'd upon the shore beneath.
Sound! sound! my loud war-trumpets & alarm my thirteen Angels!
Loud howls the eternal Wolf: the eternal Lion lashes his tail!"

PLATE 10

Thus wept the Angel voice & as he wept the terrible blasts
Of trumpets blew a loud alarm across the Atlantic deep.
No trumpets answer: no reply of clarions or of fifes,
Silent the Colonies remain and refuse the loud alarm.

On those vast shady hills between America & Albion's shore:
Now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea: call'd Atlantean hills;[8]
Because from their bright summits you may pass to the Golden world
An ancient palace, archetype of mighty Emperies,[9]
Rears its immortal pinnacles, built in the forest of God
By Ariston the king of beauty for his stolen bride.[1]

Here on their magic seats the thirteen Angels sat perturb'd
For clouds from the Atlantic hover o'er the solemn roof,

PLATE 11

Fiery the Angels rose, & as they rose deep thunder roll'd
Around their shores; indignant burning with the fires of Orc
And Boston's Angel cried aloud as they flew thro' the dark night,

He cried: "Why trembles honesty and like a murderer,
Why seeks he refuge from the frowns of his immortal station,
Must the generous tremble & leave his joy, to the idle: to the pestilence!
That mock him? who commanded this, what God? what Angel!
To keep the gen'rous from experience till the ungenerous
Are unrestraind performers of the energies of nature;
Till pity is become a trade, and generosity a science
That men get rich by, & the sandy desart is giv'n to the strong.
What God is he, writes laws of peace, & clothes him in a tempest.
What pitying Angel lusts for tears, and fans himself with sighs,

What crawling villain preaches abstinence & wraps himself
In fat of lambs? no more I follow, no more obedience pay.”

PLATE 12

So cried he, rending off his robe & throwing down his scepter
In sight of Albion’s Guardian, and all the thirteen Angels
Rent off their robes to the hungry wind, & threw their golden scepters
Down on the land of America; indignant they descended
Headlong from out their heav’nly heights, descending swift as fires
Over the land; naked & fluming are their lineaments seen
In the deep gloom. By Washington & Paine & Warren they stood
And the flame folded roaring fierce within the pitchy night
Before the Demon red, who burnt towards America,
In black smoke, thunders and loud winds, rejoicing in its terror
Breaking in smoky wreaths from the wild deep, & gath’ring thick
In flames as of a furnace on the land from North to South.

PLATE 13

What time the thirteen Governors that England sent convene
In Bernard's house,[2] the flames coverd the land; they rouze, they cry
Shaking their mental chains[3] they rush in fury to the sea
To quench their anguish; at the feet of Washington down fall'n
They grovel on the sand and writhing lie, while all
The British soldiers thro' the thirteen states sent up a howl
Of anguish: threw their swords & muskets to the earth & ran
From their encampments and dark castles seeking where to hide
From the grim flames; and from the visions of Orc, in sight
Of Albion's Angel; who, enrag'd, his secret clouds open'd
From north to south, and burnt outstretchd on wings of wrath cov'ring
The eastern sky, spreading his awful wings across the heavens;
Beneath him rolld his num'rous hosts, all Albion's Angels camp'd,
Darkend the Atlantic mountains & their trumpets shook the valleys,
Arm'd with diseases of the earth to cast upon the Abyss,
Their numbers forty millions, must'ring in the eastern sky.[4]

In the flames stood & view'd the armies drawn out in the sky
Washington Franklin Paine & Warren Allen Gates & Lee:[5]
And heard the voice of Albion's Angel give the thunderous command.
His plagues obedient to his voice flew forth out of their clouds
Falling upon America, as a storm to cut them off,
As a blight cuts the tender corn when it begins to appear.
Dark is the heaven above, & cold & hard the earth beneath;
And as a plague wind fill'd with insects cuts off man & beast;
And as a sea o'erwhelms a land in the day of an earthquake;

Fury! rage! madness! in a wind swept through America
And the red flames of Orc that folded roaring fierce around
The angry shores, and the fierce rushing of th' inhabitants together;
The citizens of New-York close their books & lock their chests;
The mariners of Boston drop their anchors and unlade;
The scribe of Pensylvania casts his pen upon the earth;
The builder of Virginia throws his hammer down in fear.[6]

Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic,

And Earth had lost another portion of the infinite,
But all rush together in the night in wrath and raging fire.
The red fires rag'd! the plagues recoil'd! then rolld they back with fury

PLATE 15

On Albion's Angels: then the Pestilence began in streaks of red
Across the limbs of Albion's Guardian, the spotted plague smote Bristol's
And the Leprosy London's Spirit, sickening all their bands:[7]
The millions sent up a howl of anguish and threw off their hammerd mail,
And cast their swords & spears to earth, & stood a naked multitude.
Albion's Guardian writhed in torment on the eastern sky
Pale quivring toward the brain his glimmering eyes, teeth chattering
Howling & shuddering his legs quivering; convuls'd each muscle & sinew
Sick'ning lay London's Guardian, and the ancient miter'd York[8]
Their heads on snowy hills, their ensigns sick'ning in the sky.

The plagues creep on the burning winds driven by flames of Orc,
And by the fierce Americans rushing together in the night

Driven o’er the Guardians of Ireland and Scotland and Wales
They spotted with plagues forsook the frontiers & their banners seard
With fires of hell, deform their ancient heavens with shame & woe,
Hid in his caves the Bard of Albion[9] felt the enormous plagues.
And a cowl of flesh grew o’er his head & scales on his back & ribs;
And rough with black scales all his Angels fright their ancient heavens.
The doors of marriage are open, and the Priests in rustling scales
Rush into reptile coverts, hiding from the fires of Orc,
That play around the golden roofs in wreaths of fierce desire,
Leaving the females naked and glowing with the lusts of youth,

For the female spirits of the dead pining in bonds of religion
Run from their fetters reddening, & in long drawn arches sitting:
They feel the nerves of youth renew, and desires of ancient times,
Over their pale limbs as a vine when the tender grape appears.

PLATE 16

Over the hills, the vales, the cities, rage the red flames fierce;

The Heavens melted from north to south; and Urizen who sat
Above all heavens in thunders wrap'd, emerg'd his leprous head
From out his holy shrine, his tears in deluge piteous
Falling into the deep sublime! flag'd with grey-brow'd snows
And thunderous visages, his jealous wings wav'd over the deep;
Weeping in dismal howling woe he dark descended howling
Around the smitten bands, clothed in tears & trembling shudd'ring cold.
His stored snows he poured forth, and his icy magazines[1]
He open'd on the deep, and on the Atlantic sea white shiv'ring.
Leprous his limbs, all over white, and hoary was his visage.
Weeping in dismal howlings before the stern Americans
Hiding the Demon red with clouds & cold mists from the earth;
Till Angels & weak men twelve years[2] should govern o'er the strong:
And then their end should come, when France reciev'd the Demon's light.

Stiff shudderings shook the heav'nly thrones! France Spain & Italy
In terror view'd the bands of Albion, and the ancient Guardians
Fainting upon the elements, smitten with their own plagues

They slow advance to shut the five gates of their law-built heaven
Filled with blasting fancies and with mildews of despair
With fierce disease and lust, unable to stem the fires of Orc;
But the five gates[3] were consum'd, & their bolts and hinges melted
And the fierce flames burnt round the heavens, & round the abodes of men.

1793

Endnotes

- Note 1: A London neighborhood, on the south bank of the Thames, to which Blake and his wife, Catherine, moved in 1790. Blake's "illuminated" books of this period are collectively known as the "Lambeth prophecies."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The "nameless" female figure of line 4 speaks as the voice of the North and South American continents on plate 4 (compare Oothoon, the "soft soul of America," in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*). For Urthona, whose "dens" are mentioned in "The Song of Liberty," see pp. 160–61. Like the biblical Esau (in Genesis 25:25), Orc is born "red" and "hairy" (line 11, below); red is also the color of the planet Mars, named for the Roman god of war and destruction. Orc has grown into adolescence in 14 years (line 2), roughly the stretch of time between the commencement of the American Revolution in 1775 and of the French Revolution in 1789.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In their historical fables of the origins of society, 18th-century political philosophers drew on classical myth to contrast an idyllic golden age of natural freedom to a subsequent "iron age" characterized by the development of weapons, social

institutions, and tools—an association suggested by the "iron" cups and baskets (and tongue, below) of Urthona's "shadowy daughter."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Blake's editors have noted the resemblance between Orc in chains and Prometheus, the rebel Titan chained by Zeus in Greek mythology.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: On the following plate, each of these animals is identified with a particular region of the Americas.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Recalling Song of Solomon 3:1: "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but found him not."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The imagery here is that of falling rains bringing forth life from the fertile earth.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Blake's design for this plate depicts a male youth, probably Orc, pushing his way out of the ground. At the bottom of the plate, below the figure of the youth emerging, Blake included lines describing the Bard, reciter of this song, destroying his harp in rage and shame: "The stern Bard ceas'd, asham'd of his own song; enrag'd he swung / His harp aloft sounding, then dash'd its shining frame against / A ruin'd pillar in glittring fragments; silent he turn'd away, / And wander'd down the vales of Kent in sick & drear lamentings." Blake seems subsequently to have rethought these lines: in most of the copies he produced, he covered over this portion of the plate so the passage does not print.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Though not reducible to a single historical person, Albion's Guardian Prince is identified by many commentators with King George III, projected onto a mythic scale.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Prominent figures of the American Revolution: the generals George Washington, Horatio Gates, and Nathanael Greene; statesman and printer Benjamin Franklin; Thomas Paine, author of *Common Sense*; Joseph Warren, revolutionary hero who died at the Battle of Bunker Hill; and John Hancock, signer of the Declaration of Independence.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Here and throughout the text, the quotation marks indicating dialogue are not in Blake's original, but have been supplied for clarity by the editors of our source text, Mary Lynn Johnson and John Grant.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Associating the American colonies with a serpent facing off against a British dragon, Blake taps into figurative language often used by colonial commentators on the political situation running up to the American Revolution.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare "A Song of Liberty," line 2. "Zenith": the highest zone of the sky.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Throughout *America,* stoniness connotes both the inflexibility of law and the limitation of possibility, most directly in the reference to the "stony law" (Plate 8, line 5) of the Ten Commandments. In Blake's *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794), the "Stone of night" appears as an element of druidic religion, a symbol of power connected by Blake with Urizen.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The red planet Mars is imagined as the center of an earlier arrangement of the solar system.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Line 2 alludes to Christ's burial and resurrection (compare *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 3). Lines 3–4 allude to Ezekiel 37, which describes how the prophet walks in the valley of dry bones and witnesses the bones revived by the breath of God, with a great "shaking," into "an exceeding great army."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare Adam and Eve's departure from Eden in *Paradise Lost* 12.641–49.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This was also the closing motto of the "Song of Liberty" (see p. 161, above).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Orc takes the form of a serpent, "terrific" in the senses of awe-inspiring and terrifying; Enitharmon, the mother figure at the heart of Blake's *Europe,* gave birth to Orc along with other sons. Emphasizing how Orc appears "to Angels' eyes," Blake reminds us this is how Orc appears in one perspective, the perception of Angels.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A reprise of elements of the "Song of Liberty." For "Urizen," see p. 132, n. 2 and p. 146, n. 2. The "stony law" derives from the "ten commands" written on tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: More biblical imagery, recalling the desert's blossoming in Isaiah 35:1 and the receding of floodwaters in Genesis 8:2.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This statement can be found at the conclusions of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and "A Song of Liberty."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Imagery derived from two stories related in the book of Daniel: in one (3:23–27), the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar and his counselors cast three men into a "fiery furnace," and are astonished to see that the flames do not touch them; in the other, the king dreams of a "great image" whose "head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay" (2:31–33). As the critic Harold Bloom points out, Blake's version subtly shifts the gradation of metals by starting with feet of brass.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Representing the thirteen colonies.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: With the image of the "Viper self-renew'd," Blake (or the angel) again borrows directly from the iconography of the American colonials, which included devices based on the ouroboros (snake eating its own tail) as well as Benjamin Franklin's "join or die" image of the colonies as separate pieces of a snake reunited into one body.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Evoking the myth of an Edenic Atlantis buried beneath the sea, Blake imagines the Atlantic Ocean as covering a land passage between England and America as well as a passageway to a "Golden world."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Dominions.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, Ariston, a king of Sparta, so desired the beautiful wife of his friend that he tricked the friend into giving her to him.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Sir Francis Bernard (1712–1779), appointed governor of Massachusetts in 1759, resigned in 1771 after a tenure in which he earned the enmity of many colonists.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "Mental chains" recalls the famous sentence at the start of philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762), "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains." Blake's poem "London" refers to the "mind-forg'd manacles" of London's citizenry (see p. 137, above).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the design for this plate, the narration of the onset of war is framed by a grim ocean scene, with waves at the top of the page and the bottom of the sea below; the text thus appears as if it is underwater. The corpse of a woman is floating on the waves, her body being devoured by an eagle, while another corpse, a drowned man, lies on the sea floor, with sea creatures attacking it.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ethan Allen and (most probably) Henry Lee, two more military heroes of the American Revolution, now accompany the roll call first set out in Plate 5.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Boston's sailors "unlade" or unload ships, perhaps an allusion to the Boston Tea Party; the "scribe" of Pennsylvania is the writer and printer Benjamin Franklin; Virginia's "builder" is politician and architect Thomas Jefferson, who designed his home, Monticello, and the Virginia state capitol (the actual building, of course, was carried out with enslaved labor).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The ill-treatment that Britain has inflicted on America like a "plague" now rebounds, infecting Britain herself with suffering. As a port city, Bristol was especially sensitive to interruption of commerce with America.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Mitres are the headdresses worn by bishops, such as the archbishops of York and Canterbury (the latter's palace is in London).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Editors Grant and Johnson suggest a possible reference to William Whitehead, England's poet laureate during the period of the American Revolution.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Clouds unleashing snowstorms and hail are compared to "icy magazines" (magazines are storehouses of military armaments).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Americans defeated the British at the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, twelve years before Blake writes his prophecy in 1793.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Orc's flames consume the "gates" of the five senses. Compare Blake's injunction that the "doors of perception must be cleansed" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* plate 14.Return to reference 3

And did those feet[1]

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among those dark Satanic Mills?[2]

Bring me my Bow of burning gold,
Bring me my Arrows of desire,
Bring me my Spear; O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green & pleasant Land.

ca. 1804–10 ca. 1810–18

Endnotes

- Note 1: These quatrains occur in the preface to Blake's prophetic poem *Milton.* There is an ancient belief that Jesus came to England with Joseph of Arimathea, the merchant who is identified in the Gospels as making the arrangements for Christ's burial following the crucifixion. Blake adapts the legend to his own conception of a spiritual Israel, in which the significance of biblical events is as relevant to England as to Palestine. By a particularly Blakean irony, this poem of mental

war in the service of apocalyptic desire is widely used as a hymn, national anthem, or school song by just those establishment figures whom Blake would call "angels."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: There may be an allusion here to industrial England, but the mill is also Blake's symbol for a mechanistic and utilitarian worldview, according to which, as he said elsewhere, "the same dull round, even of a universe" becomes "a mill with complicated wheels."Return to reference 2

ROBERT BURNS
1759–1796

When Robert Burns published *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* in 1786, he was immediately hailed by the Edinburgh establishment as an instance of the natural genius, a "Heaven-taught ploughman" whose poems owed nothing to literary study, but instead represented the spontaneous overflow of his native feelings. Burns took care to call attention to those qualities in his verse—the undisciplined energy and rustic simplicity—that suited the temper of an age worried that modern refinement and propriety had undermined the vigor of poetry. But even though he cast himself (in the half-modest, half-defiant words of his Preface to *Poems*) as someone "unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing Poet by rule," Burns was in fact a widely read (although largely self-educated) man and a careful craftsman who turned to two earlier traditions for his poetic models. One of these was an oral tradition of folklore and popular balladry. The other was the highly developed literary tradition of poetry written in Scots or Lallans—the distinct English of Lowland Scotland.

His father—William Burnes, as he spelled his name—was a God-fearing and hardworking farmer of Ayrshire, a county in southwestern Scotland, who, unable to make a go of it in a period of hard times and high rents, died in 1784 broken in body and spirit. Robert, with his brother Gilbert, was forced to do the heavy work of a man while still a boy and began to show signs of the heart trouble

of which he was to die when only thirty-seven. Although his father had the Scottish esteem for education and saw to it that his sons attended school whenever they could, Burns's education in literature, theology, politics, and philosophy came mainly from his own reading. At the age of fifteen, he fell in love and was inspired by that event to write his first song. "Thus," he said, "with me began Love and Poesy." After he reached maturity, he practiced at both. He began a series of love affairs, fathering in 1785 the first of a number of illegitimate children. He also extended greatly the range and quantity of his attempts at poetry. So rapid was his development that by the time he published the Kilmarnock edition, at the age of twenty-seven, he had written all but a few of his greatest long poems.

The Kilmarnock volume (so named from the town in which it was published) is one of the most remarkable first volumes by any British poet, and it had a great and immediate success. Burns was acclaimed "Caledonia's Bard" and championed by intellectuals and gentlefolk when he visited the city of Edinburgh soon after his book came out. The peasant-poet demonstrated that he could more than hold his own as an urbane conversationalist and debater. But he was also wise enough to realize that once the novelty wore off, his eminence in this society would not endure. He had a fierce pride that was quick to resent any hint of contempt or condescension toward himself as a man of low degree. His sympathies were democratic, and even in 1793 and 1794, when partisans of parliamentary reform were being prosecuted for sedition in Edinburgh and Glasgow, he remained (like William Blake in London) an outspoken admirer of the republican revolutions in America and France. In religion too he was a radical. Against the strict Calvinism of the Presbyterian kirk (church) in which he had been raised, Burns was known to profess "the Religion of Sentiment and Reason." A letter of December 1789, in which he seizes the chance to play a free-thinking Son "of Satan," merrily proclaims his intention to take up a theme that will, he says, be "pregnant with all the stores of Learning, from Moses & Confucius to [Benjamin] Franklin & [Joseph]

Priestl[e]y—in short . . . I intend to write Baudy." Burns's satires on the kirk and taste for bawdy vulgarity could offend. Furthermore, his promiscuity gained him considerable notoriety, less because womanizing was out of the common order for the time than because he flaunted it. Many of the friendships that he made in high society fell apart, and Burns's later visits to Edinburgh were less successful than the first.

In 1788 Burns was given a commission as excise officer, or tax inspector, and he settled down with Jean Armour, a former lover, now his wife, at Ellisland, near Dumfries, combining his official duties with farming. This was the fourth farm on which Burns had worked; and when it, like the others, failed, he moved his family to the lively country town of Dumfries. Here he was fairly happy, despite recurrent illness and a chronic shortage of money. He performed his official duties efficiently and was respected by his fellow townspeople and esteemed by his superiors; he was a devoted family man and father; and he accumulated a circle of intimates to whom he could repair for conversation and conviviality. In 1787 James Johnson, an engraver, had enlisted Burns's aid in collecting Scottish ballads for an anthology called *The Scots Musical Museum.* Burns soon became the real editor for several volumes of this work, devoting all of his free time to collecting, editing, restoring, and imitating traditional songs, and to writing verses of his own to traditional dance tunes. Almost all of his creative work during the last twelve years of his life went into the writing of songs for the *Musical Museum* and for George Thomson's *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs.* This was for Burns a devoted labor of love and patriotism, done anonymously, for which he refused to accept any pay, although badly in need of money; and he continued the work when he was literally on his deathbed.

Because of its use of Scots, the language spoken by most eighteenth-century Scottish people (lower and upper class alike), and because, in addition, of its lyricism and engagement with folk culture, Burns's verse is often said to anticipate William Wordsworth's idea of a poetry founded on "a selection of language

really used by men." This account is based primarily on his songs. By far the major portion of the poems that he published under his own name are concerned with men and manners and are written in the literary forms that had been favored by earlier eighteenth-century poets. They include brilliant satire in a variety of modes, a number of fine verse epistles to friends and fellow poets, and one masterpiece of mock-heroic (or at any rate seriocomic) narrative, "Tam o' Shanter." It can be argued that, next to Pope, Burns is the greatest eighteenth-century master of these literary types. (Byron would later claim those forms for his own generation.) Yet Burns's writings in satire, epistle, and mock-heroic are remote from Pope's in their heartiness and verve, no less than in their dialect and intricate stanza forms. The reason for the difference is that Burns turned for his models not to Horace and the English neoclassic tradition but to the native tradition that had been established in the golden age of Scots poetry by Robert Henryson, William Dunbar, Gavin Douglas, and other Scottish Chaucerians of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He knew this literature through his eighteenth-century Scottish predecessors, especially Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, who had collected some of the old poems and written new ones based on the old models. Burns improved greatly on these predecessors, but he derived from them much that is characteristic in his literary forms, subjects, diction, and stanzas.

Burns's songs, which number more than three hundred, have, however, in themselves been enough to sustain his poetic reputation. They made him, for a start, a central figure for his contemporaries' discussions of how music, valued by them for awakening sympathies that reason could not rouse, might serve as the foundation of a national identity. (William Wordsworth would explore this new notion of "national music"—of ethnically marked melody—in his 1805 poem "The Solitary Reaper.") But beyond being the bard of Scots nationalism, Burns is a songwriter for all English-speaking people. Evidence of that standing is supplied each New Year's Eve, when, moved once again to acknowledge their common

bondage to time, people join hands and sing “Auld Lang Syne,” to an old tune that Burns refitted with his new words.

To a Mouse

On turning her up in her Nest, with the Plough, November 1785[1]

Wee, sleekit,° cowrin,° tim'rous beastie,
O, what a pannic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle![2]
I wad be laith° to rin° an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring *pattle!*°

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' *fellow-mortal!*

I doubt na, whyles,° but thou may thieve;
What then? Poor beastie, thou maun° live!
A *daimen-icker* in a *thrave*[3]
'S a sma' request;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,°
An' never miss't!

Thy wee bit *housie*, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's° the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big° a new ane
O' foggage° green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell° an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary Winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel *coulter*° past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,°
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But° house or hald,[4]
To thole° the Winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch° cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,°
In proving *foresight* may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o' *Mice* an' *Men*
Gang aft a-gley,[5]
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promis'd joy!

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' *me!*
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e°
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna *see*,
I *guess* an' *fear!*

1785 1786

Endnotes

- Note 1: Burns's brother claimed this poem was composed while the poet was actually holding the plow.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: With headlong scamper.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An occasional ear in twenty-four sheaves.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Hold, holding (that is, land).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Go often awry.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *sleek* Return to reference °
- °: *cowering*Return to reference °
- °: *loath* Return to reference °
- °: *run*Return to reference °
- °: *plowstaff*Return to reference °
- °: *sometimes*Return to reference °
- °: *must*Return to reference °
- °: *remainder*Return to reference °
- °: *frail walls*Return to reference °
- °: *build*Return to reference °
- °: *coarse grass*Return to reference °
- °: *bitter*Return to reference °
- °: *cutter blade*Return to reference °
- °: *stubble*Return to reference °
- °: *without*Return to reference °
- °: *endure*Return to reference °
- °: *hoarfrost*Return to reference °
- °: *not alone*Return to reference °
- °: *eye*Return to reference °

To a Louse

On seeing one on a Lady's Bonnet at Church

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin° ferlie!°
Your impudence protects you sairlie:°
I canna say but ye strunt° rarely,
Owre gauze and lace;
Tho' faith, I fear, ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin, blastit wonner,°
Detested, shunn'd, by saunt° an' sinner,
How daur ye set your fit° upon her,
Sae fine a Lady!
Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner,
On some poor body.

Swith,° in some beggar's haffet° squattle;°
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle°
Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare *horn* nor *bane*[1] ne'er dare unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud° you there, ye're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rels,° snug and tight;
Na faith ye yet![2] ye'll no be right
'Till ye've got on it,
The vera tapmost, tow'ring height
O' *Miss's bonnet.*

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,

As plump an' gray as onie grozet:[°]
O for some rank, mercurial rozet,[°]
Or fell,[°] red smeddum,[°]
I'd gie you sic a hearty dose o't,
Wad dress your droddum![°]

I wad na been surpris'd to spy.
You on an auld wife's flainen toy;[°]
Or aiblins[°] some bit duddie[°] boy,
On's wyliecoat;[°]
But Miss's fine *Lunardi!*[3] fie!
How daur ye do't?

O, *Jenny*, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread![°]
Ye little ken[°] what cursed speed
The blastie's[°] makin!
Thae[°] *winks* and *finger-ends*, I dread,
Are notice takin!

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And ev'n Devotion![4]

1785 1786

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, fine-tooth comb made of bone ("bane").Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Confound you!Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A balloon-shaped bonnet, named after Vincenzo Lunardi, who made a number of balloon flights in the 1780s.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: That is, affected piety.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *crawling* Return to reference °
- °: *wonder*Return to reference °
- °: *sorely*Return to reference °
- °: *strut*Return to reference °
- °: *wonder*Return to reference °
- °: *saint*Return to reference °
- °: *foot*Return to reference °
- °: *swift* Return to reference °
- °: *hair* Return to reference °
- °: *sprawl*Return to reference °
- °: *struggle*Return to reference °
- °: *hold*Return to reference °
- °: *ribbon ends*Return to reference °
- °: *gooseberry*Return to reference °
- °: *rosin*Return to reference °
- °: *sharp* Return to reference °
- °: *powder*Return to reference °
- °: *buttocks*Return to reference °
- °: *flannel cap*Return to reference °
- °: *perhaps* Return to reference °
- °: *ragged*Return to reference °
- °: *undershirt*Return to reference °
- °: *abroad*Return to reference °
- °: *know*Return to reference °
- °: *creature's*Return to reference °
- °: *those*Return to reference °

Green Grow the Rashes

A FRAGMENT.

CHORUS.

Green grow the rashes,° O;
Green grow the rashes, O;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent among the lasses, O.

I

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In ev'ry hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O.
Green grow, etc.

II

The warly° race may riches chase,
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.
Green grow, etc.

III

But gie me a canny° hour at e'en,°
My arms about my Dearie, O;
An' warly cares, an' warly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie,° O!
Green grow, etc.

IV

For you sae douse,[°] ye sneer at this,
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest Man[1] the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.
Green grow, etc.

V

Auld Nature swears, the lovely Dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her prentice[°] han' she try'd on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.
Green grow, etc.

1784 1787

Endnotes

- Note 1: Solomon, the Old Testament king who "loved many strange women" (1 Kings 11:1).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *rushes*Return to reference °
- °: *worldly*Return to reference °
- °: *quiet* Return to reference °
- °: *evening*Return to reference °
- °: *topsy-turvy*Return to reference °
- °: *prudent*Return to reference °
- °: *apprentice*Return to reference °

Holy Willie's Prayer[1]

O thou, wha[°] in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thysel',
Sends ane[°] to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for any guid or ill
They've done afore thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore thy sight,
For gifts an' grace
A burnin' an' a shinin' light,
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,[°]
That I should get such exaltation,
I wha deserve sic just damnation,
For broken laws,
Five thousand years 'fore my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plunged me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,[2]
In burnin' lake,
Whar damned devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to a stake.

Yet I am here a chosen sample,
To show thy grace is great an' ample;
I'm here a pillar in thy temple,

Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler° an' example
To a' thy flock.

But yet, O L—d! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd° wi' fleshly lust;
An' sometimes too, wi' warldly trust°
Vile self gets in;
But thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd in sin.

O L—d! yestreen,° thou kens, wi' Meg,
Thy pardon I sincerely beg,
O! may it ne'er be a livin' plague
To my dishonour,
An' I'll ne'er lift a lawless l—g°
Again upon her.

Besides, I farther maun° allow,
Wi Lizie's lass, three times I trow;°
But, L—d, that Friday I was fow,°
When I came near her,
Or else, thou kens, thy *servant true*,
Wad ne'er hae steer'd° her.

Maybe thou lets this *fleshly thorn*
Beset thy servant e'en and morn,[3]
Lest he owre high and proud shou'd turn,
'Cause he's sae *gifted*;
If sae, thy han' maun e'en be born,
Until thou lift it.

L—d bless thy Chosen in this place,
For *here* thou hast a *chosen race;*
But G—d confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,

Wha bring thy elders to disgrace
An' public shame.

L—d mind G—n H—n's[4] deserts,
He drinks, an' swears, an' plays at carts,°
Yet has sae mony takin' arts,
Wi' grit an' sma',°
Frae G—d's an priest the people's hearts
He steals awa'.

An' whan we chasten'd him therefore,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,°
As set the warld in a roar
O' laughin' at us;
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail° an' potatoes.

L—d hear my earnest cry an' pray'r,
Against that presbyt'ry o' Ayr;
Thy strong right hand, L—d make it bare,
Upo' their heads,
L—d weigh it down, and dinna spare,
For their misdeeds.

O L—d my G—d, that glib-tongu'd A—n,°
My very heart an' saul° are quakin',
To think how we stood sweatin' shakin',
An' p—d wi' dread,
While he wi' hingin'° lips and snakin'[5]
Held up his head.

L—d in the day of vengeance try him,
L—d visit them wha did employ him,
An' pass not in thy mercy by 'em,
Nor hear their pray'r;
But for thy people's sake destroy 'em,

And dinna spare.

But, L—d remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,
That I for gear° and grace may shine,
Extoll'd by name,
An' a' the glory shall be thine,
Amen, Amen!

1785 1789, 1799

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This satire, which takes the form of a dramatic monologue, was inspired by William Fisher, a self-righteous church elder in the same Ayrshire parish that in 1785 had forced Burns and Betty Paton to do public penance for "fornication." The poem is directed against a basic Calvinist tenet of the old Scottish kirk: Holy Willie assumes that as one of a small minority, God's "elect," he has been predestined for grace, no matter what deeds he does in this world.

  Aiming to avoid giving offense, Burns prudently excluded "Holy Willie's Prayer" from collections he published during his lifetime, though he did circulate the poem in manuscript. One of those manuscripts must have been the source used by the publishers who, likely without the poet's permission, printed the poem in 1789, in an anonymous eight-page pamphlet titled *The Prayer of Holy Willie, A Canting, Hypocritical Kirk Elder.*

  Another manuscript version of "Holy Willie's Prayer," in what is known as the Glenriddell Manuscript, includes a prologue that outlines Burns's "Argument" as follows: "Holy Willie was a rather oldish bachelor Elder in the parish of Mauchline, & much & justly famed for that polemical chattering which ends in tippling Orthodoxy, & for that Spiritualized Bawdry which refines to Liquorish Devotion.—In a Sessional process [a trial carried on

under the auspices of the Kirk government] with a gentleman in Mauchline, a Mr. Gavin Hamilton, Holy Willie, and his priest, father Auld, after full hearing of the Presbytery of Ayr, came off but second best; owing partly to the oratorical powers of Mr. Robert Aiken, Mr. Hamilton's Counsel; but chiefly to Mr. Hamilton's being one of the most irreproachable & truly respectable characters in the country.—On losing his Process, the Muse overheard him [Holy Willie] at his devotions as follows —." The Glenriddell manuscript also gives the poem an epigraph from Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*. "And send the Godly in a pet to pray—."
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: An echo of Matthew 8:12; "the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An echo of 2 Corinthians 12:7: "there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Burns's friend Gavin Hamilton, whom Holy Willie had brought up on moral charges before the kirk session of the Presbytery of Ayr. As Burns explained in the manuscript Argument, Hamilton was defended by his counsel, Robert Aiken (referred to in line 79).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Burns's modern editor, Robert Irvine, suggests that in "snaking," Aiken may be sniffing contemptuously.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *who*Return to reference °
- °: *one*Return to reference °
- °: *ancestry*Return to reference °
- °: *shield*Return to reference °
- °: *troubled*Return to reference °
- °: *duty*Return to reference °

- °: *yesterday night*Return to reference °
- °: *leg*Return to reference °
- °: *must*Return to reference °
- °: *believe*Return to reference °
- °: *drunk*Return to reference °
- °: *molested*Return to reference °
- °: *cards*Return to reference °
- °: *great and small*Return to reference °
- °: *disturbance*Return to reference °
- °: *broth*Return to reference °
- °: *Aiken*Return to reference °
- °: *soul*Return to reference °
- °: *hanging*Return to reference °
- °: *riches*Return to reference °

Tam o’ Shanter: A Tale[1]

Of Brownyis and of Bogill is full is this buke.
—Gawin Douglas

When chapmen billies° leave the street,
And drouthy° neebors, neebors meet,
As market-days are wearing late,
An’ folk begin to tak the gate;°
While we sit bousing at the nappy,°
And getting fou° and unco° happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,[2]
The mosses, waters, slaps,° and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand° honest *Tam o’ Shanter*,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
(Auld Ayr, wham ne’er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonny lasses).

O *Tam!* hadst thou but been sae wise,
As ta’en thy ain wife *Kate’s* advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,°
A blethering,° blustering, drunken blellum;°
That frae November till October,
Ae° market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka° melder,[3] wi’ the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;°
That every naig° was ca’d° a shoe on,

The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the L—d's house, even on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesied that late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drown'd in Doon;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,°
By *Aloway's* auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars° me greet,°
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthen'd sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae market-night,
Tam had got planted unco right;
Fast by an ingle,° bleezing° finely,
Wi' reaming swats,° that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter° *Johnny*,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter;
And ay the ale was growing better:
The landlady and *Tam* grew gracious,
Wi' favours, secret, sweet, and precious:
The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:
The storm without might rair° and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drown'd himself amang the nappy:
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest, but *Tam* was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amid the storm.—
Nae man can tether time or tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun° ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling showers rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
Loud, deep, and lang, the thunder bellow'd:
That night, a child might understand,
The Deil° had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare, *Meg*,[4]
A better never lifted leg,[5]
Tam skelpit° on thro' dub° and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whiles holding fast his gude blue bonnet;
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet;
Whiles glowring° round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles° catch him unawares:
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists° and houlets° nightly cry.—

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare, in the snaw, the chapman smoor'd;[6]

And past the birks° and meikle stane,°
Whare drunken *Charlie* brak's neck-bane;
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,[7]
Whare hunters fand the murder'd bairn;°
And near the thorn, aboon the well,
Whare *Mungo's* mither hang'd hersel.—
Before him *Doon* pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;
The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll:
When, glimmering thro' the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;°
Thro' ilka bore° the beams were glancing;
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.—

Inspiring bold *John Barleycorn!*
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippeny,[8] we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae,° we'll face the devil!—
The swats sae ream'd in *Tammie's* noddle,
Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle.[9]
But *Maggie* stood right sair astonish'd,
Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,
She ventured forward on the light;
And, wow! *Tam* saw an unco° sight!

Warlocks and witches in a dance;
Nae cotillion brent new° frae *France*,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys,[1] and reels,
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker° in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;
A towzie tyke,° black, grim, and large,
To gie them music was his charge:
He screw'd the pipes and gart° them skirl,°

Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.°
Coffins stood round, like open presses,
That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses:
And by some devilish cantraip° slight
Each in its cauld hand held a light.—
By which heroic *Tam* was able
To note upon the haly° table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;°
Twa span-lang,[2] wee, unchristen'd bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae a rape,°
Wi' his last gasp his gab° did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' blude red-rusted;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter, which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft,
The grey hairs yet stack° to the heft;
Wi' mair o' horrible and awefu',
Which even to name wad be unlawfu'.

As *Tammie* glowr'd, amaz'd, and curious,
The mirth and fun grew fast and furious:
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,°
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,[3]
And coost her duddies to the wark,[4]
And linket° at it in her sark![5]

Now, *Tam, O Tam!* had thae been queans,°
A' plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,°
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linnen![6]
Thir° breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,

I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,°
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies!°

But wither'd beldams,° auld and droll,
Rigwoodie° hags wad spean° a foal,
Lowping° and flinging on a crummock,°
I wonder didna turn thy stomach.

But *Tam* kend what was what fu' brawlie,°
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,°
That night enlisted in the core,°
(Lang after kend on *Carrick* shore;
For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perish'd mony a bony boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,°
And kept the country-side in fear)
Her cutty° sark, o' Paisley[7] harn,°
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude tho' sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.°—
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft° for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever grac'd a dance of witches!

But here my Muse her wing maun cour;°
Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang,
(A souple jade° she was, and strang),
And how *Tam* stood, like ane bewitch'd,
And thought his very een° enrich'd;
Even Satan glowr'd, and fidg'd fu' fain,[8]
And hotch'd° and blew wi' might and main:
Till first ae caper, syne° anither,
Tam tint° his reason a' thegither,
And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!"

And in an instant all was dark:
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,[°]
When plundering herds[°] assail their byke;[°]
As open[°] pussie's mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch[°] skreech and hollow.

Ah, *Tam!* Ah, *Tam!* thou'll get thy fairin'![9]
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
In vain thy *Kate* awaits thy comin!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane[1] of the brig;[°]
There at them thou thy tail may toss,
A running stream they dare na cross.
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient[°] a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;[°]
But little wist[°] she Maggie's mettle—
Ae spring brought off her master hale,[°]
But left behind her ain grey tail:
The carlin claught[°] her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.[2]

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk man and mother's son, take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,

Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear,
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

1790 1791, 1793

Endnotes

- Note 1: This mock-heroic poem, written to order for a 1791 book on Scottish antiquities, is based on a witch story told about Alloway Kirk, the ruins of a 16th-century church near Burns's house in Ayr. Burns recognized that "Tam o' Shanter" was his masterpiece: true, he admitted in a letter, it exhibited "a spice of roguish waggery that might be spared," but it also showed "a force of genius, and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling." The epigraph, added when "Tam o' Shanter" was republished in the 1793 edition of *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, is from the prologue to book 6 of Gavin Douglas's 16th-century Scots translation of Virgil's *Aeneid.* In this book the epic hero Aeneas, soon to be the founder of Rome, descends into the world of the dead.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Scots miles measured just over two hundred feet longer than English miles.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The amount of grain processed at a single grinding.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Tam's horse, Meg (also called Maggie), occasions the poem's bawdiest wordplay.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare this "lifted leg" to Willie's use of the term about himself in line 41 of "Holy Willie's Prayer" (p. 177, above).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The peddler smothered.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Stones heaped up as a memorial. "Whins": furze, an evergreen shrub.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Two penny (usually of weak beer).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A very small copper coin. That is, the weak beer frothed up so much in Tam's brain ("noddle") that he didn't care a farthing about devils ("deils").Return to reference 9

- Note 1: A slow Highland dance.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Two spans long (a span is the distance from outstretched thumb to little finger).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Until every old woman did sweat and smoke.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Cast off her clothes for the work.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shirt (underclothes).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Very fine linen.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A major center of textile production.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Fidgeted with pleasure.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Literally, a present brought home from a fair. That is, Tam will get his just deserts.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: It is a well known fact that witches, or any evil spirits, have no power to follow a poor wight any farther than the middle of the next running stream. It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller, that when he falls in with *bogles*, whatever danger may be in his going forward, there is much more hazard in turning back [*Burns's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, she had no tail left at all.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *peddler fellows*Return to reference °
- °: *thirsty*Return to reference °
- °: *road*Return to reference °
- °: *strong ale*Return to reference °
- °: *drunk* Return to reference °
- °: *very*Return to reference °
- °: *gaps in fences*Return to reference °
- °: *found*Return to reference °
- °: *rascal*Return to reference °
- °: *chattering* Return to reference °
- °: *babbler*Return to reference °

- °: *one*Return to reference °
- °: *every*Return to reference °
- °: *silver, money*Return to reference °
- °: *nag* Return to reference °
- °: *driven*Return to reference °
- °: *night*Return to reference °
- °: *makes* Return to reference °
- °: *weep*Return to reference °
- °: *fireplace* Return to reference °
- °: *blazing*Return to reference °
- °: *foaming new ale*Return to reference °
- °: *Shoemaker*Return to reference °
- °: *roar*Return to reference °
- °: *must*Return to reference °
- °: *Devil*Return to reference °
- °: *slapped* Return to reference °
- °: *puddle*Return to reference °
- °: *staring*Return to reference °
- °: *bogeymen*Return to reference °
- °: *ghosts* Return to reference °
- °: *owls*Return to reference °
- °: *birches* Return to reference °
- °: *big stone*Return to reference °
- °: *child*Return to reference °
- °: *blaze*Return to reference °
- °: *hole*Return to reference °
- °: *whiskey*Return to reference °
- °: *strange*Return to reference °
- °: *brand new*Return to reference °
- °: *window seat*Return to reference °
- °: *shaggy dog*Return to reference °
- °: *made* Return to reference °
- °: *screech*Return to reference °
- °: *rattle*Return to reference °
- °: *charm, spell*Return to reference °
- °: *holy*Return to reference °

- °: *irons*Return to reference °
- °: *rope*Return to reference °
- °: *mouth*Return to reference °
- °: *stuck*Return to reference °
- °: *joined hands*Return to reference °
- °: *tripped lightly*Return to reference °
- °: *girls*Return to reference °
- °: *greasy flannel*Return to reference °
- °: *These*Return to reference °
- °: *buttocks*Return to reference °
- °: *bonny (pretty) girls*Return to reference °
- °: *hags*Return to reference °
- °: *ugly* Return to reference °
- °: *wean*Return to reference °
- °: *leaping* Return to reference °
- °: *staff*Return to reference °
- °: *finely*Return to reference °
- °: *strapping*Return to reference °
- °: *corps*Return to reference °
- °: *barley*Return to reference °
- °: *short* Return to reference °
- °: *yarn*Return to reference °
- °: *proud*Return to reference °
- °: *bought*Return to reference °
- °: *lower*Return to reference °
- °: *hussie*Return to reference °
- °: *eyes*Return to reference °
- °: *jerked*Return to reference °
- °: *then*Return to reference °
- °: *lost*Return to reference °
- °: *fuss*Return to reference °
- °: *herdsmen* Return to reference °
- °: *hive*Return to reference °
- °: *begin to bark*Return to reference °
- °: *unearthly*Return to reference °
- °: *bridge*Return to reference °

- °: *devil* Return to reference °
- °: *intent* Return to reference °
- °: *knew* Return to reference °
- °: *whole* Return to reference °
- °: *clutched* Return to reference °

Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation

Fareweel to a' our Scottish fame,
  Fareweel our ancient glory!
Fareweel ev'n to the Scottish name,
  Sae famed in martial story!
Now Sark rins over Solway sands,
  An' Tweed rins to the ocean,
To mark where England's province stands—
  Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

What force or guile could not subdue
  Thro' many warlike ages
Is wrought now by a coward few
  For hireling traitors' wages.
The English steel we could disdain,
  Secure in valour's station;
But English gold has been our bane—
  Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

O, would, or I had seen the day
  That Treason thus could sell us,
My auld grey head had lien in clay
Wi' Bruce and loyal Wallace![1]
But pith and power,° till my last hour
  I'll mak this declaration:—
'We're bought and sold for English gold'—
  Such a parcel of rogues in a nation!

1792

Endnotes

- Note 1: For Bruce and Wallace, see "Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn," below, notes 1 and 2.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *with all my strength*Return to reference °

Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn[1]

[Scots, Wha Hae]

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace[2] bled,
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed
Or to victorie!

Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour,
See approach proud Edward's power—
Chains and slaverie!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?—
Let him turn, and flee!

Wha for Scotland's King and Law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand or freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

By Oppression's woes and pains,
By your sons in servile chains,
We will drain our dearest veins
But they shall be free!

Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!
Let us do, or die!

Endnotes

- Note 1: Burns's words are set to the old tune to which, it was said, Robert Bruce's Scottish army had marched when it went to battle against the English invaders in 1314. This marching song is at once a historical reconstruction and an anthem for the revolutionary 1790s. Burns's turn to song writing in the last few years of his life might, the critic Marilyn Butler suggested, have had to do with the fact that songs like these, transmitted aurally, were more likely than compositions in other modes to slip past the scrutiny of a censorious government.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Wallace (1272–1305), the great Scottish warrior in the wars against the English.Return to reference 2

Song: For a' that and a' that[1]

Is there for honest Poverty
That hings,° his head, an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by—
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,°
The Man's the gowd° for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey,[2] an' a' that?
Gie° fools their silks, and knaves their wine—
A Man's a Man for a' that.
For a' that, an a' that,
Their tinsel show, an' a' that,
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie° ca'd 'a lord,'
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that?
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a cuif° for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
His ribband, star, an' a' that,
The man o' independent mind,
He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that!
But an honest man's aboon° his might—
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that![3]

For a’ that, an’ a’ that,
Their dignities, an’ a’ that,
The pith o’ sense an’ pride o’ worth
Are higher rank than a’ that.

Then let us pray that come it may
(As come it will for a’ that)
That Sense and Worth o’er a’ the earth
Shall bear the gree° an’ a’ that!
For a’ that, an’ a’ that,
It’s comin yet for a’ that,
That Man to Man the world o’er
Shall brithers be for a’ that.

1795

Endnotes

- Note 1: This song was set to a dance tune, known as “Lady Macintosh’s Reel,” that Burns had drawn on for previous songs.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A coarse cloth of undyed wool.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Must not claim that.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *hangs*Return to reference °
- °: *inscription on a coin*Return to reference °
- °: *gold*Return to reference °
- °: *give*Return to reference °
- °: *fellow*Return to reference °
- °: *dolt*Return to reference °
- °: *above*Return to reference °
- °: *win the prize*Return to reference °

A Red, Red Rose[1]

O, my Luve is like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June.
O, my luve is like the melodie,
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luve am I,
And I will luve thee still, my Dear,
Till a' the seas gang° dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun!
O I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve,
And fare thee weel, a while!
And I will come again, my luve,
Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

1794 1796

Endnotes

- Note 1: Like many of Burns's lyrics, this one incorporates elements from several contemporary ballads.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *go*Return to reference °

Auld Lang Syne[1]

CHORUS.

For auld lang syne, my jo,°
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne!

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne!

And surely ye'll be° your pint-stowp,°
And surely I'll be mine,
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne!

We twa° hae run about the braes,°
And pou'd° the gowans° fine,
But we've wander'd monie a weary fit
Sin' auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn°
Frae morning sun till dine,°
But seas between us braid° hae roar'd
Sin' auld lang syne.

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,°
And gie's a hand o' thine,
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught°
For auld lang syne!

1796

Endnotes

- Note 1: Long ago.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *sweetheart*Return to reference °
- °: *pay for* Return to reference °
- °: *pint cup*Return to reference °
- °: *two* Return to reference °
- °: *slopes*Return to reference °
- °: *pulled* Return to reference °
- °: *daisies*Return to reference °
- °: *stream*Return to reference °
- °: *dinner, noon*Return to reference °
- °: *broad*Return to reference °
- °: *friend*Return to reference °
- °: *hearty swig*Return to reference °

An Age of Revolutions

"It is an age of revolutions, in which everything may be looked for," declared the essayist Thomas Paine in his 1791 pamphlet *The Rights of Man,* voicing the sense of possibility shared by many advocates of reform in the early stages of the French Revolution. To the British-born Paine, whose writing had earlier energized the American colonists as they took on a monarchy, a direct line led from the American Declaration of Independence (1776) to the inaugural events of the French Revolution: the storming of the Bastille prison by an angry mob of Parisians on July 14, 1789, and the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man by the new National Assembly a month later. "What we now see in the world, from the revolutions of America and France," Paine sweepingly proposed, "are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man." Paine and others envisioned such a transformative spirit radiating on to the rest of Europe, and alighting in England too. In a sermon preached in November 1789, on the anniversary of Britain's own "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, the Unitarian minister Richard Price advised "friends of freedom, and writers in its defence" that the "times are auspicious": "Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting *America* free, reflected to *France,* and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates *Europe!* Tremble all ye oppressors of the world!" Subsequent events in France—the executions of the king and queen, the massacres during the Reign of Terror under Robespierre, the wars of imperial conquest under Napoleon—complicated such an optimistic outlook for many of the Revolution's initial supporters, as hope gave way to disappointment and disenchantment; in Britain, the government clamped down on reformist agitation, and Paine himself had to escape to France. Nonetheless, globally, the revolutionary activity of the era continued: from the 1791 uprising of enslaved persons in France's wealthiest Caribbean colony, St.-

Domingue; to failed insurgencies like the Irish Rebellion of 1798; to the nineteenth-century wars of liberation across South America under Simón Bolívar; to the working-class protest movements in England and across Europe that, to many in the nineteenth century, appeared to channel older dreams of a "renovated" social order.

The political upheavals of the period, however, involved in reality no single "system of principles," as Paine had put it, but instead often competing and sometimes incompatible interests and ideas. Many who had supported the American Revolution as a legitimate response to tyranny saw in the French Revolution a dangerous overthrowing of traditional social order. Others on both sides of the Atlantic tested how truly universal were the concepts of rights, liberty, and equality enshrined in the revolutionists' declarations. The French writer Olympe de Gouges, in her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman* (1791), insisted that rights of political participation must extend to *citoyennes* as well as *citoyens*—female as well as male citizens—ideas affirmed by the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). The slave system in France's colonies, meanwhile, stood as a glaring contradiction in the new republic's language of universal rights. When France abolished colonial slavery in 1794, it was responding to a reality that had already been changed by the ongoing rebellion in St.-Domingue, one that would lead a decade later to the colony's casting off French rule and becoming the new nation of Haiti.

The first section of this cluster explores the intense controversy in Britain in the early 1790s over the meaning of the events taking place just across the channel in France. Some writers in England responded to news of the Revolution with an enthusiasm that in its intensity resembled a religious awakening. Many tried to make sense of events in terms borrowed from the Bible, interpreting the Revolution as fulfilling the promise, guaranteed by an infallible text, that a short period of violence would ultimately usher in an era of universal peace in which the world would begin anew. Conservatives, on the other hand, were first wary, and then horrified. Most alarming to them, perhaps, was the emergent view that politics was the

legitimate business of the common people and should not be monopolized by an aristocratic elite.

The English debate about the French Revolution was initiated by Price's 1789 sermon, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country,* which he delivered just weeks after French citizens marched to the palace of Versailles and arrested King Louis XVI and his queen, Marie Antoinette, confining them to the Tuileries palace in Paris. When a year later Edmund Burke published a rebuttal to Price, his *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* a "pamphlet war" heated up. *Reflections* drew more than fifty responses, including Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) as well as Paine's *Rights of Man*. While pamphlets such as Paine's—written in an accessible style—targeted a broad audience of the newly literate, so too did a full-throttled propaganda campaign launched by the British government to counter the threat of revolutionary ideas. This section concludes by sampling the pivotal contributions to that campaign that the brilliant artist James Gillray made in the dozens of political prints that he etched during the 1790s—works that seem to have begun as pictorial synopses of loyalist pamphlets, but whose shock tactics took them far beyond that assigned function.

In late October 1791, alongside daily updates on the political situation in Paris, British newspapers ran reports of ships arriving from the Caribbean with word of a massive slave revolt that had erupted two months prior on the sugar and coffee plantations of St.-Domingue, on the island of Hispaniola—an ocean away from England, but for many British observers uncomfortably close to Britain's slaveholding West Indian colonies (and near to the United States, as well). The uprising in St.-Domingue is the focus of the second section of our cluster, which includes documents from British observers and by the revolutionaries themselves. British involvement in the territory they called "Santo Domingo" deepened when Britain invaded in 1793, hoping to snatch the valuable colony for its own empire; the occupation persisted another five years, with disease as well as battlefield casualties exacting an enormous toll on British troops. By the time the British left, the talented general Toussaint

Louverture, once enslaved, had emerged as the French colony's de facto leader. In 1802, Toussaint was deported to France by Napoleon, who viewed him as a threat to his own authority (William Wordsworth's response to this turn of events is recorded in his sonnet "To Toussaint l'Ouverture"). Taking charge in Toussaint's stead, another general, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, also formerly enslaved, forced the French military from the island at the end of 1803, after brutal fighting. Declaring its independence on New Year's Day 1804, the new nation under Dessalines' leadership replaced the French "St.-Domingue" with the name Hayti (as it was then spelled), taken from the Taíno language of the island's original inhabitants. (France would finally recognize Haiti's independence only in 1825, after forcing Haiti to pay a vast sum in exchange for lost "property.")

In a letter to Byron in 1816, Percy Shelley called the French Revolution "the master theme of the epoch in which we live." The Haitian Revolution on occasion flared to the forefront of British consciousness, but at other times was easily pushed out of mind, though writers in Britain (and in Europe and America) continued to be haunted both by the specter of violent resistance to European rule, and by the power of the revolution's claims for freedom and recognition in the face of racial oppression. As the historian Laurent Dubois argues, understandings of citizenship, rights, and democratic inclusion forged in the struggles in and around the Caribbean continue to resonate globally.

These interconnected histories of revolution and empire around the Atlantic, and the debates in Britain about their meanings, profoundly shaped the literature of the Romantic period.

The French Revolution Controversy

RICHARD PRICE

Richard Price (1723–1791) was a Unitarian minister in London and a writer on moral philosophy, population, and the national debt, among other topics. The full title of his sermon, which prompted Burke's *Reflections* and in turn the scores of responses to Burke, is *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, Delivered on Nov. 4, 1789, at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry, to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain.* The London Revolution Society had been founded a year earlier to mark the hundredth anniversary of the "bloodless" Glorious Revolution of 1688, which ended the short reign of King James II and produced the Declaration of Right, establishing a limited monarchy and guaranteeing the civil rights of privileged classes. The first two-thirds of the extracts given here commemorate that Revolution; in the final third, beginning "What an eventful period is this!" Price greets with religious fervor "two other Revolutions, both glorious," the American and the French. The *Discourse* went through six editions in its first year of publication.

From A Discourse on the Love of Our Country

We are met to thank God for that event in this country to which the name of THE REVOLUTION has been given; and which, for more than a century, it has been usual for the friends of freedom, and more especially Protestant Dissenters, under the title of the REVOLUTION SOCIETY, to celebrate with expressions of joy and exultation. * * * By a bloodless victory, the fetters which despotism had been long preparing for us were broken; the rights of the people were asserted, a tyrant expelled, and a Sovereign of our own choice appointed in his room. Security was given to our property, and our consciences were emancipated. The bounds of free enquiry were enlarged; the volume in which are the words of eternal life, was laid more open to our examination; and that *aera* of light and liberty was introduced among us, by which we have been made an example to other kingdoms, and became the instructors of the world. Had it not been for this deliverance, the probability is, that, instead of being thus distinguished, we should now have been a base people, groaning under the infamy and misery of popery and slavery. Let us, therefore, offer thanksgivings to God, the author of all our blessings. * * *

It is well known that King James was not far from gaining his purpose; and that probably he would have succeeded, had he been less in a hurry. But he was a fool as well as a bigot. He wanted courage as well as prudence; and, therefore, fled, and left us to settle quietly for ourselves that constitution of government which is now our boast. We have particular reason, as Protestant Dissenters, to rejoice on this occasion. It was at this time we were rescued from persecution, and obtained the liberty of worshipping God in the manner we think most acceptable to him. It was then our meeting houses were opened, our worship was taken under the protection of

the law, and the principles of toleration gained a triumph. We have, therefore, on this occasion, peculiar reasons for thanksgiving.—But let us remember that we ought not to satisfy ourselves with thanksgivings. Our gratitude, if genuine, will be accompanied with endeavours to give stability to the deliverance our country has obtained, and to extend and improve the happiness with which the Revolution has blest us.—Let us, in particular, take care not to forget the principles of the Revolution. This Society has, very properly, in its Reports, held out these principles, as an instruction to the public. I will only take notice of the three following:

First: The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.

Secondly: The right to resist power when abused. And,

Thirdly: The right to chuse our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.

* * *

I would farther direct you to remember, that though the Revolution was a great work, it was by no means a perfect work; and that all was not then gained which was necessary to put the kingdom in the secure and complete possession of the blessings of liberty.—In particular, you should recollect, that the toleration then obtained was imperfect. It included only those who could declare their faith in the doctrinal articles of the church of England. It has, indeed, been since extended, but not sufficiently; for there still exist penal laws on account of religious opinions, which (were they carried into execution) would shut up many of our places of worship, and silence and imprison some of our ablest and best men.—The TEST LAWS are also still in force; and deprive of eligibility to civil and military offices, all who cannot conform to the established worship. It is with great pleasure I find that the body of Protestant Dissenters, though defeated in two late attempts to deliver their country from this disgrace to it, have determined to persevere. Should they at last succeed, they will have the satisfaction, not only of removing from themselves a proscription they do not deserve, but of contributing to

lessen the number of public iniquities. For I cannot call by a gentler name, laws which convert an ordinance appointed by our Saviour to commemorate his death, into an instrument of oppressive policy, and a qualification of rakes and atheists for civil posts.—I have said, *should* they succeed—but perhaps I ought not to suggest a doubt about their success. And, indeed, when I consider that in Scotland the established church is defended by no such test—that in Ireland it has been abolished—that in a great neighbouring country it has been declared to be an indefeasible right of all citizens to be equally eligible to public offices—that in the same kingdom a professed Dissenter from the established church holds the first office in the state—that in the Emperor's dominions *Jews* have been lately admitted to the enjoyment of equal privileges with other citizens—and that in this very country, a Dissenter, though excluded from the power of *executing* the laws, yet is allowed to be employed in *making* them.—When, I say, I consider such facts as these, I am disposed to think it impossible that the enemies of the repeal of the Test Laws should not soon become ashamed, and give up their opposition.

But the most important instance of the imperfect state in which the Revolution left our constitution, is the *inequality of our representation.* I think, indeed, this defect in our constitution so gross and so palpable, as to make it excellent chiefly in form and theory. You should remember that a representation in the legislature of a kingdom is the *basis* of constitutional liberty in it, and of all legitimate government; and that without it a government is nothing but an usurpation. When the representation is fair and equal, and at the same time vested with such powers as our House of Commons possesses, a kingdom may be said to govern itself, and consequently to possess true liberty. When the representation is partial, a kingdom possesses liberty only partially; and if extremely partial, it only gives a *semblance* of liberty; but if not only extremely partial, but corruptly chosen, and under corrupt influence after being chosen, it becomes a *nuisance*, and produces the worst of all forms of government—a government by corruption, a government carried on

and supported by spreading venality and profligacy through a kingdom. May heaven preserve this kingdom from a calamity so dreadful! It is the point of depravity to which abuses under such a government as ours naturally tend, and the last stage of national unhappiness. We are, at present, I hope, at a great distance from it. But it cannot be pretended that there are no advances towards it, or that there is no reason for apprehension and alarm.

* * *

What an eventful period is this! I am thankful that I have lived to it; and I could almost say, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation* [Luke 2:29–30]. I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error—I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it.—I have lived to see THIRTY MILLIONS of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice; their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects.—After sharing in the benefits of one Revolution, I have been spared to be a witness to two other Revolutions, both glorious.—And now, methinks, I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment beginning in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience.

Be encouraged, all ye friends of freedom, and writers in its defence! The times are auspicious. Your labours have not been in vain. Behold kingdoms, admonished by you, starting from sleep, breaking their fetters, and claiming justice from their oppressors! Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting *America* free, reflected to *France*, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates *Europe*!

Tremble all ye oppressors of the world! Take warning all ye supporters of slavish governments, and slavish hierarchies! Call no

more (absurdly and wickedly) REFORMATION, innovation. You cannot now hold the world in darkness. Struggle no longer against increasing light and liberality. Restore to mankind their rights; and consent to the correction of abuses, before they and you are destroyed together.

1789

EDMUND BURKE

The great statesman and political theorist Edmund Burke (1729–1797) read Price's *Discourse* in January 1790 and immediately began drafting his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* as a reply in the form of a letter (as the lengthy subtitle describes it) "Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris" (a Frenchman who had written to Burke soliciting the British parliamentarian's opinion of events in his country). The work was published at the beginning of November and was an instant bestseller: thirteen thousand copies were purchased in the first five weeks, and by the following September it had gone through eleven editions. Clearly, part of its appeal to contemporary readers lay in the highly wrought accounts of the mob's violent treatment of the French king and queen (who at the time Burke was writing were imprisoned in Paris and would be executed three years later, in January and October 1793). *Reflections* has become the classic, most eloquent statement of British conservatism favoring monarchy, aristocracy, property, hereditary succession, and the wisdom of the ages. Earlier in his career Burke had championed many liberal causes and sided with the Americans in their war for independence; opponents and allies alike were surprised at the strength of his conviction that the French Revolution was a disaster and the revolutionists "a swinish multitude."

From Reflections on the Revolution in France

* * * All circumstances taken together, the French revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world. The most wonderful things are brought about in many instances by means the most absurd and ridiculous; in the most ridiculous modes; and apparently, by the most contemptible instruments. Every thing seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies. In viewing this monstrous tragi-comic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror.

* * *

You will observe, that from Magna Charta to the Declaration of Right,[1] it has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an *entailed inheritance*[2] derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity; as an estate specially belonging to the people of this kingdom without any reference whatever to any other more general or prior right. By this means our constitution preserves an unity in so great a diversity of its parts. We have an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage; and an house of commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties, from a long line of ancestors.

This policy appears to me to be the result of profound reflection; or rather the happy effect of following nature, which is wisdom without reflection, and above it. A spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper and confined views. People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors.

Besides, the people of England well know, that the idea of inheritance furnishes a sure principle of conservation, and a sure principle of transmission; without at all excluding a principle of improvement. It leaves acquisition free; but it secures what it acquires. Whatever advantages are obtained by a state proceeding on these maxims, are locked fast as in a sort of family settlement; grasped as in a kind of mortmain[3] for ever. By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives. The institutions of policy, the goods of fortune, the gifts of Providence, are handed down, to us and from us, in the same course and order. Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete. By adhering in this manner and on those principles to our forefathers, we are guided not by the superstition of antiquarians, but by the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars.

Through the same plan of a conformity to nature in our artificial institutions, and by calling in the aid of her unerring and powerful instincts, to fortify the fallible and feeble contrivances of our reason, we have derived several other, and those no small benefits, from

considering our liberties in the light of an inheritance. Always acting as if in the presence of canonized forefathers, the spirit of freedom, leading in itself to misrule and excess, is tempered with an awful gravity. This idea of a liberal descent inspires us with a sense of habitual native dignity, which prevents that upstart insolence almost inevitably adhering to and disgracing those who are the first acquirers of any distinction. By this means our liberty becomes a noble freedom. It carries an imposing and majestic aspect. It has a pedigree and illustrating ancestors. It has its bearings and its ensigns armorial. It has its gallery of portraits; its monumental inscriptions; its records, evidences, and titles. We procure reverence to our civil institutions on the principle upon which nature teaches us to revere individual men; on account of their age; and on account of those from whom they are descended. All your sophisters[4] cannot produce any thing better adapted to preserve a rational and manly freedom than the course that we have pursued, who have chosen our nature rather than our speculations, our breasts rather than our inventions, for the great conservatories and magazines[5] of our rights and privileges.

* * *

Far am I from denying in theory; full as far is my heart from withholding in practice (if I were of power to give or to withhold) the *real* rights of men. In denying their false claims of right, I do not mean to injure those which are real, and are such as their pretended rights would totally destroy. If civil society be made for the advantage of man, all the advantages for which it is made become his right. It is an institution of beneficence; and law itself is only beneficence acting by a rule. Men have a right to live by that rule; they have a right to justice; as between their fellows, whether their fellows are in politic function or in ordinary occupation. They have a right to the fruits of their industry; and to the means of making their industry fruitful. They have a right to the acquisitions of their parents; to the nourishment and improvement of their offspring; to

instruction in life, and to consolation in death. Whatever each man can separately do, without trespassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with all its combinations of skill and force, can do in his favor. In this partnership all men have equal rights; but not to equal things. He that has but five shillings in the partnership, has as good a right to it, as he that has five hundred pound has to his larger proportion. But he has not a right to an equal dividend in the product of the joint stock; and as to the share of power, authority, and direction which each individual ought to have in the management of the state, that I must deny to be amongst the direct original rights of man in civil society; for I have in my contemplation the civil social man, and no other. It is a thing to be settled by convention.

* * *

History, who keeps a durable record of all our acts, and exercises her awful censure over the proceedings of all sorts of sovereigns, will not forget, either those events, or the era of this liberal refinement in the intercourse of mankind. History will record, that on the morning of the 6th of October 1789, the king and queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite, and troubled melancholy repose. From this sleep the queen was first startled by the voice of the centinel at her door, who cried out to her, to save herself by flight—that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give—that they were upon him, and he was dead. Instantly he was cut down. A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked, and through ways unknown to the murderers had escaped to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure of his own life for a moment.

This king, to say no more of him, and this queen, and their infant children (who once would have been the pride and hope of a great and generous people) were then forced to abandon the sanctuary of the most splendid palace in the world, which they left swimming in blood, polluted by massacre, and strewed with scattered limbs and mutilated carcases. Thence they were conducted into the capital of their kingdom. Two had been selected from the unprovoked, unresisted, promiscuous slaughter, which was made of the gentlemen of birth and family who composed the king's body guard. These two gentlemen, with all the parade of an execution of justice, were cruelly and publickly dragged to the block, and beheaded in the great court of the palace. Their heads were stuck upon spears, and led the procession; whilst the royal captives who followed in the train were slowly moved along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women. After they had been made to taste, drop by drop, more than the bitterness of death, in the slow torture of a journey of twelve miles, protracted to six hours, they were, under a guard, composed of those very soldiers who had thus conducted them through this famous triumph, lodged in one of the old palaces of Paris, now converted into a Bastile[6] for kings.

* * *

I hear that the august person,[7] who was the principal object of our preacher's triumph,[8] though he supported himself, felt much on that shameful occasion. As a man, it became him to feel for his wife and his children, and the faithful guards of his person, that were massacred in cold blood about him; as a prince, it became him to feel for the strange and frightful transformation of his civilized subjects, and to be more grieved for them, than solicitous for himself. It derogates little from his fortitude, while it adds infinitely to the honor of his humanity. I am very sorry to say it, very sorry

indeed, that such personages are in a situation in which it is not unbecoming in us to praise the virtues of the great.

I hear, and I rejoice to hear, that the great lady, the other object of the triumph, has borne that day (one is interested that beings made for suffering should suffer well) and that she bears all the succeeding days, that she bears the imprisonment of her husband, and her own captivity, and the exile of her friends, and the insulting adulation of addresses, and the whole weight of her accumulated wrongs, with a serene patience, in a manner suited to her rank and race, and becoming the offspring of a sovereign distinguished for her piety and her courage;[9] that like her she has lofty sentiments; that she feels with the dignity of a Roman matron; that in the last extremity she will save herself from the last disgrace,[1] and that if she must fall, she will fall by no ignoble hand.

It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France, then the dauphiness,[2] at Versailles; and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in,—glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendor, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honor and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult.—But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the

cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honor, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

This mixed system of opinion and sentiment had its origin in the antient chivalry; and the principle, though varied in its appearance by the varying state of human affairs, subsisted and influenced through a long succession of generations, even to the time we live in. If it should ever be totally extinguished, the loss I fear will be great. It is this which has given its character to modern Europe. It is this which has distinguished it under all its forms of government, and distinguished it to its advantage, from the states of Asia, and possibly from those states which flourished in the most brilliant periods of the antique world. It was this, which, without confounding ranks, had produced a noble equality, and handed it down through all the gradations of social life. It was this opinion which mitigated kings into companions, and raised private men to be fellows with kings. Without force, or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power; it obliged sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination vanquisher of laws, to be subdued by manners.

But now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion.

On this scheme of things, a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order. All homage paid to the sex[3] in general as such, and without distinct views, is to be regarded as romance and folly. Regicide, and parricide, and sacrilege, are but fictions of superstition, corrupting jurisprudence by destroying its simplicity. The murder of a king, or a queen, or a bishop, or a father, are only common homicide; and if the people are by any chance, or in any way gainers by it, a sort of homicide much the most pardonable, and into which we ought not to make too severe a scrutiny.

On the scheme of this barbarous philosophy, which is the offspring of cold hearts and muddy understandings, and which is as void of solid wisdom, as it is destitute of all taste and elegance, laws are to be supported only by their own terrors, and by the concern, which each individual may find in them, from his own private speculations, or can spare to them from his own private interests. In the groves of *their* academy, at the end of every visto, you see nothing but the gallows. Nothing is left which engages the affections on the part of the commonwealth. On the principles of this mechanic philosophy, our institutions can never be embodied, if I may use the expression, in persons; so as to create in us love, veneration, admiration, or attachment. But that sort of reason which banishes the affections is incapable of filling their place. These public affections, combined with manners, are required sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law. The precept given by a wise man, as well as a great critic, for the construction of poems, is equally true as to states. *Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia sunto.*[4] There ought to be a system of manners in every nation which a well-formed mind would be disposed to relish. To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely.

But power, of some kind or other, will survive the shock in which manners and opinions perish; and it will find other and worse means for its support. The usurpation which, in order to subvert antient institutions, has destroyed antient principles, will hold power by arts

similar to those by which it has acquired it. When the old feudal and chivalrous spirit of *Fealty*,[5] which, by freeing kings from fear, freed both kings and subjects from the precautions of tyranny, shall be extinct in the minds of men, plots and assassinations will be anticipated by preventive murder and preventive confiscation, and that long roll of grim and bloody maxims, which form the political code of all power, not standing on its own honor, and the honor of those who are to obey it. Kings will be tyrants from policy when subjects are rebels from principle.

When antient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to govern us; nor can we know distinctly to what port we steer. Europe undoubtedly, taken in a mass, was in a flourishing condition the day on which your Revolution was compleated. How much of that prosperous state was owing to the spirit of our old manners and opinions is not easy to say; but as such causes cannot be indifferent in their operation, we must presume, that, on the whole, their operation was beneficial.

We are but too apt to consider things in the state in which we find them, without sufficiently adverting to the causes by which they have been produced, and possibly may be upheld. Nothing is more certain, than that our manners, our civilization, and all the good things which are connected with manners, and with civilization, have, in this European world of ours, depended for ages upon two principles; and were indeed the result of both combined; I mean the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion. The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence, even in the midst of arms and confusions, and whilst governments were rather in their causes than formed. Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood; and paid it with usury,[6] by enlarging their ideas, and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union, and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning

will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.

If, as I suspect, modern letters owe more than they are always willing to own to antient manners, so do other interests which we value full as much as they are worth. Even commerce, and trade, and manufacture, the gods of our oeconomical politicians, are themselves perhaps but creatures; are themselves but effects, which, as first causes, we choose to worship. They certainly grew under the same shade in which learning flourished. They too may decay with their natural protecting principles. With you, for the present at least, they all threaten to disappear together. Where trade and manufactures are wanting to a people, and the spirit of nobility and religion remains, sentiment supplies, and not always ill supplies their place; but if commerce and the arts should be lost in an experiment to try how well a state may stand without these old fundamental principles, what sort of a thing must be a nation of gross, stupid, ferocious, and at the same time, poor and sordid barbarians, destitute of religion, honor, or manly pride, possessing nothing at present, and hoping for nothing hereafter?

I wish you may not be going fast, and by the shortest cut, to that horrible and disgustful situation. Already there appears a poverty of conception, a coarseness and vulgarity in all the proceedings of the assembly and of all their instructors. Their liberty is not liberal. Their science is presumptuous ignorance. Their humanity is savage and brutal.

* * *

1790

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Magna Carta, the “great charter” of English personal and political liberty, dates from 1215. The Declaration

of Right, another cornerstone of the English constitution, was a product of the Glorious Revolution of 1688.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: An entail is a legal device that prescribes the line of succession along which a piece of family property must pass and that thereby prevents future generations of heirs from making their own decisions about that property.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A legal term (literally, "dead hand") for the perpetual holding of lands by an ecclesiastical or other corporation.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Persons reasoning with clever and fallacious arguments (from the name given to a sect of paid teachers of rhetoric and philosophy in ancient Athens).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Storehouses.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Bastille was France's political prison.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: King Louis XVI.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A reference to Price's exclamation, in the final selection printed on p. 193, above, from *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, that he has lived to see the French "king led in triumph . . . an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Marie Antoinette was the daughter of Maria Theresa, empress of Austria.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Like the women of classical Rome when they endured defeat, Marie Antoinette, Burke suggests, will kill herself to preserve her chastity rather than suffer the disgrace of rape.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, wife of the dauphin, who was heir to the throne of France.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Homage paid to women.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "It is not enough for poems to have beauty; they must be sweet" (Latin; Horace's *Ars Poetica* 99).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Fidelity of a vassal or feudal tenant to his lord.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Interest.Return to reference 6

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT

The first of the many published replies to Burke's *Reflections* was by Wollstonecraft, who appears elsewhere in this anthology as author of A *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), the landmark work in the history of feminism, and *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Toward the end of 1790, when Burke's *Reflections* came out, she was working in London as a writer and translator for the radical publisher Joseph Johnson. Reading Burke, she was outraged at the weakness of his arguments and the exaggerated rhetoric with which he depicted the revolutionists as violators of royalty and womanhood. Always a rapid writer, she composed her reply, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, in a matter of days, and Johnson's printer set it in type as fast as the sheets of manuscript were turned in. It was published anonymously in November, less than a month after Burke's *Reflections* first appeared, and a second edition (this time with her name on the title page) was called for almost immediately.

From A Vindication of the Rights of Men

Advertisement

Mr. Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution first engaged my attention as the transient topic of the day; and reading it more for amusement than information, my indignation was roused by the sophistical arguments, that every moment crossed me, in the questionable shape of natural feelings and common sense.

Many pages of the following letter were the effusions of the moment; but, swelling imperceptibly to a considerable size, the idea was suggested of publishing a short vindication of *the Rights of Men.*

Not having leisure or patience to follow this desultory writer through all the devious tracks in which his fancy has started fresh game, I have confined my strictures, in a great measure, to the grand principles at which he has levelled many ingenious arguments in a very specious garb.

A Letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke

Sir,

It is not necessary, with courtly insincerity, to apologize to you for thus intruding on your precious time, nor to profess that I think it an honor to discuss an important subject with a man whose literary abilities have raised him to notice in the state. I have not yet learned to twist my periods,[1] nor, in the equivocal idiom of politeness, to disguise my sentiments, and imply what I should be afraid to utter: if, therefore, in the course of this epistle, I chance to express contempt, and even indignation, with some emphasis, I beseech you to believe that it is not a flight of fancy; for truth, in morals, has ever appeared to me the essence of the sublime; and, in taste, simplicity the only criterion of the beautiful. But I war not with an individual when I contend for the *rights of men* and the liberty of reason. You

see I do not condescend to cull my words to avoid the invidious phrase, nor shall I be prevented from giving a manly definition of it, by the flimsy ridicule which a lively fancy has interwoven with the present acceptation of the term. Reverencing the rights of humanity, I shall dare to assert them; not intimidated by the horse laugh that you have raised, or waiting till time has wiped away the compassionate tears which you have elaborately labored to excite.

From the many just sentiments interspersed through the letter before me, and from the whole tendency of it, I should believe you to be a good, though a vain man, if some circumstances in your conduct did not render the inflexibility of your integrity doubtful; and for this vanity a knowledge of human nature enables me to discover such extenuating circumstances, in the very texture of your mind, that I am ready to call it amiable, and separate the public from the private character.

* * *

Quitting now the flowers of rhetoric, let us, Sir, reason together; and, believe me, I should not have meddled with these troubled waters, in order to point out your inconsistencies, if your wit had not burnished up some rusty, baneful opinions, and swelled the shallow current of ridicule till it resembled the flow of reason, and presumed to be the test of truth.

I shall not attempt to follow you through "horse-way and foot-path;"[2] but, attacking the foundation of your opinions, I shall leave the superstructure to find a center of gravity on which it may lean till some strong blast puffs it into the air; or your teeming fancy, which the ripening judgment of sixty years has not tamed, produces another Chinese erection,[3] to stare, at every turn, the plain country people in the face, who bluntly call such an airy edifice—a folly.

The birthright of man, to give you, Sir, a short definition of this disputed right, is such a degree of liberty, civil and religious, as is compatible with the liberty of every other individual with whom he is

united in a social compact, and the continued existence of that compact.

Liberty, in this simple, unsophisticated sense, I acknowledge, is a fair idea that has never yet received a form in the various governments that have been established on our beauteous globe; the demon of property has ever been at hand to encroach on the sacred rights of men, and to fence round with awful pomp laws that war with justice. But that it results from the eternal foundation of right—from immutable truth—who will presume to deny, that pretends to rationality—if reason has led them to build their morality[4] and religion on an everlasting foundation—the attributes of God?

I glow with indignation when I attempt, methodically, to unravel your slavish paradoxes, in which I can find no fixed first principle to refute; I shall not, therefore, condescend to shew where you affirm in one page what you deny in another; and how frequently you draw conclusions without any previous premises:—it would be something like cowardice to fight with a man who had never exercised the weapons with which his opponent chose to combat, and irksome to refute sentence after sentence in which the latent spirit of tyranny appeared.

I perceive, from the whole tenor of your Reflections, that you have a mortal antipathy to reason; but, if there is any thing like argument, or first principles, in your wild declamation, behold the result:—that we are to reverence the rust of antiquity, and term the unnatural customs, which ignorance and mistaken self-interest have consolidated, the sage fruit of experience: nay, that, if we do discover some errors, our *feelings* should lead us to excuse, with blind love, or unprincipled filial affection, the venerable vestiges of ancient days. These are gothic[5] notions of beauty—the ivy is beautiful, but, when it insidiously destroys the trunk from which it receives support, who would not grub it up?

Further, that we ought cautiously to remain for ever in frozen inactivity, because a thaw, whilst it nourishes the soil, spreads a temporary inundation; and the fear of risking any personal present

convenience should prevent a struggle for the most estimable advantages. This is sound reasoning, I grant, in the mouth of the rich and short-sighted.

Yes, Sir, the strong gained riches, the few have sacrificed the many to their vices; and, to be able to pamper their appetites, and supinely exist without exercising mind or body, they have ceased to be men.—Lost to the relish of true pleasure, such beings would, indeed, deserve compassion, if injustice was not softened by the tyrant's plea—necessity; if prescription was not raised as an immortal boundary against innovation. Their minds, in fact, instead of being cultivated, have been so warped by education, that it may require some ages to bring them back to nature, and enable them to see their true interest, with that degree of conviction which is necessary to influence their conduct.

The civilization which has taken place in Europe has been very partial, and, like every custom that an arbitrary point of honour has established, refines the manners at the expence of morals, by making sentiments and opinions current in conversation that have no root in the heart, or weight in the cooler resolves of the mind.—And what has stopped its progress?—hereditary property—hereditary honors. The man has been changed into an artificial monster by the station in which he was born, and the consequent homage that benumbed his faculties like the torpedo's[6] touch;—or a being, with a capacity of reasoning, would not have failed to discover, as his faculties unfolded, that true happiness arose from the friendship and intimacy which can only be enjoyed by equals; and that charity is not a condescending distribution of alms, but an intercourse of good offices and mutual benefits, founded on respect for justice and humanity.

* * *

It is necessary emphatically to repeat, that there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in

receiving these, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights.

A father may dissipate his property without his child having any right to complain;—but should he attempt to sell him for a slave, or fetter him with laws contrary to reason; nature, in enabling him to discern good from evil, teaches him to break the ignoble chain, and not to believe that bread becomes flesh, and wine blood, because his parents swallowed the Eucharist with this blind persuasion.

There is no end to this implicit submission to authority—some where it must stop, or we return to barbarism; and the capacity of improvement, which gives us a natural sceptre on earth, is a cheat, an ignis-fatuus,[7] that leads us from inviting meadows into bogs and dung-hills. And if it be allowed that many of the precautions, with which any alteration was made, in our government, were prudent, it rather proves its weakness than substantiates an opinion of the soundness of the stamina, or the excellence of the constitution.

But on what principle Mr. Burke could defend American independence, I cannot conceive; for the whole tenor of his plausible arguments settles slavery on an everlasting foundation. Allowing his servile reverence for antiquity, and prudent attention to self-interest, to have the force which he insists on, the slave trade ought never to be abolished; and, because our ignorant forefathers, not understanding the native dignity of man, sanctioned a traffic that outrages every suggestion of reason and religion, we are to submit to the inhuman custom, and term an atrocious insult to humanity the love of our country, and a proper submission to the laws by which our property is secured.—Security of property! Behold, in a few words, the definition of English liberty. And to this selfish principle every nobler one is sacrificed.—The Briton takes place of the man, and the image of God is lost in the citizen! But it is not that enthusiastic flame which in Greece and Rome consumed every sordid passion: no, self is the focus; and the disparting rays rise not above our foggy atmosphere. But softly—it is only the property of the rich that is secure; the man who lives by the sweat of his brow has no asylum from oppression; the strong man may enter—when

was the castle of the poor sacred? and the base informer steal him from the family that depend on his industry for subsistence.

* * *

But, among all your plausible arguments, and witty illustrations, your contempt for the poor always appears conspicuous, and rouses my indignation. The following paragraph in particular struck me, as breathing the most tyrannic spirit, and displaying the most factitious feelings. "Good order is the foundation of all good things. To be enabled to acquire, the people, without being servile, must be tractable and obedient. The magistrate must have his reverence, the laws their authority. The body of the people must not find the principles of natural subordination by art rooted out of their minds. They *must* respect that property of which they *cannot* partake. *They must labor to obtain what by labor can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavor, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice.* Of this consolation, whoever deprives them, deadens their industry, and strikes at the root of all acquisition as of all conservation. He that does this, is the cruel oppressor, the merciless enemy, of the poor and wretched; at the same time that, by his wicked speculations, he exposes the fruits of successful industry, and the accumulations of fortune, (ah! there's the rub)[8] to the plunder of the negligent, the disappointed, and the unprosperous."

This is contemptible hard-hearted sophistry, in the specious form of humility, and submission to the will of Heaven.—It is, Sir, *possible* to render the poor happier in this world, without depriving them of the consolation which you gratuitously grant them in the next. They have a right to more comfort than they at present enjoy; and more comfort might be afforded them, without encroaching on the pleasures of the rich: not now waiting to enquire whether the rich have any right to exclusive pleasures. What do I say?—encroaching! No; if an intercourse were established between them, it would

impart the only true pleasure that can be snatched in this land of shadows, this hard school of moral discipline.

I know, indeed, that there is often something disgusting in the distresses of poverty, at which the imagination revolts, and starts back to exercise itself in the more attractive Arcadia of fiction. The rich man builds a house, art and taste give it the highest finish. His gardens are planted, and the trees grow to recreate the fancy of the planter, though the temperature of the climate may rather force him to avoid the dangerous damps they exhale, than seek the umbrageous retreat. Every thing on the estate is cherished but man;—yet, to contribute to the happiness of man, is the most sublime of all enjoyments. But if, instead of sweeping pleasure-grounds, obelisks, temples, and elegant cottages,[9] as *objects* for the eye, the heart was allowed to beat true to nature, decent farms would be scattered over the estate, and plenty smile around. Instead of the poor being subject to the griping hand of an avaricious steward, they would be watched over with fatherly solicitude, by the man whose duty and pleasure it was to guard their happiness, and shield from rapacity the beings who, by the sweat of their brow, exalted him above his fellows.

I could almost imagine I see a man thus gathering blessings as he mounted the hill of life; or consolation, in those days when the spirits lag, and the tired heart finds no pleasure in them. It is not by squandering alms that the poor can be relieved, or improved—it is the fostering sun of kindness, the wisdom that finds them employments calculated to give them habits of virtue, that meliorates their condition. Love is only the fruit of love; condescension and authority may produce the obedience you applaud; but he has lost his heart of flesh who can see a fellow-creature humbled before him, and trembling at the frown of a being, whose heart is supplied by the same vital current, and whose pride ought to be checked by a consciousness of having the same infirmities.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Conceal the truth with elaborate sentence structures.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Shakespeare's *King Lear* 4.1.57.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Chinese pagodas were popular ornaments in late 18th-century British landscaping.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: As religion is included in my idea of morality, I should not have mentioned the term without specifying all the simple ideas which that comprehensive word generalizes; but as the charge of atheism has been very freely banded about in the letter I am considering, I wish to guard against misrepresentation [*Wollstonecraft's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Barbarous.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Electric ray, a fish with a whiplike tail that gives an electric shock to those it touches.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The phosphorescent light (also known as will o' the wisp) that is said to appear in marshy landscapes and lead travelers off the path of safety.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 3.1.67. The "rub" is the flaw in the reasoning.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A reference to the vogue for picturesque landscaping on aristocratic estates.Return to reference 9

THOMAS PAINE

Although he was born and lived his first thirty-seven years in England, Thomas Paine (1737–1809) enters the debate as a visitor from America, where by writing *Common Sense* (1776) and the sixteen *Crisis* pamphlets, beginning "These are the times that try men's souls" (1776–83), he had served as the most effective propagandist for American independence. His *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*, published in March 1791 with a dedication "To George Washington, President of the United States of America," has the full weight of the American revolutionary experience behind it and is the strongest statement against hereditary monarchy of any of the works replying to Burke in this "war of pamphlets." Paine published a second part of *Rights of Man* the following year and, when charged with treason by the British, fled to France, where he was made a citizen and a member of the Convention. With the fall of the more moderate Girondists, he was imprisoned by the Jacobins for a year in 1793–94, during which he wrote his last famous work, *The Age of Reason* (1794).

From Rights of Man

Among the incivilities by which nations or individuals provoke and irritate each other, Mr. Burke's pamphlet on the French Revolution is an extraordinary instance. Neither the people of France, nor the National Assembly, were troubling themselves about the affairs of England, or the English Parliament; and why Mr. Burke should commence an unprovoked attack upon them, both in parliament and in public, is a conduct that cannot be pardoned on the score of manners, nor justified on that of policy.

There is scarcely an epithet of abuse to be found in the English language with which Mr. Burke has not loaded the French nation and the National Assembly. Every thing which rancor, prejudice, ignorance or knowledge could suggest, are poured forth in the copious fury of near four hundred pages. In the strain and on the plan Mr. Burke was writing, he might have written on to as many thousands. When the tongue or the pen is let loose in a frenzy of passion, it is the man, and not the subject, that becomes exhausted.

Hitherto Mr. Burke has been mistaken and disappointed in the opinions he had formed of the affairs of France; but such is the ingenuity of his hope, or the malignancy of his despair, that it furnishes him with new pretences to go on. There was a time when it was impossible to make Mr. Burke believe there would be any revolution in France. His opinion then was, that the French had neither spirit to undertake it, nor fortitude to support it; and now that there is one, he seeks an escape by condemning it.

* * *

There never did, there never will, and there never can exist a parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controuling posterity to the "*end of time,*" or of commanding for

ever how the world shall be governed, or who shall govern it; and therefore, all such clauses, acts or declarations, by which the makers of them attempt to do what they have neither the right nor the power to do, nor the power to execute, are in themselves null and void.—Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, *in all cases*, as the ages and generations which preceded it. The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies. Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow. The parliament or the people of 1688, or of any other period, had no more right to dispose of the people of the present day, or to bind or to controul them *in any shape whatever*, than the parliament or the people of the present day have to dispose of, bind or controul those who are to live a hundred or a thousand years hence. Every generation is, and must be, competent to all the purposes which its occasions require. It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated. When man ceases to be, his power and his wants cease with him; and having no longer any participation in the concerns of this world, he has no longer any authority in directing who shall be its governors, or how its government shall be organized, or how administered.

I am not contending for nor against any form of government, nor for nor against any party here or elsewhere. That which a whole nation chooses to do, it has a right to do. Mr. Burke says, No. Where then *does* the right exist? I am contending for the rights of the *living*, and against their being willed away, and controuled and contracted for, by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead; and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living.

* * *

"We have seen," says Mr. Burke, "the French rebel against a mild and lawful Monarch, with more fury, outrage, and insult, than any people has been known to rise against the most illegal usurper, or the most

sanguinary tyrant."—This is one among a thousand other instances, in which Mr. Burke shews that he is ignorant of the springs and principles of the French revolution.

It was not against Louis the XVIth, but against the despotic principles of the government, that the nation revolted. These principles had not their origin in him, but in the original establishment, many centuries back; and they were become too deeply rooted to be removed, and the augean stable[1] of parasites and plunderers too abominably filthy to be cleansed, by any thing short of a complete and universal revolution. When it becomes necessary to do a thing, the whole heart and soul should go into the measure, or not attempt it. That crisis was then arrived, and there remained no choice but to act with determined vigor, or not to act at all. The King was known to be the friend of the nation, and this circumstance was favorable to the enterprise. Perhaps no man bred up in the style of an absolute King, ever possessed a heart so little disposed to the exercise of that species of power as the present King of France. But the principles of the government itself still remained the same. The Monarch and the monarchy were distinct and separate things; and it was against the established despotism of the latter, and not against the person or principles of the former, that the revolt commenced, and the revolution has been carried.

Mr. Burke does not attend to the distinction between *men* and *principles;* and therefore, he does not see that a revolt may take place against the despotism of the latter, while there lies no charge of despotism against the former.

The natural moderation of Louis the XVIth contributed nothing to alter the hereditary despotism of the monarchy. All the tyrannies of former reigns, acted under that hereditary despotism, were still liable to be revived in the hands of a successor. It was not the respite of a reign that would satisfy France, enlightened as she was then become. A casual discontinuance of the *practice* of despotism, is not a discontinuance of its *principles*; the former depends on the virtue of the individual who is in immediate possession of power; the latter, on the virtue and fortitude of the nation. In the case of

Charles I and James II of England,[2] the revolt was against the personal despotism of the men; whereas in France, it was against the hereditary despotism of the established government. But men who can consign over the rights of posterity for ever on the authority of a moldy parchment, like Mr. Burke, are not qualified to judge of this revolution. It takes in a field too vast for their views to explore, and proceeds with a mightiness of reason they cannot keep pace with.

But there are many points of view in which this revolution may be considered. When despotism has established itself for ages in a country, as in France, it is not in the person of the King only that it resides. It has the appearance of being so in show, and in nominal authority; but it is not so in practice, and in fact. It has its standard every where. Every office and department has its despotism founded upon custom and usage. Every place has its Bastille,[3] and every Bastille its despot. The original hereditary despotism resident in the person of the King, divides and subdivides itself into a thousand shapes and forms, till at last the whole of it is acted by deputation. This was the case in France; and against this species of despotism, proceeding on through an endless labyrinth of office till the source of it is scarcely perceptible, there is no mode of redress. It strengthens itself by assuming the appearance of duty, and tyrannises under the pretence of obeying.

When a man reflects on the condition which France was in from the nature of her government, he will see other causes for revolt than those which immediately connect themselves with the person or character of Louis XVI. There were, if I may so express it, a thousand despotisms to be reformed in France, which had grown up under the hereditary despotism of the monarchy, and became so rooted as to be in a great measure independent of it. Between the monarchy, the parliament, and the church, there was a *rivalship* of despotism; besides the feudal despotism operating locally, and the ministerial despotism operating every where. But Mr. Burke, by considering the King as the only possible object of a revolt, speaks as if France was a village, in which every thing that passed must be

known to its commanding officer, and no oppression could be acted but what he could immediately control. Mr. Burke might have been in the Bastille his whole life, as well under Louis XVI as Louis XIV and neither the one nor the other have known that such a man as Mr. Burke existed. The despotic principles of the government were the same in both reigns, though the dispositions of the men were as remote as tyranny and benevolence.

What Mr. Burke considers as a reproach to the French Revolution (that of bringing it forward under a reign more mild than the preceding ones), is one of its highest honors. The revolutions that have taken place in other European countries, have been excited by personal hatred. The rage was against the man, and he became the victim. But, in the instance of France, we see a revolution generated in the rational contemplation of the rights of man, and distinguishing from the beginning between persons and principles.

But Mr. Burke appears to have no idea of principles, when he is contemplating governments. "Ten years ago," says he, "I could have felicitated France on her having a government, without enquiring what the nature of that government was, or how it was administered." Is this the language of a rational man? Is it the language of a heart feeling as it ought to feel for the rights and happiness of the human race? On this ground, Mr. Burke must compliment every government in the world, while the victims who suffer under them, whether sold into slavery, or tortured out of existence, are wholly forgotten. It is power, and not principles, that Mr. Burke venerates; and under this abominable depravity, he is disqualified to judge between them.—Thus much for his opinion as to the occasions of the French Revolution.

* * *

As to the tragic paintings by which Mr. Burke has outraged his own imagination, and seeks to work upon that of his readers, they are very well calculated for theatrical representation, where facts are manufactured for the sake of show, and accommodated to produce,

through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect. But Mr. Burke should recollect that he is writing History, and not *Plays*; and that his readers will expect truth, and not the spouting rant of high-toned exclamation.

When we see a man dramatically lamenting in a publication intended to be believed, that, "*The age of chivalry is gone!* that *The glory of Europe is extinguished for ever!* that *The unbought grace of life* (if any one knows what it is), *the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize, is gone!"* and all this because the Quixote[4] age of chivalric nonsense is gone, What opinion can we form of his judgment, or what regard can we pay to his facts? In the rhapsody of his imagination, he has discovered a world of windmills, and his sorrows are, that there are no Quixotes to attack them. But if the age of aristocracy, like that of chivalry, should fall, and they had originally some connection, Mr. Burke, the trumpeter of the Order, may continue his parody to the end, and finish with exclaiming, *"Othello's occupation's gone!"*[5]

Notwithstanding Mr. Burke's horrid paintings, when the French Revolution is compared with that of other countries, the astonishment will be, that it is marked with so few sacrifices; but this astonishment will cease when we reflect that *principles*, and not *persons*, were the meditated objects of destruction. The mind of the nation was acted upon by a higher stimulus than what the consideration of persons could inspire, and sought a higher conquest than could be produced by the downfall of an enemy. * * *

1791

Endnotes

- Note 1: King Augeas's stable, housing three thousand oxen and neglected for decades, was a classical symbol of filth and corruption. Hercules cleaned it by changing the course of a river.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Charles I was overthrown in the Civil Wars and executed in 1649. His son, James II, was dethroned in the Glorious

Revolution of 1688.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: France's political prison (where the French Revolution began on July 14, 1789).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Insanely idealistic; from the hero of Cervantes' romance, who famously mistakes windmills for his foes the giants.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shakespeare's *Othello* 3.3.362; Othello's feeling, when he thinks Desdemona has been unfaithful, that his life is over.Return to reference 5

JAMES GILLRAY

In the mid-eighteenth century, the artist William Hogarth's success with the prints he called his "modern moral subjects" had demonstrated that people who trained as engravers could be something more than practitioners of a mechanical art, replicating in reproducible form the paintings of others. They could also claim considerable moral authority as witty social critics. Satiric prints in the tradition Hogarth helped establish were a thriving commercial concern by the time the twenty-one-year old James Gillray (1757–1815) enrolled (along with William Blake) as a student of engraving at the Royal Academy of Art. Especially popular at this time were political caricatures, the form of portraiture, deftly balanced between a realistic visual idiom and a grotesque one, that continues to be used to pillory public figures and their pretensions. Straitlaced foreign visitors frequently marveled over the laughing crowds that would gather around the windows of the London print shops where these were displayed. By the end of the 1780s, Gillray, originally from a working-class family, had become a celebrity thanks to the verve with which he captured the likenesses of politicians—even the Royal Family—in etched portraits that comically heightened the physical particularities that made them their distinct selves. With the outbreak of the French Revolution, these images also proved well suited to registering the yawning gap between the high-minded idealism of the revolutionaries and the sordid realities of their Revolution. The imaginative power that infused Gillray's depictions of French revolutionists and their English sympathizers struck many as the equivalent in visual art to the verbal art that Thomas Paine had complained about in his encounter with "Mr. Burke's horrid paintings." It is not surprising therefore to learn that after 1797 Gillray was secretly on the government payroll, for assisting in the campaign to discredit the radical opposition. Still, with their characteristic mix of fury and glee, his prints make it difficult for

attentive viewers to pin down his political allegiances. Straightforward propaganda they are not. Unbalanced, blending in a combustible compound the high-minded history paintings Gillray studied at the Royal Academy and the crude energies of popular culture, these images can throw us off balance in our turn.

Smelling out a Rat;—or The Atheistical Revolutionist disturbed in his Midnight Calculations. Published December 3, 1790. This print commemorating the attack on Richard Price that Burke made in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was etched only six months after Gillray engraved James Northcote's heroic painting of the liberation of the Bastille prisoners (see color insert). That Gillray had since then changed sides in the Revolution Controversy, falling in line with Burke's equation of the Revolution with destruction not salvation, is suggested by the print's title and many details. The painting on the wall behind Price's desk depicts the beheading of England's King Charles I in the Civil Wars of the 1640s. On the study floor Price's offending sermon lies beside a book with the seditious title *Treatise . . . on the Absurdity of Serving God and Honoring the King.* But how sincere was Gillray's newfound allegiance to Burke, given that an outsize nose and spectacles here make Burke appear a fanatical monster? Price, only lightly caricatured, may be the rat of the title but he has been permitted to retain his humanity.

French Liberty, British Slavery. Published December 21, 1792. In this well-known image, which reappeared as a decoration gracing porcelain mugs and jugs, Gillray pairs scenes of dining and self-mythologizing. The shabby, emaciated Frenchman munches raw scallions, to be followed by a course of snails (creeping out of the pot on the left), while rhapsodizing joyously about how as "free citizens" now he and his compatriots "swim in de Milk & Honey." A world away, an obese Englishman stuffs himself on roast beef while bemoaning his government's tax rates: "they're making Slaves of all, & Starving us to Death!" A figurine of Britannia is behind his right shoulder, a money bag replacing her usual shield.

The Zenith of French Glory;—The Pinnacle of Liberty.
Published February 12, 1793. The news that reached London on January 24, 1793, of the French National Convention's execution of King Louis XVI three days earlier occasioned this ferocious

print. It shows one of Gillray's specimen sans-culottes enjoying a good view of the guillotine and its royal victim, his right foot set jauntily atop the neck of one of the clergymen who have been strung up below him. (*Sans-culotte* was the usual French designation for a member of the lower classes, because working men wore long trousers instead of the knee-breeches favored by male aristocrats and bourgeois. Gillray delighted in translating the term literally and scurrilously, and the posteriors of his Frenchmen are often visible, as here, through their rags.) In the colored version of the print, the execution platform appears to be located in a lake of blood, the effect of the red caps worn by the mob of sans-culottes who surround it. The cathedral that is in flames and the paper reading "Bon soir Monsieur" ("Good night sir") that has been nailed atop the crucifix on the picture's right add apocalyptic notes to the horror of the scene.

The BRITISH-BUTCHER,

Supplying JOHN-BULL with a Substitute for BREAD. Vide. Message to Lord Mayor.

Publ.d July 6.th 1795 - by H. Humphrey N.o 37. New Bond Street

BILLY the BUTCHER'S advice to JOHN BULL.

Since Bread is so dear, (and you say you must Eat,)
For to save the Expence, you must live upon Meat;

The British Butcher, Supplying John Bull with a Substitute for Bread. Published July 6, 1795. John Bull, the embodiment of ordinary Englishness, is a stock character in Gillray's prints. Bull is the closest we approach to innocence in Gillray's villainous world and yet he cuts a shambling figure: Gillray portrays him as hopelessly susceptible to politicians' manipulations. This print was published at the height of a food shortage brought on by a bad harvest and exacerbated by the demands of the war against France. Prime Minister Pitt is pictured as a butcher, arrogantly explaining to his customer John Bull that because he cannot afford bread, he must accept meat: "A Crown, take it or leave it." The posters that are pasted on the side of Pitt's butcher's block and that juxtapose the prices for provisions with the monthly wages for working men suggest Bull's problem: either he can starve or he can obtain higher wages by enlisting as a soldier for the Crown and so risk being butchered himself. In a similar scene involving this duo, from November 1796, Gillray pictures the prime minister holding a money-bag and saying, "More Money John! to defend you from the Bloody, the Cannibal French . . . They're a coming!" The caption tells us that Bull, imaged with his trousers in his hand, is "giving his Breeches to save his Bacon": a hint that Bull may turn sans-culotte himself.

The Haitian Revolution

BRYAN EDWARDS

The wealthy planter Bryan Edwards (1743–1800), author of several works on the history and economy of the West Indies, was widely regarded by contemporaries as a leading authority on the region. Born in England, as an adolescent he was sent to live with an uncle in Jamaica, from whom he inherited a number of estates. In 1791, Edwards heard with alarm of an uprising of enslaved persons in the nearby French colony of St.-Domingue. Traveling to the island with a convoy of British warships bringing aid to the White colonists, Edwards was astonished to find a "dreadful scene of devastation by fire," with the rebels in control of large swaths of the countryside. London papers ran his sensational eyewitness accounts of the rebellion in 1791, and Edwards drew on these in his *Historical Survey of the French Colony of Saint Domingo* (1797), from which we take our excerpt. In rhetoric that echoes Edmund Burke's rendering of the anarchic violence of the French Revolution, Edwards plays up the spectacle of a terrified White minority threatened by a much larger Black population: his narrative focuses on individual European families while casting the insurgents as a menacing "savage horde" incited by the zealotry of British abolitionists and French revolutionary propagandists. As a member of Parliament in the later 1790s, Edwards defended the interests of West Indian planters in debates with William Wilberforce and other abolitionists.

From An Historical Survey of the French Colony in the Island of Saint Domingo

* * * Every writer must rise or sink, in some degree, with the nature of his subject; and on this occasion, the picture which I shall exhibit, has nothing in it to delight the fancy, or to gladden the heart. The prospects before us are all dark and dismal. Here is no room for tracing the beauties of unsullied nature. Those groves of perennial verdure; those magnificent and romantick landscapes, which, in tropical regions, every where invite the eye, and oftentimes detain it, until wonder is exalted to devotion, must now give place to the miseries of war, and the horrors of pestilence; to scenes of anarchy, desolation, and carnage. We have to contemplate the human mind in its utmost deformity; to behold savage man, let loose from restraint, exercising cruelties, of which the bare recital makes the heart recoil, and committing crimes which are hitherto unheard of in history; teeming

> _____ all monstrous, all prodigious things,
> Abominable, unutterable, and worse
> Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd!
>
> MILTON.[1]

All therefore that I can hope and expect is, that my narrative, if it cannot delight, may at least *instruct*. On the sober and considerate, on those who are open to conviction, this assemblage of horrors will have its effect.[2] It will expose the lamentable ignorance of some, and the monstrous wickedness of others, among the reformers of the present day, who, urging onwards schemes of perfection, and projects of amendment in the condition of human life, faster than nature allows, are lighting up a consuming fire between the different classes of mankind, which nothing but human blood can extinguish.[3]

To tell such men that great and beneficial modifications in the established orders of society, can only be effected by a progressive improvement in the situation of the lower ranks of the people, is to preach to the winds. In their hands reformation, with a scythe more destructive than that of time, mows down every thing, and plants nothing. Moderation and caution they consider as rank cowardice. Force and violence are the ready, and, in their opinion, the only proper application for the cure of early and habitual prejudice. Their practice, like that of other mountebanks, is bold and compendious; their motto is, *care or kill*.

These reflections naturally arise from the circumstance which is incontrovertibly proved in the following pages, namely, that the rebellion of the negroes in St. Domingo, and the insurrection of the mulattoes, to whom Ogè was sent as ambassador, had one and the same origin.[4] It was not the strong and irresistible impulse of human nature, groaning under oppression, that excited either of those classes to plunge their daggers into the bosoms of unoffending women and helpless infants. They were driven into those excesses—reluctantly driven—by the vile machinations of men calling themselves philosophers (the proselytes and imitators in France, of the Old Jewry associates in London) whose pretences to philanthropy were as gross a mockery of human reason, as their conduct was an outrage on all the feelings of our nature, and the ties which hold society together![5]

* * *

I am now to enter on the retrospect of scenes, the horrors of which imagination cannot adequately conceive nor pen describe. * * * Such a picture of human misery;—such a scene of woe, presents itself, as no other country, no former age has exhibited. Upwards of one hundred thousand savage people, habituated to the barbarities of Africa, avail themselves of the silence and obscurity of the night, and fall on the peaceful and unsuspicious planters, like so many famished tygers thirsting for human blood.[6] Revolt, conflagration,

and massacre, every where mark their progress; and death, in all its horrors, or cruelties and outrages, compared to which immediate death is mercy, await like the old and the young, the matron, the virgin, and the helpless infant. No condition, age, or sex is spared. All the shocking and shameful enormities, with which the fierce and unbridled passions of savage man have ever conducted a war, prevail uncontrouled. The rage of fire consumes what the sword is unable to destroy, and, in a few dismal hours, the most fertile and beautiful plains in the world are converted into one vast field of carnage;—a wilderness of desolation![7]

* * *

The rebellion first broke out on a plantation called *Noé*, in the parish of *Acul*, nine miles only from the city.[8] Twelve or fourteen of the ring-leaders, about the middle of the night, proceeded to the refinery, or sugar-house, and seized on a young man, the refiner's apprentice, dragged him to the front of the dwelling-house, and there hewed him into pieces with their cutlasses: his screams brought out the overseer, whom they instantly shot. The rebels now found their way to the apartment of the refiner, and massacred him in his bed. A young man lying sick in a neighbouring chamber, was left apparently dead of the wounds inflicted by their cutlasses: he had strength enough however to crawl to the next plantation, and relate the horrors he had witnessed. He reported, that all the whites of the estate which he had left were murdered, except only the surgeon, whom the rebels had compelled to accompany them, on the idea that they might stand in need of his professional assistance. Alarmed by this intelligence, the persons to whom it was communicated immediately sought their safety in flight. What became of the poor youth I have never been informed.

* * *

It was computed that, within two months after the revolt first began, upwards of two thousand white persons, of all conditions and ages, had been massacred;—that one hundred and eighty sugar plantations, and about nine hundred coffee, cotton, and indigo settlements had been destroyed (the buildings thereon being consumed by fire), and one thousand two hundred christian families reduced from opulence, to such a state of misery as to depend altogether for their clothing and sustenance on publick and private charity. Of the insurgents, it was reckoned that upwards of ten thousand had perished by the sword or by famine; and some hundreds by the hands of the executioner;—many of them, I am sorry to say, under the torture of the wheel;—a system of revenge and retaliation, which no enormities of savage life could justify or excuse.[9]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: From the description of the deathly hellscape confronting the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost* 2.625–27.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The "horrors" Edwards has in mind are those suffered by White colonists, rather than the horrors of slavery itself. The "horrors of St. Domingo" would become conventional shorthand for the threat of violence against White colonists, later applied to the massacres of White families under Jean-Jacques Dessalines, as in the 1808 novel *Secret History, or The Horrors of St. Domingo,* by Leonora Sansay.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Playing into anti-Jacobin rhetoric of the 1790s, Edwards lumps partisans of French revolutionary principles together with British abolitionists: in its early reporting on the insurrection in 1791, the *Times* of London even ran an outrageous story of rebel slaves dancing around effigies of the leading abolitionist William Wilberforce.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: In St.-Domingue, the social group Edwards calls "mulattoes" were known as *gens de couleur libres,* or free persons of color, who had both European and African ancestry; many free persons of color were among the colony's leading families, though in the later 18th century they had been subject to intensifying codes of racial distinction. Vincent Ogè the younger (1757–1791), a free person of color and businessman from a wealthy family, was sentenced to public torture and execution for his role in a 1790 rebellion.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: London's Old Jewry Street was the location of the headquarters of Britain's primary abolitionist organization, the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, founded in 1787. The French Société des Amis des Noirs (Society of the Friends of the Blacks), founded in 1788, was in close correspondence with leading British abolitionists; it numbered among its members many notables of French society.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Edwards's dehumanizing language identifies Africa with barbarism and casts enslaved Africans as beastlike. The metaphor reinforces a common line of argument used against calls for emancipation: the idea that freeing slaves would mean unshackling a bloodthirsty mass. Edwards similarly stressed his notion of African "barbarism" in his debates in Parliament with Wilberforce and others.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: St.-Domingue had been known as the "Pearl of the Antilles" for the wealth generated by its fertile plantations—worked, of course, through slave labor.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In August 1791, two large secret meetings of enslaved persons from many plantations preceded a coordinated uprising in the island's northern province, its most productive.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Captured insurgents were tortured and executed, their bodies physically broken on the wheel, a medieval mode of torture still in use in Europe in the 18th century.Return to reference 9

MARCUS RAINSFORD

The Irish-born officer Marcus Rainsford's service with the British army included battling the American colonials in the American War of Independence, fighting the French in the Netherlands, and recruiting Black troops in Jamaica to aid the British occupation of St.-Domingue. In 1798, a ship on which he was traveling, blown off course by a hurricane, landed unexpectedly at Le Cap, St.-Domingue's principal city. The unplanned visit gave Rainsford a firsthand look at the colony under Toussaint's leadership, and a stock of stories on which he could dine out once back in London. During the lead-up to Napoleon's invasion of the island in 1802, Rainsford further capitalized on the material by publishing an account of his adventures that ran through several editions. In 1805, the year after Dessalines was crowned Emperor Jacques I, Rainsford published a full-fledged *Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti,* from which we take our excerpt. Rainsford's perspective contrasts tellingly with that of Edwards. Though he voices no objection to slavery as an institution, Rainsford is supportive of Haitian independence and paints an especially flattering picture of Toussaint, whom he credited with rescuing him from a death sentence as a suspected spy for the British. Rainsford's writing was a key contribution to the growing mythology around the revolutionary hero.

From An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti

It has frequently been the fate of striking events, and particularly those which have altered the condition of mankind, to be denied that consideration by their cotemporaries, which they obtain from the veneration of posterity. In their vortex, attention is distracted by the effects; and distant society recedes from the contemplation of objects that threaten a violation of their system, or wound a favourite prejudice. It is thus that history, with all the advantages of calm discussion, is imperfect; and philosophy enquires in vain for the unrecorded causes of astonishing transactions.

To remedy the evil in this enlightened era, the disquisitions of the observer, and the relations of the traveller occur; but these are perused with the rapidity, with which they are necessarily made, and, although they teach us what regards our own nature, impress no other sense of the period described, than as relates to the fleeting objects of immediate import—furnishing, therefore, little more (if so much may always be expected) than frail documents for the judgment of the future historian.

Such is precisely the case with the subject of the following pages. The rise of the Haytian empire is an event which may powerfully affect the condition of the human race; yet it is viewed as an ordinary succession of triumphs and defeats, interrupted only by the horrors of new and terrible inflictions, the fury of the contending elements, and destructive disease, more tremendous than all.

It will scarcely be credited in another age, that philosophers heard unmoved, of the ascertainment of a brilliant fact, hitherto unknown, or confined to the vague knowledge of those whose experience is not admitted within the pale of historical truth. It will not be believed, that enlightened Europe calmly witnessed its

contrasted brilliancy with actions which, like the opaque view of night, for a sullen hour obscured the dazzling splendour.

It is on ancient record, that negroes were capable of repelling their enemies, with vigour, in their own country; and a writer of modern date[1] has ensured us of the talents and virtues of these people; but it remained for the close of the eighteenth century to realize the scene, from a state of abject degeneracy:—to exhibit, a horde of negroes emancipating themselves from the vilest slavery, and at once filling the relations of society, enacting laws, and commanding armies, in the colonies of Europe.

The same period has witnessed a great and polished nation, not merely returning to the barbarism of the earliest periods, but descending to the characters of assassins and executioners; and, removing the boundaries which civilization had prescribed even to war, rendering it a wild conflict of brutes and a midnight massacre.[2]

To attract a serious attention to circumstances, which constitute an era in the history of human nature and of martial affairs, is the purpose of the present disquisition; which, it is hoped, will tend to furnish an awful, yet practical lesson, as well as to excite and gratify a laudable curiosity.

* * *

To avoid the suspicion in which, notwithstanding the recent treaty, the English yet continued to be viewed, and to prevent the probability of injury to his companions, the writer was induced to assume the character of an American, which was easy to be effected, as the vessel was ultimately bound to that continent.[3] The crew were permitted to land after certain ceremonies, and the first object which excited their attention, was no less than the hero of this novel empire.[4] Toussaint was conversing with two privates of his forces on the batteries, and when he saw the Europeans approaching, immediately walked towards them, and, addressing them in French, inquired the news, from whence they came, and their destination. One served as respondent for the whole, who

spoke in such terms as his character demanded, and the General civilly took his leave.

The number of Americans at this port could not fail to attract particular notice, and every attention seemed to be paid to the accommodation of their commerce, and a striking degree of interest in every occurrence that concerned them. Even the women seemed to renew a fondness long repressed for the whites, in favor of the meanest of the American sailors. The present writer, however, requiring some rest after his recent voyage, hastened, on receiving his directions to the purpose, to the Hotel de la Republique, the principal house, usually resorted to by Americans, an edifice of rather elegant appearance; and on his way, except the preponderancy of the black complexion, perceived but little difference from an European city. On entering the house, however, he immediately perceived that the usual subordinations of society were entirely disregarded, and that he was to witness, for the first time, a real system of equality.

Here were officers and privates, the colonel and the drummer, at the same table indiscriminately; and the writer had been scarcely seated at a repast in the first room to which he was conducted, when a fat negro, to initiate him in the general system, helped himself frequently from his dish, and took occasion to season his character by large draughts of the wine, accompanied with the address of "Mon Americain." The appearance of the house, and its accommodations, were not much inferior to a London coffee-house, and on particular occasions exhibited a superior degree of elegance. Toussaint not unfrequently dined here himself, but he did not sit at the head of the table, from the idea, (as was asserted,) that the hours of refection and relaxation should not be damped by the affected forms of the old regimen, and that no man should assume a real superiority in any other place than the field. He was in the evenings at the billiard-table, where the writer conversed and played with him several times; and he could not help, on some occasions, when a want of etiquette disturbed him for a moment, congratulating himself, that if he experienced not the refinement of

European intercourse, he saw no room for insincerity: and that if delicate converse did not always present itself, he was free from the affectation of sentiment.

In traversing the once superb city of the Cape,[5] though presenting a tolerable appearance from the shore, desolation every where presented itself. On the site where elegant luxury had exhausted its powers to delight the voluptuary, all was magnificent ruin! and to mark the contrast stronger, of the wrecks were composed temporary houses for the American merchants, and petty shops inhabited by the natives. Several spacious streets towards the centre, displayed the walls of superb edifices of five and six stories, with gilded balconies, of which the beautiful structure exhibited the devastation that had occurred, with additional horror. Nor was this all, for in different parts of these ruins the sad remains of the former possessors were visibly mingled with the crumbling walls:

> "There—heedless of the dead,
> The shelter-seeking peasant rears his shed,
> And wonders man could want the larger pile."[6]

Having been informed of a review which was to take place on the plain of the Cape, the writer availed himself of the opportunity, accompanied by some Americans, and a few of his own countrymen who resided there under that denomination. Of the grandeur of the scene he had not the smallest conception. Two thousand officers were in the field, carrying arms, from the general to the ensign, yet with the utmost attention to rank; without the smallest symptom of the insubordination that existed in the leisure of the hotel. Each general officer had a demi-brigade,[7] which went through the manual exercise with a degree of expertness seldom witnessed, and performed equally well several manœuvres applicable to their method of fighting. At a whistle a whole brigade ran three or four hundred yards, then separating, threw themselves flat on the ground, changing to their backs or sides, keeping up a strong fire the whole of the time, till they were recalled; they then formed

again, in an instant, into their wonted regularity. This single manœuvre was executed with such facility and precision, as totally to prevent cavalry from charging them in bushy and hilly countries. Such complete subordination, such promptitude and dexterity, prevailed the whole time, as would have astonished any European soldier who had the smallest idea of their previous situation.[8]

The pleasing sensations inspired by the ability manifested in this review, were checked by the additional monuments of human ferocity which presented themselves on his return to the city; the conflagration of which, and of the surrounding plantations, was still in the memory of several Americans, who described the effect, as awfully grand beyond conception.

In one of the squares in the north-west quarter was placed an edifice that made some amends for the desolation appearing in its vicinity, from the elegance of its execution. It was an ascent to a canopy, or dome, of which the architecture was not perfectly regular, beneath which were two seats, and above them an inscription, that eminently exhibited the tolerance of Toussaint. There were two centinels to guard it, who, being asked if any one might ascend the steps, answered in the affirmative, but with a strict prohibition against touching the cap of liberty, which crowned it.[9] It was a tribute of respect to the memory of Sonthonax and Polverel, the French commissioners, and had been erected by some of their advocates at a time when their largesses obtained for them what they would not otherwise have enjoyed, a transitory popularity.[1] An extract from a speech of one of them formed part of the inscription, in French, and which countenanced the opinion, that the abolition of slavery was a primary object of their mission. It was to the following effect:

My Friends,
We came to make you free.
Frenchmen give Liberty to the World.
You are free.
Guard your Freedom.

Vive la Liberté. Vive la Republique.
Vive Robespierre.[2]

The remainder of the inscription consisted of a selection from the proclamation for abolishing slavery. The prevailing opinion of these men, notwithstanding they had been execrated for their conduct, was favourable to their talents, and to their spirit.

* * *

1805

Endnotes

- Note 1: Rainsford cites the French natural historian and explorer Michel Adanson (1727–1806), who traveled to Senegal in 1749–54.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Rainsford alludes to the bloody excesses of the French Revolution in the 1790s, with its "midnight massacres" and Reign of Terror, but his history also documents the atrocities and crimes of war carried out by French soldiers against Black troops and civilians in St.-Domingue in 1802–03, when the French forces acted with what some have described as a genocidal fervor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Our excerpt picks up Rainsford's narrative with his accidental, shipwrecked arrival in the city of Le Cap, also known as Cap- Français. The treaty to which Rainsford refers was concluded between Toussaint and the British general Thomas Maitland following secret negotiations, with Toussaint exercising his own diplomatic initiative. Signed August 31, 1798, the agreement ended hostilities and established trade relations between Britain and Saint Domingo, effectively recognizing Toussaint as the island's authority.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Rainsford's language is romantic: St.-Domingue was still at this point a French colony; Haiti would name itself an "empire" under Dessalines in 1804.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Though much impacted by the years of fighting, at the close of the 18th century Le Cap, or "the Cape," was a cosmopolitan city famed for its theater and its cultural life, with a number of publishers of books and newspapers.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From Oliver Goldsmith's lament over the ruins of Italy's past glory in *The Traveller, or the Prospect of Society* (1764), lines 160–62.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A demi-brigade was a type of military unit originating with the French revolutionary army; a brigade is a unit of typically several thousand soldiers.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Toussaint was renowned for the military discipline of the soldiers under his command. Rainsford, who had fought alongside and recruited Black troops, here implicitly refutes Bryan Edwards's repeated insistence that Black soldiers inherently lacked discipline and fought "irregularly."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Popularized as a symbol of freedom in the French Revolution, the liberty cap or "bonnet rouge" also has historical connections to the Roman caps worn by manumitted slaves.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Léger Félicité Sonthonax (1763–1813) and Étienne Polverel (1740–1795) served as the French Republic's civil commissioners for St.-Domingue from 1792 to 1794. In 1793, Sonthonax issued a proclamation abolishing slavery in the northern section of Domingue over which he had jurisdiction (enacting the "largesse" to which Rainsford refers).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Long live liberty, long live the Republic, and long live [Maximilien] Robespierre," the French radical who presided over the Reign of Terror, then fell to the guillotine himself in July 1794.Return to reference 2

TOUSSAINT LOUVERTURE

Officially the product of a committee appointed by Toussaint, St.-Domingue's Constitution of 1801 is often referred to as "Toussaint's Constitution," the name it was typically given in the English-language press. When American and British newspapers first published the document, it was often accompanied by a character sketch of Toussaint. Born around 1743, the future general grew up in slavery on a plantation near Le Cap, gaining manumission in the 1770s. The first recorded instance of his use of the name "Louverture"—"the opening"—is in a letter issued the same day the French authorities in the colony abolished slavery, inviting fellow rebels to unite with him in fighting for freedom: "I am Toussaint Louverture. My name is perhaps known to you. I have undertaken to avenge you. I want liberty and equality to reign throughout St.-Domingue." At the time, Toussaint was officially allied with the Spanish king against France, although he would publicly throw his support to the French Republican side in 1794. A brilliant military tactician, statesman, and political thinker, Toussaint also masterfully orchestrated political theater, using speeches, correspondence, print publication, pageantry and ceremony, and his personal charisma strategically to shape his public persona, move audiences, and sideline rivals.

Toussaint's Constitution marks the remarkable revolution by which a society that just a decade earlier had been structured entirely around the institution of race-based slavery now, under the leadership of a Black insurgent, declares slavery and all racial distinction "abolished forever." At the same time, aiming for stability, the Constitution defines the colony as "free and French," and envisions citizenship on a paternalistic model of the family, with Toussaint established as leader for life. The Constitution was issued without Napoleon's prior approval, and provoked an outraged response: when Toussaint saw the size of the fleet Napoleon had sent to re-assert his authority, Toussaint is said to have remarked

that “all of France has come to St.-Domingue.” Seeing no military way out, Toussaint soon negotiated a peaceful surrender, but was taken prisoner and brought to a French dungeon in the Jura Mountains near the Swiss border, where he died from pneumonia in 1803. The text of this English translation of the Constitution is taken from the London *Morning Post*, Oct. 8, 1801.

"Toussaint Louverture, chief of the Black rebels of Saint Domingue." This print was issued in Paris around 1802. Mounted on horseback and attired in elegant military dress, the

revolutionary leader displays an air of valor and decisive command.

From Constitution of the French Colony of St. Domingo

The deputies of the departments of the colony of St. Domingo, assembled in a General Meeting, have decreed and fixed the Constitutional Basis of a System for the French colony of St. Domingo.

I. *Territory.*

Art. 1. St. Domingo, in all its extent, as well as Samana, Turtle Island, Gonava, the Caimites, Heifer Island, La Saone, and the other adjacent islands, form the territory of a single colony, which makes a part of the French empire, but is governed by particular laws.

2. The territory of this colony is divided into departments, circles, or districts, and parishes.

II. *Inhabitants.*

3. Slaves are not permitted in this territory.—Slavery is abolished for ever; all men, born in this country, live and die freemen and Frenchmen.[1]

4. Every man, of whatsoever colour he may be, is eligible to all places.

5. There is no distinction but that of virtue and talents, and no superiority but what the law confers by the exercise of some public function. The law is the same to all, whether it protects or punishes.

III. *Religion.*

6. The Catholic, apostolic, and Roman religion is the only one publicly professed.[2]

* * *

IV. *Morals.*

9. Marriage, by its political and religious institution, tends to purify the public morals. Those who practise the virtues which it enjoins, will be at all times distinguished, and particularly protected by the government.

10. Divorce is not permitted in this colony.

11. The condition and the rights of children, born out of marriage, will be determined by laws made to extend and preserve the social virtues, as well as to encourage and strengthen the union of families.

* * *

VI. *Agriculture and Commerce.*

14. The country being essentially agricultural, cannot suffer the smallest interruption in the labours of its cultivators.

15. Every habitation is a manufacture, which obtains the union of the proprietor and the cultivators; it is the tranquil asylum of an industrious and well-regulated family, of which the proprietor of the soil, or his representative, is necessarily the father.

16. Every cultivator is a member of this family, and is entitled to a share in its revenues. Every change that is made in a habitation by the part of the cultivator tends to its ruin. In order to repress a vice equally fatal to the colony, and opposite to the public good, the Governor has made all the regulations of police which circumstances require, and which are founded on the regulations of the 12th October, 9th year, and on the proclamation of 8th February, published by General Toussaint Louverture.[3]

* * *

VIII. *Government.*

27. The administration of the government of the colonies is confided to the Governor, who corresponds with the government of

the mother country concerning every thing which relates to the interests of the colonies.

28. The Constitution names as Governor Citizen Toussaint Louverture, General in Chief of the Army of St. Domingo; and, in consideration of the important services rendered by this General to the colony in the most critical circumstances of the revolution, and of his having acted to the satisfaction of a grateful people, the reins of government are entrusted to him for the whole of his glorious life.[4]

29. In future every Governor will be appointed for six years; and if his administration in that period be approved, he will be continued in office.

30. In order to secure the tranquillity which the colony owes to the firmness, the activity, the indefatigable zeal and rare virtues of General Toussaint Louverture, and as a pledge of the boundless confidence of the inhabitants of St. Domingo, the Constitution reserves exclusively to this General, in case of the cruel event of his death, the right of chusing his immediate successor. This choice shall be secret: it shall be inclosed in a sealed packet, which shall be opened only by the Central Assembly, in presence of all the Generals of the Army of St. Domingo in actual service, and of the Commander in Chief of the departments. General Toussaint will take all the necessary precautions to enable the Central Assembly to find the place where he shall have deposited this packet.

31. The Citizen who shall be chosen by Citizen Louverture to receive the reins of Government after his death, will, in the presence of the Central Assembly, take the oath to execute the Constitution of St. Domingo, and to remain faithful to the French Government, and he will then be immediately installed. The whole will be done in the presence of the Generals of the Army in actual service, and of the Commanders in Chief of the departments, who shall all, individually and collectively, take the oath of obedience to the new Governor, without quitting the place.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: In the French original, the second sentence of this article reads “Tous les hommes y naissent, vivent et meurent libres et français,” or “Here, all men are born, live and die free and French”—an echo and rewriting of the famous first sentence of the first article of France’s 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man: “All men are born and remain free and equal in rights.”Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Toussaint himself was devoutly Catholic.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Controversially, the Constitution shores up the existing plantation system—imagined on a familial model—by attaching laborers to the land on which they were formerly enslaved. Toussaint viewed the plantation system as crucial to restoring the colony’s agricultural productivity, but others at the time, and some historians since, viewed these provisions strictly binding workers to plantations as reintroducing forced labor and a form of secondary citizenship, though workers received compensation.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Constitution pointedly refers to General Toussaint as “citizen”—in the language of the French Republic—even as it declares him leader for the remainder of his “glorious life” and gives him the power to choose his successor (in an echo of Napoleon’s consolidation of power in his own person in France).Return to reference 4

JEAN-JACQUES DESSALINES, HENRI CHRISTOPHE, AND AUGUSTIN CLERVEAUX

Though for a time after Toussaint's capture some of his former commanders cooperated with the French authorities, relations quickly deteriorated. Many assumed the French would reimpose slavery, as they did in 1802 in the nearby colony of Guadeloupe. The struggle against slavery then became a war of independence, even survival. Heading the newly named Armée Indigène, or Indigenous Army, in this fight was the famed general Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who would become the first leader of the new nation of Haiti. Born around 1758 in either West Africa or St.-Domingue (the historical record is unclear), Dessalines spent most of his life before the 1791 insurrection enslaved on a sugar plantation under a brutal White master; joining the rebels, he rose through the ranks under Toussaint. In this proclamation, dated shortly after the decisive defeat of the French at the Battle of Vertières on November 18, Dessalines and his fellow generals declare the island independent "in the name of the Blacks and men of color" (the term *gens de couleur* designated persons of mixed European and African ancestry). The proclamation's other signatories are Augustin Clerveaux (1763–1804), a free person of color, and Henri Christophe (1767–1820), who from 1811 would be King Henry I of Haiti and, like Dessalines, had been formerly enslaved. As the scholar Deborah Jenson argues, however, the document is consonant in style with proclamations Dessalines issued solely under his own name.

Though no French original has been found, this declaration was widely printed (sometimes under the heading "in translation") in American newspapers in January 1804 and in British newspapers in February, a time lag reflecting its overseas travel. By the time it appeared in the foreign press, Dessalines had already issued the New Year's Day declaration from which Haiti conventionally dates its

independence. Dessalines, who ruled in authoritarian style, would be assassinated in 1806.

Declaration of the Independence of the Blacks of St. Domingo

Proclamation of Dessalines, Christophe, and Clervaux, Chiefs of St. Domingo

In the Name of the Black People, and Men of Color of St. Domingo:[1]

The Independence of St. Domingo is proclaimed. Restored to our primitive[2] dignity, we have asserted our rights; we swear never to yield them to any power on earth; the frightful veil of prejudice is torn to pieces, be it so for ever. Woe be to them who would dare, to put together its bloody tatters.

Oh! Landholders of St. Domingo, wandering in foreign countries, by proclaiming our independence, we do not forbid you, indiscriminately, from returning to your property; far be from us this unjust idea.[3] We are not ignorant that there are some among you that have renounced their former errors, abjured the injustice of their exhorbitant pretensions, and acknowledged the lawfulness of the cause for which we have been spilling our blood these twelve years.[4] Toward those men who do us justice, we will act as brothers; let them rely for ever on our esteem and friendship; let them return among us. The God who protects us, the God of Freemen, bids us to stretch out towards them our conquering arms. But as for those, who, intoxicated with foolish pride, interested slaves of a guilty pretension, are blinded so much as to believe themselves the essence of human nature, and assert that they are destined by heaven to be our masters and our tyrants, let them never come near the land of St. Domingo: if they come hither, they will only meet with chains or deportation; then let them stay where they are; tormented by their well-deserved misery, and the frowns of the just men whom they have too long mocked, let them still continue to move, unpitied and unnoticed by all.[5]

We have sworn not to listen with clemency towards all those who would dare to speak to us of slavery; we will be inexorable, perhaps even cruel, towards all troops who, themselves forgetting the object for which they have not ceased fighting since 1789,[6] should come from Europe to bring among us death and servitude. Nothing is too dear, and all means are lawful, to men from whom it is wished to tear the first of all blessings.[7] Were they to cause rivers and torrents of blood to run; were they, in order to maintain their liberty, to conflagrate seven eighths of the globe, they are innocent before the tribunal of Providence, that never created men, to see them groaning under so harsh and shameful a servitude.[8]

In the various commotions that took place, some inhabitants against whom we had not to complain, have been victims by the cruelty of a few soldiers or cultivators, too much blinded by the remembrance of their past sufferings to be able to distinguish the good and humane land-owners from those that were unfeeling and cruel, we lament with all feeling souls so deplorable an end, and declare to the world, whatever may be said to the contrary by wicked people, that the murders were committed contrary to the wishes of our-hearts. It was impossible, especially in the crisis in which the colony was, to be able to prevent or stop those horrors. They who are in the least acquainted with history, know that a people, when assailed by civil dissentions, though they may be the most polished on earth, give themselves up to every species of excess, and the authority of the chiefs, at that time not firmly supported, in a time of revolution cannot punish all that are guilty, without meeting with new difficulties.[9] But now a-days the Aurora[1] of peace hails us, with the glimpse of a less stormy time; now that the calm of victory has succeeded to the trouble of a dreadful war, every thing in St. Domingo ought to assume a new face, and its government henceforward be that of justice.

Done at the Head-Quarters, Fort Dauphin, November 29, 1803.

(Signed) DESSALINES.
CHRISTOPHE.
CLERVEAUX.

True Copy, B. AIME, Secretary.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The proclamation casts "Black People, and Men of Color" as speaking with one voice, despite the tension and mistrust that had historically existed between those social groups in St.-Domingue. Seeking to affirm Haitian identity while outlawing racial distinction, the nation's 1805 constitution would define all Haitian citizens as "Black," regardless of ancestry or skin color.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the sense of original.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Addressing plantation owners who had fled to America, Europe, and elsewhere in the West Indies.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, since the uprising of 1791.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: This sentence at once turns the language of slavery back on would-be enslavers—so they themselves are described as slaves to their greed and mistaken worldview—and exposes the logic by which one group legitimates its subjugation of others by identifying itself alone as "the essence of human nature."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The French Revolution began in 1789 with calls for universal liberty and equality.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Echoing the revolutionists' phrase "Liberty or Death!" with which Dessalines routinely prefaced official statements.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The language is that of biblical apocalypse: in Revelation 16:1–9, angels pouring out the "wrath of God upon the earth" turn rivers to blood and scorch the world with fire.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The victorious generals appear here to distance themselves from what they characterize as unlawful violence, while pointedly reminding their audience of the excesses witnessed in a European capital such as Paris under the Terror.

In 1804, a series of massacres of Whites of French descent was carried out under the authority of Dessalines (Whites of other national origin were not attacked). In Dessalines' later proclamations, including the "Liberty or Death!" declaration of April 28, 1804, defending the massacres as a necessary step against perceived "internal enemies" of the nation, the defense of rights is more directly combined with the language of avenging wrongs.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Roman goddess of dawn.Return to reference 1

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT
1759–1797

Mary Wollstonecraft's father inherited a substantial fortune and set himself up as a gentleman farmer. He was, however, both extravagant and incompetent, and as one farm after another failed, he became moody and violent and sought solace in heavy bouts of drinking and in tyrannizing his submissive wife. Mary was the second of five children and the oldest daughter. She later told her husband, William Godwin, that she used to throw herself in front of her mother to protect her from her father's blows, and that she sometimes slept outside the door of her parents' bedroom to intervene if her father should break out in a drunken rage. The solace of Mary's early life was her fervent attachment to Fanny Blood, an accomplished girl two years her senior; their friendship, which began when Mary was sixteen, endured and deepened until Fanny's death.

At the age of nineteen, Mary Wollstonecraft left home to take a position as companion to a well-to-do widow living in Bath, where for the first time she had the opportunity to observe—and scorn—the social life of the upper classes at the most fashionable of English resort cities. Having left her job in 1780 to nurse her dying mother through a long and harrowing illness, Wollstonecraft next went to live with the Bloods, where her work helped sustain the struggling family. Her sister Eliza meanwhile had married and, in 1784, after the birth of a daughter, suffered a nervous breakdown. Convinced

that her sister's collapse was the result of her husband's cruelty and abuse, Wollstonecraft persuaded her to abandon husband and child and flee to London. Because a divorce at that time was not commonly available, and a fugitive wife could be forced to return to her husband, the two women hid in secret quarters while awaiting the grant of a legal separation. The infant, automatically given into the father's custody, died before she was a year old.

The penniless women, together with Fanny Blood and Wollstonecraft's other sister, Everina, established a girls' school at Newington Green, near London. The project flourished at first, and at Newington, Wollstonecraft was befriended by the Reverend Richard Price, the radical author who was soon to play a leading role in the British debates about the Revolution in France, and whose kindly guidance helped shape her social and political opinions. Blood, although already ill with tuberculosis, went to Lisbon to marry her longtime suitor, Hugh Skeys, and quickly became pregnant. Wollstonecraft rushed to Lisbon to attend her friend's childbirth, only to have Fanny die in her arms; the infant died soon afterward. The loss threw Wollstonecraft (already subject to bouts of depression) into black despair, which was heightened when she found that the school at Newington was in bad financial straits and had to be closed. Tormented by creditors, she rallied her energies to write her first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1786), a conventional and pious series of essays, and took up a position as governess for several daughters in the Anglo-Irish family of Viscount Kingsborough, a man of great wealth whose seat was in County Cork, Ireland.

The Kingsboroughs were well intentioned and did their best to introduce Wollstonecraft into the busy trivialities of their social life. But the ambiguity of her position as governess, halfway between a servant and a member of the family, was galling. An antagonism developed between Wollstonecraft and Lady Kingsborough, in part because the children feared their mother and adored their governess. Wollstonecraft was dismissed. She returned to London, where Joseph Johnson in 1788 published *Mary, a Fiction*, a novel, as

Wollstonecraft described it, about "the mind of a woman who has thinking powers." Johnson also published her book for children, *Original Stories from Real Life*, a considerable success that was translated into German and quickly achieved a second English edition illustrated with engravings by William Blake. Wollstonecraft was befriended and subsidized by Johnson, the major publisher in England of radical and reformist books, and she took a prominent place among the writers (including notables such as Barbauld and Coleridge) whom he regularly entertained at his rooms in St. Paul's Churchyard. She published translations from French and German (she had taught herself both languages) and began reviewing books for Johnson's newly founded journal, the *Analytical Review.* Though still in straitened circumstances, she helped support her two sisters and her improvident and importunate father and was also generous with funds—and with advice—to one of her brothers and to the indigent family of Fanny Blood.

In 1790 Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* —an eloquent and powerful attack on the French Revolution and its English sympathizers—quickly evoked Wollstonecraft's response, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men.* This was a formidable piece of argumentation; its most potent passages represent the disabilities and sufferings of the English lower classes and impugn the motives and sentiments of Burke. This work, the first book-length reply to Burke, scored an immediate success, although it was soon submerged in the flood of other replies, most notably Thomas Paine's classic *Rights of Man* (1791–92). In 1792 Wollstonecraft focused her defense of the underprivileged on her own sex and wrote, in six weeks of intense effort, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

Earlier writers in both France and England had proposed that, given equivalent educations, women would equal men in achievement. Wollstonecraft was particularly indebted to the historian Catharine Macaulay, whose *Letters on Education* (1790) she had reviewed enthusiastically. At the same time Wollstonecraft was contributing to a long-running discussion of human rights that in

Britain dated back to John Locke's publication of the *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690). Prefaced with a letter addressed to the French politician Bishop Talleyrand, the *Vindication* was in part her rejoinder to the inconsistent actions of France's National Assembly, which in 1791 had formally denied to all Frenchwomen the rights of citizens, even as, ironically enough, it set about celebrating the "universal rights of man."

Her book was also unprecedented in its firsthand observations of the disabilities and indignities suffered by women and in the articulateness and passion with which it exposed and decried this injustice. Wollstonecraft's views were conspicuously radical at a time when women had no political rights; were limited to a few lowly vocations as servants, nurses, governesses, and petty shopkeepers; and were legally nonpersons who lost their property to their husbands at marriage and were incapable of instituting an action in the courts of law. An impressive feature of her book, for all its vehemence, is the clear-sightedness and balance of her analysis of the social conditions of the time, as they affect men as well as women. She perceives that women constitute an oppressed class that cuts across the standard hierarchy of social classes; she shows that women, because they are denied their rights as human beings, have been forced to seek their ends by means of coquetry and cunning, the weapons of the weak; and having demonstrated that it is contrary to reason to expect virtue from those who are not free, she also recognizes that men, no less than women, inherit their roles, and that the wielding of irresponsible power corrupts the oppressor no less than it distorts the oppressed. Hence her surprising and telling comparisons between women on the one hand and men of the nobility and military on the other as classes whose values and behavior have been distorted because their social roles prevent them from becoming fully human. In writing this pioneering work, Wollstonecraft found the cause that she was to pursue the rest of her life.

In December 1792 Wollstonecraft went to Paris to observe the Revolution firsthand. During the years that she lived in France,

1793–94, the early period of moderation was succeeded by extremism and violence. In Paris she joined a group of English, American, and European expatriates sympathetic to the Revolution and fell in love with Gilbert Imlay, a personable American who had briefly been an officer in the American Revolutionary Army and was the author of a widely read book on the Kentucky backwoods, where he had been an explorer. He played the role in Paris of an American frontiersman and child of nature, but was in fact an adventurer who had left America to avoid prosecution for debt and for freewheeling speculations in Kentucky land. He was also unscrupulous in his relations with women. The two became lovers, and their daughter, Fanny Imlay, was born in May 1794. Imlay, who was often absent on mysterious business deals, left mother and daughter for a visit to London that he kept protracting. After the publication of her book *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* (1794), Wollstonecraft followed Imlay to London, where, convinced that he no longer loved her, she tried to commit suicide. The attempt, however, was discovered and prevented by Imlay. To get her out of the way, he persuaded her to take a trip as his business envoy to the Scandinavian countries. Although this was then a region of poor or impassible roads and primitive accommodations, the intrepid Wollstonecraft traveled there for four months, sometimes in the wilds, accompanied by the year-old Fanny and a French nursemaid.

Back in London, Wollstonecraft discovered that Imlay was living with a new mistress, an actress. Finally convinced he was lost to her, she hurled herself from a bridge into the Thames but was rescued by a passerby. Imlay departed with his actress to Paris. Wollstonecraft, resourceful as always, used the letters she had written to Imlay to compose a book, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), full of sharp observations of politics, the lives of Scandinavian women, and the austere northern landscape.

In the same year Wollstonecraft renewed an earlier acquaintance with the philosopher William Godwin. His *Enquiry Concerning*

Political Justice (1793), the most drastic proposal for restructuring the political and social order yet published in England, together with his novel of terror, *Caleb Williams* (1794), which embodies his social views, had made him the most famed radical writer of his time. The austerely rationalistic philosopher, then forty years of age, had an unexpected capacity for deep feeling, and what began as a flirtation soon ripened into affection and (as their letters show) passionate physical love. She wrote Godwin, with what was for the time remarkable outspokenness on the part of a woman: "Now by these presents [that is, this document] let me assure you that you are not only in my heart, but my veins, this morning. I turn from you half abashed—yet you haunt me, and some look, word or touch thrills through my whole frame. . . . When the heart and reason accord there is no flying from voluptuous sensations, do what a woman can." Wollstonecraft was soon pregnant once more, and Godwin (who had in his *Enquiry* attacked the institution of marriage as a base form of property rights in human beings) braved the ridicule of his radical friends and conservative enemies by marrying her.

They set up a household together, but Godwin also kept separate quarters in which to do his writing, and they further salvaged their principles by agreeing to live separate social lives. Wollstonecraft was able to enjoy this arrangement for only six months. She began writing *The Wrongs of Woman*, a novel about marriage and motherhood that uses its Gothic setting inside a dilapidated madhouse to explore how women are confined both by unjust marriage laws and by their own romantic illusions. On August 30, 1797, she gave birth to a daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, later the author of *Frankenstein* and wife of Percy Shelley. The delivery was not difficult, but resulted in massive blood poisoning. After ten days of agony, she lapsed into a coma and died. Her last whispered words were about her husband: "He is the kindest, best man in the world." Godwin wrote to a friend, announcing her death: "I firmly believe that there does not exist her equal in the world. I know from experience we were formed to make each other happy."

To distract himself in his grief, Godwin published in 1798 *Memoirs of the Author of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,"* in which he told, with the total candor on which he prided himself, of her affairs with Imlay and himself, her attempts at suicide, and her freethinking in matters of religion and sexual relationships. In four companion volumes of her *Posthumous Works*, he indiscreetly included her love letters to Imlay along with the unfinished *Wrongs of Woman.* The reaction to these revelations was immediate and ugly. The conservative satirist the Reverend Richard Polwhele, for instance, remarked gloatingly on how it appeared to him providential that as a proponent of sexual equality Wollstonecraft should have died in childbirth—"a death that strongly marked the distinction of the sexes, by pointing out the destiny of women, and the diseases to which they are liable." The unintended consequence of Godwin's candor was that Wollstonecraft came to be saddled with a scandalous reputation so enduring that through the Victorian era advocates of the equality of women circumspectly avoided explicit reference to her *Vindication.* Even John Stuart Mill, in his *Subjection of Women* (1869), neglected to mention the work. It was only in the twentieth century, and especially in the later decades, that Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* gained recognition as a classic in the literature not only of women's rights but of social analysis as well.

From A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

From *The Dedication to M. Talleyrand-Périgord*[1]

* * *

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue; for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice. And how can woman be expected to co-operate unless she know why she ought to be virtuous? unless freedom strengthen her reason till she comprehend her duty, and see in what manner it is connected with her real good? If children are to be educated to understand the true principle of patriotism, their mother must be a patriot; and the love of mankind, from which an orderly train of virtues spring, can only be produced by considering the moral and civil interest of mankind; but the education and situation of woman, at present, shuts her out from such investigations.

In this work I have produced many arguments, which to me were conclusive, to prove that the prevailing notion respecting a sexual[2] character was subversive of morality, and I have contended, that to render the human body and mind more perfect, chastity must more universally prevail, and that chastity will never be respected in the male world till the person of a woman is not, as it were, idolized, when little virtue or sense embellish it with the grand traces of mental beauty, or the interesting simplicity of affection.

Consider, Sir, dispassionately, these observations—for a glimpse of this truth seemed to open before you when you observed, 'that to see one half of the human race excluded by the other from all participation of government, was a political phænomenon that, according to abstract principles, it was impossible to explain.' If so, on what does your constitution rest?[3] If the abstract rights of man will bear discussion and explanation, those of woman, by a parity of reasoning, will not shrink from the same test: though a different

opinion prevails in this country, built on the very arguments which you use to justify the oppression of woman—prescription.[4]

Consider, I address you as a legislator, whether, when men contend for their freedom, and to be allowed to judge for themselves respecting their own happiness, it be not inconsistent and unjust to subjugate women, even though you firmly believe that you are acting in the manner best calculated to promote their happiness? Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him the gift of reason?

In this style, argue tyrants of every denomination, from the weak king to the weak father of a family; they are all eager to crush reason; yet always assert that they usurp its throne only to be useful. Do you not act a similar part, when you *force* all women, by denying them civil and political rights, to remain immured in their families groping in the dark? for surely, Sir, you will not assert, that a duty can be binding which is not founded on reason? If indeed this be their destination, arguments may be drawn from reason: and thus augustly supported, the more understanding women acquire, the more they will be attached to their duty—comprehending it—for unless they comprehend it, unless their morals be fixed on the same immutable principle as those of man, no authority can make them discharge it in a virtuous manner. They may be convenient slaves, but slavery will have its constant effect, degrading the master and the abject dependent.

But, if women are to be excluded, without having a voice, from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason—else this flaw in your NEW CONSTITUTION will ever shew that man must, in some shape, act like a tyrant, and tyranny, in whatever part of society it rears its brazen front, will ever undermine morality.

I have repeatedly asserted, and produced what appeared to me irrefragable arguments drawn from matters of fact, to prove my assertion, that women cannot, by force, be confined to domestic concerns; for they will, however ignorant, intermeddle with more weighty affairs, neglecting private duties only to disturb, by cunning

tricks, the orderly plans of reason which rise above their comprehension.

Besides, whilst they are only made to acquire personal accomplishments, men will seek for pleasure in variety, and faithless husbands will make faithless wives; such ignorant beings, indeed, will be very excusable when, not taught to respect public good, nor allowed any civil rights, they attempt to do themselves justice by retaliation.

The box of mischief thus opened in society,[5] what is to preserve private virtue, the only security of public freedom and universal happiness?

Let there be then no coercion *established* in society, and the common law of gravity prevailing, the sexes will fall into their proper places. And, now that more equitable laws are forming your citizens, marriage may become more sacred: your young men may choose wives from motives of affection, and your maidens allow love to root out vanity.

The father of a family will not then weaken his constitution and debase his sentiments, by visiting the harlot, nor forget, in obeying the call of appetite, the purpose for which it was implanted. And, the mother will not neglect her children to practise the arts of coquetry, when sense and modesty secure her the friendship of her husband.

But, till men become attentive to the duty of a father, it is vain to expect women to spend that time in their nursery which they, 'wise in their generation,'[6] choose to spend at their glass; for this exertion of cunning is only an instinct of nature to enable them to obtain indirectly a little of that power of which they are unjustly denied a share: for, if women are not permitted to enjoy legitimate rights, they will render both men and themselves vicious, to obtain illicit privileges.

I wish, Sir, to set some investigations of this kind afloat in France; and should they lead to a confirmation of my principles, when your constitution is revised the Rights of Woman may be respected, if it be fully proved that reason calls for this respect, and loudly demands Justice for one half of the human race.

I am, SIR,
Your's respectfully,
M. W.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: In 1791 Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord submitted a report on public education to France's new National Assembly.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Here as elsewhere in the *Vindication*, the word *sexual* is equivalent to the modern term *gender-specific*.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In France's Constitution of 1791 only males over twenty-five were citizens. Women were not to get the vote until 1944.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* of 1755 (the later 18th century's authoritative guide to usage) defines *prescription* as "rules produced and authorised by long custom: custom continued till it has the force of law." In her first *Vindication* Wollstonecraft noted how the doctrine of prescription motivated Edmund Burke's antagonism toward the dismantling of inherited privileges in revolutionary France and, accordingly, identified his *Reflections on the Revolution* as championing the rich, who invoke "prescription," she asserted, as "an immortal boundary against innovation."
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Refers to the story of Pandora, who in Greek mythology was the first woman, and to her opening of the box that Zeus, king of the gods, had sent down to earth with her. That action released evil into the world.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Luke 16:8: "For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."Return to reference

6

Introduction

After considering the historic page, and viewing the living world with anxious solicitude, the most melancholy emotions of sorrowful indignation have depressed my spirits, and I have sighed when obliged to confess, that either nature has made a great difference between man and man, or that the civilization which has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial. I have turned over various books written on the subject of education, and patiently observed the conduct of parents and the management of schools; but what has been the result?—a profound conviction that the neglected education of my fellow-creatures is the grand source of the misery I deplore; and that women, in particular, are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes, originating from one hasty conclusion. The conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity.—One cause of this barren blooming[7] I attribute to a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men who, considering females rather as women than human creatures, have been more anxious to make them alluring mistresses than affectionate wives and rational mothers; and the understanding of the sex has been so bubbled[8] by this specious homage, that the civilized women of the present century, with a few exceptions, are only anxious to inspire love, when they ought to cherish a nobler ambition, and by their abilities and virtues exact respect.

In a treatise, therefore, on female rights and manners, the works which have been particularly written for their improvement must not be overlooked; especially when it is asserted, in direct terms, that the minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement; that the books of instruction, written by men of genius, have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions; and that, in the true style of

Mahometanism, they are treated as a kind of subordinate beings,[9] and not as a part of the human species, when improveable reason is allowed to be the dignified distinction which raises men above the brute creation, and puts a natural sceptre in a feeble hand.

Yet, because I am a woman, I would not lead my readers to suppose that I mean violently to agitate the contested question respecting the equality or inferiority of the sex; but as the subject lies in my way, and I cannot pass it over without subjecting the main tendency of my reasoning to misconstruction, I shall stop a moment to deliver, in a few words, my opinion.—In the government of the physical world it is observable that the female in point of strength is, in general, inferior to the male. This is the law of nature; and it does not appear to be suspended or abrogated in favour of woman. A degree of physical superiority cannot, therefore, be denied—and it is a noble prerogative! But not content with this natural pre-eminence, men endeavour to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment; and women, intoxicated by the adoration which men, under the influence of their senses, pay them, do not seek to obtain a durable interest in their hearts, or to become the friends of the fellow creatures who find amusement in their society.

I am aware of an obvious inference:—from every quarter have I heard exclamations against masculine women; but where are they to be found? If by this appellation men mean to inveigh against their ardour in hunting, shooting, and gaming, I shall most cordially join in the cry; but if it be against the imitation of manly virtues, or, more properly speaking, the attainment of those talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character, and which raise females in the scale of animal being, when they are comprehensively termed mankind;—all those who view them with a philosophic eye must, I should think, wish with me, that they may every day grow more and more masculine.

This discussion naturally divides the subject. I shall first consider women in the grand light of human creatures, who, in common with men, are placed on this earth to unfold their faculties; and

afterwards I shall more particularly point out their peculiar designation.

I wish also to steer clear of an error which many respectable writers have fallen into; for the instruction which has hitherto been addressed to women, has rather been applicable to *ladies*, if the little indirect advice, that is scattered through Sandford and Merton,[1] be excepted; but, addressing my sex in a firmer tone, I pay particular attention to those in the middle class, because they appear to be in the most natural state.[2] Perhaps the seeds of false-refinement, immorality, and vanity, have ever been shed by the great. Weak, artificial beings, raised above the common wants and affections of their race, in a premature unnatural manner, undermine the very foundation of virtue, and spread corruption through the whole mass of society! As a class of mankind they have the strongest claim to pity; the education of the rich tends to render them vain and helpless, and the unfolding mind is not strengthened by the practice of those duties which dignify the human character.—They only live to amuse themselves, and by the same law which in nature invariably produces certain effects, they soon only afford barren amusement.

But as I purpose taking a separate view of the different ranks of society, and of the moral character of women, in each, this hint is, for the present, sufficient; and I have only alluded to the subject, because it appears to me to be the very essence of an introduction to give a cursory account of the contents of the work it introduces.

My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their *fascinating* graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone. I earnestly wish to point out in what true dignity and human happiness consists—I wish to persuade women to endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body, and to convince them that the soft phrases, susceptibility of heart, delicacy of sentiment, and refinement of taste, are almost synonymous with epithets of weakness, and that those beings who are only the objects of pity

and that kind of love, which has been termed its sister, will soon become objects of contempt.

Dismissing then those pretty feminine phrases, which the men condescendingly use to soften our slavish dependence, and despising that weak elegancy of mind, exquisite sensibility, and sweet docility of manners, supposed to be the sexual characteristics of the weaker vessel, I wish to shew that elegance is inferior to virtue, that the first object of laudable ambition is to obtain a character as a human being, regardless of the distinction of sex; and that secondary views should be brought to this simple touchstone.

This is a rough sketch of my plan; and should I express my conviction with the energetic emotions that I feel whenever I think of the subject, the dictates of experience and reflection will be felt by some of my readers. Animated by this important object, I shall disdain to cull my phrases or polish my style;—I aim at being useful, and sincerity will render me unaffected; for, wishing rather to persuade by the force of my arguments, than dazzle by the elegance of my language, I shall not waste my time in rounding periods,[3] or in fabricating the turgid bombast of artificial feelings, which, coming from the head, never reach the heart.—I shall be employed about things, not words!—and, anxious to render my sex more respectable members of society, I shall try to avoid that flowery diction which has slided from essays into novels, and from novels into familiar letters and conversation.

These pretty superlatives, dropping glibly from the tongue, vitiate the taste, and create a kind of sickly delicacy that turns away from simple unadorned truth; and a deluge of false sentiments and overstretched feelings, stifling the natural emotions of the heart, render the domestic pleasures insipid, that ought to sweeten the exercise of those severe duties, which educate a rational and immortal being for a nobler field of action.

The education of women has, of late, been more attended to than formerly; yet they are still reckoned a frivolous sex, and ridiculed or pitied by the writers who endeavour by satire or instruction to improve them. It is acknowledged that they spend

many of the first years of their lives in acquiring a smattering of accomplishments;[4] meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty, to the desire of establishing themselves,—the only way women can rise in the world,—by marriage. And this desire making mere animals of them, when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act:—they dress; they paint, and nickname God's creatures.[5] Surely these weak beings are only fit for a seraglio![6]—Can they be expected to govern a family with judgment, or take care of the poor babes whom they bring into the world?

If then it can be fairly deduced from the present conduct of the sex, from the prevalent fondness for pleasure which takes place of ambition and those nobler passions that open and enlarge the soul; that the instruction which women have hitherto received has only tended, with the constitution of civil society, to render them insignificant objects of desire—mere propagators of fools!—if it can be proved that in aiming to accomplish them, without cultivating their understandings, they are taken out of their sphere of duties, and made ridiculous and useless when the short-lived bloom of beauty is over,[7] I presume that *rational* men will excuse me for endeavouring to persuade them to become more masculine and respectable.

Indeed the word masculine is only a bugbear: there is little reason to fear that women will acquire too much courage or fortitude; for their apparent inferiority with respect to bodily strength, must render them, in some degree, dependent on men in the various relations of life; but why should it be increased by prejudices that give a sex to virtue, and confound simple truths with sensual reveries?

Women are, in fact, so much degraded by mistaken notions of female excellence, that I do not mean to add a paradox when I assert, that this artificial weakness produces a propensity to tyrannize, and gives birth to cunning, the natural opponent of strength, which leads them to play off those contemptible infantine airs that undermine esteem even whilst they excite desire. Let men

become more chaste and modest, and if women do not grow wiser in the same ratio, it will be clear that they have weaker understandings. It seems scarcely necessary to say, that I now speak of the sex in general. Many individuals have more sense than their male relatives; and, as nothing preponderates where there is a constant struggle for an equilibrium, without it has naturally more gravity, some women govern their husbands without degrading themselves, because intellect will always govern.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 7: Wollstonecraft compares women to "luxuriants," botanical science's technical term for those plants that late 18th-century gardeners, drawing on the latest techniques, cultivated for their showy blooms and at the expense of their seeds.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Deluded, cheated (archaic).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: It was a common but mistaken opinion among Europeans that in the Quran, the sacred text of Islam, the Prophet Mohammed taught that women have no souls and would not be permitted an afterlife.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *Sandford and Merton*, a children's book by Thomas Day (1786–89), is the story of Tommy Merton, a spoiled wealthy child who is befriended by Harry Sandford, a poor but principled lad.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wollstonecraft considers the middle classes to be more "natural" and also more educable than the aristocracy—"the great"—because they are as yet uncorrupted by the artificiality of leisure-class life.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Formulating balanced sentences.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the lessons in music, dancing, art, and needlework that were central elements in the education provided for genteel young women and that were supposed to

enhance their value on the marriage market.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Shakespeare's Hamlet, charging Ophelia with the faults characteristic of women, says, "you jig, you amble, and you lisp and nickname God's creatures" (*Hamlet* 3.1.143–44).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Harem, the women's quarters in a Muslim household.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A lively writer, I cannot recollect his name, asks what business women turned of forty have to do in the world? [*Wollstonecraft's note*]. Perhaps Wollstonecraft is referring to a passage in Frances Burney's popular novel *Evelina* spoken by the licentious Lord Merton: "I don't know what the devil a woman lives for after thirty: she is only in other folks' way."Return to reference 7

Chapter 2. The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed

To account for, and excuse the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtue, ought to aim at attaining a very different character: or, to speak explicitly, women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue. Yet it should seem, allowing them to have souls, that there is but one way appointed by Providence to lead *mankind* to either virtue or happiness.

If then women are not a swarm of ephemeron triflers, why should they be kept in ignorance under the specious name of innocence? Men complain, and with reason, of the follies and caprices of our sex, when they do not keenly satirize our headstrong passions and groveling vices.—Behold, I should answer, the natural effect of ignorance! The mind will ever be unstable that has only prejudices to rest on, and the current will run with destructive fury when there are no barriers to break its force. Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, *outward* obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, every thing else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives.

Thus Milton describes our first frail mother; though when he tells us that women are formed for softness and sweet attractive grace,[8] I cannot comprehend his meaning, unless, in the true Mahometan strain, he meant to deprive us of souls, and insinuate that we were beings only designed by sweet attractive grace, and docile blind obedience, to gratify the senses of man when he can no longer soar on the wing of contemplation.

How grossly do they insult us who thus advise us only to render ourselves gentle, domestic brutes! For instance, the winning softness so warmly, and frequently, recommended, that governs by obeying.

What childish expressions, and how insignificant is the being—can it be an immortal one? who will condescend to govern by such sinister methods! 'Certainly,' says Lord Bacon, 'man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature!'[9] Men, indeed, appear to me to act in a very unphilosophical manner when they try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood. Rousseau[1] was more consistent when he wished to stop the progress of reason in both sexes, for if men eat of the tree of knowledge, women will come in for a taste; but, from the imperfect cultivation which their understandings now receive, they only attain a knowledge of evil.[2]

Children, I grant, should be innocent; but when the epithet is applied to men, or women, it is but a civil term for weakness. For if it be allowed that women were destined by Providence to acquire human virtues, and by the exercise of their understandings, that stability of character which is the firmest ground to rest our future hopes upon, they must be permitted to turn to the fountain of light, and not forced to shape their course by the twinkling of a mere satellite. Milton, I grant, was of a very different opinion; for he only bends to the indefeasible right of beauty, though it would be difficult to render two passages which I now mean to contrast, consistent. But into similar inconsistencies are great men often led by their senses.

> To whom thus Eve with *perfect beauty* adorn'd.
> My Author and Disposer, what thou bidst
> *Unargued* I obey; So God ordains;
> God is *thy law, thou mine:* to know no more
> Is Woman's *happiest* knowledge and her *praise*.[3]

These are exactly the arguments that I have used to children; but I have added, your reason is now gaining strength, and, till it arrives at some degree of maturity, you must look up to me for advice—then you ought to *think*, and only rely on God.

Yet in the following lines Milton seems to coincide with me; when he makes Adam thus expostulate with his Maker.

> Hast thou not made me here thy substitute,
> And these inferior far beneath me set?
> Among *unequals* what society
> Can sort, what harmony or true delight?
> Which must be mutual, in proportion due
> Giv'n and receiv'd; but in *disparity*
> The one intense, the other still remiss
> Cannot well suit with either, but soon prove
> Tedious alike: of *fellowship* I speak
> Such as I seek, fit to participate
> All rational delight—[4]

In treating, therefore, of the manners of women, let us, disregarding sensual arguments, trace what we should endeavour to make them in order to co-operate, if the expression be not too bold, with the supreme Being.

By individual education, I mean, for the sense of the word is not precisely defined, such an attention to a child as will slowly sharpen the senses, form the temper,[5] regulate the passions as they begin to ferment, and set the understanding to work before the body arrives at maturity; so that the man may only have to proceed, not to begin, the important task of learning to think and reason.

To prevent any misconstruction, I must add, that I do not believe that a private education[6] can work the wonders which some sanguine writers have attributed to it. Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in. In every age there has been a stream of popular opinion that has carried all before it, and given a family character, as it were, to the century. It may then fairly be inferred, that, till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education. It is, however, sufficient for my present purpose to assert, that, whatever effect circumstances have on the abilities, every being may

become virtuous by the exercise of its own reason; for if but one being was created with vicious inclinations, that is positively bad, what can save us from atheism? or if we worship a God, is not that God a devil?

Consequently, the most perfect education, in my opinion, is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. This was Rousseau's opinion respecting men: I extend it to women, and confidently assert that they have been drawn out of their sphere by false refinement, and not by an endeavour to acquire masculine qualities. Still the regal homage which they receive is so intoxicating, that till the manners of the times are changed, and formed on more reasonable principles, it may be impossible to convince them that the illegitimate power, which they obtain, by degrading themselves, is a curse, and that they must return to nature and equality if they wish to secure the placid satisfaction that unsophisticated affections impart. But for this epoch we must wait—wait, perhaps, till kings and nobles, enlightened by reason, and, preferring the real dignity of man to childish state, throw off their gaudy hereditary trappings: and if then women do not resign the arbitrary power of beauty—they will prove that they have *less* mind than man.

I may be accused of arrogance; still I must declare what I firmly believe, that all the writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory,[7] have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and, consequently, more useless members of society. I might have expressed this conviction in a lower key; but I am afraid it would have been the whine of affectation, and not the faithful expression of my feelings, of the clear result, which experience and reflection have led me to draw. When I come to that division of the subject, I shall advert to the passages that I more particularly disapprove of, in the works of the

authors I have just alluded to; but it is first necessary to observe, that my objection extends to the whole purport of those books, which tend, in my opinion, to degrade one half of the human species, and render women pleasing at the expense of every solid virtue.

Though, to reason on Rousseau's ground, if man did attain a degree of perfection of mind when his body arrived at maturity, it might be proper, in order to make a man and his wife *one*, that she should rely entirely on his understanding; and the graceful ivy, clasping the oak that supported it, would form a whole in which strength and beauty would be equally conspicuous. But, alas! husbands, as well as their helpmates, are often only overgrown children; nay, thanks to early debauchery, scarcely men in their outward form—and if the blind lead the blind, one need not come from heaven to tell us the consequence.[8]

Many are the causes that, in the present corrupt state of society, contribute to enslave women by cramping their understandings and sharpening their senses. One, perhaps, that silently does more mischief than all the rest, is their disregard of order.

To do every thing in an orderly manner, is a most important precept, which women, who, generally speaking, receive only a disorderly kind of education, seldom attend to with that degree of exactness that men, who from their infancy are broken into method, observe. This negligent kind of guess-work, for what other epithet can be used to point out the random exertions of a sort of instinctive common sense, never brought to the test of reason? prevents their generalizing matters of fact—so they do to-day, what they did yesterday, merely because they did it yesterday.

This contempt of the understanding in early life has more baneful consequences than is commonly supposed; for the little knowledge which women of strong minds attain, is, from various circumstances, of a more desultory kind than the knowledge of men, and it is acquired more by sheer observations on real life, than from comparing what has been individually observed with the results of experience generalized by speculation. Led by their dependent

situation and domestic employments more into society, what they learn is rather by snatches; and as learning is with them, in general, only a secondary thing, they do not pursue any one branch with that persevering ardour necessary to give vigour to the faculties, and clearness to the judgment. In the present state of society, a little learning is required to support the character of a gentleman; and boys are obliged to submit to a few years of discipline. But in the education of women, the cultivation of the understanding is always subordinate to the acquirement of some corporeal accomplishment; even while enervated by confinement and false notions of modesty, the body is prevented from attaining that grace and beauty which relaxed half-formed limbs never exhibit. Besides, in youth their faculties are not brought forward by emulation; and having no serious scientific study, if they have natural sagacity it is turned too soon on life and manners. They dwell on effects, and modifications, without tracing them back to causes; and complicated rules to adjust behaviour are a weak substitute for simple principles.

As a proof that education gives this appearance of weakness to females, we may instance the example of military men, who are, like them, sent into the world before their minds have been stored with knowledge or fortified by principles. The consequences are similar; soldiers acquire a little superficial knowledge, snatched from the muddy current of conversation, and, from continually mixing with society, they gain, what is termed a knowledge of the world; and this acquaintance with manners and customs has frequently been confounded with a knowledge of the human heart. But can the crude fruit of casual observation, never brought to the test of judgment, formed by comparing speculation and experience, deserve such a distinction? Soldiers, as well as women, practice the minor virtues with punctilious politeness. Where is then the sexual difference, when the education has been the same? All the difference that I can discern, arises from the superior advantage of liberty, which enables the former to see more of life.

It is wandering from my present subject, perhaps, to make a political remark; but, as it was produced naturally by the train of my

reflections, I shall not pass it silently over.

Standing armies can never consist of resolute, robust men; they may be well disciplined machines, but they will seldom contain men under the influence of strong passions, or with very vigorous faculties. And as for any depth of understanding, I will venture to affirm, that it is as rarely to be found in the army as amongst women; and the cause, I maintain, is the same. It may be further observed, that officers are also particularly attentive to their persons, fond of dancing, crowded rooms, adventures, and ridicule.[9] Like the *fair* sex,[1] the business of their lives is gallantry.—They were taught to please, and they only live to please. Yet they do not lose their rank in the distinction of sexes, for they are still reckoned superior to women, though in what their superiority consists, beyond what I have just mentioned, it is difficult to discover.

The great misfortune is this, that they both acquire manners before morals, and a knowledge of life before they have, from reflection, any acquaintance with the grand ideal outline of human nature. The consequence is natural; satisfied with common nature, they become a prey to prejudices, and taking all their opinions on credit, they blindly submit to authority. So that, if they have any sense, it is a kind of instinctive glance, that catches proportions, and decides with respect to manners; but fails when arguments are to be pursued below the surface, or opinions analyzed.

May not the same remark be applied to women? Nay, the argument may be carried still further, for they are both thrown out of a useful station by the unnatural distinctions established in civilized life. Riches and hereditary honours have made cyphers of women to give consequence to the numerical figure;[2] and idleness has produced a mixture of gallantry and despotism into society, which leads the very men who are the slaves of their mistresses to tyrannize over their sisters, wives, and daughters. This is only keeping them in rank and file, it is true. Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience; but, as blind obedience is ever sought for by power, tyrants and sensualists are in the right when they endeavour to keep women in the dark,

because the former only want slaves, and the latter a play-thing. The sensualist, indeed, has been the most dangerous of tyrants, and women have been duped by their lovers, as princes by their ministers, whilst dreaming that they reigned over them.

I now principally allude to Rousseau, for his character of Sophia[3] is, undoubtedly, a captivating one, though it appears to me grossly unnatural; however it is not the superstructure, but the foundation of her character, the principles on which her education was built, that I mean to attack; nay, warmly as I admire the genius of that able writer, whose opinions I shall often have occasion to cite, indignation always takes place of admiration, and the rigid frown of insulted virtue effaces the smile of complacency, which his eloquent periods are wont to raise, when I read his voluptuous reveries. Is this the man, who, in his ardour for virtue, would banish all the soft arts of peace, and almost carry us back to Spartan discipline? Is this the man who delights to paint the useful struggles of passion, the triumphs of good dispositions, and the heroic flights which carry the glowing soul out of itself?—How are these mighty sentiments lowered when he describes the pretty foot and enticing airs of his little favourite! But, for the present, I wave[4] the subject, and, instead of severely reprehending the transient effusions of overweening sensibility, I shall only observe, that whoever has cast a benevolent eye on society, must often have been gratified by the sight of a humble mutual love, not dignified by sentiment, or strengthened by a union in intellectual pursuits. The domestic trifles of the day have afforded matters for cheerful converse, and innocent caresses have softened toils which did not require great exercise of mind or stretch of thought: yet, has not the sight of this moderate felicity excited more tenderness than respect? An emotion similar to what we feel when children are playing, or animals sporting,[5] whilst the contemplation of the noble struggles of suffering merit has raised admiration, and carried our thoughts to that world where sensation will give place to reason.

Women are, therefore, to be considered either as moral beings, or so weak that they must be entirely subjected to the superior

faculties of men.

Let us examine this question. Rousseau declares that a woman should never, for a moment, feel herself independent, that she should be governed by fear to exercise her natural cunning, and made a coquetish slave in order to render her a more alluring object of desire, a *sweeter* companion to man, whenever he chooses to relax himself. He carries the arguments, which he pretends to draw from the indications of nature, still further, and insinuates that truth and fortitude, the corner stones of all human virtue, should be cultivated with certain restrictions, because, with respect to the female character, obedience is the grand lesson which ought to be impressed with unrelenting rigour.[6]

What nonsense! when will a great man arise with sufficient strength of mind to puff away the fumes which pride and sensuality have thus spread over the subject! If women are by nature inferior to men, their virtues must be the same in quality, if not in degree, or virtue is a relative idea; consequently, their conduct should be founded on the same principles, and have the same aim.

Connected with man as daughters, wives, and mothers, their moral character may be estimated by their manner of fulfilling those simple duties; but the end, the grand end of their exertions should be to unfold their own faculties and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue. They may try to render their road pleasant; but ought never to forget, in common with man, that life yields not the felicity which can satisfy an immortal soul. I do not mean to insinuate, that either sex should be so lost in abstract reflections or distant views, as to forget the affections and duties that lie before them, and are, in truth, the means appointed to produce the fruit of life; on the contrary, I would warmly recommend them, even while I assert, that they afford most satisfaction when they are considered in their true, sober light.

Probably the prevailing opinion, that woman was created for man, may have taken its rise from Moses's poetical story;[7] yet, as very few, it is presumed, who have bestowed any serious thought on the subject, ever supposed that Eve was, literally speaking, one of

Adam's ribs, the deduction must be allowed to fall to the ground; or, only be so far admitted as it proves that man, from the remotest antiquity, found it convenient to exert his strength to subjugate his companion, and his invention to shew that she ought to have her neck bent under the yoke, because the whole creation was only created for his convenience or pleasure.

Let it not be concluded that I wish to invert the order of things; I have already granted, that, from the constitution of their bodies, men seem to be designed by Providence to attain a greater degree of virtue. I speak collectively of the whole sex; but I see not the shadow of a reason to conclude that their virtues should differ in respect to their nature. In fact, how can they, if virtue has only one eternal standard? I must therefore, if I reason consequentially, as strenuously maintain that they have the same simple direction, as that there is a God.

It follows then that cunning should not be opposed to wisdom, little cares to great exertions, or insipid softness, varnished over with the name of gentleness, to that fortitude which grand views alone can inspire.

I shall be told that woman would then lose many of her peculiar graces, and the opinion of a well known poet might be quoted to refute my unqualified assertion. For Pope has said, in the name of the whole male sex,

> Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create,
> As when she touch'd the brink of all we hate.[8]

In what light this sally places men and women, I shall leave to the judicious to determine; meanwhile I shall content myself with observing, that I cannot discover why, unless they are mortal, females should always be degraded by being made subservient to love or lust.

To speak disrespectfully of love is, I know, high treason against sentiment and fine feelings; but I wish to speak the simple language of truth, and rather to address the head than the heart. To

endeavour to reason love out of the world, would be to out Quixote Cervantes,[9] and equally offend against common sense; but an endeavour to restrain this tumultuous passion, and to prove that it should not be allowed to dethrone superior powers, or to usurp the sceptre which the understanding should ever coolly wield, appears less wild.

Youth is the season for love in both sexes; but in those days of thoughtless enjoyment provision should be made for the more important years of life, when reflection takes place of sensation. But Rousseau, and most of the male writers who have followed his steps, have warmly inculcated that the whole tendency of female education ought to be directed to one point:—to render them pleasing.

Let me reason with the supporters of this opinion who have any knowledge of human nature, do they imagine that marriage can eradicate the habitude of life? The woman who has only been taught to please will soon find that her charms are oblique sunbeams, and that they cannot have much effect on her husband's heart when they are seen every day, when the summer is passed and gone. Will she then have sufficient native energy to look into herself for comfort, and cultivate her dormant faculties? or, is it not more rational to expect that she will try to please other men; and, in the emotions raised by the expectation of new conquests, endeavour to forget the mortification her love or pride has received? When the husband ceases to be a lover—and the time will inevitably come, her desire of pleasing will then grow languid, or become a spring of bitterness; and love, perhaps, the most evanescent of all passions, gives place to jealousy or vanity.

I now speak of women who are restrained by principle or prejudice; such women, though they would shrink from an intrigue with real abhorrence, yet, nevertheless, wish to be convinced by the homage of gallantry that they are cruelly neglected by their husbands; or, days and weeks are spent in dreaming of the happiness enjoyed by congenial souls till their health is undermined and their spirits broken by discontent. How then can the great art of

pleasing be such a necessary study? it is only useful to a mistress; the chaste wife, and serious mother, should only consider her power to please as the polish of her virtues, and the affection of her husband as one of the comforts that render her task less difficult and her life happier.—But, whether she be loved or neglected, her first wish should be to make herself respectable, and not to rely for all her happiness on a being subject to like infirmities with herself.

The worthy Dr. Gregory fell into a similar error. I respect his heart; but entirely disapprove of his celebrated Legacy to his Daughters.

He advises them to cultivate a fondness for dress, because a fondness for dress, he asserts, is natural to them.[1] I am unable to comprehend what either he or Rousseau mean, when they frequently use this indefinite term.[2] If they told us that in a pre-existent state the soul was fond of dress, and brought this inclination with it into a new body, I should listen to them with a half smile, as I often do when I hear a rant about innate elegance.—But if he only meant to say that the exercise of the faculties will produce this fondness—I deny it.—It is not natural; but arises, like false ambition in men, from a love of power.

Dr. Gregory goes much further; he actually recommends dissimulation, and advises an innocent girl to give the lie to her feelings, and not dance with spirit, when gaiety of heart would make her feel eloquent without making her gestures immodest. In the name of truth and common sense, why should not one woman acknowledge that she can take more exercise than another? or, in other words, that she has a sound constitution; and why, to damp innocent vivacity, is she darkly to be told that men will draw conclusions which she little thinks of?[3]—Let the libertine draw what inference he pleases; but, I hope, that no sensible mother will restrain the natural frankness of youth by instilling such indecent cautions. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;[4] and a wiser than Solomon[5] hath said, that the heart should be made clean, and not trivial ceremonies observed,[6] which it is not very

difficult to fulfill with scrupulous exactness when vice reigns in the heart.

Women ought to endeavour to purify their heart; but can they do so when their uncultivated understandings make them entirely dependent on their senses for employment and amusement, when no noble pursuit sets them above the little vanities of the day, or enables them to curb the wild emotions that agitate a reed over which every passing breeze has power? To gain the affections of a virtuous man is affectation necessary? Nature has given woman a weaker frame than man; but, to ensure her husband's affections, must a wife, who by the exercise of her mind and body whilst she was discharging the duties of a daughter, wife, and mother, has allowed her constitution to retain its natural strength, and her nerves a healthy tone, is she, I say, to condescend to use art and feign a sickly delicacy in order to secure her husband's affection? Weakness may excite tenderness, and gratify the arrogant pride of man; but the lordly caresses of a protector will not gratify a noble mind that pants for, and deserves to be respected. Fondness is a poor substitute for friendship!

In a seraglio, I grant, that all these arts are necessary; the epicure must have his palate tickled, or he will sink into apathy; but have women so little ambition as to be satisfied with such a condition? Can they supinely dream life away in the lap of pleasure, or the languor of weariness, rather than assert their claim to pursue reasonable pleasures and render themselves conspicuous by practising the virtues which dignify mankind? Surely she has not an immortal soul who can loiter life away merely employed to adorn her person, that she may amuse the languid hours, and soften the cares of a fellow-creature who is willing to be enlivened by her smiles and tricks, when the serious business of life is over.

Besides, the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practising various virtues, become the friend, and not the humble dependent of her husband; and if she, by possessing such substantial qualities, merit his regard, she will not find it necessary to conceal her affection, nor to pretend

to an unnatural coldness of constitution to excite her husband's passions. In fact, if we revert to history, we shall find that the women who have distinguished themselves have neither been the most beautiful nor the most gentle of their sex.

Nature, or, to speak with strict propriety, God, has made all things right; but man has sought him out many inventions to mar the work. I now allude to that part of Dr. Gregory's treatise, where he advises a wife never to let her husband know the extent of her sensibility or affection.[7] Voluptuous precaution, and as ineffectual as absurd.—Love, from its very nature, must be transitory. To seek for a secret that would render it constant, would be as wild a search as for the philosopher's stone, or the grand panacea:[8] and the discovery would be equally useless, or rather pernicious to mankind. The most holy band of society is friendship. It has been well said, by a shrewd satirist, "that rare as true love is, true friendship is still rarer."[9]

This is an obvious truth, and the cause not lying deep, will not elude a slight glance of inquiry.

Love, the common passion, in which chance and sensation take place of choice and reason, is, in some degree, felt by the mass of mankind; for it is not necessary to speak, at present, of the emotions that rise above or sink below love. This passion, naturally increased by suspense and difficulties, draws the mind out of its accustomed state, and exalts the affections; but the security of marriage, allowing the fever of love to subside, a healthy temperature is thought insipid, only by those who have not sufficient intellect to substitute the calm tenderness of friendship, the confidence of respect, instead of blind admiration, and the sensual emotions of fondness.

This is, must be, the course of nature.—Friendship or indifference inevitably succeeds love.—And this constitution seems perfectly to harmonize with the system of government which prevails in the moral world. Passions are spurs to action, and open the mind; but they sink into mere appetites, become a personal and momentary gratification, when the object is gained, and the satisfied mind rests

in enjoyment. The man who had some virtue whilst he was struggling for a crown, often becomes a voluptuous tyrant when it graces his brow; and, when the lover is not lost in the husband, the dotard, a prey to childish caprices, and fond jealousies, neglects the serious duties of life, and the caresses which should excite confidence in his children are lavished on the overgrown child, his wife.

In order to fulfil the duties of life, and to be able to pursue with vigour the various employments which form the moral character, a master and mistress of a family ought not to continue to love each other with passion. I mean to say, that they ought not to indulge those emotions which disturb the order of society, and engross the thoughts that should be otherwise employed. The mind that has never been engrossed by one object wants vigour—if it can long be so, it is weak.

A mistaken education, a narrow, uncultivated mind, and many sexual prejudices, tend to make women more constant than men; but, for the present, I shall not touch on this branch of the subject. I will go still further, and advance, without dreaming of a paradox, that an unhappy marriage is often very advantageous to a family, and that the neglected wife is, in general, the best mother.[1] And this would almost always be the consequence if the female mind were more enlarged: for, it seems to be the common dispensation of Providence, that what we gain in present enjoyment should be deducted from the treasure of life, experience; and that when we are gathering the flowers of the day and revelling in pleasure, the solid fruit of toil and wisdom should not be caught at the same time. The way lies before us, we must turn to the right or left; and he who will pass life away in bounding from one pleasure to another, must not complain if he acquire neither wisdom nor respectability of character.

Supposing, for a moment, that the soul is not immortal, and that man was only created for the present scene,—I think we should have reason to complain that love, infantine fondness, ever grew insipid and palled upon the sense. Let us eat, drink, and love, for

tomorrow we die, would be, in fact, the language of reason, the morality of life; and who but a fool would part with a reality for a fleeting shadow? But, if awed by observing the improbable[2] powers of the mind, we disdain to confine our wishes or thoughts to such a comparatively mean field of action, that only appears grand and important, as it is connected with a boundless prospect and sublime hopes, what necessity is there for falsehood in conduct, and why must the sacred majesty of truth be violated to detain a deceitful good that saps the very foundation of virtue? Why must the female mind be tainted by coquetish arts to gratify the sensualist, and prevent love from subsiding into friendship, or compassionate tenderness, when there are not qualities on which friendship can be built? Let the honest heart shew itself, and *reason* teach passion to submit to necessity; or, let the dignified pursuit of virtue and knowledge raise the mind above those emotions which rather imbitter than sweeten the cup of life, when they are not restrained within due bounds.

I do not mean to allude to the romantic passion, which is the concomitant of genius.—Who can clip its wing? But that grand passion not proportioned to the puny enjoyments of life, is only true to the sentiment, and feeds on itself. The passions which have been celebrated for their durability have always been unfortunate. They have acquired strength by absence and constitutional melancholy.—The fancy[3] has hovered round a form of beauty dimly seen—but familiarity might have turned admiration into disgust; or, at least, into indifference, and allowed the imagination leisure to start fresh game. With perfect propriety, according to this view of things, does Rousseau make the mistress of his soul, Eloisa, love St. Preux, when life was fading before her;[4] but this is no proof of the immortality of the passion.

Of the same complexion is Dr. Gregory's advice respecting delicacy of sentiment, which he advises a woman not to acquire, if she have determined to marry.[5] This determination, however, perfectly consistent with his former advice, he calls *indelicate*, and earnestly persuades his daughters to conceal it, though it may

govern their conduct;—as if it were indelicate to have the common appetites of human nature.

Noble morality! and consistent with the cautious prudence of a little soul that cannot extend its views beyond the present minute division of existence. If all the faculties of woman's mind are only to be cultivated as they respect her dependence on man; if, when a husband be obtained, she have arrived at her goal, and meanly proud rests satisfied with such a paltry crown, let her grovel contentedly, scarcely raised by her employments above the animal kingdom; but, if, struggling for the prize of her high calling,[6] she look beyond the present scene, let her cultivate her understanding without stopping to consider what character the husband may have whom she is destined to marry. Let her only determine, without being too anxious about present happiness, to acquire the qualities that ennoble a rational being, and a rough inelegant husband may shock her taste without destroying her peace of mind. She will not model her soul to suit the frailties of her companion, but to bear with them: his character may be a trial, but not an impediment to virtue.

If Dr. Gregory confined his remark to romantic expectations of constant love and congenial feelings, he should have recollected that experience will banish what advice can never make us cease to wish for, when the imagination is kept alive at the expence of reason.

I own it frequently happens that women who have fostered a romantic unnatural delicacy of feeling, waste their[7] lives in *imagining* how happy they should have been with a husband who could love them with a fervid increasing affection every day, and all day. But they might as well pine married as single—and would not be a jot more unhappy with a bad husband than longing for a good one. That a proper education; or, to speak with more precision, a well stored mind, would enable a woman to support a single life with dignity, I grant; but that she should avoid cultivating her taste, lest her husband should occasionally shock it, is quitting a substance for a shadow. To say the truth, I do not know of what use is an improved taste, if the individual be not rendered more independent

of the casualties of life; if new sources of enjoyment, only dependent on the solitary operations of the mind, are not opened. People of taste, married or single, without distinction, will ever be disgusted by various things that touch not less observing minds. On this conclusion the argument must not be allowed to hinge; but in the whole sum of enjoyment is taste to be denominated a blessing?

The question is, whether it procures most pain or pleasure? The answer will decide the propriety of Dr. Gregory's advice, and shew how absurd and tyrannic it is thus to lay down a system of slavery; or to attempt to educate moral beings by any other rules than those deduced from pure reason, which apply to the whole species.

Gentleness of manners, forbearance and long-suffering, are such amiable Godlike qualities, that in sublime poetic strains the Deity has been invested with them; and, perhaps, no representation of his goodness so strongly fastens on the human affections as those that represent him abundant in mercy and willing to pardon.[8] Gentleness, considered in this point of view, bears on its front all the characteristics of grandeur, combined with the winning graces of condescension; but what a different aspect it assumes when it is the submissive demeanour of dependence, the support of weakness that loves, because it wants protection; and is forbearing, because it must silently endure injuries; smiling under the lash at which it dare not snarl. Abject as this picture appears, it is the portrait of an accomplished woman, according to the received opinion of female excellence separated by specious reasoners from human excellence. Or, they[9] kindly restore the rib, and make one moral being of a man and woman; not forgetting to give her all the 'submissive charms.'[1]

How women are to exist in that state where there is to be neither marrying nor giving in marriage, we are not told.[2] For though moralists have agreed that the tenor of life seems to prove that *man* is prepared by various circumstances for a future state, they constantly concur in advising *woman* only to provide for the present. Gentleness, docility, and a spaniel-like affection are, on this ground, consistently recommended as the cardinal virtues of the sex; and, disregarding the arbitrary economy of nature, one writer has

declared that it is masculine for a woman to be melancholy.[3] She was created to be the toy of man, his rattle, and it must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused.

To recommend gentleness, indeed, on a broad basis is strictly philosophical. A frail being should labour to be gentle. But when forbearance confounds right and wrong, it ceases to be a virtue; and, however convenient it may be found in a companion—that companion will ever be considered as an inferior, and only inspire a vapid tenderness, which easily degenerates into contempt. Still, if advice could really make a being gentle, whose natural disposition admitted not of such a fine polish, something towards the advancement of order would be attained; but if, as might quickly be demonstrated, only affectation be produced by this indiscriminate counsel, which throws a stumbling-block in the way of gradual improvement, and true melioration of temper, the sex is not much benefited by sacrificing solid virtues to the attainment of superficial graces, though for a few years they may procure the individuals regal sway.

As a philosopher, I read with indignation the plausible epithets which men use to soften their insults; and, as a moralist, I ask what is meant by such heterogeneous associations, as fair defects, amiable weaknesses, &c.?[4] If there be but one criterion of morals, but one archetype for man, women appear to be suspended by destiny, according to the vulgar tale of Mahomet's coffin;[5] they have neither the unerring instinct of brutes, nor are allowed to fix the eye of reason on a perfect model. They were made to be loved, and must not aim at respect, lest they should be hunted out of society as masculine.

But to view the subject in another point of view. Do passive indolent women make the best wives? Confining our discussion to the present moment of existence, let us see how such weak creatures perform their part? Do the women who, by the attainment of a few superficial accomplishments, have strengthened the prevailing prejudice, merely contribute to the happiness of their husbands? Do they display their charms merely to amuse them? And

have women, who have early imbibed notions of passive obedience, sufficient character to manage a family or educate children? So far from it, that, after surveying the history of woman, I cannot help, agreeing with the severest satirist, considering the sex as the weakest as well as the most oppressed half of the species. What does history disclose but marks of inferiority, and how few women have emancipated themselves from the galling yoke of sovereign man?—So few, that the exceptions remind me of an ingenious conjecture respecting Newton: that he was probably a being of a superior order, accidentally caged in a human body.[6] Following the same train of thinking, I have been led to imagine that the few extraordinary women who have rushed in eccentrical directions out of the orbit prescribed to their sex, were *male* spirits, confined by mistake in female frames. But if it be not philosophical to think of sex when the soul is mentioned, the inferiority must depend on the organs; or the heavenly fire, which is to ferment the clay, is not given in equal portions.

But avoiding, as I have hitherto done, any direct comparison of the two sexes collectively, or frankly acknowledging the inferiority of woman, according to the present appearance of things, I shall only insist that men have increased that inferiority till women are almost sunk below the standard of rational creatures. Let their faculties have room to unfold, and their virtues to gain strength, and then determine where the whole sex must stand in the intellectual scale. Yet let it be remembered, that for a small number of distinguished women I do not ask a place.

It is difficult for us purblind mortals to say to what height human discoveries and improvements may arrive when the gloom of despotism subsides, which makes us stumble at every step; but, when morality shall be settled on a more solid basis, then, without being gifted with a prophetic spirit, I will venture to predict that woman will be either the friend or slave of man. We shall not, as at present, doubt whether she is a moral agent, or the link which unites man with brutes. But, should it then appear, that like the brutes they were principally created for the use of man, he will let

them patiently bite the bridle, and not mock them with empty praise; or, should their rationality be proved, he will not impede their improvement merely to gratify his sensual appetites. He will not, with all the graces of rhetoric, advise them to submit implicitly their understanding to the guidance of man. He will not, when he treats of the education of women, assert that they ought never to have the free use of reason, nor would he recommend cunning and dissimulation to beings who are acquiring, in like manner as himself, the virtues of humanity.

Surely there can be but one rule of right, if morality has an eternal foundation, and whoever sacrifices virtue, strictly so called, to present convenience, or whose *duty* it is to act in such a manner, lives only for the passing day, and cannot be an accountable creature.

The poet then should have dropped his sneer when he says,

> If weak women go astray,
> The stars are more in fault than they.[7]

For that they are bound by the adamantine chain of destiny is most certain, if it be proved that they are never to exercise their own reason, never to be independent, never to rise above opinion, or to feel the dignity of a rational will that only bows to God, and often forgets that the universe contains any being but itself and the model of perfection to which its ardent gaze is turned, to adore attributes that, softened into virtues, may be imitated in kind, though the degree overwhelms the enraptured mind.

If I say, for I would not impress by declamation when Reason offers her sober light, if they be really capable of acting like rational creatures, let them not be treated like slaves; or, like the brutes who are dependent on the reason of man, when they associate with him; but cultivate their minds, give them the salutary, sublime curb of principle, and let them attain conscious dignity by feeling themselves only dependent on God. Teach them, in common with man, to

submit to necessity, instead of giving, to render them more pleasing, a sex to morals.

Further, should experience prove that they cannot attain the same degree of strength of mind, perseverance, and fortitude, let their virtues be the same in kind, though they may vainly struggle for the same degree; and the superiority of man will be equally clear, if not clearer; and truth, as it is a simple principle, which admits of no modification, would be common to both. Nay, the order of society as it is at present regulated would not be inverted, for woman would then only have the rank that reason assigned her, and arts could not be practised to bring the balance even, much less to turn it.

These may be termed Utopian dreams.—Thanks to that Being who impressed them on my soul, and gave me sufficient strength of mind to dare to exert my own reason, till, becoming dependent only on him for the support of my virtue, I view, with indignation, the mistaken notions that enslave my sex.

I love man as my fellow; but his scepter, real, or usurped, extends not to me, unless the reason of an individual demands my homage; and even then the submission is to reason, and not to man. In fact, the conduct of an accountable being must be regulated by the operations of its own reason; or on what foundation rests the throne of God?

It appears to me necessary to dwell on these obvious truths, because females have been insulated, as it were; and, while they have been stripped of the virtues that should clothe humanity, they have been decked with artificial graces that enable them to exercise a short-lived tyranny. Love, in their bosoms, taking place of every nobler passion, their sole ambition is to be fair, to raise emotion instead of inspiring respect; and this ignoble desire, like the servility in absolute monarchies, destroys all strength of character. Liberty is the mother of virtue, and if women be, by their very constitution, slaves, and not allowed to breathe the sharp invigorating air of freedom, they must ever languish like exotics,[8] and be reckoned beautiful flaws in nature.

As to the argument respecting the subjection in which the sex has ever been held, it retorts on man. The many have always been enthralled by the few; and monsters, who scarcely have shewn any discernment of human excellence, have tyrannized over thousands of their fellow-creatures. Why have men of superiour endowments submitted to such degradation? For, is it not universally acknowledged that kings, viewed collectively, have ever been inferior, in abilities and virtue, to the same number of men taken from the common mass of mankind—yet, have they not, and are they not still treated with a degree of reverence that is an insult to reason? China is not the only country where a living man has been made a God.[9] *Men* have submitted to superior strength to enjoy with impunity the pleasure of the moment—*women* have only done the same, and therefore till it is proved that the courtier, who servilely resigns the birthright of a man, is not a moral agent, it cannot be demonstrated that woman is essentially inferior to man because she has always been subjugated.

Brutal force has hitherto governed the world, and that the science of politics is in its infancy, is evident from philosophers scrupling to give the knowledge most useful to man that determinate distinction.

I shall not pursue this argument any further than to establish an obvious inference, that as sound politics diffuse liberty, mankind, including woman, will become more wise and virtuous.

Endnotes

- Note 8: Milton asserts the authority of man over woman on the grounds that "For contemplation he and valor formed, / For softness she and sweet attractive grace; / He for God only, she for God in him" (*Paradise Lost* 4.298ff.).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Francis Bacon, Essay XVI, "Of Atheism."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Throughout his writings Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) argued against the notion that civilization and rationality

brought moral perfection, proposing that virtuous societies were instead the primitive ones that remained closest to nature.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Both Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. In the fallen state both men and women need to work at virtue, but according to Wollstonecraft, women have been denied the education, and thus the means, to attain it.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *Paradise Lost* 4.634–38. The italics are Wollstonecraft's.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: *Paradise Lost* 8.381–92. The italics are Wollstonecraft's.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Temperament, character.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Education at home.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: John Gregory (1724–1773), Scottish physician, philosopher, and professor at the University of Edinburgh. In her edited anthology *The Female Reader* (1789) Wollstonecraft had quoted extensively from Gregory's widely read advice book, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (1774). Here she returns to that work in a more critical spirit.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Matthew 15:14: "And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." "One . . . from heaven": Jesus.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Why should women be censured with petulant acrimony, because they seem to have a passion for a scarlet coat? Has not education placed them more on a level with soldiers than any other class of men? [*Wollstonecraft's note*]. Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Women.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: As a zero added to a number multiplies its value by a factor of ten, in a hierarchical society women magnify the status of the men with whom they are allied.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "*Sophie ou la Femme*" is the title of book 5 of *Émile,* Rousseau's blend of educational treatise and novel. Having tracked the development of Émile, his imaginary pupil, up to

age twenty, Rousseau invents the character of Sophie (Sophia in the 1762 English translation) to supply his hero with a wife and to address, belatedly, the topic of female education.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: A common spelling for "waive" in the 18th century.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  Similar feelings has Milton's pleasing picture of paradisiacal happiness ever raised in my mind; yet, instead of envying the lovely pair, I have, with conscious dignity, or Satanic pride, turned to hell for sublimer objects. In the same style, when viewing some noble monument of human art, I have traced the emanation of the Deity in the order I admired, till, descending from that giddy height, I have caught myself contemplating the grandest of all human sights;—for fancy quickly placed, in some solitary recess, an outcast of fortune, rising superior to passion and discontent [*Wollstonecraft's note*]. Wollstonecraft is referring to the portrait of Adam and
  Return to reference 5
- Note 6: *Émile:* "The first and most important qualification in a woman is good nature or sweetness of temper: formed to obey a being so imperfect as man, often full of vices, and always full of faults, she ought to learn betimes even to suffer injustice, and to bear the insults of a husband without complaint: it is not for his sake, but her own, that she should be of a mild disposition."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See Genesis 2:21–23 for one account of the creation of woman. Moses was thought to be the author of the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Alexander Pope, "Of the Characters of Women," Epistle 2, lines 51–52, of his *Moral Essays* (1735).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, to outdo the idealistic but ineffectual hero of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) in trying to accomplish the impossible. Return to reference 9

- Note 1: "The love of dress is natural to you, and therefore it is proper and reasonable." John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, 2nd ed. (London, 1775).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, "natural."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: For this and the previous sentence see Gregory: "I would have you to dance with spirit; but never allow yourselves to be so far transported with mirth, as to forget the delicacy of your sex.—Many a girl dancing in the gaiety and innocence of her heart, is thought to discover a spirit she little dreams of."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Matthew 12:34.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, Jesus, who describes himself in comparable terms in Luke 11:31. Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Luke 11:39–44 and Matthew 23:25–28, Jesus speaks of purifying the inner self and denounces the Pharisees' self-righteous observance of the letter of the law.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Gregory: "If you love him, let me advise you never to discover to him the full extent of your love, no, not although you marry him."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A medicine reputed to cure all diseases. "Philosopher's stone": sought by alchemists because it was supposed to have the power to transmute base metals into gold.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680, French noble), *Les Maximes*, No. 473.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Wollstonecraft's point is that a woman who is not preoccupied with her husband (and his attentions to her) has more time and energy for her children.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The first edition reads "improvable" here, which makes more sense in context.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Imagination.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Rousseau's *Julie; ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), the heroine, Julie, reveals her long-held passionate love for St. Preux as she is dying, even though she has been a faithful wife to Wolmar since her marriage.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Gregory: "But if you find that marriage is absolutely essential to your happiness . . . shun . . . reading and conversation that warms the imagination, which engages and softens the heart, and raises the taste above the level of common life . . . [otherwise] you may be tired with insipidity and dullness; shocked with indelicacy, or mortified by indifference."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An echo of Philippians 3:14, where Saint Paul writes, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: For example, the herd of Novelists [*Wollstonecraft's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Isaiah 55:7: "And he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Vide Rousseau, and Swedenborg [*Wollstonecraft's note*]. The Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772) believed that in the afterlife each married couple would form a single angel, with the wife contributing her capacity for love and the husband his wisdom.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *Paradise Lost* 4.497–99: "he in delight / Both of her Beauty and submissive charms / Smil'd with superior love."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An echo of Jesus's account of the resurrection in Matthew 22:30.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Perhaps a recollection of Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). In attempting to distinguish the aesthetic category of "the beautiful" from the aesthetic category of "the sublime," Burke resorts frequently to analogy and so devotes many pages to outlining his notions of the distinctions that separate femininity from masculinity.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: *Paradise Lost* 10.891–92: "This fair defect / Of nature"; and Pope, "Of the Characters of Women," line 44: "Fine by defect, and delicately weak."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Wollstonecraft refers to a discredited European legend maintaining that at Mohammed's tomb in Medina giant magnets

were used to suspend his coffin in midair.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Possibly a reference to Pope's 1733–34 *Essay on Man*, Epistle 2, lines 31–34: "Superior beings, when of late they saw / A mortal Man unfold all Nature's law, / Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape, / And shew'd a NEWTON as we shew an Ape." Isaac Newton (1643–1727) was revered across Europe for his foundational work of physics, the *Principia* (1687), in which he formulated the laws of gravitation and motion.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Matthew Prior, "Hans Carvel" (1700), lines 11–12.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hothouse plants, which do not thrive in the English climate. Wollstonecraft's phrasing also recalls the language of the 1772 case of the enslaved Black man James Somerset, in which the judge, Lord Mansfield, issued a ruling effectively prohibiting slavery within England. Somerset's lawyer had successfully argued that no person could be held as a slave on English soil, whose "air is . . . too pure for slaves to breathe in."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The emperors of China were known as the "sons of heaven."Return to reference 9

From *Chapter 4. Observations on the State of Degradation to Which Woman Is Reduced by Various Causes.*

* * *

In the middle rank of life, to continue the comparison,[1] men, in their youth, are prepared for professions, and marriage is not considered as the grand feature in their lives; whilst women, on the contrary, have no other scheme to sharpen their faculties. It is not business, extensive plans, or any of the excursive flights of ambition, that engross their attention; no, their thoughts are not employed in rearing such noble structures. To rise in the world, and have the liberty of running from pleasure to pleasure, they must marry advantageously, and to this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted. A man when he enters any profession has his eye steadily fixed on some future advantage (and the mind gains great strength by having all its efforts directed to one point), and, full of his business, pleasure is considered as mere relaxation; whilst women seek for pleasure as the main purpose of existence. In fact, from the education, which they receive from society, the love of pleasure may be said to govern them all; but does this prove that there is a sex in souls? It would be just as rational to declare that the courtiers in France, when a destructive system of despotism had formed their character, were not men, because liberty, virtue, and humanity, were sacrificed to pleasure and vanity.—Fatal passions, which have ever domineered over the *whole* race!

The same love of pleasure, fostered by the whole tendency of their education, gives a trifling turn to the conduct of women in most circumstances: for instance, they are ever anxious about secondary things; and on the watch for adventures, instead of being occupied by duties.

A man, when he undertakes a journey, has, in general, the end in view; a woman thinks more of the incidental occurrences, the

strange things that may possibly occur on the road; the impression that she may make on her fellow-travellers; and, above all, she is anxiously intent on the care of the finery that she carries with her, which is more than ever a part of herself, when going to figure on a new scene; when, to use an apt French turn of expression, she is going to produce a sensation.—Can dignity of mind exist with such trivial cares?

In short, women, in general, as well as the rich of both sexes, have acquired all the follies and vices of civilization, and missed the useful fruit. It is not necessary for me always to premise, that I speak of the condition of the whole sex, leaving exceptions out of the question. Their senses are inflamed, and their understandings neglected, consequently they become the prey of their senses, delicately termed sensibility, and are blown about by every momentary gust of feeling. Civilized women are, therefore, so weakened by false refinement, that, respecting morals, their condition is much below what it would be were they left in a state nearer to nature. Ever restless and anxious, their over exercised sensibility not only renders them uncomfortable themselves, but troublesome, to use a soft phrase, to others. All their thoughts turn on things calculated to excite emotion; and feeling, when they should reason, their conduct is unstable, and their opinions are wavering—not the wavering produced by deliberation or progressive views, but by contradictory emotions. By fits and starts they are warm in many pursuits; yet this warmth, never concentrated into perseverance, soon exhausts itself; exhaled by its own heat, or meeting with some other fleeting passion, to which reason has never given any specific gravity, neutrality ensues. Miserable, indeed, must be that being whose cultivation of mind has only tended to inflame its passions! A distinction should be made between inflaming and strengthening them. The passions thus pampered, whilst the judgment is left unformed, what can be expected to ensue?—Undoubtedly, a mixture of madness and folly!

This observation should not be confined to the *fair* sex; however, at present, I only mean to apply it to them.

Novels, music, poetry, and gallantry, all tend to make women the creatures of sensation, and their character is thus formed in the mould of folly during the time they are acquiring accomplishments, the only improvement they are excited, by their station in society, to acquire. This overstretched sensibility naturally relaxes the other powers of the mind, and prevents intellect from attaining that sovereignty which it ought to attain to render a rational creature useful to others, and content with its own station: for the exercise of the understanding, as life advances, is the only method pointed out by nature to calm the passions.

Satiety has a very different effect, and I have often been forcibly struck by an emphatical description of damnation:—when the spirit is represented as continually hovering with abortive eagerness round the defied body, unable to enjoy any thing without the organs of sense. Yet, to their senses, are women made slaves, because it is by their sensibility that they obtain present power.

And will moralists pretend to assert, that this is the condition in which one half of the human race should be encouraged to remain with listless inactivity and stupid acquiescence? Kind instructors! what were we created for? To remain, it may be said, innocent; they mean in a state of childhood.—We might as well never have been born, unless it were necessary that we should be created to enable man to acquire the noble privilege of reason, the power of discerning good from evil, whilst we lie down in the dust from whence we were taken, never to rise again.—

It would be an endless task to trace the variety of meannesses, cares, and sorrows, into which women are plunged by the prevailing opinion, that they were created rather to feel than reason, and that all the power they obtain, must be obtained by their charms and weakness:

Fine by defect, and amiably weak![2]

And, made by this amiable weakness entirely dependent, excepting what they gain by illicit sway, on man, not only for protection, but

advice, is it surprising that, neglecting the duties that reason alone points out, and shrinking from trials calculated to strengthen their minds, they only exert themselves to give their defects a graceful covering, which may serve to heighten their charms in the eye of the voluptuary, though it sink them below the scale of moral excellence?

Fragile in every sense of the word, they are obliged to look up to man for every comfort. In the most trifling dangers they cling to their support, with parasitical tenacity, piteously demanding succour; and their *natural* protector extends his arm, or lifts up his voice, to guard the lovely trembler—from what? Perhaps the frown of an old cow, or the jump of a mouse; a rat, would be a serious danger. In the name of reason, and even common sense, what can save such beings from contempt; even though they be soft and fair?

These fears, when not affected, may produce some pretty attitudes; but they shew a degree of imbecility which degrades a rational creature in a way women are not aware of—for love and esteem are very distinct things.

I am fully persuaded that we should hear of none of these infantine airs, if girls were allowed to take sufficient exercise, and not confined in close rooms till their muscles are relaxed, and their powers of digestion destroyed. To carry the remark still further, if fear in girls, instead of being cherished, perhaps, created, were treated in the same manner as cowardice in boys, we should quickly see women with more dignified aspects. It is true, they could not then with equal propriety be termed the sweet flowers that smile in the walk of man; but they would be more respectable members of society, and discharge the important duties of life by the light of their own reason. 'Educate women like men,' says Rousseau, 'and the more they resemble our sex the less power will they have over us.'[3] This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish them to have power over men; but over themselves.

In the same strain have I heard men argue against instructing the poor; for many are the forms that aristocracy assumes. 'Teach them to read and write,' say they, 'and you take them out of the station assigned them by nature.' An eloquent Frenchman has

answered them, I will borrow his sentiments. But they know not, when they make man a brute, that they may expect every instant to see him transformed into a ferocious beast.[4] Without knowledge there can be no morality!

Ignorance is a frail base for virtue! Yet, that it is the condition for which woman was organized, has been insisted upon by the writers who have most vehemently argued in, favour of the superiority of man; a superiority not in degree, but essence; though, to soften the argument, they have laboured to prove, with chivalrous generosity, that the sexes ought not to be compared; man was made to reason, woman to feel: and that together, flesh and spirit, they make the most perfect whole, by blending happily reason and sensibility into one character.

And what is sensibility? 'Quickness of sensation; quickness of perception; delicacy.' Thus is it defined by Dr. Johnson;[5] and the definition gives me no other idea than of the most exquisitely polished instinct. I discern not a trace of the image of God in either sensation or matter. Refined seventy times seven,[6] they are still material; intellect dwells not there; nor will fire ever make lead gold!

I come round to my old argument; if woman be allowed to have an immortal soul, she must have, as the employment of life, an understanding to improve. And when, to render the present state more complete, though every thing proves it to be but a fraction of a mighty sum, she is incited by present gratification to forget her grand destination, nature is counteracted, or she was born only to procreate and rot. Or, granting brutes, of every description, a soul, though not a reasonable one, the exercise of instinct and sensibility may be the step, which they are to take, in this life, towards the attainment of reason in the next; so that through all eternity they will lag behind man, who, why we cannot tell, had the power given him of attaining reason in his first mode of existence.

When I treat of the peculiar duties of women, as I should treat of the peculiar duties of a citizen or father, it will be found that I do not mean to insinuate that they should be taken out of their families, speaking of the majority. 'He that hath wife and children,' says Lord

Bacon, 'hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men.'[7] I say the same of women. But, the welfare of society is not built on extraordinary exertions; and were it more reasonably organized, there would be still less need of great abilities, or heroic virtues.

In the regulation of a family, in the education of children, understanding, in an unsophisticated sense, is particularly required: strength both of body and mind; yet the men who, by their writings, have most earnestly laboured to domesticate women, have endeavoured, by arguments dictated by a gross appetite, which satiety had rendered fastidious, to weaken their bodies and cramp their minds. But, if even by these sinister methods they really *persuaded* women, by working on their feelings, to stay at home, and fulfil the duties of a mother and mistress of a family, I should cautiously oppose opinions that led women to right conduct, by prevailing on them to make the discharge of such important duties the main business of life, though reason were insulted. Yet, and I appeal to experience, if by neglecting the understanding they be as much, nay, more detached from these domestic employments, than they could be by the most serious intellectual pursuit, though it may be observed, that the mass of mankind will never vigorously pursue an intellectual object,[8] I may be allowed to infer that reason is absolutely necessary to enable a woman to perform any duty properly, and I must again repeat, that sensibility is not reason.

The comparison with the rich still occurs to me; for, when men neglect the duties of humanity, women will follow their example; a common stream hurries them both along with thoughtless celerity. Riches and honours prevent a man from enlarging his understanding, and enervate all his powers by reversing the order of nature, which has ever made true pleasure the reward of labour. Pleasure—enervating pleasure is, likewise, within women's reach without earning it. But, till hereditary possessions are spread abroad, how can we expect men to be proud of virtue? And, till they are,

women will govern them by the most direct means, neglecting their dull domestic duties to catch the pleasure that sits lightly on the wing of time.

'The power of the woman,' says some author, 'is her sensibility';[9] and men, not aware of the consequence, do all they can to make this power swallow up every other. Those who constantly employ their sensibility will have most: for example; poets, painters, and composers.[1] Yet, when the sensibility is thus increased at the expence of reason, and even the imagination, why do philosophical men complain of their fickleness? The sexual attention of man particularly acts on female sensibility, and this sympathy has been exercised from their youth up. A husband cannot long pay those attentions with the passion necessary to excite lively emotions, and the heart, accustomed to lively emotions, turns to a new lover, or pines in secret, the prey of virtue or prudence. I mean when the heart has really been rendered susceptible, and the taste formed; for I am apt to conclude, from what I have seen in fashionable life, that vanity is oftener fostered than sensibility by the mode of education, and the intercourse between the sexes, which I have reprobated; and that coquetry more frequently proceeds from vanity than from that inconstancy, which overstrained sensibility naturally produces.

Another argument that has had great weight with me, must, I think, have some force with every considerate benevolent heart. Girls who have been thus weakly educated, are often cruelly left by their parents without any provision; and, of course, are dependent on, not only the reason, but the bounty of their brothers. These brothers are, to view the fairest side of the question, good sort of men, and give as a favour, what children of the same parents had an equal right to. In this equivocal humiliating situation, a docile female may remain some time, with a tolerable degree of comfort. But, when the brother marries, a probable circumstance, from being considered as the mistress of the family, she is viewed with averted looks as an intruder, an unnecessary burden on the benevolence of the master of the house, and his new partner.

Who can recount the misery, which many unfortunate beings, whose minds and bodies are equally weak, suffer in such situations —unable to work, and ashamed to beg? The wife, a cold-hearted, narrow-minded, woman, and this is not an unfair supposition; for the present mode of education does not tend to enlarge the heart any more than the understanding, is jealous of the little kindness which her husband shews to his relations; and her sensibility not rising to humanity, she is displeased at seeing the property of *her* children lavished on an helpless sister.

These are matters of fact, which have come under my eye again and again. The consequence is obvious, the wife has recourse to cunning to undermine the habitual affection, which she is afraid openly to oppose; and neither tears nor caresses are spared till the spy is worked out of her home, and thrown on the world, unprepared for its difficulties; or sent, as a great effort of generosity, or from some regard to propriety, with a small stipend, and an uncultivated mind, into joyless solitude.

These two women may be much upon a par, with respect to reason and humanity; and changing situations, might have acted just the same selfish part; but had they been differently educated, the case would also have been very different. The wife would not have had that sensibility, of which self is the centre, and reason might have taught her not to expect, and not even to be flattered by, the affection of her husband, if it led him to violate prior duties. She would wish not to love him merely because he loved her, but on account of his virtues; and the sister might have been able to struggle for herself instead of eating the bitter bread of dependence.

I am, indeed, persuaded that the heart, as well as the understanding, is opened by cultivation; and by, which may not appear so clear, strengthening the organs; I am not now talking of momentary flashes of sensibility, but of affections. And, perhaps, in the education of both sexes, the most difficult task is so to adjust instruction as not to narrow the understanding, whilst the heart is warmed by the generous juices of spring, just raised by the electric

fermentation of the season; nor to dry up the feelings by employing the mind in investigations remote from life.

With respect to women, when they receive a careful education, they are either made fine ladies, brimful of sensibility, and teeming with capricious fancies; or mere notable women.[2] The latter are often friendly, honest creatures, and have a shrewd kind of good sense joined with worldly prudence, that often render them more useful members of society than the fine sentimental lady, though they possess neither greatness of mind nor taste. The intellectual world is shut against them; take them out of their family or neighbourhood, and they stand still; the mind finding no employment, for literature affords a fund of amusement which they have never sought to relish, but frequently to despise. The sentiments and taste of more cultivated minds appear ridiculous, even in those whom chance and family connections have led them to love; but in mere acquaintance they think it all affectation.

A man of sense can only love such a woman on account of her sex, and respect her, because she is a trusty servant. He lets her, to preserve his own peace, scold the servants, and go to church in clothes made of the very best materials. A man of her own size of understanding would, probably, not agree so well with her; for he might wish to encroach on her prerogative, and manage some domestic concerns himself. Yet women, whose minds are not enlarged by cultivation, or the natural selfishness of sensibility expanded by reflection, are very unfit to manage a family; for, by an undue stretch of power, they are always tyrannizing to support a superiority that only rests on the arbitrary distinction of fortune. The evil is sometimes more serious, and domestics are deprived of innocent indulgences, and made to work beyond their strength, in order to enable the notable woman to keep a better table, and outshine her neighbours in finery and parade. If she attend to her children, it is, in general, to dress them in a costly manner—and, whether this attention arise from vanity or fondness, it is equally pernicious.

Besides, how many women of this description pass their days; or, at least, their evenings, discontentedly. Their husbands acknowledge that they are good managers, and chaste wives; but leave home to seek for more agreeable, may I be allowed to use a significant French word, *piquant*[3] society; and the patient drudge, who fulfils her task, like a blind horse in a mill, is defrauded of her just reward; for the wages due to her are the caresses of her husband; and women who have so few resources in themselves, do not very patiently bear this privation of a natural right.

A fine lady, on the contrary, has been taught to look down with contempt on the vulgar employments of life; though she has only been incited to acquire accomplishments that rise a degree above sense; for even corporeal accomplishments cannot be acquired with any degree of precision unless the understanding has been strengthened by exercise. Without a foundation of principles taste is superficial, grace must arise from something deeper than imitation. The imagination, however, is heated, and the feelings rendered fastidious, if not sophisticated; or, a counterpoise of judgment is not acquired, when the heart still remains artless, though it becomes too tender.

These women are often amiable; and their hearts are really more sensible to general benevolence, more alive to the sentiments that civilize life, than the square-elbowed family drudge; but, wanting a due proportion of reflection and self-government, they only inspire love; and are the mistresses of their husbands, whilst they have any hold on their affections; and the platonic friends of his male acquaintance. These are the fair defects in nature; the women who appear to be created not to enjoy the fellowship of man, but to save him from sinking into absolute brutality, by rubbing off the rough angles of his character; and by playful dalliance to give some dignity to the appetite that draws him to them.—Gracious Creator of the whole human race! hast thou created such a being as woman, who can trace thy wisdom in thy works, and feel that thou alone art by thy nature exalted above her,—for no better purpose?—Can she believe that she was only made to submit to man, her equal, a

being, who, like her, was sent into the world to acquire virtue?—Can she consent to be occupied merely to please him; merely to adorn the earth, when her soul is capable of rising to thee?—And can she rest supinely dependent on man for reason, when she ought to mount with him the arduous steeps of knowledge?—

Yet, if love be the supreme good, let women be only educated to inspire it, and let every charm be polished to intoxicate the senses; but, if they be moral beings, let them have a chance to become intelligent; and let love to man be only a part of that glowing flame of universal love, which, after encircling humanity, mounts in grateful incense to God.

* * *

1792

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, her comparison between the social expectations that shape men and those that shape women and lead them to "degradation."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A misquotation of Pope, "Of the Characters of Women," line 44: "Fine by defect, and delicately weak."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The passage continues: "and when once they become like ourselves, we shall then be truly their masters" (*Émile*).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Wollstonecraft might be remembering a remark made in 1790 by the statesman Mirabeau, responding to the aggressive tone of the debates in revolutionary France's new National Assembly and reflecting, more generally, on the power the common people had come to exercise in the nation's political arguments: "you have loosed the bull: do you expect he will not use his horns?"Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Wollstonecraft cites the emended definition Johnson included in the fourth (1773) edition of his *Dictionary.*Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Matthew 18:22: "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Francis Bacon, Essay 8, "Of Marriage and the Single Life."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The mass of mankind are rather the slaves of their appetites than of their passions [*Wollstonecraft's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Possibly a recollection of *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, in which Gregory, discussing women's blushing, asserts "That extreme sensibility which it indicates, may be a weakness and incumbrance in our sex . . . but in yours it is peculiarly engaging."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Men of these descriptions pour it into their compositions, to amalgamate the gross materials; and, moulding them with passion, give to the inert body a soul; but, in woman's imagination, love alone concentrates these ethereal beams [*Wollstonecraft's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, industrious and energetic housewives.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Stimulating.Return to reference 3

Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark

Writing to a friend in March 1797, the poet Robert Southey declared himself haunted by a book of travels that the firm of Joseph Johnson had published at the start of the preceding year: Mary Wollstonecraft, Southey enthused, "has made me in love with a cold climate, and frost and snow, with a northern moonlight." Wollstonecraft had set out on her arduous and sometimes dangerous five-month journey through the Scandinavian countries in June 1795, taking with her Fanny, her year-old infant, and Marguerite, a French maid who had earlier accompanied her from Paris to London. Fanny's father, Gilbert Imlay—author, inaugurator of sometimes shady commercial deals, and inveterate philanderer—had devised this scheme of sending Wollstonecraft as his business agent to the northern countries, thus leaving himself free to pursue an affair with another woman. Upon returning to London in September 1795, Wollstonecraft prepared for publication the letters that she had written to Imlay during the trip. Contemporary readers were left to speculate about the identity of the *you* to whom the letters were addressed and to ponder the suggestion that the letters' unhappy author had once been romantically involved with this unnamed correspondent. For many this tantalizingly sketchy love story gave the *Letters* their fascination. Writing in his *Memoirs* of Wollstonecraft, William Godwin declared, "If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me the book."

By the late eighteenth century, travel writing had begun to develop into a philosophical genre—a forum for comparative inquiries into the effects various sorts of political institutions and legal systems had on people's everyday lives and a forum in which commentators assessed the costs, as well as the benefits, of social and economic progress. Wollstonecraft had reviewed travelogues for Johnson's *Analytical Review*, and she contributed to this development in her turn with these discussions of Europe's northern fringe, a remote, unmodernized region that until then had rarely figured on travelers' itineraries. In the letters she thus remarks

insightfully on the relations between rich and poor in the communities she visits, on the people's responses to the political tumults of the era, and, especially, on the situation of women and the petty despotisms of family life. Yet she also responds ardently to the sublime natural scenery of Scandinavia, and moves easily from those aesthetic contemplations to meditations on death and the possibility of an afterlife—reveries she intersperses with her sharply realistic observations of the world around her.

From Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark

Advertisement

The writing travels, or memoirs, has ever been a pleasant employment; for vanity or sensibility always renders it interesting. In writing these desultory letters, I found I could not avoid being continually the first person—"the little hero of each tale."[1] I tried to correct this fault, if it be one, for they were designed for publication; but in proportion as I arranged my thoughts, my letter, I found, became stiff and affected: I, therefore, determined to let my remarks and reflections flow unrestrained, as I perceived that I could not give a just description of what I saw, but by relating the effect different objects had produced on my mind and feelings, whilst the impression was still fresh.

A person has a right, I have sometimes thought, when amused by a witty or interesting egotist, to talk of himself when he can win on our attention by acquiring our affection. Whether I deserve to rank amongst this privileged number, my readers alone can judge—and I give them leave to shut the book, if they do not wish to become better acquainted with me.

My plan was simply to endeavor to give a just view of the present state of the countries I have passed through, as far as I could obtain information during so short a residence; avoiding those details which, without being very useful to travelers who follow the same route, appear very insipid to those who only accompany you in their chair.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Edward Young, *Love of Fame, the Universal Passion* (1725), line 116.Return to reference 1

Letter 1

Eleven days of weariness on board a vessel not intended for the accommodation of passengers have so exhausted my spirits, to say nothing of the other causes, with which you are already sufficiently acquainted, that it is with some difficulty I adhere to my determination of giving you my observations, as I travel through new scenes, whilst warmed with the impression they have made on me.

The captain, as I mentioned to you, promised to put me on shore at Arendall, or Gothenburg, in his way to Elsineur;[2] but contrary winds obliged us to pass both places during the night. In the morning, however, after we had lost sight of the entrance of the latter bay, the vessel was becalmed; and the captain, to oblige me, hanging out a signal for a pilot, bore down towards the shore.

My attention was particularly directed to the lighthouse; and you can scarcely imagine with what anxiety I watched two long hours for a boat to emancipate me—still no one appeared. Every cloud that flitted on the horizon was hailed as a liberator, till approaching nearer, like most of the prospects sketched by hope, it dissolved under the eye into disappointment.

Weary of expectation, I then began to converse with the captain on the subject; and, from the tenor of the information my questions drew forth, I soon concluded, that, if I waited for a boat, I had little chance of getting on shore at this place. Despotism, as is usually the case, I found had here cramped the industry of man. The pilots being paid by the king, and scantily, they will not run into any danger, or even quit their hovels, if they can possibly avoid it, only to fulfil what is termed their duty. How different is it on the English coast, where, in the most stormy weather, boats immediately hail you, brought out by the expectation of extraordinary profit.

Disliking to sail for Elsineur, and still more to lie at anchor, or cruise about the coast for several days, I exerted all my rhetoric to prevail on the captain to let me have the ship’s boat; and though I

added the most forcible of arguments, I for a long time addressed him in vain.

It is a kind of rule at sea, not to send out a boat. The captain was a good-natured man; but men with common minds seldom break through general rules. Prudence is ever the resort of weakness; and they rarely go as far as they may in any undertaking, who are determined not to go beyond it on any account. If, however, I had some trouble with the captain, I did not lose much time with the sailors; for they, all alacrity, hoisted out the boat, the moment I obtained permission, and promised to row me to the lighthouse.

I did not once allow myself to doubt of obtaining a conveyance from thence round the rocks—and then away for Gothenburg—confinement is so unpleasant.

The day was fine; and I enjoyed the water till, approaching the little island, poor Marguerite, whose timidity always acts as a feeler before her adventuring spirit, began to wonder at our not seeing any inhabitants. I did not listen to her. But when, on landing, the same silence prevailed, I caught the alarm, which was not lessened by the sight of two old men, whom we forced out of their wretched hut. Scarcely human in their appearance, we with difficulty obtained an intelligible reply to our questions—the result of which was, that they had no boat, and were not allowed to quit their post, on any pretense. But, they informed us, that there was at the other side, eight or ten miles over, a pilot's dwelling; two guineas[3] tempted the sailors to risk the captain's displeasure, and once more embark to row me over.

The weather was pleasant, and the appearance of the shore so grand, that I should have enjoyed the two hours it took to reach it, but for the fatigue which was too visible in the countenances of the sailors who, instead of uttering a complaint, were, with the thoughtless hilarity peculiar to them, joking about the possibility of the captain's taking advantage of a slight westerly breeze, which was springing up, to sail without them. Yet, in spite of their good humor, I could not help growing uneasy when the shore, receding, as it were, as we advanced, seemed to promise no end to their toil. This

anxiety increased when, turning into the most picturesque bay I ever saw, my eyes sought in vain for the vestige of a human habitation. Before I could determine what step to take in such a dilemma, for I could not bear to think of returning to the ship, the sight of a barge relieved me, and we hastened towards it for information. We were immediately directed to pass some jutting rocks when we should see a pilot's hut.

There was a solemn silence in this scene, which made itself be felt. The sunbeams that played on the ocean, scarcely ruffled by the lightest breeze, contrasted with the huge, dark rocks, that looked like the rude materials of creation forming the barrier of unwrought space, forcibly struck me; but I should not have been sorry if the cottage had not appeared equally tranquil. Approaching a retreat where strangers, especially women, so seldom appeared, I wondered that curiosity did not bring the beings who inhabited it to the windows or door. I did not immediately recollect that men who remain so near the brute creation, as only to exert themselves to find the food necessary to sustain life, have little or no imagination to call forth the curiosity necessary to fructify the faint glimmerings of mind which entitles them to rank as lords of the creation.—Had they either, they could not contentedly remain rooted in the clods they so indolently cultivate.

Whilst the sailors went to seek for the sluggish inhabitants, these conclusions occurred to me; and, recollecting the extreme fondness which the Parisians ever testify for novelty, their very curiosity appeared to me a proof of the progress they had made in refinement. Yes; in the art of living—in the art of escaping from the cares which embarrass the first steps towards the attainment of the pleasures of social life.

The pilots informed the sailors that they were under the direction of a lieutenant retired from the service, who spoke English; adding, that they could do nothing without his orders; and even the offer of money could hardly conquer their laziness, and prevail on them to accompany us to his dwelling. They would not go with me alone which I wanted them to have done, because I wished to dismiss the

sailors as soon as possible. Once more we rowed off, they following tardily, till, turning round another bold protuberance of the rocks, we saw a boat making towards us, and soon learnt that it was the lieutenant himself, coming with some earnestness to see who we were.

To save the sailors any further toil, I had my baggage instantly removed into his boat; for, as he could speak English, a previous parley was not necessary; though Marguerite's respect for me could hardly keep her from expressing the fear, strongly marked on her countenance, which my putting ourselves into the power of a strange man excited. He pointed out his cottage; and, drawing near to it, I was not sorry to see a female figure, though I had not, like Marguerite, been thinking of robberies, murders, or the other evil[4] which instantly, as the sailors would have said, runs foul of a woman's imagination.

On entering, I was still better pleased to find a clean house, with some degree of rural elegance. The beds were of muslin, coarse it is true, but dazzlingly white; and the floor was strewed over with little sprigs of juniper (the custom, as I afterwards found, of the country), which formed a contrast with the curtains and produced an agreeable sensation of freshness, to soften the ardor of noon. Still nothing was so pleasing as the alacrity of hospitality—all that the house afforded was quickly spread on the whitest linen.—Remember I had just left the vessel, where, without being fastidious, I had continually been disgusted. Fish, milk, butter, and cheese, and I am sorry to add, brandy, the bane of this country, were spread on the board. After we had dined, hospitality made them, with some degree of mystery, bring us some excellent coffee. I did not then know that it was prohibited.[5]

The good man of the house apologized for coming in continually, but declared that he was so glad to speak English, he could not stay out. He need not have apologized; I was equally glad of his company. With the wife I could only exchange smiles; and she was employed observing the make of our clothes. My hands, I found, had first led her to discover that I was the lady. I had, of course, my

quantum of reverences; for the politeness of the north seems to partake of the coldness of the climate, and the rigidity of its iron sinewed rocks. Amongst the peasantry, there is, however, so much of the simplicity of the golden age in this land of flint—so much overflowing of heart, and fellow-feeling, that only benevolence, and the honest sympathy of nature, diffused smiles over my countenance when they kept me standing, regardless of my fatigue, whilst they dropt courtesy after courtesy.

The situation of this house was beautiful, though chosen for convenience. The master being the officer who commanded all the pilots on the coast, and the person appointed to guard wrecks, it was necessary for him to fix on a spot that would overlook the whole bay. As he had seen some service, he wore, not without a pride I thought becoming, a badge to prove that he had merited well of his country. It was happy, I thought, that he had been paid in honor; for the stipend he received was little more than twelve pounds a year.—I do not trouble myself or you with the calculation of Swedish ducats. Thus, my friend, you perceive the necessity of *perquisites.*[6] This same narrow policy runs through every thing. I shall have occasion further to animadvert on it.

Though my host amused me with an account of himself, which gave me an idea of the manners of the people I was about to visit, I was eager to climb the rocks to view the country, and see whether the honest tars had regained their ship. With the help of the lieutenant's telescope I saw the vessel underway with a fair though gentle gale. The sea was calm, playful even as the most shallow stream, and on the vast bason[7] I did not see a dark speck to indicate the boat. My conductors were consequently arrived.

Straying further my eye was attracted by the sight of some heart's-ease[8] that peeped through the rocks. I caught at it as a good omen, and going to preserve it in a letter that had not conveyed balm to my heart, a cruel remembrance suffused my eyes; but it passed away like an April shower. If you are deep read in Shakspeare, you will recollect that this was the little western flower tinged by love's dart, which "maidens call love in idleness."[9] The

gaiety of my babe was unmixed; regardless of omens or sentiments, she found a few wild strawberries more grateful[1] than flowers or fancies.

The lieutenant informed me that this was a commodious bay. Of that I could not judge, though I felt its picturesque beauty. Rocks were piled on rocks, forming a suitable bulwark to the ocean. Come no further, they emphatically said, turning their dark sides to the waves to augment the idle roar. The view was sterile: still little patches of earth, of the most exquisite verdure, enameled with the sweetest wild flowers, seemed to promise the goats and a few straggling cows luxurious herbage. How silent and peaceful was the scene. I gazed around with rapture, and felt more of that spontaneous pleasure which gives credibility to our expectation of happiness, than I had for a long, long time before. I forgot the horrors I had witnessed in France,[2] which had cast a gloom over all nature, and suffering the enthusiasm of my character, too often, gracious God! damped by the tears of disappointed affection, to be lighted up afresh, care took wing while simple fellow feeling expanded my heart.

To prolong this enjoyment, I readily assented to the proposal of our host to pay a visit to a family, the master of which spoke English, who was the drollest dog in the country, he added, repeating some of his stories, with a hearty laugh.

I walked on, still delighted with the rude beauties of the scene; for the sublime often gave place imperceptibly to the beautiful, dilating the emotions which were painfully concentrated.

When we entered this abode, the largest I had yet seen, I was introduced to a numerous family; but the father, from whom I was led to expect so much entertainment, was absent. The lieutenant consequently was obliged to be the interpreter of our reciprocal compliments. The phrases were awkwardly transmitted, it is true; but looks and gestures were sufficient to make them intelligible and interesting. The girls were all vivacity, and respect for me could scarcely keep them from romping with my host, who, asking for a pinch of snuff, was presented with a box, out of which an artificial

mouse, fastened to the bottom, sprung. Though this trick had doubtless been played time out of mind, yet the laughter it excited was not less genuine.

They were overflowing with civility; but to prevent their almost killing my babe with kindness, I was obliged to shorten my visit; and two or three of the girls accompanied us, bringing with them a part of whatever the house afforded to contribute towards rendering my supper more plentiful; and plentiful in fact it was, though I with difficulty did honor to some of the dishes, not relishing the quantity of sugar and spices put into every thing. At supper my host told me bluntly that I was a woman of observation, for I asked him *men's questions.*

The arrangements for my journey were quickly made; I could only have a car with post-horses, as I did not choose to wait till a carriage could be sent for to Gothenburg. The expense of my journey, about one or two and twenty English miles, I found would not amount to more than eleven or twelve shillings, paying, he assured me, generously. I gave him a guinea and a half. But it was with the greatest difficulty that I could make him take so much, indeed any thing for my lodging and fare. He declared that it was next to robbing me, explaining how much I ought to pay on the road. However, as I was positive, he took the guinea for himself; but, as a condition, insisted on accompanying me, to prevent my meeting with any trouble or imposition on the way.

I then retired to my apartment with regret. The night was so fine, that I would gladly have rambled about much longer; yet recollecting that I must rise very early, I reluctantly went to bed: but my senses had been so awake, and my imagination still continued so busy, that I sought for rest in vain. Rising before six, I scented the sweet morning air; I had long before heard the birds twittering to hail the dawning day, though it could scarcely have been allowed to have departed.

Nothing, in fact, can equal the beauty of the northern summer's evening and night; if night it may be called that only wants the glare of day, the full light, which frequently seems so impertinent; for I

could write at midnight very well without a candle. I contemplated all nature at rest; the rocks, even grown darker in their appearance, looked as if they partook of the general repose, and reclined more heavily on their foundation.—What, I exclaimed, is this active principle which keeps me still awake?—Why fly my thoughts abroad when every thing around me appears at home? My child was sleeping with equal calmness—innocent and sweet as the closing flowers.—Some recollections, attached to the idea of home, mingled with reflections respecting the state of society I had been contemplating that evening, made a tear drop on the rosy cheek I had just kissed; and emotions that trembled on the brink of ectasy and agony gave a poignancy to my sensations, which made me feel more alive than usual.

What are these imperious sympathies? How frequently has melancholy and even misanthropy taken possession of me, when the world has disgusted me, and friends have proved unkind. I have then considered myself as a particle broken off from the grand mass of mankind;—I was alone, till some involuntary sympathetic emotion, like the attraction of adhesion,[3] made me feel that I was still a part of a mighty whole, from which I could not sever myself—not, perhaps, for the reflection has been carried very far, by snapping the thread of an existence which loses its charms in proportion as the cruel experience of life stops or poisons the current of the heart. Futurity, what hast thou not to give to those who know that there is such a thing as happiness! I speak not of philosophical contentment, though pain has afforded them the strongest conviction of it.

After our coffee and milk, for the mistress of the house had been roused long before us by her hospitality, my baggage was taken forward in a boat by my host, because the car could not safely have been brought to the house.

The road at first was very rocky and troublesome; but our driver was careful, and the horses accustomed to the frequent and sudden acclivities and descents; so that not apprehending any danger, I

played with my girl, whom I would not leave to Marguerite's care, on account of her timidity.

Stopping at a little inn to bait[4] the horses, I saw the first countenance in Sweden that displeased me, though the man was better dressed than any one who had as yet fallen in my way. An altercation took place between him and my host, the purport of which I could not guess, excepting that I was the occasion of it, be it what it would. The sequel was his leaving the house angrily; and I was immediately informed that he was the custom-house officer. The professional had indeed effaced the national character, for living as he did with these frank hospitable people, still only the exciseman appeared,—the counterpart of some I had met with in England and France. I was unprovided with a passport, not having entered any great town. At Gothenburg I knew I could immediately obtain one, and only the trouble made me object to the searching my trunks. He blustered for money; but the lieutenant was determined to guard me, according to promise, from imposition.

To avoid being interrogated at the town-gate, and obliged to go in the rain to give an account of myself, merely a form, before we could get the refreshment we stood in need of, he requested us to descend, I might have said step, from our car, and walk into town.

I expected to have found a tolerable inn, but was ushered into a most comfortless one; and, because it was about five o'clock, three or four hours after their dining hour, I could not prevail on them to give me any thing warm to eat.

The appearance of the accommodations obliged me to deliver one of my recommendatory letters, and the gentleman, to whom it was addressed, sent to look out for a lodging for me whilst I partook of his supper. As nothing passed at this supper to characterize the country, I shall here close my letter.

Your's truly.

Endnotes

- Note 2: Helsingør, Denmark. “Arendall”: in Norway [*Wollstonecraft’s note*]. “Gothenburg”: Göteborg, Sweden. Gilbert Imlay’s business partner was based in this town.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A British gold coin worth one pound and a shilling.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Rape.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The law then prohibited the import or consumption of coffee.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Payments in addition to salary. The suggestion is of income derived from bribes or smuggling.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, basin.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A small wildflower, variously colored. Wollstonecraft goes on to make the first of many veiled allusions to her faithless lover Imlay, to whom these letters are addressed.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Popular name for the pansy, whose juice Oberon put on the sleeping Titania’s eyes to make her dote on the next person she saw (Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 2.1.165–72).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Pleasing.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wollstonecraft had lived in France at the time of the Reign of Terror under Robespierre (1793–94).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The physical attraction between two different substances.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Feed.Return to reference 4

From *Letter 5*

Had I determined to travel in Sweden merely for pleasure, I should probably have chosen the road to Stockholm, though convinced, by repeated observation, that the manners of a people are best discriminated in the country. The inhabitants of the capital are all of the same genus; for the varieties in the species we must, therefore, search where the habitations of men are so separated as to allow the difference of climate to have its natural effect. And with this difference we are, perhaps, most forcibly struck at the first view, just as we form an estimate of the leading traits of a character at the first glance, of which intimacy afterwards makes us almost lose sight.

As my affairs called me to Stromstad (the frontier town of Sweden) in my way to Norway, I was to pass over, I heard, the most uncultivated part of the country.[5] Still I believe that the grand features of Sweden are the same every where, and it is only the grand features that admit of description. There is an individuality in every prospect, which remains in the memory as forcibly depicted as the particular features that have arrested our attention; yet we cannot find words to discriminate that individuality so as to enable a stranger to say, this is the face, that the view. We may amuse by setting the imagination to work; but we cannot store the memory with a fact.

As I wish to give you a general idea of this country, I shall continue in my desultory manner to make such observations and reflections as the circumstances draw forth, without losing time, by endeavouring to arrange them.

* * *

We arrived early the second evening at a little village called Quistram,[6] where we had determined to pass the night; having been informed that we should not afterwards find a tolerable inn until we reached Stromstad.

Advancing towards Quistram, as the sun was beginning to decline, I was particularly impressed by the beauty of the situation. The road was on the declivity of a rocky mountain, slightly covered with a mossy herbage and vagrant firs. At the bottom, a river, straggling amongst the recesses of stone, was hastening forward to the ocean and its grey rocks, of which we had a prospect on the left, whilst on the right it stole peacefully forward into the meadows, losing itself in a thickly wooded rising ground. As we drew near, the loveliest banks of wild flowers variegated the prospect, and promised to exhale odours to add to the sweetness of the air, the purity of which you could almost see, alas! not smell, for the putrifying herrings, which they use as manure, after the oil has been extracted, spread over the patches of earth, claimed by cultivation, destroyed every other.

It was intolerable, and entered with us into the inn, which was in other respects a charming retreat.

Whilst supper was preparing I crossed the bridge, and strolled by the river, listening to its murmurs. Approaching the bank, the beauty of which had attracted my attention in the carriage, I recognized many of my old acquaintance growing with great luxuriancy.

Seated on it, I could not avoid noting an obvious remark. Sweden appeared to me the country in the world most proper to form the botanist and natural historian: every object seemed to remind me of the creation of things, of the first efforts of sportive nature. When a country arrives at a certain state of perfection, it looks as if it were made so; and curiosity is not excited. Besides, in social life too many objects occur for any to be distinctly observed by the generality of mankind; yet a contemplative man, or poet, in the country, I do not mean the country adjacent to cities, feels and sees what would escape vulgar eyes, and draws suitable inferences. This train of reflections might have led me further, in every sense of the word; but I could not escape from the detestable evaporation of the herrings, which poisoned all my pleasure.

After making a tolerable supper, for it is not easy to get fresh provisions on the road, I retired, to be lulled to sleep by the

murmuring of a stream, of which I with great difficulty obtained sufficient to perform my daily ablutions.

The last battle between the Danes and Swedes, which gave new life to their ancient enmity, was fought at this place 1788;[7] only seventeen or eighteen were killed; for the great superiority of the Danes and Norwegians obliged the Swedes to submit; but sickness, and a scarcity of provisions, proved very fatal to their opponents, on their return.

It would be very easy to search for the particulars of this engagement in the publications of the day; but as this manner of filling my pages does not come within my plan, I probably should not have remarked that the battle was fought here, were it not to relate an anecdote which I had from good authority.

I noticed, when I first mentioned this place to you, that we descended a steep before we came to the inn; an immense ridge of rocks stretching out on one side. The inn was sheltered under them; and about a hundred yards from it was a bridge that crossed the river, whose murmurs I have celebrated; it was not fordable. The Swedish general received orders to stop at the bridge, and dispute the passage; a most advantageous post for an army so much inferior in force: but the influence of beauty is not confined to courts. The mistress of the inn was handsome: when I saw her there were still some remains of beauty; and, to preserve her house, the general gave up the only tenable station. He was afterwards broke[8] for contempt of orders.

Approaching the frontiers, consequently the sea, nature resumed an aspect ruder and ruder, or rather seemed the bones of the world waiting to be clothed with every thing necessary to give life and beauty. Still it was sublime.

The clouds caught their hue of the rocks that menaced them. The sun appeared afraid to shine, the birds ceased to sing, and the flowers to bloom; but the eagle fixed his nest high amongst the rocks, and the vulture hovered over this abode of desolation. The farm houses, in which only poverty resided, were formed of logs scarcely keeping off the cold and drifting snow; out of them the

inhabitants seldom peeped, and the sports or prattling of children was neither seen nor heard. The current of life seemed congealed at the source: all were not frozen; for it was summer, you remember; but everything appeared so dull, that I waited to see ice, in order to reconcile me to the absence of gaiety.

The day before, my attention had frequently been attracted by the wild beauties of the country we passed through.

The rocks which tossed their fantastic heads so high were often covered with pines and firs, varied in the most picturesque manner. Little woods filled up the recesses, when forests did not darken the scene; and vallies and glens, cleared of the trees, displayed a dazzling verdure which contrasted with the gloom of the shading pines. The eye stole into many a covert where tranquillity seemed to have taken up her abode, and the number of little lakes that continually presented themselves added to the peaceful composure of the scenery. The little cultivation which appeared did not break the enchantment, nor did castles rear their turrets aloft to crush the cottages, and prove that man is more savage than the natives of the woods. I heard of the bears, but never saw them stalk forth, which I was sorry for; I wished to have seen one in its wild state. In the winter, I am told, they sometimes catch a stray cow, which is a heavy loss to the owner.

The farms are small. Indeed most of the houses we saw on the road indicated poverty, or rather that the people could just live. Towards the frontiers they grew worse and worse in their appearance, as if not willing to put sterility itself out of countenance. No gardens smiled round the habitations, not a potato or cabbage to eat with the fish drying on a stick near the door. A little grain here and there appeared, the long stalks of which you might almost reckon. The day was gloomy when we passed over this rejected spot, the wind bleak, and winter seemed to be contending with nature, faintly struggling to change the season. Surely, thought I, if the sun ever shines here, it cannot warm these stones; moss only cleaves to them, partaking of their hardness; and nothing like vegetable life appears to chear with hope the heart.

So far from thinking that the primitive inhabitants of the world lived in a southern climate, where Paradise spontaneously arose, I am led to infer, from various circumstances, that the first dwelling of man happened to be a spot like this which led him to adore a sun so seldom seen; for this worship, which probably preceded that of demons or demi-gods, certainly never began in a southern climate, where the continual presence of the sun prevented its being considered as a good; or rather the want of it never being felt, this glorious luminary would carelessly have diffused its blessings without being hailed as a benefactor. Man must therefore have been placed in the north, to tempt him to run after the sun, in order that the different parts of the earth might be peopled. Nor do I wonder that hordes of barbarians always poured out of these regions to seek for milder climes, when nothing like cultivation attached them to the soil; especially when we take into the view that the adventuring spirit, common to man, is naturally stronger and more general during the infancy of society. The conduct of the followers of Mahomet,[9] and the crusaders, will sufficiently corroborate my assertion.

Approaching nearer to Stromstad, the appearance of the town proved to be quite in character with the country we had just passed through. I hesitated to use the word country, yet could not find another; still it would sound absurd to talk of fields of rocks.

The town was built on, and under them. Three or four weather-beaten trees were shrinking from the wind; and the grass grew so sparingly, that I could not avoid thinking Dr. Johnson's hyperbolical assertion "that the man merited well of his country who made a few blades of grass grow where they never grew before," might here have been uttered with strict propriety.[1] The steeple likewise towered aloft; for what is a church, even amongst the Lutherans, without a steeple? But to prevent mischief in such an exposed situation, it is wisely placed on a rock at some distance, not to endanger the roof of the church.

Rambling about, I saw the door open, and entered, when to my great surprise I found the clergyman reading prayers, with only the

clerk attending. I instantly thought of Swift's "Dearly beloved Roger;"[2] but on enquiry I learnt that some one had died that morning, and in Sweden it is customary to pray for the dead.

The sun, who I suspected never dared to shine, began now to convince me that he came forth only to torment; for though the wind was still cutting, the rocks became intolerably warm under my feet; whilst the herring effluvia, which I before found so very offensive, once more assailed me. I hastened back to the house of a merchant, the little sovereign of the place, because he was by far the richest, though not the mayor.

Here we were most hospitably received, and introduced to a very fine and numerous family. I have before mentioned to you the lillies of the north, I might have added, water lillies, for the complexion of many, even of the young women seem to be bleached on the bosom of snow. But in this youthful circle the roses bloomed with all their wonted freshness, and I wondered from whence the fire was stolen which sparkled in their fine blue eyes.

Here we slept; and I rose early in the morning to prepare for my little voyage to Norway. I had determined to go by water, and was to leave my companions behind; but not getting a boat immediately, and the wind being high and unfavourable, I was told that it was not safe to go to sea during such boisterous weather; I was therefore obliged to wait for the morrow, and had the present day on my hands; which I feared would be irksome, because the family, who possessed about a dozen French words amongst them, and not an English phrase, were anxious to amuse me, and would not let me remain alone in my room. The town we had already walked round and round; and if we advanced farther on the coast, it was still to view the same unvaried immensity of water, surrounded by barrenness.

The gentlemen wishing to peep into Norway, proposed going to Frederics-hall, the first town, the distance was only three Swedish miles.[3] There, and back again, was but a day's journey, and would not, I thought, interfere with my voyage. I agreed, and invited the eldest and prettiest of the girls to accompany us. I invited her,

because I liked to see a beautiful face animated by pleasure, and to have an opportunity of regarding the country, whilst the gentlemen were amusing themselves with her.

I did not know, for I had not thought of it, that we were to scale some of the most mountainous cliffs of Sweden, in our way to the ferry which separates the two countries.

Entering amongst the cliffs, we were sheltered from the wind; warm sun-beams began to play, streams to flow, and groves of pines diversified the rocks. Sometimes they became suddenly bare and sublime. Once, in particular, after mounting the most terrific precipice, we had to pass through a tremendous defile, where the closing chasm seemed to threaten us with instant destruction, when turning quickly, verdant meadows and a beautiful lake relieved and charmed my eyes.

I have never travelled through Switzerland; but one of my companions assured me, that I should not there find any thing superior, if equal to the wild grandeur of these views.

As we had not taken this excursion into our plan, the horses had not been previously ordered, which obliged us to wait two hours at the first post. The day was wearing away. The road was so bad, that walking up the precipices consumed the time insensibly. But as we desired horses at each post ready at a certain hour, we reckoned on returning more speedily.

We stopt to dine at a tolerable farm. They brought us out ham, butter, cheese, and milk; and the charge was so moderate, that I scattered a little money amongst the children who were peeping at us, in order to pay them for their trouble.

Arrived at the ferry, we were still detained; for the people who attend at the ferries have a stupid kind of sluggishness in their manner, which is very provoking when you are in haste. At present I did not feel it; for scrambling up the cliffs, my eye followed the river as it rolled between the grand rocky banks; and to complete the scenery, they were covered with firs and pines, through which the wind rustled, as if it were lulling itself to sleep with the declining sun.

Behold us now in Norway; and I could not avoid feeling surprise at observing the difference in the manners of the inhabitants of the two sides of the river; for everything shews that the Norwegians are more industrious and more opulent. The Swedes, for neighbours are seldom the best friends, accuse the Norwegians of knavery, and they retaliate by bringing a charge of hypocrisy against the Swedes. Local circumstances probably render both unjust, speaking from their feelings, rather than reason: and is this astonishing when we consider that most writers of travels have done the same, whose works have served as materials for the compilers of universal histories. All are eager to give a national character; which is rarely just, because they do not discriminate the natural from the acquired difference. The natural, I believe, on due consideration, will be found to consist merely in the degree of vivacity or thoughtfulness, pleasure, or pain, inspired by the climate, whilst the varieties which the forms of government, including religion, produce, are much more numerous and unstable.

A people have been characterized as stupid by nature; what a paradox! because they did not consider that slaves, having no object to stimulate industry, have not their faculties sharpened by the only thing that can exercise them, self-interest. Others have been brought forward as brutes, having no aptitude for the arts and sciences, only because the progress of improvement had not reached that stage which produces them.

Those writers who have considered the history of man, or of the human mind, on a more enlarged scale, have fallen into similar errors, not reflecting that the passions are weak where the necessaries of life are too hardly or too easily obtained.

Travellers who require that every nation should resemble their native country, had better stay at home. It is, for example, absurd to blame a people for not having that degree of personal cleanliness and elegance of manners which only refinement of taste produces, and will produce every where in proportion as society attains a general polish. The most essential service, I presume, that authors could render to society, would be to promote inquiry and discussion,

instead of making those dogmatical assertions which only appear calculated to gird the human mind round with imaginary circles, like the paper globe which represents the one he inhabits.

This spirit of inquiry is the characteristic of the present century, from which the succeeding will, I am persuaded, receive a great accumulation of knowledge; and doubtless its diffusion will in a great measure destroy the factitious national characters which have been supposed permanent, though only rendered so by the permanency of ignorance.

Arriving at Fredericshall, at the siege of which Charles XII lost his life,[4] we had only time to take a transient view of it, whilst they were preparing us some refreshment.

Poor Charles! I thought of him with respect. I have always felt the same for Alexander;[5] with whom he has been classed as a madman, by several writers, who have reasoned superficially, confounding the morals of the day with the few grand principles on which unchangeable morality rests. Making no allowance for the ignorance and prejudices of the period, they do not perceive how much they themselves are indebted to general improvement for the acquirements, and even the virtues, which they would not have had the force of mind to attain, by their individual exertions in a less advanced state of society.

The evening was fine, as is usual at this season; and the refreshing odour of the pine woods became more perceptible; for it was nine o'clock when we left Fredericshall. At the ferry we were detained by a dispute relative to our Swedish passport, which we did not think of getting countersigned in Norway. Midnight was coming on; yet it might with such propriety have been termed the noon of night, that had Young ever travelled towards the north, I should not have wondered at his becoming enamoured of the moon.[6] But it is not the queen of night alone who reigns here in all her splendor, though the sun, loitering just below the horizon, decks her with a golden tinge from his car, illuminating the cliffs that hide him; the heavens also, of a clear softened blue, throw her forward, and the evening star appears a lesser moon to the naked eye. The huge

shadows of the rocks, fringed with firs, concentrating the views, without darkening them, excited that tender melancholy which, sublimating the imagination, exalts, rather than depresses the mind.

My companions fell asleep:—fortunately they did not snore; and I contemplated, fearless of idle questions, a night such as I had never before seen or felt to charm the senses, and calm the heart. The very air was balmy, as it freshened into morn, producing the most voluptuous sensations. A vague pleasurable sentiment absorbed me, as I opened my bosom to the embraces of nature; and my soul rose to its author, with the chirping of the solitary birds, which began to feel, rather than see, advancing day. I had leisure to mark its progress. The grey morn, streaked with silvery rays, ushered in the orient beams,—how beautifully varying into purple!—yet, I was sorry to lose the soft watry clouds which preceded them, exciting a kind of expectation that made me almost afraid to breathe, lest I should break the charm. I saw the sun—and sighed.

One of my companions, now awake, perceiving that the postillion had mistaken the road, began to swear at him, and roused the other two, who reluctantly shook off sleep.

We had immediately to measure back our steps, and did not reach Stromstad before five in the morning.

The wind had changed in the night, and my boat was ready.

A dish of coffee, and fresh linen, recruited my spirits; and I directly set out again for Norway; purposing to land much higher up the coast.

Wrapping my great coat round me, I lay down on some sails at the bottom of the boat, its motion rocking me to rest, till a discourteous wave interrupted my slumbers, and obliged me to rise and feel a solitariness which was not so soothing as that of the past night.

Adieu!

1795 1796

Endnotes

- Note 5: Wollstonecraft has temporarily left behind in Gothenburg (modern-day Göteborg) her baby and the maid, Marguerite, and is now traveling north up Sweden's southwest coast to the border with Norway.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Located at about the halfway mark of the journey between Göteborg and the border.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A reference to the Russo-Swedish war of 1788–90, in which Sweden's foes Denmark and Norway became involved because of treaty obligations.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, stripped of his rank.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, Mohammed.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Probably thinking of his travelogue *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), which frequently deplores the barrenness of the Highlands, Wollstonecraft mistakenly ascribes to Samuel Johnson an assertion in fact uttered by the King of Brobdingnag in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). Gulliver reports that King's opinion that whoever could make "two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before" served his nation more "than the whole race of politicians put together."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The prayer services that during 1700 Swift conducted as vicar of Laracor (in County Meath, Ireland) were thinly attended. The legend goes that he arrived in church one day to find nobody present except his clerk Roger Cox, which necessitated some rewording of the customary address to the congregation. Swift began the service with the words, "Dearly beloved Roger."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In an earlier note Wollstonecraft explains that a Swedish mile is nearly six English miles.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Charles XII was the celebrated warrior king, known as "the Lion of the North," who ruled Sweden from 1697 to 1718. He was shot while inspecting the trenches, as his army besieged a Norwegian fortress in what is now the modern town of Halden.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: There was debate through the 18th century as to whether the military conquests of Alexander the Great (356–323

B.C.E.) should be seen as glorious or criminal, heroic or insane. The linkage of Alexander and Charles XII was conventional: in a *Champion* essay of 1740 the novelist Henry Fielding had, for instance, depicted them both as brutal madmen.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: The third book of Edward Young's popular long poem *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742–45) begins by invoking the moon as Young's muse.Return to reference 6

MARIA EDGEWORTH
1768–1849

Maria Edgeworth's publishing career earned her more than £11,000—an enormous sum. It also made the novel, regularly reviled by critics in the late eighteenth century, a respectable form. After 1804, the editor Francis Jeffrey attended respectfully in the pages of his *Edinburgh Review* to each of Edgeworth's publications, remarking on how in her hands fiction had become an edifying medium for serious ideas.

Edgeworth was born in Oxfordshire on New Year's Day, 1768, the second child of Richard Lovell Edgeworth and Anna Maria Elers, who died when her daughter was five. (Richard Lovell Edgeworth married three more times, each new wife younger than her predecessor, and eventually fathered twenty-two children.) Maria Edgeworth spent most of her childhood in fashionable boarding schools in England, until her father, in a spirit of patriotism and optimism about social progress, decided to dedicate himself to the family estate in Ireland that had been his birthplace. In 1782 he sent for Maria to join him, his third wife, and Maria's half-brothers and half-sisters at Edgeworthstown, source of the Protestant Edgeworths' wealth since the early seventeenth century, when the property had been confiscated from a Catholic family. For the rest of her life, that manor house in rural County Longford would remain home for Edgeworth, who in 1802 rejected a marriage proposal from a Swedish diplomat.

Brimming over with children, with books, and (it was reported) with "ingenious mechanical devices" (some of them Richard Lovell Edgeworth's inventions), this home doubled as a laboratory for her father's experiments in education, up-to-the-minute agricultural techniques, and enlightened landlord-tenant relations. From the age of fourteen, Edgeworth assumed a central role in those experiments. She took up the business of estate management. She taught the younger children. At her father's prompting, she began a course of reading in political and economic theory, starting with Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations.*

Eventually Maria Edgeworth also began to write. *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), a novelistic defense of women's education, was followed by *The Parent's Assistant* (1796) and *Practical Education* (1798), treatises on pedagogy she co-authored with her father, and by the first of her influential collections of stories for children (*Early Lessons*, 1801). In 1800 she published *Castle Rackrent*, her masterpiece. *Rackrent* inaugurated Edgeworth's series of narratives memorializing the vanishing ways of life of rural Ireland, a project continued by *Ennui* (1809), *The Absentee* (1812), and *Ormond* (1819). Edgeworth's study of the Enlightenment social sciences is easy to trace in these regional fictions, and these concerns were a factor that helped secure their reputation among the reviewers. Not only had Edgeworth managed to associate the novel with a more intellectually prestigious discourse but, by packaging her representations of Ireland's picturesque folk culture in this way, she was also able to tap the authority of a system of economic and political analysis that, in its claims to be scientifically impartial, seemed to many to offer a counterweight to the ugly prejudices that were the legacies of that nation's history of colonial conquest.

The year Richard Lovell Edgeworth settled in Ireland, 1782, seemed an auspicious moment for a reformer like him. The Parliament in Dublin had just won legislative independence, and it appeared as though penal laws targeting Catholics would soon be relaxed. But this confidence that a new era of civil harmony was

dawning was quickly shattered. In 1798 armed insurrection, involving both Catholic peasants and middle-class Protestants from the North, engulfed Ireland. The rising was soon repressed, with extreme brutality. Introduced in 1800 as a security measure by a British state horrified at the news that French expeditionary forces had planned to aid the rebels, an Act of Union abolished the Dublin Parliament and incorporated Ireland into the United Kingdom. However, as Byron observed in an address to the House of Lords, to call the ensuing political situation a union was to abuse the term: "If it must be called an Union, it is the union of the shark with his prey." The native Catholic population would long remain without civil rights. Indeed, when Edgeworth died in 1849 at the age of eighty-three, Ireland was once again a scene of violent insurrection as well as of horrendous famine.

An anecdote in Edgeworth's 1820 memoir of her father conveys a sense of the ambiguous position that the Protestant Anglo-Irish—neither English exactly, nor Irish, neither outsiders nor natives—occupied in this tense political context. Edgeworth recounts how, after their family escaped from the Catholic rebels who in 1798 occupied the countryside around Edgeworthstown, Richard Lovell Edgeworth was nearly lynched by a mob from the Protestant county town where the Edgeworths had taken refuge, who were certain (such were the suspicions aroused by his nonsectarian politics) that he was a rebel sympathizer and a French spy.

The 1802 tale that we have selected as an example of Maria Edgeworth's fiction, "The Irish Incognito"—part trickster tale from the folk tradition, part philosophical meditation on the precariousness of personal identity—also captures something of this experience of living between cultures. Starting with the first disorienting sentence, which introduces a hero who sports the ultra-English name of John Bull but who is also a native son of Cork, this treatment of cultural difference is distinguished by some slippery ironies. (A town on Ireland's south coast, Cork, of course, is home to the legendary Blarney Stone, which grants Irish people their gift of gab.) The tale might well have promoted tolerance for British

diversity among its original readers: unlike many of his namesakes of the era, this "John Bull" is eminently likeable. But (as with the more biting satires that Jonathan Swift had penned in Dublin eighty years before) it would also have perplexed these readers' preconceived notions about *who* exactly was *who* within that hybrid political entity called "the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland."

The Irish Incognito[1]

Sir John Bull was a native of Ireland, *bred* and *born* in the city of Cork. His real name was Phelim O'Mooney, and he was by profession a *stocah*, or walking gentleman; that is, a person who is too proud to earn his bread, and too poor to have bread without earning it. He had always been told that none of his ancestors had ever been in trade or business of any kind, and he resolved, when a boy, never to *demean* himself and family, as his elder brother had done, by becoming a rich merchant. When he grew up to be a young man, he kept this spirited resolution as long as he had a relation or friend in the world who would let him hang upon them; but when he was shaken off by all, what could he do but go into business? He chose the most genteel, however; he became a wine merchant. I'm *only* a wine merchant, said he to himself, and that is next door to being nothing at all. His brother furnished his cellars; and Mr. Phelim O'Mooney, upon the strength of the wine that he had in his cellars, and of the money he expected to make of it, immediately married a wife, set up a gig, and gave excellent dinners to men who were ten times richer than he even ever *expected* to be. In return for these excellent dinners, his new friends bought all their wine from Mr. O'Mooney, and never paid for it; he lived upon credit himself, and gave all his friends credit, till he became a bankrupt. Then nobody came to dine with him, and every body found out that he had been very imprudent; and he was obliged to sell his gig, but not before it had broken his wife's neck; so that when accounts came to be finally settled, he was not much worse than when he began the world, the loss falling upon his creditors, and he being, as he observed, free to begin life again, with the advantage of being once more a bachelor. He was such a good-natured, freehearted fellow, that every body liked him, even his creditors. His wife's relations made up the sum of five hundred pounds for him, and his brother offered to take him into his firm as partner; but O'Mooney preferred, he said, going to

try, or rather to make, his fortune in England, as he did not doubt but he should by marriage, being, as he did not scruple to acknowledge, a personable, clever-looking man, and a great favourite with the sex.[2]

"My last wife I married for love, my next I expect will do the same by me, and of course the money must come on her side this time," said our hero, half jesting, half in earnest. His elder and wiser brother, the merchant, whom he still held in more than sufficient contempt, ventured to hint some slight objections to this scheme of Phelim's seeking fortune in England. He observed that so many had gone upon this plan already, that there was rather a prejudice in England against Irish adventurers.

This could not affect *him* any ways, Phelim replied, because he did not mean to appear in England as an Irishman at all.

"How then?"

"As an Englishman, since that is most agreeable."

"How can that be?"

"Who should hinder it?"

His brother, hesitatingly, said "Yourself."

"Myself!—What part of myself? Is it my tongue?—You'll acknowledge, brother, that I do not speak with the brogue."

It was true that Phelim did not speak with any Irish brogue: his mother was an English woman, and he had lived much with English officers in Cork, and he had studied and imitated their manner of speaking so successfully, that no one, merely by his accent, could have guessed that he was an Irishman.

"Hey! brother, I say!" continued Phelim, in a triumphant English tone; "I never was taken for an Irishman in my life. Colonel Broadman told me the other day, I spoke English better than the English themselves; that he should take me for an Englishman, in any part of the known world, the moment I opened my lips. You must allow that not the smallest particle of brogue is discernible on my tongue."

His brother allowed that not the smallest particle of brogue was to be discerned upon Phelim's tongue, but feared that some Irish idiom might be perceived in his conversation. And then the name of O'Mooney!

"Oh, as to that, I need not trouble an act of parliament, or even a king's letter, just to change my name for a season; at the worst, I can travel and appear incognito."

"Always?"

"No: only just till I'm upon good terms with the lady—Mrs. Phelim O'Mooney, that is to be, God willing. Never fear, nor shake your head, brother; *you* men of business are out of this line, and not proper judges: I beg your pardon for saying so, but as you are my own brother, and nobody by, you'll excuse me."

His brother did excuse him, but continued silent for some minutes; he was pondering upon the means of persuading Phelim to give up this scheme.

"I would lay you any wager, my dear Phelim," said he, "that you could not continue four days in England incognito."

"Done!" cried Phelim. "Done for a hundred pounds; done for a thousand pounds, and welcome."

"But if you lose, how will you pay?"

"Faith! that's the last thing I thought of, being sure of winning."

"Then you will not object to any mode of payment I shall propose."

"None: only remembering always, that I was bankrupt last week, and shall be little better till I'm married; but then I'll pay you honestly if I lose."

"No, if you lose I must be paid before that time, my good sir," said his brother, laughing. "My bet is this:—I will lay you one hundred guineas that you do not remain four days in England incognito; be upon honour with me, and promise, that if you lose, you will, instead of laying down a hundred guineas, come back immediately, and settle quietly again to business."

The word *business* was always odious to our hero's proud ears; but he thought himself so secure of winning his wager, that he

willingly bound himself in a penalty which he believed would never become due; and his generous brother, at parting, made the bet still more favourable, by allowing that Phelim should not be deemed the loser unless he was, in the course of the first four days after he touched English ground, detected eight times in being an Irishman.

"Eight times!" cried Phelim. "Good bye to a hundred guineas, brother, you may say."

"You may say," echoed his brother, and so they parted.

Mr. Phelim O'Mooney the next morning sailed from Cork harbour with a prosperous gale, and with a confidence in his own success which supplied the place of auspicious omens. He embarked at Cork, to go by long sea to London, and was driven into Deal, where Julius Caesar once landed before him, and with the same resolution to see and conquer.[3] It was early in the morning; having been very sea-sick, he was impatient, as soon as he got into the inn, for his breakfast: he was shown into a room where three ladies were waiting to go by the stage; his air of easy confidence was the best possible introduction.

"Would any of the company choose eggs?" said the waiter.

"I never touch an egg for my share," said O'Mooney, carelessly; he knew that it was supposed to be an Irish custom to eat eggs at breakfast; and when the malicious waiter afterwards set a plate full of eggs in salt upon the table, our hero magnanimously abstained from them; he even laughed heartily at a story told by one of the ladies of an Hibernian at Buxton, who declared that "no English hen ever laid a fresh egg."

O'Mooney got through breakfast much to his own satisfaction, and to that of the ladies, whom he had taken a proper occasion to call the *three graces,*[4] and whom he had informed that he was an *old* baronet of an English family, and that his name was Sir John Bull. The youngest of the graces civilly observed, "that whatever else he might he, she should never have taken him for an *old* baronet." The lady who made this speech was pretty, but O'Mooney had penetration enough to discover, in the course of the conversation, that she and her companions were far from being divinities; his

three graces were a greengrocer's wife, a tallow chandler's widow, and a milliner. When he found that these ladies were likely to be his companions if he were to travel in the coach, he changed his plan, and ordered a post-chaise and four.

O'Mooney was not in danger of making any vulgar Irish blunders in paying his bill at an inn. No landlord or waiter could have suspected him, especially as he always left them to settle the matter first, and then looked over the bill and money with a careless gentility, saying, "Very right," or, "Very well, sir"; wisely calculating, that it was better to lose a few shillings on the road, than to lose a hundred pounds by the risk of Hibernian miscalculation.

Whilst the chaise was getting ready he went to the custom-house to look after his baggage. He found a red-hot countryman of his own there, roaring about four and fourpence, and fighting the battle of his trunks, in which he was ready to make affidavit there was not, nor never had been, any thing contraband; and when the custom-house officer replied by pulling out of one of them a piece of Irish poplin, the Hibernian fell immediately upon the Union, which he swore was Disunion, as the custom-house officers managed it. Sir John Bull appeared to much advantage all this time, maintaining a dignified silence; from his quiet appearance and deportment, the custom-house officers took it for granted that he was an Englishman. He was in no hurry; he begged *that* gentleman's business might be settled first; he would wait the officer's leisure, and as he spoke he played so dexterously with half-a-guinea between his fingers, as to make it visible only where he wished. The custom-house officer was his humble servant immediately; but the Hibernian would have been his enemy, if he had not conciliated him by observing, "that even Englishmen must allow there was something very like a bull in professing to make a complete identification of the two kingdoms, whilst, at the same time, certain regulations continued in full force to divide the countries by art, even more than the British channel does by nature."

Sir John talked so plausibly, and, above all, so candidly and coolly on Irish and English politics, that the custom-house officer conversed

with him for a quarter of an hour without guessing of what country he was, till in an unlucky moment Phelim's heart got the better of his head. Joining in the praises bestowed by all parties on the conduct of a distinguished patriot of his country, he, in the height of his enthusiasm, inadvertently called him *the Speaker.*

"The *Speaker*!" said the officer.

"Yes, the Speaker—*our* Speaker" cried Phelim, with exultation.[5] He was not aware how he had betrayed himself, till the officer smiled and said—

"Sir, I really never should have found out that you were an Irishman but from the manner in which you named your countryman, who is as highly thought of by all parties in this country as in yours: your enthusiasm does honour to your heart."

"And to my head, I'm sure," said our hero, laughing with the best grace imaginable. "Well, I am glad you have found me out in this manner, though I lose the eighth part of a bet of a hundred guineas by it."

He explained the wager, and begged the custom-house officer to keep his secret, which he promised to do faithfully, and assured him, "that he should be happy to do any thing in his power to serve him." Whilst he was uttering these last words, there came in a snug, but soft-looking Englishman, who opining from the words "happy to do any thing in my power to serve you," that O'Mooney was a friend of the custom-house officer's, and encouraged by something affable and good-natured in our hero's countenance, crept up to him, and whispered a request—"Could you tell a body, sir, how to get out of the custom-house a very valuable box of Sèvre china that has been *laying* in the custom-house three weeks, and which I was commissioned to get out if I could, and bring up to town for a lady."

As a lady was in the case, O'Mooney's gallantry instantly made his good-nature effective. The box of Sèvre china was produced, and opened only as a matter of form, and only as a matter of curiosity its contents were examined—a beautiful set of Sèvre china and a pendule, said to have belonged to M. Egalité![6] "These things must

be intended," said Phelim, "for some lady of superior taste or fortune."

As Phelim was a proficient in the Socratic art of putting judicious interrogatories, he was soon happily master of the principal points it concerned him to know: he learnt that the lady was rich—a spinster—of full age—at her own disposal—living with a single female companion at Blackheath[7]—furnishing a house there in a superior style—had two carriages—her Christian name Mary—her surname Sharperson.

O'Mooney, by the blessing of God, it shall soon be, thought Phelim. He politely offered the Englishman a place in his chaise for himself and Sèvre china, as it was for a lady, and would run great hazard in the stage, which besides was full. Mr. Queasy, for that was our soft Englishman's name, was astonished by our hero's condescension and affability, especially as he heard him called Sir John: he bowed sundry times as low as the fear of losing his wig would permit, and accepted the polite offer with many thanks for himself and the lady concerned.

Sir John Bull's chaise and four was soon ready and Queasy seated in the corner of it, and the Sèvre china safely stowed between his knees. Captain Murray, a Scotch officer, was standing at the inn door, with his eyes intently fixed on the letters that were worked in nails on the top of Sir John's trunk; the letters were P. O'M. Our hero, whose eyes were at least as quick as the Scotchman's, was alarmed lest this should lead to a second detection. He called instantly, with his usual presence of mind, to the ostler, and desired him to uncord *that* trunk, as it was not to go with him; raising his voice loud enough for all *the yard* to hear, he added—"It is not mine at all; it belongs to my friend, Mr. O'Mooney: let it be sent after me, at leisure, by the waggon, as directed, to the care of Sir John Bull."

Our hero was now giving his invention a prodigious quantity of superfluous trouble; and upon this occasion, as upon most others, he was more in danger from excess than deficiency of ingenuity: he was like the man in the fairy tale, who was obliged to tie his legs lest

he should outrun the object of which he was in pursuit. The Scotch officer, though his eyes were fixed on the letters P. O'M., had none of the suspicions which Phelim was counteracting; he was only considering how he could ask for the third place in Sir John's chaise during the next stage, as he was in great haste to get to town upon particular business, and there were no other horses at the inn. When he heard that the heavy baggage was to go by the waggon, he took courage, and made his request. It was instantly granted by the good-natured Hibernian, who showed as much hospitality about his chaise as if it had been his house. Away they drove as fast as they could. Fresh dangers awaited him at the next inn. He left his hat upon the table in the hall whilst he went into the parlour, and when he returned, he heard some person inquiring what Irish gentleman was there. Our hero was terribly alarmed, for he saw that his hat was in the inquirer's hand, and he recollected that the name of Phelim O'Mooney was written in it. This the inquisitive gentleman did not see, for it was written in no very legible characters on the leather withinside of the front; but "F. Guest, hatter, Dame-street, Dublin," was a printed advertisement that could not be mistaken, and *that* was pasted within the crown. O'Mooney's presence of mind did not forsake him upon this emergency.

"My good sir," said he, turning to Queasy, who, without hearing one word of what was passing, was coming out of the parlour, with his own hat and gloves in his hand; "My good sir," continued he, loading him with parcels, "will you have the goodness to see these put into my carriage? I'll take care of your hat and gloves," added O'Mooney in a low voice. Queasy surrendered his hat and gloves instantly, unknowing wherefore; then squeezed forward with his load through the crowd, crying—"Waiter! hostler! pray, somebody put these into Sir John Bull's chaise."

Sir John Bull, equipped with Queasy's hat, marched deliberately through the defile, bowing with the air of at least an English county member[8] to this side and to that, as way was made for him to his carriage. No one suspected that the hat did not belong to him; no one, indeed, thought of the hat, for all eyes were fixed upon the

man. Seated in the carriage, he threw money to the waiter, hostler, and boots, and drew up the glass, bidding the postilions drive on. By this cool self-possession our hero effected his retreat with successful generalship, leaving his new Dublin beaver behind him, without regret, as bona waviata.[9] Queasy, before whose eyes things passed continually without his seeing them, thanked Sir John for the care he had taken of his hat, drew on his gloves, and calculated aloud how long they should be going to the next stage. At the first town they passed through, O'Mooney bought a new hat, and Queasy deplored the unaccountable mistake by which Sir John's hat had been forgotten. No further *mistakes* happened upon the journey. The travellers rattled on, and neither 'stinted nor stayed'[1] till they arrived at Blackheath, at Miss Sharperson's. Sir John sat Queasy down without having given him the least hint of his designs upon the lady; but as he helped him out with the Sèvre china, he looked through the large opening double doors of the hall, and slightly said—"Upon my word, this seems to be a handsome house: it would be worth looking at, if the family were not at home."

"I am morally sure, Sir John," said the soft Queasy, "that Miss Sharperson would be happy to let you see the house to-night, and this minute, if she knew you were at the door, and who you were, and all your civility about me and the china.—Do, pray, walk in."

"Not for the world: a gentleman could not do such a thing without an invitation from the lady of the house herself."

"Oh, if that's all, I'll step up myself to the young lady; I'm certain she'll be proud—"

"Mr. Queasy, by no means; I would not have the lady disturbed for the world at this unseasonable hour.—It is too late—quite too late."

"Not at all, begging pardon, Sir John," said Queasy, taking out his watch: "only just tea-time by me.—Not at all unseasonable for any body; besides, the message is of my own head:—all, you know, if not well taken—"

Up the great staircase he made bold to go on his mission, as he thought, in defiance of Sir John's better judgment. He returned in a

few minutes with a face of self-complacent exultation, *and* Miss Sharperson's compliments, and begs Sir John Bull will walk up and rest himself with a dish of tea, and has her thanks to him for the china.

Now Queasy, who had the highest possible opinion of Sir John Bull and of Miss Sharperson, whom he thought the two people of the greatest consequence and affability, had formed the notion that they were made for each other, and that it must be a match if they could but meet. The meeting he had now happily contrived and effected; and he had done his part for his friend Sir John, with Miss Sharperson, by as many exaggerations as he could utter in five minutes, concerning his perdigious politeness and courage, his fine person and carriage, his ancient family, and vast connections and importance wherever he appeared on the road, at inns, and over all England. He had previously, during the journey, done his part for his friend Miss Sharperson with Sir John, by stating that "she had a large fortune left her by her mother, and was to have twice as much from her grandmother; that she had thousands upon thousands in the funds, and an estate of two thousand a year, called Rascàlly, in Scotland, besides plate and jewels without end."

Thus prepared, how could this lady and gentleman meet without falling desperately in love with each other!

Though a servant in handsome livery appeared ready to show Sir John up the great staircase, Mr. Queasy acted as a gentleman usher, or rather as showman. He nodded to Sir John as they passed across a long gallery and through an ante-chamber, threw open the doors of various apartments as he went along, crying—"Peep in! peep in! peep in here! peep in there!—Is not this spacious? Is not this elegant? Is not that grand? Did I say too much?" continued he, rubbing his hands with delight. "Did you ever see so magnificent and such highly-polished steel grates out of Lon'on?"

Sir John, conscious that the servant's eyes were upon him, smiled at this question, "looked superior down;" and though with reluctant complaisance he leaned his body to this side or to that, as Queasy pulled or swayed, yet he appeared totally regardless of the man's

vulgar reflections. He had seen every thing as he passed, and was surprised at all he saw; but he evinced not the slightest symptom of astonishment. He was now ushered into a spacious, well lighted apartment: he entered with the easy, unembarrassed air of a man who was perfectly accustomed to such a home. His quick coup-d'oeil took in the whole at a single glance. Two magnificent candelabras stood on Egyptian tables[2] at the farther end of the room, and the lights were reflected on all sides from mirrors of no common size. Nothing seemed worthy to attract our hero's attention but the lady of the house, whom he approached with an air of distinguished respect. She was reclining on a Turkish sofa, her companion seated beside her, tuning a harp. Miss Sharperson half rose to receive Sir John: he paid his compliments with an easy, yet respectful air. He was thanked for his civilities to *the person* who had been commissioned to bring the box of Sèvre china from Deal.

"Vastly sorry it should have been so troublesome," Miss Sharperson said, in a voice fashionably unintelligible, and with a most becoming yet intimidating nonchalance of manner. Intimidating it might have been to any man but our hero; he, who had the happy talent of catching, wherever he went, the reigning manner of the place, replied to the lady in equal strains; and she, in her turn, seemed to look upon him more as her equal. Tea and coffee were served. *Nothings* were talked of quite easily by Sir John. He practised the art "not to admire," so as to give a justly high opinion of his taste, consequence, and knowledge of the world. Miss Sharperson, though her nonchalance was much diminished, continued to maintain a certain dignified reserve; whilst her companion, Miss Felicia Flat, condescended to ask Sir John, who had doubtless seen every fine house in England and on the continent, his opinion with respect to the furniture and finishing of the room, the placing of the Egyptian tables and the candelabras.

No mortal could have guessed by Sir John Bull's air, when he heard this question, that he had never seen a candelabra before in his life. He was so much, and yet seemingly so little upon his guard, he dealt so dexterously in generals, and evaded particulars so

delicately, that he went through this dangerous conversation triumphantly. Careful not to protract his visit beyond the bounds of propriety, he soon rose to take leave, and he mingled "intrusion, regret, late hour, happiness, and honour," so charmingly in his parting compliment, as to leave the most favourable impression on the minds of both the ladies, and to procure for himself an invitation to see the house next morning.

The first day was now ended, and our hero had been detected but once. He went to rest this night well satisfied with himself, but much more occupied with the hopes of marrying the heiress of Rascàlly than of winning a paltry bet.

The next day he waited upon the ladies in high spirits. Neither of them was *visible*, but Mr. Queasy had orders to show him the house, which he did with much exultation, dwelling particularly in his praises on the beautiful high polish of the steel grates. Queasy boasted that it was he who had recommended the ironmonger who furnished the house in that line; and that his bill, as he was proud to state, amounted to *many, many* hundreds. Sir John, who did not attend to one word Queasy said, went to examine the map of the Rascàlly estate, which was unrolled, and he had leisure to count the number of lords' and ladies' visiting tickets[3] which lay upon the chimney-piece. He saw names of the people of first quality and respectability: it was plain that Miss Sharperson must be a lady of high family as well as large fortune, else she would not be visited by persons of such distinction. Our hero's passion for her increased every moment. Her companion, Miss Flat, now appeared, and entered very freely into conversation with Sir John; and as he perceived that she was commissioned to sit in judgment upon him, he evaded all her leading questions with the skill of an Irish witness, but without giving any Hibernian answers. She was fairly at a fault. Miss Sharperson at length appeared, elegantly dressed; her person was genteel, and her face rather pretty. Sir John, at this instant, thought her beautiful, or seemed to think so. The ladies interchanged looks, and afterwards Sir John found a softness in his fair one's manner, a languishing tenderness in her eyes, in the tone

of her voice, and at the same time a modest perplexity and reserve about her, which altogether persuaded him that he was quite right, and his brother quite wrong *en fait d'amour.*[4] Miss Flat appeared now to have the most self-possession of the three, and Miss Sharperson looked at her, from time to time, as if she asked leave to be in love. Sir John's visit lasted a full half hour before he was sensible of having been five minutes engaged in this delightful conversation.

Miss Sharperson's coach now came to the door: he handed her into it, and she gave him a parting look, which satisfied him all was yet safe in her heart. Miss Flat, as he handed her into the carriage, said, "Perhaps they should meet Sir John at Tunbridge,[5] where they were going in a few days." She added some words as she seated herself, which he scarcely noticed at the time, but they recurred afterwards disagreeably to his memory. The words were, "I'm so glad we've a roomy coach, for of all things it annoys me to be *squeedged* in a carriage."

This word *squeedged*, as he had not been used to it in Ireland, sounded to him extremely vulgar, and gave him suspicions of the most painful nature. He had the precaution, before he left Blackheath, to go into several shops, and to inquire something more concerning his fair ladies. All he heard was much to their advantage; that is, much to the advantage of Miss Sharperson's fortune. All agreed that she was a rich Scotch heiress. A rich Scotch heiress, Sir John wisely considered, might have an humble companion who spoke bad English. He concluded that *squeedged* was Scotch, blamed himself for his suspicions, and was more in love with his mistress and with himself than ever. As he returned to town, he framed the outline of a triumphant letter to his brother on his approaching marriage. The bet was a matter, at present, totally beneath his consideration. However, we must do him the justice to say, that like a man of honour he resolved that, as soon as he had won the lady's heart, he would *candidly* tell her his circumstances, and then leave her the choice either to marry him or break her heart, as she pleased. Just as he had formed this generous

resolution, at a sudden turn of the road he overtook Miss Sharperson's coach: he bowed and looked in as he passed, when, to his astonishment, he saw, *squeedged* up in the corner by Miss Felicia, Mr. Queasy. He thought that this was a blunder in etiquette that would never have been made in Ireland. Perhaps his mistress was of the same opinion, for she hastily pulled down the blind as Sir John passed. A cold qualm came over the lover's heart. He lost no time in idle doubts and suspicions, but galloped on to town as fast as he could, and went immediately to call upon the Scotch officer with whom he had travelled, and whom he knew to be keen and prudent. He recollected the map of the Rascàlly estate, which he saw in Miss Sharperson's breakfast-room, and he remembered that the lands were said to lie in that part of Scotland from which Captain Murray came; from him he resolved to inquire into the state of the premises, before he should offer himself as tenant for life. Captain Murray assured him that there was no such place as Rascàlly in that part of Scotland; that he had never heard of any such person as Miss Sharperson, though he was acquainted with every family and every estate in the neighbourhood where she fabled hers to be. O'Mooney drew, from memory, the map of the Rascàlly estate. Captain Murray examined the boundaries, and assured him that his cousin the general's lands joined his own at the very spot which he described, and that unless two straight lines could enclose a space, the Rascàlly estate could not be found.

Sir John, naturally of a warm temper, proceeded, however, with prudence. The Scotch officer admired his sagacity in detecting this adventurer. Sir John waited at his hotel for Queasy, who had promised to call to let him know when the ladies would go to Tunbridge. Queasy came. Nothing could equal his astonishment and dismay when he was told the news.

"No such place as the Rascàlly estate! Then I'm an undone man! an undone man!" cried poor Queasy, bursting into tears: "but I'm certain it's impossible; and you'll find, Sir John, you've been misinformed. I would stake my life upon it, Miss Sharperson's a rich heiress, and has a rich grandmother. Why, she's five hundred pounds

in my debt, and I know of her being thousands and thousands in the books of as good men as myself, to whom I've recommended her, which I wouldn't have done for my life if I had not known her to be solid. You'll find she'll prove a rich heiress, Sir John."

Sir John hoped so, but the proofs were not yet satisfactory. Queasy determined to inquire about her payments to certain creditors at Blackheath, and promised to give a decisive answer in the morning. O'Mooney saw that this man was too great a fool to be a knave; his perturbation was evidently the perturbation of a dupe, not of an accomplice: Queasy was made to "be an anvil, not a hammer."[6] In the midst of his own disappointment, our good-natured Hibernian really pitied this poor currier.[7]

The next morning Sir John went early to Blackheath. All was confusion at Miss Sharperson's house; the steps covered with grates and furniture of all sorts; porters carrying out looking-glasses, Egyptian tables, and candelabras; the noise of workmen was heard in every apartment; and louder than all the rest, O'Mooney heard the curses that were denounced against his rich heiress—curses such as are bestowed on a swindler in the moment of detection by the tradesmen whom she has ruined.

Our hero, who was of a most happy temper, congratulated himself upon having, by his own wit and prudence, escaped making the practical bull of marrying a female swindler.

Now that Phelim's immediate hopes of marrying a rich heiress were over, his bet with his brother appeared to him of more consequence, and he rejoiced in the reflection that this was the third day he had spent in England, and that he had but once been detected.—The ides of March[8] were come, but not passed!

"My lads," said he to the workmen, who were busy in carrying out the furniture from Miss Sharperson's house, "all hands are at work, I see, in saving what they can from the wreck of *the Sharperson.* She was as well-fitted out a vessel, and in as gallant trim, as any ship upon the face of the earth."

"Ship upon the face of the *yearth*!" repeated an English porter with a sneer; "ship upon the face of the water, you should say,

master; but I take it you be's an Irishman."

O'Mooney had reason to be particularly vexed at being detected by this man, who spoke a miserable jargon, and who seemed not to have a very extensive range of ideas. He was one of those half-witted geniuses who catch at the shadow of an Irish bull. In fact, Phelim had merely made a lapsus linguae and had used an expression justifiable by the authority of the elegant and witty lord Chesterfield,[9] who said—no, who *wrote*—that the English navy is the finest navy *upon the face of the earth*! But it was in vain for our hero to argue the point; he was detected—no matter how or by whom. But this was only his second detection, and three of his four days of probation were past.

He dined this day at Captain Murray's. In the room in which they dined there was a picture of the captain, painted by Romney. Sir John, who happened to be seated opposite to it, observed that it was a very fine picture; the more he looked at it, the more he liked it. His admiration was at last unluckily expressed: he said, "That's an incomparable, an inimitable picture; it is absolutely *more like than the original."*[1]

A keen Scotch lady in company smiled, and repeated, *"More like than the original!* Sir John, if I had not been told by my relative here that you were an Englishman, I should have set you *doon*, from that speech, for an Irishman."

This unexpected detection brought the colour, for a moment, into Sir John's face; but immediately recovering his presence of mind, he said, "That was, I acknowledge, an excellent Irish bull; but in the course of my travels I have heard as good English bulls as Irish."

To this Captain Murray politely acceded, and he produced some laughable instances in support of the assertion, which gave the conversation a new turn.

O'Mooney felt extremely obliged to the captain for this, especially as he saw, by his countenance, that he also had suspicions of the truth. The first moment he found himself alone with Murray, our hero said to him, "Murray, you are too good a fellow to impose upon, even in jest. Your keen countrywoman guessed the truth—I am an

Irishman, but not a swindler. You shall hear why I conceal my country and name; only keep my secret till to-morrow night, or I shall lose a hundred guineas by my frankness."

O'Mooney then explained to him the nature of his bet. "This is only my third detection, and half of it voluntary, I might say, if I chose to higgle, which I scorn to do."

Captain Murray was so much pleased by this openness, that as he shook hands with O'Mooney, he said, "Give me leave to tell you, Sir, that even if you should lose your bet by this frank behaviour, you will have gained a better thing—a friend."

In the evening our hero went with his friend and a party of gentlemen to Maidenhead, near which place a battle was to be fought next day, between two famous pugilists, Bourke and Belcher.[2] At the appointed time the combatants appeared upon the stage; the whole boxing corps and the gentlemen *amateurs* crowded to behold the spectacle. Phelim O'Mooney's heart beat for the Irish champion Bourke; but he kept a guard upon his tongue, and had even the forbearance not to bet upon his countryman's head. How many rounds were fought, and how many minutes the fight lasted, how many blows were *put in* on each side, or which was the *game man* of the two, we forbear to decide or relate, as all this has been settled in the newspapers of the day; where also it was remarked, that Bourke, who lost the battle, "was put into a post-chaise, and left *standing* half an hour, while another fight took place. This was very scandalous on the part of his friends," says the humane newspaper historian, "as the poor man might possibly be dying."

Our hero O'Mooney's heart again got the better of his head. Forgetful of his bet, forgetful of every thing but humanity, he made his way up to the chaise, where Bourke was left. "How are you, my gay fellow?" said he. "Can you *see at all with the eye that's knocked out?"*

The brutal populace, who overheard this question, set up a roar of laughter: "A bull! a bull! an Irish bull! Did you hear the question this Irish gentleman asked his countryman?"

O’Mooney was detected a fourth time, and this time he was not ashamed. There was one man in the crowd who did not join in the laugh: a poor Irishman, of the name of Terence McDermod. He had in former times gone out a grousing, near Cork, with our hero; and the moment he heard his voice, he sprang forward, and with uncouth but honest demonstrations of joy, exclaimed, “Ah, my dear master! my dear young master! Phelim O’Mooney, Esq.[3] And I have found your honour alive again? By the blessing of God above, I’ll never part you now till I die; and I’ll go to the world’s end to sarve *yees*.”

O’Mooney wished him at the world’s end this instant, yet could not prevail upon himself to check this affectionate follower of the O’Mooneys. He, however, put half a crown into his hand, and hinted that if he wished really to serve him, it must be at some other time. The poor fellow threw down the money, saying, he would never leave him. “Bid me do any thing, barring that. No, you shall never part me. Do what you plase with me, still I’ll be close to your heart, like your own shadow: knock me down if you will, and wilcome, ten times a day, and I’ll be up again like a ninepin: only let me sarve your honour; I’ll ask no wages nor take none.”

There was no withstanding all this; and whether our hero’s good-nature deceived him we shall not determine, but he thought it most prudent, as he could not get rid of Terence, to take him into his service, to let him into his secret, to make him swear that he would never utter the name of Phelim O’Mooney during the remainder of this day. Terence heard the secret of the bet with joy, entered into the jest with all the readiness of an Irishman, and with equal joy and readiness swore by the hind leg of the holy lamb that he would never mention, even to his own dog, the name of Phelim O’Mooney, Esq., good or bad, till past twelve o’clock; and further, that he would, till the clock should strike that hour, call his master Sir John Bull, and nothing else, to all men, women, and children, upon the floor of God’s creation.

Satisfied with the fulness of this oath, O’Mooney resolved to return to town with his man Terence McDermod. He, however,

contrived, before he got there, to make a practical bull, by which he was detected a fifth time. He got into the coach which was driving *from* London instead of that which was driving *to* London, and he would have been carried rapidly to Oxford, had not his man Terence, after they had proceeded a mile and a half on the wrong road, put his head down from the top of the coach, crying, as he looked in at the window, "Master, Sir John Bull, are you there? Do you know we're in the wrong box, going to Oxford?"

"Your master's an Irishman, dare to say, as well as yourself," said the coachman, as he let Sir John out. He walked back to Maidenhead, and took a chaise to town.

It was six o'clock when he got to London, and he went into a coffee-house to dine. He sat down beside a gentleman who was reading the newspaper. "Any news to-day, sir?"

The gentleman told him the news of the day, and then began to read aloud some paragraphs in a strong Hibernian accent. Our hero was sorry that he had met with another countryman; but he resolved to set a guard upon his lips, and he knew that his own accent could not betray him. The stranger read on till he came to a trial about a legacy which an old woman had left to her cats. O'Mooney exclaimed, "I hate cats almost as much as old women; and if I had been the English minister, I would have laid the *dog-tax* upon cats."[4]

"If you had been the *Irish* minister, you mean," said the stranger, smiling; "for I perceive now you are a countryman of my own."

"How can you think so, sir?" said O'Mooney: "You have no reason to suppose so from my accent, I believe."

"None in life—quite the contrary; for you speak remarkably pure English—not the least note or half note of the brogue; but there's another sort of freemason sign by which we Hibernians know one another and are known all over the globe. Whether to call it a confusion of expressions or of ideas, I can't tell. Now an Englishman, if he had been saying what you did, sir, just now, would have taken time to separate the dog and the tax, and he would have put the tax

upon cats, and let the dogs go about their business." Our hero, with his usual good-humour, acknowledged himself to be fairly detected.

"Well, sir," said the stranger, "if I had not found you out before by the blunder, I should be sure now you were my countryman by your good-humour. An Irishman can take what's said to him, provided no affront's meant, with more good-humour than any man on earth."

"Ay, that he can," cried O' Mooney: "he lends himself, like the whale, to be tickled even by the fellow with the harpoon, till he finds what he is about, and then he pays away, and pitches the fellow, boat and all, to the devil. Ah, countryman! you would give me credit indeed for my good humour if you knew what danger you have put me in by detecting me for an Irishman. I have been found out six times, and if I blunder twice more before twelve o'clock this night, I shall lose a hundred guineas by it: but I will make sure of my bet; for I will go home straight this minute, lock myself up in my room, and not say a word to any mortal till the watchman cries 'past twelve o'clock,'—then the fast and long Lent of my tongue will be fairly over; and if you'll meet me, my dear friend, at the King's Arms, we will have a good supper and keep Easter for ever."

Phelim, pursuant to his resolution, returned to his hotel, and shut himself up in his room, where he remained in perfect silence and consequent safety till about nine o'clock. Suddenly he heard a great huzzaing in the street; he looked out of the window, and saw that all the houses in the street were illuminated. His landlady came bustling into his apartment, followed by waiters with candles. His spirits instantly rose, though he did not clearly know the cause of the rejoicings. "I give you joy, ma'am. What are you all illuminating[5] for?" said he to his landlady.

"Thank you, sir, with all my heart. I am not sure. It is either for a great victory or the peace. Bob—waiter—step out and inquire for the gentleman."

The gentleman preferred stepping out to inquire for himself. The illuminations were in honour of the peace.[6] He totally forgot his bet, his silence, and his prudence, in his sympathy with the general joy. He walked rapidly from street to street, admiring the various elegant

devices. A crowd was standing before the windows of a house that was illuminated with extraordinary splendour. He inquired whose it was, and was informed that it belonged to a contractor, who had made an immense fortune by the war.

"Then I'm sure these illuminations of his for the peace are none of the most sincere," said O'Mooney. The mob were of his opinion; and Phelim, who was now, alas! worked up to the proper pitch for blundering, added, by way of pleasing his audience still more—"If this contractor had *illuminated* in character, it should have been with *dark lanterns.*"[7]

"Should it? by Jasus! that would be an Irish illumination," cried some one. "Arrah, honey! you're an Irishman, whoever you are, and have spoke your mind in character."

Sir John Bull was vexed that the piece of wit which he had aimed at the contractor had recoiled upon himself. "It is always, as my countryman observed, by having too much wit that I blunder. The deuce take me if I sport a single bon mot more this night. This is only my seventh detection, I have an eighth blunder still *to the good*; and if I can but keep my wit to myself till I am out of purgatory, then I shall be in heaven, and may sing Io triumphe[8] in spite of my brother."

Fortunately, Phelim had not made it any part of his bet that he should not speak to himself an Irish idiom, or that he should not think a bull. Resolved to be as obstinately silent as a monk of La Trappe,[9] he once more shut himself up in his cell, and fell fast asleep—dreamed that fat bulls of Basan[1] encompassed him round about—that he ran down a steep hill to escape them—that his foot slipped—he rolled to the bottom—felt the bull's horns in his side—heard the bull bellowing in his ears—wakened—and found Terence McDermod bellowing at his room door.

"Sir John Bull! Sir John Bull! murder! murder! my dear master, Sir John Bull! murder, robbery, and reward! let me in! for the love of the Holy Virgin! they are all after you!"

"Who? are you drunk, Terence?" said Sir John, opening the door.

"No, but they are mad—all mad."

"Who?"

"The constable. They are all mad entirely, and the lord mayor, all along with your honour's making me swear I would not tell your name. Sure they are all coming armed in a body to put you in jail for a forgery, unless I run back and tell them the truth—will I?"

"First tell me the truth, blunderer!"

"I'll make my affidavit I never blundered, plase your honour, but just went to the merchant's, as you ordered, with the draught, signed with the name I swore not to utter till past twelve. I presents the draught, and waits to be paid. 'Are you Mr. O'Mooney's servant?' says one of the clerks after a while. No, sir, not at all, sir,' said I; 'I'm Sir John Bull's, at your *sar*vice.' He puzzles and puzzles, and asks me did I bring the draught, and was that your writing at the bottom of it? I still said it was my master's writing, *Sir John Bull's*, and no other. They whispered from one up to t'other, and then said it was a forgery, as I overheard, and I must go before the mayor. With that, while the master, who was called down to be examined as to his opinion, was putting on his glasses to spell it out, I gives them, one and all, the slip, and whips out of the street door and home to give your honour notice, and have been breaking my heart at the door this half hour to make you hear—and now you have it all."

"I am in a worse dilemma now than when between the horns of the bull," thought Sir John: "I must now either tell my real name, avow myself an Irishman, and so lose my bet, or else go to gaol."

He preferred going to gaol. He resolved to pretend to be dumb, and he charged Terence not to betray him. The officers of justice came to take him up: Sir John resigned himself to them, making signs that he could not speak. He was carried before a magistrate. The merchant had never seen Mr. Phelim O'Mooney, but could swear to his handwriting and signature, having many of his letters and draughts. The draught in question was produced. Sir John Bull would neither acknowledge nor deny the signature, but in dumb show made signs of innocence. No art or persuasion could make him speak; he kept his fingers on his lips. One of the bailiffs offered to

open Sir John's mouth. Sir John clenched his hand, in token that if they used violence he knew his remedy. To the magistrate he was all bows and respect: but the law, in spite of civility, must take its course.

Terence McDermod beat his breast, and called upon all the saints in the Irish calender when he saw the committal actually made out, and his dear master given over to the constables. Nothing but his own oath and his master's commanding eye, which was fixed upon him at this instant, could have made him forbear to utter, what he had never in his life been before so strongly tempted to tell—the truth.

Determined to win his wager, our hero suffered himself to be carried to a lock-up house, and persisted in keeping silence till the clock struck twelve! Then the charm was broken, and he spoke. He began talking to himself, and singing as loud as he possibly could. The next morning Terence, who was no longer bound by his oath to conceal Phelim's name, hastened to his master's correspondent in town, told the whole story, and O'Mooney was liberated. Having won his bet by his wit and steadiness, he had now the prudence to give up these adventuring schemes, to which he had so nearly become a dupe; he returned immediately to Ireland to his brother, and determined to settle quietly to business. His good brother paid him the hundred guineas most joyfully, declaring that he had never spent a hundred guineas better in his life than in recovering a brother. Phelim had now conquered his foolish dislike to trade: his brother took him into partnership, and Phelim O'Mooney never relapsed into Sir John Bull.

1802

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Although written solely by Maria Edgeworth, "The Irish Incognito" forms the culminating chapter of a book that was published under both her name and her father's (her *Memoir* o

her father states that he contributed passages to a few of the other chapters). This book was the *Essay on Irish Bulls*, which went through three revised editions between 1802 and 1808, before being included, in its 1808 version, in Maria Edgeworth's eighteen-volume collected *Tales and Novels* of 1832. That edition provides the basis for the text we give here. A "bull" is verbal blunder, an expression containing a contradiction that goes unperceived by the speaker. To collect "Irish bulls" as the [Return to reference 1]

- Note 2: Women.[Return to reference 2]
- Note 3: The Roman expeditionary force that invaded Britain in 55 B.C.E. landed in the southeast in the vicinity of the modern-day port of Deal. A later victory in Anatolia occasioned Caesar's boast about how he "came, saw, and conquered."[Return to reference 3]
- Note 4: A flowery compliment: in classical mythology the three graces are sister goddesses who bestow beauty and charm.[Return to reference 4]
- Note 5: John Foster, Baron Oriel, the last man to serve as speaker in the Irish House of Commons, before its abolition by the Act of Union in 1801.[Return to reference 5]
- Note 6: Cousin to King Louis XVI and himself in line for the throne of France, Philippe, Duke of Orleans (1747–1793) assumed the surname Egalité ("Equality") as testimony of his support for the Revolution. The name change did not save him from the guillotine. The duke's Sèvre—expensive porcelain manufactured near Paris—and pendule (a pendulum clock) appear to have come on the market following his execution.[Return to reference 6]
- Note 7: District of London.[Return to reference 7]
- Note 8: One of the members of Parliament who represented the counties of England.[Return to reference 8]
- Note 9: *Bona waviata* is a Latin term applied in law to stolen goods that have been thrown away by their thief, who would rather lose them than be caught red-handed. It is applied here

to the hero's "beaver," a type of hat made from beaver's fur.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: That is, by not stinting on money or food for the horses, they avoided any delay (stay).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Following the victory of the British fleet against the French at the Battle of the Nile (1798), furnishings in an Egyptian style were the height of fashion.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The cards left by the people paying social calls on Miss Sharperson.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In matters concerning love (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Tunbridge Wells, a fashionable spa town in southeast England.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, Queasy has not acted but been acted upon.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Someone who curries favor.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: March 15. In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* 1.2, a soothsayer prophesies that Caesar will meet with danger on this date.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The hero's *lapsus linguae* (Latin for slip of the tongue) has a precedent in the writings of Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773), whose posthumously published letters to his illegitimate son secured him a reputation as a wit and a schemer.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: This bull was really made [*Edgeworth's note*]. George Romney (1734–1802) painted society portraits and rural scenes.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The reference is to actual historical figures of the early 19th century—the bare-knuckle boxers Jem Belcher and Joe Bourke.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "Esquire"; designation given to men regarded as gentlemen.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: One of several new taxes introduced by Prime Minister William Pitt to finance Britain's war against France.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Decorating with lights as a sign of celebration.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Probably the truce signed between Britain and France in October 1801, temporarily suspending hostilities after eight years of war.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Lanterns equipped with slides that allow their light to be hidden.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Greek cry of triumph.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Alluding to the vows of silence taken by the monks of the French Abbey of La Trappe.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A recollection of Psalms 22:12, where the Psalmist describes his anguish at being forsaken: "strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round."Return to reference 1

The Gothic and the Development of a Mass Readership

Strictly speaking, the Gothic is not "Gothic" at all, but a phenomenon that originates in the late eighteenth century, long after enlightened Europeans put the era of Gothic cathedrals, chivalry, and superstition behind them—a phenomenon that begins, in fact, as an embrace of a kind of counterfeit medievalism or as a "medieval revival." As a word they applied to a dark and distant past, Gothic gave Romantic-period writers and readers a way to describe accounts of terrifying experiences in ancient castles and ruined abbeys—experiences connected with subterranean dungeons, secret passageways, flickering lamps, screams, moans, ghosts, and graveyards. In the long run Gothic became a label for the macabre, mysterious, supernatural, and terrifying, especially the *pleasurably* terrifying, in literature generally; the link that Romantic-period writers had forged between the Gothic and antiquated spaces was eventually loosened. Even so, one has only to look, in post-Romantic literature, at the fiction of the Brontës or Poe, or, in our own not-so-modern culture, at movies or computer games to realize that the pleasures of regression the late eighteenth-century Gothic revival provided die hard. Readers continue to seek out opportunities to feel haunted by pasts that will not let themselves be exorcised.

The Gothic revival appeared in later eighteenth-century English garden design and architecture before it got into literature. In 1747 Horace Walpole (1717–1797), younger son of the British prime minister, purchased Strawberry Hill, an estate on the river Thames near London, and three years later set about remodeling it in what he called a "Gothick" style. Adding towers, turrets, battlements, arched doors, windows, and ornaments of every description, he

created the kind of spurious medieval architecture that survives today mainly in churches and university buildings. Eventually tourists came from all over to see Strawberry Hill and went home to Gothicize their own houses.

When the Gothic made its appearance in literature, Walpole was again a trailblazer. In 1764 he published *The Castle of Otranto*, a self-styled "Gothic story" featuring a haunted castle, an early, pre-Byronic version of the Byronic hero (suitably named Manfred), mysterious deaths, a moaning ancestral portrait, damsels in distress, violent passions, and strange obsessions. Walpole's gamble—that the future of the novel would involve the reclamation of the primitive emotions of fear and wonder provided by the romances of a pre-Enlightened age—convinced many writers who came after him. By the 1790s novels trading on horror, mystery, and faraway settings flooded the book market; meanwhile in theaters new special effects were devised to incarnate ghostly apparitions onstage. It is noteworthy that the best-selling author of the terror school (Ann Radcliffe), the author of its most enduring novel (Mary Shelley), and the author of its most effective send-up (Jane Austen) were all women. Indeed, many of Radcliffe's numerous imitators (and, on occasion, downright plagiarizers) published under the auspices of the Minerva Press, a business whose very name (that of the goddess of wisdom) acknowledged the centrality of female authors and readers to this new lucrative trend in the book market. William Lane, the marketing genius who owned the press, also set up a cross-country network of circulating libraries that stocked his ladies' volumes and made them available for hire at modest prices.

This section offers extracts from some of the most celebrated works in the Gothic mode: Walpole's *Otranto* as the initiating prototype; two extremely popular works by Radcliffe, the "Queen of Terror," *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794); Matthew Lewis's concoction of devilry, sadism, and mob violence, *The Monk* (1796). We also include an essay of 1773 in which John and Anna Letitia Aikin provide justification after the fact for Walpole's rebellion against the critical orthodoxies. According to

most early critics of novels, the only *moral* fiction was probable fiction; the Aikins, however, make the business of the novelist lie as much with the pleasures of the imagination as with moral edification and the representation of real life.

The Aikins' essay suggests why Gothic reading was appealing to so many Romantic poets—visionaries who in their own way dissented from critical rules that would, drearily, limit literature to the already known and recognizable. Signs of the poets' acquaintance with the terror school of novel writing show up in numerous well-known Romantic poems—from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to *Manfred.* For instance, in Keats's *The Eve of St. Agnes*, a poem that in many respects represents an idealized tale of young love, Porphyro's invasion of Madeline's bedroom has some perturbing connections with the predatory overtones of the extract from *The Monk* reprinted here. And Keats's enigmatic fragment "This living hand" can be read as a brilliantly abbreviated version of the kind of tale of terror that aimed to make its reader's blood run cold.

Yet it simplifies matters to characterize the Gothic only as an influence on Romanticism. As the pieces by Coleridge in this section suggest, the poets had a love–hate relationship with Gothic writers and, even more so, with Gothic readers. Many contemporary commentators objected to the new school of novels on moral and technical grounds: they complained, for instance, about how plot driven they were and how cheaply they solved their mysteries. But questions about social class and literary taste were also important. In an era of revolution, in which newly literate workers were reading about "the rights of man" and crowds were starting to shape history, the very *popularity* of Gothic novels, the terror writers' capacity to move and manipulate whole crowds with their suspense and trickery, itself represented a source of anxiety. As the twentieth-century critic E. J. Clery explains, the "unprecedented capacity of the market to absorb at great speed large amounts of a particular type of literary product, the 'terrorist' novel, shook old certainties." Furthermore, terror had begun to seem a commodity produced on an assembly line.

Many of the Romantic poets comment, accordingly, on what is scary and pernicious *about* the Gothic as well as what is scary and pernicious *in* the Gothic. And throughout their writings, the tales of terror are invoked in ways that enable the writer to construct a divide between "high" and "low" culture and to play off the passive absorption associated with the reading of the crowds against the tasteful, active reading that is (according to the writer) practiced by the elite few. In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads,* for instance, Wordsworth identifies as a cause of English culture's modern decline the "frenetic novels" that have blunted their consumers' powers of discrimination and reduced them "to a state of almost savage torpor" (a negative version of the regression that William Hazlitt, for instance, celebrates as he describes how Radcliffe "makes her readers twice children" while she "forces us to believe all that is strange and next to impossible"). Wordsworth follows a hint that he may have found three years earlier in Coleridge's review of *The Monk* (reprinted near the end of this section) and suggests that such readers inevitably need higher and higher doses of the "violent stimulants" that novelists—drug pushers of sorts—have supplied them. In this way the Preface pioneers an account of a mass readership addicted to what will kill it. In similar fashion our extract containing Coleridge's very funny tirade against the patrons of circulating libraries makes it seem that novels were objects of utterly mindless consumption (absorbed, imbibed, but not *read*). The selections with which we close this section register, in other words, a recoil from the Gothic. But Gothic themes frequently come back to haunt the critics of the mode. When they depict popular, commercialized culture's threat to individual autonomy and describe consumers as if they were zombies sunk in trances, the critics appear to rehearse nightmarish scenarios straight out of the tales of terror.

HORACE WALPOLE

Horace Walpole's landmark work *The Castle of Otranto* initially purported to be a translation from (as the title page of the first edition put it) "the original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto." The events related in it were supposed to have occurred in the twelfth or thirteenth century. In the second edition, however, Walpole (1717–1797) renounced the hoax and confessed his authorship. Rather than presenting the narrative as a remarkable historical discovery, a manuscript from the lost barbaric past, he cast his "Gothic Story" as a novelty: an experiment in blending, he explained, "the ancient and modern" romance, and in combining the realism that was the hallmark of the up-to-date eighteenth-century novel with the imagination that had flourished in medieval romance and that this realism had suffocated.

When the story opens, the villainous Manfred, prince of Otranto, to get an heir to his estate, has arranged a marriage between his only son, Conrad, and the beautiful Isabella. But on his wedding day Conrad is mysteriously killed, victim of a giant helmet that falls from the sky and crushes him. Lest he should be left without male descendants, Manfred determines to divorce his present wife, Hippolita, who is past childbearing, and marry Isabella himself. In the extract reprinted here, Isabella learns of his intention and decides to flee the castle by night. The account of her flight suggests how the Gothic novelists, lavishing attention on architectural details, make experiences of terror inseparable from the walls, ceilings, floors, and doors enclosing them.

From The Castle of Otranto

From *Chapter 1*

As it was now evening, the servant who conducted Isabella bore a torch before her. When they came to Manfred, who was walking impatiently about the gallery, he started and said hastily, "Take away that light, and begone." Then shutting the door impetuously, he flung himself upon a bench against the wall, and bade Isabella sit by him. She obeyed trembling. "I sent for you, lady," said he,—and then stopped under great appearance of confusion. "My lord!"—"Yes, I sent for you on a matter of great moment," resumed he,—"Dry your tears, young lady—you have lost your bridegroom.—Yes, cruel fate! and I have lost the hopes of my race!—but Conrad was not worthy of your beauty."—"How! my lord," said Isabella; "sure you do not suspect me of not feeling the concern I ought. My duty and affection would have always—" "Think no more of him," interrupted Manfred; "he was a sickly puny child, and heaven has perhaps taken him away that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation. The line of Manfred calls for numerous supports. My foolish fondness for that boy blinded the eyes of my prudence—but it is better as it is. I hope in a few years to have reason to rejoice at the death of Conrad."

Words cannot paint the astonishment of Isabella. At first she apprehended that grief had disordered Manfred's understanding. Her next thought suggested that this strange discourse was designed, to ensnare her: she feared that Manfred had perceived her indifference for his son: and in consequence of that idea she replied, "Good my lord, do not doubt my tenderness: my heart would have accompanied my hand. Conrad would have engrossed all my care; and wherever fate shall dispose of me, I shall always cherish his memory, and regard your highness and the virtuous Hippolita as my parents." "Curse on Hippolita!" cried Manfred: "forget her from this moment as I do. In short, lady, you have missed a husband undeserving of your charms: they shall now be better disposed of. Instead of a sickly boy, you shall have a husband in the prime of his age, who will know how to value your beauties, and who may expect

a numerous offspring." "Alas! my lord," said Isabella, "my mind is too sadly engrossed by the recent catastrophe in your family to think of another marriage. If ever my father returns, and it shall be his pleasure, I shall obey, as I did when I consented to give my hand to your son: but until his return, permit me to remain under your hospitable roof, and employ the melancholy hours in assuaging yours, Hippolita's, and the fair Matilda's affliction."

"I desired you once before," said Manfred angrily, "not to name that woman: from this hour she must be a stranger to you, as she must be to me;—in short, Isabella, since I cannot give you my son, I offer you myself."—"Heavens!" cried Isabella, waking from her delusion, "what do I hear! You! My lord! You! My father-in-law! the father of Conrad! the husband of the virtuous and tender Hippolita!"—"I tell you," said Manfred imperiously, "Hippolita is no longer my wife; I divorce her from this hour. Too long has she cursed me by her unfruitfulness: my fate depends on having sons,—and this night I trust will give a new date to my hopes." At those words he seized the cold hand of Isabella, who was half-dead with fright and horror. She shrieked and started from him. Manfred rose to pursue her, when the moon, which was now up and gleamed in at the opposite casement, presented to his sight the plumes of the fatal helmet, which rose to the height of the windows, waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow and rustling sound. Isabella, who gathered courage from her situation, and who dreaded nothing so much as Manfred's pursuit of his declaration, cried, "Look! my lord; see, heaven itself declares against your impious intentions!"—"Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs," said Manfred, advancing again to seize the princess. At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh, and heaved its breast. Isabella, whose back was turned to the picture, saw not the motion, nor knew whence the sound came, but started, and said, "Hark, my lord! What sound was that?" and at the same time made towards the door. Manfred, distracted between the flight of Isabella, who had now reached the stairs, and yet unable to keep his

eyes from the picture, which began to move, had however advanced some steps after her, still looking backwards on the portrait, when he saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air. "Do I dream?" cried Manfred returning, "or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, infernal spectre! or, if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou too conspire against thy wretched descendant, who too dearly pays for—" Ere he could finish the sentence the vision sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him. "Lead on!" cried Manfred; "I will follow thee to the gulph of perdition." The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped to with violence by an invisible hand. The prince, collecting courage from this delay, would have forcibly burst open the door with his foot, but found that it resisted his utmost efforts. "Since hell will not satisfy my curiosity," said Manfred, "I will use the human means in my power for preserving my race; Isabella shall not escape me."

That lady, whose resolution had given way to terror the moment she had quitted Manfred, continued her flight to the bottom of the principal staircase. There she stopped, not knowing whither to direct her steps, nor how to escape from the impetuosity of the prince. The gates of the castle she knew were locked, and guards placed in the court. Should she, as her heart prompted her, go and prepare Hippolita for the cruel destiny that awaited her, she did not doubt but Manfred would seek her there, and that his violence would incite him to double the injury he meditated, without leaving room for them to avoid the impetuosity of his passions. Delay might give him time to reflect on the horrid measures he had conceived, or produce some circumstance in her favour, if she could for that night at least avoid his odious purpose.—Yet where conceal herself? how avoid the pursuit he would infallibly make throughout the castle? As these thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, she recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the castle to the

church of St. Nicholas. Could she reach the altar before she was overtaken, she knew even Manfred's violence would not dare to profane the sacredness of the place; and she determined, if no other means of deliverance offered, to shut herself up for ever among the holy virgins, whose convent was contiguous to the cathedral. In this resolution, she seized a lamp that burned at the foot of the staircase, and hurried towards the secret passage. The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters; and it was not easy for one under so much anxiety to find the door that opened into the cavern. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which, grating on the rusty hinges, were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her with new terror;—yet more she dreaded to hear the wrathful voice of Manfred urging his domestics[1] to pursue her. She trod as softly as impatience would give her leave, —yet frequently stopped and listened to hear if she was followed. In one of those moments she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled; she concluded it was Manfred. Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind. She condemned her rash flight, which had thus exposed her to his rage in a place where her cries were not likely to draw anybody to her assistance.—Yet the sound seemed not to come from behind,—if Manfred knew where she was, he must have followed her: she was still in one of the cloisters, and the steps she had heard were too distinct to proceed from the way she had come. Cheered with this reflection, and hoping to find a friend in whoever was not the prince, she was going to advance, when a door that stood ajar, at some distance to the left, was opened gently: but ere her lamp, which she held up, could discover who opened it, the person retreated precipitately on seeing the light.

Isabella, whom every incident was sufficient to dismay, hesitated whether she should proceed. Her dread of Manfred soon outweighed every other terror. The very circumstance of the person avoiding her

gave her a sort of courage. It could only be, she thought, some domestic belonging to the castle. Her gentleness had never raised her an enemy, and conscious innocence bade her hope that, unless sent by the prince’s order to seek her, his servants would rather assist than prevent her flight. Fortifying herself with these reflections, and believing, by what she could observe, that she was near the mouth of the subterraneous cavern, she approached the door that had been opened; but a sudden gust of wind that met her at the door extinguished her lamp, and left her in total darkness.

1764

Endnotes

- Note 1: Servants.Return to reference 1

ANNA LETITIA AIKIN (LATER BARBAULD) AND JOHN AIKIN

In the following essay John Aikin (1747–1822) and his sister Anna Letitia (who appears earlier in this anthology as a poet and under her married name, Barbauld) engage a question philosophers and psychologists continue to debate: why do people who listen to ghost stories around the campfire, or read Gothic novels, or watch monster movies find such frightening experiences pleasing? The Aikins, members of a prominent family of religious dissenters and educators, begin by observing that it is easy to explain why we might feel satisfaction when we feel pity—that emotion is necessary for the well-being of the human community, which would fall apart were it not somehow in our own interest to feel for others. But it is by contrast more difficult to understand how morality is advanced when we delight in objects of terror. As they map out an alternative way of accounting for that amoral delight, the Aikins write an early Romantic description of the glory of the imagination; the reader's encounter with what is unknown and amazing elevates and expands the mind. The fragmentary story of a medieval knight errant that the Aikins appended to their essay was meant to give their readers a chance to test this thesis, but thanks to its handling of suspense "Sir Bertrand" soon came to be celebrated in its own right.

Published in 1773 in the Aikins' *Miscellaneous Pieces in Prose*, "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror" built on Walpole's innovation in *Otranto.* It gave the next generation of Gothic authors a critical justification for their engagement with the supernatural and for their swerve away from the didacticism that had valued fiction writers only when they seemed to be educating readers for real life. Family tradition ascribed the essay to Anna and "Sir Bertrand" to John.

On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror; with Sir Bertrand, a Fragment

That the exercise of our benevolent feelings, as called forth by the view of human afflictions, should be a source of pleasure, cannot appear wonderful to one who considers that relation between the moral and natural system of man, which has connected a degree of satisfaction with every action or emotion productive of the general welfare. The painful sensation immediately arising from a scene of misery, is so much softened and alleviated by the reflex sense of self-approbation on attending virtuous sympathy, that we find, on the whole, a very exquisite and refined pleasure remaining, which makes us desirous of again being witnesses to such scenes, instead of flying from them with disgust and horror. It is obvious how greatly such a provision must conduce to the ends of mutual support and assistance. But the apparent delight with which we dwell upon objects of pure terror, where our moral feelings are not in the least concerned, and no passion seems to be excited but the depressing one of fear, is a paradox of the heart, much more difficult of solution.

The reality of this source of pleasure seems evident from daily observation. The greediness with which the tales of ghosts and goblins, of murders, earthquakes, fires, shipwrecks, and all the most terrible disasters attending human life, are devoured by every ear, must have been generally remarked. Tragedy, the most favourite work of fiction, has taken a full share of those scenes; "it has supt full with horrors"[1]—and has, perhaps, been more indebted to them for public admiration than to its tender and pathetic parts. The ghost of Hamlet, Macbeth descending into the witches' cave, and the tent scene in Richard, command as forcibly the attention of our souls as the parting of Jaffeir and Belvidera, the fall of Wolsey, or the death of Shore.[2] The inspiration of *terror* was by the antient critics

assigned as the peculiar province of tragedy; and the Greek and Roman tragedians have introduced some extraordinary personages for this purpose: not only the shades of the dead, but the furies, and other fabulous inhabitants of the infernal regions. Collins, in his most poetical ode to Fear, has finely enforced this idea.

> Tho' gently Pity claim her mingled part,
> Yet all the thunders of the scene are thine.[3]

The old Gothic romance and the Eastern tale, with their genii, giants, enchantments, and transformations, however a refined critic may censure them as absurd and extravagant, will ever retain a most powerful influence on the mind, and interest the reader independently of all peculiarity of taste. Thus the great Milton, who had a strong bias to these wildnesses of the imagination, has with striking effect made the stories "of forests and enchantments drear," a favourite subject with his *Penseroso*; and had undoubtedly their awakening images strong upon his mind when he breaks out,

> Call up him that left half-told
> The story of Cambuscan bold; &c.[4]

How are we then to account for the pleasure derived from such objects? I have often been led to imagine that there is a deception in these cases; and that the avidity with which we attend is not a proof of our receiving real pleasure. The pain of suspense, and the irresistible desire of satisfying curiosity, when once raised, will account for our eagerness to go quite through an adventure, though we suffer actual pain during the whole course of it. We rather chuse to suffer the smart pang of a violent emotion than the uneasy craving of an unsatisfied desire. That this principle, in many instances, may involuntarily carry us through what we dislike, I am convinced from experience. This is the impulse which renders the poorest and most insipid narrative interesting when once we get fairly into it; and I have frequently felt it with regard to our modern

novels, which, if lying on my table, and taken up in an idle hour, have led me through the most tedious and disgusting pages, while, like Pistol eating his leek, I have swallowed and execrated to the end.[5] And it will not only force us through dullness, but through actual torture—through the relation of a Damien's execution, or an inquisitor's act of faith.[6] When children, therefore, listen with pale and mute attention to the frightful stories of apparitions, we are not, perhaps, to imagine that they are in a state of enjoyment, any more than the poor bird which is dropping into the mouth of the rattlesnake—they are chained by the ears, and fascinated by curiosity. This solution, however, does not satisfy me with respect to the well-wrought scenes of artificial terror which are formed by a sublime and vigorous imagination. Here, though we know beforehand what to expect, we enter into them with eagerness, in quest of a pleasure already experienced. This is the pleasure constantly attached to the excitement of surprise from new and wonderful objects. A strange and unexpected event awakens the mind, and keeps it on the stretch; and where the agency of invisible beings is introduced, of "forms unseen, and mightier far than we," our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers. Passion and fancy cooperating elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amazement.

Hence the more wild, fanciful, and extraordinary are the circumstance, of a scene of horror, the more pleasure we receive from it; and where they are too near common nature, though violently borne by curiosity through the adventure, we cannot repeat it or reflect on it, without an overbalance of pain. In the *Arabian Nights* are many most striking examples of the terrible joined with the marvellous: the story of Aladdin, and the travels of Sinbad are particularly excellent. The *Castle of Otranto* is a very spirited modern attempt upon the same plan of mixed terror, adapted to the model of Gothic romance. The best conceived, and most strongly worked-up scene of mere natural horror that I recollect, is in Smollett's *Ferdinand Count Fathom*;[7] where the hero, entertained in a lone

house in a forest, finds a corpse just slaughtered in the room where he is sent to sleep, and the door of which is locked upon him. It may be amusing for the reader to compare his feelings upon these, and from thence form his opinion of the justness of my theory. The following fragment, in which both these manners are attempted to be in some degree united, is offered to entertain a solitary winter's evening.

Sir Bertrand, a Fragment

After this adventure, Sir Bertrand turned his steed towards the woulds,[8] hoping to cross these dreary moors before the curfew. But ere he had proceeded half his journey, he was bewildered by the different tracks, and not being able, as far as the eye could reach, to espy any object but the brown heath surrounding him, he was at length quite uncertain which way he should direct his course. Night overtook him in this situation. It was one of those nights when the moon gives a faint glimmering of light through the thick black clouds of a lowering sky. Now and then she suddenly emerged in full splendor from her veil; and then instantly retired behind it, having just served to give the forlorn Sir Bertrand a wide extended prospect over the desolate waste. Hope and native courage a while urged him to push forwards, but at length the increasing darkness and fatigue of body and mind overcame him; he dreaded moving from the ground he stood on, for fear of unknown pits and bogs, and alighting from his horse in despair, he threw himself on the ground. He had not long continued in that posture when the sullen toll of a distant bell struck his ears—he started up, and turning towards the sound discerned a dim twinkling light.

Instantly he seized his horse's bridle, and with cautious steps advanced towards it. After a painful march he was stopt by a moated ditch surrounding the place from whence the light proceeded; and by a momentary glimpse of moon-light he had a full view of a large antique mansion, with turrets at the corners, and an ample porch in the centre. The injuries of time were strongly marked

on every thing about it. The roof in various places was fallen in, the battlements were half demolished, and the windows broken and dismantled. A drawbridge, with a ruinous gateway at each end, led to the court before the building—He entered, and instantly the light, which proceeded from a window in one of the turrets, glided along and vanished; at the same moment the moon sunk beneath a black cloud, and the night was darker than ever. All was silent—Sir Bertrand fastened his steed under a shed, and approaching the house traversed its whole front with light and slow footsteps—All was still as death—He looked in at the lower windows, but could not distinguish a single object through the impenetrable gloom. After a short parley with himself, he entered the porch, and seizing a massy iron knocker at the gate, lifted it up, and hesitating, at length struck a loud stroke. The noise resounded through the whole mansion with hollow echoes. All was still again—He repeated the strokes more boldly and louder—another interval of silence ensued—A third time he knocked, and a third time all was still. He then fell back to some distance that he might discern whether any light could be seen in the whole front—It again appeared in the same place and quickly glided away as before—at the same instant a deep sullen toll sounded from the turret. Sir Bertrand's heart made a fearful stop—He was a while motionless; then terror impelled him to make some hasty steps towards his steed—but shame stopt his flight; and urged by honour, and a resistless desire of finishing the adventure, he returned to the porch; and working up his soul to a full steadiness of resolution, he drew forth his sword with one hand, and with the other lifted up the latch of the gate. The heavy door, creaking upon its hinges, reluctantly yielded to his hand—he applied his shoulder to it and forced it open—he quitted it and stept forward—the door instantly shut with a thundering clap. Sir Bertrand's blood was chilled—he turned back to find the door, and it was long ere his trembling hands could seize it—but his utmost strength could not open it again. After several ineffectual attempts, he looked behind him, and beheld, across a hall, upon a large staircase, a pale bluish flame which cast a dismal gleam of light around. He again summoned forth his courage and advanced towards it—It retired. He came to the foot

of the stairs, and after a moment's deliberation ascended. He went slowly up, the flame retiring before him, till he came to a wide gallery—The flame proceeded along it, and he followed in silent horror, treading lightly, for the echoes of his footsteps startled him. It led him to the foot of another staircase, and then vanished—At the same instant another toll sounded from the turret—Sir Bertrand felt it strike upon his heart. He was now in total darkness, and with his arms extended, began to ascend the second staircase. A dead cold hand met his left hand and firmly grasped it, drawing him forcibly forwards—he endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not—he made a furious blow with his sword, and instantly a loud shriek pierced his ears, and the dead hand was left powerless in his —He dropt it, and rushed forwards with a desperate valour. The stairs were narrow and winding, and interrupted by frequent breaches, and loose fragments of stone. The staircase grew narrower and narrower and at length terminated in a low iron grate. Sir Bertrand pushed it open—it led to an intricate winding passage, just large enough to admit a person upon his hands and knees. A faint glimmering of light served to show the nature of the place. Sir Bertrand entered—A deep hollow groan resounded from a distance through the vault—He went forwards, and proceeding beyond the first turning, he discerned the same blue flame which had before conducted him. He followed it. The vault, at length, suddenly opened into a lofty gallery, in the midst of which a figure appeared, compleatly armed, thrusting forwards the bloody stump of an arm, with a terrible frown and menacing gesture, and brandishing a sword in his hand. Sir Bertrand undauntedly sprung forwards; and aiming a fierce blow at the figure, it instantly vanished, letting fall a massy iron key. The flame now rested upon a pair of ample folding doors at the end of the gallery. Sir Bertrand went up to it, and applied the key to a brazen lock—with difficulty he turned the bolt—instantly the doors flew open, and discovered a large apartment, at the end of which was a coffin rested upon a bier, with a taper burning on each side of it. Along the room on both sides were gigantic statues of black marble, attired in the Moorish habit, and holding enormous sabres in their right hands. Each of them reared his arm, and

advanced one leg forwards, as the knight entered; at the same moment the lid of the coffin flew open, and the bell tolled. The flame still glided forwards, and Sir Bertrand resolutely followed, till he arrived within six paces of the coffin. Suddenly, a lady in a shrowd and black veil rose up in it, and stretched out her arms towards him—at the same time the statues clashed their sabres and advanced. Sir Bertrand flew to the lady and clasped her in his arms —she threw up her veil and kissed his lips; and instantly the whole building shook as with an earthquake, and fell asunder with a horrible crash. Sir Bertrand was thrown into a sudden trance, and on recovering, found himself seated on a velvet sofa, in the most magnificent room he had ever seen, lighted with innumerable tapers, in lustres of pure crystal. A sumptuous banquet was set in the middle. The doors opening to soft music, a lady of incomparable beauty, attired with amazing splendour entered, surrounded by a troop of gay nymphs far more fair than the Graces—She advanced to the knight, and falling on her knees thanked him as her deliverer. The nymphs placed a garland of laurel on his head, and the lady led him by the hand to the banquet, and sat beside him. The nymphs placed themselves at the table, and a numerous train of servants entering, served up the feast; delicious music playing all the time. Sir Bertrand could not speak for astonishment—he could only return their honours by courteous looks and gestures. After the banquet was finished, all retired but the lady, who leading back the knight to the sofa, addressed him in these words:—[9]

1773

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 5.5.13.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The mentions of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Richard III are followed by references to the doomed husband and wife in Thomas Otway's tragedy *Venice Preserv'd* (1681), the royal adviser whose fall from grace centers the action of

Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, and Jane Shore, title character of Nicholas Rowe's tragedy of 1714.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Lines 44–45 in William Collins's "Ode to Fear" (1746), slightly misquoted. The speaker of this poem anticipates the Aikins in marveling over the allure of fear and its potency as a source of art.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Quoting lines 119 and 109–10 of Milton's poem on the delights of studious melancholy. The story of Cambuscan was left half told in Chaucer's unfinished *Squire's Tale.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Alluding to a comic scene of force-feeding in Shakespeare's *Henry V* (5.1.36–60).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Or *auto-da-fé*; the form of execution that the Spanish Inquisition inflicted on heretics: the condemned were burned alive. The brutality of the public torture and execution in 1757 of Robert-François Damiens, the would-be assassin of Louis XV of France, was commented on across Europe.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tobias Smollett's 1753 novel of villainy and picaresque adventure.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, wolds: open, elevated ground.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The fragment ends here.Return to reference 9

ANN RADCLIFFE

The "Great Enchantress," Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) published five novels between 1789 and 1797 and a sixth posthumously in 1826, most of them tremendously popular and influential on other writers for long afterward. She shunned fame and lived in seclusion; so little was known of her that, seeking to explain the long interval between *The Italian* in 1797 and *Gaston de Blondeville* in 1826, contemporaries gossiped that Radcliffe had at last gone mad from too much imagining and had spent her final decades confined in an asylum. The rumor was without basis, but the fate it assigned to Radcliffe is the fate most feared by her heroines, who cling valiantly to reason, but who are plunged into worlds of nightmarish mystery where nothing is as it seems and where reason, at least initially, does not get them very far. A Radcliffean heroine, like Radcliffe's reader, is kept on the rack of suspense by a succession of inexplicable sights and sounds that tempt her to believe that supernatural events really do happen. The ancient castle in which she is confined, the site of these mysteries, is often located in some wilderness that the forces of law have abandoned and that has become the haunt of mercenary soldiers and picaresque bandits. For all its strangeness, however, this place frequently turns out to be a version of the heroine's long-lost home, just as her tyrannical persecutors turn out to be closely allied with the fathers, uncles, and priests who are supposed to be a young lady's protectors.

The first extract is taken from Radcliffe's third novel, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). In this episode, later remembered by Jane Austen as she recounted the story of the first eventful night that Catherine Morland spends as a guest at Northanger Abbey, the orphaned Adeline sets out, detectivelike, to solve a mystery. The second extract is from Radcliffe's masterpiece, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), one of her signature pieces of dreamy landscape description, representing Emily St. Aubert's reactions as she and her

villainous guardian Montoni approach his castle high in the Italian Appenines.

From The Romance of the Forest

From *Chapter 8*

Adeline retired early to her room, which adjoined on one side to Madame La Motte's, and on the other to the closet formerly mentioned. It was spacious and lofty, and what little furniture it contained was falling to decay; but, perhaps, the present tone of her spirits might contribute more than these circumstances to give that air of melancholy which seemed to reign in it. She was unwilling to go to bed, lest the dreams that had lately pursued her should return; and determined to sit up till she found herself oppressed by sleep, when it was probable her rest would be profound. She placed the light on a small table, and, taking a book, continued to read for above an hour, till her mind refused any longer to abstract itself from its own cares, and she sat for some time leaning pensively on her arm.

The wind was high, and as it whistled through the desolate apartment, and shook the feeble doors, she often started, and sometimes even thought she heard sighs between the pauses of the gust; but she checked these illusions, which the hour of the night and her own melancholy imagination conspired to raise. As she sat musing, her eyes fixed on the opposite wall, she perceived the arras, with which the room was hung, wave backwards and forwards; she continued to observe it for some minutes, and then rose to examine it farther. It was moved by the wind; and she blushed at the momentary fear it had excited: but she observed that the tapestry was more strongly agitated in one particular place than elsewhere, and a noise that seemed something more than that of the wind issued thence. The old bedstead, which La Motte had found in this apartment, had been removed to accommodate Adeline, and it was behind the place where this had stood that the wind seemed to rush with particular force: curiosity prompted her to examine still farther; she felt about the tapestry, and perceiving the wall behind shake under her hand, she lifted the arras, and discovered a small door, whose loosened hinges admitted the wind, and occasioned the noise she had heard.

The door was held only by a bolt, having undrawn which, and brought the light, she descended by a few steps into another chamber: she instantly remembered her dreams. The chamber was not much like that in which she had seen the dying Chevalier, and afterwards the bier; but it gave her a confused remembrance of one through which she had passed. Holding up the light to examine it more fully, she was convinced by its structure that it was part of the ancient foundation. A shattered casement, placed high from the floor, seemed to be the only opening to admit light. She observed a door on the opposite side of the apartment; and after some moments of hesitation, gained courage, and determined to pursue the inquiry. "A mystery seems to hang over these chambers," said she, "which it is, perhaps, my lot to develope;[1] I will, at least, see to what that door leads."

She stepped forward, and having unclosed it, proceeded with faltering steps along a suite of apartments resembling the first in style and condition, and terminating in one exactly like that where her dream had represented the dying person; the remembrance struck so forcibly upon her imagination that she was in danger of fainting; and looking round the room, almost expected to see the phantom of her dream.

Unable to quit the place, she sat down on some old lumber[2] to recover herself, while her spirits were nearly overcome by a superstitious dread, such as she had never felt before. She wondered to what part of the abbey these chambers belonged, and that they had so long escaped detection. The casements were all too high to afford any information from without. When she was sufficiently composed to consider the direction of the rooms, and the situation of the abbey, there appeared not a doubt that they formed an interior part of the original building.

As these reflections passed over her mind, a sudden gleam of moonlight fell upon some object without the casement. Being now sufficiently composed to wish to pursue the inquiry, and believing this object might afford her some means of learning the situation of these rooms, she combated her remaining terrors, and, in order to

distinguish it more clearly, removed the light to an outer chamber; but before she could return, a heavy cloud was driven over the face of the moon, and all without was perfectly dark: she stood for some moments waiting a returning gleam, but the obscurity continued. As she went softly back for the light, her foot stumbled over something on the floor, and while she stooped to examine it, the moon again shone, so that she could distinguish, through the casement, the eastern towers of the abbey. This discovery confirmed her former conjectures concerning the interior situation of these apartments. The obscurity of the place prevented her discovering what it was that had impeded her steps, but having brought the light forward, she perceived on the floor an old dagger: with a trembling hand she took it up, and upon a closer view perceived that it was spotted and stained with rust.

Shocked and surprised, she looked round the room for some object that might confirm or destroy the dreadful suspicion which now rushed upon her mind; but she saw only a great chair, with broken arms, that stood in one corner of the room, and a table in a condition equally shattered, except that in another part lay a confused heap of things, which appeared to be old lumber. She went up to it, and perceived a broken bedstead, with some decayed remnants of furniture, covered with dust and cobwebs, and which seemed, indeed, as if they had not been moved for many years. Desirous, however, of examining farther, she attempted to raise what appeared to have been part of the bedstead, but it slipped from her hand, and, rolling to the floor, brought with it some of the remaining lumber. Adeline started aside and saved herself, and when the noise it made had ceased, she heard a small rustling sound, and as she was about to leave the chamber, saw something falling gently among the lumber.

It was a small roll of paper, tied with a string, and covered with dust. Adeline took it up, and on opening it perceived an handwriting. She attempted to read it, but the part of the manuscript she looked at was so much obliterated that she found this difficult, though what

few words were legible impressed her with curiosity and terror, and induced her to return immediately to her chamber.

1791

Endnotes

- Note 1: Unfold, reveal.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Disused furniture and the like.Return to reference 2

From The Mysteries of Udolpho

From *Volume 2, Chapter 5*

Towards the close of day, the road wound into a deep valley. Mountains, whose shaggy steeps appeared to be inaccessible, almost surrounded it. To the east, a vista opened, that exhibited the Apennines in their darkest horrors; and the long perspective of retiring summits, rising over each other, their ridges clothed with pines, exhibited a stronger image of grandeur, than any that Emily had yet seen. The sun had just sunk below the top of the mountains she was descending, whose long shadow stretched athwart the valley, but his sloping rays, shooting through an opening of the cliffs, touched with a yellow gleam the summits of the forest, that hung upon the opposite steeps, and streamed in full splendour upon the towers and battlements of a castle, that spread its extensive ramparts along the brow of a precipice above. The splendour of these illumined objects was heightened by the contrasted shade, which involved the valley below.

"There," said Montoni, speaking for the first time in several hours, "is Udolpho."

Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and Emily continued to gaze, till its clustering towers were alone seen, rising over the tops of the woods, beneath whose thick shade the carriages soon after began to ascend.

The extent and darkness of these tall woods awakened terrific images in her mind, and she almost expected to see banditti start up from under the trees. At length, the carriages emerged upon a heathy rock, and, soon after, reached the castle gates, where the deep tone of the portal bell, which was struck upon to give notice of their arrival, increased the fearful emotions that had assailed Emily. While they waited till the servant within should come to open the gates, she anxiously surveyed the edifice: but the gloom that overspread it allowed her to distinguish little more than a part of its outline, with the massy walls of the ramparts, and to know that it was vast, ancient and dreary. From the parts she saw, she judged of the heavy strength and extent of the whole. The gateway before her, leading into the courts, was of gigantic size, and was defended by two round towers, crowned by overhanging turrets, embattled, where instead of banners, now waved long grass and wild plants, that had taken root among the mouldering stones, and which seemed to sigh, as the breeze rolled past, over the desolation around them. The towers were united by a curtain, pierced and embattled also, below which appeared the pointed arch of an huge portcullis, surmounting the gates: from these, the walls of the ramparts extended to other towers, overlooking the precipice, whose shattered outline, appearing on a gleam that lingered in the west, told of the ravages of war.—Beyond these all was lost in the obscurity of evening.

While Emily gazed with awe upon the scene, footsteps were heard within the gates, and the undrawing of the bolts; after which an ancient servant of the castle appeared, forcing back the huge folds of the portal, to admit his lord. As the carriage-wheels rolled heavily under the portcullis, Emily’s heart sunk, and she seemed as if she was going into her prison; the gloomy court into which she passed served to confirm the idea, and her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors than her reason could justify.

1794

MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS

Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk*, published in 1796 when the author was twenty, is the most gory of the Gothic novels and one of the most vividly written (a combination guaranteed to produce a bestseller). Lewis (1775–1818) appears to have been alarmed by the scandal that erupted when his authorship was revealed, but not so rattled as to alter his literary course. He went on to compose Gothic dramas for the stage and, finding new uses for the language skills honed during the education that was meant to have prepared him for a diplomatic career, played a major part in introducing German tales of terror to England.

In *The Monk* Ambrosio, abbot of a monastery in Madrid, goes from a pinnacle of self-satisfied saintliness to become one of the most depraved villains in all fiction, both an incestuous rapist and matricidal murderer. After being seduced by Matilda, a female demon who has entered his monastery disguised as a male novice named Rosario, Ambrosio, with the help of a talisman that Matilda provides, plots the rape of one of his penitents, Antonia. Within *The Monk* mob violence competes with Ambrosio's bloodlust as a source for horror, suggesting how Gothic stories, even when set in distant pasts and places, may have allowed the readers and writers of the 1790s to work through timely anxieties about the power of crowds and the threat of revolution.

In the first extract here, Ambrosio exults in private after having delivered a spellbinding sermon to a packed church in Madrid. The second extract recounts his assault on Antonia and the discovery by her mother, Elvira, of the young woman's peril.

From The Monk

From *Chapter 2*

The monks having attended their abbot to the door of his cell, he dismissed them with an air of conscious superiority, in which humility's semblance combated with the reality of pride.

He was no sooner alone, than he gave free loose to the indulgence of his vanity. When he remembered the enthusiasm which his discourse had excited, his heart swelled with rapture, and his imagination presented him with splendid visions of aggrandizement. He looked round him with exultation; and pride told him loudly that he was superior to the rest of his fellow-creatures.

"Who," thought he, "who but myself has passed the ordeal of youth, yet sees no single stain upon his conscience? Who else has subdued the violence of strong passions and an impetuous temperament, and submitted even from the dawn of life to voluntary retirement? I seek for such a man in vain. I see no one but myself possessed of such resolution. Religion cannot boast Ambrosio's equal! How powerful an effect did my discourse produce upon its auditors! How they crowded round me! How they loaded me with benedictions, and pronounced me the sole uncorrupted pillar of the church! What then now is left for me to do? Nothing, but to watch as carefully over the conduct of my brethren, as I have hitherto watched over my own. Yet hold! May I not be tempted from those paths which till now I have pursued without one moment's wandering? Am I not a man whose nature is frail and prone to error? I must now abandon the solitude of my retreat; the fairest and noblest dames of Madrid continually present themselves at the abbey, and will use no other confessor. I must accustom my eyes to objects of temptation, and expose myself to the seduction of luxury and desire. Should I meet in that world which I am constrained to enter, some lovely female—lovely as you—Madona—!"

As he said this, he fixed his eyes upon a picture of the Virgin, which was suspended opposite to him: this for two years had been the object of his increasing wonder and adoration. He paused, and gazed upon it with delight.

"What beauty in that countenance!" he continued after a silence of some minutes; "how graceful is the turn of that head! what sweetness, yet what majesty in her divine eyes! how softly her cheek reclines upon her hand! Can the rose vie with the blush of that cheek? can the lily rival the whiteness of that hand? Oh! if such a creature existed, and existed but for me! were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom! gracious God, should I then resist the temptation? Should I not barter for a single embrace the reward of my sufferings for thirty years? Should I not abandon——Fool that I am! Whither do I suffer my admiration of this picture to hurry me? Away, impure ideas! Let me remember that woman is for ever lost to me. Never was mortal formed so perfect as this picture. But even did such exist, the trial might be too mighty for a common virtue; but Ambrosio's is proof against temptation. Temptation, did I say? To me it would be none. What charms me, when ideal and considered as a superior being, would disgust me, become woman and tainted with all the failings of mortality. It is not the woman's beauty that fills me with such enthusiasm: it is the painter's skill that I admire; it is the Divinity that I adore. Are not the passions dead in my bosom? have I not freed myself from the frailty of mankind? Fear not, Ambrosio! Take confidence in the strength of your virtue. Enter boldly into the world, to whose failings you are superior; reflect that you are now exempted from humanity's defects, and defy all the arts of the spirits of darkness. They shall know you for what you are!"

Here his reverie was interrupted by three soft knocks at the door of his cell. With difficulty did the abbot awake from his delirium. The knocking was repeated.

"Who is there?" said Ambrosio at length.

"It is only Rosario," replied a gentle voice.

From *Chapter 8*

It was almost two o'clock before the lustful monk ventured to bend his steps towards Antonia's dwelling. It has been already mentioned that the abbey was at no great distance from the strada di San Iago. He reached the house unobserved. Here he stopped, and hesitated for a moment. He reflected on the enormity of the crime, the consequences of a discovery, and the probability, after what had passed, of Elvira's suspecting him to be her daughter's ravisher. On the other hand it was suggested that she could do no more than suspect; that no proofs of his guilt could be produced; that it would seem impossible for the rape to have been committed without Antonia's knowing when, where, or by whom; and finally, he believed that his fame was too firmly established to be shaken by the unsupported accusations of two unknown women. This latter argument was perfectly false. He knew not how uncertain is the air of popular applause, and that a moment suffices to make him to-day the detestation of the world, who yesterday was its idol. The result of the monk's deliberations was that he should proceed in his enterprise. He ascended the steps leading to the house. No sooner did he touch the door with the silver myrtle than it flew open, and presented him with a free passage. He entered, and the door closed after him of its own accord.

Guided by the moon-beams, he proceeded up the stair-case with slow and cautious steps. He looked round him every moment with apprehension and anxiety. He saw a spy in every shadow, and heard a voice in every murmur of the night-breeze. Consciousness of the guilty business on which he was employed appalled his heart, and rendered it more timid than a woman's. Yet still he proceeded. He reached the door of Antonia's chamber. He stopped, and listened. All was hushed within. The total silence persuaded him that his intended victim was retired to rest, and he ventured to lift up the latch. The door was fastened, and resisted his efforts. But no sooner was it touched by the talisman than the bolt flew back. The ravisher stepped on, and found himself in the chamber where slept the

innocent girl, unconscious how dangerous a visitor was drawing near her couch. The door closed after him, and the bolt shot again into its fastening.

Ambrosio advanced with precaution. He took care that not a board should creak under his foot, and held in his breath as he approached the bed. His first attention was to perform the magic ceremony, as Matilda had charged him: he breathed thrice upon the silver myrtle, pronounced over it Antonia's name, and laid it upon her pillow. The effects which it had already produced permitted not his doubting its success in prolonging the slumbers of his devoted mistress. No sooner was the enchantment performed than he considered her to be absolutely in his power, and his eyes flashed with lust and impatience. He now ventured to cast a glance upon the sleeping beauty. A single lamp, burning before the statue of St. Rosolia, shed a faint light through the room, and permitted him to examine all the charms of the lovely object before him. The heat of the weather had obliged her to throw off part of the bed-clothes. Those which still covered her Ambrosio's insolent hand hastened to remove. She lay with her cheek reclining upon one ivory arm: the other rested on the side of the bed with graceful indolence. A few tresses of her hair had escaped from beneath the muslin which confined the rest, and fell carelessly over her bosom, as it heaved with slow and regular suspiration. The warm air had spread her cheek with a higher colour than usual. A smile inexpressibly sweet played round her ripe and coral lips, from which every now and then escaped a gentle sigh, or an half-pronounced sentence. An air of enchanting innocence and candour pervaded her whole form; and there was a sort of modesty in her very nakedness, which added fresh stings to the desires of the lustful monk.

He remained for some moments devouring those charms with his eyes which soon were to be subjected to his ill-regulated passions. Her mouth half-opened seem to solicit a kiss: he bent over her: he joined his lips to hers, and drew in the fragrance of her breath with rapture. This momentary pleasure increased his longing for still greater. His desires were raised to that frantic height by which brutes are agitated. He resolved not to delay for one instant longer the

accomplishment of his wishes, and hastily proceeded to tear off those garments which impeded the gratification of his lust.

"Gracious God!" exclaimed a voice behind him: "Am I not deceived? Is not this an illusion?"

Terror, confusion, and disappointment accompanied these words, as they struck Ambrosio's hearing. He started, and turned towards it. Elvira stood at the door of the chamber, and regarded the monk with looks of surprise and detestation.

A frightful dream had represented to her Antonia on the verge of a precipice. She saw her trembling on the brink: every moment seemed to threaten her fall, and she heard her exclaim with shrieks, "Save me, mother! save me!—Yet a moment, and it will be too late." Elvira woke in terror. The vision had made too strong an impression upon her mind to permit her resting till assured of her daughter's safety. She hastily started from her bed, threw on a loose nightgown, and, passing through the closet in which slept the waiting-woman, reached Antonia's chamber just in time to rescue her from the grasp of the ravisher.

His shame and her amazement seemed to have petrified into statues both Elvira and the monk. They remained gazing upon each other in silence. The lady was the first to recover herself.

"It is no dream," she cried: "it is really Ambrosio who stands before me. It is the man whom Madrid esteems a saint that I find at this late hour near the couch of my unhappy child. Monster of hypocrisy! I already suspected your designs, but forbore your accusation in pity to human frailty. Silence would now be criminal. The whole city shall be informed of your incontinence. I will unmask you, villain, and convince the church what a viper she cherishes in her bosom."

Pale and confused, the baffled culprit stood trembling before her. He would fain have extenuated his offence, but could find no apology for his conduct. He could produce nothing but broken sentences, and excuses which contradicted each other. Elvira was too justly incensed to grant the pardon which he requested. She protested that she would raise the neighbourhood, and make him an example to all

future hypocrites. Then hastening to the bed, she called to Antonia to wake; and finding that her voice had no effect, she took her arm, and raised her forcibly from the pillow. The charm operated too powerfully. Antonia remained insensible; and, on being released by her mother, sank back upon the pillow.

"This slumber cannot be natural," cried the amazed Elvira, whose indignation increased with every moment: "some mystery is concealed in it. But tremble, hypocrite! All your villainy shall soon be unravelled. Help! help!" she exclaimed aloud: "Within there! Flora! Flora!"

"Hear me for one moment, lady!" cried the monk, restored to himself by the urgency of the danger: "by all that is sacred and holy, I swear that your daughter's honour is still unviolated. Forgive my transgression! Spare me the shame of a discovery, and permit me to regain the abbey undisturbed. Grant me this request in mercy! I promise not only that Antonia shall be secure from me in future, but that the rest of my life shall prove—"

Elvira interrupted him abruptly.

" Final Discovery . . . " Frontispiece for a typical Gothic chapbook, the inexpensive form that Gothic fiction took as it became part of popular culture: *The Skeleton Lover: A Romantic Tale* (1830).

"Antonia secure from you? *I* will secure her. You shall betray no longer the confidence of parents. Your iniquity shall be unveiled to the public eye. All Madrid shall shudder at your perfidy, your hypocrisy, and incontinence. What ho! there! Flora! Flora! I say."

While she spoke thus, the remembrance of Agnes struck upon his mind. Thus had she sued to him for mercy, and thus had he refused her prayer! It was now his turn to suffer, and he could not but acknowledge that his punishment was just. In the mean while Elvira continued to call Flora to her assistance; but her voice was so choaked with passion, that the servant, who was buried in profound

slumber, was insensible to all her cries: Elvira dared not go towards the closet in which Flora slept, lest the monk should take that opportunity to escape. Such indeed was his intention: he trusted that, could he reach the abbey unobserved by any other than Elvira, her single testimony would not suffice to ruin a reputation so well established as his was in Madrid. With this idea he gathered up such garments as he had already thrown off, and hastened towards the door. Elvira was aware of his design: she followed him, and, ere he could draw back the bolt, seized him by the arm, and detained him.

"Attempt not to fly!" said she: "you quit not this room without witnesses of your guilt."

Ambrosio struggled in vain to disengage himself. Elvira quitted not her hold, but redoubled her cries for succour. The friar's danger grew more urgent. He expected every moment to hear people assembling at her voice; and, worked up to madness by the approach of ruin, he adopted a resolution equally desperate and savage. Turning round suddenly, with one hand he grasped Elvira's throat so as to prevent her continuing her clamour, and with the other, dashing her violently upon the ground, he dragged her towards the bed. Confused by this unexpected attack, she scarcely had power to strive at forcing herself from his grasp: while the monk, snatching the pillow from beneath her daughter's head, covering with it Elvira's face, and pressing his knee upon her stomach with all his strength, endeavoured to put an end to her existence. He succeeded but too well. Her natural strength increased by the excess of anguish, long did the sufferer struggle to disengage herself, but in vain. The monk continued to kneel upon her breast, witnessed without mercy the convulsive trembling of her limbs beneath him, and sustained with inhuman firmness the spectacle of her agonies, when soul and body were on the point of separating. Those agonies at length were over. She ceased to struggle for life. The monk took off the pillow, and gazed upon her. Her face was covered with a frightful blackness: her limbs moved no more: the blood was chilled in her veins: her heart had forgotten to beat; and her hands were stiff and frozen. Ambrosio beheld before him that

once noble and majestic form, now become a corse,[1] cold, senseless, and disgusting.

This horrible act was no sooner perpetrated, than the friar beheld the enormity of his crime. A cold dew flowed over his limbs: his eyes closed: he staggered to a chair, and sank into it almost as lifeless as the unfortunate who lay extended at his feet. From this state he was roused by the necessity of flight, and the danger of being found in Antonia's apartment. He had no desire to profit by the execution of his crime. Antonia now appeared to him an object of disgust. A deadly cold had usurped the place of that warmth which glowed in his bosom. No ideas offered themselves to his mind but those of death and guilt, of present shame and future punishment. Agitated by remorse and fear, he prepared for flight: yet his terrors did not so completely master his recollection as to prevent his taking the precautions necessary for his safety. He replaced the pillow upon the bed, gathered up his garments, and, with the fatal talisman in his hand, bent his unsteady steps towards the door. Bewildered by fear, he fancied that his flight was opposed by legions of phantoms. Wherever he turned, the disfigured corse seemed to lie in his passage, and it was long before he succeeded in reaching the door.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Corpse.Return to reference 1

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Many elements in Coleridge's poetry—the account of the skeleton ship in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, for instance, or the atmosphere, setting, and fragmentary plot of witchery and seduction in *Christabel*—suggest how absorbing he found the novels of the "terrorist school." His letters from the 1790s sometimes reveal him sitting up all night, trembling, he says, "like an aspen leaf" as he turns their pages. But elsewhere Coleridge's writings indicate how complex and ambivalent the Romantic poets' reaction to Gothic writing could be. As a first example we provide his scathing review, published in the *Critical Review* in February 1797, of *The Monk.* It should be noted that Coleridge's reaction to Matthew Lewis's novel is, for all its alarm, much more measured than those of most of his fellow critics.

From Review of *The Monk* by Matthew Lewis

The horrible and the preternatural have usually seized on the popular taste, at the rise and decline of literature. Most powerful stimulants, they can never be required except by the torpor of an unawakened, or the languor of an exhausted, appetite. The same phenomenon, therefore, which we hail as a favourable omen in the belles lettres[1] of Germany, impresses a degree of gloom in the compositions of our countrymen. We trust, however, that satiety will banish what good sense should have prevented; and that, wearied with fiends, incomprehensible characters, with shrieks, murders, and subterraneous dungeons, the public will learn, by the multitude of the manufacturers, with how little expense of thought or imagination this species of composition is manufactured. But, cheaply as we estimate romances in general, we acknowledge, in the work before us, the offspring of no common genius. The tale is similar to that of Santon Barsista in the Guardian.[2] Ambrosio, a monk, surnamed the Man of Holiness, proud of his own undeviating rectitude, and severe to the faults of others, is successfully assailed by the tempter of mankind, and seduced to the perpetration of rape and murder, and finally precipitated into a contract in which he consigns his soul to everlasting perdition.

The larger part of the three volumes is occupied by the underplot, which, however, is skilfully and closely connected with the main story, and is subservient to its development. The tale of the bleeding nun is truly terrific; and we could not easily recollect a bolder or more happy conception than that of the burning cross on the forehead of the wandering Jew (a mysterious character, which, though copied as to its more prominent features from Schiller's incomprehensible Armenian,[3] does, nevertheless, display great vigour of fancy). But the character of Matilda, the chief agent in the

seduction of Antonio[4] appears to us to be the author's master-piece. It is, indeed, exquisitely imagined, and as exquisitely supported. The whole work is distinguished by the variety and impressiveness of its incidents; and the author everywhere discovers an imagination rich, powerful, and fervid. Such are the excellencies;—the errors and defects are more numerous, and (we are sorry to add) of greater importance.

All events are levelled into one common mass, and become almost equally probable, where the order of nature may be changed whenever the author's purposes demand it. No address is requisite to the accomplishment of any design; and no pleasure therefore can be received from the perception of *difficulty surmounted.* The writer may make us wonder, but he cannot surprise us. For the same reasons a romance is incapable of exemplifying a moral truth. No proud man, for instance, will be made less proud by being told that Lucifer once seduced a presumptuous monk. *Incredulus odit.*[5] Or even if, believing the story, he should deem his virtue less secure, he would yet acquire no lessons of prudence, no feelings of humility. Human prudence can oppose no sufficient shield to the power and cunning of supernatural beings; and the privilege of being proud might be fairly conceded to him who could rise superior to all earthly temptations, and whom the strength of the spiritual world alone would be adequate to overwhelm. So falling, he would fall with glory, and might reasonably welcome his defeat with the haughty emotions of a conqueror. As far, therefore, as the story is concerned, the praise which a romance can claim, is simply that of having given pleasure during its perusal; and so many are the calamities of life, that he who has done this, has not written uselessly. The children of sickness and of solitude shall thank him. To this praise, however, our author has not entitled himself. The sufferings which he describes are so frightful and intolerable, that we break with abruptness from the delusion, and indignantly suspect the man of a species of brutality, who could find a pleasure in wantonly imagining them; and the abominations which he portrays with no hurrying pencil, are such as the observation of character by no means demanded, such

as "no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly suffer them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind." The merit of a novelist is in proportion (not simply to the effect, but) to the *pleasurable* effect which he produces. Situations of torment, and images of naked horror, are easily conceived; and a writer in whose works they abound, deserves our gratitude almost equally with him who should drag us by way of sport through a military hospital, or force us to sit at the dissecting-table of a natural philosopher. To trace the nice[6] boundaries, beyond which terror and sympathy are deserted by the pleasurable emotions,—to reach those limits, yet never to pass them,—*hic labor, hic opus est*.[7] Figures that shock the imagination, and narratives that mangle the feelings, rarely discover *genius*, and always betray a low and vulgar *taste.* Nor has our author indicated less ignorance of the human heart in the management of the principal character. The wisdom and goodness of providence have ordered that the tendency of vicious actions to deprave the heart of the perpetrator, should diminish in proportion to the greatness of his temptations. Now, in addition to constitutional warmth and irresistible opportunity, the monk is impelled to incontinence by friendship, by compassion, by gratitude, by all that is amiable, and all that is estimable; yet in a few weeks after his first frailty, the man who had been described as possessing much general humanity, a keen and vigorous understanding, with habits of the most exalted piety, degenerates into an uglier fiend than the gloomy imagination of Dante would have ventured to picture. Again, the monk is described as feeling and acting under the influence of an appetite which could not co-exist with his other emotions. The romance-writer possesses an unlimited power over situations; but he must scrupulously make his characters act in congruity with them. Let him work *physical* wonders only, and we will be content to *dream* with him for a while; but the first *moral* miracle which he attempts, he disgusts and awakens us. Thus our judgment remains unoffended, when, announced by thunders and earthquakes, the spirit appears to Ambrosio involved in blue fires that increase the cold of the cavern; and we acquiesce in the power of the silver

myrtle which made gates and doors fly open at its touch, and charmed every eye into sleep. But when a mortal, fresh from the impression of that terrible appearance, and in the act of evincing for the first time the witching force of this myrtle, is represented as being at the same moment agitated by so fleeting an appetite as that of lust, our own feelings convince us that this is not improbable, but impossible; not preternatural, but contrary to nature. The extent of the powers that may exist, we can never ascertain; and therefore we feel no great difficulty in yielding a temporary belief to any, the strangest, situation of *things.* But that situation once conceived, how beings like ourselves would feel and act in it, our own feelings sufficiently instruct us; and we instantly reject the clumsy fiction that does not harmonise with them. These are the two *principal* mistakes in *judgment*, which the author has fallen into; but we cannot wholly pass over the frequent incongruity of his style with his subjects. It is gaudy where it should have been severely simple; and too often the mind is offended by phrases the most trite and colloquial, where it demands and had expected a sternness and solemnity of diction.

A more grievous fault remains, a fault for which no literary excellence can atone, a fault which all other excellence does but aggravate, as adding subtlety to a poison by the elegance of its preparation. Mildness of censure would here be criminally misplaced, and silence would make us accomplices. Not without reluctance then, but in full conviction that we are performing a duty, we declare it to be our opinion, that the Monk is a romance, which if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter, he might reasonably turn pale. The temptations of Ambrosio are described with a libidinous minuteness, which, we sincerely hope, will receive its best and only adequate censure from the offended conscience of the author himself. The shameless harlotry of Matilda, and the trembling innocence of Antonia, are seized with equal avidity, as vehicles of the most voluptuous images; and though the tale is indeed a tale of horror, yet the most painful impression which the work left on our minds was that of great acquirements and splendid genius employed to furnish a *mormo*[8] for children, a poison for youth, and a

provocative for the debauchee. Tales of enchantments and witchcraft can never be *useful*: our author has contrived to make them *pernicious*, by blending, with an irreverent negligence, all that is most awfully true in religion with all that is most ridiculously absurd in superstition.

1797

Endnotes

- Note 1: Literature.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An Eastern tale published in 1713 and acknowledged by Lewis as one of his sources.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The mysterious villain of Friedrich Schiller's *The Ghost-seer* (English translation 1795).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Coleridge's mistake for Ambrosio.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "To disbelieve is to dislike": Horace, *Art of Poetry* 1.188.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Subtle.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: This is the effort, this is the work (Latin).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Bogeyman, object of needless dread.Return to reference 8

From Biographia Literaria

From *Chapter* 3[1]

For as to the devotees of the circulating libraries, I dare not compliment their *pass-time*, or rather *kill-time*, with the name of *reading.* Call it rather a sort of beggarly daydreaming, during which the mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish sensibility; while the whole *materiel* and imagery of the doze is supplied *ab extra*[2] by a sort of mental *camera obscura*[3] manufactured at the printing office, which *pro tempore*[4] fixes, reflects and transmits the moving phantasms of one man's delirium, so as to people the barrenness of an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance or suspension of all common sense and all definite purpose. We should therefore transfer this species of *amusement* (if indeed those can be said to retire *a musis*,[5] who were never in their company, or relaxation be attributable to those, whose bows are never bent) from the genus, *reading*, to that comprehensive class characterized by the power of reconciling the two contrary yet co-existing propensities of human nature, namely indulgence of sloth, and hatred of vacancy. In addition to novels and tales of chivalry in prose or rhyme (by which last I mean neither rhythm nor metre) this genus comprises as its species, gaming; swinging or swaying on a chair or gate; spitting over a bridge; smoking; snuff-taking; tête-à-tête quarrels after dinner between husband and wife; conning word by word all the advertisements of the *Daily Advertiser* in a public house on a rainy day, etc. etc. etc.

1815 1817

Endnotes

- Note 1: This paragraph makes up the first footnote to the third chapter of Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, the hybrid book in which he blended autobiography with philosophical speculations and favorite anecdotes. In the body of his text, Coleridge refers to the frequency with which his name has been before the reading public; the footnote (the text given here) then goes on

to identify the sort of people who for him do not count as legitimate members of that public.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: From the outside (Latin).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A device (forerunner of the modern camera) creating a special optical effect: light passes through a pinhole into a darkened room and creates an inverted image of the world beyond the walls.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: For the time being (Latin).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A pun linking "amusement" and *a musis*, "away from the Muses."Return to reference 5

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
1770–1850

William Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth in West Cumberland, just on the northern fringe of the English Lake District. His mother died shortly before he turned eight; the following year, the boy was sent to school at Hawkshead, near Esthwaite lake, in the heart of that sparsely populated region that he and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were to transform into one of the poetic centers of England. William and his three brothers boarded in the cottage of Ann Tyson, who gave the boys simple comfort, ample affection, and freedom to roam the countryside at will. A vigorous, unruly, and sometimes moody boy, William spent his free days and occasionally "half the night" in the sports and rambles described in the first two books of his autobiographical poem *The Prelude*, "drinking in" (to use one of his favorite metaphors) the natural sights and sounds, and getting to know the cottagers, shepherds, and solitary wanderers who moved through his imagination into his later poetry. He also found time to read voraciously in the books owned by his young headmaster, William Taylor, who encouraged him in his inclination to poetry.

John Wordsworth, the poet's father, died suddenly when William was thirteen, leaving to his five children mainly the substantial sum owed him by Lord Lonsdale, whom he had served as attorney and as steward of the huge Lonsdale estate. This harsh nobleman had yet to pay the debt when he died in 1802. Wordsworth was nevertheless

able in 1787 to enter St. John's College, Cambridge University, where four years later he took his degree without distinction.

During the summer vacation of his third year at Cambridge (1790), Wordsworth and his closest college friend, the Welshman Robert Jones, journeyed on foot through France and the Alps (described in *The Prelude* 6) at the time when the French were joyously celebrating the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. Upon completing his course at Cambridge, Wordsworth spent four months in London, set off on another walking tour with Robert Jones through Wales (the time of the memorable ascent of Mount Snowdon in *The Prelude* 13), and then went back alone to France to master the language and qualify as a traveling tutor.

During his year in France (November 1791 to December 1792), Wordsworth became a fervent supporter of the French Revolution—which seemed to him and many others to promise a "glorious renovation" of society—and he fell in love with Annette Vallon, the daughter of a French surgeon at Blois. The two planned to marry, despite their differences in religion and political inclinations (Annette belonged to an old Catholic family whose sympathies were Royalist). But almost immediately after their daughter, Caroline, was born, lack of money forced Wordsworth to return to England. The outbreak of war made it impossible for him to rejoin Annette and Caroline. Wordsworth's guilt over this abandonment, his divided loyalties between England and France, and his gradual disillusion with the course of the Revolution brought him—according to his account in *The Prelude* 10 and 11—to the verge of an emotional breakdown, when, "sick, wearied out with contrarieties," he "yielded up moral questions in despair." His suffering, his near-collapse, and the successful effort, after his break with his past, to reestablish "a saving intercourse with my true self," are the experiences that underlie many of his greatest poems.

At this critical point, a friend died and left Wordsworth a sum of money just sufficient to enable him to live by his poetry. In 1795 he settled in a rent-free house at Racedown, Dorsetshire, with his beloved sister, Dorothy, who now began her long career as

confidante, inspirer, and secretary. At that same time Wordsworth met Coleridge. Two years later he moved to Alfoxden House, Somersetshire, to be near Coleridge, who lived a few miles away at Nether Stowey. Here he entered at the age of twenty-seven on the delayed springtime of his poetic career.

Even while he had been an undergraduate at Cambridge, Coleridge claimed that he had detected signs of genius in Wordsworth's rather conventional poem about his tour in the Alps, *Descriptive Sketches*, published in 1793. Now he hailed Wordsworth unreservedly as "the best poet of the age." The two men met almost daily, talked for hours about poetry, and wrote prolifically. So close was their association that we find the same phrases occurring in poems by Wordsworth and Coleridge, as well as in the remarkable journals that Dorothy kept at the time; the two poets collaborated in some writings and freely traded thoughts and passages for others; and Coleridge even undertook to complete a few poems that Wordsworth had left unfinished. This close partnership, along with the hospitality the two households offered to another young radical writer, John Thelwall, aroused the paranoia of people in the neighborhood. Already fearful of a military invasion by France, they became convinced that Wordsworth and Coleridge were political plotters, not poets. The government sent spies to investigate, and the Wordsworths lost their lease.

Although brought to this abrupt end, that short period of collaboration resulted in one of the most important books of the era, *Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems,* published anonymously in 1798. This short volume opened with Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and included three other poems by Coleridge, some lyrics in which Wordsworth celebrated the experience of nature, and a number of verse anecdotes drawn from the lives of the rural poor. (The verse forms and the subject matter of this last set of poems—which includes "Simon Lee," "We Are Seven," and "The Thorn"—make evident the debt, announced in the very title of *Lyrical Ballads*, that Wordsworth's and Coleridge's book owed to the folk ballads that were being transcribed and anthologized in the later eighteenth

century by collectors such as Thomas Percy and Robert Burns.) The book closed with Wordsworth's great descriptive and meditative poem in blank verse, "Tintern Abbey." This poem inaugurated what modern critics call Wordsworth's "myth of nature": his presentation of the "growth" of his mind to maturity, a process unfolding through the interaction between the inner world of the mind and the shaping force of external Nature.

William Hazlitt said that when he heard Coleridge read some of the newly written poems of *Lyrical Ballads* aloud, "the sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me," with something of the effect "that arises from the turning up of the fresh soil, or of the first welcome breath of spring." The reviewers were less enthusiastic, warning that, because of their simple language and subject matter, poems such as "Simon Lee" risked "vulgarity" or silliness. Nevertheless *Lyrical Ballads* sold out in two years, and Wordsworth published under his own name a new edition, dated 1800, to which he added a second volume of poems. In his famous Preface to this edition, planned in close consultation with Coleridge, Wordsworth outlined a critical program that provided a retroactive rationale for the "experiments" the poems represented.

Late in 1799 William and Dorothy moved back permanently to their native lakes, settling at Grasmere in the little house later named Dove Cottage. Coleridge, following them, rented at Keswick, thirteen miles away. In 1802 Wordsworth finally came into his father's inheritance and, after an amicable settlement with Annette Vallon, married Mary Hutchinson, whom he had known since childhood. His life after that time had many sorrows: the drowning in 1805 of his favorite brother, John, a sea captain; the deaths in 1812 of two of his and Mary's five children; a growing rift with Coleridge, culminating in a bitter quarrel (1810) from which they were not completely reconciled for almost two decades; and, from the 1830s on, Dorothy's physical and mental illness. Over these years Wordsworth became, nonetheless, increasingly prosperous and famous. He also displayed a political and religious conservatism that disappointed readers who, like Hazlitt, had interpreted his early work

as the expression of a "levelling Muse" that promoted democratic change. In 1813 a government sinecure, the position of stamp distributor (that is, revenue collector) for Westmorland, was bestowed on him—concrete evidence of his recognition as a national poet and of the alteration in the government's perception of his politics. Gradually, Wordsworth's residences, as he moved into more and more comfortable quarters, became standard stops for sightseers touring the Lakes. By 1843 he was poet laureate of Great Britain. He died in 1850 at the age of eighty. Only then did his executors publish his masterpiece, *The Prelude,* or *Growth of a Poet's Mind*, the epic poem of "Self-biography" (in Coleridge's phrase) that he had written in two parts in 1799, expanded to its full length in 1805, and then continued to revise almost to the last decade of his long life.

Most of Wordsworth's greatest poetry had been written by 1807, when he published *Poems, in Two Volumes.* After *The Excursion* (1814) and the first collected edition of his poems (1815), although he continued to write prolifically and to work on the revisions for additional collected editions, his powers appeared to decline. The causes of that decline have been much debated. One seems to be inherent in the very nature of his writing. Wordsworth is above all the poet of the remembrance—also the reinterpretation—of things past. He frequently presents his poetry as the outgrowth of occasions on which objects or events in the present trigger a sudden renewal of feelings that he has experienced in youth, often without then realizing their import. In his prose portrait of Wordsworth for *The Spirit of the Age* William Hazlitt noticed this: for Wordsworth, he observed, there "is no image so insignificant that it has not in some mood or other found the way into his heart: no sound that does not awaken the memory of other years." But the memory of one's early emotional experience is not an inexhaustible resource for poetry, as Wordsworth recognized almost from the start of his career. In book 11 of the 1805 version of *The Prelude* he already seems to be entertaining a premonition of future loss, in the lines that describe the recurrence of "spots of time" from his memories of childhood:

The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life: the hiding-places of my power
Seem open; I approach and then they close;
I see by glimpses now, when age comes on
May scarcely see at all.

The simple (maybe even prosy) lines, on the perplexities of memory, on the mystery that the self poses for the self, and on the sorrows and losses brought by time, announce an imminent imaginative failure. At the same time, contrariwise, they also suggest the reason Hazlitt in the same essay would declare Wordsworth's poetry preeminent among that of the living poets: "he has communicated interest and dignity to the primal movements of the heart of man."

From Lyrical Ballads

Goody Blake and Harry Gill

A True Story

Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter?
What is't that ails young Harry Gill?
That evermore his teeth they chatter,
Chatter, chatter, chatter still.
Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,
Good duffle grey, and flannel fine;
He has a blanket on his back,
And coats enough to smother nine.

In March, December, and in July,
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;
The neighbours tell, and tell you truly,
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.
At night, at morning, and at noon,
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;
Beneath the sun, beneath the moon,
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.

Young Harry was a lusty drover,
And who so stout of limb as he?
His cheeks were red as ruddy clover,
His voice was like the voice of three.
Auld Goody[1] Blake was old and poor,
Ill fed she was, and thinly clad;
And any man who pass'd her door,
Might see how poor a hut she had,

All day she spun in her poor dwelling,
And then her three hours' work at night!

Alas! ’twas hardly worth the telling,
It would not pay for candle-light.
—This woman dwelt in Dorsetshire,
Her hut was on a cold hill-side,
And in that country coals are dear,
For they come far by wind and tide.

By the same fire to boil their pottage,
Two poor old dames, as I have known,
Will often live in one small cottage,
But she, poor woman, dwelt alone.
’Twas well enough when summer came,
The long, warm, lightsome summer-day,
Then at her door the *canty*° dame
Would sit, as any linnet gay.

But when the ice our streams did fetter,
Oh! then how her old bones would shake!
You would have said, if you had met her,
’Twas a hard time for Goody Blake.
Her evenings then were dull and dead;
Sad case it was, as you may think,
For very cold to go to bed,
And then for cold not sleep a wink.

Oh joy for her! when e’er in winter
The winds at night had made a rout,
And scatter’d many a lusty splinter,
And many a rotten bough about.
Yet never had she, well or sick,
As every man who knew her says,
A pile before-hand, wood or stick,
Enough to warm her for three days.

Now, when the frost was past enduring,
And made her poor old bones to ache,

Could any thing be more alluring,
Than an old hedge to Goody Blake?
And now and then, it must be said,
When her old bones were cold and chill,
She left her fire, or left her bed,
To seek the hedge of Harry Gill.

Now Harry he had long suspected
This trespass of old Goody Blake,
And vow'd that she should be detected,
And he on her would vengeance take.
And oft from his warm fire he'd go,
And to the fields his road would take,
And there, at night, in frost and snow,
He watch'd to seize old Goody Blake.

And once, behind a rick of barley,
Thus looking out did Harry stand;
The moon was full and shining clearly,
And crisp with frost the stubble-land.
—He hears a noise—he's all awake—
Again?—on tip-toe down the hill
He softly creeps—'Tis Goody Blake,
She's at the hedge of Harry Gill.

Right glad was he when he beheld her:
Stick after stick did Goody pull,
He stood behind a bush of elder,
Till she had filled her apron full.
When with her load she turned about,
The bye-road back again to take,
He started forward with a shout,
And sprang upon poor Goody Blake.

And fiercely by the arm he took her,
And by the arm he held her fast,

And fiercely by the arm he shook her,
And cried, "I've caught you then at last!"
Then Goody, who had nothing said,
Her bundle from her lap let fall;
And kneeling on the sticks, she pray'd
To God that is the judge of all.

She pray'd, her wither'd hand uprearing,
While Harry held her by the arm—
"God! who art never out of hearing,
O may he never more be warm!"
The cold, cold moon above her head,
Thus on her knees did Goody pray,
Young Harry heard what she had said,
And icy-cold he turned away.

He went complaining all the morrow
That he was cold and very chill:
His face was gloom, his heart was sorrow,
Alas! that day for Harry Gill!
That day he wore a riding-coat,
But not a whit the warmer he:
Another was on Thursday brought,
And ere the Sabbath he had three.

'Twas all in vain, a useless matter,
And blankets were about him pinn'd;
Yet still his jaws and teeth they clatter,
Like a loose casement in the wind.
And Harry's flesh it fell away;
And all who see him say 'tis plain,
That, live as long as live he may,
He never will be warm again.

No word to any man he utters,
A-bed or up, to young or old;

But ever to himself he mutters,
"Poor Harry Gill is very cold."
A-bed or up, by night or day;
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.
Now think, ye farmers all, I pray,
Of Goody Blake and Harry Gill.[2]

Mar. 1798 1798

Endnotes

- Note 1: Term of civility applied to a woman in humble life. "Auld": old.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the version of a Preface Wordsworth wrote for *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800 he remarked that through this tale he aimed "to draw attention to the truth that the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes even in our physical nature as might almost appear miraculous. The truth is an important one; the fact (for it is a *fact*) is a valuable illustration of it." Wordsworth found this fact when reading the latest speculations in psychological science. The poem reworks a case study in Erasmus Darwin's *Zoonomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life* (1796).Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *lively*Return to reference °

Simon Lee[1]

The Old Huntsman

WITH AN INCIDENT IN WHICH HE WAS CONCERNED

In the sweet shire of Cardigan,[2]
Not far from pleasant Ivor-hall,
An old man dwells, a little man,—
'Tis said he once was tall.
Full five-and-thirty years he lived
A running huntsman[3] merry;
And still the centre of his cheek
Is red as a ripe cherry.

No man like him the horn could sound,
And hill and valley rang with glee
When Echo bandied, round and round,
The halloo of Simon Lee.
In those proud days, he little cared
For husbandry or tillage;
To blither tasks did Simon rouse
The sleepers of the village.

He all the country could outrun,
Could leave both man and horse behind;
And often, ere the chase was done,
He reeled, and was stone-blind.°
And still there's something in the world
At which his heart rejoices;
For when the chiming hounds are out,
He dearly loves their voices!

But, oh the heavy change![4]—bereft
Of health, strength, friends, and kindred, see!
Old Simon to the world is left
In liveried[5] poverty.
His Master's dead,—and no one now
Dwells in the Hall of Ivor;
Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead;
He is the sole survivor.

And he is lean and he is sick;
His body, dwindled and awry,
Rests upon ankles swoln and thick;
His legs are thin and dry.
One prop he has, and only one,
His wife, an aged woman,
Lives with him, near the waterfall,
Upon the village Common.

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,
Not twenty paces from the door,
A scrap of land they have, but they
Are poorest of the poor.
This scrap of land he from the heath
Enclosed when he was stronger;
But what to them avails the land
Which he can till no longer?

Oft, working by her Husband's side,
Ruth does what Simon cannot do;
For she, with scanty cause for pride,
Is stouter° of the two.
And, though you with your utmost skill
From labour could not wean them,
'Tis very, very little—all
That they can do between them.

Few months of life has he in store
As he to you will tell,
For still, the more he works, the more
Do his weak ankles swell.
My gentle Reader, I perceive
How patiently you've waited,
And now I fear that you expect
Some tale will be related.

O Reader! had you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,
O gentle Reader! you would find
A tale in every thing.
What more I have to say is short,
And you must kindly take it:
It is no tale; but, should you think,
Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

One summer-day I chanced to see
This old Man doing all he could
To unearth the root of an old tree,
A stump of rotten wood.
The mattock tottered in his hand;
So vain was his endeavour,
That at the root of the old tree
He might have worked for ever.

"You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,
Give me your tool," to him I said;
And at the word right gladly he
Received my proffered aid.
I struck, and with a single blow
The tangled root I severed,
At which the poor old Man so long
And vainly had endeavoured.

The tears into his eyes were brought,
And thanks and praises seemed to run
So fast out of his heart, I thought
They never would have done.
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning;
Alas! the gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning.

1798 1798, 1845

Endnotes

- Note 1: This old man had been huntsman to the Squires of Alfoxden. * * * I have, after an interval of 45 years, the image of the old man as fresh before my eyes as if I had seen him yesterday. The expression when the hounds were out, "I dearly love their voices," was word for word from his own lips [*Wordsworth's note*, 1843]. Wordsworth and Dorothy had lived at Alfoxden House, Somersetshire, in 1797–98.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth relocates the incident from Somersetshire to Cardiganshire in Wales.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Manager of the hunt and the person in charge of the hounds.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare Milton's "Lycidas," line 37: "But O the heavy change, now thou art gone."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Livery was the uniform worn by the male servants of a household.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *totally blind*Return to reference °
- °: *stronger, sturdier*Return to reference °

We Are Seven[1]

_____ A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage Girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway[2] dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

"Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."

"You say that two at Conway dwell,

And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven! I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be."

Then did the little Maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree."

"You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little Maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

"And often after sun-set, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,[3]
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

"So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,

My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
Quick was the little Maid's reply,
"O Master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

1798

1798, 1815

Endnotes

- Note 1: Written at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798. * * * * * The little girl who is the heroine I met within the area of Goodrich Castle [in the Wye Valley north of Tintern Abbey] in the year 1793 [*Wordsworth's note*, 1843]. Wordsworth also tells us that, "while walking to and fro," he composed the last stanza first, beginning with the last line, and that Coleridge contributed the first stanza.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A seaport town in north Wales.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bowl for porridge.Return to reference 3

Lines Written in Early Spring

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle[1] trailed its wreaths,
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,[2]
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

1798

1798, 1837

Endnotes

- Note 1: A trailing evergreen plant with small blue flowers (U.S. myrtle).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The version of these two lines in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 reads: "If I these thoughts may not prevent, / If such be of my creed the plan."Return to reference 2

The Thorn[1]

1

"There is a Thorn[2]—it looks so old,
In truth, you'd find it hard to say
How it could ever have been young,
It looks so old and grey.
Not higher than a two years' child
It stands erect, this aged Thorn;
No leaves it has, no prickly points;
It is a mass of knotted joints,
A wretched thing forlorn.
It stands erect, and like a stone
With lichens is it overgrown.

2

"Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown,
With lichens to the very top,
And hung with heavy tufts of moss,
A melancholy crop:
Up from the earth these mosses creep,
And this poor Thorn they clasp it round
So close, you'd say that they are bent
With plain and manifest intent
To drag it to the ground;
And all have joined in one endeavour
To bury this poor Thorn for ever.

3

"High on a mountain's highest ridge,
Where oft the stormy winter gale
Cuts like a scythe, while through the clouds
It sweeps from vale to vale;
Not five yards from the mountain path,
This Thorn you on your left espy;
And to the left, three yards beyond,
You see a little muddy pond
Of water—never dry
Though but of compass small, and bare
To thirsty suns and parching air.

4

"And, close beside this aged Thorn,
There is a fresh and lovely sight,
A beauteous heap, a hill of moss,
Just half a foot in height.
All lovely colours there you see,
All colours that were ever seen;
And mossy network too is there,
As if by hand of lady fair
The work had woven been;
And cups,° the darlings of the eye,
So deep is their vermilion dye.

5

"Ah me! what lovely tints are there
Of olive green and scarlet bright,
In spikes, in branches, and in stars,
Green, red, and pearly white!
This heap of earth o'ergrown with moss,
Which close beside the Thorn you see,

So fresh in all its beauteous dyes,
Is like an infant's grave in size,
As like as like can be:
But never, never any where,
An infant's grave was half so fair.

6

"Now would you see this aged Thorn,
This pond, and beauteous hill of moss,
You must take care and choose your time
The mountain when to cross.
For oft there sits between the heap
So like an infant's grave in size,
And that same pond of which I spoke,
A Woman in a scarlet cloak,
And to herself she cries,
'Oh misery! oh misery!
Oh woe is me! oh misery!'

7

"At all times of the day and night
This wretched Woman thither goes;
And she is known to every star,
And every wind that blows;
And there, beside the Thorn, she sits
When the blue daylight's in the skies,
And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And to herself she cries,
'Oh misery! oh misery!
Oh woe is me! oh misery!' "

8

"Now wherefore, thus, by day and night,
In rain, in tempest, and in snow,
Thus to the dreary mountain-top
Does this poor Woman go?
And why sits she beside the Thorn
When the blue daylight's in the sky
Or when the whirlwind's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And wherefore does she cry?—
O wherefore? wherefore? tell me why
Does she repeat that doleful cry?"

9

"I cannot tell; I wish I could;
For the true reason no one knows:
But would you gladly view the spot,
The spot to which she goes;
The hillock like an infant's grave,
The pond—and Thorn, so old and grey;
Pass by her door—'tis seldom shut—
And, if you see her in her hut—
Then to the spot away!
I never heard of such as dare
Approach the spot when she is there."

10

"But wherefore to the mountain-top
Can this unhappy Woman go,
Whatever star is in the skies,
Whatever wind may blow?"

"Full twenty years are past and gone
Since she (her name is Martha Ray)[3]
Gave with a maiden's true good-will
Her company to Stephen Hill;
And she was blithe and gay,
While friends and kindred all approved
Of him whom tenderly she loved.

11

"And they had fixed the wedding day,
The morning that must wed them both;
But Stephen to another Maid
Had sworn another oath;
And, with this other Maid, to church
Unthinking Stephen went—
Poor Martha! on that woeful day
A pang of pitiless dismay
Into her soul was sent;
A fire was kindled in her breast,
Which might not burn itself to rest.

12

"They say, full six months after this,
While yet the summer leaves were green,
She to the mountain-top would go,
And there was often seen.
What could she seek?—or wish to hide?
Her state to any eye was plain;
She was with child,° and she was mad;
Yet often was she sober sad
From her exceeding pain.
O guilty Father—would that death

Had saved him from that breach of faith!

13

"Sad case for such a brain to hold
Communion with a stirring child!
Sad case, as you may think, for one
Who had a brain so wild!
Last Christmas-eve we talked of this,
And grey-haired Wilfred of the glen
Held that the unborn infant wrought
About its mother's heart, and brought
Her senses back again:
And, when at last her time drew near,
Her looks were calm, her senses clear.

14

"More know I not, I wish I did,
And it should all be told to you;
For what became of this poor child
No mortal ever knew;
Nay—if a child to her was born
No earthly tongue could ever tell;
And if 'twas born alive or dead,
Far less could this with proof be said;
But some remember well,
That Martha Ray about this time
Would up the mountain often climb.

15

"And all that winter, when at night
The wind blew from the mountain-peak,

'Twas worth your while, though in the dark,
The churchyard path to seek:
For many a time and oft were heard
Cries coming from the mountain head:
Some plainly living voices were;
And others, I've heard many swear,
Were voices of the dead:
I cannot think, whate'er they say,
They had to do with Martha Ray.

16

"But that she goes to this old Thorn,
The Thorn which I described to you,
And there sits in a scarlet cloak,
I will be sworn is true.
For one day with my telescope,
To view the ocean wide and bright,
When to this country first I came,
Ere I had heard of Martha's name,
I climbed the mountain's height:—
A storm came on, and I could see
No object higher than my knee.

17

" 'Twas mist and rain, and storm and rain:
No screen, no fence could I discover;
And then the wind! in sooth, it was
A wind full ten times over.
I looked around, I thought I saw
A jutting crag,—and off I ran,
Head-foremost, through the driving rain,
The shelter of the crag to gain;

And, as I am a man,
Instead of jutting crag, I found
A Woman seated on the ground.

18

"I did not speak—I saw her face;
Her face!—it was enough for me;
I turned about and heard her cry,
'Oh misery! oh misery!'
And there she sits, until the moon
Through half the clear blue sky will go;
And, when the little breezes make
The waters of the pond to shake,
As all the country know,
She shudders, and you hear her cry,
'Oh misery! oh misery!' "

19

"But what's the Thorn? and what the pond?
And what the hill of moss to her?
And what the creeping breeze that comes
The little pond to stir?"
"I cannot tell; but some will say
She hanged her baby on the tree;
Some say she drowned it in the pond,
Which is a little step beyond:
But all and each agree,
The little Babe was buried there,
Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

20

"I've heard, the moss is spotted red
With drops of that poor infant's blood;
But kill a new-born infant thus,
I do not think she could!
Some say, if to the pond you go,
And fix on it a steady view,
The shadow of a babe you trace,
A baby and a baby's face,
And that it looks at you;
Whene'er you look on it, 'tis plain
The baby looks at you again.

21

"And some had sworn an oath that she
Should be to public justice brought;
And for the little infant's bones
With spades they would have sought.
But instantly the hill of moss
Before their eyes began to stir!
And, for full fifty yards around,
The grass—it shook upon the ground!
Yet all do still aver
The little Babe lies buried there,
Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

22

"I cannot tell how this may be,
But plain it is the Thorn is bound
With heavy tufts of moss that strive
To drag it to the ground;
And this I know, full many a time,
When she was on the mountain high,

By day, and in the silent night,
When all the stars shone clear and bright,
That I have heard her cry,
240 'Oh misery! oh misery!
Oh woe is me! oh misery!' "

Mar.–Apr. 1798 1798, 1845

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Arose out of my observing, on the ridge of Quantock Hill [in Somersetshire], on a stormy day, a thorn which I had often past, in calm and bright weather, without noticing it. I said to myself, "Cannot I by some invention do as much to make this Thorn permanently an impressive object as the storm has made it to my eyes at this moment?" I began the poem accordingly, and composed it with great rapidity [*Wordsworth's note*, 1843]. In the prefatory Advertisement to the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth wrote, "The poem of the Thorn . . . is not supposed to be spoken in the author's own person: the character of the loquacious narrator will
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hawthorn, a thorny shrub or small tree.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Wordsworth gives the woman the name of the victim at the center of one of the 18th century's most famous murder trials. Martha Ray, mistress to a nobleman, was murdered in 1779 by a rejected suitor, a clergyman who claimed he had been driven to the deed by "love's madness." One of the illegitimate children whom this Martha Ray bore to the Earl of Sandwich was Wordsworth and Coleridge's friend Basil Montagu.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *blossoms* Return to reference °
- °: *pregnant* Return to reference °

Expostulation and Reply[1]

"Why, William, on that old grey stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

"Where are your books?—that light bequeathed
To Beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply.

"The eye—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,

That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?

"—Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing[2] as I may,
I sit upon this old grey stone,
And dream my time away."

Spring 1798

1798

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This and the companion poem, "The Tables Turned," have often been attacked—and defended—as Wordsworth's own statement about the comparative merits of nature and of books. But they are a dialogue between two friends who rally one another by the usual device of overstating parts of a whole truth. In the 1798 Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads,* Wordsworth said that the pieces originated in a conversation "with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy." In 1843 he noted that the idea of learning when the mind is in a state of "wise passiveness" made this poem a favorite of the Quakers, who

  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the old sense of "communing" (with the "things for ever speaking").Return to reference 2

The Tables Turned

An Evening Scene on the Same Subject

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:°
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,°
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle° sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;°
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

1798, 1832

1798

Notes

- °: *double over*Return to reference °
- °: *small finch*Return to reference °
- °: *song thrush*Return to reference °
- °: *pages*Return to reference °

Old Man Travelling;

Animal Tranquillity and Decay, a Sketch

The little hedge-row birds,
That peck along the road, regard him not.
He travels on, and in his face, his step,
His gait, is one expression; every limb,
His look and bending figure, all bespeak
A man who does not move with pain, but moves
With thought—He is insensibly subdued
To settled quiet: he is one by whom
All effort seems forgotten, one to whom
Long patience has such mild composure given,
That patience now doth seem a thing, of which
He hath no need. He is by nature led
To peace so perfect, that the young behold
With envy, what the old man hardly feels.
—I asked him whither he was bound, and what
The object of his journey; he replied
"Sir! I am going many miles to take
A last leave of my son, a mariner,
Who from a sea-fight has been brought to
Falmouth,[1]
And there is dying in an hospital."[2]

1796–97 1798

Endnotes

- Note 1: Port town in southwest England.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In his 1799 review of *Lyrical Ballads* Charles Burney objected to the antiwar sentiment he detected in this

conclusion. In the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth cast lines 17–20 as reported rather than direct speech. Starting in 1815, reprints omitted the final five lines altogether.Return to reference 2

Lines[1]

Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.[2]—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them

In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen° of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished
thought,

With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe°
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.[3] Not for this
Faint° I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power

To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,[4]
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits[5] to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,[6]
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform

The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,[7]
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion,° with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence[8]—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service; rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

July 1798

1798, 1845

Endnotes

- Note 1: No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of 4 or 5 days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol [*Wordsworth's note*, 1843]. The poem was printed as the last item in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern [*Wordsworth's note*]. Until 1845 the text had "sweet" for "soft," meaning fresh, not salty.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lines 66ff. contain Wordsworth's famed description of the three stages of his growing up, defined in terms of his evolving relations to the natural scene: the young boy's purely physical responsiveness (lines 73–74); the postadolescent's aching, dizzy, and equivocal passions—a love that is more like dread (lines 67–72, 75–85: this was his state of mind on the occasion of his first visit); his present state (lines 85ff.), in which for the first time he adds thought to sense.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I cannot recollect [*Wordsworth's note*]. Edward Young in *Night Thoughts* (1744) says that the human senses "half create the wondrous world they see."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Creative powers. ("Genial" is here the adjectival form of the noun *genius.*)Return to reference 5
- Note 6: His sister, Dorothy.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the opening of *Paradise Lost* 7, Milton describes himself as fallen on "evil days" and "evil tongues" and with "dangers compassed round" (lines 26–27).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, reminders of his own "past existence" five years earlier (see lines 116–19).Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *burden*Return to reference °
- °: *deer*Return to reference °
- °: *lose heart*Return to reference °
- °: *inheritance, dowry*Return to reference °

Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)

To the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads,* published jointly with Coleridge in 1798, Wordsworth prefixed an "Advertisement" asserting that the majority of the poems were "to be considered as experiments" to determine "how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." In the second, two-volume edition of 1800, Wordsworth, aided by frequent conversations with Coleridge, expanded the Advertisement into a Preface that justified the poems not as experiments, but as exemplifying the principles of all good poetry. The Preface was enlarged for the third edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, published two years later. This last version of 1802 is reprinted here.

Although some of its ideas had antecedents in the later eighteenth century, the Preface as a whole deserves its reputation as a revolutionary manifesto about the nature of poetry. Like many radical statements, however, it claims to go back to the implicit principles that governed the great poetry of the past but have been perverted in recent practice. Most discussions of the Preface, following the lead of Coleridge in chapters 14 and 17 of his *Biographia Literaria*, have focused on Wordsworth's assertions about the valid language of poetry, on which he bases his attack on the "poetic diction" of eighteenth-century poets. As Coleridge pointed out, Wordsworth's argument about this issue is far from clear. However, Wordsworth's questioning of the underlying premises of neoclassical poetry went even further. His Preface implicitly denies the traditional assumption that the poetic genres constitute a hierarchy, from epic and tragedy at the top down through comedy, satire, pastoral, to the short lyric at the lowest reaches of the poetic scale; he also rejects the traditional principle of "decorum," which required the poet to arrange matters so that the poem's subject (especially the social class of its protagonists) and its level of diction conformed to the status of the literary kind on the poetic scale.

When Wordsworth asserted in the Preface that he deliberately chose to represent "incidents and situations from common life," he translated his democratic sympathies into critical terms, justifying his

use of peasants, children, outcasts, criminals, and madwomen as serious subjects of poetic and even tragic concern. He also undertook to write in "a selection of language really used by men," on the grounds that there can be no "essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." In making this claim Wordsworth attacked the neoclassical principle that required the language, in many kinds of poems, to be elevated over everyday speech by a special, more refined and dignified diction and by artful figures of speech. Wordsworth's views about the valid language of poetry are based on the new premise that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings"—spontaneous, that is, at the moment of composition, even though the process is influenced by prior thought and acquired poetic skill.

Wordsworth's assertions about the materials and diction of poetry have been greatly influential in expanding the range of serious literature to include the common people and ordinary things and events, as well as in justifying a poetry of sincerity rather than of artifice, expressed in the ordinary language of its time. But in the long view other aspects of his Preface have been no less significant in establishing its importance, not only as a turning point in English criticism but also as a central document in modern culture. Wordsworth feared that a new urban, industrial society's mass media and mass culture (glimpsed in the Preface when he refers derisively to contemporary Gothic novels and German melodramas) were threatening to blunt the human mind's "discriminatory powers" and to "reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor." He attributed to imaginative literature the primary role in keeping the human beings who live in such societies emotionally alive and morally sensitive. Literature, that is, could keep humans essentially human.

From Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802)

[THE SUBJECT AND LANGUAGE OF POETRY]

The first volume of these poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that I have pleased a greater number than I ventured to hope I should please.

For the sake of variety, and from a consciousness of my own weakness, I was induced to request the assistance of a friend,[1] who furnished me with the poems of the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Foster-Mother's Tale*, the *Nightingale*, and the poem entitled *Love.* I should not, however, have requested this assistance, had I not believed that the poems of my friend would in a great measure have the same tendency as my own, and that, though there would be found a difference, there would be found no discordance in the colours of our style; as our opinions on the subject of poetry do almost entirely coincide.

Several of my friends are anxious for the success of these poems from a belief, that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realized, a class of poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the

multiplicity, and in the quality of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, because I knew that on this occasion the reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because, adequately to display my opinions, and fully to enforce my arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to the nature of a preface. For to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence of which I believe it susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined, without pointing out, in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible, that there would be some impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the public, without a few words of introduction, poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed, that by the act of writing in verse an author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprizes the reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius and that of Statius or Claudian,[2] and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope. I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which by the act of writing in verse an author, in the present day, makes to his reader; but I am certain, it will appear to many persons that I have

not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope therefore the reader will not censure me, if I attempt to state what I have proposed to myself to perform; and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from the most dishonorable accusation which can be brought against an author, namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when this duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and, from the necessary character of

rural occupations, are more easily comprehended; and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation.[3]

I cannot, however, be insensible of the present outcry against the triviality and meanness both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge, that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonorable to the writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose.* Not that I mean to say, that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but I believe that my habits of meditation have so formed my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose.* If in this opinion I am mistaken, I can have little right to the name of a poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: but though this be true, poems to which any value can be attached,

were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections ameliorated.

I have said that each of these poems has a purpose. I have also informed my reader what this purpose will be found principally to be: namely, to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement. But, speaking in language somewhat more appropriate, it is to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature. This object I have endeavored in these short essays to attain by various means; by tracing the maternal passion through many of its more subtile[4] windings, as in the poems of the *Idiot Boy* and the *Mad Mother*; by accompanying the last struggles of a human being, at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society, as in the poem of the *Forsaken Indian*; by shewing, as in the stanzas entitled *We Are Seven*, the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion; or by displaying the strength of fraternal, or to speak more philosophically, of moral attachment when early associated with the great and beautiful objects of nature, as in *The Brothers*; or, as in the Incident of *Simon Lee*, by placing my reader in the way of receiving from ordinary moral sensations another and

more salutary impression than we are accustomed to receive from them. It has also been part of my general purpose to attempt to sketch characters under the influence of less impassioned feelings, as in the *Two April Mornings, The Fountain, The Old Man Travelling, The Two Thieves*, &c., characters of which the elements are simple, belonging rather to nature than to manners,[5] such as exist now, and will probably always exist, and which from their constitution may be distinctly and profitably contemplated. I will not abuse the indulgence of my reader by dwelling longer upon this subject; but it is proper that I should mention one other circumstance which distinguishes these poems from the popular poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling. My meaning will be rendered perfectly intelligible by referring my reader to the poems entitled *Poor Susan* and the *Childless Father*, particularly to the last stanza of the latter poem.

I will not suffer a sense of false modesty to prevent me from asserting, that I point my reader's attention to this mark of distinction, far less for the sake of these particular poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross[6] and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for

extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.[7] To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies,[8] and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.—When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble effort with which I have endeavoured to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible; and did I not further add to this impression a belief, that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed, by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these poems, I shall request the reader's permission to apprize him of a few circumstances relating to their *style*, in order, among other reasons, that I may not be censured for not having performed what I never attempted. The reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas[9] rarely occur in these volumes; and, I hope, are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. I have proposed to myself to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but I have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep my reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. I am, however, well aware that others who pursue a

different track may interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, I only wish to prefer a different claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction;[1] I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. I do not know how, without being culpably particular, I can give my reader a more exact notion of the style in which I wished these poems to be written than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject, consequently, I hope that there is in these poems little falsehood of description, and that my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something I must have gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.

If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics, who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him, that not only the language of a

large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. I have not space for much quotation; but, to illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who was at the head of those who by their reasonings have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt prose and metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction.[2]

> In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
> And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire:
> The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
> Or cheerful fields resume their green attire:
> These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
> *A different object do these eyes require;*
> *My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;*
> *And in my breast the imperfect joys expire;*
> Yet Morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
> And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
> The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
> To warm their little loves the birds complain.
> *I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear*
> *And weep the more because I weep in vain.*

It will easily be perceived that the only part of this sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in italics: it is equally obvious, that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation I have shewn that the language of prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and I have previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good prose. I will go further. I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between poetry and painting, and, accordingly, we call them sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; poetry[3] sheds no tears "such as Angels weep,"[4] but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor[5] that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: The "friend" of course is Coleridge.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth's implied contrast is between the naturalness and simplicity of the first three Roman poets (who wrote in the last two centuries B.C.E.) and the elaborate artifice of the last two Roman poets (Statius wrote in the 1st and Claudian in the 4th century C.E.).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: It is worthwhile here to observe that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day [*Wordsworth's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Subtle.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Social custom.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Coarse.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: This was the period of the wars against France, of industrial urbanization, and of the rapid proliferation in England of daily newspapers.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Wordsworth had in mind the "Gothic" terror novels by writers such as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Gregory Lewis and the sentimental melodrama, then immensely popular in England, of August von Kotzebue and his German contemporaries.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This practice was common in 18th-century poetry. Samuel Johnson, for instance, in *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749), has "Observation . . . survey[ing] mankind" and "Vengeance listen[ing] to the fool's request" (lines 1–2, 14).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In the sense of words, phrases, and figures of speech not commonly used in conversation or prose that are regarded as especially appropriate to poetry.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Thomas Gray (author in 1751 of the "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard") had written, in a letter to Richard West, that "the language of the age is never the language of poetry." The poem that follows is Gray's "Sonnet on the Death of Richard West."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: I here use the word "poetry" (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word "prose," and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of poetry and prose, instead of the more philosophical one of poetry and matter of fact, or science. The only strict antithesis to prose is metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis; because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable [*Wordsworth's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Milton's *Paradise Lost* 1.620.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Greek mythology the fluid in the veins of the gods.Return to reference 5

["WHAT IS A POET?"]

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, I ask what is meant by the word "poet"? What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than any thing which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves; whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt but that the language which it will suggest to him, must, in liveliness and truth, fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself. However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a poet, it is obvious, that, while he describes and imitates passions, his situation

is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him, by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle on which I have so much insisted, namely, that of selection; on this he will depend for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out[6] or to elevate nature: and, the more industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith that no words, which his fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who deems himself justified when he substitutes excellences of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of poetry as a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac[7] or sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, hath said, that poetry is the most philosophic of all writing;[8] it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own

testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the biographer and historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the poet who has an adequate notion of the dignity of his art. The poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer or a natural philosopher, but as a man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the poet and the image of things; between this, and the biographer and historian there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere because it is not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves.[9] We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The man of science, the chemist and mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he

considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions which by habit become of the nature of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding every where objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which without any other discipline than that of our daily life we are fitted to take delight, the poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature. And thus the poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the poet and the man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science. Emphatically may it be said of the poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after."[1] He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things

silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the poet's thoughts are every where; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present, but he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings.[2] If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.—It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What I have thus far said applies to poetry in general; but especially to those parts of composition where the poet speaks through the mouth of his characters; and upon this point it appears to have such weight that I will conclude, there are few persons, of good sense, who would not allow that the dramatic parts of

composition are defective, in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are coloured by a diction of the poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual poet, or belonging simply to poets in general, to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring my reader to the description which I have before given of a poet. Among the qualities which I have enumerated as principally conducing to form a poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what I have there said is, that the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions[3] of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language, when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But poets do not write for poets alone, but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration

which depends upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the poet must descend from this supposed height, and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. * * *

Endnotes

- Note 6: Dress up.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A sweet wine made from muscat grapes. "Rope-dancing": tightrope walking.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Aristotle in fact said that "poetry is more philosophic than history, since its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars" (*Poetics* 1451b).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A bold echo of the words of St. Paul, that in God "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In *Hamlet* 4.4.39, Hamlet describes the capability of "looking before and after" as an essential element of being human.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth is at least right in anticipating the poetry of the machine. His sonnet "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways" is an early instance.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Recurrence.Return to reference 3

["EMOTION RECOLLECTED IN TRANQUILLITY"]

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind and in whatever degree, from various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment. Now, if nature be thus cautious in preserving in a state of enjoyment a being thus employed, the poet ought to profit by the lesson thus held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that whatever passions he communicates to his reader, those passions, if his reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely, all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the reader. I might perhaps include all which it is *necessary* to say upon this subject by affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions, either of passions,

manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once. * * *

I know that nothing would have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view, as to have shewn of what kind the pleasure is, and how the pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavoured to recommend: for the reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition; and what can I do more for him? The power of any art is limited; and he will suspect, that, if I propose to furnish him with new friends, it is only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honorable bigotry for the objects which have long continued to please them: we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is a host of arguments in these feelings; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow, that, in order entirely to enjoy the poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But, would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, I might have removed many obstacles, and assisted my reader in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible that poetry may give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of my subject I have not altogether neglected; but it has been less my present aim to prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, than to offer reasons for presuming, that, if the object which I have proposed to myself were adequately attained, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry; in its nature

well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the poems, the reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I have proposed to myself: he will determine how far I have attained this object; and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining; and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the public.

1800, 1802

Strange fits of passion have I known[1]

Strange fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befel.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head!

"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"[2]

1799 1800, 1836

Endnotes

- Note 1: This and the four following pieces are often grouped by editors as the "Lucy poems," even though "A slumber did my spirit seal" does not identify the "she" who is the subject of that poem. All but the last were written in 1799, while Wordsworth and his sister were in Germany and homesick. There has been diligent speculation about the identity of Lucy, but it remains speculation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An additional stanza in an earlier manuscript version demonstrates how a poem can be improved by omission of a passage that is, in itself, excellent poetry: "I told her this: her laughter light / Is ringing in my ears; / And when I think upon that night / My eyes are dim with tears."Return to reference 2

She dwelt among the untrodden ways

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
  Beside the springs of Dove,[1]
A Maid whom there were none to praise
  And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
  Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
  Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
  When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
  The difference to me!

1799 1800

Endnotes

- Note 1: There are several rivers by this name in England, including one in the Lake District.Return to reference 1

Three years she grew

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A Lady of my own.[1]

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the Storm
Grace that shall mould the Maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place

Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

"And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—the work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

1799

1800, 1805

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, Lucy was three years old when Nature made this promise; line 37 makes clear that Lucy had reached the maturity foretold in the sixth stanza when she died.Return to reference 1

A slumber did my spirit seal

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal° course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

1799 1800

Notes

- °: *daily*Return to reference °

I travelled among unknown men

I travelled among unknown men,
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

ca. 1801

1807, 1836

Nutting[1]

————————It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days that cannot die;
When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
I left our cottage-threshold, sallying forth
With a huge wallet° o'er my shoulder slung,
A nutting-crook[2] in hand; and turned my steps
Tow'rd some far-distant wood, a Figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds°
Which for that service had been husbanded,
By exhortation of my frugal Dame[3]—
Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes,° and brambles,—and, in truth,
More ragged than need was! O'er pathless rocks,
Through beds of matted fern, and tangled thickets,
Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation; but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung,
A virgin scene!—A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and, with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet;—or beneath the trees I sate
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
A temper known to those, who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blest
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves

The violets of five seasons re-appear
And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy water-breaks[4] do murmur on
For ever; and I saw the sparkling foam,
And—with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees,
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep—
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks[5] and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage: and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being: and, unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.—
Then, dearest Maiden,[6] move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

1798 1800

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wordsworth said in 1843 that these lines, written in Germany in 1798, were "intended as part of a poem on my own life [*The Prelude*], but struck out as not being wanted there." He

published them in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hooked stick used to shake tree branches and make nuts fall.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ann Tyson, with whom Wordsworth lodged while at Hawkshead grammar school.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Places where the flow of a stream is broken by rocks.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Tree stumps. ("Stocks and stones" is a conventional expression for "inanimate things.")Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In a manuscript passage originally intended to lead up to "Nutting," the maiden is called Lucy.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *bag, knapsack*Return to reference °
- °: *clothes*Return to reference °
- °: *thickets of ferns*Return to reference °

The Ruined Cottage[1]

First Part

’Twas summer and the sun was mounted high.
Along the south the uplands feebly glared
Through a pale steam, and all the northern downs
In clearer air ascending shewed far off
Their surfaces with shadows dappled o’er
Of deep embattled clouds: far as the sight
Could reach those many shadows lay in spots
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams
Of clear and pleasant sunshine interposed;
Pleasant to him who on the soft cool moss
Extends his careless limbs beside the root
Of some huge oak whose aged branches make
A twilight of their own, a dewy shade
Where the wren warbles while the dreaming man,
Half-conscious of that soothing melody,
With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,
By those impending branches made more soft,
More soft and distant. Other lot was mine.
Across a bare wide Common I had toiled
With languid feet which by the slipp’ry ground
Were baffled still, and when I stretched myself
On the brown earth my limbs from very heat
Could find no rest nor my weak arm disperse
The insect host which gathered round my face
And joined their murmurs to the tedious noise
Of seeds of bursting gorse that crackled round.
I rose and turned towards a group of trees
Which midway in that level stood alone,

And thither come at length, beneath a shade
Of clustering elms that sprang from the same root
I found a ruined house, four naked walls
That stared upon each other. I looked round
And near the door I saw an aged Man,
Alone, and stretched upon the cottage bench;
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.
With instantaneous joy I recognized
That pride of nature and of lowly life,
The venerable Armytage, a friend
As dear to me as is the setting sun.
Two days before
We had been fellow-travellers. I knew
That he was in this neighbourhood and now
Delighted found him here in the cool shade.
He lay, his pack of rustic merchandize
Pillowing his head—I guess he had no thought
Of his way-wandering life. His eyes were shut;
The shadows of the breezy elms above
Dappled his face. With thirsty heat oppress'd
At length I hailed him, glad to see his hat
Bedewed with water-drops, as if the brim
Had newly scoop'd a running stream. He rose
And pointing to a sun-flower bade me climb
The [ ][2] wall where that same gaudy flower
Looked out upon the road. It was a plot
Of garden-ground, now wild, its matted weeds
Marked with the steps of those whom as they pass'd,
The goose-berry trees that shot in long lank slips,
Or currants hanging from their leafless stems
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap
The broken wall. Within that cheerless spot,
Where two tall hedgerows of thick willow boughs
Joined in a damp cold nook, I found a well
Half-choked [with willow flowers and weeds.][3]

I slaked my thirst and to the shady bench
Returned, and while I stood unbonneted
To catch the motion of the cooler air
The old Man said, "I see around me here
Things which you cannot see: we die, my Friend,
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth
Dies with him or is changed, and very soon
Even of the good is no memorial left.
The Poets in their elegies and songs
Lamenting the departed call the groves,
They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,
And senseless[4] rocks, nor idly; for they speak
In these their invocations with a voice
Obedient to the strong creative power
Of human passion. Sympathies there are
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,
That steal upon the meditative mind
And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood
And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond
Of brotherhood is broken: time has been
When every day the touch of human hand
Disturbed their stillness, and they ministered
To human comfort. When I stooped to drink,
A spider's web hung to the water's edge,
And on the wet and slimy foot-stone lay
The useless fragment of a wooden bowl;
It moved my very heart. The day has been
When I could never pass this road but she
Who lived within these walls, when I appeared,
A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her
As my own child. O Sir! the good die first,
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket. Many a passenger°

Has blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks
When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn
From that forsaken spring, and no one came
But he was welcome, no one went away
But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,
The worm is on her cheek, and this poor hut,
Stripp'd of its outward garb of household flowers,
Of rose and sweet-briar, offers to the wind
A cold bare wall whose earthy top is tricked
With weeds and the rank spear-grass. She is dead,
And nettles rot and adders sun themselves
Where we have sate together while she nurs'd
Her infant at her breast. The unshod Colt,
The wandring heifer and the Potter's ass,
Find shelter now within the chimney-wall
Where I have seen her evening hearth-stone blaze
And through the window spread upon the road
Its chearful light.—You will forgive me, Sir,
But often on this cottage do I muse
As on a picture, till my wiser mind
Sinks, yielding to the foolishness of grief.
She had a husband, an industrious man,
Sober and steady; I have heard her say
That he was up and busy at his loom
In summer ere the mower's scythe had swept
The dewy grass, and in the early spring
Ere the last star had vanished. They who pass'd
At evening, from behind the garden-fence
Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply
After his daily work till the day-light
Was gone and every leaf and flower were lost
In the dark hedges. So they pass'd their days
In peace and comfort, and two pretty babes
Were their best hope next to the God in Heaven.
—You may remember, now some ten years gone,
Two blighting seasons when the fields were left

With half a harvest.[5] It pleased heaven to add
A worse affliction in the plague of war:
A happy land was stricken to the heart;
'Twas a sad time of sorrow and distress:
A wanderer among the cottages,
I with my pack of winter raiment saw
The hardships of that season: many rich
Sunk down as in a dream among the poor,
And of the poor did many cease to be,
And their place knew them not. Meanwhile, abridg'd°
Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled
To numerous self-denials, Margaret
Went struggling on through those calamitous years
With chearful hope: but ere the second autumn
A fever seized her husband. In disease
He lingered long, and when his strength returned
He found the little he had stored to meet
The hour of accident or crippling age
Was all consumed. As I have said, 'twas now
A time of trouble; shoals of artisans
Were from their daily labour turned away
To hang for bread on parish charity,[6]
They and their wives and children—happier far
Could they have lived as do the little birds
That peck along the hedges or the kite
That makes her dwelling in the mountain rocks.
Ill fared it now with Robert, he who dwelt
In this poor cottage; at his door he stood
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes
That had no mirth in them, or with his knife
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks,
Then idly sought about through every nook
Of house or garden any casual task
Of use or ornament, and with a strange,
Amusing but uneasy novelty

He blended where he might the various tasks
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring.
But this endured not; his good-humour soon
Became a weight in which no pleasure was,
And poverty brought on a petted° mood
And a sore temper: day by day he drooped,
And he would leave his home, and to the town
Without an errand would he turn his steps
Or wander here and there among the fields.
One while he would speak lightly of his babes
And with a cruel tongue: at other times
He played with them wild freaks of merriment:
And 'twas a piteous thing to see the looks
Of the poor innocent children. 'Every smile,'
Said Margaret to me here beneath these trees,
'Made my heart bleed.' " At this the old Man paus'd
And looking up to those enormous elms
He said, " 'Tis now the hour of deepest noon,
At this still season of repose and peace,
This hour when all things which are not at rest
Are chearful, while this multitude of flies
Fills all the air with happy melody,
Why should a tear be in an old man's eye?
Why should we thus with an untoward mind
And in the weakness of humanity
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away,
To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears,
And feeding on disquiet thus disturb
The calm of Nature with our restless thoughts?"

END OF THE FIRST PART

Second Part

He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone:
But when he ended there was in his face

Such easy chearfulness, a look so mild
That for a little time it stole away
All recollection, and that simple tale
Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound.
A while on trivial things we held discourse,
To me soon tasteless. In my own despite
I thought of that poor woman as of one
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed
Her homely tale with such familiar power,
With such a[n active][7] countenance, an eye
So busy, that the things of which he spake
Seemed present, and, attention now relaxed,
There was a heartfelt chillness in my veins.
I rose, and turning from that breezy shade
Went out into the open air and stood
To drink the comfort of the warmer sun.
Long time I had not stayed ere, looking round
Upon that tranquil ruin, I returned
And begged of the old man that for my sake
He would resume his story. He replied,
"It were a wantonness° and would demand
Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts
Could hold vain dalliance with the misery
Even of the dead, contented thence to draw
A momentary pleasure never marked
By reason, barren of all future good.
But we have known that there is often found
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,
A power to virtue friendly; were't not so,
I am a dreamer among men, indeed
An idle dreamer. 'Tis a common tale,
By moving accidents[8] uncharactered,
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed
In bodily form, and to the grosser sense
But ill adapted, scarcely palpable

To him who does not think. But at your bidding
I will proceed.
While thus it fared with them
To whom this cottage till that hapless year
Had been a blessed home, it was my chance
To travel in a country far remote,
And glad I was when, halting by yon gate
That leads from the green lane, again I saw
These lofty elm-trees. Long I did not rest:
With many pleasant thoughts I cheer'd my way
O'er the flat common. At the door arrived,
I knocked, and when I entered with the hope
Of usual greeting, Margaret looked at me
A little while, then turned her head away
Speechless, and sitting down upon a chair
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do
Or how to speak to her. Poor wretch! at last
She rose from off her seat—and then, oh Sir!
I cannot tell how she pronounced my name:
With fervent love, and with a face of grief
Unutterably helpless, and a look
That seem'd to cling upon me, she enquir'd
If I had seen her husband. As she spake
A strange surprize and fear came to my heart,
Nor had I power to answer ere she told
That he had disappeared—just two months gone.
He left his house; two wretched days had passed,
And on the third by the first break of light,
Within her casement full in view she saw
A purse of gold.[9] 'I trembled at the sight,'
Said Margaret, 'for I knew it was his hand
That placed it there, and on that very day
By one, a stranger, from my husband sent,
The tidings came that he had joined a troop
Of soldiers going to a distant land.

He left me thus—Poor Man! he had not heart
To take a farewell of me, and he feared
That I should follow with my babes, and sink
Beneath the misery of a soldier's life.'
This tale did Margaret tell with many tears:
And when she ended I had little power
To give her comfort, and was glad to take
Such words of hope from her own mouth as serv'd
To cheer us both: but long we had not talked
Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,
And with a brighter eye she looked around
As if she had been shedding tears of joy.
We parted. It was then the early spring;
I left her busy with her garden tools;
And well remember, o'er that fence she looked,
And while I paced along the foot-way path
Called out, and sent a blessing after me
With tender chearfulness and with a voice
That seemed the very sound of happy thoughts.
  I roved o'er many a hill and many a dale
With this my weary load, in heat and cold,
Through many a wood, and many an open ground,
In sunshine or in shade, in wet or fair,
Now blithe, now drooping, as it might befal,
My best companions now the driving winds
And now the 'trotting brooks'[1] and whispering trees
And now the music of my own sad steps,
With many a short-lived thought that pass'd between
And disappeared. I came this way again
Towards the wane of summer, when the wheat
Was yellow, and the soft and bladed grass
Sprang up afresh and o'er the hay-field spread
Its tender green. When I had reached the door
I found that she was absent. In the shade
Where now we sit I waited her return.

Her cottage in its outward look appeared
As chearful as before; in any shew
Of neatness little changed, but that I thought
The honeysuckle crowded round the door
And from the wall hung down in heavier wreathes,
And knots of worthless stone-crop[2] started out
Along the window's edge, and grew like weeds
Against the lower panes. I turned aside
And stroll'd into her garden.—It was chang'd:
The unprofitable bindweed spread his bells
From side to side and with unwieldy wreaths
Had dragg'd the rose from its sustaining wall
And bent it down to earth; the border-tufts—
Daisy and thrift and lowly camomile
And thyme—had straggled out into the paths
Which they were used° to deck. Ere this an hour
Was wasted. Back I turned my restless steps,
And as I walked before the door it chanced
A stranger passed, and guessing whom I sought
He said that she was used to ramble far.
The sun was sinking in the west, and now
I sate with sad impatience. From within
Her solitary infant cried aloud.
The spot though fair seemed very desolate,
The longer I remained more desolate.
And, looking round, I saw the corner-stones,
Till then unmark'd, on either side the door
With dull red stains discoloured and stuck o'er
With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep
That feed upon the commons[3] thither came
Familiarly and found a couching-place
Even at her threshold.—The house-clock struck
eight;
I turned and saw her distant a few steps.
Her face was pale and thin, her figure too

Was chang'd. As she unlocked the door she said,
'It grieves me you have waited here so long,
But in good truth I've wandered much of late
And sometimes, to my shame I speak, have need
Of my best prayers to bring me back again.'
While on the board she spread our evening meal
She told me she had lost her elder child,
That he for months had been a serving-boy
Apprenticed by the parish. 'I perceive
You look at me, and you have cause. Today
I have been travelling far, and many days
About the fields I wander, knowing this
Only, that what I seek I cannot find.
And so I waste my time: for I am changed;
And to myself,' said she, 'have done much wrong,
And to this helpless infant. I have slept
Weeping, and weeping I have waked; my tears
Have flow'd as if my body were not such
As others are, and I could never die.
But I am now in mind and in my heart
More easy, and I hope,' said she, 'that heaven
Will give me patience to endure the things
Which I behold at home.' It would have grieved
Your very heart to see her. Sir, I feel
The story linger in my heart. I fear
'Tis long and tedious, but my spirit clings
To that poor woman: so familiarly
Do I perceive her manner, and her look
And presence, and so deeply do I feel
Her goodness, that not seldom in my walks
A momentary trance comes over me;
And to myself I seem to muse on one
By sorrow laid asleep or borne away,
A human being destined to awake
To human life, or something very near
To human life, when he shall come again

For whom she suffered. Sir, it would have griev'd
Your very soul to see her: evermore
Her eye-lids droop'd, her eyes were downward cast;
And when she at her table gave me food
She did not look at me. Her voice was low,
Her body was subdued. In every act
Pertaining to her house-affairs appeared
The careless stillness which a thinking mind
Gives to an idle matter—still she sighed,
But yet no motion of the breast was seen,
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire
We sate together, sighs came on my ear;
I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.
I took my staff, and when I kissed her babe
The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then
With the best hope and comfort I could give;
She thanked me for my will, but for my hope
It seemed she did not thank me.
I returned
And took my rounds along this road again
Ere on its sunny bank the primrose flower
Had chronicled the earliest day of spring.
I found her sad and drooping; she had learn'd
No tidings of her husband: if he lived
She knew not that he lived; if he were dead
She knew not he was dead. She seemed the same
In person [or][4] appearance, but her house
Bespoke a sleepy hand of negligence;
The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth
Was comfortless [ ],
The windows too were dim, and her few books,
Which, one upon the other, heretofore
Had been piled up against the corner-panes
In seemly order, now with straggling leaves
Lay scattered here and there, open or shut

As they had chanced to fall. Her infant babe
Had from its mother caught the trick of grief
And sighed among its playthings. Once again
I turned towards the garden-gate and saw
More plainly still that poverty and grief
Were now come nearer to her: the earth was hard,
With weeds defaced and knots of withered grass;
No ridges there appeared of clear black mould,
No winter greenness; of her herbs and flowers
It seemed the better part were gnawed away
Or trampled on the earth; a chain of straw
Which had been twisted round the tender stem
Of a young apple-tree lay at its root;
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.
Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,
And seeing that my eye was on the tree
She said, 'I fear it will be dead and gone
Ere Robert come again.' Towards the house
Together we returned, and she inquired
If I had any hope. But for her Babe
And for her little friendless Boy, she said,
She had no wish to live, that she must die
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom
Still in its place. His Sunday garments hung
Upon the self-same nail, his very staff
Stood undisturbed behind the door. And when
I passed this way beaten by Autumn winds
She told me that her little babe was dead
And she was left alone. That very time,
I yet remember, through the miry lane
She walked with me a mile, when the bare trees
Trickled with foggy damps, and in such sort
That any heart had ached to hear her begg'd
That wheresoe'er I went I still would ask
For him whom she had lost. We parted then,
Our final parting, for from that time forth

Did many seasons pass ere I returned
Into this tract again.
Five tedious years
She lingered in unquiet widowhood,
A wife and widow. Needs must it have been
A sore heart-wasting. I have heard, my friend,
That in that broken arbour she would sit
The idle length of half a sabbath day—
There, where you see the toadstool's lazy head—
And when a dog passed by she still would quit
The shade and look abroad. On this old Bench
For hours she sate, and evermore her eye
Was busy in the distance, shaping things
Which made her heart beat quick. Seest thou that path?
(The green-sward now has broken its grey line)
There to and fro she paced through many a day
Of the warm summer, from a belt of flax
That girt her waist spinning the long-drawn thread
With backward steps.—Yet ever as there passed
A man whose garments shewed the Soldier's red,
Or crippled Mendicant in Sailor's garb,
The little child who sate to turn the wheel
Ceased from his toil, and she with faltering voice,
Expecting still to learn her husband's fate,
Made many a fond inquiry; and when they
Whose presence gave no comfort were gone by,
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate
Which bars the traveller's road she often stood
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully,
Most happy if from aught discovered there
Of tender feeling she might dare repeat
The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor hut
Sunk to decay, for he was gone whose hand
At the first nippings of October frost

Closed up each chink and with fresh bands of straw
Chequered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived
Through the long winter, reckless and alone,
Till this reft house by frost, and thaw, and rain
Was sapped; and when she slept the nightly damps
Did chill her breast, and in the stormy day
Her tattered clothes were ruffled by the wind
Even at the side of her own fire. Yet still
She loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds
Have parted hence; and still that length of road
And this rude bench one torturing hope endeared,
Fast rooted at her heart, and here, my friend,
In sickness she remained, and here she died,
Last human tenant of these ruined walls."
The old Man ceased: he saw that I was mov'd;
From that low Bench, rising instinctively,
I turned aside in weakness, nor had power
To thank him for the tale which he had told.
I stood, and leaning o'er the garden-gate
Reviewed that Woman's suff'rings, and it seemed
To comfort me while with a brother's love
I blessed her in the impotence of grief.
At length [towards] the [Cottage I returned][5]
Fondly, and traced with milder interest
That secret spirit of humanity
Which, 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies
Of nature, 'mid her plants, her weeds, and flowers,
And silent overgrowings, still survived.
The old man, seeing this, resumed and said,
"My Friend, enough to sorrow have you given,
The purposes of wisdom ask no more;
Be wise and chearful, and no longer read
The forms of things with an unworthy eye.
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.
I well remember that those very plumes,

Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,
By mist and silent rain-drops silver'd o'er,
As once I passed did to my heart convey
So still an image of tranquillity,
So calm and still, and looked so beautiful
Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
That what we feel of sorrow and despair
From ruin and from change, and all the grief
The passing shews of being leave behind,
Appeared an idle dream that could not live
Where meditation was. I turned away
And walked along my road in happiness."
He ceased. By this the sun declining shot
A slant and mellow radiance which began
To fall upon us where beneath the trees
We sate on that low bench, and now we felt,
Admonished thus, the sweet hour coming on.
A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,
A thrush sang loud, and other melodies,
At distance heard, peopled the milder air.
The old man rose and hoisted up his load.
Together casting then a farewell look
Upon those silent walls, we left the shade
And ere the stars were visible attained
A rustic inn, our evening resting-place.

THE END

1797–ca. 1799 1949

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wordsworth wrote *The Ruined Cottage* in 1797–98, then revised it several times before he finally published an expanded version of the story as book 1 of *The Excursion*, in 1814. *The Ruined Cottage* was not published as an independent poem until 1949, when it appeared in the fifth volume of *The*

Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, edited by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, who printed a version known as "MS. B." The text reprinted here is from "MS. D," dated 1799, as transcribed by James Butler in the Cornell Wordsworth volume, *"The Ruined Cottage" and "The Pedlar"* (1979).Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The brackets here and in later lines mark blank spaces left unfilled in the manuscript.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Wordsworth penciled the bracketed phrase into a gap left in the manuscript.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Incapable of sensation or perception.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As James Butler points out in his introduction to the Cornell Wordsworth edition, Wordsworth is purposely distancing his story in time. The "two blighting seasons" in fact occurred in 1794–95, only a few years before Wordsworth wrote *The Ruined Cottage*, when a bad harvest was followed by one of the worst winters on record. Much of the seed grain was destroyed in the ground, and the price of wheat nearly doubled.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The so-called able-bodied poor were entitled to receive from the parish in which they were settled the food, the clothing, and sometimes the cash that would help them over a crisis.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Wordsworth penciled the bracketed phrase into a gap left in the manuscript.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Othello speaks "of most disastrous chances, / Of moving accidents by flood and field, / Of hairbreadth 'scapes" (Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3.133–35).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The "bounty" that her husband had been paid for enlisting in the militia. The shortage of volunteers and England's sharply rising military needs had in some counties forced the bounty up from about £1 in 1757 to more than £16 in 1796 (J. R. Western, *English Militia in the Eighteenth Century*, 1965).Return to reference 9

- Note 1: From Robert Burns (“To William Simpson,” line 87).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A plant with yellow flowers that grows on walls and rocks.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Land belonging to the local community as a whole.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The word *or* was erased here; later manuscripts read “and.”Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The words inside the brackets were added in MS. E.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *passerby, traveler*Return to reference °
- °: *deprived*Return to reference °
- °: *ill-tempered*Return to reference °
- °: *reckless ill-doing*Return to reference °
- °: *accustomed*Return to reference °

Michael[1]

A Pastoral Poem

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,[2]
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites°
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved;—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power

Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, he heard the South°
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,

Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honourable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling° o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
With two brave sheep-dogs tried° in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,

Their labour did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fire-side; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a l
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of his old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,
And was a public symbol of the life

That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake;
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched

Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice[3] cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire° of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they

Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance.[4] This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think

That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

"When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;°
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?"
At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman,[5] thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy[6]—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master° there,

Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel floored
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;

And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold;[7] and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same

That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.————————After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befals
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fire-side
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when

At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mould.°
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened° when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go."
At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
"This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—But, I forget

My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befal thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,

Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were
throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named THE EVENING STAR
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood;[8] great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

Oct. 11–Dec. 9, 1800 1800, 1836

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem is founded on the actual misfortunes of a family at Grasmere. For the account of the sheepfold, see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals*, October 11, 1800 (pp. 437–38 in this volume). Wordsworth wrote to Thomas Poole, on April 9, 1801, that he had attempted to picture a man "agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart; the parental affection, and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home, and personal and family independence." In another letter, sent, along with a copy of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*, January 14, 1801, to Charles James Fox, the leader of the opposition in

Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A ravine forming the bed of a stream. Greenhead Ghyll is not far from Wordsworth's cottage at Grasmere. The other places named in the poem are also in that vicinity.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Grove of small trees.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Michael has guaranteed a loan for his nephew and now has lost the collateral, which amounts to half his financial worth.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ings Chapel and is on the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside [*Wordsworth's note*, 1802–05].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A poor boy supported financially by the poor rates (taxes) paid out by the wealthier members of his parish.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A sheepfold [pen for sheep] in these mountains is an unroofed building of stone walls, with different divisions [*Wordsworth's note*, 1802–05].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The land on which Michael's sheep had grazed has been turned over to cultivation.Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *hawks*Return to reference °
- °: *south wind*Return to reference °
- °: *counting*Return to reference °
- °: *tested*Return to reference °
- °: *wages*Return to reference °
- °: *unmortgaged*Return to reference °
- °: *employer*Return to reference °
- °: *grave plot*Return to reference °
- °: *mortgaged*Return to reference °

Resolution and Independence[1]

1

There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

2

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

3

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

4

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name.

5

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare:
Even such a happy Child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
But there may come another day to me—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

6

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial° faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can He expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

7

I thought of Chatterton,[2] the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;

Of Him[3] who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

8

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befel, that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I saw a Man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

9

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;

10

Such seemed this Man,[4] not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage

Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

11

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

12

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,°
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

13

A gentle answer did the old Man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew:
And him with further words I thus bespake,
"What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

14

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave Livers[5] do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

15

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches,[6] being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

16

The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

17

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,

My question eagerly did I renew,
"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"

18

He with a smile did then his words repeat;
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
"Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

19

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse
renewed.

20

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
But stately in the main; and when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
"God," said I, "be my help and stay[7] secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!"

Endnotes

- Note 1: “This old man I met a few hundred yards from my cottage,” Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick in 1843, and “the account of him is taken from his own mouth.” He wrote the poem eighteen months after the meeting. For the account of the meeting and the writing of the poem, which had the working title “The Leech Gatherer,” see Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journals*, October 3, 1800, p. 437, and May 4 and 7, 1802, pp. 442 and 443 in this volume.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  After his early death through drug overdose, a death believed by many to have been a suicide, the poet Thomas Chatterton (1752–1770) became a prime symbol of neglected boy genius for the Romantics. He came to public attention in his hometown of Bristol in the west of England as the discoverer of the long-lost manuscripts of a local 15th-century monk named “Thomas Rowley.” Rowley’s works—in fact Chatterton’s own inventions—included many poems. His pseudo-Chaucerian “An Excelente Balade of Charitie” used the rhyme royal stanza form that Wordsworth employs here. Reports of the frustrations that Chatterton experienced in his attempts to
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Robert Burns, here considered, as Chatterton is, a natural poet who died young and poor, without adequate recognition, and who seemed to have hastened his death through dissipation.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  To outline his theory of the imagination, Wordsworth himself commented on lines 57–65 and 75–77, pointing out how the stone “is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the sea-beast,” the sea-beast is “stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone,” and the old man is divested of enough life and motion to make “the tw
  objects unite and coalesce in just comparison.” In this manner,

he stated, "the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying powers of the Imagination" were "all brought into conjunction" (Preface to the *Poems* of 1815). Compare Coleridge's definition of the imagination in *Biographia Literaria*, chap. 13 (see p. 523 Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Those who live gravely (as opposed to "loose livers," those who live for a life of pleasure).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Used by medical attendants to draw their patients' blood for curative purposes. A leech gatherer, bare legged in shallow water, stirred the water to attract them and, when they fastened themselves to his legs, picked them off.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Support (a noun).Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *creative*Return to reference °
- °: *studied*Return to reference °

I wandered lonely as a cloud[1]

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

1804 1807, 1815

Endnotes

- Note 1: For the original experience, two years earlier, see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals,* April 15, 1802 (p. 440 in this volume).Return to reference 1

My heart leaps up

My heart leaps up when I behold
    A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
    Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.[1]

Mar. 26, 1802 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: Perhaps as distinguished from piety based on the Bible, in which the rainbow is the token of God's promise to Noah and his descendants never again to send a flood to destroy the earth.Return to reference 1

Ode: Intimations of Immortality In 1843

Wordsworth said about this ode to Isabella Fenwick:

> This was composed during my residence at Town End, Grasmere; two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself; but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or *experiences* of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere [in the opening stanza of "We Are Seven"]:
>
> ——A simple Child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death!
>
> But it was not so much from [feelings] of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah [Genesis 5.22–24; 2 Kings 2.11], and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines—

Obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings; etc.

> To that dreamlike vividness and splendor which invest objects of sight in childhood, everyone, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here: but having in the Poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. * * * [W]hen I was impelled to write this Poem on the 'Immortality of the Soul,' I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet.

When he dictated this long note to Isabella Fenwick, at the age of seventy-two or seventy-three, Wordsworth was troubled by objections that his apparent claim for the preexistence of the soul violated the Christian belief that the soul, although it survives after death, does not exist before the birth of an individual. His claim in the note is that he refers to the preexistence of the soul not in order to set out a religious doctrine but only so as to deal "as a Poet" with a common human experience: that the passing of youth involves the loss of a freshness and radiance investing everything one sees. Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode," which he wrote (in its earliest version) after he had heard the first four stanzas of Wordsworth's poem, employs a similar figurative technique for a comparable, though more devastating, experience of loss.

The original published text of this poem (in 1807) had as its title only "Ode," and then as epigraph *"Paulo maiora canamus"* (Latin for "Let us sing of somewhat higher things") from Virgil's *Eclogue* 4.

Ode

Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

The Child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.[1]

1

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

2

The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose,
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare,
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,

That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

3

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's[2] sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance[3] gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,[4]
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

4

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,[5]
The fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the Children are culling

On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

5

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,[6]
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

6

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely[7] Nurse doth all she can
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

7

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted[8] by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons° another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"[9]
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation

Were endless imitation.

8

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul's immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

9

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive![°]
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest;

Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised,[1]
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

11

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode° not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.[2]

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest° flower that blows° can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

1802–04 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: The concluding lines of Wordsworth's "My heart leaps up" (see p. 380, above).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A small drum often used to beat time for dancing.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Perhaps "My heart leaps up," perhaps "Resolution and Independence," perhaps not a poem at all.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Of the many suggested interpretations, the simplest is "from the fields where they were sleeping." Wordsworth often associated a rising wind with the revival of spirit and of poetic inspiration (see, for example, the opening passage of *The Prelude*, p. 393, below).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Circlet of wildflowers, with which the shepherd boys trimmed their hats in May.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The sun, as metaphor for the soul.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the old sense: simple and friendly.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Irritated; or possibly in the old sense: checkered over.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From a sonnet by the Elizabethan poet Samuel Daniel. In Daniel's era *humorous* meant "capricious" and also referred to the various characters and temperaments ("humors") represented in drama.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Not seeming real (see Wordsworth's comment about "this abyss of idealism" in the headnote on p. 381, above).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Greece foot races were often run for the prize of a branch or wreath of palm. Wordsworth's line echoes Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:24, who uses such races as a metaphor for life:

"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?"Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *studies*Return to reference °
- °: *fleeting*Return to reference °
- °: *predict, portend*Return to reference °
- °: *lowliest* Return to reference °
- °: *blooms*Return to reference °

The Solitary Reaper[1]

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.[2]

Will no one tell me what she sings?[3]
Perhaps the plaintive numbers° flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—

I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

Nov. 5, 1805 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of the rare poems not based on Wordsworth's own experience. In a note published with the poem in 1807, Wordsworth says that it was suggested by a passage in Thomas Wilkinson's *Tours to the British Mountains* (1824), which he had seen in manuscript: "Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Erse [the Gaelic language of Scotland] as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more." In 1803 William, Dorothy Wordsworth, and Coleridge toured Scotland, making a pilgrimage to Robert Burns's grave and visiting places mentioned in Walter Scott's historical notes to his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Islands off the west coast of Scotland.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The poet does not understand Erse, the language in which she sings.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *verses*Return to reference °

SONNETS

Prefatory Sonnet [Nuns fret not][1]

Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room;
And Hermits are contented with their Cells;
And Students with their pensive Citadels:
Maids at the Wheel,° the Weaver at his Loom,
Sit blithe and happy; Bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,[2]
Will murmur by the hour in Foxglove bells:
In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:
Pleas'd if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find short solace there, as I have found.

1802 1815

Endnotes

- Note 1: In *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807), this celebration of the restrictions of the sonnet form headed up the book's selection of sonnets. In old age Wordsworth remembered that his interest in the form was first revived when Dorothy read John Milton's sonnets aloud to him in 1802.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hills forming the southwestern part of the Lake District.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *spinning wheel*Return to reference °

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802[1]

Earth has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

1802 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: The date of this experience was not September 3 but July 31, 1802. Its occasion was a trip to France, made possible by a brief truce in the war (see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals,* July 1802, pp. 443–44 in this volume). Wordsworth's conflicted feelings about this return to France, where he had once supported the Revolution and loved Annette Vallon, inform a number of personal and political sonnets that he wrote in 1802, among them the four that follow.Return to reference 1

It is a beauteous evening

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,[1]
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom[2] all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Aug. 1802 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: The girl walking with Wordsworth is Caroline, his daughter by Annette Vallon. For the event described see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journals*, July 1802 (p. 444 in this volume).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Where the souls destined for heaven rest after death. Luke 16:22: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."Return to reference 2

To Toussaint l'Ouverture[1]

Toussaint, the most unhappy Man of Men!
Whether the rural Milk-maid by her Cow
Sing in thy hearing, or thou liest now
Alone in some deep dungeon's earless den,
O miserable Chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen Thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and Man's unconquerable mind.

1802 1803, 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: First published in the *Morning Post*, Feb. 2, 1803. The formerly enslaved general Toussaint Louverture was a leader of the rebellion of enslaved persons in the French colony of St.-Domingue, now Haiti. After issuing a new constitution for the colony (see pp. 222–25 in this volume), Toussaint was arrested and taken to France in June 1802. He died in prison in April 1803.Return to reference 1

September 1st, 1802[1]

We had a fellow-Passenger who came
From Calais with us, gaudy in array,
A Negro Woman like a Lady gay,
Yet silent as a woman fearing blame;
Dejected, meek, yea pitiably tame,
She sat, from notice turning not away,
But on our proffered kindness still did lay
A weight of languid speech, or at the same
Was silent, motionless in eyes and face.
She was a Negro Woman driv'n from France,
Rejected like all others of that race,
Not one of whom may now find footing there;
This the poor Out-cast did to us declare,
Nor murmured at the unfeeling Ordinance.

1802 1803, 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: First published, with the title "The Banished Negroes," in the *Morning Post*, Feb. 11, 1803. In 1827 Wordsworth added an explanatory headnote beneath the title: "Among the capricious acts of tyranny that disgraced those times, was the chasing of all Negroes from France by decree of the government: we had a Fellow-passenger who was one of the expelled."Return to reference 1

London, 1802[1]

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower°
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

Sept. 1802 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of a series "written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country *** as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that in this and the succeeding sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth" [*Wordsworth's note*, 1843].Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *endowment, gift*Return to reference °

The world is too much with us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon![1]
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for every thing, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton[2] blow his wreathèd horn.

1802–04 1807

Endnotes

- Note 1: Gift. It is the act of giving the heart away that is sordid.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A sea deity, usually represented as blowing on a conch shell. Proteus was an old man of the sea who (in the *Odyssey*) could assume a variety of shapes. The description of Proteus echoes *Paradise Lost* 3.603–04, and that of Triton echoes Edmund Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, lines 244–45.Return to reference 2

Surprised by joy[1]

Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

1813–14 1815

Endnotes

- Note 1: This was in fact suggested by my daughter Catherine, long after her death [*Wordsworth's note*]. Catherine Wordsworth died June 4, 1812, at the age of four.Return to reference 1

Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways[1]

Motions and Means, on land and sea at war
With old poetic feeling, not for this,
Shall ye, by Poets even, be judged amiss!
Nor shall your presence, howsoe'er it mar
The loveliness of Nature, prove a bar
To the Mind's gaining that prophetic sense
Of future change, that point of vision, whence
May be discovered what in soul ye are.
In spite of all that beauty may disown
In your harsh features, Nature doth embrace
Her lawful offspring in Man's art; and Time,
Pleased with your triumphs o'er his brother Space,
Accepts from your bold hands the proffered crown
Of hope, and smiles on you with cheer sublime.

1833 1835

Endnotes

- Note 1: In late middle age Wordsworth demonstrates, as he had predicted in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, that the poet will assimilate to his subject matter the "material revolution" produced by science.Return to reference 1

The 1805 Prelude We cannot be sure what William Wordsworth would have thought of the title by which readers now know his major work, *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet's Mind.* The poet's widow gave the poem that title when her husband's literary executors published it in July 1850, three months after his death. Wordsworth himself had referred to it, variously, as "the poem to Coleridge" or "the poem on the growth of my own mind." Wordsworth's readership had known of the existence of this autobiographical poem since his 1814 publication of *The Excursion,* which had the subtitle "Being a portion of *The Recluse.*" In the preface to that poem, which explained that *The Excursion* was part of a philosophical poem, still in preparation, titled *The Recluse*, Wordsworth revealed further that *The Recluse* would appear with a supplement: a poem, "long finished," he stated, that traced how Nature and Education had prepared the poet for executing the "arduous labour" which that philosophical poem would entail. This other poem—which is the one we now know as *The Prelude*—scrutinized his qualifications for that task. The "two Works have the same kind of relation to each other," he explained, as an ante-chapel has to a nave or "body of a gothic church."

Where *The Recluse* was never really begun, despite what that 1814 subtitle and preface indicated, *The Prelude*, by contrast, appears to have been a poem that Wordsworth could never really declare finished. He completed it, and then, rather than declaring it ready for the press, he completed it again. Revision occupied him for a half-century, claiming the time he had aimed to devote to *The Recluse.* Because he held it back from publication, this poem of self-scrutiny became a kind of lifetime companion to the poet, its account of his past altered to keep pace with the changes that age brought to its creator. The resulting gap between its dates of composition and date of publication is obliquely acknowledged in the title Mary Wordsworth devised. *The Prelude* was a good title, one of Wordsworth's executors observed, precisely because it would discourage readers from supposing that "it was his final production, instead of being, as it really is, one of his *earlier* works." Wordsworth

had so arranged things, however, that when at last in 1850 it appeared as a book, this "earlier" work did double duty (in the words of Wordsworth scholar Mary Jacobus) as "a self-authored epitaph." In 1926 Ernest de Selincourt, working from manuscripts, printed the version of the poem that Wordsworth completed in 1805, and which for many readers since then has become the preferred version. Other scholars later established the existence of a still earlier and shorter version that Wordsworth composed in 1798–99. This anthology uses the 1805 text, reproduced from the edition that Jonathan Wordsworth, Stephen Gill, and M. H. Abrams prepared in 1979 for the Norton Critical Edition of *The Prelude*.

As the *Prelude*'s multiple recastings suggest, Wordsworth's vision of his poem—his view of himself, too—altered substantially over the years, at the start of the process especially. When he decided to enlarge the two-part *Prelude* of 1799, he committed himself to expanding lyric introspection to epic dimensions. It was "a thing unprecedented in Literary history," he observed in an 1805 letter that hints at this experiment with genre, "that a man should talk so much about himself." Between 1801 and 1805 he heightened his poem's style and incorporated allusions to earlier epics, self-consciously measuring his achievement as a poet-prophet against Milton's in *Paradise Lost.* Another prototype for his poem can be found in the tradition of spiritual autobiography that Saint Augustine had founded with his *Confessions* in the fourth century and that the scandalous Frenchman Jean-Jacques Rousseau had revived in the 1780s. Rousseau's *Confessions* made big, bold claims for the fascination of the author's subjectivity in all its unique intricacies, and Wordsworth's *Prelude* in some measure follows suit, as it personalizes epic and makes a literary form devoted to the public life of great collectivities (the fall of Troy or of Man) absorb representations of childhood anxieties and guilt that we might nowadays think of as belonging to a psychological case history. But as narrator, rather than narrated subject, Wordsworth insists on the wider import of this singular story. *The Prelude* thus asks to be read as the representative testimony of someone who (along with

Coleridge, to whom the poem is addressed as a kind of letter, and along with an entire generation, in fact) has grappled with the traumatic experience of revolutionary optimism followed by defeat.

The poet has made it his urgent task to recover that lost faith: "I would enshrine the spirit of the past / For future restoration" (11.341–42). The persistent metaphor of *The Prelude*, shared with many autobiographies, is that of life as a circular journey. This poem of many wanderers and journeys concludes by installing the wandering poet back in his starting place. The prodigal son has completed the long journey home, after being lured into a crisis of identity by youthful radicalism and a residence in France. The poet declares the poem itself to be proof that he has realized the vocation he had queried at his setting-out. For many modern readers, however, much of the brilliance of *The Prelude* inheres in the passages in which the poet confesses to his failure to close the circle. What these readers value are Wordsworth's recurring expressions of doubt as to whether memory could ever bind the disparate materials of the individual's life into a coherent whole. A sense of the disjuncture between the man and the boy, the self who remembers and the self who is remembered, haunts this poem. This autobiographical enterprise demonstrates that sometimes self-estrangement—"I seem / Two consciousnesses—conscious of myself, / And of some other being" (2.31–33)—and self-knowledge proceed hand in hand.

Book First.

Introduction: Childhood and School-time

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds
And from the sky; it beats against my cheek,
And seems half conscious of the joy it gives.
O welcome messenger! O welcome friend!
A captive greets thee, coming from a house
Of bondage, from yon city's° walls set free,
A prison where he hath been long immured.
Now I am free, enfranchised and at large,
May fix my habitation where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me, in what vale
Shall be my harbour, underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?
The earth is all before me[1]—with a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about, and should the guide I chuse
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again—
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me. It is shaken off,
As by miraculous gift 'tis shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
Long months of peace—if such bold word accord
With any promises of human life—
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight

Are mine in prospect.° Whither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through open field,
Or shall a twig or any floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course?

Enough that I am free, for months to come
May dedicate myself to chosen tasks,
May quit the tiresome sea and dwell on shore—
If not a settler on the soil, at least
To drink wild water, and to pluck green herbs,
And gather fruits fresh from their native bough.
Nay more, if I may trust myself, this hour
Hath brought a gift that consecrates my joy;
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A corresponding mild creative breeze,
A vital breeze which travelled gently on
O'er things which it had made, and is become
A tempest, a redundant° energy,
Vexing its own creation. 'Tis a power
That does not come unrecognised, a storm
Which, breaking up a long-continued frost,
Brings with it vernal° promises, the hope
Of active days, of dignity and thought,
Of prowess in an honorable field,
Pure passions, virtue, knowledge, and delight,
The holy life of music and of verse.[2]

Thus far, O friend,[3] did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of my song,[4]
Pour out that day my soul in measured strains,
Even in the very words which I have here
Recorded. To the open fields I told
A prophesy; poetic numbers° came
Spontaneously, and clothed in priestly robe
My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,

For holy services. Great hopes were mine:
My own voice cheared me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound—
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A chearful confidence in things to come.

Whereat, being not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion,[5] I paced on
Gently, with careless steps, and came erelong
To a green shady place where down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice
And settling into gentler happiness.
'Twas autumn, and a calm and placid day
With warmth as much as needed from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west, a day
With silver clouds and sunshine on the grass,
And, in the sheltered grove where I was couched,
A perfect stillness. On the ground I lay
Passing through many thoughts, yet mainly such
As to myself pertained. I made a choice
Of one sweet vale[6] whither my steps should turn,
And saw, methought, the very house and fields
Present before my eyes; nor did I fail
To add meanwhile assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun—
Perhaps too there performed.[7] Thus long I lay
Cheared by the genial pillow of the earth
Beneath my head, soothed by a sense of touch
From the warm ground, that balanced me, else lost
Entirely, seeing nought, nought hearing, save
When here and there about the grove of oaks
Where was my bed, an acorn from the trees
Fell audibly, and with a startling sound.

Thus occupied in mind I lingered here
Contented, nor rose up until the sun

Had almost touched the horizon; bidding then
A farewell to the city left behind,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour
I journeyed towards the vale which I had chosen.
It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Did once again make trial of the strength
Restored to her afresh; nor did she want
Eolian visitations[8]—but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence. 'Be it so,
It is an injury', said I, 'to this day
To think of any thing but present joy.'
So, like a peasant, I pursued my road
Beneath the evening sun, nor had one wish
Again to bend the sabbath of that time[9]
To a servile yoke. What need of many words?—
A pleasant loitering journey, through two days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.°

I spare to speak, my friend, of what ensued—
The admiration and the love, the life
In common things, the endless store of things
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
Found all about me in one neighbourhood,
The self-congratulation,° the complete
Composure, and the happiness entire.
But speedily a longing in me rose
To brace myself to some determined aim,
Reading or thinking, either to lay up
New stores, or rescue from decay the old
By timely interference. I had hopes
Still higher, that with a frame of outward life
I might endue,° might fix in a visible home,
Some portion of those phantoms of conceit,°

That had been floating loose about so long,
And to such beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
But I have been discouraged: gleams of light
Flash often from the east, then disappear,
And mock me with a sky that ripens not
Into a steady morning. If my mind,
Remembering the sweet promise of the past,
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
Vain is her wish—where'er she turns she finds
Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, O dear friend,
The poet, gentle creature as he is,
Hath like the lover his unruly times—
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts. The mind itself,
The meditative mind, best pleased perhaps
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding,[1] lives not always to that end,
But hath less quiet instincts—goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves.
With me is now such passion, which I blame
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such a glorious work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often chearing; for I neither seem
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
Nor general truths which are themselves a sort
Of elements and agents, under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living mind.

Nor am I naked in external things,
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil,
And needful to build up a poet's praise.
Time, place, and manners,° these I seek, and these
I find in plenteous store, but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice—
No little band of yet remembered names
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
To summon back from lonesome banishment
And make them inmates in the hearts of men
Now living, or to live in times to come.
Sometimes, mistaking vainly, as I fear,
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
I settle on some British theme, some old
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;[2]
More often resting at some gentle place
Within the groves of chivalry I pipe
Among the shepherds, with reposing knights
Sit by a fountain-side and hear their tales.
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
That Odin, father of a race by whom
Perished the Roman Empire;[3] how the friends
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,
And left their usages, their arts and laws,
To disappear by a slow gradual death,
To dwindle and to perish one by one,
Starved in those narrow bounds—but not the soul
Of liberty, which fifteen hundred years
Survived, and, when the European came
With skill and power that could not be withstood,
Did like a pestilence maintain its hold,

And wasted down by glorious death that race
Of natural heroes.[4] Or I would record
How in tyrannic times, some unknown man,
Unheard of in the chronicles of kings,
Suffered in silence for the love of truth;
How that one Frenchman, through continued force
Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
Of the first conquerors of the Indian Isles,
Went single in his ministry across
The ocean, not to comfort the oppressed,
But like a thirsty wind to roam about
Withering the oppressor;[5] how Gustavus found
Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines;[6]
How Wallace fought for Scotland, left the name
Of Wallace[7] to be found like a wild flower
All over his dear country, left the deeds
Of Wallace like a family of ghosts
To people the steep rocks and river-banks,
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
Of independence and stern liberty.
Sometimes it suits me better to shape out
Some tale from my own heart, more near akin
To my own passions and habitual thoughts,
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, with interchange of gentler things.
But deadening admonitions will succeed,
And the whole beauteous fabric seems to lack
Foundation, and withal appears throughout
Shadowy and unsubstantial.

Then, last wish—
My last and favorite aspiration—then
I yearn towards some philosophic song
Of truth[8] that cherishes° our daily life,
With meditations passionate from deep

Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;[9]
But from this awful° burthen I full soon
Take refuge, and beguile myself with trust
That mellower years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight. Thus from day to day
I live a mockery of the brotherhood
Of vice and virtue, with no skill to part°
Vague longing that is bred by want° of power,
From paramount impulse not to be withstood;
A timorous capacity, from prudence;
From circumspection,° infinite delay.
Humility and modest awe themselves
Betray me, serving often for a cloak
To a more subtle selfishness, that now
Doth lock my functions up in blank reserve,°
Now dupes me by an over-anxious eye
That with a false activity beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth.
Ah, better far than this to stray about
Voluptuously° through fields and rural walks
And ask no record of the hours given up
To vacant musing, unreproved neglect
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
Far better never to have heard the name
Of zeal and just ambition than to live
Thus baffled by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant° to her task, takes heart again,
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
Hang like an interdict° upon her hopes.
This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting—so much wanting—in myself
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose

In indolence from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling towards the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back.[1]

Was it for this[2]
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this didst thou,
O Derwent, travelling over the green plains
Near my 'sweet birthplace',[3] didst thou, beauteous stream,
Make ceaseless music through the night and day,
Which with its steady cadence tempering
Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
A knowledge, a dim earnest,° of the calm
Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves?
When, having left his mountains, to the towers
Of Cockermouth that beauteous river came,
Behind my father's house he passed, close by,
Along the margin of our terrace walk.[4]
He was a playmate whom we dearly loved:
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
A naked boy, in one delightful rill,
A little mill-race[5] severed from his stream,
Made one long bathing of a summer's day,
Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again,
Alternate, all a summer's day, or coursed
Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves
Of yellow grunsel;[6] or, when crag and hill,
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's[7] lofty height,

Were bronzed with a deep radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains,[8] and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness to sport,
A naked savage, in the thunder-shower.

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear,
Much favored in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved vale[9] to which erelong
I was transplanted. Well I call to mind—
'Twas at an early age, ere I had seen
Nine summers—when upon the mountain slope
The frost and breath of frosty wind had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
To wander half the night among the cliffs
And the smooth hollows where the woodcocks ran
Along the open turf. In thought and wish
That time, my shoulder all with springes° hung,
I was a fell destroyer. On the heights
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
My anxious visitation, hurrying on,
Still hurrying, hurrying onward. Moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head; I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That was among them. Sometimes it befel
In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toils[1]
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less in springtime, when on southern banks

The shining sun had from her knot of leaves
Decoyed the primrose flower, and when the vales
And woods were warm, was I a plunderer then
In the high places, on the lonesome peaks,
Where'er among the mountains and the winds
The mother-bird had built her lodge. Though mean°
My object and inglorious, yet the end°
Was not ignoble. Oh, when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost, as it seemed,
Suspended by the blast which blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ears; the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds!

The mind of man is framed even like the breath
And harmony of music. There is a dark
Invisible workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, and makes them move
In one society. Ah me, that all
The terrors, all the early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, that all
The thoughts and feelings which have been infused
Into my mind, should ever have made up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself. Praise to the end,
Thanks likewise for the means! But I believe
That Nature, oftentimes, when she would frame
A favored being, from his earliest dawn
Of infancy doth open out the clouds
As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
With gentlest visitation; not the less,
Though haply° aiming at the self-same end,

Does it delight her sometimes to employ
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable—and so she dealt with me.

One evening—surely I was led by her—
I went alone into a shepherd's boat,
A skiff that to a willow-tree was tied
Within a rocky cove, its usual home.
'Twas by the shores of Patterdale, a vale
Wherein I was a stranger, thither come
A schoolboy traveller at the holidays.
Forth rambled from the village inn alone,
No sooner had I sight of this small skiff,
Discovered thus by unexpected chance,
Than I unloosed her tether and embarked.
The moon was up, the lake was shining clear
Among the hoary mountains; from the shore
I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again
In cadence, and my little boat moved on
Even like a man who moves with stately step
Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure. Nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on,
Leaving behind her still on either side
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. A rocky steep uprose
Above the cavern of the willow-tree,
And now, as suited one who proudly rowed
With his best skill, I fixed a steady view
Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
The bound of the horizon—for behind
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.[2]
She was an elfin pinnace;° lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And as I rose upon the stroke my boat

Went heaving through the water like a swan—
When from behind that craggy steep, till then
The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
As if with voluntary power instinct,°
Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,
And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
Rose up between me and the stars, and still
With measured motion, like a living thing
Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.
There, in her mooring-place, I left my bark
And through the meadows homeward went with grave
And serious thoughts; and after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts
There was a darkness—call it solitude
Or blank desertion—no familiar shapes
Of hourly objects, images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,
But huge and mighty forms that do not live
Like living men moved slowly through my mind
By day, and were the trouble of my dreams.

Wisdom and spirit of the universe,
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,
That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion—not in vain,
By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul,
Not with the mean and vulgar° works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and Nature, purifying thus

The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying by such discipline
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valleys made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods
At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights
When by the margin of the trembling lake
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine—
'Twas mine among the fields both day and night,
And by the waters all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,
I heeded not the summons; happy time
It was indeed for all of us, to me
It was a time of rapture. Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six; I wheeled about
Proud and exulting, like an untired horse
That cares not for its home. All shod with steel°
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chace
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
The pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle. With the din,
Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed; while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west

The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway,[3] leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the image of a star
That gleamed upon the ice. And oftentimes
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short—yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal° round.
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,°
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye presences of Nature, in the sky
Or on the earth, ye visions of the hills
And souls of lonely places, can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry—when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters°
Of danger or desire, and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear,
Work° like a sea?

Not uselessly employed,
I might pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play to which the year
Did summon us in its delightful round.

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours,
Nor saw a race in happiness and joy
More worthy of the fields where they were sown.
I would record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung, the rod and line—
True symbol of the foolishness of hope—
Which with its strong enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools, shut out from every star
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings of the mountain brooks.
Unfading recollections—at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons
The kite, high up among the fleecy clouds,
Pull at its rein like an impatient courser,°
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages in which we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours,
A sanctity, a safeguard, and a love.
Can I forget you, being as ye were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? Or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye
Delights and exultations of your own:
Eager and never weary we pursued
Our home amusements by the warm peat fire
At evening, when with pencil and with slate,
In square divisions parcelled out, and all
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,°
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head,

In strife too humble to be named in verse;
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,°
Cherry, or maple, sate in close array,
And to the combat—lu or whist—led on
A thick-ribbed army, not as in the world
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,
But husbanded through many a long campaign.
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions—some, plebean cards
Which fate beyond the promise of their birth
Had glorified, and called to represent
The persons of departed potentates.[4]
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
A congregation piteously akin.
Cheap matter did they give to boyish wit,
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
With scoffs and taunts like Vulcan[5] out of heaven;
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse;
Queens, gleaming through their splendour's last
decay;
And monarchs, surly at the wrongs sustained
By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad
The heavy rain was falling, or the frost
Raged bitterly with keen and silent tooth;
And, interrupting the impassioned game,
From Esthwaite's neighbouring lake the splitting ice,
While it sank down towards the water, sent
Among the meadows and the hills its long
And dismal yellings, like the noise of wolves
When they are howling round the Bothnic main.°

Nor, sedulous° as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first

Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand
And made me love them, may I well forget
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin—how I have felt,
Not seldom, even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem in their simplicity to own
An intellectual° charm, that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born° affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union betwixt life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth
And twice five seasons on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then,
A child, I held unconscious intercourse
With the eternal beauty, drinking in
A pure organic pleasure from the lines
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by the steady clouds.
The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's° rocky limits, they can tell
How when the sea threw off his evening shade
And to the shepherd's huts beneath the crags
Did send sweet notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these,
Engrafted in the tenderness of thought,
A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace—yet I have stood
Even while mine eye has moved o'er three long leagues°
Of shining water, gathering, as it seemed,

Through every hair-breadth of that field of light
New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers.

Thus often in those fits of vulgar° joy
Which through all seasons on a child's pursuits
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
Which like a tempest works along the blood
And is forgotten, even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield. The earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents—
Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies—yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral° objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
Wearied itself out of the memory,
The scenes which were a witness of that joy
Remained, in their substantial lineaments
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight. And thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness—
So frequently repeated—and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of joys that were forgotten, these same scenes,
So beauteous and majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did at length
Become habitually dear, and all
Their hues and forms were by invisible links
Allied to the affections.

I began
My story early, feeling, as I fear,
The weakness of a human love for days
Disowned by memory—ere the birth of spring
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows.[6]
Nor will it seem to thee, my friend, so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
Meanwhile my hope has been that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years,
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
To honorable toil. Yet should these hopes
Be vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments if I am so loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things,[7] and lovely forms
And sweet sensations, that throw back our life
And almost make our infancy itself
A visible scene on which the sun is shining?

One end hereby at least hath been attained—
My mind hath been revived—and if this mood
Desert me not, I will forthwith bring down
Through later years the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me. 'Tis a theme
Single and of determined bounds, and hence
I chuse it rather at this time than work
Of ampler or more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost,
And certain hopes are with me that to thee

This labour will be welcome, honoured friend.

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of many echoes from *Paradise Lost*, where the line is applied to Adam and Eve as they begin their new life after the fall and their expulsion from Eden: "The world was all before them" (12.646).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: This opening passage (lines 1–54), which Wordsworth wrote in 1799, and which in book 7, line 4, he will call his "glad preamble," replaces a traditional epic's opening prayer to the Muse for inspiration. To be "inspired" is literally to be breathed or blown into by a divinity (in Latin *spirare* means both "to breathe" and "to blow"). The "breath of heaven" that blows on the poet's body in lines 41–42, answered by a breeze within (lines 42–43), fills that role here.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to whom Wordsworth addresses the whole of *The Prelude.* For Coleridge's response, see "To William Wordsworth" (pp. 516-18, below).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth says that his poetry usually originates in "emotion recollected in tranquillity"; hence not, as in the preamble of lines 1–54, during the experience that it records.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, willing to prolong the passion.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Grasmere, where Wordsworth settled with his sister, Dorothy, in December 1799.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The work is *The Recluse,* which Wordsworth planned as his major poetic work but never finished.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Influences to which his soul responded as an Eolian harp, placed in an open window, responds with music to gusts of a breeze. For a description of this instrument, named for Aeolus, the classical god of the winds, see Coleridge's *The Eolian Harp*, p. 471, n. 1, below.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: That time of rest.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An echo of Milton's description in *Paradise Lost* of the original act of creation: the Holy Spirit, whom Milton calls on for inspiration, "Dovelike satst brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad'st it pregnant" (1.21–22).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In *Paradise Lost* 9.24–41 Milton relates that, in seeking a subject for his epic poem, he considered then rejected the "fabled Knights" of medieval romance.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Mithridates VI, king of Pontus in Asia Minor, was defeated by the Roman general Pompey in 66 B.C.E. Wordsworth finds epic potential in the legend that, following this defeat, he (in some versions, one of his chieftains) led his people in migration from Asia, north to Scandinavia; there he so impressed the inhabitants with his power that he was able to make them take him for a god, becoming the real-life prototype for the Norse god of war, Odin. In 1796 Coleridge and Robert Southey co-wrote an essay for Coleridge's journal *The Watchman* that retold this story, emphasizing Odin's choice of a dangerous freedom over Roman subjugation. This account of Odin links
  Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sertorius, a Roman general temporarily allied with Mithridates, sought to establish an independent Roman republic in Spain. Following his assassination in 72 B.C.E. the republic was crushed, but there is a legend that his followers fled to the Canary Islands (known then as the "Fortunate Islands," line 191), where their descendants flourished until the arrival of Spanish conquistadors late in the 15th century.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Dominique de Gourges, a French gentleman who went in 1568 to Florida to avenge the massacre of the French by the Spaniards there [*Wordsworth's note* in the 1850 Prelude].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Gustavus Vassa (1496–1530) worked to advance Sweden's liberation from Danish rule while concealing himself in

his country's Dalecarlia mines.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: William Wallace, Scottish patriot, fought against the English until captured and executed in 1304. See Robert Burns's "Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn," pp. 185–86, above.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, *The Recluse.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The lyre of Orpheus. In Greek myth the singing and playing of Orpheus, a traditional figure for the powers of poetry, enchanted both humans and the natural world.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The reference is to Christ's parable of the steward who fails to use his talents (literally, the coins his master has entrusted to him and, figuratively, his God-given abilities) in Matthew 25:14–30.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The two-part *Prelude* that Wordsworth wrote in 1798–99 begins with this abrupt question.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Quoting Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," line 28 (p. 510, below).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Derwent River flows by Cockermouth Castle and then past the garden terrace behind Wordsworth's childhood residence in Cockermouth, Cumbria.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The current that drives a mill wheel.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Or groundsel, a common European weed.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: One of the highest peaks in the Lake District, nine miles east of Cockermouth.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, in America.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The valley of Esthwaite, thirty-five miles from Cockermouth, where Wordsworth attended school after 1779.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Snares or labors.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: To direct his boat in a straight line, the rower (sitting facing the stern of the boat) has fixed his eye on a point on the ridge above the nearby shore, which blocks out the landscape behind.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Moved off obliquely.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The cards for these games of loo and whist have changed their functions in ways that remind us that *The Prelude* was begun soon after the downfall of the French monarchy during the Revolution. The "potentate" cards—the kings, queens, and jacks—have over time been lost from the pack and so selected "plebean," or commoner, cards have come to be used in their place.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Roman god of fire and the forge. His mother, Juno, when he was born lame, threw him down from Olympus, home of the gods.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, he fears that he may have mistakenly attributed his later thoughts to a time of life he can no longer remember.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Things seen in a vision.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *London's*Return to reference °
- °: *anticipation*Return to reference °
- °: *abundant*Return to reference °
- °: *springtime*Return to reference °
- °: *verses*Return to reference °
- °: *secluded dwelling*Return to reference °
- °: *rejoicing*Return to reference °
- °: *invest*Return to reference °
- °: *mental images*Return to reference °
- °: *customs*Return to reference °
- °: *fosters tenderly*Return to reference °
- °: *solemn*Return to reference °
- °: *distinguish*Return to reference °
- °: *lack*Return to reference °
- °: *carefulness*Return to reference °
- °: *total inaction*Return to reference °
- °: *luxuriously*Return to reference °

- °: *unfaithful* Return to reference °
- °: *prohibition* Return to reference °
- °: *foretaste* Return to reference °
- °: *bird snares* Return to reference °
- °: *petty* Return to reference °
- °: *result* Return to reference °
- °: *perhaps* Return to reference °
- °: *small boat* Return to reference °
- °: *endowed* Return to reference °
- °: *lowly, commonplace* Return to reference °
- °: *on skates* Return to reference °
- °: *daily* Return to reference °
- °: *succession* Return to reference °
- °: *signs* Return to reference °
- °: *seethe* Return to reference °
- °: *racehorse* Return to reference °
- °: *tic-tac-toe* Return to reference °
- °: *pine or fir* Return to reference °
- °: *Baltic Sea* Return to reference °
- °: *diligent* Return to reference °
- °: *spiritual* Return to reference °
- °: *innate* Return to reference °
- °: *Cumberland's* Return to reference °
- °: *about 9 miles* Return to reference °
- °: *ordinary* Return to reference °
- °: *secondary* Return to reference °

From Book Second.

School-time (Continued)

["BLESSED THE INFANT BABE"]

* * *

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient[1] till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. But who shall[2] parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square?
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown even as a seed,
Who that shall point as with a wand, and say
'This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain'? Thou, my friend, art one
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
Science[3] appears but what in truth she is,
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
But as a succedaneum,[4] and a prop
To our infirmity. Thou art no slave
Of that false secondary power by which
In weakness we create distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
Which we perceive, and not which we have made.
To thee, unblinded by these outward shows,
The unity of all has been revealed;
And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skilled
Than many are to class the cabinet
Of their sensations,[5] and in voluble phrase°
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.

Hard task to analyse a soul, in which
Not only general habits and desires,
But each most obvious and particular thought—
Not in a mystical and idle sense,
But in the words of reason deeply weighed—
Hath no beginning.

Blessed the infant babe—
For with my best conjectures I would trace
The progress of our being—blest the babe
Nursed in his mother's arms, the babe who sleeps
Upon his mother's breast, who, when his soul
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,
Doth gather passion from his mother's eye.[6]
Such feelings pass into his torpid life
Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind,
Even in the first trial of its powers,
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
In one appearance all the elements
And parts of the same object, else detached
And loth to coalesce. Thus day by day
Subjected to the discipline of love,
His organs and recipient faculties
Are quickened, are more vigorous; his mind spreads,
Tenacious of° the forms which it receives
In one beloved presence—nay and more,
In that most apprehensive habitude[7]
And those sensations which have been derived
From this beloved presence—there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
All objects through all intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of Nature that connect him with the world.[8]

Emphatically such a being lives,
An inmate of° this *active* universe.
From Nature largely he receives, nor so
Is satisfied, but largely gives again;
For feeling has to him imparted strength,
And—powerful in all sentiments of grief,
Of exultation, fear and joy—his mind,
Even as an agent of the one great mind,
Creates, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.[9] Such, verily, is the first
Poetic spirit of our human life—
By uniform controul of after years
In most abated and suppressed, in some
Through every change of growth or of decay
Preeminent till death.

From early days,
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my mother's heart,[1]
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby the infant sensibility,
Great birthright of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
More difficult before me, and I fear
That in its broken windings we shall need
The chamois'° sinews and the eagle's wing.
For now a trouble came into my mind
From unknown causes, I was left alone
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
The props of my affections were removed,[2]
And yet the building stood, as if sustained
By its own spirit. All that I beheld
Was dear to me, and from this cause it came

That now to Nature's finer influxes°
My mind lay open—to that more exact
And intimate communion which our hearts
Maintain with the minuter properties
Of objects which already are beloved,
And of those only.

Many are the joys
Of youth, but, oh, what happiness to live
When every hour brings palpable access
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
And sorrow is not there. The seasons came,
And every season to my notice brought
A store of transitory qualities
Which but for this most watchful power of love
Had been neglected, left a register
Of permanent relations else unknown.[3]
Hence, life, and change, and beauty, solitude
More active even than 'best society',[4]
Society made sweet as solitude
By silent inobtrusive sympathies,
And gentle agitations of the mind
From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things where to the common eye
No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
Sublimer joy. For I would walk alone
In storm and tempest, or in starlight nights
Beneath the quiet heavens, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or image unprofaned; and I would stand
Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are
The ghostly° language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power.

I deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation; not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life,[5] but that the soul—
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not—retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, to which
With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still
That whatsoever point they gain they still
Have something to pursue.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, entering only incidentally into his other concerns.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, who is able to.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the older sense: learning.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In medicine a drug substituted for a different drug. Wordsworth, however, uses the term to signify a remedy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: To classify feelings as if they were exhibits in a display case.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Like modern psychologists, Wordsworth recognized the importance of earliest infancy in the development of the individual mind.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Relationship ("habitude") most suited to the apprehension of the world.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The infant, in the sense of security and love that is shed by his mother's presence, perceives what would otherwise be an alien world as a place to which he is connected, in a "filial bond" (line 263).Return to reference 8

- Note 9: The mind partially creates, by altering, the world it seems simply to perceive.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, both infant and mother feel the pulse of the other's heart.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth's mother died the month before his eighth birthday.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, had it not been for the "watchful power of love" (line 310), the "transitory qualities" (line 309) would have been neglected, and the "permanent relations" now recorded in his memory would have been unknown.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A partial quotation of a line spoken by Adam to Eve in *Paradise Lost* 9.249: "For solitude sometimes is best society."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, not because they are related to the nonsensuous ("intellectual") aspect of life.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *fluent words*Return to reference °
- °: *holding fast to*Return to reference °
- °: *dweller in*Return to reference °
- °: *mountain antelope's*Return to reference °
- °: *influences*Return to reference °
- °: *disembodied*Return to reference °

[ADDRESS TO COLERIDGE]

Thou, my friend, wert reared
In the great city, 'mid far other scenes,[6]
But we by different roads at length have gained
The self-same bourne.[°] And for this cause to thee
I speak unapprehensive of contempt,
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
And all that silent language which so oft
In conversation betwixt man and man
Blots from the human countenance all trace
Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought
The truth in solitude, and thou art one
The most intense of Nature's worshippers,
In many things my brother, chiefly here
In this my deep devotion. Fare thee well.
Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
Attend thee, seeking oft the haunts of men—
And yet more often living with thyself,
And for thyself—so haply shall thy days
Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

Endnotes

- Note 6: A reminiscence of Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," lines 51–52: "For I was reared / In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim." The two-part *Prelude* Wordsworth completed in 1799 ended with the address to Coleridge in lines 467–84.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *destination*Return to reference °

From Book Fifth.

Books

[THE DREAM OF THE ARAB]

* * *

Thou also, man, hast wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with itself,[1]
Things worthy of unconquerable life;
And yet we feel—we cannot chuse but feel—
That these must perish. Tremblings of the heart
It gives, to think that the immortal being
No more shall need such garments;[2] and yet man,
As long as he shall be the child of earth,
Might almost 'weep to have' what he may lose[3]—
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.
A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,
'Should earth by inward throes be wrenched throughout,
Or fire be sent from far to wither all
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old Ocean in his bed, left singed and bare,
Yet would the living presence still subsist
Victorious; and composure would ensue,
And kindlings like the morning—presage sure,
Though slow perhaps, of a returning day.'
But all the meditations of mankind,
Yea, all the adamantine holds° of truth
By reason built, or passion (which itself
Is highest reason in a soul sublime),
The consecrated works of bard and sage,
Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes—
Where would they be? Oh, why hath not the mind

Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?

One day, when in the hearing of a friend
I had given utterance to thoughts like these,
He answered with a smile that in plain truth
'Twas going far to seek disquietude—
But on the front of his reproof confessed
That he at sundry seasons had himself
Yielded to kindred hauntings, and, forthwith,
Added that once upon a summer's noon
While he was sitting in a rocky cave
By the seaside, perusing as it chanced,
The famous history of the errant knight
Recorded by Cervantes,[4] these same thoughts
Came to him, and to height unusual rose
While listlessly he sate, and, having closed
The book, had turned his eyes towards the sea.
On poetry and geometric truth
(The knowledge that endures) upon these two,
And their high privilege of lasting life
Exempt from all internal injury,
He mused—upon these chiefly—and at length,
His senses yielding to the sultry air,
Sleep seized him and he passed into a dream.
He saw before him an Arabian waste,
A desart, and he fancied that himself
Was sitting there in the wide wilderness
Alone upon the sands. Distress of mind
Was growing in him when, behold, at once
To his great joy a man was at his side,
Upon a dromedary° mounted high.
He seemed an arab of the Bedouin tribes;[5]

A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
Of a surpassing brightness. Much rejoiced
The dreaming man that he should have a guide
To lead him through the desart; and he thought,
While questioning himself what this strange freight
Which the newcomer carried through the waste
Could mean, the arab told him that the stone—
To give it in the language of the dream—
Was *Euclid's Elements.*[6] 'And this', said he,
'This other', pointing to the shell, 'this book
Is something of more worth.' 'And, at the word,
The stranger', said my friend continuing,
'Stretched forth the shell towards me, with command
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
A loud prophetic blast of harmony,
An ode in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge now at hand. No sooner ceased
The song, but with calm look the arab said
That all was true, that it was even so
As had been spoken, and that he himself
Was going then to bury those two books—
The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
And wedded man to man by purest bond
Of nature, undisturbed by space or time;
Th' other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, and was
A joy, a consolation, and a hope.'
My friend continued, 'Strange as it may seem
I wondered not, although I plainly saw
The one to be a stone, th' other a shell,
Nor doubted once but that they both were books,

Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
A wish was now engendered in my fear
To cleave unto this man, and I begged leave
To share his errand with him. On he passed
Not heeding me; I followed, and took note
That he looked often backward with wild look,
Grasping his twofold treasure to his side.
Upon a dromedary, lance in rest,
He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
I fancied that he was the very knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells, yet not the knight,
But was an arab of the desart too,
Of these was neither, and was both at once.
His countenance meanwhile grew more disturbed,
And looking backwards when he looked I saw
A glittering light, and asked him whence it came.
"It is", said he, "the waters of the deep
Gathering upon us." Quickening then his pace
He left me; I called after him aloud;
He heeded not, but with his twofold charge
Beneath his arm—before me full in view—
I saw him riding o'er the desart sands
With the fleet waters of the drowning world
In chace of him; whereat I waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me, and the book
In which I had been reading at my side.[7]

Full often, taking from the world of sleep
This arab phantom which my friend beheld,
This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
A substance, fancied him a living man—
A gentle dweller in the desart, crazed
By love, and feeling, and internal thought
Protracted among endless solitudes—
Have shaped him, in the oppression of his brain,
Wandering upon this quest and thus equipped.

And I have scarcely pitied him, have felt
A reverence for a being thus employed,
And thought that in the blind and awful lair
Of such a madness reason did lie couched.
Enow° there are on earth to take in charge
Their wives, their children, and their virgin loves,
Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear—
Enow to think of these—yea, will I say,
In sober contemplation of the approach
Of such great overthrow, made manifest
By certain evidence, that I methinks
Could share that maniac's anxiousness, could go
Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least
Me hath such deep entrancement half-possessed
When I have held a volume in my hand—
Poor earthly casket of immortal verse—
Shakespeare or Milton, labourers divine.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: From the works of God's creation, Nature, Wordsworth turns at this point in *The Prelude* to human creations. Man, as well as God, has created works by which to communicate with man ("commerce of thy nature with itself"): those creations are books, and the title of book 5 underlines their importance to Wordsworth's account of himself.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth draws on the traditional image of the body as the garment of the soul, no longer needed at death and so discarded.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The quotation is from Shakespeare's sonnet 64, in which the thought that Time might come and take his love away is for the speaker "as a death, which cannot choose / But weep to have that which it fears to lose."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: That is, *Don Quixote*, the 17th-century novel about a man unable to distinguish between reality and books' romantic fictions.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Mathematics had flourished in Arabic culture—hence the Arab rider.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Celebrated book on geometry and the theory of numbers by the Greek mathematician Euclid (3rd century B.C.E.); it continued to be used as a textbook into the 19th century.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A late 17th-century biography reported that on a single night in 1619 three dreams troubled René Descartes, who believed them to be a supernatural visitation foretelling his future vocation as a philosopher. The third dream, which has had many interpreters, involved two books that appeared mysteriously to the dreamer and then vanished again, a dictionary and an anthology of poetry. Coleridge is usually thought to have told the story of that dream to Wordsworth, who in lines 56–139 reworks it brilliantly.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *indestructible fortresses*Return to reference °
- °: *camel*Return to reference °
- °: *enough*Return to reference °

[THE BOY OF WINANDER; THE DROWNED MAN]

There was a boy[8]—ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander—many a time
At evening, when the stars had just begun
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he as through an instrument
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him. And they would shout
Across the wat'ry vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud,
Redoubled and redoubled—concourse wild
Of mirth and jocund din. And when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then sometimes in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
Has carried far into his heart[9] the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood ere he was full ten years old.
Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
The vale where he was born; the churchyard hangs
Upon a slope above the village school,
And there, along that bank, when I have passed

At evening, I believe that oftentimes
A full half-hour together I have stood
Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies.
Even now methinks I have before my sight
That self-same village church: I see her sit—
The thronèd lady spoken of erewhile—
On her green hill, forgetful of this boy
Who slumbers at her feet, forgetful too
Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
And listening only to the gladsome sounds
That, from the rural school ascending, play
Beneath her and about her. May she long
Behold a race of young ones like to those
With whom I herded—easily, indeed,
We might have fed upon a fatter soil
Of Arts and Letters, but be that forgiven—
A race of real children, not too wise,
Too learned, or too good, but wanton, fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy,
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain and fear, yet still in happiness
Not yielding to the happiest upon earth.
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds!
May books and Nature be their early joy,
And knowledge, rightly honored with that name—
Knowledge not purchased with the loss of power!
  Well do I call to mind the very week
When I was first entrusted to the care
Of that sweet valley[1]—when its paths, its shores
And brooks, were like a dream of novelty
To my half-infant thoughts—that very week,

While I was roving up and down alone
Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross
One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears,
Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake.
Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom
I saw distinctly on the opposite shore
A heap of garments, left as I supposed
By one who there was bathing. Long I watched,
But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake
Grew dark, with all the shadows on its breast,
And now and then a fish up-leaping snapped
The breathless stillness. The succeeding day—
Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale—
Went there a company, and in their boat
Sounded with grappling-irons and long poles:
At length, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene
Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
Rose with his ghastly face, a spectre shape—
Of terror even. And yet no vulgar fear,
Young as I was, a child not nine years old,
Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
Such sights before among the shining streams
Of fairyland, the forests of romance—
Thence came a spirit hallowing what I saw
With decoration and ideal grace,
A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
Of Grecian art and purest poesy.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 8: In an early manuscript version of lines 389–413, Wordsworth uses the first-person pronoun, suggesting the boy's experience was his own. Under the title "There Was a Boy," the

lines were published as a separate poem in Wordsworth's 1815 *Poems.* In the preface to that volume Wordsworth describes how the account of the boy's listening dramatizes a moment when internal feelings cooperate with external accidents and "plant, for immortality, images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination."Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Thomas De Quincey responded to this line in *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*: "This very expression, 'far,' by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its capacities of re-echoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me as with a flash of sublime revelation."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: At age nine Wordsworth was sent away from home to attend school at Hawkshead in the Esthwaite valley.Return to reference 1

From Book Sixth.

Cambridge and the Alps

["HUMAN NATURE SEEMING BORN AGAIN"]

* * *

When the third summer brought its liberty[1]
A fellow student and myself, he too
A mountaineer, together sallied forth,
And, staff in hand on foot pursued our way
Towards the distant Alps. An open slight
Of college cares and study was the scheme,[2]
Nor entertained without concern for those
To whom my worldly interests were dear,
But Nature then was sovereign in my heart,
And mighty forms seizing a youthful fancy
Had given a charter[3] to irregular hopes.
In any age, without an impulse sent
From work of nations and their goings-on,
I should have been possessed by like desire;
But 'twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.
Bound, as I said, to the Alps, it was our lot
To land at Calais on the very eve
Of that great federal day;[4] and there we saw,
In a mean° city and among a few,
How bright a face is worn when joy of one
Is joy of tens of millions.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wordsworth was a student at St. John's College, Cambridge University, from 1787 to 1791. Books 3 and 4 describe his first year there and the succeeding summer vacation. In this book, after reviewing briefly his second and third years at university, Wordsworth describes his trip through France and Switzerland with a college friend, Robert Jones, during the summer vacation of 1790. France was then in the "golden hours" of the early period of the Revolution; the fall of the Bastille had occurred on July 14 of the preceding year.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Undergraduates were expected to spend their third summer preparing for the final examinations that would determine their rank upon graduation and shape their career prospects.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Privileged freedom.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Wordsworth and Jones landed at the port of Calais in northeast France on July 13, 1790, just before the Festival of Federation, the ceremony, also marking the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, in which King Louis XVI swore to be faithful to the nation's new, democratic constitution.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *lowly*Return to reference °

[CROSSING SIMPLON PASS]

'Tis not my present purpose to retrace
That variegated journey step by step;
A march it was of military speed,
And earth did change her images and forms
Before us fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
Day after day, up early and down late,
From vale to vale, from hill to hill we went,
From province on to province did we pass,
Keen hunters in a chace of fourteen weeks—
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship
Upon the stretch when winds are blowing fair.
Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,
Enticing vallies—greeted them, and left
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
Of salutation were not passed away.
Oh, sorrow for the youth who could have seen
Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
To patriarchal dignity of mind
And pure simplicity of wish and will,
Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man.
My heart leaped up when first I did look down
On that which was first seen of those deep haunts,
A green recess, an aboriginal° vale,
Quiet, and lorded over and possessed
By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
And by the river-side.

That day we first
Beheld the summit of Mount Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
Which had usurped upon a living thought

That never more could be.[5] The wondrous Vale
Of Chamouny[6] did, on the following dawn,
With its dumb° cataracts and streams of ice—
A motionless array of mighty waves,
Five rivers broad and vast—make rich amends,
And reconciled us to realities.
There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
The eagle soareth in the element,
There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
While Winter like a tamèd lion walks,
Descending from the mountain to make sport
Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld
Or heard was fitted to our unripe state
Of intellect and heart. By simple strains
Of feeling, the pure breath of real life,
We were not left untouched. With such a book
Before our eyes we could not chuse but read
A frequent lesson of sound tenderness,
The universal reason of mankind,
The truth of young and old. Nor, side by side
Pacing, two brother pilgrims, or alone
Each with his humour,° could we fail to abound—
Craft this which hath been hinted at before—
In dreams and fictions pensively composed:
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,[7]
Even among those solitudes sublime,
And sober posies of funereal flowers,
Culled from the gardens of the Lady Sorrow,
Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me, mingling with these delights,
Was something of stern mood, an under-thirst

Of vigour, never utterly asleep.
Far different dejection once was mine—
A deep and genuine sadness then I felt—
The circumstances I will here relate
Even as they were. Upturning with a band
Of travellers, from the Valais we had clomb°
Along the road that leads to Italy;[8]
A length of hours, making of these our guides,
Did we advance, and, having reached an inn
Among the mountains, we together ate
Our noon's repast, from which the travellers rose
Leaving us at the board. Erelong we followed,
Descending by the beaten road that led
Right to a rivulet's edge, and there broke off;
The only track now visible was one
Upon the further side, right opposite,
And up a lofty mountain. This we took,
After a little scruple° and short pause,
And climbed with eagerness—though not, at length,
Without surprize and some anxiety
On finding that we did not overtake
Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
While every moment now encreased our doubts,
A peasant met us, and from him we learned
That to the place which had perplexed us first
We must descend, and there should find the road
Which in the stony channel of the stream
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks—
And further, that thenceforward all our course
Was downwards with the current of that stream.
Hard of belief, we questioned him again,
And all the answers which the man returned
To our inquiries, in their sense and substance
Translated by the feelings which we had,
Ended in this—that we had crossed the Alps.[9]

Imagination!—lifting up itself
Before the eye and progress of my song°
Like an unfathered vapour,[1] here that power,
In all the might of its endowments, came
Athwart me. I was lost as in a cloud,
Halted without a struggle to break through,
And now, recovering, to my soul I say
'I recognise thy glory'. In such strength
Of usurpation, in such visitings
Of awful° promise, when the light of sense
Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
There harbours whether we be young or old.
Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
Is with infinitude—and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.
The mind beneath such banners militant
Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught
That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts
That are their own perfection and reward—
Strong in itself, and in the access of joy
Which hides it like the overflowing Nile.

The dull and heavy slackening which ensued
Upon those tidings by the peasant given
Was soon dislodged; downwards we hurried fast,
And entered with the road which we had missed
Into a narrow chasm. The brook and road
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy pass,
And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow step. The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,

And everywhere along the hollow rent
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears—
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them—the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great apocalypse,
The types and symbols of eternity,[2]
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.[3]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 5: The "image" is the actual sight of Mont Blanc, as contrasted with what the poet has imagined the famous Swiss mountain to be.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Chamonix, a valley in eastern France, north of Mont Blanc.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The mention of the "willow wreath" suggests that the poetry the two travelers composed to while away their time was conventionally sentimental. "Gilded": laid on like gilt; superficial.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Simplon Pass.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: As Dorothy Wordsworth baldly put it later on, "The ambition of youth was disappointed at these tidings." The visionary experience that follows (lines 525–48) did not occur in the Alps; Wordsworth celebrates the creative power that he experiences at the time of writing this passage, fourteen years after the disappointment at Simplon Pass.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Vapor appearing suddenly from no apparent source.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The objects in this natural scene are like the written words (“characters”) of the Apocalypse—that is, of the Book of Revelation, concluding book of the New Testament. “Types”: signs foreshadowing eternity.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See Revelation 1:8: “I am Alpha and Omega [the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet], the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord.” In *Paradise Lost* 5.153–65 Milton says that all God’s works declare their Creator, and call on all to extol “him first, him last, him midst, and without end.”Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *primitive, untouched*Return to reference °
- °: *silent*Return to reference °
- °: *temperament*Return to reference °
- °: *climbed*Return to reference °
- °: *hesitation*Return to reference °
- °: The Prelude *itself*Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °

From Book Seventh.

Residence in London

[THE BLIND BEGGAR; BARTHOLOMEW FAIR]

* * *

How often in the overflowing streets[1]
Have I gone forwards with the crowd, and said
Unto myself, 'The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery.'
Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
By thoughts of what, and whither, when and how,
Until the shapes before my eyes became
A second-sight procession, such as glides
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams,[2]
And all the ballast of familiar life—
The present, and the past, hope, fear, all stays,°
All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man—
Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.
And once, far travelled in such mood, beyond
The reach of common indications, lost
Amid the moving pageant, 'twas my chance
Abruptly to be smitten with the view
Of a blind beggar, who, with upright face,
Stood propped against a wall, upon his chest
Wearing a written paper, to explain
The story of the man, and who he was.
My mind did at this spectacle turn round
As with the might of waters, and it seemed
To me that in this label was a type

Or emblem of the utmost that we know
Both of ourselves and of the universe,
And on the shape of this unmoving man,
His fixèd face and sightless eyes, I looked,
As if admonished from another world.

Though reared upon the base of outward things,
These chiefly are such structures as the mind
Builds for itself. Scenes different there are—
Full-formed—which take, with small internal help,
Possession of the faculties: the peace
Of night, for instance, the solemnity
Of Nature's intermediate hours of rest
When the great tide of human life stands still,
The business of the day to come unborn,
Of that gone by locked up as in the grave;[3]
The calmness, beauty, of the spectacle,
Sky, stillness, moonshine, empty streets, and sounds
Unfrequent as in desarts;° at late hours
Of winter evenings when unwholesome rains
Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
The feeble salutation from the voice
Of some unhappy woman[4] now and then
Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
Nothing is listened to. But these I fear
Are falsely catalogued:[5] things that are, are not,
Even as we give them welcome, or assist—
Are prompt, or are remiss. What say you then
To times when half the city shall break out
Full of one passion—vengeance, rage, or fear—
To executions,[6] to a street on fire,
Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From those sights
Take one, an annual festival, the fair
Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
And named of St Bartholomew,[7] there see

A work that's finished to our hands, that lays,
If any spectacle on earth can do,
The whole creative powers of man asleep.
For once the Muse's help will we implore,
And she shall lodge us—wafted on her wings
Above the press and danger of the crowd—
Upon some showman's platform. What a hell
For eyes and ears, what anarchy and din
Barbarian and infernal—'tis a dream
Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound.
Below, the open space, through every nook
Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive
With heads; the midway region and above
Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
Dumb proclamations of the prodigies;
And chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
And children whirling in their roundabouts;°
With those that stretch the neck, and strain the eyes,
And crack the voice in rivalship, the crowd
Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
Grimacing, writhing, screaming; him who grinds
The hurdy-gurdy,[8] at the fiddle weaves,
Rattles the salt-box,[9] thumps the kettle-drum,
And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
The silver-collared negro with his timbrel,°
Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
Blue-breeched, pink-vested, and with towering plumes.
All moveables of wonder from all parts
Are here, albinos, painted Indians, dwarfs,
The horse of knowledge, and the learned pig,[1]
The stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
Giants, ventriloquists, the invisible girl,
The bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,

The waxwork,[2] clockwork,° all the marvellous craft
Of modern Merlins,[3] wild beasts, puppet-shows,
All out-o'-th'-way, far-fetched, perverted things,[4]
All freaks of Nature, all Promethean[5] thoughts,
Of man—his dulness, madness, and their feats,
All jumbled up together to make up
This parliament of monsters. Tents and booths
Meanwhile—as if the whole were one vast mill°—
Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides,
Men, women, three-years' children, babes in arms.

O, blank confusion, and a type° not false
Of what the mighty city is itself
To all, except a straggler here and there—
To the whole swarm of its inhabitants—
An undistinguishable world to men,
The slaves unrespited of low pursuits,
Living amid the same perpetual flow
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end—
Oppression under which even highest minds
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.
But though the picture weary out the eye,
By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest, sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.

* * *

This did I feel in that vast receptacle.[6]
The spirit of Nature was upon me here,
The soul of beauty and enduring life

Was present as a habit, and diffused—
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things—
Composure and ennobling harmony.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wordsworth spent a few unhappy months in London in 1791.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: As though other people were seen in a vision or were optical illusions.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Wordsworth's sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" describes a similar response to London when its "mighty heart is lying still" (see p. 388, above).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Perhaps a sex worker.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Mistakenly classified, because what things are depends on the attitude with which they are perceived.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Executions were held in public in England until 1868.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: This four-day-long fair was held every September in commemoration of the martyrdom of the Protestants burned at the stake during the reign of Catholic Queen Mary (1553–58).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A stringed instrument, used by street musicians, which is sounded by a turning wheel rather than a bow.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A crude musical instrument formed of a wooden box containing salt; it was rattled or beaten.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Animals trained to tap out answers to arithmetic questions, etc.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Madame Tussaud brought her collection of wax figures of the leaders and victims of the French Revolution to London in 1802.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Merlin was the legendary magician in the court of King Arthur, but there was a modern Merlin: the Dutch inventor John Joseph Merlin, who in the late 18th century displayed ingenious contrivances at Merlin's Mechanical Museum, a popular place of London entertainment.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Echoing Milton's description of how in Hell "Nature breeds / Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things" (*Paradise Lost* 2.624–25).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Daringly inventive. In Greek myth Prometheus made man out of clay and taught him the arts.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, London.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *supports*Return to reference °
- °: *wildernesses*Return to reference °
- °: *merry-go-rounds*Return to reference °
- °: *tambourine*Return to reference °
- °: *robots*Return to reference °
- °: *factory*Return to reference °
- °: *image*Return to reference °

From Book Tenth.

Residence in France and French Revolution[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wordsworth visited France for the second time in 1791–92 and, as he explains in this book, became, initially, a passionate partisan of the Revolution. His lack of money forced him to return to England late in 1792. From there he looked on despairingly as the radicals, led by Robespierre, who ascended to power in France in the summer of 1793, undertook a campaign of mass arrests and executions in order to purge the new Republic of its enemies.Return to reference 1

[RETROSPECT: FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE REVOLUTION]

* * *

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy,
For great were the auxiliars° which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love.
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance—
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchanter to assist the work
Which then was going forwards in her name.
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(To take an image which was felt, no doubt,
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full-blown.
What temper° at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were rouzed, and lively natures rapt away.°
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams—
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtlety, and strength
Their ministers, used to stir in lordly wise
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And deal with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it—they too, who, of gentle mood,

Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts (schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves),
Did now find helpers to their hearts' desire
And stuff at hand plastic° as they could wish,
Were called upon to exercise their skill
Not in Utopia—subterraneous fields,
Or some secreted island, heaven knows where—
But in the very world which is the world
Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all.

* * *

Notes

- °: *allies*Return to reference °
- °: *temperament*Return to reference °
- °: *enraptured*Return to reference °
- °: *malleable*Return to reference °

[CRISIS AND RECOVERY][2]

Time may come
When some dramatic story may afford
Shapes livelier to convey to thee, my friend,°
What then I learned—or think I learned—of truth,
And the errors into which I was betrayed
By present objects, and by reasonings false
From the beginning, inasmuch as drawn
Out of a heart which had been turned aside
From Nature by external accidents,
And which was thus confounded more and more,
Misguiding and misguided. Thus I fared,
Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
Like culprits to the bar,° suspiciously
Calling the mind to establish in plain day
Her titles° and her honours, now believing,
Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of moral obligation—what the rule,
And what the sanction—till, demanding proof,
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,°
Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair,
And for my future studies, as the sole
Employment of the inquiring faculty,
Turned towards mathematics, and their clear
And solid evidence.
Ah, then it was
That thou, most precious friend, about this time
First known to me, didst lend a living help
To regulate my soul. And then it was

That the belovèd woman in whose sight
Those days were passed—now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition like a brook
That does but cross a lonely road; and now
Seen, heard and felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse°
With my true self (for, though impaired, and changed
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
Than as a clouded, not a waning moon);
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A poet, made me seek beneath that name
My office° upon earth, and nowhere else.[3]
And lastly, Nature's self, by human love
Assisted, through the weary labyrinth
Conducted me again to open day,
Revived the feelings of my earlier life,
Gave me that strength and knowledge full of peace,
Enlarged, and never more to be disturbed,
Which through the steps of our degeneracy,
All degradation of this age, hath still
Upheld me, and upholds me at this day
In the catastrophe° (for so they dream,
And nothing less), when, finally to close
And rivet up the gains of France, a Pope
Is summoned in to crown an Emperor[4]—
This last opprobrium,° when we see the dog
Returning to his vomit,[5] when the sun
That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
In exultation among living clouds,
Hath put his function and his glory off,
And, turned into a gewgaw,° a machine,
Sets like an opera phantom.[6]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 2: Wordsworth has been describing the crisis of conscience he experienced when, in February 1793, war broke out between Britain and revolutionary France. This section of book 10 describes his suffering and the start of his recovery.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: After a long separation Dorothy Wordsworth came to live with her brother at Racedown in 1795.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The ultimate blow to liberal hopes for France occurred when on December 2, 1804, Napoleon summoned the pope to officiate at the ceremony elevating him to emperor. At the last moment Napoleon grabbed the crown from the pope and donned it himself.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Allusion to Proverbs 26:11: "As a dog returneth to his vomit, a fool returneth to his folly."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Stage machinery used for theatrical effect.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *Coleridge*Return to reference °
- °: *courtroom*Return to reference °
- °: *legal entitlements*Return to reference °
- °: *in the end*Return to reference °
- °: *communion*Return to reference °
- °: *duty*Return to reference °
- °: *dramatic climax*Return to reference °
- °: *disgrace*Return to reference °
- °: *toy*Return to reference °

From Book Eleventh.

Imagination, How Impaired and Restored

[SPOTS OF TIME][1]

* * *

There are in our existence spots of time,
Which with distinct preeminence retain
A renovating virtue,° whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight
In trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired—
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life in which
We have had deepest feeling that the mind
Is lord and master, and that outward sense[2]
Is but the obedient servant of her will.
Such moments, worthy of all gratitude,
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood—in our childhood even
Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me,
As far as memory can look back, is full
Of this beneficent influence.
At a time

When scarcely (I was then not six years old)
My hand could hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we rode towards the hills:
We were a pair of horsemen—honest James
Was with me, my encourager and guide.[3]
We had not travelled long ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my comrade, and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and stumbling on, at length
Came to a bottom° where in former times
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast[4] was mouldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone, but on the turf
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's
name.
The monumental writing was engraven
In times long past, and still from year to year
By superstition of the neighbourhood
The grass is cleared away; and to this hour
The letters are all fresh and visible.
Faltering, and ignorant where I was, at length
I chanced to espy those characters° inscribed
On the green sod: forthwith I left the spot,
And, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit,[5] and more near,
A girl who bore a pitcher on her head
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight, but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Did at that time invest the naked pool,

The beacon on the lonely eminence,
The woman, and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. When, in blessèd season,
With those two dear ones[6]—to my heart so dear—
When, in the blessèd time of early love,
Long afterwards I roamed about
In daily presence of this very scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon, fell
The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam—
And think ye not with radiance more divine
From these remembrances, and from the power
They left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.

Oh mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours! I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands—but this I feel,
That from thyself it is that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life; the hiding-places of my power
Seem open, I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now, when age comes on
May scarcely see at all; and I would give
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future restoration. Yet another
Of these to me affecting incidents,
With which we will conclude.

One Christmas-time,[7]
The day before the holidays began,

Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those two horses which should bear us home,
My brothers and myself. There was a crag,
An eminence,° which from the meeting-point
Of two highways ascending overlooked
At least a long half-mile of those two roads,
By each of which the expected steeds might come—
The choice uncertain. Thither I repaired
Up to the highest summit. 'Twas a day
Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half sheltered by a naked wall.
Upon my right hand was a single sheep,
A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the wood
And plain beneath. Ere I to school returned
That dreary time, ere I had been ten days
A dweller in my father's house, he died,
And I and my two brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave.[8] The event,
With all the sorrow which it brought, appeared
A chastisement; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope,
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low
To God who thus corrected my desires.
And afterwards the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business[9] of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
Which on the line of each of those two roads

Advanced in such indisputable shapes[1]—
All these were spectacles and sounds to which
I often would repair, and thence would drink
As at a fountain. And I do not doubt
That in this later time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
When I am in the woods, unknown to me
The workings of my spirit thence are brought.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wordsworth's account in the lines that follow of two memories from childhood was originally drafted for the first book of the two-book *Prelude* of 1798. By transferring these early memories close to the end of his completed autobiography, rather than presenting them in its opening books alongside his other boyhood memories, he enacts his own theory about how remembrance of things past nourishes the imagination.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Perception of the external world.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The 1850 version of *The Prelude* refers to "an ancient Servant of my Father's house" (12.229).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The post with a projecting arm used for hanging criminals.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A signal beacon on a hill above Penrith.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: His future wife, Mary Hutchinson, and his sister, Dorothy.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In 1783, Wordsworth, aged thirteen, was at Hawkshead School with two of his brothers.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: John Wordsworth died on December 30, 1783. William's mother had died five years earlier.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Busy-ness, motions.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: That is, shapes one did not dare question. Compare this with Hamlet's declaration to the ghost of his father: "Thou com'st in such questionable shape / That I will speak to thee" (*Hamlet* 1.4.24–25).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *power of renewal*Return to reference °
- °: *valley*Return to reference °
- °: *letters*Return to reference °
- °: *elevated ground*Return to reference °

From Book Thirteenth.

Conclusion

[VISION ON MOUNT SNOWDON]

In one of these excursions, travelling then
Through Wales on foot and with a youthful friend,
I left Bethkelet's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way to see the sun
Rise from the top of Snowdon.[1] Having reached
The cottage at the mountain's foot, we there
Rouzed up the shepherd who by ancient right
Of office is the stranger's usual guide,
And after short refreshment sallied forth.

It was a summer's night, a close warm night,
Wan, dull, and glaring,[2] with a dripping mist
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky,
Half threatening storm and rain; but on we went
Unchecked, being full of heart and having faith
In our tried pilot. Little could we see,
Hemmed round on every side with fog and damp,
And, after ordinary travellers' chat
With our conductor, silently we sunk
Each into commerce with his private thoughts.
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard the while
Which took me from my musings, save that once
The shepherd's cur did to his own great joy
Unearth a hedgehog in the mountain-crags,
Round which he made a barking turbulent.
This small adventure—for even such it seemed
In that wild place and at the dead of night—
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up

With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts,
Thus might we wear perhaps an hour away,
Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band—
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash. I looked about, and lo,
The moon stood naked in the heavens at height
Immense above my head, and on the shore
I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
Which meek and silent rested at my feet.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean,[3] and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed
To dwindle and give up its majesty,
Usurped upon as far as sight could reach.
Meanwhile, the moon looked down upon this shew
In single glory, and we stood, the mist
Touching our very feet; and from the shore
At distance not the third part of a mile
Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
The universal spectacle throughout
Was shaped for admiration and delight,
Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged
The soul, the imagination of the whole.

A meditation rose in me that night

Upon the lonely mountain when the scene
Had passed away, and it appeared to me
The perfect image of a mighty mind,
Of one that feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an under-presence,
The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim
Or vast in its own being—above all,
One function of such mind had Nature there
Exhibited by putting forth, and that
With circumstance most awful° and sublime:
That domination which she oftentimes
Exerts upon the outward face of things,
So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence
Doth make one object so impress itself
Upon all others, and pervades them so,
That even the grossest° minds must see and hear,
And cannot chuse but feel. The power which these
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
Thrusts forth upon the senses, is the express
Resemblance—in the fullness of its strength
Made visible—a genuine counterpart
And brother of the glorious faculty
Which higher minds bear with them as their own.[4]
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With all the objects of the universe:
They from their native selves can send abroad
Like transformation, for themselves create
A like existence, and, when'er it is
Created for them, catch it by an instinct.
Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt. They build up greatest things
From least suggestions, ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon.
They need not extraordinary calls

To rouze them—in a world of life they live,
By sensible° impressions not enthralled,
But quickened, rouzed, and made thereby more fit
To hold communion with the invisible world.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
That can be known is theirs—the consciousness
Of whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image,[5] and through every thought,
And all impressions; hence religion, faith,
And endless occupation for the soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive;[6]
Hence sovereignty within and peace at will,
Emotion which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense;
Hence chearfulness in every act of life;
Hence truth in moral judgements; and delight
That fails not, in the external universe.

Oh, who is he that hath his whole life long
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?—
For this alone is genuine liberty.
Witness, ye solitudes, where I received
My earliest visitations (careless then
Of what was given me), and where now I roam,
A meditative, oft a suffering man,
And yet I trust with undiminished powers;
Witness—whatever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained—that, howsoe'er misled,
I never in the quest of right and wrong
Did tamper with myself° from private aims;
Nor was in any of my hopes the dupe
Of selfish passions; nor did wilfully
Yield ever to mean cares and low pursuits;

But rather did with jealousy° shrink back
From every combination that might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of habit to enslave the mind—I mean
Oppress it by the laws of vulgar° sense,
And substitute a universe of death,
The falsest of all worlds, in place of that
Which is divine and true.[7]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wordsworth climbed Mount Snowdon—the highest peak in Wales, some ten miles from the sea—with Robert Jones, the friend with whom he had also hiked through the Alps (book 6). The climb started from the village of Beddgelert ("Bethkelet") at "couching-time" (line 3), the time of night when the sheep lie down to sleep. This event took place in 1791 or possibly 1793; Wordsworth presents it out of its chronological order so as to introduce at this point the "perfect image" (line 69) for the mind, and especially for the activity of the imagination, whose "restoration" the previous books have described.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the dialect of northern England, *glairie*, applied to the weather, means dull or rainy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Milton's description of God's creation of land from the waters, "the mountains huge appear / Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave / Into the clouds" (*Paradise Lost* 7.285–87).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The "glorious faculty" is the imagination, which transfigures and re-creates what is given to it, much as, in Wordsworth's account of the night on Snowdon, the moonlit mist, layering a metaphoric sea atop a "real sea," transfigures the familiar landscape.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: That is, through all they see.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An echo of Archangel Raphael's account to Adam of the soul's powers of reason (*Paradise Lost* 5.488–89). Discursive reason, mainly a human quality according to Raphael, undertakes to reach truths through a logical sequence of premises, observations, and conclusions; "intuitive" reason, mainly angelic, comprehends truth immediately.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In *Paradise Lost* 2.622, the phrase "universe of death" is used to describe Hell. Wordsworth's Hell is a place in which individuals are enslaved by an unimaginative reliance on the senses and habitual perceptions.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °
- °: *dullest*Return to reference °
- °: *sensory*Return to reference °
- °: *my conscience*Return to reference °
- °: *vigilance*Return to reference °
- °: *commonplace*Return to reference °

[FINAL PROPHECY]

Oh, yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete—thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised.[8]
Then, though too weak to tread the ways of truth,
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together,[9] we shall still
Find solace in the knowledge which we have,
Blessed with true happiness if we may be
United helpers forward of a day
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work—
Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe°—
Of their° redemption, surely yet to come.
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason and by truth; what we have loved
Others will love, and we may teach them how:
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of substance and of fabric more divine.

1805 1926

Endnotes

- Note 8: In his conclusion, Wordsworth once again addresses Coleridge.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: That is, though men—whole nations of them together—sink to ignominy (disgrace) and shame.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *grant*Return to reference °
- °: *men's*Return to reference °

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH
1771–1855

Dorothy Wordsworth has an enduring place in English literature even though she wrote very little for publication. Not until late in the nineteenth century did editors begin systematically to collect and print her writings: letters, a few poems, memoirs of her travels, and a set of journals that are now known by the names of the places where she wrote them, the Alfoxden journal (1798), the Grasmere journal (1800–1803), and the Rydal journal (1824–35). It has always been known, from tributes to her by her brother and Coleridge, that she exerted an important influence on the lives and writings of both these men. It is now apparent that she also possessed a power surpassing that of the two poets for precise observation of people and the natural world, together with a genius for terse, luminous, and delicately nuanced description in prose.

Dorothy was born on Christmas Day 1771, twenty-one months after William; she was the only girl of five Wordsworth children. From her seventh year, when her mother died, she lived with various relatives and saw William and her other brothers only occasionally, during the boys' summer vacations from school. In 1795, when she was twenty-four, an inheritance that William received enabled her to carry out a long-held plan to join her brother in a house at Racedown, and the two spent the rest of their long lives together, first in Dorsetshire and Somersetshire, in the southwest of England, then in their beloved Lake District. She uncomplainingly

subordinated her own talents to looking after her brother and his household. She also became William's secretary, tirelessly copying and recopying the manuscripts of his poems to ready them for publication. Despite the scolding of a great-aunt, who deemed "rambling about . . . on foot" unladylike, she accompanied her brother, too, in vigorous cross-country walks in which they sometimes covered as much as thirty-three miles in a day. In late summer and early autumn 1803, in an adventure she memorialized in her manuscript travelogue *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, she and William, joined part of the time by Coleridge, took a grueling, six-week, 663-mile journey through the Scottish Lowlands and Highlands, often proceeding on foot because the roads were too rough for their horse-drawn carriage.

In 1829, the first in a series of severe bouts of illness, never precisely diagnosed and affecting both her body and her mind, began a new phase in Dorothy's existence. Walking became increasingly difficult for her. By the close of the 1830s, she was confined year-round to her bedroom upstairs in her brother and sister-in-law's house, her horizon, as her editor Pamela Woof puts it, narrowed to "the pots of flowers on her window ledge." She lingered in this half-life until 1855, attended devotedly by William until his death five years before her own.

Our principal selections are from the journal Dorothy kept in 1798 at Alfoxden, Somersetshire, where the Wordsworths had moved from Racedown to be near Coleridge at Nether Stowey, as well as from her journals while at Grasmere (1800–03), with Coleridge residing some thirteen miles away at Greta Hall, Keswick. Her records cover the period when both men emerged as major poets, and in their achievements Dorothy played an indispensable role. In book 10 of the 1805 *Prelude*, William says that in the time of his spiritual crisis, Dorothy "maintained for me a saving intercourse / With my true self" and "preserved me still / A Poet"; in a letter of 1797, Coleridge stressed the delicacy and tact in the responses of William's "exquisite sister" to the world of sense: "Her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. . . . Her information various—her eye

watchful in minutest observation of nature—and her taste a perfect electrometer—it bends, protrudes, and draws in, at subtlest beauties & most recondite faults."

The verbal sketches of natural scenes given in the journal passages reprinted here are often echoed in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's poems. Of at least equal importance for Wordsworth was her chronicling of the busy wayfaring life of rural England. These were exceedingly hard times for country people, when the suffering caused by the displacement of small farms and of household crafts by large-scale farms and industries was aggravated by the economic distress caused by protracted Continental wars (see Wordsworth's comment in *The Ruined Cottage*, lines 133ff., p. 357, above). Peddlers, maimed war veterans, leech gatherers, adult and infant beggars, ousted farm families, fugitives, and women abandoned by husbands or lovers streamed along the rural roads and into William's brooding poetic imagination—often by way of Dorothy's prose records.

The journals also show the intensity of Dorothy's love for her brother. Inevitably in our era, the mutual devotion of the orphaned brother and sister has evoked psychoanalytic speculation. It is important to note that Mary Hutchinson, a gentle and openhearted young woman, had been Dorothy's closest friend since adolescence, and that Dorothy encouraged William's courtship and marriage, even though she realized that it entailed her own displacement as a focus of her brother's life. All the evidence indicates that their lives in a single household never strained the affectionate relationship between the two women; indeed Dorothy, until she became an invalid, added to her former functions as William's chief support, housekeeper, and scribe a loving ministration to her brother's children.

In 1897 William Wordsworth's biographer William Knight published the first transcripts of Dorothy Wordsworth's Alfoxden and Grasmere journals, and those transcripts are the basis for the excerpts printed here. The exception is the entry from autumn 1802, in which Dorothy describes her distress on her brother's wedding

day: because Knight excluded it from his edition, we rely there on Pamela Woof's edition of the Grasmere journals (Oxford University Press, 1991). Dorothy Wordsworth's poems, many of them originally written for the children in her brother's household, survived through the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries mainly as manuscripts in various family commonplace books. (William Wordsworth did, however, include three in his *Poems* of 1815, ascribing them to a "Female Friend.") Her poems were not collected until 1987, when Susan M. Levin edited thirty of them in an appendix ("The Collected Poems of Dorothy Wordsworth") to her *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism.* The poems "Grasmere—A Fragment" and "Thoughts on My Sick-Bed" are reprinted from that source.

From The Alfoxden Journal

Jan. 31, 1798. Set forward to Stowey[1] at half-past five. A violent storm in the wood; sheltered under the hollies. When we left home the moon immensely large, the sky scattered over with clouds. These soon closed in, contracting the dimensions of the moon without concealing her.[2] The sound of the pattering shower, and the gusts of wind, very grand. Left the wood when nothing remained of the storm but the driving wind, and a few scattering drops of rain. Presently all clear, Venus first showing herself between the struggling clouds; afterwards Jupiter appeared. The hawthorn hedges, black and pointed, glittering with millions of diamond drops; the hollies shining with broader patches of light. The road to the village of Holford glittered like another stream. On our return, the wind high—a violent storm of hail and rain at the Castle of Comfort.[3] All the Heavens seemed in one perpetual motion when the rain ceased; the moon appearing, now half veiled, and now retired behind heavy clouds, the stars still moving, the roads very dirty.

* * *

Feb. 3. A mild morning, the windows open at breakfast, the redbreasts singing in the garden. Walked with Coleridge over the hills. The sea at first obscured by vapour; that vapour afterwards slid in one mighty mass along the sea-shore; the islands and one point of land clear beyond it. The distant country (which was purple in the clear dull air), overhung by straggling clouds that sailed over it, appeared like the darker clouds, which are often seen at a great distance apparently motionless, while the nearer ones pass quickly over them, driven by the lower winds. I never saw such a union of earth, sky, and sea. The clouds beneath our feet spread themselves to the water, and the clouds of the sky almost joined them. Gathered

sticks in the wood; a perfect stillness. The redbreasts sang upon the leafless boughs. Of a great number of sheep in the field, only one standing. Returned to dinner at five o'clock. The moonlight still and warm as a summer's night at nine o'clock.

Feb. 4. Walked a great part of the way to Stowey with Coleridge. The morning warm and sunny. The young lasses seen on the hill-tops, in the villages and roads, in their summer holiday clothes—pink petticoats and blue. Mothers with their children in arms, and the little ones that could just walk, tottering by their side. Midges or small flies spinning in the sunshine; the songs of the lark and redbreast; daisies upon the turf; the hazels in blossom; honeysuckles budding. I saw one solitary strawberry flower under a hedge. The furze[4] gay with blossom. The moss rubbed from the pailings by the sheep, that leave locks of wool, and the red marks with which they are spotted, upon the wood.[5]

* * *

Feb. 8. Went up the Park, and over the tops of the hills, till we came to a new and very delicious pathway, which conducted us to the Coombe.[6] Sat a considerable time upon the heath. Its surface restless and glittering with the motion of the scattered piles of withered grass, and the waving of the spiders' threads.[7] On our return the mist still hanging over the sea, but the opposite coast clear, and the rocky cliffs distinguishable. In the deep Coombe, as we stood upon the sunless hill, we saw miles of grass, light and glittering, and the insects passing.

Feb. 9. William gathered sticks.

Feb. 10. Walked to Woodlands, and to the waterfall. The adder's-tongue and the ferns green in the low damp dell. These plants now in perpetual motion from the current of the air; in summer only moved by the drippings of the rocks. A cloudy day.[8]

* * *

Mar. 7. William and I drank tea at Coleridge's. A cloudy sky. Observed nothing particularly interesting—the distant prospect obscured. One only leaf upon the top of a tree—the sole remaining leaf—danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind.[9]

Mar. 8. Walked in the Park in the morning. I sate under the fir trees. Coleridge came after dinner, so we did not walk again. A foggy morning, but a clear sunny day.

Mar. 9. A clear sunny morning, went to meet Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge. The day very warm.

Mar. 10. Coleridge, Wm., and I walked in the evening to the top of the hill. We all passed the morning in sauntering about the park and gardens, the children playing about, the old man at the top of the hill gathering furze; interesting groups of human creatures, the young frisking and dancing in the sun, the elder quietly drinking in the life and soul of the sun and air.

Mar. 11. A cold day. The children went down towards the sea. William and I walked to the top of the hills above Holford. Met the blacksmith. Pleasant to see the labourer on Sunday jump with the friskiness of a cow upon a sunny day.

* * *

1798 **Endnotes** 1897

- Note 1: That is, to Coleridge's cottage at Nether Stowey, three miles from Alfoxden.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare Coleridge's *Christabel*, lines 16–19 (p. 495, below).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A tavern halfway between Holford and Nether StoweyReturn to reference 3
- Note 4: Evergreen shrub with yellow flowers, sometimes called gorse.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage*, lines 330–36 (p. 361, above).Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Hodder's Coombe is in the Quantock Hills, near Alfoxden. A coombe is a deep valley.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, line 184 (p. 480, below).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare the description of the dell in Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison," lines 13–20 (p. 473, below).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Compare *Christabel*, lines 49ff. (p. 496, below).Return to reference 9

From The Grasmere Journals

1800

May 14, 1800.—Wm. and John set off into Yorkshire[1] after dinner at half-past two o'clock, cold pork in their pockets. I left them at the turning of the Lowwood bay under the trees. My heart was so full that I could hardly speak to W. when I gave him a farewell kiss. I sate a long time upon a stone at the margin of the lake, and after a flood of tears my heart was easier. The lake looked to me, I knew not why, dull and melancholy, and the weltering on the shores seemed a heavy sound. I walked as long as I could amongst the stones of the shore. The wood rich in flowers; a beautiful yellow (palish yellow) flower, that looked thick, round, and double—the smell very sweet (I supposed it was a ranunculus), crowfoot, the grassy-leaved rabbit-looking white flower, strawberries, geraniums, scentless violets, anemones, two kinds of orchises, primroses, the hackberry very beautiful, the crab coming out as a low shrub. Met an old man, driving a very large beautiful bull, and a cow. He walked with two sticks. Came home by Clappersgate. The valley very green; many sweet views up to Rydale, when I could juggle away the fine houses; but they disturbed me, even more than when I have been happier; one beautiful view of the bridge, without Sir Michael's.[2] Sate down very often, though it was cold. I resolved to write a journal of the time, till W. and J. return, and I set about keeping my resolve, because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give William pleasure by it when he comes home again. At Rydale, a woman of the village, stout and well dressed, begged a half-penny. She had never she said done it before, but these hard times! Arrived at home, set some slips of privet, the evening cold, had a fire, my face now flame-coloured. It is nine o'clock. I shall now go to bed.

* * *

Friday, 3rd October. Very rainy all the morning. Wm. walked to Ambleside after dinner. I went with him part of the way. He talked much about the object of his essay for the second volume of "L. B."[3]* * *

N.B.—When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double.[4] He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a night-cap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. John, who afterwards met him at Wytheburn, took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, and "she was a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with ten children." All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle, where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season, but many years they have been scarce. He supposed it owing to their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. Leeches were formerly 2s. 6d.[5] per 100; they are now 30s. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broken, his body driven over, his skull fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then late in the evening, when the light was just going away.

* * *

Saturday, [*Oct.*] *11th*. A fine October morning. Sat in the house working all the morning. William composing. * * * After dinner we walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold.[6] We went by Mr. Olliff's, and through his woods. It was a delightful day, and the views looked excessively cheerful and beautiful, chiefly that from Mr. Olliff's field, where our own house is to be built. The colours of the

mountains soft, and rich with orange fern; the cattle pasturing upon the hilltops; kites sailing in the sky above our heads; sheep bleating, and feeding in the water courses, scattered over the mountains. They come down and feed, on the little green islands in the beds of the torrents, and so may be swept away. The sheepfold is falling away. It is built nearly in the form of a heart unequally divided. Looked down the brook, and saw the drops rise upwards and sparkle in the air at the little falls. The higher sparkled the tallest. We walked along the turf of the mountain till we came to a track, made by the cattle which come upon the hills.

* * *

Sunday, October 12th. Sate in the house writing in the morning while Wm. went into the wood to compose. Wrote to John in the morning; copied poems for the L. B. In the evening wrote to Mrs. Rawson. Mary Jameson and Sally Ashburner dined. We pulled apples after dinner, a large basket full. We walked before tea by Bainriggs to observe the many-coloured foliage. The oaks dark green with yellow leaves, the birches generally still green, some near the water yellowish, the sycamore crimson and crimson-tufted, the mountain ash a deep orange, the common ash lemon-colour, but many ashes still fresh in their peculiar green, those that were discoloured chiefly near the water. Wm. composing in the evening. Went to bed at 12 o'clock.

1801

Tuesday, [*Nov.*] *24th.* * * * It was very windy, and we heard the wind everywhere about us as we went along the lane, but the walls sheltered us. John Green's house looked pretty under Silver How. As we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of 50 yards from our favourite birch tree. It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. The

sun went in, and it resumed its purplish appearance, the twigs still yielding to the wind, but not so visibly to us. The other birch trees that were near it looked bright and cheerful, but it was a creature by its own self among them. . . . We went through the wood. It became fair. There was a rainbow which spanned the lake from the island-house to the foot of Bainriggs. The village looked populous and beautiful. Catkins are coming out; palm trees budding; the alder, with its plum-coloured buds. We came home over the stepping-stones. The lake was foamy with white waves. I saw a solitary butter-flower in the wood. * * * Reached home at dinner time. Sent Peggy Ashburner some goose. She sent me some honey, with a thousand thanks. "Alas! the gratitude of men has," etc.[7] I went in to set her right about this, and sate a while with her. She talked about Thomas's having sold his land. "I," says she, "said many a time he's not come fra London to buy our land, however." Then she told me with what pains and industry they had made up their taxes, interest, etc. etc., how they all got up at 5 o'clock in the morning to spin and Thomas carded, and that they had paid off a hundred pounds of the interest. She said she used to take much pleasure in the cattle and sheep. "O how pleased I used to be when they fetched them down, and when I had been a bit poorly I would gang out upon a hill and look over 't fields and see them, and it used to do me so much good you cannot think." Molly said to me when I came in, "Poor body! she's very ill, but one does not know how long she may last. Many a fair face may gang before her." We sate by the fire without work for some time, then Mary read a poem of Daniel.[8]* * * * * Wm. read Spenser, now and then, a little aloud to us. We were making his waistcoat. We had a note from Mrs. C., with bad news from poor C. —very ill. William went to John's Grove. I went to find him. Moonlight, but it rained. * * * * * He had been surprised, and terrified, by a sudden rushing of winds, which seemed to bring earth, sky, and lake together, as if the whole were going to enclose him in. He was glad he was in a high road.

In speaking of our walk on Sunday evening, the 22nd November, I forgot to notice one most impressive sight. It was the moon and

the moonlight seen through hurrying driving clouds immediately behind the Stone-Man upon the top of the hill, on the forest side. Every tooth and every edge of rock was visible, and the Man stood like a giant watching from the roof of a lofty castle. The hill seemed perpendicular from the darkness below it. It was a sight that I could call to mind at any time, it was so distinct.

1802

Thursday [*Mar. 4*]. Before we had quite finished breakfast Calvert's man brought the horses for Wm.[9] We had a deal to do, pens to make, poems to put in order for writing, to settle for the press, pack up; and the man came before the pens were made, and he was obliged to leave me with only two. Since he left me at half-past 11 (it is now 2) I have been putting the drawers into order, laid by his clothes which he had thrown here and there and everywhere, filed two months' newspapers and got my dinner, 2 boiled eggs and 2 apple tarts. I have set Molly on to clean the garden a little, and I myself have walked. I transplanted some snowdrops—the Bees are busy. Wm. has a nice bright day. It was hard frost in the night. The Robins are singing sweetly. Now for my walk. I *will* be busy. I *will* look well, and be well when he comes back to me. O the Darling! Here is one of his bitten apples. I can hardly find it in my heart to throw it into the fire. * * * I walked round the two Lakes, crossed the stepping-stones at Rydale foot. Sate down where we always sit. I was full of thought about my darling. Blessings on him. I came home at the foot of our own hill under Loughrigg. They are making sad ravages in the woods. Benson's wood is going, and the woods above the River. The wind has blown down a small fir tree on the Rock, that terminates John's path. I suppose the wind of Wednesday night. I read German after tea. I worked and read the L. B., enchanted with the *Idiot Boy*. Wrote to Wm. and then went to bed. It snowed when I went to bed.

* * *

Monday [*Mar. 22*]. A rainy day. William very poorly. 2 letters from Sara, and one from poor Annette. Wrote to my brother Richard. We talked a good deal about C. and other interesting things. We resolved to see Annette, and that Wm. should go to Mary.[1] Wm. wrote to Coleridge not to expect us till Thursday or Friday.

Tuesday.—A mild morning. William worked at *The Cuckoo* poem.[2] I sewed beside him. After dinner he slept. I read German, and, at the closing-in of day, went to sit in the orchard. William came to me, and walked backwards and forwards. We talked about C. Wm. repeated the poem to me. I left him there, and in 20 minutes he came in, rather tired with attempting to write. He is now reading Ben Jonson. I am going to read German. It is about 10 o'clock, a quiet night. The fire flickers, and the watch ticks. I hear nothing save the breathing of my Beloved as he now and then pushes his book forward, and turns over a leaf. * * *

* * *

Thursday, [*Apr.*] *15th.* It was a threatening, misty morning, but mild. We set off after dinner from Eusemere. Mrs. Clarkson went a short way with us, but turned back.[3] The wind was furious, and we thought we must have returned. We first rested in the large boathouse, then under a furze bush opposite Mr. Clarkson's. Saw the plough going in the field. The wind seized our breath. The lake was rough. There was a boat by itself floating in the middle of the bay below Water Millock. We rested again in the Water Millock Lane. The hawthorns are black and green, the birches here and there greenish, but there is yet more of purple to be seen on the twigs. We got over into a field to avoid some cows—people working. A few primroses by the roadside—woodsorrel flower, the anemone, scentless violets, strawberries, and that starry, yellow flower which Mrs. C. calls pile wort. When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water-side.[4] We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more and yet more; and at last,

under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow, for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again. The bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances, and in the middle of the water, like the sea. Rain came on. * * * William was sitting by a good fire when I came downstairs. He soon made his way to the library, piled up in a corner of the window. He brought out a volume of Enfield's *Speaker*,[5] another miscellany, and an odd volume of Congreve's plays. We had a glass of warm rum and water. We enjoyed ourselves, and wished for Mary. It rained and blew, when we went to bed. * * *

Friday, 16*th April* (*Good Friday*).—When I undrew curtains in the morning, I was much affected by the beauty of the prospect, and the change. The sun shone, the wind had passed away, the hills looked cheerful, the river was very bright as it flowed into the lake. The church rises up behind a little knot of rocks, the steeple not so high as an ordinary three-story house. Trees in a row in the garden under the wall. The valley is at first broken by little woody knolls that make retiring places, fairy valleys in the vale, the river winds along under these hills, travelling, not in a bustle but not slowly, to the lake. We saw a fisherman in the flat meadow on the other side of the water. He came towards us, and threw his line over the two-arched bridge. It is a bridge of a heavy construction, almost bending inwards in the middle, but it is grey, and there is a look of ancientry in the architecture of it that pleased me. As we go on the vale opens out more into one vale, with somewhat of a cradle bed. Cottages, with groups of trees, on the side of the hills. We passed a pair of

twin children, two years old. Sate on the next bridge which we crossed—a single arch. We rested again upon the turf, and looked at the same bridge. We observed arches in the water, occasioned by the large stones sending it down in two streams. A sheep came plunging through the river, stumbled up the bank, and passed close to us. It had been frightened by an insignificant little dog on the other side. Its fleece dropped a glittering shower under its belly. Primroses by the road-side, pile wort that shone like stars of gold in the sun, violets, strawberries, retired and half-buried among the grass. When we came to the foot of Brothers Water, I left William sitting on the bridge, and went along the path on the right side of the lake through the wood. I was delighted with what I saw. The water under the boughs of the bare old trees, the simplicity of the mountains, and the exquisite beauty of the path. There was one grey cottage. I repeated *The Glow-worm*,[6] as I walked along. I hung over the gate, and thought I could have stayed for ever. When I returned, I found William writing a poem descriptive of the sights and sounds we saw and heard. There was the gentle flowing of the stream, the glittering, lively lake, green fields without a living creature to be seen on them; behind us, a flat pasture with forty-two cattle feeding; to our left, the road leading to the hamlet. No smoke there, the sun shone on the bare roofs. The people were at work ploughing, harrowing, and sowing; . . . a dog barking now and then, cocks crowing, birds twittering, the snow in patches at the top of the highest hills, yellow palms, purple and green twigs on the birches, ashes with their glittering stems quite bare. The hawthorn a bright green, with black stems under the oak. The moss of the oak glossy. We went on. Passed two sisters at work (they first passed us), one with two pitchforks in her hand, the other had a spade. We had come to talk with them. They laughed long after we were gone, perhaps half in wantonness, half boldness. William finished his poem.[7] Before we got to the foot of Kirkstone, there were hundreds of cattle in the vale. * * *

Thursday, [*Apr.*] 29*th*. * * * After I had written down *The Tinker*, which William finished this morning,[8] Luff called. He was very lame,

limped into the kitchen. He came on a little pony. We then went to John's Grove, sate a while at first; afterwards William lay, and I lay, in the trench under the fence—he with his eyes shut, and listening to the waterfalls and the birds. There was no one waterfall above another—it was a sound of waters in the air—the voice of the air. William heard me breathing, and rustling now and then, but we both lay still, and unseen by one another. He thought that it would be so sweet thus to lie in the grave, to hear the peaceful sounds of the earth, and just to know that our dear friends were near. The lake was still; there was a boat out. Silver How reflected with delicate purple and yellowish hues, as I have seen spar; lambs on the island, and running races together by the half-dozen, in the round field near us. The copses greenish, hawthorns green, . . . cottages smoking. As I lay down on the grass, I observed the glittering silver line on the ridge of the backs of the sheep, owing to their situation respecting the sun, which made them look beautiful, but with something of strangeness, like animals of another kind, as if belonging to a more splendid world. * * *

* * *

Tuesday, *May 4th*. Though William went to bed nervous, and jaded in the extreme, he rose refreshed, wrote out *The Leech Gatherer*[9] for him, which he had begun the night before and of which he wrote several stanzas in bed this Monday morning. It was very hot. * * * We rested several times by the way,—read, and repeated *The Leech Gatherer.** * * We saw Coleridge on the Wytheburn side of the water; he crossed the beck to us. Mr. Simpson was fishing there. William and I ate luncheon and then went on towards the waterfall. It is a glorious wild solitude under that lofty purple crag. It stood upright by itself; its own self, and its shadow below, one mass; all else was sunshine. We went on further. A bird at the top of the crag was flying round and round, and looked in thinness and transparency, shape and motion like a moth. We climbed the hill, but looked in vain for a shade, except at the foot of

the great waterfall. We came down, and rested upon a moss-covered rock rising out of the bed of the river. There we lay, ate our dinner, and stayed there till about four o'clock or later. William and Coleridge repeated and read verses. I drank a little brandy and water, and was in heaven. The stag's horn is very beautiful and fresh, springing upon the fells; mountain ashes, green. We drank tea at a farm house. * * * We parted from Coleridge at Sara's crag, after having looked for the letters which C. carved in the morning. I missed them all. William deepened the T. with C.'s pen-knive.[1] We sate afterwards on the wall, seeing the sun go down, and the reflections in the still water. C. looked well, and parted from us cheerfully, hopping upon the side stones. On the Raise we met a woman with two little girls, one in her arms, the other, about four years old, walking by her side, a pretty little thing, but half-starved. * * * The mother, when we accosted her, told us how her husband had left her, and gone off with another woman, and how she "*pursued*" them. Then her fury kindled, and her eyes rolled about. She changed again to tears. She was a Cockermouth woman, thirty years of age—a child at Cockermouth when I was. I was moved, and gave her a shilling. . . . We had the crescent moon with the "auld moon in her arms."[2] We rested often, always upon the bridges. Reached home at about ten o'clock. * * * We went soon to bed. I repeated verses to William while he was in bed; he was soothed, and I left him. "This is the spot"[3] over and over again.

* * *

Thursday, 6*th May.*—A sweet morning. We have put the finishing stroke to our bower, and here we are sitting in the orchard. It is one o'clock. We are sitting upon a seat under the wall, which I found my brother building up, when I came to him.—He had intended that it should have been done before I came. It is a nice, cool, shady spot. The small birds are singing, lambs bleating, cuckoos calling, the thrush sings by fits, Thomas Ashburner's axe is going quietly (without passion) in the orchard, hens are cackling, flies humming,

the women talking together at their doors, plum and pear trees are in blossom—apple trees greenish—the opposite woods green, the crows are cawing, we have heard ravens, the ash trees are in blossom, birds flying all about us, the stitchwort is coming out, there is one budding lychnis, the primroses are passing their prime, celandine, violets, and wood sorrel for ever more, little geraniums and pansies on the wall. We walked in the evening to Tail End, to inquire about hurdles for the orchard shed. * * * When we came in we found a magazine, and review, and a letter from Coleridge, verses to Hartley, and Sara H. We read the review,[4] etc. The moon was a perfect boat, a silver boat, when we were out in the evening. The birch tree is all over green in *small* leaf, more light and elegant than when it is full out. It bent to the breezes, as if for the love of its own delightful motions. Sloe-thorns and hawthorns in the hedges.

Friday, *7th May*.—William had slept uncommonly well, so, feeling himself strong, he fell to work at *The Leech Gatherer;* he wrote hard at it till dinner time, then he gave over, tired to death—he had finished the poem.[5] I was making Derwent's frocks. After dinner we sate in the orchard. It was a thick, hazy, dull air. The thrush sang almost continually; the little birds were more than usually busy with their voices. The sparrows are now full fledged. The nest is so full that they lie upon one another; they sit quietly in their nest with closed mouths. I walked to Rydale after tea, which we drank by the kitchen fire. The evening very dull; a terrible kind of threatening brightness at sunset above Easedale. The sloe-thorn beautiful in the hedges, and in the wild spots higher up among the hawthorns. No letters. William met me. He had been digging in my absence, and cleaning the well. We walked up beyond Lewthwaites. A very dull sky; coolish; crescent moon now and then. I had a letter brought me from Mrs. Clarkson while we were walking in the orchard. I observed the sorrel leaves opening at about nine o'clock. William went to bed tired with thinking about a poem.

* * *

[*July*.] On Thursday morning, 29th, we arrived in London.[6] Wm. left me at the Sun. * * * After various troubles and disasters, we left London on Saturday morning at half-past five or six, the 31st of July. We mounted the Dover coach at Charing Cross. It was a beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light, that there was even something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles.[7]

We rode on cheerfully, now with the Paris diligence before us, now behind. We walked up the steep hills, a beautiful prospect everywhere, till we even reached Dover. * * * We arrived at Calais at four o'clock on Sunday morning, the 31st of July.[8] We stayed in the vessel till half-past seven; then William went for letters at about half-past eight or nine. We found out Annette and C. chez Madame Avril dans la Rue de la Tête d'or. We lodged opposite two ladies, in tolerably decent-sized rooms, but badly furnished. * * * The weather was very hot. We walked by the sea-shore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone. I had a bad cold, and could not bathe at first, but William did. It was a pretty sight to see as we walked upon the sands when the tide was low, perhaps a hundred people bathing about a quarter of a mile distant from us. And we had delightful walks after the heat of the day was passed—seeing far off in the west the coast of England like a cloud crested with Dover castle, which was but like the summit of the cloud—the evening star and the glory of the sky, the reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself, purple waves brighter than precious stones, for ever melting away upon the sands.

* * *

[*Sept. 24 and following.*] Mary first met us in the avenue. She looked so fat and well that we were made very happy by the sight of her—then came Sara, & last of all Joanna.[9] Tom was forking corn

standing upon the corn cart. We dressed ourselves immediately & got tea—the garden looked gay with asters & sweet peas—I looked at everything with tranquillity & happiness but I was ill both on Saturday & Sunday & continued to be poorly most of the time of our stay. Jack & George came on Friday Evening 1st October. On Saturday 2nd we rode to Hackness, William Jack George & Sara single, I behind Tom. On Sunday 3rd Mary & Sara were busy packing. On Monday 4th October 1802, my Brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night & rose fresh & well in the morning—at a little after 8 o'clock I saw them go down the avenue towards the Church. William had parted from me up stairs. I gave him the wedding ring—with how deep a blessing! I took it from my forefinger where I had worn it the whole of the night before—he slipped it again onto my finger and blessed me fervently. When they were absent my dear little Sara prepared the breakfast. I kept myself as quiet as I could, but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, I could stand it no longer & threw myself on the bed where I lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing any thing, till Sara came upstairs to me & said "They are coming." This forced me from the bed where I lay & I moved I knew not how straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me till I met my beloved William & fell upon his bosom. He & John Hutchinson led me to the house & there I stayed to welcome my dear Mary. As soon as we had breakfasted we departed.[1] It rained when we set off. Poor Mary was much agitated when she parted from her Brothers & Sisters & her home. Nothing particular occurred till we reached Kirby. We had sunshine & showers, pleasant talk, love & chearfulness. * * * It rained very hard when we reached Windermere. We sate in the rain at Wilcock's to change horses, & arrived at Grasmere at about 6 o'clock on Wednesday Evening, the 6th of October 1802. Molly was overjoyed to see us,—for my part I cannot describe what I felt, & our dear Mary's feelings would I dare say not be easy to speak of. We went by candle light into the garden & were astonished at the growth of the Brooms, Portugal Laurels, &c &c &c—The next day, Thursday, we unpacked the Boxes. On Friday

8th we baked Bread, & Mary & I walked, first upon the Hill side, & then in John's Grove, then in view of Rydale, the first walk that I had taken with my Sister.

* * *

24th December.—Christmas Eve. William is now sitting by me, at half-past ten o'clock. I have been * * * repeating some of his sonnets to him, listening to his own repeating, reading some of Milton's, and the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*. It is a quick, keen frost. * * * Coleridge came this morning with Wedgwood. We all turned out * * * one by one, to meet him. He looked well. We had to tell him of the birth of his little girl, born yesterday morning at six o'clock. William went with them to Wytheburn in the chaise, and M. and I met W. on the Raise. It was not an unpleasant morning. * * * The sun shone now and then, and there was no wind, but all things looked cheerless and distinct; no meltings of sky into mountains, the mountains like stone work wrought up with huge hammers. Last Sunday was as mild a day as I ever remember. * * * Mary and I went round the lakes. There were flowers of various kinds—the topmost bell of a foxglove, geraniums, daisies, a buttercup in the water (but this I saw two or three days before), small yellow flowers (I do not know their name) in the turf. A large bunch of strawberry blossoms. * * * It is Christmas Day, Saturday, 25th December 1802. I am thirty-one years of age. It is a dull, frosty day.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: William and his younger brother John, on the way to visit Mary Hutchinson, whom William was to marry two and a half years later.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sir Michael le Fleming's estate, Rydal Hall. "Without": outside or beyond.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: William's "Resolution and Independence," composed one and a half years later, incorporated various details of Dorothy's description of the leech gatherer. See May 4 and 7, 1802 (pp. 442 and 443, above), for William working on the poem he originally called "The Leech Gatherer."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Two shillings, six pence.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The sheepfold (pen for sheep) in William's "Michael." Lines 1–7 of the poem describe the walk up Greenhead Gill.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A quotation from William's "Simon Lee": "Alas! the gratitude of men / Has oft'ner left me mourning."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Identified as Samuel Daniel's poem *Musophiles: Containing a General Defence of Learning* (1599).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: For a journey to Keswick to visit Coleridge.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: It had been arranged several months earlier that William was to marry Mary Hutchinson (Sara is Mary's sister, with whom Coleridge had fallen in love). Now the Wordsworths resolve to go to France to settle affairs with Annette Vallon, mother of William's daughter, Caroline. William did not conceal the facts of his early love affair from his family, or from Mary Hutchinson.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "To the Cuckoo."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Catherine Clarkson, the wife of the anti–slave-trade campaigner Thomas Clarkson, was a neighbor and became one of Dorothy Wordsworth's closest friends.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: William did not compose his poem on the daffodils, "I wandered lonely as a cloud," until two years later. Comparison with the poem will show how extensive was his use of Dorothy's prose description (p. 379, above).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: William Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774), a volume of selections suitable for elocution.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: William's poem beginning "Among all lovely things my Love had been," composed four days earlier; "my Love" in this line is Dorothy.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The short lyric "Written in March."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: William never published his comic poem "The Tinkers." It was first printed in 1897.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The poem that was published as "Resolution and Independence" (see pp. 375–79, above). For its origin see the entry for October 3, 1800 (p. 437).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The rock, which has since been blasted away to make room for a new road, contained the carved letters W. W., M. H., D. W., S. T. C., J. W., and S. H.: William Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Wordsworth, and Sara Hutchinson.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From the ballad "Sir Patrick Spens" (see p. 38, above).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: William never completed this poem.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The *Monthly Review* for March 1802.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Later entries show, however, that William kept working on the manuscript until July 4.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: On the way to France to visit Annette Vallon and Caroline (see the entry for March 22, 1802, pp. 439–40).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare William's sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" (p. 388, above).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The actual date was August 1. One of the walks by the sea that Dorothy goes on to describe was the occasion for William's sonnet "It is a beauteous evening" (see p. 388, above).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The Wordsworths have come to Gallow Hill, Yorkshire, for the marriage of William and Mary. The people mentioned are Mary's sisters and brothers (Sara, Joanna, Tom, Jack, and

George Hutchinson). Out of consideration for Dorothy's overwrought feelings, only Joanna, Jack, and Tom attended the ceremony at Brampton Church.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Dorothy accompanied William and Mary on the three-day journey back to their cottage at Grasmere.Return to reference 1

Grasmere—A Fragment

Peaceful our valley, fair and green,
And beautiful her cottages,
Each in its nook, its sheltered hold,
Or underneath its tuft of trees.

Many and beautiful they are;
But there is *one* that I love best,
A lowly shed, in truth, it is,
A brother of the rest.

Yet when I sit on rock or hill,
Down looking on the valley fair,
That Cottage with its clustering trees
Summons my heart; it settles there.

Others there are whose small domain
Of fertile fields and hedgerows green
Might more seduce a wanderer's mind
To wish that *there* his home had been.

Such wish be his! I blame him not,
My fancies they perchance are wild
—I love that house because it is
The very Mountains' child.

Fields hath it of its own, green fields,
But they are rocky steep and bare;
Their fence is of the mountain stone,
And moss and lichen flourish there.

And when the storm comes from the North
It lingers near that pastoral spot,

And, piping through the mossy walls,
It seems delighted with its lot.

And let it take its own delight;
And let it range the pastures bare;
Until it reach that group of trees,
—It may not enter there!

A green unfading grove it is,
Skirted with many a lesser tree,
Hazel and holly, beech and oak,
A bright and flourishing company.

Precious the shelter of those trees;
They screen the cottage that I love;
The sunshine pierces to the roof,
And the tall pine-trees tower above.

When first I saw that dear abode,
It was a lovely winter's day:
After a night of perilous storm
The west wind ruled with gentle sway;

A day so mild, it might have been
The first day of the gladsome spring;
The robins warbled, and I heard
One solitary throstle sing.

A Stranger, Grasmere, in thy Vale,
All faces then to me unknown,
I left my sole companion-friend
To wander out alone.

Lured by a little winding path,
I quitted soon the public road,
A smooth and tempting path it was,
By sheep and shepherds trod.

Eastward, toward the lofty hills,
This pathway led me on
Until I reached a stately Rock,
With velvet moss o'ergrown.

With russet oak and tufts of fern
Its top was richly garlanded;
Its sides adorned with eglantine
Bedropp'd with hips of glossy red.

There, too, in many a sheltered chink
The foxglove's broad leaves flourished fair,
And silver birch whose purple twigs
Bend to the softest breathing air.

Beneath that Rock my course I stayed,
And, looking to its summit high,
"Thou wear'st," said I, "a splendid garb,
Here winter keeps his revelry.

"Full long a dweller on the Plains,
I griev'd when summer days were gone;
No more I'll grieve; for Winter here
Hath pleasure gardens of his own.

"What need of flowers? The splendid moss
Is gayer than an April mead;
More rich its hues of various green,
Orange, and gold, & glittering red."

—Beside that gay and lovely Rock
There came with merry voice
A foaming streamlet glancing by;
It seemed to say "Rejoice!"

My youthful wishes all fulfill'd,

Wishes matured by thoughtful choice,
I stood an Inmate of this vale
How *could* I but rejoice?

ca. 1802–05 1892

Floating Island[1]

Harmonious Powers with Nature work
On sky, earth, river, lake and sea;
Sunshine and cloud, whirlwind and breeze,
All in one duteous task agree.

Once did I see a slip of earth
(By throbbing waves long undermined)
Loosed from its hold; how, no one knew,
But all might see it float, obedient to the wind;

Might see it, from the mossy shore
Dissevered, float upon the Lake,
Float with its crest of trees adorned
On which the warbling birds their pastime take.

Food, shelter, safety, there they find;
There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;
There insects live their lives, and die;
A peopled world it is; in size a tiny room.

And thus through many seasons' space
This little Island may survive;
But Nature, though we mark her not,
Will take away, may cease to give.

Perchance when you are wandering forth
Upon some vacant sunny day,
Without an object, hope, or fear,
Thither your eyes may turn—the Isle is passed away;

Buried beneath the glittering Lake,[2]

Its place no longer to be found;
Yet the lost fragments shall remain
To fertilize some other ground.

1828–32 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1: A manuscript version of this poem in Dorothy Wordsworth's notebook carries the title "Floating Island at Hawkshead, An Incident in the Schemes of Nature." (Hawkshead is a small village close to the Wordsworths' Lake District home.) Our text follows the published version of the poem as it appeared under the title "Floating Island" in William Wordsworth's *Poems* (1842), where William included it with an attribution to "D. W.," "Author of the Address to the Wind, &c." In his travel book *Guide to the Lakes* (5th ed., 1835), William also engaged this strange natural phenomenon: "there occasionally appears above the surface of Derwentwater, and always in the same place, a considerable tract of spongy ground covered with aquatic plants, which is called the Floating, but with more propriety might be named the Buoyant, Island."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Among several differences in punctuation between the notebook and the published version, this line in the notebook concludes emphatically, with an exclamation point: "Buried beneath the glittering Lake!"Return to reference 2

Thoughts on My Sick-Bed[1]

And has the remnant of my life
Been pilfered of this sunny Spring?
And have its own prelusive sounds
Touched in my heart no echoing string?

Ah! say not so—the hidden life
Couchant° within this feeble frame
Hath been enriched by kindred gifts,
That, undesired, unsought-for, came

With joyful heart in youthful days
When fresh each season in its Round
I welcomed the earliest Celandine
Glittering upon the mossy ground;

With busy eyes I pierced the lane
In quest of known and *un*known things,
—The primrose a lamp on its fortress rock,
The silent butterfly spreading its wings,

The violet betrayed by its noiseless breath,
The daffodil dancing in the breeze,
The carolling thrush, on his naked perch,
Towering above the budding trees.

Our cottage-hearth no longer our home,
Companions of Nature were we,
The Stirring, the Still, the Loquacious, the Mute—
To all we gave our sympathy.

Yet never in those careless days
When spring-time in rock, field, or bower

Was but a fountain of earthly hope
A promise of fruits & the *splendid* flower.

No! then I never felt a bliss
That might with *that* compare
Which, piercing to my couch of rest,
Came on the vernal air.

When loving Friends an offering brought,
The first flowers of the year,
Culled from the precincts of our home,
From nooks to Memory dear.

With some sad thoughts the work was done,
Unprompted and unbidden,
But joy it brought to my *hidden* life,
To consciousness no longer hidden.

I felt a Power unfelt before,
Controlling weakness, languor, pain;
It bore me to the Terrace walk
I trod the Hills again;—

No prisoner in this lonely room,
I *saw* the green Banks of the Wye,
Recalling thy prophetic words,
Bard, Brother, Friend from infancy!

No need of motion, or of strength,
Or even the breathing air:
—I thought of Nature's loveliest scenes;
And with Memory I was there.

May 1832 1978

Endnotes

- Note 1: In a letter of May 25, 1832, William Wordsworth's daughter Dora mentions this as "an affecting poem which she [her aunt Dorothy] has written on the pleasure she received from the first spring flowers that were carried up to her when confined to her sick room." The lines refer to half a dozen or more poems by William, including "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (in line 18) and "Tintern Abbey" (lines 45–52).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *lying*Return to reference °

SIR WALTER SCOTT
1771–1832

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, but as a small boy, to improve his health, he lived for some years with his grandparents on their farm in the Scottish Border country (the part of southern Scotland lying immediately north of the border with England). This region was rich in ballad and folklore, much of it associated with the Border warfare between northern English and southern Scottish raiders. As a child Scott listened eagerly to stories about the past, especially to accounts by survivors of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, the last in a series of ill-fated attempts to restore to the throne of Britain the Stuart dynasty, who had been living in exile since 1688. The defeat of the ragtag army of Scottish Highland soldiers who had rallied around Charles Edward Stuart brought to an end not just the Jacobite cause but also the quasi-feudal power that the Highland chiefs had exercised over their clans. The Highlands' native traditions were suppressed by a government in London that was determined, to the point of brutality, to integrate all its Scottish subjects more fully into the United Kingdom. Ideally situated to witness these social and cultural transformations, Scott early acquired what he exploited throughout his work—a sense of history as associated with a specific place and a sense of the past that is kept alive, tenuously, in the oral traditions of the present.

Scott's father was a lawyer, and he himself was trained in the law, becoming in 1799 sheriff (local judge) of Selkirkshire, a Border

county, and in 1806 clerk of session—that is, secretary to the highest civil court in Scotland—in Edinburgh. Scott viewed the law, in its development over the centuries, as embodying the changing social customs of the country and an important element in social history, and he often used it (as in *The Heart of Midlothian* and *Redgauntlet*) to give a special dimension to his fiction.

From early childhood Scott was an avid reader of ballads and poetic romances, which with his phenomenal memory he effortlessly memorized. He began his literary career as a poet, first as a translator of German ballad imitations and then as a writer of such imitations. In 1799 he set out on the collecting expedition that resulted in the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–3), his compilation of Border ballads. Motivating the collection was Scott's belief that the authentic features of the Scottish character were "daily melting . . . into those of her . . . ally" (that is, England), but he had fewer compunctions than modern folklorists about "improving" the ballads he and assistants transcribed from the recitations of elderly peasant women and shepherds. Scott turned next to composing long narrative poems set in medieval times, the best-known of which are *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810). Although these "metrical romances" were sensational best sellers (in 1830 Scott estimated that *The Lay* had sold thirty thousand copies) and helped establish nineteenth-century culture's vogue for medieval chivalry, Scott eventually gave up poetry for prose fiction. "Byron beat me," he explained, referring to the fact that his metrical romances ended up eclipsed by his rival's even more exotic "Eastern tales."

Scott continued to write lyric poems, which he inserted in his novels. Some of the lyrics, including "Proud Maisie," are based on the folk ballad and capture remarkably the terse suggestiveness of the oral form. *Waverley* (1814), which deals with the Jacobite defeat in 1745, introduced a motif that would remain central to Scott's fiction: the protagonist mediates between a heroic but violent old world that can no longer survive and an emerging new world that will be both safer than the old one—ensuring the security of

property and the rule of law—and duller, allowing few opportunities for adventure. The novels negotiate between preserving the last traces of the traditional cultures whose disappearance they chronicle—for instance, the Scots superstitions and distinctive speech forms that feature in the ghost story that Wandering Willie recounts in *Redgauntlet* and the song, "Proud Maisie," that Madge Wildfire sings in *The Heart of Midlothian*—and representing, through the long views of the novels' impersonal narrators, the iron laws of historical development, as those were expounded in the emerging Scottish Enlightenment disciplines of political economy, sociology, and anthropology. This approach to representing change, one that acquiesces in the necessity of social progress but also nostalgically acknowledges the allure of the backward past, was timely. It appealed powerfully to a generation that, following the British victory at Waterloo, was both eager to think that a new period in its history had begun and yet reluctant to turn its back on the past, not least because devotion to its shared historical heritage might help reunify a fragmented nation. Scott did not invent the historical novel, and indeed was readier than most twentieth-century critics to acknowledge that he had been influenced by the women novelists who dominated the literary scene before his debut, but his example established the significance the form would henceforth claim.

Scott published all his novels anonymously, an index of how a gentleman-poet, even at the start of the nineteenth century, might find fiction a disreputable occupation. However, his authorship of "the Waverley Series" was an open secret, and Scott became the most internationally famous novelist as well as the most prolific writer of the day. In 1811 he started building his palatial country house at Abbotsford, a place that, characteristically, he both equipped with up-to-date indoor plumbing and gas lighting and stocked with antiquarian relics. There he enacted his vision of himself as a country gentleman of the old school. Though in 1820 he acquired the title of baronet and thus added a "Sir" to his name, this glamorous persona of the Scottish laird depended on his hardheaded, unromantic readiness to conceive of literature as a

business. To support his expenditures at Abbotsford, Scott wrote (as Thomas Carlyle put it disapprovingly in 1838) “with the ardour of a steam-engine” and participated in a number of commercial ventures in printing and publishing. In the crash of 1826, as a result of the failure of the publishing firm of Constable, Scott was financially ruined. He insisted on working off his huge debts by his pen and exhausted himself in the effort to do so. Not until after his death were his creditors finally paid off in full with the proceeds of the continuing sale of his novels.

From The Lay of the Last Minstrel[1]

Introduction

The way was long, the wind was cold,
The Minstrel was infirm and old;
His withered cheek, and tresses gray,
Seemed to have known a better day;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy.
The last of all the Bards was he,
Who sung of Border chivalry;
For, well-a-day! their date was fled,
His tuneful brethren all were dead;
And he, neglected and oppressed,
Wished to be with them, and at rest.
No more, on prancing palfrey° borne,
He carolled, light as lark at morn;
No longer, courted and caressed,
High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
He poured, to lord and lady gay,
The unpremeditated lay;
Old times were changed, old manners gone,
A stranger[2] filled the Stuarts' throne;
The bigots of the iron time
Had called his harmless art a crime.
A wandering harper, scorned and poor,
He begged his bread from door to door;
And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
The harp, a King had loved to hear.

He passed where Newark's[3] stately tower

Looks out from Yarrow's birchen bower:
The Minstrel gazed with wishful eye—
No humbler resting place was nigh.
With hesitating step, at last,
The embattled portal-arch he passed,
Whose ponderous grate, and massy bar,
Had oft rolled back the tide of war,
But never closed the iron door
Against the desolate and poor.
The Duchess marked his weary pace,
His timid mien, and reverend face,
And bade her page the menials° tell,
That they should tend the old man well:
For she had known adversity,
Though born in such a high degree;
In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,
Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb![4]

When kindness had his wants supplied,
And the old man was gratified,
Began to rise his minstrel pride.
And he began to talk, anon,
Of good Earl Francis, dead and gone,
And of Earl Walter, rest him God![5]
A braver ne'er to battle rode;
And how full many a tale he knew,
Of the old warriors of Buccleuch;
And, would the noble Duchess deign
To listen to an old man's strain,
Though stiff his hand, his voice though weak,
He thought even yet, the sooth° to speak,
That, if she loved the harp to hear,
He could make music to her ear.

The humble boon was soon obtained;
The aged Minstrel audience gained.

But, when he reached the room of state,
Where she, with all her ladies, sate,
Perchance he wished his boon denied;
For, when to tune his harp he tried,
His trembling hand had lost the ease,
Which marks security to please;
And scenes, long past, of joy and pain,
Came wildering o'er his aged brain—
He tried to tune his harp in vain.
The pitying Duchess praised its chime,
And gave him heart, and gave him time,
Till every string's according glee
Was blended into harmony.
And then, he said, he would full fain
He could recall an ancient strain,
He never thought to sing again.
It was not framed for village churls,
But for high dames and mighty earls;
He had played it to King Charles the Good
When he kept court at Holyrood;[6]
And much he wished, yet feared, to try
The long-forgotten melody.
Amid the strings his fingers strayed,
And an uncertain warbling made—
And oft he shook his hoary° head.
But when he caught the measure wild,
The old man raised his face, and smiled;
And lightened up his faded eye,
With all a poet's extacy!
In varying cadence, soft or strong,
He swept the sounding chords along;
The present scene, the future lot,
His toils, his wants, were all forgot;
Cold diffidence, and age's frost,
In the full tide of song were lost.

Each blank, in faithless memory void,
The poet's glowing thought supplied;
And, while his harp responsive rung,
'Twas thus the LATEST MINSTREL sung.

100 1805

Endnotes

- Note 1: Scott's first metrical romance interweaves two stories and boasts more than a hundred pages of historical notes. One story is set in the 16th century and combines the Border legend of the goblin Gilpin Horner with a story of the magic spells cast by the dowager lady of Branksome, who hopes to use a long-hidden book of black arts to avenge the death of her husband at the hands of a neighboring clan. In the second story, which unfolds across the introductions and endings of the poem's six cantos, the 17th-century minstrel who tells or sings the story of this witch's plot (a lay is a song) emerges as hero. In his prose preface Scott described this minstrel, who has "survived the Revolution" of 1688, as a figure of historical transition. He has caught "somewhat of the refinement of modern poetry without losing the simplicity of his original model"—a hint that the relationship between this figure and his 17th-century listeners mirrors Scott's relationship with his 19th-century audience. But in addition to allying his authorship with his minstrel's improvised vocal performance, Scott associates himself with the power of the written word: the "wondrous book" that the Lady of Branksome seeks is buried inside the grave of a wizard suggestively named "Michael Scott."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William III, who in 1688 ascended to the British throne after Parliament coerced the last Stuart monarch, the Catholic James II, into fleeing to France.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Newark Castle, located in the Border district, at a bend of the river Yarrow.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The duchess, identified in Scott's footnote as Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch, was, in addition to being a descendant of the Lady of Branksome whose black magic will figure in the minstrel's story, the widow of the Duke of Monmouth. A bastard son of Charles II, Monmouth was executed in 1685 after his unsuccessful insurrection against his uncle James II.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In footnotes Scott identifies Earl Francis and Earl Walter as the father and grandfather of the duchess.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Having ascended to the throne of England in 1626, Charles I traveled to the palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh in 1633 to receive the crown of Scotland.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *saddle horse*Return to reference °
- °: *servants*Return to reference °
- °: *truth*Return to reference °
- °: *gray with age*Return to reference °

Proud Maisie[1]

Proud Maisie is in the wood
  Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
  Singing so rarely.

"Tell me, thou bonny bird,
  When shall I marry me?"—
"When six braw° gentlemen
  Kirkward shall carry ye."

"Who makes the bridal bed,
  Birdie, say truly?"—
"The gray-headed sexton
  That delves the grave duly.

"The glowworm o'er grave and stone
  Shall light thee steady,
The owl from the steeple sing,
  'Welcome, proud lady.' "

1818

Endnotes

- Note 1: The "fragment" of a song heard by the characters in *The Heart of Midlothian* who attend the insane gypsy Madge Wildfire on her deathbed (chap. 40).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *fine*Return to reference °

Wandering Willie's Tale

"Wandering Willie's Tale" forms part of *Redgauntlet* (1824), Scott's most formally inventive novel and the last of his major fictions set in the Border country. It is told by the blind fiddler Willie Steenson to a young gentleman of a romantic temperament, Darsie Latimer, who on a whim has joined him in his cross-country wandering and who subsequently writes down Willie's tale and sends it off in a letter to a friend in Edinburgh. (*Redgauntlet* begins, though after its first third does not continue, as a novel in letters, the eighteenth-century form that Scott revived for this book he called his "Tale of the Eighteenth Century.") Like most of Scott's fiction, then, "Wandering Willie's Tale" juxtaposes oral storytelling against written records, while also moving among several time frames: 1765, when Willie recounts to Darsie the tale he heard from his grandfather, the piper Steenie Steenson; the year—sometime in the early 1690s—when the events Steenie experienced occurred; and also the four decades before 1690, in which the central figure in the story, Sir Robert Redgauntlet, committed the wicked deeds for which, in the course of the tale, he will pay at last. The story likewise mixes fiction and history: Steenie's journey to the underworld, where he pursues the fictional Redgauntlet and thereby recovers a lost piece of his own past, gives Scott a device for making his reader acquainted with some central figures of seventeenth-century Scottish history.

We follow the text of the "Magnum Opus" edition of his works, which Scott prepared in 1832 and in which he officially acknowledged authorship of his novels; we omit, however, the long historical notes he added to that edition.

Scott's simulation of Willie's Scots dialect becomes easier to understand when one hears rather than reads it, so reading the tale aloud is advised.

From Redgauntlet

Wandering Willie's Tale

Ye maun[1] have heard of Sir Robert Redgauntlet of that Ilk, who lived in these parts before the dear years.[2] The country will lang mind him; and our fathers used to draw breath thick if ever they heard him named. He was out wi' the Hielandmen in Montrose's time; and again he was in the hills wi' Glencairn in the saxteen hundred and fifty-twa; and sae when King Charles the Second came in, wha was in sic[3] favour as the Laird of Redgauntlet?[4] He was knighted at Lonon court, wi' the King's ain sword; and being a redhot prelatist, he came down here, rampauging like a lion, with commissions of lieutenancy (and of lunacy, for what I ken[5]), to put down a' the Whigs and Covenanters in the country. Wild wark they made of it, for the Whigs were as dour as the Cavaliers were fierce, and it was which should first tire the other. Redgauntlet was aye[6] for the strong hand; and his name is kend as wide in the country as Claverhouse's or Tarn Dalyell's.[7] Glen, nor dargle,[8] nor mountain, nor cave, could hide the puir hill-folk when Redgauntlet was out with bugle and bloodhound after them, as if they had been sae mony deer. And troth when they fand them, they didna mak muckle[9] mair ceremony than a Hielandman wi' a roebuck—It was just, "Will ye tak the test?"—if not, "Make ready—present—fire!"—and there lay the recusant.[1]

Far and wide was Sir Robert hated and feared. Men thought he had a direct compact with Satan—that he was proof against steel—and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hailstanes from a hearth—that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra-gawns[2]—and muckle to the same purpose, of whilk mair anon. The best blessing they wared[3] on him was, "Deil scowp wi' Redgauntlet!"[4] He wasna a bad maister to his ain folk though, and

was weel aneugh liked by his tenants; and as for the lackies and troopers that raid out wi' him to the persecutions, as the Whigs caa'd those killing times, they wad hae drunken themsells blind to his health at ony time.

Now you are to ken that my gudesire[5] lived on Redgauntlet's grund—they ca' the place Primrose-Knowe. We had lived on the grund, and under the Redgauntlets, since the riding days,[6] and lang before. It was a pleasant bit; and I think the air is callerer[7] and fresher there than ony where else in the country. It's a' deserted now; and I sat on the broken door-cheek three days since, and was glad I couldna see the plight the place was in; but that's a' wide o' the mark.[8] There dwelt my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, a rambling, rattling chiel[9] he had been in his young days, and could play weel on the pipes; he was famous at "Hoopers and Girders"—a' Cumberland couldna touch him at "Jockie Lattin"—and he had the finest finger for the back-lill[1] between Berwick and Carlisle. The like o' Steenie wasna the sort that they made Whigs o'. And so he became a Tory, as they ca' it, which we now ca' Jacobites,[2] just out of a kind of needcessity, that he might belang to some side or other. He had nae ill-will to the Whig bodies, and liked little to see the blude rin, though, being obliged to follow Sir Robert in hunting and hosting, watching and warding,[3] he saw muckle mischief, and maybe did some, that he couldna avoid.

Now Steenie was a kind of favourite with his master, and kend a' the folks about the castle, and was often sent for to play the pipes when they were at their merriment. Auld Dougal MacCallum, the butler, that had followed Sir Robert through gude and ill, thick and thin, pool and stream, was specially fond of the pipes, and aye gae[4] my gudesire his gude word wi' the Laird; for Dougal could turn his master round his finger.

Weel, round came the Revolution,[5] and it had like to have broken the hearts baith of Dougal and his master. But the change was not a'thegether sae great as they feared, and other folk thought for. The Whigs made an unco crawing[6] what they wad do with their auld

enemies, and in special wi' Sir Robert Redgauntlet. But there were ower many great folks dipped in the same doings, to mak a spick and span new warld. So parliament passed it a' ower easy; and Sir Robert, bating[7] that he was held to hunting foxes instead of Covenanters, remained just the man he was. He revel was as loud, and his hall as weel lighted, as ever it had been, though maybe he lacked the fines of the nonconformists, that used to come to stock his larder and cellar; for it is certain he began to be keener about the rents than his tenants used to find him before, and they behoved to be[8] prompt to the rent-day, or else the Laird wasna pleased. And he was sic an awsome body, that naebody cared to anger him; for the oaths he swore, and the rage that he used to get into, and the looks that he put on, made men sometimes think him a devil incarnate.

Weel, my gudesire was nae manager—no that he was a very great misguider—but he hadna the saving gift, and he got twa terms' rent in arrear. He got the first brash at Whitsunday put ower wi' fair word and piping; but when Martinmas came, there was a summons from the grund-officer to come wi' the rent on a day preceese, or else Steenie behoved to flit.[9] Sair wark[1] he had to get the siller; but he was weel-freended, and at last he got the haill[2] scraped thegither—a thousand merks—the maist of it was from a neighbour they caa'd Laurie Lapraik—a sly tod.[3] Laurie had walth o' gear[4]—could hunt wi' the hound and rin wi' the hare—and be Whig or Tory, saunt or sinner, as the wind stood. He was a professor in this Revolution warld, but he liked an orra sough of this warld;[5] and a tune on the pipes weel aneugh at a bytime, and abune a',[6] he thought he had gude security for the siller he lent my gudesire ower the stocking at Primrose-Knowe.[7]

Away trots my gudesire to Redgauntlet Castle, wi' a heavy purse and a light heart, glad to be out of the Laird's danger. Weel, the first thing he learned at the Castle was, that Sir Robert had fretted himself into a fit of the gout, because he did not appear before twelve o'clock. It wasna a'thegether for sake of the money, Dougal

thought; but because he didna like to part wi' my gudesire aff the grund. Dougal was glad to see Steenie, and brought him into the great oak parlour, and there sat the Laird his leesome lane, excepting that he had beside him a great, ill-favoured jackanape,[8] that was a special pet of his; a cankered beast it was, and mony an ill-natured trick it played—ill to please it was, and easily angered—ran about the haill castle, chattering and yowling, and pinching and biting folk, especially before ill weather, or disturbances in the state. Sir Robert caa'd it Major Weir, after the warlock that was burnt;[9] and few folk liked either the name or the conditions of the creature—they thought there was something in it by ordinar—and my gudesire was not just easy in his mind when the door shut on him, and he saw himself in the room wi' naebody but the Laird, Dougal MacCallum, and the Major, a thing that hadna chanced to him before.

Sir Robert sat, or, I should say, lay, in a great armed chair, wi' his grand velvet gown, and his feet on a cradle; for he had baith gout and gravel, and his face looked as gash and ghastly as Satan's. Major Weir sat opposite to him, in a red laced coat, and the Laird's wig[1] on his head; and aye as Sir Robert girned[2] wi' pain, the jackanape girned too, like a sheep's-head between a pair of tangs—an ill-faured,[3] fearsome couple they were. The Laird's buff-coat was hung on a pin behind him, and his broadsword and his pistols within reach; for he keepit up the auld fashion of having the weapons ready, and a horse saddled day and night, just as he used to do when he was able to loup on horseback, and away after ony of the hill-folk he could get speerings[4] of. Some said it was for fear of the Whigs taking vengeance, but I judge it was just his auld custom—he wasna gien to fear ony thing. The rental-book, wi' its black cover and brass clasps, was lying beside him; and a book of sculduddry sangs[5] was put betwixt the leaves, to keep it open at the place where it bore evidence against the Goodman of Primrose-Knowe, as behind the hand with his mails and duties.[6] Sir Robert gave my gudesire a look, as if he would have withered his heart in his bosom. Ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows, that men saw the

visible mark of a horse-shoe in his forehead, deep-dinted, as if it had been stamped there.

"Are ye come light-handed, ye son of a toom whistle?" said Sir Robert. "Zounds! if you are"—

My gudesire, with as gude a countenance as he could put on, made a leg,[7] and placed the bag of money on the table wi' a dash, like a man that does something clever. The Laird drew it to him hastily—"Is it all here, Steenie, man?"

"Your honour will find it right," said my gudesire.

"Here, Dougal," said the Laird, "gie Steenie a tass[8] of brandy down stairs, till I count the siller and write the receipt."

But they werena weel out of the room, when Sir Robert gied a yelloch that garr'd[9] the Castle rock! Back ran Dougal—in flew the livery-men—yell on yell gied the Laird, ilk ane mair awfu' than the ither. My gudesire knew not whether to stand or flee, but he ventured back into the parlour, where a' was gaun hirdy-girdie—naebody to say "come in," or "gae out." Terribly the Laird roared for cauld water to his feet, and wine to cool his throat; and hell, hell, hell, and its flames, was aye the word in his mouth. They brought him water, and when they plunged his swoln feet into the tub, he cried out it was burning; and folk say that it *did* bubble and sparkle like a seething cauldron. He flung the cup at Dougal's head, and said he had given him blood instead of burgundy; and, sure aneugh, the lass washed clotted blood aff the carpet the neist day. The jackanape they caa'd Major Weir, it jibbered and cried as if it was mocking its master; my gudesire's head was like to turn—he forgot baith siller and receipt, and down stairs he banged; but as he ran, the shrieks came faint and fainter; there was a deep-drawn shivering groan, and word gaed through the Castle, that the Laird was dead.

Weel, away came my gudesire, wi' his finger in his mouth, and his best hope was, that Dougal had seen the money-bag, and heard the Laird speak of writing the receipt. The young Laird, now Sir John, came from Edinburgh, to see things put to rights. Sir John and his father never gree'd weel. Sir John had been bred an advocate, and afterwards sat in the last Scots Parliament and voted for the

Union, having gotten, it was thought, a rug of the compensations[1]—if his father could have come out of his grave, he would have brained him for it on his awn hearthstane. Some thought it was easier counting with the auld rough Knight than the fair-spoken young ane—but mair of that anon.

Dougal MacCallum, poor body, neither grat[2] nor graned, but gaed about the house looking like a corpse, but directing, as was his duty, a' the order of the grand funeral. Now, Dougal looked aye waur and waur[3] when night was coming, and was aye the last to gang to his bed, whilk was in a little round just opposite the chamber of dais,[4] whilk his master occupied while he was living, and where he now lay in state, as they caa'd it, weel-a-day! The night before the funeral, Dougal could keep his awn counsel[5] nae langer; he came doun with his proud spirit, and fairly asked auld Hutcheon to sit in his room with him for an hour. When they were in the round, Dougal took ae tass of brandy to himsell, and gave another to Hutcheon, and wished him all health and lang life, and said that, for himsell, he wasna lang for this world; for that, every night since Sir Robert's death, his silver call had sounded from the state chamber, just as it used to do at nights in his lifetime, to call Dougal to help to turn him in his bed. Dougal said, that being alone with the dead on that floor of the tower (for naebody cared to wake Sir Robert Redgauntlet like another corpse), he had never daured to answer the call, but that now his conscience checked him for neglecting his duty; for, "though death breaks service," said MacCallum, "it shall never break my service to Sir Robert; and I will answer his next whistle, so be you will stand by me, Hutcheon."

Hutcheon had nae will to the wark, but he had stood by Dougal in battle and broil, and he wad not fail him at this pinch; so down the carles[6] sat ower a stoup[7] of brandy, and Hutcheon, who was something of a clerk, would have read a chapter of the Bible; but Dougal would hear naething but a blaud[8] of Davie Lindsay, whilk was the waur preparation.

When midnight came, and the house was quiet as the grave, sure aneugh the silver whistle sounded as sharp and shrill as if Sir Robert was blowing it, and up gat the twa auld serving-men, and tottered into the room where the dead man lay. Hutcheon saw aneugh at the first glance; for there were torches in the room, which showed him the foul fiend in his ain shape, sitting on the Laird's coffin! Over he cowped[9] as if he had been dead. He could not tell how lang he lay in a trance at the door, but when he gathered himself, he cried on his neighbour, and getting nae answer, raised the house, when Dougal was found lying dead within twa steps of the bed where his master's coffin was placed. As for the whistle, it was gaen anes and aye;[1] but mony a time was it heard at the top of the house on the bartizan,[2] and amang the auld chimneys and turrets, where the howlets have their nests. Sir John hushed the matter up, and the funeral passed over without mair bogle-wark.[3]

But when a' was ower, and the Laird was beginning to settle his affairs, every tenant was called up for his arrears, and my gudesire for the full sum that stood against him in the rental-book. Weel, away he trots to the Castle, to tell his story, and there he is introduced to Sir John, sitting in his father's chair, in deep mourning, with weepers and hanging cravat,[4] and a small walking rapier by his side, instead of the auld broadsword that had a hundredweight of steel about it, what with blade, chape, and basket-hilt. I have heard their communing so often tauld ower, that I almost think I was there mysell, though I couldna be born at the time. . . .

"I wuss ye joy, sir, of the head seat, and the white loaf, and the braid lairdship.[5] Your father was a kind man to friends and followers; muckle grace to you, Sir John, to fill his shoon—his boots, I suld say, for he seldom wore shoon, unless it were muils[6] when he had the gout."

"Ay, Steenie," quoth the Laird, sighing deeply, and putting his napkin to his een, "his was a sudden call, and he will be missed in the country; no time to set his house in order—weel prepared Godward, no doubt, which is the root of the matter—but left us

behind a tangled hesp to wind,[7] Steenie.—Hem! hem! We maun go to business, Steenie; much to do, and little time to do it in."

Here he opened the fatal volume. I have heard of a thing they call Doomsday-book[8]—I am clear it has been a rental of back-ganging[9] tenants.

"Stephen," said Sir John, still in the same soft, sleekit tone of a voice—"Stephen Stevenson, or Steenson, ye are down here for a year's rent behind the hand—due at last term."

Stephen. "Please your honour, Sir John, I paid it to your father."

Sir John. "Ye took a receipt then, doubtless, Stephen; and can produce it?"

Stephen. "Indeed I hadna time, an it like your honour; for nae sooner had I set doun the siller, and just as his honour Sir Robert, that's gaen, drew it till him to count it, and write out the receipt, he was ta'en wi' the pains that removed him."

"That was unlucky," said Sir John, after a pause. "But ye maybe paid it in the presence of somebody. I want but a *talis qualis*[1] evidence, Stephen. I would go ower strictly to work with no poor man."

Stephen. "Troth, Sir John, there was naebody in the room but Dougal MacCallum, the butler. But, as your honour kens, he has e'en followed his auld master."

"Very unlucky again, Stephen," said Sir John, without altering his voice a single note. "The man to whom ye paid the money is dead—and the man who witnessed your payment is dead too—and the siller, which should have been to the fore, is neither seen nor heard tell of in the repositories. How am I to believe a' this?"

Stephen. "I dinna ken, your honour; but there is a bit memorandum note of the very coins; for, God help me! I had to borrow out of twenty purses; and I am sure that ilka[2] men there set down will take his grit oath for what purpose I borrowed the money."

Sir John. "I have little doubt that ye *borrowed* the money, Steenie. It is the *payment* to my father that I want to have some proof of."

Stephen. "The siller maun be about the house, Sir John. And since your honour never got it, and his honour that was canna have ta'en it wi' him, maybe some of the family may have seen it."

Sir John. "We will examine the servants, Stephen; that is but reasonable."

But lackey and lass, and page and groom, all denied stoutly that they had ever seen such a bag of money as my gudesire described. What was waur, he had unluckily not mentioned to any living soul of them his purpose of paying his rent. Ae quean[3] had noticed something under his arm, but she took it for the pipes.

Sir John Redgauntlet ordered the servants out of the room, and then said to my gudesire, "Now, Steenie, ye see you have fair play; and, as I have little doubt ye ken better where to find the siller than ony other body, I beg, in fair terms, and for your own sake, that you will end this fasherie;[4] for, Stephen, ye maun pay or flit."

"The Lord forgie your opinion," said Stephen, driven almost to his wit's end—"I am an honest man."

"So am I, Stephen," said his honour; "and so are all the folks in the house, I hope. But if there be a knave amongst us, it must be he that tells the story he cannot prove." He paused, and then added, mair sternly, "If I understand your trick, sir, you want to take advantage of some malicious reports concerning things in this family, and particularly respecting my father's sudden death, thereby to cheat me out of the money, and perhaps take away my character, by insinuating that I have received the rent I am demanding.—Where do you suppose this money to be?—I insist upon knowing."

My gudesire saw every thing look sae muckle against him that he grew nearly desperate—however, he shifted from one foot to another, looked to every corner of the room, and made no answer.

"Speak out, sirrah," said the Laird, assuming a look of his father's, a very particular ane, which he had when he was angry—it seemed as if the wrinkles of his frown made that selfsame fearful shape of a horse's shoe in the middle of his brow;—"Speak out, sir! I *will* know your thoughts;—do you suppose that I have this money?"

"Far be it frae me to say so," said Stephen.

"Do you charge any of my people with having taken it?"

"I wad be laith to charge them that may be innocent," said my gudesire; "and if there be any one that is guilty, I have nae proof."

"Somewhere the money must be, if there is a word of truth in your story," said Sir John; "I ask where you think it is—and demand a correct answer?"

"In hell, if you *will* have my thoughts of it," said my gudesire, driven to extremity,—"in hell! with your father, his jackanape, and his silver whistle."

Down the stairs he ran (for the parlour was nae place for him after such a word), and he heard the Laird swearing blood and wounds behind him, as fast as ever did Sir Robert, and roaring for the bailie and the baron-officer.

Away rode my gudesire to his chief creditor (him they caa'd Laurie Lapraik), to try if he could make ony thing out of him; but when he tauld his story, he got but the warst word in his wame[5]—thief, beggar, and dyvour,[6] were the saftest terms; and to the boot of these hard terms, Laurie brought up the auld story of his dipping his hand in the blood of God's saunts, just as if a tenant could have helped riding with the Laird, and that a laird like Sir Robert Red-gauntlet. My gudesire was, by this time, far beyond the bounds of patience, and while he and Laurie were at deil speed the liars, he was wanchancie[7] aneugh to abuse Lapraik's doctrine as weel as the man, and said things that garr'd folk's flesh grue[8] that heard them;—he wasna just himsell, and he had lived wi' a wild set in his day.

At last they parted, and my gudesire was to ride hame through the wood of Pitmurkie, that is a' fou of black firs, as they say.—I ken the wood, but the firs may be black or white for what I can tell.—At the entry of the wood there is a wild common, and on the edge of the common, a little lonely change-house, that was keepit then by an ostler-wife, they suld hae caa'd her Tibbie Faw,[9] and there puir Steenie cried for a mutchkin of brandy, for he had had no refreshment the haill day. Tibbie was earnest wi' him to take a bite of meat, but he couldna think o't, nor would he take his foot out of

the stirrup, and took off the brandy wholely at twa draughts, and named a toast at each:—the first was, the memory of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, and might he never lie quiet in his grave till he had righted his poor bond-tenant; and the second was, a health to Man's Enemy, if he would but get him back the pock of siller, or tell him what came o't, for he saw the haill world was like to regard him as a thief and a cheat, and he took that waur than even the ruin of his house and hauld.[1]

On he rode, little caring where. It was a dark night turned, and the trees made it yet darker, and he let the beast take its ain road through the wood; when, all of a sudden, from tired and wearied that it was before, the nag began to spring, and flee, and stend, that my gudesire could hardly keep the saddle—Upon the whilk, a horseman, suddenly riding up beside him, said, "That's a mettle beast of yours, freend; will you sell him?"—So saying, he touched the horse's neck with his riding-wand, and it fell into its auld heigh-ho of a stumbling trot. "But his spunk's soon out of him, I think," continued the stranger, "and that is like mony a man's courage, that thinks he wad do great things till he came to the proof."

My gudesire scarce listened to this, but spurred his horse, with "Gude e'en to you, freend."

But it's like the stranger was ane that doesna lightly yield his point; for, ride as Steenie liked, he was aye beside him at the selfsame pace. At last my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, grew half angry; and, to say the truth, half feared.

"What is it that ye want with me, freend?" he said. "If ye be a robber, I have nae money; if ye be a leal[2] man, wanting company, I have nae heart to mirth or speaking; and if ye want to ken the road, I scarce ken it mysell."

"If you will tell me your grief," said the stranger, "I am one that, though I have been sair miscaa'd[3] in the world, am the only hand for helping my freends."

So my gudesire, to ease his ain heart, mair than from any hope of help, told him the story from beginning to end.

"It's a hard pinch," said the stranger; "but I think I can help you."

"If you could lend me the money, sir, and take a lang day[4]—I ken nae other help on earth," said my gudesire.

"But there may be some under the earth," said the stranger. "Come, I'll be frank wi' you; I could lend you the money on bond, but you would maybe scruple my terms. Now, I can tell you, that your auld Laird is disturbed in his grave by your curses, and the wailing of your family, and if ye daur venture to go to see him, he will give you the receipt."

My gudesire's hair stood on end at this proposal, but he thought his companion might be some humorsome chield that was trying to frighten him, and might end with lending him the money. Besides he was bauld wi' brandy, and desperate wi' distress; and he said, he had courage to go to the gate of hell, and a step farther, for that receipt.—The stranger laughed.

Weel, they rode on through the thickest of the wood, when, all of a sudden, the horse stopped at the door of a great house; and, but that he knew the place was ten miles off, my father would have thought he was at Redgauntlet Castle. They rode into the outer court-yard, through the muckle faulding yetts,[5] and aneath the auld portcullis; and the whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray[6] within as used to be in Sir Robert's House at Pace and Yule,[7] and such high seasons. They lap off, and my gudesire, as seemed to him, fastened his horse to the very ring he had tied him to that morning, when he gaed to wait on the young Sir John.

"God!" said my gudesire, "if Sir Robert's death be but a dream!"

He knocked at the ha' door just as he was wont, and his auld acquaintance, Dougal MacCallum,—just after his wont, too,—came to open the door, and said, "Piper Steenie, are ye there, lad? Sir Robert has been crying for you."

My gudesire was like a man in a dream—he looked for the stranger, but he was gane for the time. At last he just tried to say, "Ha! Dougal Driveower,[8] are ye living? I thought ye had been dead."

"Never fash[9] yoursell wi' me," said Dougal, "but look to yoursell; and see ye take naething frae onybody here, neither meat, drink, or siller, except just the receipt that is your ain."

So saying, he led the way out through halls and trances that were weel kend to my gudesire, and into the auld oak parlour; and there was as much singing of profane sangs, and birling[1] of red wine, and speaking blasphemy and sculduddry, as had ever been in Redgauntlet Castle when it was at the blithest.

But, Lord take us in keeping! what a set of ghastly revellers they were that sat round that table!—My gudesire kend mony that had long before gane to their place, for often had he piped to the most part in the hall of Redgauntlet. There was the fierce Middleton, and the dissolute Rothes, and the crafty Lauderdale; and Dalyell, with his bald head and a beard to his girdle; and Earlshall, with Cameron's blude on his hand; and wild Bonshaw, that tied blessed Mr Cargill's limbs till the blude sprung; and Dumbarton Douglas, the twice-turned traitor baith to country and king. There was the Bluidy Advocate MacKenyie, who, for his worldly wit and wisdom, had been to the rest as a god.[2] And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark, curled locks, streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made.[3] He sat apart from them all, and looked at them with a melancholy, haughty countenance; while the rest hallooed, and sung, and laughed, that the room rang. But their smiles were fearfully contorted from time to time; and their laughter passed into such wild sounds, as made my gudesire's very nails grow blue, and chilled the marrow in his banes.

They that waited at the table were just the wicked serving-men and troopers, that had done their work and cruel bidding on earth. There was the Lang Lad of Nethertown, that helped to take Argyle; and the Bishop's summoner, that they called the Deil's Rattle-bag; and the wicked guardsmen, in their laced coats; and the savage Highland Amorites,[4] that shed blood like water; and many a proud serving-man, haughty of heart and bloody of hand, cringing to the rich, and making them wickeder than they would be; grinding the

poor to powder, when the rich had broken them into fragments. And mony, mony mair were coming and ganging, a' as busy in their vocation as if they had been alive.

Sir Robert Redgauntlet, in the midst of a' this fearful riot, cried, wi' a voice like thunder, on Steenie Piper, to come to the board-head where he was sitting; his legs stretched out before him, and swathed up with flannel, with his holster pistols aside him, while the great broadsword rested against his chair, just as my gudesire had seen him the last time upon earth—the very cushion for the jackanape was close to him, but the creature itsell was not there—it wasna its hour, it's likely; for he heard them say as he came forward, "Is not the Major come yet?" And another answered, "The jackanape will be here betimes the morn." And when my gudesire came forward, Sir Robert, or his ghaist, or the deevil in his likeness, said, "Weel, piper, hae ye settled wi' my son for the year's rent?"

With much ado my father gat breath to say, that Sir John would not settle without his honour's receipt.

"Ye shall hae that for a tune of the pipes, Steenie," said the appearance of Sir Robert—"Play us up, 'Weel hoddled, Luckie.' "

Now this was a tune my gudesire learned frae a warlock, that heard it when they were worshipping Satan at their meetings; and my gudesire had sometimes played it at the ranting[5] suppers in Redgauntlet Castle, but never very willingly; and now he grew cauld at the very name of it, and said, for excuse, he hadna his pipes wi' him.

"MacCallum, ye limb of Beelzebub," said the fearfu' Sir Robert, "bring Steenie the pipes that I am keeping for him."

MacCallum brought a pair of pipes might have served the piper of Donald of the Isles.[6] But he gave my gudesire a nudge as he offered them; and looking secretly and closely, Steenie saw that the chanter[7] was of steel, and heated to a white heat; so he had fair warning not to trust his fingers with it. So he excused himself again, and said, he was faint and frightened, and had not wind aneugh to fill the bag.

"Then ye maun eat and drink, Steenie," said the figure; "for we do little else here; and it's ill speaking between a fou man and a fasting."[8]

Now these were the very words that the bloody Earl of Douglas said to keep the King's messenger in hand, while he cut the head off MacLellan of Bombie, at the Threave Castle;[9] and that put Steenie mair and mair on his guard. So he spoke up like a man, and said he came neither to eat, or drink, or make minstrelsy; but simply for his ain—to ken what was come o' the money he had paid, and to get a discharge for it; and he was so stout-hearted by this time, that he charged Sir Robert for conscience-sake—(he had no power to say the holy name)—and as he hoped for peace and rest, to spread no snares for him, but just to give him his ain.

The appearance gnashed its teeth and laughed, but it took from a large pocketbook the receipt, and handed it to Steenie. "There is your receipt, ye pitiful cur; and for the money, my dog-whelp of a son may go look for it in the Cat's Cradle."

My gudesire uttered mony thanks, and was about to retire, when Sir Robert roared aloud, "Stop though, thou sack-doudling son of a whore! I am not done with thee. HERE we do nothing for nothing; and you must return on this very day twelvemonth, to pay your master the homage that you owe me for my protection."

My father's tongue was loosed of a suddenty, and he said aloud, "I refer mysell to God's pleasure, and not to yours."

He had no sooner uttered the word than all was dark around him; and he sunk on the earth with such a sudden shock, that he lost both breath and sense.

How lang Steenie lay there, he could not tell; but when he came to himsell, he was lying in the auld kirkyard of Redgauntlet parochine,[1] just at the door of the family aisle, and the scutcheon[2] of the auld knight, Sir Robert, hanging over his head. There was a deep morning fog on the grass and gravestane around him, and his horse was feeding quietly beside the minister's twa cows. Steenie would have thought the whole was a dream, but he had the receipt in his hand, fairly written and signed by the auld Laird; only the last

letters of his name were a little disorderly, written like one seized with sudden pain.

Sorely troubled in his mind, he left that dreary place, rode through the mist to Redgauntlet Castle, and with much ado he got speech of the Laird.

"Well, you dyvour bankrupt," was the first word, "have you brought me my rent?"

"No," answered my gudesire, "I have not; but I have brought your honour Sir Robert's receipt for it."

"How, sirrah?—Sir Robert's receipt!—You told me he had not given you one."

"Will your honour please to see if that bit line is right?"

Sir John looked at every line, and at every letter, with much attention; and at last, at the date, which my gudesire had not observed,—"*From my appointed place,"* he read, *"this twenty-fifth of November.*—What!—That is yesterday!—Villain, thou must have gone to hell for this!"

"I got it from your honour's father—whether he be in heaven or hell, I know not," said Steenie.

"I will delate[3] you for a warlock to the Privy Council!" said Sir John. "I will send you to your master, the devil, with the help of a tar-barrel and a torch!"

"I intend to delate mysell to the Presbytery,"[4] said Steenie, "and tell them all I have seen last night, whilk are things fitter for them to judge of than a borrel[5] man like me."

Sir John paused, composed himsell, and desired to hear the full history; and my gudesire told it from point to point, as I have told it you—word for word, neither more nor less.

Sir John was silent again for a long time, and at last he said, very composedly, "Steenie, this story of yours concerns the honour of many a noble family besides mine; and if it be a leasing-making,[6] to keep yourself out of my danger, the least you can expect is to have a redhot iron driven through your tongue, and that will be as bad as scauding your fingers with a redhot chanter. But yet it may be true,

Steenie; and if the money cast up, I shall not know what to think of it.—But where shall we find the Cat's Cradle? There are cats enough about the old house, but I think they kitten without the ceremony of bed or cradle."

"We were best ask Hutcheon," said my gudesire; "he kens a' the odd corners about as weel as—another serving-man that is now gane, and that I wad not like to name."

Aweel, Hutcheon, when he was asked, told them, that a ruinous turret, lang disused, next to the clock-house, only accessible by a ladder, for the opening was on the outside, and far above the battlements, was called of old the Cat's Cradle.

"There will I go immediately," said Sir John; and he took (with what purpose, Heaven kens) one of his father's pistols from the hall-table, where they had lain since the night he died, and hastened to the battlements.

It was a dangerous place to climb, for the ladder was auld and frail, and wanted ane or twa rounds. However, up got Sir John, and entered at the turret door, where his body stopped the only little light that was in the bit turret. Something flees at him wi' a vengeance, maist dang him back ower—bang gaed the knight's pistol, and Hutcheon, that held the ladder, and my gudesire that stood beside him, hears a loud skelloch.[7] A minute after, Sir John flings the body of the jackanape down to them, and cries that the siller is fund, and that they should come up and help him. And there was the bag of siller sure aneugh, and mony orra things besides, that had been missing for mony a day. And Sir John, when he had riped[8] the turret weel, led my gudesire into the dining-parlour, and took him by the hand, and spoke kindly to him, and said he was sorry he should have doubted his word, and that he would hereafter be a good master to him, to make amends.

"And now, Steenie," said Sir John, "although this vision of yours tends, on the whole, to my father's credit, as an honest man, that he should, even after his death, desire to see justice done to a poor man like you, yet you are sensible that ill-dispositioned men might make bad constructions on it, concerning his soul's health. So, I

think, we had better lay the haill dirdum[9] on that ill-deedie creature, Major Weir, and say naething about your dream in the wood of Pitmurkie. You had taken ower muckle brandy to be very certain about ony thing; and, Steenie, this receipt," (his hand shook while he held it out,)—"it's but a queer kind of document, and we will do best, I think, to put it quietly in the fire."

"Od, but for as queer as it is, it's a' the voucher I have for my rent," said my gudesire, who was afraid, it may be, of losing the benefit of Sir Robert's discharge.

"I will bear the contents to your credit in the rental-book, and give you a discharge under my own hand," said Sir John, "and that on the spot. And, Steenie, if you can hold your tongue about this matter, you shall sit, from this term downward, at an easier rent."

"Mony thanks to your honour," said Steenie, who saw easily in what corner the wind was; "doubtless I will be conformable to all your honour's commands; only I would willingly speak wi' some powerful minister on the subject, for I do not like the sort of soumons of appointment whilk your honour's father"—

"Do not call that phantom my father!" said Sir John, interrupting him.

"Weel, then, the thing that was so like him,"—said my gudesire; "he spoke of my coming back to him this time twelvemonth, and it's a weight on my conscience."

"Aweel, then," said Sir John, "if you be much distressed in mind, you may speak to our minister of the parish; he is a douce[1] man, regards the honour of our family, and the mair that he may look for some patronage from me."

Wi' that my gudesire readily agreed that the receipt should be burnt, and the Laird threw it into the chimney with his ain hand. Burn it would not for them, though; but away it flew up the lum,[2] wi' a lang train of sparks at its tail, and a hissing noise like a squib.[3]

My gudesire gaed down to the manse,[4] and the minister, when he had heard the story, said, it was his real opinion, that though my gudesire had gaen very far in tampering with such dangerous

matters, yet, as he had refused the devil's arles[5] (for such was the offer of meat and drink,) and had refused to do homage by piping at his bidding, he hoped, that if he held a circumspect walk hereafter, Satan could take little advantage by what was come and gane. And, indeed, my gudesire, of his ain accord, lang forswore baith the pipes and the brandy—it was not even till the year was out, and the fatal day passed, that he would so much as take the fiddle, or drink usquebaugh or tippeny.[6]

Sir John made up his story about the jackanape as he liked himsell; and some believe till this day there was no more in the matter than the filching nature of the brute. Indeed, ye'll no hinder some to threap,[7] that it was nane o' the Auld Enemy that Dougal and my gudesire saw in the Laird's room, but only that wanchancy creature, the Major, capering on the coffin; and that as to the blawing on the Laird's whistle that was heard after he was dead, the filthy brute could do that as weel as the Laird himsell, if no better. But Heaven kens the truth, whilk first came out by the minister's wife, after Sir John and her ain gudeman[8] were baith in the moulds.[9] And then, my gudesire, wha was failed in his limbs, but not in his judgment or memory—at least nothing to speak of—was obliged to tell the real narrative to his freends, for the credit of his good name. He might else have been charged for a warlock.

The shades of evening were growing thicker around us as my conductor finished his long narrative with this moral—"Ye see, birkie,[1] it is nae chancy thing to tak a stranger traveller for a guide, when ye are in an uncouth[2] land."

1824

Endnotes

- Note 1: Must.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Years of famine at the end of the 1690s. “Of that Ilk”: from the estate that bears the same name as the family. Willie’s story concerns Redgauntlet of Redgauntlet.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Such.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  This opening establishes Redgauntlet’s past as a “prelatist”—supporter of what was, for most of the 17th century, Scotland’s established, Episcopal Church—and a royalist. For four decades he was the foe of the Covenanters—Presbyterians, often members of Scotland’s middle and lower classes, who rejected episcopacy, the spiritual authority of the bishops, and supported “covenants” to preserve the purity of their worship. The conflict between the royalists and Covenanters began during the Civil Wars of the 1640s, when, on behalf of Charles I, the Earl of Montrose and his Highland army battled the Presbyterian insurgents—known as the
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Know.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Always.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Royalist aristocrats who led the persecutions of Covenanters in 1681–85. Folk legends held that both had diabolical powers, which Scott transfers to Redgauntlet in the following paragraph.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A word for river valley, perhaps of Scott’s coining.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Much.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: To take the Test is, according to the terms of the Test Act of 1681, to swear an oath recognizing the monarch’s supremacy as head of the Church, something a Presbyterian, who recognized Christ alone as head, could not do. Redgauntlet and followers used this legal device to hunt down “recusants,” that is, those who did not conform to the Episcopal Church.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Redgauntlet's supernaturally fleet-footed mare could turn a hare— get in front of it and change its course—while being ridden on Carrifragawns, a steep slope.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bestowed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "Devil take Redgauntlet!"Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Grandfather.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Period of Border warfare in the 16th century.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Cooler.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Beside the point.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lad.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Thumbhole in the melody pipe of a bagpipe. The border between Scotland and England extends between Carlisle—chief city of the northern English county of Cumberland (now known as Cumbria) on the west coast and Berwick on the east.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Tory Party in Scotland included most supporters of the Episcopal Church and, after 1688, the Jacobites—supporters of the exiled James Stuart and his heirs.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Guarding.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Gave.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Revolution of 1688, which expelled the Stuart dynasty from the British throne, and in Scotland reestablished Presbyterianism, ending the persecutions of the Covenanters. Jacobites continued to resist the Revolutionary Settlement until their last uprising in 1745.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Extraordinary crowing; that is, much noise.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Except.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Were obliged to be.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: To move house. Rents were due on "quarter days": Candlemas (February 2), Whitsunday (May 15), Lammas (August 1), and Martinmas (November 11).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Difficult work.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Whole.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Fox.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Lots of property.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, in this post-Revolutionary world puritanical Laurie adheres to ("professes") his religion but still likes an occasional ("orra") worldly song ("sough").Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Above all.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, the security for the loan of the rent money is "the stocking"—cattle, farm implements, etc.—of Steenie's farm.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Monkey.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Major Weir, a historical figure who fought in the Covenanter cause in youth and in old age confessed to crimes that included wizardry, for which he was executed in 1670.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Gentlemen in the late 17th and the 18th centuries were in the custom of wearing wigs in public.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Grimaced.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ugly.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: News.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Obscene songs.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Rents.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, he bowed.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Cup.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Made.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Sir John is eventually to hold a seat in the Scots Parliament that will make history in 1707 by passing the Act of Union that joins the kingdoms of England and Scotland and by this means voting itself out of existence. Like many of his peers, Sir John will take a cut ("rug") of the "compensations" offered the parliamentarians as a bribe.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wept.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Always looked worse and worse.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Best bedroom.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Keep quiet.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fellows.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Cup.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A selection: Lindsay was a 16th-century satirical poet.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Tilted.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Once and always—that is, forever.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Parapet atop a castle.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ghostly occurrences.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Mourning dress included hat bands of white linen ("weepers") and a "hanging cravat" instead of the usual shirt frills.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A ceremonious speech wishing Sir John well in his new position as head of a great family: white bread ("white loaf") is mentioned as a delicacy only the rich could afford; a "braid lairdship" is a large estate.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Slippers.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, the deceased has left behind him a confused state of affairs that requires disentangling (winding). "Hesp": length of yarn.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The property survey of England ordered by William the Conqueror in 1086.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Behind in paying.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Of some kind (Latin); a legal term used for evidence that is acceptable only under special circumstances.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Every.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Young woman.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Annoyance.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Mind.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Good-for-nothing.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Unlucky.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Made people's flesh creep.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, "I am told she was called Tibbie Faw." "Ostler-wife": female keeper of a hostelry (inn).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Home.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Honest.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Much maligned.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Extend credit for a long time.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Great folding gates.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Disorderly revelry.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Easter and Christmas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Nickname for an idler.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Trouble.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Pouring.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Willie's list identifies a number of the royalist aristocrats who, while alive, took the lead in persecuting the Covenanters.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: John Graham of Claverhouse, another historical figure notorious for his ruthlessness during the killing years and the leader of the Highland army that fought for the cause of the exiled King James Stuart in 1689. He died in battle that year, and legend reported that it took a silver bullet to kill him.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The "Highland host" sent into southwest Scotland in 1678 to enforce a law that legalized the evictions of people who attended Presbyterian conventicles rather than parish churches. Covenanter hymns compared this army to the Amorites, who in the Old Testament are the enemies of the Israelites.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Merry.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A powerful chief of the Western Isles of Scotland.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Melody pipe of a bagpipe.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Proverb: a full man should not prevent a hungry man from eating.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In 1452 the Earl of Douglas beheaded his prisoner MacLellan while the king's messenger bearing orders for his release was detained at the table refreshing himself after his journey.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Churchyard of Redgauntlet parish.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Coat of arms.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Report.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Ecclesiastical court made up of ministers and elders from the local parishes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Simple.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Slander.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Screech.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Searched.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Blame.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Respectable.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Chimney flue.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Firecracker.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Minister's house.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Money given to bind the bargain when a servant is hired.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Whiskey and weak beer that was sold for two pence. See Burns's "Tam O'Shanter," lines 107–08; Steenie's adventure in some respects repeats Tam's.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Contend.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Husband.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Their graves.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Clever young man.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Strange.Return to reference 2

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE
1772–1834

In *The Prelude* Wordsworth, recording his gratitude to the mountains, lakes, and winds "that dwell among the hills where I was born," commiserates with Coleridge because "thou, my Friend! wert reared / In the great City, 'mid far other scenes." Samuel Taylor Coleridge had in fact been born in the small town of Ottery St. Mary, in rural Devonshire, but on the death of his father he had been sent to school at Christ's Hospital in London. He was a dreamy, enthusiastic, and extraordinarily precocious schoolboy. Charles Lamb, his schoolmate and lifelong friend, in an essay on Christ's Hospital gave a vivid sketch of Coleridge's loneliness, his learning, and his eloquence. When in 1791 Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge, he was an accomplished scholar; but he found little intellectual stimulation at the university, fell into idleness, dissoluteness, and debt, then in despair fled to London and enlisted in the Light Dragoons under the alias of Silas Tomkyn Comberbache —one of the most inept cavalrymen in the long history of the British army. Although rescued by his brothers and sent back to Cambridge, he left the university in 1794 without a degree.

In June 1794 Coleridge met Robert Southey, then a student at Oxford who, like himself, had poetic aspirations, was a radical in religion and politics, and sympathized with the republican experiment in France. Together the two young men planned to establish an ideal democratic community in America for which

Coleridge coined the name "Pantisocracy," signifying an equal rule by all. A plausible American real estate agent persuaded them that the ideal location would be on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Twelve men undertook to go; and because perpetuation of the scheme required offspring, hence wives, Coleridge dutifully became engaged to Sara Fricker, conveniently at hand as the sister of Southey's fiancée. The Pantisocracy scheme collapsed, but at Southey's insistence Coleridge went through with the marriage, "resolved," as he said, "but wretched." Later Coleridge's radicalism waned, and he became a conservative in politics—a highly philosophical one—and a staunch Anglican in religion.

In 1795 Coleridge met Wordsworth and at once judged him to be "the best poet of the age." When in 1797 Wordsworth brought his sister, Dorothy, to settle at Alfoxden, only three miles from the Coleridges at Nether Stowey, the period of intimate communication and poetic collaboration began that was the golden time of Coleridge's life. An annual allowance of £150, granted to Coleridge by Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood, sons of the founder of the famous pottery firm, came just in time to deflect him from assuming a post as a Unitarian minister. After their joint publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, Coleridge and the Wordsworths spent a winter in Germany, where Coleridge attended the University of Göttingen and began the lifelong study of German philosophers and critics—Kant, Schiller, Schelling, and Fichte—that helped alter profoundly his thinking about philosophy, religion, and aesthetics.

Back in England, Coleridge in 1800 followed the Wordsworths to the Lake District, settling at Greta Hall, Keswick. He had become gradually disaffected from his wife, and now he fell helplessly and hopelessly in love with Sara Hutchinson, whose sister, Mary, Wordsworth married in 1802. In accord with the medical prescription of that time, Coleridge had been taking laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol) to ease the painful physical ailments from which he had suffered from an early age. In 1800–01 heavy dosages during attacks of rheumatism made opium a necessity to him, and

Coleridge soon recognized that the drug was a greater evil than the diseases it did not cure. "Dejection: An Ode," published in 1802, was Coleridge's despairing farewell to health, happiness, and poetic creativity. A two-year sojourn on the Mediterranean island of Malta, intended to restore his health, instead completed his decline. When he returned to England in the late summer of 1806, he was a broken man, a drug addict, estranged from his wife, suffering from agonies of remorse, and subject to terrifying nightmares of guilt and despair from which his own shrieks awakened him. By 1810, when he and Wordsworth quarreled bitterly, it must have seemed that he could not fall any lower.

Under these conditions Coleridge's literary efforts, however sporadic and fragmentary, were little short of heroic. In 1808 he debuted as a speaker at one of the new lecturing institutions that sprang up in British cities in the early nineteenth century. His lectures on poetry, like his later series on Shakespeare, became part of the social calendar for fashionable Londoners—women, excluded still from universities, particularly. He wrote for newspapers and single-handedly undertook to write, publish, and distribute a periodical, *The Friend*, which lasted for some ten months beginning in June 1809. A tragedy, *Remorse*, had in 1813 a successful run of twenty performances at the Drury Lane theater. In 1816 he took up residence at Highgate, a northern suburb of London, under the supervision of the excellent and endlessly forbearing physician James Gillman, who managed to control, although not to eliminate, Coleridge's consumption of opium. The next three years were Coleridge's most sustained period of literary activity. While continuing to lecture and to write for the newspapers on a variety of subjects, he published *Biographia Literaria, Zapolya* (a drama), a book consisting of the essays in *The Friend* (revised and greatly enlarged), two collections of poems, and several important treatises on philosophical and religious subjects. In these treatises and those that followed over the next fifteen years, he emerged as the heir to the conservatism of Edmund Burke, an opponent to secularism and a defender of the Anglican Church, and an unapologetic intellectual

elitist with an ambitious account of the role elites might play in modern states, outlined in his discussions of national culture and of the "clerisy" who would take responsibility for preserving it.

The remaining years of his life, which he spent with Dr. and Mrs. Gillman, were quieter and happier than any he had known since the turn of the century. He came to a peaceful understanding with his wife and was reconciled with Wordsworth, with whom he toured the Rhineland in 1828. His rooms at Highgate became a center for friends, for the London literati, and for a steady stream of pilgrims from England and America. They came to hear one of the wonders of the age, the Sage of Highgate's conversation—or monologue—for even in his decline, Coleridge's talk never lost its almost hypnotic power. Mary Shelley appears to have been haunted by the memory of the evening when, a small child, she hid behind a sofa to listen to Coleridge, one of her father's visitors, recite *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and a stanza from that poem of dark mystery found its way into *Frankenstein*, just as her recollections of that visitor's voice contributed to her depictions of the irresistible hold her novel's storytellers have over their auditors. When he died, Coleridge left his friends with the sense that an incomparable intellect had vanished from the world.

Coleridge's friends, however, abetted by his own merciless self-judgments, set current the opinion, still common, that he was great in promise but not in performance. Even in his buoyant youth he described his own character as "indolence capable of energies"; and it is true that while his mind was incessantly active and fertile, he lacked application and staying power. He also manifested early in life a profound sense of guilt and a need for public expiation. After drug addiction sapped his strength and will, he often adapted (or simply adopted) passages from other writers, with little or no acknowledgment, and sometimes in a context that seems designed to reveal that he relies on sources that he does not credit. Whatever the tangled motives for his procedure, Coleridge has repeatedly been charged with gross plagiarism, from his day to ours. After *The Ancient Mariner*, most of the poems he completed were written, like

the first version of "Dejection: An Ode," in a spasm of intense effort. Writings that required sustained planning and application were either left unfinished or, like *Biographia Literaria*, made up of brilliant sections padded out with filler, sometimes lifted from other writers, in a desperate effort to meet a deadline. Many of his speculations Coleridge merely confided to his notebooks and the ears of his friends, incorporated in letters, and poured out in the margins of his own and other people's books.

Even so, it is only when measured against his own potentialities that Coleridge's achievements appear limited. In an 1838 essay the philosopher John Stuart Mill hailed the recently deceased Coleridge as one of "the two great seminal minds of England": according to Mill, Coleridge's conservatism had, along with the very different utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham (the other seminal mind identified in Mill's essay), revolutionized the political thought of the day. Coleridge was also one of the important and influential literary theorists of the nineteenth century. One of his major legacies is the notion that culture, the nation's artistic and spiritual heritage, represents a force with the power to combat the fragmentation of a modern, market-driven society and to restore a common, collective life. This was an idea that he worked out largely in opposition to Bentham's utilitarianism, the newly prestigious discipline of political economy, and the impoverished, soulless account of human nature that these systems of thought offered. And in *Biographia Literaria* and elsewhere, Coleridge raised the stakes for literary criticism, making it into a kind of writing that could address the most difficult and abstract questions—questions about, for instance, the relations between literary language and ordinary language, or between poetry and philosophy, or between perception and imagination. Above all, Coleridge's writings in verse—whether we consider the poetry of Gothic demonism in *Christabel* or the meditative conversation poems like "Frost at Midnight" or "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison"—are the achievements of a remarkably innovative poet.

The Eolian Harp[1]

Composed at Clevedon, Somersetshire

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our cot, our cot o'ergrown
With white flowered jasmin, and the broad-leaved
myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such should wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world so
hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant sea
Tells us of silence.

And that simplest lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding,° as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious° notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfins make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,[2]

Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
O the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance[3] every where—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

And thus, my love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eye-lids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,°
And tranquil muse upon tranquillity;
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject lute!

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of All?

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek daughter in the family of Christ!
Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
These shapings of the unregenerate[4] mind;
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling° spring.

For never guiltless may I speak of him,
The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
I praise him, and with Faith that inly feels;
Who with his saving mercies healed me,
A sinful and most miserable man,
Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
Peace, and this cot, and thee, heart-honored Maid!

1795 1796

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Named for Aeolus, god of the winds, the harp has strings stretched over a rectangular sounding box. When placed in an opened window, the harp (also called "Eolian lute," "Eolian lyre," "wind harp") responds to the altering wind by sequences of musical chords. This instrument, which seems to voice nature's own music, was a favorite household furnishing in the period and was repeatedly alluded to in Romantic poetry. It served also as one of the recurrent Romantic images for the mind—either the mind in poetic inspiration, as in the last stanzas of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" (p. 804, below), or else the mind in perception, responding to an intellectual breeze by trembling into consciousness, as in this poem, lines 44–48.

  Coleridge wrote this poem to Sara Fricker, whom he married on October 4, 1795, and took to a cottage (the "cot" of lines 3 and 64) at Clevedon, overlooking the Bristol Channel. He later several times expanded and altered the original version; the famous lines 26–29, for example, were not added until 1817. Originally it was titled "Effusion XXXV" and was one of thirty-six such effusions that Coleridge included in a 1796 volume of verse; revised and retitled, it became what he called a "conversation poem"—the designation used since his day for a sustained blank-verse lyric of description and meditation, in the mode of conversation addressed to a silent auditor. This was the

form that Coleridge perfected in “Frost at Midnight” and that Wordsworth adopted in “Tintern Abbey.”
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Brilliantly colored birds found in New Guinea and adjacent islands. The native practice of removing the legs when preparing the skin led Europeans to believe that the birds were footless and spent their lives hovering in the air and feeding on nectar.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An archaic term for enjoyment, coined in the 16th century by Spenser and reintroduced by Coleridge.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Spiritually unredeemed; not born again.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *scolding*Return to reference °
- °: *regularly following*Return to reference °
- °: *ocean*Return to reference °
- °: *ever babbling*Return to reference °

This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison

In the June of 1797, some long-expected Friends paid a visit to the author's cottage; and on the morning of their arrival, he met with an accident, which disabled him from walking during the whole time of their stay. One evening, when they had left him for a few hours, he composed the following lines in the garden-bower.[1]

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,
Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy[2] heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge;—that branchless ash,
Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fanned by the water-fall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.[3]

Now, my friends emerge

Beneath the wide wide Heaven—and view again
The many-steepled tract magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark,° perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two Isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hungered after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent,[4] winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity![5] Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue ocean! So my Friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence.

A delight
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,
This little lime-tree bower, have I not marked
Much that has soothed me. Pale beneath the blaze
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watched
Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see
The shadow of the leaf and stem above
Dappling its sunshine! And that walnut-tree
Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay
Full on the ancient ivy, which usurps

Those fronting elms, and now, with blackest mass
Makes their dark branches gleam a lighter hue
Through the late twilight: and though now the bat
Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters,
Yet still the solitary humble bee
Sings in the bean-flower! Henceforth I shall know
That Nature ne'er deserts the wise and pure;
No plot so narrow, be but Nature there,
No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! and sometimes
'Tis well to be bereft of promised good,
That we may lift the Soul, and contemplate
With lively joy the joys we cannot share.
My gentle-hearted Charles! when the last rook
Beat its straight path along the dusky air
Homewards, I blessed it! deeming its black wing
(Now a dim speck, now vanishing in light)
Had crossed the mighty orb's dilated glory,
While thou stood'st gazing; or when all was still,
Flew creeking o'er thy head, and had a charm
For thee, my gentle-hearted Charles, to whom
No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.

1797 1800

Endnotes

- Note 1: The time was in fact July 1797. The visiting friends were William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Charles Lamb. The accident was the fault of Mrs. Coleridge—"dear Sara," Coleridge wrote, "accidentally emptied a skillet of boiling milk on my foot." The bower consisted of lime (linden) trees in the garden of Thomas Poole, next door to Coleridge's cottage at Nether Stowey. Coleridge related these facts in a letter to Robert Southey, July 17, 1797, in which he transcribed the first version of this poem. In the earliest printed text the title is followed by

"Addressed to Charles Lamb, of the India-House, London."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: *Elastic*, I mean [*Coleridge's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare Dorothy Wordsworth's description of the "low damp dell" in her *Alfoxden Journal*, February 10, 1798 (p. 436, above).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Despite Coleridge's claim, Charles Lamb eminently preferred London over what he called "dead Nature."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Some ten months earlier Charles Lamb's sister, Mary, had stabbed their mother to death in a fit of insanity.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *boat*Return to reference °

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner[1]

IN SEVEN PARTS

> *Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibiles in rerum universitate. Sed horum* [sic] *omnium familiam quis nobis enarrabit, et gradus et cognationes et discrimina et singulorum munera? Quid agunt? quae loca habitant? Harum rerum notitiam semper ambivit ingenium humanum, nunquam attigit. Juvat, interea, non diffiteor, quandoque in animo, tanquam in tabulâ, majoris et melioris mundi imaginem contemplari: ne mens assuefacta hodiernae vitae minutiis se contrahat nimis, et tota subsidat in pusillas cogitationes. Sed veritati interea invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.*
>
> —T. BURNET, *Archaeol. Phil.* p. 68.[2]

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Coleridge describes the origin of this poem in the opening section of chap. 14 of *Biographia Literaria.* In a comment made to the Reverend Alexander Dyce in 1835 and in a note on "We Are Seven" dictated in 1843, Wordsworth added some details. The poem, based on a dream of Coleridge's friend Cruikshank, was originally planned as a collaboration between Coleridge an Wordsworth, to pay the expense of a walking tour they took with Dorothy Wordsworth in November 1797. Before he droppe out of the enterprise, Wordsworth suggested the shooting of th

albatross and the navigation of the ship by the dead men; he also contributed lines 13–16 and 226–27.
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: "I readily believe that there are more invisible than visible Natures in the universe. But who will explain for us the family of all these beings, and the ranks and relations and distinguishing features and functions of each? What do they do? What places do they inhabit? The human mind has always sought the knowledge of these things, but never attained it. Meanwhile I do not deny that it is helpful sometimes to contemplate in the mind, as on a tablet, the image of a greater and better world, lest the intellect, habituated to the petty things of daily life, narrow itself and sink wholly into trivial thoughts. But at the same time we must be watchful for the truth and keep a sense of proportion, so that we may distinguish the certain from the uncertain, day from night." Adapted by Coleridge from Thomas Burnet, *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* (1692).Return to reference 2

Part 1

It is an ancient Mariner
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"
Eftsoons[3] his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The wedding-guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.[4]

The wedding-guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk,[5] below the hill,
Below the light house top.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—"
The wedding-guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The wedding-guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"And now the storm-blast came, and he

Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye[6] we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken[7]—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound![8]

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,[9]
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

Endnotes

- Note 3: At once.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the Mariner has gained control of the will of the wedding guest by hypnosis or, as it was called in Coleridge's time, by "mesmerism."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Church.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Always.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Knew.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Swoon.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Rope supporting the mast.Return to reference 9

Part 2

The Sun now rose upon the right:[1]
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;[2]
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires[4] danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assured were
Of the spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Having rounded Cape Horn, the ship heads north into the Pacific.Return to reference 1
- Note 3: In 1817 Coleridge wrote of this line, "I had not been long on board a ship, before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself, the *Wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern." To better capture the Mariner's vision, he altered the line to "The furrow stream'd off free." Later editions reverted to the original words, as printed here.Return to reference 3
- Note 2: That is, the equator. Return to reference 2
- Note 4: Usually glossed as St. Elmo's fire—an atmospheric electricity on a ship's mast or rigging—believed by superstitious sailors to portend disaster. Possibly the reference is instead to phosphorescence resulting from the decomposition of organic matter in the sea (see line 123).Return to reference 4

Part 3

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.[5]

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,[6]
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy![7] they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;[8]
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?[9]

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk[1] alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.[2]

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.[3]

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

Endnotes

- Note 5: Knew.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A supernatural being that supervises the natural elements (but Coleridge may in fact have been using the term to mean water-spout).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Great thanks; from the French *grand-merci.*Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Benefit.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Filmy cobwebs floating in the air.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Large ship.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Ghost ship.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An omen of impending evil.Return to reference 3

Part 4

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—
Fear not, fear not, thou wedding-guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,

And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

Part 5

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly[4] buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,[5]
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;[6]
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,

To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses[8] came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning![9]

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,

From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not[1] to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

"Is it he?" quoth one, "Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow."

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, "The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."

Endnotes

- Note 4: Simple, homely.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shone. These fire-flags are probably St. Elmo's fire (see p. 478, n. 4), but Coleridge may be describing the Aurora Australis, or Southern Lights, and possibly also lightning.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A rushlike plant growing in wet soil.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Supernatural beings halfway between mortals and gods (the type of spirit that Coleridge describes in the gloss beside lines 131–34).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Corpses.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Warbling (Middle English).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, have not the knowledge.Return to reference 1

Part 6

FIRST VOICE

"But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?"

SECOND VOICE

"Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him."

FIRST VOICE

"But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?"

SECOND VOICE

"The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated."

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o’er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow

Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood![2]
A man all light, a seraph-man,[3]
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve[4] my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

Endnotes

- Note 2: Cross.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A shining celestial being, highest in the ranks of the angels.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Absolve.Return to reference 4

Part 7

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
"Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?"

"Strange, by my faith!" the Hermit said—
"And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod[5] is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young."

"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look"—
(The Pilot made reply)
"I am a-feared"—"Push on, push on!"
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
"Ha! ha!" quoth he, "full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row."

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

"O shrieve me, shrieve me,[6] holy man!"
The Hermit crossed his brow.[7]
"Say quick," quoth he, "I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?"

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself

Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.[8]

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:[9]
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

1797 1798, 1817

Endnotes

- Note 5: Clump of ivy.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Hear my confession and grant me absolution.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Made the sign of the cross on his forehead. Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Coleridge said in 1830, answering the objection of the poet Anna Barbauld that the poem "lacked a moral": "I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the *Arabian Nights'* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant *because* one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Bereft.Return to reference 9

Kubla Khan

Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment

In[1] the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effect of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in *Purchas's Pilgrimage:* "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto: and thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall."[2] The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses,[3] during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter:

Then all the charm

Is broken—all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
And each mis-shape[s] the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth! who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes—
The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo! he stays,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror.

[From Coleridge's *The Picture; or, the Lover's Resolution*, lines 91–100]

Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the Author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him. Αὔριον ἄδιον ἄσω:[4] but the to-morrow is yet to come.

As a contrast to this vision, I have annexed a fragment of a very different character, describing with equal fidelity the dream of pain and disease.[5]—1816.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph,[6] the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:
And ’mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And ’mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.[7]
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ’twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,[8]
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.[9]

ca. 1797–98 1816

Endnotes

- Note 1: In the texts of 1816–29, this note began with an additional short paragraph: "The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity, and, as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits." The "poet of . . . celebrity" was Lord Byron.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "In Xamdu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant Springs, delightfull Streames, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the middest thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place." From Samuel Purchas's book of travelers' tales, *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1613). The historical Kublai Khan founded the Mongol dynasty in China in the 13th century.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In a note on a manuscript copy of "Kubla Khan," Coleridge gave a more precise account of the nature of this "sleep": "This fragment with a good deal more, not recoverable, composed, in a sort of reverie brought on by two grains of opium, taken to check a dysentery, at a farmhouse between Porlock and Linton, a quarter of a mile from Culbone Church, in the fall of the year, 1797."Return to reference 3
- Note 4:

I shall sing a sweeter song tomorrow (Greek; recalled from Theocritus's *Idylls* 1.145).

A number of Coleridge's assertions in this preface have been debated by critics: whether the poem was written in 1797 or later, whether it was actually composed in a "dream" or opium reverie, even whether it is a fragment or in fact is complete. All critics agree, however, that this visionary poem of demonic inspiration is much more than a mere "psychological curiosity." Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Coleridge refers to "The Pains of Sleep."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Derived probably from the Greek river Alpheus, which flows into the Ionian Sea. Its waters were fabled to rise again in Sicily as the fountain of Arethusa.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Apparently a reminiscence of Milton's *Paradise Lost* 4.280–82: "where Abassin Kings their issue guard / Mount Amara (though this by some supposed / True Paradise) under the Ethiop line."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A magic ritual, to protect the inspired poet from intrusion.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lines 50ff. echo in part the description, in Plato's *Ion* 533–34, of inspired poets, who are "like Bacchic maidens who draw milk and honey from the rivers when they are under the influence of Dionysus but not when they are in their right mind."Return to reference 9

Christabel[1]

Preface

The first part of the following poem was written in the year 1797, at Stowey, in the county of Somerset. The second part, after my return from Germany, in the year 1800, at Keswick, Cumberland. It is probable, that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods, or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect. But for this, I have only my own indolence to blame. The dates are mentioned for the exclusive purpose of precluding charges of plagiarism or servile imitation from myself. For there is amongst us a set of critics, who seem to hold, that every possible thought and image is traditional; who have no notion that there are such things as fountains in the world, small as well as great; and who would therefore charitably derive every rill they behold flowing, from a perforation made in some other man's tank. I am confident, however, that as far as the present poem is concerned, the celebrated poets[2] whose writings I might be suspected of having imitated, either in particular passages, or in the tone and the spirit of the whole, would be among the first to vindicate me from the charge, and who, on any striking coincidence, would permit me to address them in this doggerel version of two monkish Latin hexameters.

Tis mine and it is likewise yours;
But an if this will not do;
Let it be mine, good friend! for I
Am the poorer of the two.

I have only to add, that the metre of the Christabel is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables.[3] Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion.

Part 1

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock;
Tu—whit!——Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch;
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye,° by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:
'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothed knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal° of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak,
But moss and rarest mistletoe:[4]
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree,
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is, she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill; the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu, Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,

Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

"Mary mother, save me now!"
(Said Christabel,) "And who art thou?"

The lady strange made answer meet,°
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
"Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!"
Said Christabel, "How cam'st thou here?"
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

"My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain,° their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced I wis[5])
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,

A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath this oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand" (thus ended she),
"And help a wretched maid to flee."

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand
And comforted fair Geraldine:
"O well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline;
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth and friends withal
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall."

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.
Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
"All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;°
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me."

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,

Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:[6]
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the Lady by her side;
"Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!"
"Alas, alas!" said Geraldine,
"I cannot speak for weariness."
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,

And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
"O softly tread," said Christabel,
"My father seldom sleepeth well."

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And, jealous of the listening air,
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
As still as death with stifled breath!
And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes[7] of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

"O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;

My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?"
Christabel answered—"Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the grey-haired friar tell,
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!"
"I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"

But soon with altered voice, said she—
"Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine![8]
I have power to bid thee flee."
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?
And why with hollow voice cries she,
"Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
"Alas!" said she, "this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wildered you!"
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, " 'tis over now!"

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright;
She was most beautiful to see,

Like a lady of a far countrée.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
"All they who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell,
Even I in my degree will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, "So let it be!"
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close;
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture° from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side——
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel![9]

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;

Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,°
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly as one defied
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,
Ah well-a-day!
And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
"In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow;
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair:
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air."

The Conclusion to Part 1

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
    Amid the jagged shadows
    Of mossy leafless boughs,
    Kneeling in the moonlight,
    To make her gentle vows;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale°—
Her face, oh call it fair not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is—
O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn[1] and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, tu—whoo! tu—whoo!

Tu—whoo! tu—whoo! from wood and fell![2]

And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!
Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep.
And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free,
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt, she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere?
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!

Part 2

"Each matin bell," the Baron saith,
"Knells us back to a world of death."
These words Sir Leoline first said,
When he rose and found his lady dead:
These words Sir Leoline will say,
Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began,
That still at dawn the sacristan,[3]
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
Five and forty beads must tell[4]
Between each stroke—a warning knell,
Which not a soul can choose but hear
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.[5]

Saith Bracy the bard, "So let it knell!
And let the drowsy sacristan
Still count as slowly as he can!
There is no lack of such, I ween,°
As well fill up the space between.
In Langdale Pike° and Witch's Lair,
And Dungeon-ghyll[6] so foully rent,
With ropes of rock and bells of air
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother;
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borodale."

The air is still! through mist and cloud

That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from the bed;
Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,°
And nothing doubting of her spell
Awakens the lady Christabel.
"Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well."

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
O rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet! and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
"Sure I have sinned!" said Christabel,
"Now heaven be praised if all be well!"
And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet
With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown,
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and the lady tall

Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same,
As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between;—
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face:
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.

O then the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side,
He would proclaim it far and wide
With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they who thus had wronged the dame,
Were base as spotted infamy!
"And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court[7]—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men!"
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!
For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

And now the tears were on his face,
And fondly in his arms he took
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
Prolonging it with joyous look.
Which when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,
The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
(Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)
Again she saw that bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:

Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
And nothing saw, but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest,
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!
With new surprise,
"What ails then my beloved child?"
The Baron said—His daughter mild
Made answer, "All will yet be well!"
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,
Had deemed her sure a thing divine.
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared, she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
And with such lowly tones she prayed,
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.
"Nay!
Nay, by my soul!" said Leoline.
"Ho! Bracy, the bard, the charge be thine!
Go thou, with music sweet and loud,
And take two steeds with trappings proud,
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,
And clothe you both in solemn vest,
And over the mountains haste along,
Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,

Detain you on the valley road.
And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes
Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,
And reaches soon that castle good
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

"Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet,
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet,
More loud than your horses' echoing feet!
And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!
Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—
Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me.
He bids thee come without delay
With all thy numerous array;
And take thy lovely daughter home:
And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array
White with their panting palfreys' foam:
And by mine honour! I will say,
That I repent me of the day
When I spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!—
—For since that evil hour hath flown,
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine."

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing;
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious hail on all bestowing!—
"Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet might I gain a boon of thee,

This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me;
That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warned by a vision in my rest!
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
Sir Leoline! I saw the same
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wonder'd what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old
tree.

"And in my dream methought I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck,
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower;
But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye!

And thence I vowed this self-same day,
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,
Half-listening heard him with a smile;
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
His eyes made up of wonder and love;
And said in courtly accents fine,
"Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,
With arms more strong than harp or song,
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!"
He kissed her forehead as he spake,
And Geraldine, in maiden wise,°
Casting down her large bright eyes,
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline;
Softly gathering up her train,
That o'er her right arm fell again;
And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast,
And looked askance at Christabel—
Jesu Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance!—
One moment—and the sight was fled!
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;
And Geraldine again turned round,
And like a thing, that sought relief,

Full of wonder and full of grief,
She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind;
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
Still picturing that look askance
With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view——
As far as such a look could be,
In eyes so innocent and blue!
And when the trance was o'er, the maid
Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
Then falling at the Baron's feet,
"By my mother's soul do I entreat
That thou this woman send away!"
She said: and more she could not say:
For what she knew she could not tell,
O'er-mastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
Sir Leoline? Thy only child
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
So fair, so innocent, so mild;
The same, for whom thy lady died!
O by the pangs of her dear mother
Think thou no evil of thy child!

For her, and thee, and for no other,
She prayed the moment ere she died:
Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!
  That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
    Sir Leoline!
  And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
    Her child and thine?

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swelled his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild,
Dishonoured thus in his old age;
Dishonoured by his only child,
And all his hospitality
To the wrong'd daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy
Brought thus to a disgraceful end—
He rolled his eye with stern regard
Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
And said in tones abrupt, austere—
"Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
I bade thee hence!" The bard obeyed;
And turning from his own sweet maid,
The aged knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine!

The Conclusion to Part 2

A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
That always finds, and never seeks,
Makes such a vision to the sight
As fills a father's eyes with light;
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
Upon his heart, that he at last
Must needs express his love's excess
With words of unmeant bitterness.
Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm.
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what, if in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks as it's most used to do.

1798–1800 1816

Endnotes

- Note 1: Coleridge had planned to publish *Christabel* in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) but had not been able to complete the poem. When *Christabel* was finally published in 1816 in its present fragmentary state, he still hoped to finish it, for the Preface contained this sentence (deleted in the edition of 1834): "But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than

with the liveliness of a vision; I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, who had read and admired *Christabel* while it circulated in manuscript. Coleridge has in mind Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and Byron's *Siege of Corinth* (1816), which showed the influence of *Christabel,* especially in their meter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Much of the earlier English versification, following the example of Old English poetry, had been based on stress, or "accent," and some of it shows as much freedom in varying the number of syllables as does *Christabel.* The poem, however, is a radical departure from the theory and practice of versification in the 18th century, which had been based on a recurrent number of syllables in each line.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Celtic Britain the mistletoe (a parasitic plant) was regarded with reverence when it was found growing—as it rarely does—on an oak tree. (Its usual host is the apple tree.)Return to reference 4
- Note 5: I believe (Coleridge's misinterpretation of the Middle English adverb *ywis*, meaning "certainly").Return to reference 5
- Note 6: According to legend, a witch cannot cross the threshold by her own power because it has been blessed against evil spirits.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Often used as a floor covering in the Middle Ages.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 1.3.22. "Wandering": term that could designate a fit of hysteria.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In several manuscripts and the first printing, this line reads "And she is to sleep by [*or* with] Christabel."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Tarn, a mountain pool.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Elevated moor, or hill.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Church officer who digs the graves and rings the bells.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Pray while “telling” (keeping count of) the beads of a rosary.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: These and the following names are of places in the English Lake District.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ravine forming the bed of a stream.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Arena for tournaments.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *always*Return to reference °
- °: *well-being*Return to reference °
- °: *appropriate*Return to reference °
- °: *at top speed*Return to reference °
- °: *of a monastery*Return to reference °
- °: *belt*Return to reference °
- °: *attempt*Return to reference °
- °: *evil, sorrow*Return to reference °
- °: *believe*Return to reference °
- °: *Peak*Return to reference °
- °: *plait*Return to reference °
- °: *manner*Return to reference °

Frost at Midnight[1]

The frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film,[2] which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering stranger! and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place,[3] and the old church-tower,

Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things I dreamt
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's[4] face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike![5]

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.

Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

Feb. 1798 1798, 1829

Endnotes

- Note 1: The scene is Coleridge's cottage at Nether Stowey; the infant in line 7 is his son Hartley, then aged seventeen months.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In all parts of the kingdom these films are called *strangers* and supposed to portend the arrival of some absent friend [*Coleridge's note*]. The "film" is a piece of soot fluttering on the bar of the grate. See Cowper's *The Task* 4.292–95, in which the poet describes how, dreaming before the parlor fire, he watches "The sooty films that play upon the bars, / Pendulous and foreboding, in the view / Of superstition prophesying still, / Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach." Several editions of Cowper's poems were advertised on the verso of the last page of Coleridge's text in the 1798 volume in which "Frost at Midnight" was first published.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Coleridge was born at Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, but went to school in London, beginning at the age of nine.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The Reverend James Boyer at Coleridge's school, Christ's Hospital.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, when both Coleridge and his sister Ann still wore infant clothes, before he was deemed old enough to be breeched.Return to reference 5

Dejection: An Ode[1]

Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
With the old Moon in her arms;
And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
We shall have a deadly storm.

—*Ballad of Sir Patrick Spence*

1

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mould yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
Upon the strings of this Eolian lute,[2]
Which better far were mute.
For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
And overspread with phantom light,
(With swimming phantom light o'erspread
But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
The coming on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted° impulse give,

Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

2

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady![3] in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd,
All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

3

My genial° spirits fail;
And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

4

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud![4]
And would we aught° behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,
A light, a glory,[5] a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

5

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dower,
A new Earth and new Heaven,[6]
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—
Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colours a suffusion from that light.

6

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
  This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
  Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth,
  But oh! each visitation°
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
  My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
  But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
  From my own nature all the natural man—
  This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

7

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
  Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
  Which long has raved unnoticed. What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lute sent forth! Thou Wind, that ravest without,
Bare crag, or mountain-tairn,[7] or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,°
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
  Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,

Mak'st Devils' yule,[8] with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, e'en to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of a host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's[9] self had framed the tender lay,
'Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

8

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,[1]
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,

Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

Apr. 4, 1802 1802

Endnotes

- Note 1: This poem originated in a verse letter of 340 lines, called "A Letter to ———," that Coleridge wrote on the night of April 4, 1802, after hearing the opening stanzas of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," which Wordsworth had just composed. The "Letter" was addressed to Sara Hutchinson (whom Coleridge sometimes called "Asra"), the sister of Wordsworth's fiancée, Mary. It picked up the theme of a loss in the quality of perceptual experience that Wordsworth had presented at the beginning of his "Ode." In his original poem Coleridge lamented at length his unhappy marriage and the hopelessness of his love for Sara Hutchinson. In the next six months Coleridge deleted more than half the original lines, revised and reordered the remaining passages, and so transformed a long verse confession into the compact and dignified "Dejection: An Ode." He published the "Ode," in substantially its present form, on October 4, 1802, Wordsworth's wedding day—and also the seventh anniversary of Coleridge's own disastrous marriage to Sara Flicker.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A stringed instrument played upon by the wind (see "The Eolian Harp," p. 471, n. 1, above.).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the original version "Sara"—Sara Hutchinson. After intervening versions, in which the poem was addressed first to "William" (Wordsworth) and then to "Edmund," Coleridge introduced the noncommittal "Lady" in 1817.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: That is, nature's wedding garment and shroud are ours to give to her.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Halo. Coleridge often uses the term to identify in particular the phenomenon that occurs in the mountains when a walker sees his or her own figure projected by the sun in the mist, enlarged and with light encircling its head.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The sense becomes clearer if line 68 is punctuated in the way that Coleridge punctuated it when quoting the passage in one of his essays: "Which, wedding Nature to us, gives in dower." That is, Joy marries us to Nature and gives us, for our dowry, "a new Earth and a new Heaven," a phrase echoing Revelation 21:1.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tarn, or mountain pool.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Christmas as, in a perverted form, it is celebrated by devils.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Thomas Otway (1652–1685), a dramatist noted for the pathos of his tragic passages. The poet originally named was "William," and the allusion was probably to Wordsworth's "Lucy Gray."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Probably, "May this be a typical mountain storm, short though violent," although Coleridge might have intended an allusion to Horace's phrase "the mountain labored and brought forth a mouse."Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *customary*Return to reference °
- °: *creative*Return to reference °
- °: *anything*Return to reference °
- °: *of affliction*Return to reference °
- °: *climbed*Return to reference °

The Pains of Sleep[1]

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use° to pray
With moving lips or bended knees;
But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to Love compose,
In humble trust mine eye-lids close,
With reverential resignation,
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
Only a sense of supplication;
A sense o'er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, every where
Eternal strength and wisdom are.

But yester-night I prayed aloud
In anguish and in agony,
Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
A lurid light, a trampling throng,
Sense of intolerable wrong,
And whom I scorned, those only strong!
Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
Still baffled, and yet burning still!
Desire with loathing strangely mixed
On wild or hateful objects fixed.
Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!
And shame and terror over all!
Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
Which all confused I could not know,
Whether I suffered, or I did:
For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe,

My own or others still the same
Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

So two nights passed: the night's dismay
Saddened and stunned the coming day.
Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
Distemper's worst calamity.
The third night, when my own loud scream
Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
I wept as I had been a child;
And having thus by tears subdued
My anguish to a milder mood,
Such punishments, I said, were due
To natures deepliest stained with sin,—
For aye entempesting anew
The unfathomable hell within,
The horror of their deeds to view,
To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
Such griefs with such men well agree,
But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
To be beloved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed.

1803 1816

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Coleridge included a draft of this poem in a letter to Robert Southey, September 11, 1803, in which he wrote that "my spirits are dreadful, owing entirely to the Horrors of every nigh —I truly dread to sleep. It is no shadow with me, but substanti Misery foot-thick, that makes me sit by my bedside of a morning, & *cry*—. I have abandoned all opiates except Ether be one; & that only in *fits.* . . ." The last sentence indicates what Coleridge did not know—that his guilty nightmares were

probably withdrawal symptoms from opium. The dreams he describes are very similar to those that Thomas De Quincey represents as "The Pains of Opium" in his *Confessions of an*
Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *custom*Return to reference °

To William Wordsworth

Composed on the Night after His Recitation of a Poem on theGrowth of an Individual Mind[1]

Friend of the wise! and teacher of the good!
Into my heart have I received that lay°
More than historic, that prophetic lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell
What may be told, to the understanding mind
Revealable; and what within the mind
By vital breathings secret as the soul
Of vernal° growth, oft quickens in the heart
Thoughts all too deep for words![2]—

Theme hard as high!
Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears
(The first-born they of Reason and twin birth),
Of tides obedient to external force,
And currents self-determined, as might seem,
Or by some inner power; of moments awful,°
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received
The light reflected, as a light bestowed—
Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,
Hyblean[3] murmurs of poetic thought
Industrious in its joy, in vales and glens
Native or outland, lakes and famous hills!

Or on the lonely high-road, when the stars
Were rising; or by secret mountain-streams,
The guides and the companions of thy way!

Of more than Fancy, of the Social Sense
Distending wide, and man beloved as man,
Where France in all her towns lay vibrating
Like some becalmed bark beneath the burst
Of Heaven's immediate thunder, when no cloud
Is visible, or shadow on the main.
For thou wert there, thine own brows garlanded,
Amid the tremor of a realm aglow,
Amid a mighty nation jubilant,
When from the general heart of human kind
Hope sprang forth like a full-born Deity!
——Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,
So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm and sure
From the dread watch-tower of man's absolute self,
With light unwaning on her eyes, to look
Far on—herself a glory to behold,
The Angel of the vision![4] Then (last strain)
Of Duty, chosen laws controlling choice,
Action and joy!—An Orphic song[5] indeed,
A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
To their own music chanted!

O great Bard!
Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
With steadfast eye I viewed thee in the choir
Of ever-enduring men. The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence! They, both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
Save as it worketh for them, they in it.
Nor less a sacred roll, than those of old,
And to be placed, as they, with gradual fame

Among the archives of mankind, thy work
Makes audible a linked lay of Truth,
Of Truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
Ah! as I listened with a heart forlorn,
The pulses of my being beat anew:
And even as life returns upon the drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;
And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of hope;
And hope that scarce would know itself from fear;
Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all,
Commune with thee had opened out—but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!

That way no more! and ill beseems it me,
Who came a welcomer in herald's guise,
Singing of glory, and futurity,
To wander back on such unhealthful road,
Plucking the poisons of self-harm! And ill
Such intertwine beseems triumphal wreaths
Strewed before thy advancing!

Nor do thou,
Sage Bard! impair the memory of that hour
Of thy communion with my nobler mind[6]
By pity or grief, already felt too long!
Nor let my words import more blame than needs.
The tumult rose and ceased: for peace is nigh
Where wisdom's voice has found a listening heart.
Amid the howl of more than wintry storms,

The halcyon[7] hears the voice of vernal hours
Already on the wing.

Eve following eve,[8]
Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of Home
Is sweetest! moments for their own sake hailed
And more desired, more precious for thy song,
In silence listening, like a devout child,
My soul lay passive, by thy various strain
Driven as in surges now beneath the stars,
With momentary stars of my own birth,
Fair constellated foam, still darting off
Into the darkness; now a tranquil sea,
Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the moon.

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength!—
Thy long sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased—yet thou thyself
Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved faces—
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my being blended in one thought
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—
And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

1807 1817

Endnotes

- Note 1: This was the poem (later called *The Prelude*), addressed to Coleridge, that Wordsworth had completed in 1805. After Coleridge returned from Malta, very low in health and spirits, Wordsworth read the poem aloud to him during the evenings of almost two weeks. Coleridge wrote most of the present

response immediately after the reading was completed, on January 7, 1807.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth had described the effect on his mind of the animating breeze ("vital breathings") in *The Prelude* 1.1–47. "Thoughts . . . words" echoes the last line of Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode. Coleridge goes on to summarize the major themes and events of *The Prelude.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sweet. Hybla, in ancient Sicily, was famous for its honey.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Probably alludes to "the great vision of the guarded mount" in Milton's "Lycidas," line 161.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As enchanting and oracular as the song of the legendary Orpheus. There may also be an allusion to the Orphic mysteries, involving spiritual death and rebirth (see lines 61–66).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, during the early association between the two poets (1797–98).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A fabled bird, able to calm the sea where it nested in winter.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The evenings during which Wordsworth read his poem aloud.Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *song*Return to reference °
- °: *springtime*Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °

Epitaph[1]

Stop, Christian Passer-by!—Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.—
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death!
Mercy for praise—to be forgiven for[2] fame
He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same!

1833 1834

Endnotes

- Note 1: Written by Coleridge the year before he died. One version that he sent in a letter had as a title: "Epitaph on a Poet little known, yet better known by the Initials of his name than by the Name Itself."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "For" in the sense of "instead of" [*Coleridge's note*].Return to reference 2

Biographia Literaria In March 1815 Coleridge was preparing a collected edition of his poems and planned to include "a general preface . . . on the principles of philosophic and genial criticism." As was typical for Coleridge, the materials developed as he worked on them until, on July 29, he declared that the preface had expanded to become a book in its own right, an "Autobiographia Literaria." In a characteristic Romantic reinvention of autobiography, the work merged personal experience with philosophical speculation, as well as with what Coleridge identified as "digression and anecdotes." It was to consist of two main parts, "my literary life and opinions, as far as poetry and *poetical* criticism [are] concerned" and a critique of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction. This work was ready by September 17, 1815, but the *Biographia Literaria*, in two volumes, was not published until July 1817. The delay was caused by a series of miscalculations by his printer, which forced Coleridge to add 150 pages of miscellaneous materials to pad out the length of the second volume.

Coleridge had been planning a detailed critique of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction ever since 1802, when he had detected "a radical difference in our theoretical opinions respecting poetry." In the selection from chapter 17, Coleridge agrees with Wordsworth's general aim of reforming the artifices of current poetic diction, but he sharply denies Wordsworth's claim that there is no essential difference between the language of poetry and the language spoken by people in real life. The other selections printed here are devoted mainly to the central principle of Coleridge's own critical theory, the distinction between the mechanical "fancy" and the organic imagination, which is tersely summarized in the conclusion to chapter 13. The definition of poetry at the end of chapter 14 develops at greater length the nature of the "synthetic and magical power . . . of imagination," which, for Coleridge, has the capacity to dissolve the divisions (between, for instance, the perceiving human subject and his or her objects of perception) that characterize human beings' fallen state.

For another selection from *Biographia Literaria,* see "The Gothic and the Development of a Mass Readership," p. 313, above.

From Biographia Literaria

From *Chapter 4*

[MR. WORDSWORTH'S EARLIER POEMS]

* * * During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's first publication, entitled *Descriptive Sketches*;[1] and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced. In the form, style, and manner of the whole poem, and in the structure of the particular lines and periods, there is a harshness and acerbity connected and combined with words and images all a-glow which might recall those products of the vegetable world, where gorgeous blossoms rise out of the hard and thorny rind and shell within which the rich fruit was elaborating. The language was not only peculiar and strong, but at times knotty and contorted, as by its own impatient strength; while the novelty and struggling crowd of images, acting in conjunction with the difficulties of the style, demanded always a greater closeness of attention than poetry (at all events than descriptive poetry) has a right to claim. It not seldom therefore justified the complaint of obscurity. In the following extract I have sometimes fancied that I saw an emblem of the poem itself and of the author's genius as it was then displayed:

> 'Tis storm; and hid in mist from hour to hour,
> All day the floods a deepening murmur pour;
> The sky is veiled, and every cheerful sight:
> Dark is the region as with coming night;
> And yet what frequent bursts of overpowering light!
> Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,
> Glances the fire-clad eagle's wheeling form;
> Eastward, in long perspective glittering, shine
> The wood-crowned cliffs that o'er the lake recline;
> Wide o'er the Alps a hundred streams unfold,
> At once to pillars turned that flame with gold;
> Behind his sail the peasant strives to shun
> The West, that burns like one dilated sun,

Where in a mighty crucible expire
The mountains, glowing hot, like coals of fire.[2]

The poetic Psyche, in its process to full development, undergoes as many changes as its Greek namesake, the butterfly.[3] And it is remarkable how soon genius clears and purifies itself from the faults and errors of its earliest products; faults which, in its earliest compositions, are the more obtrusive and confluent because, as heterogeneous elements which had only a temporary use, they constitute the very *ferment* by which themselves are carried off. Or we may compare them to some diseases, which must work on the humors and be thrown out on the surface in order to secure the patient from their future recurrence. I was in my twenty-fourth year when I had the happiness of knowing Mr. Wordsworth personally;[4] and, while memory lasts, I shall hardly forget the sudden effect produced on my mind by his recitation of a manuscript poem which still remains unpublished, but of which the stanza and tone of style were the same as those of *The Female Vagrant* as originally printed in the first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads.*[5] There was here no mark of strained thought or forced diction, no crowd or turbulence of imagery, and, as the poet hath himself well described in his lines on revisiting the Wye,[6] manly reflection and human associations had given both variety and an additional interest to natural objects which in the passion and appetite of the first love they had seemed to him neither to need or permit. The occasional obscurities, which had risen from an imperfect control over the resources of his native language, had almost wholly disappeared, together with that worse defect of arbitrary and illogical phrases, at once hackneyed and fantastic, which hold so distinguished a place in the *technique* of ordinary poetry and will, more or less, alloy the earlier poems of the truest genius, unless the attention has been specifically directed to their worthlessness and incongruity. I did not perceive anything particular in the mere style of the poem alluded to during its recitation, except indeed such difference as was not separable from the thought and manner; and the Spenserian stanza which always,

more or less, recalls to the reader's mind Spenser's own style, would doubtless have authorized in my then opinion a more frequent descent to the phrases of ordinary life than could, without an ill effect, have been hazarded in the heroic couplet. It was not however the freedom from false taste, whether as to common defects or to those more properly his own, which made so unusual an impression on my feelings immediately, and subsequently on my judgment. It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents, and situations of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the luster, had dried up the sparkle and the dewdrops. "To find no contradiction in the union of old and new, to contemplate the Ancient of Days and all his works with feelings as fresh as if all had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat,[7] characterizes the mind that feels the riddle of the world and may help to unravel it. To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years had rendered familiar;

> With sun and moon and stars throughout the year,
> And man and woman;[8]

this is the character and privilege of genius, and one of the marks which distinguish genius from talents. And therefore it is the prime merit of genius, and its most unequivocal mode of manifestation, so to represent familiar objects as to awaken in the minds of others a kindred feeling concerning them, and that freshness of sensation which is the constant accompaniment of mental no less than of bodily convalescence. Who has not a thousand times seen snow fall on water? Who has not watched it with a new feeling from the time that he has read Burns' comparison of sensual pleasure

To snow that falls upon a river
A moment white—then gone forever![9]

In poems, equally as in philosophic disquisitions, genius produces the strongest impressions of novelty while it rescues the most admitted truths from the impotence caused by the very circumstance of their universal admission. Truths of all others the most awful and mysterious, yet being at the same time of universal interest, are too often considered as *so* true, that they lose all the life and efficiency of truth and lie bedridden in the dormitory of the soul side by side with the most despised and exploded errors." *The Friend*, p. 76, no. 5.[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: Published 1793, the year before Coleridge left Cambridge; a long descriptive-meditative poem in closed couplets, recounting Wordsworth's walking tour in the Alps in 1790. Wordsworth describes the same tour in *The Prelude*, book 6.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Descriptive Sketches* (1815 version), lines 332ff.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek, Psyche is the common name for the soul and the butterfly [*Coleridge's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The meeting occurred in September 1795.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Salisbury Plain* (1793–94), which was left in manuscript until Wordsworth published a revised version in 1842 as "Guilt and Sorrow." An excerpt from *Salisbury Plain* was printed as "The Female Vagrant," in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," lines 76ff.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The first divine command: "Let there be light."Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Altered from Milton’s sonnet “To Mr. Cyriack Skinner upon His Blindness.”Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Altered from Burns’s “Tam o’ Shanter,” lines 61–62.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A periodical published by Coleridge (1809–10).Return to reference 1

[ON FANCY AND IMAGINATION—THE INVESTIGATION OF THE DISTINCTION IMPORTANT TO THE FINE ARTS]

This excellence, which in all Mr. Wordsworth's writings is more or less predominant and which constitutes the character of his mind, I no sooner felt than I sought to understand. Repeated meditations led me first to suspect (and a more intimate analysis of the human faculties, their appropriate marks, functions, and effects, matured my conjecture into full conviction) that fancy and imagination were two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest the lower and higher degree of one and the same power. It is not, I own, easy to conceive a more apposite translation of the Greek *phantasia* than the Latin *imaginatio*; but it is equally true that in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize those words originally of the same meaning which the conflux of dialects had supplied to the more homogeneous languages, as the Greek and German: and which the same cause, joined with accidents of translation from original works of different countries, occasion in mixed languages like our own. The first and most important point to be proved is, that two conceptions perfectly distinct are confused under one and the same word, and (this done) to appropriate that word exclusively to one meaning, and the synonym (should there be one) to the other. But if (as will be often the case in the arts and sciences) no synonym exists, we must either invent or borrow a word. In the present instance the appropriation had already begun and been legitimated in the derivative adjective: Milton had a highly *imaginative*, Cowley a very *fanciful*, mind. If therefore I should succeed in establishing the actual existence of two faculties generally different, the nomenclature would be at once determined. To the faculty by which I had characterized Milton we

should confine the term *imagination;* while the other would be contradistinguished as *fancy.* Now were it once fully ascertained that this division is no less grounded in nature than that of delirium from mania, or Otway's

> Lutes, lobsters, seas of milk, and ships of amber,[2]

from Shakespeare's

> What! have his daughters brought him to this pass?[3]

or from the preceding apostrophe to the elements, the theory of the fine arts and of poetry in particular could not, I thought, but derive some additional and important light. It would in its immediate effects furnish a torch of guidance to the philosophical critic, and ultimately to the poet himself. In energetic minds truth soon changes by domestication into power; and from directing in the discrimination and appraisal of the product becomes influencive in the production. To admire on principle is the only way to imitate without loss of originality. * * *

Endnotes

- Note 2: Thomas Otway, in *Venice Preserved* (1682), wrote "laurels" in place of "lobsters" (5.2.151).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *King Lear* 3.4.59.Return to reference 3

From *Chapter 13*

[ON THE IMAGINATION, OR ESEMPLASTIC[4] POWER]

* * * The IMAGINATION, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.[5] * * *

Endnotes

- Note 4: Coleridge coined this word and used it to mean "molding into unity."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Coleridge conceives God's creation to be a continuing process, which has an analogy in the creative perception ("primary imagination") of all human minds. The creative process is repeated, or "echoed," on still a third level, by the "secondary imagination" of the poet, which dissolves the products of primary perception to shape them into a new and

unified creation—the imaginative passage or poem. The "fancy," on the other hand, can only manipulate "fixities and definites" that, linked by association, come to it ready-made from perception.Return to reference 5

Chapter 14

OCCASION OF *THE LYRICAL BALLADS,* AND THE OBJECTS ORIGINALLY PROPOSED—PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION—THE ENSUING CONTROVERSY, ITS CAUSES AND ACRIMONY—PHILOSOPHIC DEFINITIONS OF A POEM AND POETRY WITH SCHOLIA.[6]

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours,[7] our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination.[8] The sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in *this* sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads;* in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.[9]

With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing, among other poems, *The Dark Ladie*, and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter.[1] Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published; and were presented by him, as an *experiment*,[2] whether subjects which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition[3] he added a preface of considerable length; in which, notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of *real* life. From this preface,

prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long-continued controversy.[4] For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy[5] and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things which they were for a long time described as being; had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness[6] of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them; they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found too not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its *religious* fervor. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author, which was more or less consciously felt where it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence with which it whirled them round and round. With many parts of this preface, in the sense attributed to them and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorize, I never concurred; but, on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface and to the author's own practice in the greater number of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth in his recent collection[7] has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice. But he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering

it as the source of a controversy in which I have been honored more than I deserve by the frequent conjunction of my name with his, I think it expedient to declare once for all in what points I coincide with his opinions, and in what points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my ideas, first, of a POEM; and secondly, of POETRY itself, in *kind* and in *essence.*

The office of philosophical *disquisition* consists in just *distinction;* while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity in which they actually coexist; and this is the *result* of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by meter, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months:

> Thirty days hath September,
> April, June, and November, etc.

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm superadded, whatever be their contents, *may* be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial *form.* A difference of object and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate

purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may *result* from the *attainment* of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end. In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the *ultimate* end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blessed indeed is that state of society in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the Bathyllus even of an Anacreon, or the Alexis of Virgil,[8] from disgust and aversion!

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work not metrically composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels and romances. Would then the mere superaddition of meter, with or without rhyme, entitle *these* to the name of poems? The answer is that nothing can permanently please which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If meter be superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having *this* object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole* as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part.*

Controversy is not seldom excited in consequence of the disputants attaching each a different meaning to the same word; and in few instances has this been more striking than in disputes concerning the present subject. If a man chooses to call every composition a poem which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted. The distinction is at least

competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting as a tale or as a series of interesting reflections, I of course admit this as another fit ingredient of a poem and an additional merit. But if the definition sought for be that of a *legitimate* poem, I answer it must be one the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgment of all countries in equally denying the praises of a just poem on the one hand to a series of striking lines or distichs,[9] each of which absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself disjoins it from its context and makes it a separate whole, instead of a harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air; at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward. "*Praecipitandus est* liber *spiritus,*"[1] says Petronius Arbiter most happily. The epithet *liber* here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of Plato, and Bishop Taylor, and the *Theoria Sacra* of Burnet,[2] furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without meter, and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem. The first chapter of Isaiah (indeed a very large proportion of the whole book) is poetry in the most emphatic sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert that pleasure, and not truth, was the immediate object of the prophet. In short, whatever *specific*

import we attach to the word poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry. Yet if a harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved in *keeping*[3] with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement as will partake of *one*, though not a *peculiar*, property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal attention than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in the preceding disquisition on the fancy and imagination. What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind.

The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding and retained under their irremissive,[4] though gentle and unnoticed, control (*laxis effertur habenis*)[5] reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities:[6] of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. "Doubtless," as Sir John Davies

observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately, to the poetic IMAGINATION):

> Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
> Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,
> As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
> As we our food into our nature change.
>
> From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,
> And draws a kind of quintessence from things;
> Which to her proper nature she transforms,
> To bear them light on her celestial wings.
>
> Thus does she, when from individual states
> She doth abstract the universal kinds;
> Which then reclothed in divers names and fates
> Steal access through our senses to our minds.[7]

Finally, GOOD SENSE is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY,[8] MOTION its LIFE, and IMAGINATION the SOUL that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

Endnotes

- Note 6: Additional remarks, after a philosophic demonstration.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: At Nether Stowey and Alfoxden, Somerset, in 1797.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare Wordsworth's account in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (p. 338, above).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Compare Isaiah 6:9–10.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, published anonymously in 1798, contained nineteen poems by Wordsworth, four by Coleridge.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: *Experiments* was the word used by Wordsworth in his Advertisement to the first edition.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Published in 1800.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The controversy over Wordsworth's theory and poetical practice in the literary reviews of the day.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Deep-rooted prejudice.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Vulgarity.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: *Poems*, 2 vols., 1815.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The reference is to poems of same-sex love. Bathyllus was a beautiful boy praised by Anacreon, a Greek lyric poet (ca. 560–475 B.C.E.); Alexis was a young man loved by the shepherd Corydon in Virgil's *Eclogue* 2.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Pairs of lines.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: "The *free* spirit [of the poet] must be hurled onward." From the *Satyricon,* by the Roman satirist Petronius Arbiter (1st century C.E.).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Thomas Burnet (1635?–1715), author of *The Sacred Theory of the Earth.* Bishop Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), author of *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying.* Coleridge greatly admired the elaborate and sonorous prose of both these writers. He took from a work by Burnet the Latin motto for *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A term from the theory of painting for the maintenance of the harmony of a composition.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Continuous.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: It is driven with loosened reins (Latin).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Here Coleridge introduces the concept, which became central to the American New Critics of the mid-20th century, that the best poetry incorporates and reconciles opposite or discordant elements.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Adapted from John Davies's *Nosce Teipsum* ("Know Thyself"), a philosophical poem (1599).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Clothing.Return to reference 8

From *Chapter 17*

[EXAMINATION OF THE TENETS PECULIAR TO MR. WORDSWORTH]

As far then as Mr. Wordsworth in his preface contended, and most ably contended, for a reformation in our poetic diction, as far as he has evinced the truth of passion, and the *dramatic* propriety of those figures and metaphors in the original poets which, stripped of their justifying reasons and converted into mere artifices of connection or ornament, constitute the characteristic falsity in the poetic style of the moderns; and as far as he has, with equal acuteness and clearness, pointed out the process by which this change was effected and the resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown by the pleasurable confusion of thought from an unaccustomed train of words and images and that state which is induced by the natural language of impassioned feeling, he undertook a useful task and deserves all praise, both for the attempt and for the execution. The provocations to this remonstrance in behalf of truth and nature were still of perpetual recurrence before and after the publication of this preface. * * *

My own differences from certain supposed parts of Mr. Wordsworth's theory ground themselves on the assumption that his words had been rightly interpreted, as purporting that the proper diction for poetry in general consists altogether in a language taken, with due exceptions, from the mouths of men in real life, a language which actually constitutes the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feelings.[9] My objection is, first, that in *any* sense this rule is applicable only to *certain* classes of poetry; secondly, that even to these classes it is not applicable, except in such a sense as hath never by anyone (as far as I know or have read) been denied or doubted; and, lastly, that as far as, and in that degree in which it is *practicable*, yet as a *rule* it is useless, if not injurious, and therefore either need not or ought not to be practiced. * * *

Endnotes

- Note 9: Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800, 1802): "A selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation. . . . Low and rustic life was generally chosen. . . . The language, too, of these men is adopted."Return to reference 9

[RUSTIC LIFE (ABOVE ALL, *LOW* AND RUSTIC LIFE) ESPECIALLY UNFAVORABLE TO THE FORMATION OF A HUMAN DICTION—THE BEST PARTS OF LANGUAGE THE PRODUCTS OF PHILOSOPHERS, NOT CLOWNS[1] OR SHEPHERDS]

As little can I agree with the assertion that from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates the best part of language is formed. For first, if to communicate with an object implies such an acquaintance with it, as renders it capable of being discriminately reflected on; the distinct knowledge of an uneducated rustic would furnish a very scanty vocabulary. The few things, and modes of action, requisite for his bodily conveniences, would alone be individualized; while all the rest of nature would be expressed by a small number of confused general terms. Secondly, I deny that the words and combinations of words derived from the objects, with which the rustic is familiar, whether with distinct or confused knowledge, can be justly said to form the *best* part of language. It is more than probable that many classes of the brute creation possess discriminating sounds, by which they can convey to each other notices of such objects as concern their food, shelter, or safety. Yet we hesitate to call the aggregate of such sounds a language, otherwise than metaphorically. The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man; though in civilized society, by imitation and passive remembrance of what they hear from their religious instructors and other superiors, the most uneducated share in the harvest which they neither sowed or reaped. * * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Rustic people.Return to reference 1

[THE LANGUAGE OF MILTON AS MUCH THE LANGUAGE OF *REAL* LIFE, YEA, INCOMPARABLY MORE SO THAN THAT OF THE COTTAGER]

Here let me be permitted to remind the reader that the positions which I controvert are contained in the sentences—"a selection of the REAL language of men"; "the language of these men (i.e., men in low and rustic life) I propose to myself to imitate, and as far as possible to adopt the very language of men." "Between the language of prose and that of metrical composition there neither is, nor can be any essential difference." It is against these exclusively that my opposition is directed.

I object, in the very first instance, to an equivocation in the use of the word "real." Every man's language varies according to the extent of his knowledge, the activity of his faculties, and the depth or quickness of his feelings. Every man's language has, first, its *individualities;* secondly, the common properties of the *class* to which he belongs; and thirdly, words and phrases of *universal* use. The language of Hooker, Bacon, Bishop Taylor, and Burke[2] differs from the common language of the learned class only by the superior number and novelty of the thoughts and relations which they had to convey. The language of Algernon Sidney[3] differs not at all from that which every well-educated gentleman would wish to write, and (with due allowances for the undeliberateness and less connected train of thinking natural and proper to conversation) such as he would wish to talk. Neither one nor the other differ half as much from the general language of cultivated society as the language of Mr. Wordsworth's homeliest composition differs from that of a common peasant. For "real" therefore we must substitute *ordinary*, or *lingua communis.*[4] And this, we have proved, is no more to be found in the phraseology of low and rustic life than in that of any other class. Omit the peculiarities of each, and the result of course must be common to all. And assuredly the omissions and changes to be

made in the language of rustics before it could be transferred to any species of poem, except the drama or other professed imitation, are at least as numerous and weighty as would be required in adapting to the same purpose the ordinary language of tradesmen and manufacturers. Not to mention that the language so highly extolled by Mr. Wordsworth varies in every county, nay, in every village, according to the accidental character of the clergyman, the existence or nonexistence of schools; or even, perhaps, as the exciseman, publican, or barber happen to be, or not to be, zealous politicians and readers of the weekly newspaper *pro bono publico.*[5] Anterior to cultivation the *lingua communis* of every country, as Dante has well observed, exists every where in parts and no where as a whole.[6]

Neither is the case rendered at all more tenable by the addition of the words "in a state of excitement."[7] For the nature of a man's words, when he is strongly affected by joy, grief, or anger, must necessarily depend on the number and quality of the general truths, conceptions, and images, and of the words expressing them, with which his mind had been previously stored. For the property of passion is not to *create*, but to set in increased activity. At least, whatever new connections of thoughts or images, or (which is equally, if not more than equally, the appropriate effect of strong excitement) whatever generalizations of truth or experience the heat of passion may produce, yet the terms of their conveyance must have pre-existed in his former conversations, and are only collected and crowded together by the unusual stimulation. It is indeed very possible to adopt in a poem the unmeaning repetitions, habitual phrases, and other blank counters which an unfurnished or confused understanding interposes at short intervals in order to keep hold of his subject which is still slipping from him, and to give him time for recollection; or in mere aid of vacancy, as in the scanty companies of a country stage the same player pops backwards and forwards, in order to prevent the appearance of empty spaces, in the procession of *Macbeth* or *Henry VIIIth.* But what assistance to the poet or ornament to the poem these can supply, I am at a loss to conjecture. Nothing assuredly can differ either in origin or in mode

more widely from the apparent tautologies of intense and turbulent feeling in which the passion is greater and of longer endurance than to be exhausted or satisfied by a single representation of the image or incident exciting it. Such repetitions I admit to be a beauty of the highest kind; as illustrated by Mr. Wordsworth himself from the song of Deborah. "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down; at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead."[8]

1815 1817

Endnotes

- Note 2: Richard Hooker (1554–1600), author of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,* Francis Bacon (1561–1626), essayist and philosopher, and Jeremy Taylor were all, together with the late 18th-century politician and opponent of the French Revolution Edmund Burke (1729–1797), lauded for their prose styles.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Republican soldier and statesman (1622–1683), author of *Discourses Concerning Government*, executed for his part in the Rye House Plot to assassinate Charles II.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The common language (Latin).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: For the public welfare (Latin).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (*On the Speech of the People*) Dante discusses—and affirms—the fitness for poetry of the unlocalized Italian vernacular.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Wordsworth: "the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Judges 5:27. Cited by Wordsworth in a note to *The Thorn* as an example of the natural repetitiousness of "impassioned feelings."Return to reference 8

Slavery and the Literature of Abolition

Late eighteenth-century Britons prided themselves on how their constitution safeguarded individual liberty. Yet their economy depended increasingly on wealth obtained through the enslavement of others. Members of Parliament and even the missionary arm of the Anglican Church numbered among the absentee owners of Caribbean plantations that exploited the labor of enslaved Africans. The maritime industries of Bristol and Liverpool were heavily involved in procuring this labor supply. Beginning in the seventeenth century, a "triangular trade" had been established, which saw ships sail to the west coast of Africa to buy or kidnap human cargo, voyage across the Atlantic to the New World where those slaves would be sold at a tremendous premium, and then, in the third leg of the triangle, return to Britain carrying the colonial goods that fed Europeans' growing appetites for tobacco, rum, and sugar. By the 1790s more than 40,000 Africans annually were being packed into British slave ships. The mortality rate for these people during the horrific Middle Passage has been estimated at one in six. One-third died within three years of disembarking in the West Indies, from tropical diseases or the mistreatment and sexual abuse meted out to them on the plantations.

Through the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, those few British people who had considered these evils at all had for the most part rationalized them away. Slavery seemed simply the cost of doing business in the New World, and the West Indian planters' rights to secure possession of their property, even property in persons, appeared beyond challenge. The link between slave labor and the consumer pleasures that defined their daily lives escaped most people's notice. "How little think the giddy and the gay / While sipping o'er the sweets of charming tea, / . . . How oft their lux'ry

robs the wretch of rest," lamented one Mary Birkett in her 1789 poem on the slave trade. Whereas across the Atlantic the White settlers of the southern United States and the White elites of the Sugar Islands were outnumbered and continually anxious, with reason, that the enslaved might revolt and avenge their wrongs, White Britons, by contrast, contrived to enjoy the fruits of slavery without meditating on its costs.

The movement for abolishing the slave trade that was launched in the 1780s challenged that willful ignorance. The abolitionists mobilized the power that the stories and poems they distributed had to break down the boundaries between "out there" and "in here"; they brought distant suffering and violence home. Almost every major poet working in the late eighteenth century wrote for their cause. (For proslavery writers, by contrast, prose was overwhelmingly the medium of choice.) In amassing, in an often lurid idiom, a dossier of national crime, this literature changed how the public thought about collective moral responsibility. It also evidenced the power that might accrue to those who harnessed the emergent force of mass literacy.

At its 1787 launch the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Trade in Slaves comprised only a small circle: Thomas Clarkson, most famously, the lawyer Granville Sharp, the Quaker publisher James Phillips, and a few others. Nonetheless, abolitionism fast became a popular movement. That same year, two-thirds of the adult male population of Manchester signed petitions calling on Parliament to investigate the trade. Later 300,000 families pledged to abstain from purchasing Caribbean sugar. Though marginalized by later historians, members of Britain's Black community, an impoverished group who at this time numbered ten to fifteen thousand, also found public voices in the struggle. There were Black writers such as Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cuguano and, before them, figures such as James Somerset, the enslaved man who had the audacity to test White men's law and so force the judiciary to declare outright, in the Mansfield Judgement of 1772, that in fact there was no legal basis for slavery on English ground.

It was difficult for these activists to parlay altered public opinion into legislative action. William Wilberforce, the society's chief representative in Parliament, was consistently outmaneuvered by proslavery politicians, who variously dismissed the witnesses he introduced, cited biblical precedents legitimizing modern slavery, or insisted that, thanks to their owners' benevolent care, West Indian slaves were better off than British laborers. His motions for abolition were repeatedly voted down or allowed to die in committee, defeats bitterly memorialized in Anna Letitia Barbauld's 1791 poem "Epistle to William Wilberforce" (on p. 45, above). The radical turn that revolutionary activity in France took in the 1790s proved another setback. Proslavery agitators seized the opportunity to portray abolition as dangerous to social stability. The petitioning among White British subjects that had occurred in the early stages of the abolitionist campaigning looked different in this altered context: a menacing attempt on the part of the governed to overawe their rightful governors. Then revolution in the French sugar colony of St.-Domingue (modern Haiti), led by the formerly enslaved commanders Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Toussaint Louverture, occasioned a new racist demonology: the carnage was decried as the inevitable consequence of recklessly introducing primitive minds to modern politics' "schemes of perfection." (See pp. 215–28, above.)

Nonetheless, subsequent events made apparent the penalties Britain would pay for continued support of colonial slavery. The few British soldiers who survived their tours of duty in the West Indies during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars returned with news of just how resolute an enemy enslaved people seeking their freedom could be. Napoleon's reintroduction of slavery into the French Empire in 1802 enabled supporters of abolition to parry the suggestion that the disruption of this lucrative British industry would aid Britain's commercial rivals: instead they could link support for their cause to the war effort. In 1807 Parliament at last voted for the slave trade's abolition.

Wishfully, Wilberforce, Clarkson, and their associates had proposed that with the ending of the trade, slavery itself would

disappear in due course. Many who opposed slavery as an institution felt advocating for legislation abolishing it outright was politically naïve; some contended an extended transition between slavery and emancipation would be preferable to abrupt change. Bloodily suppressed uprisings in Barbados (1816), Guyana (1823), and Jamaica (1831) were cited not only by pro-slavery writers but also by abolitionists who continued to argue, paternalistically, that enslaved populations were not yet ready for freedom: in an 1824 speech in Parliament, Foreign Secretary George Canning drew on Mary Shelley's novel, or likely its 1823 stage adaptation, to compare calls for immediate emancipation to Frankenstein's irresponsible creation of an out-of-control monster. A "gradualist" approach was built into the original title of the most prominent abolitionist organization of the 1820s and '30s: though it became popularly known as the London Anti-Slavery Society, it was founded in 1823 by leading campaigners including Wilberforce and Clarkson as the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions.

At the same time, more radical voices, coming from a variety of social and political positions, were making impassioned cases that slavery was a moral crime of such magnitude that to wait on reform or gradual change was itself criminal. To those impatient with gradualism, the successive rebellions in slave colonies were inevitable and understandable, evidence of the urgency of the cause. Operating in the scruffy milieu of London working-class radicalism, the Jamaica-born Black activist Robert Wedderburn linked the plights of English laborers and enslaved West Indians, provocatively representing both groups as political actors capable of organizing and overthrowing oppressive systems (testing the limits of permissible speech, Wedderburn was arrested in 1819 and sentenced in 1820 to two years' jail time for blasphemy and sedition). A different kind of transatlantic connection developed in the 1820s and '30s as "immediatism" gained traction among evangelicals, Quakers, and other Protestant congregations in both Britain and America, and especially through an international network

of women's antislavery societies, whose members engaged in extensive door-to-door canvassing to spread information and gain support. With legislative avenues in Parliament apparently blocked, they advocated alternative means of action through consumer boycotts and other pressure campaigns.

By the early 1830s, abolitionist strategy would shift considerably in favor of immediate emancipation. Graphic accounts of slavery's cruelties, including Mary Prince's autobiographical testimony of her harrowing experiences of enslavement in Bermuda (1831), helped move public opinion. After the 1832 reform of Parliament reduced the number of votes controlled by the West Indian interests, an Emancipation Bill was finally enacted in 1834—though even that mandated a period of gradual emancipation for slaves over six years old, while also richly compensating slaveholders for their "losses." (Full emancipation came in 1838.) British writers continued to contribute to antislavery activism after this point, with the focus now turned to the United States, where emancipation would of course not come until the Civil War.

The strategies for depicting violence, suffering, and retaliation that anti- and proslavery writers developed over the course of this long debate altered the cultural landscape. The influence of their writings is discernible throughout Romantic literature, in Romantic authors' apocalyptic imaginings, explorations of themes of guilt and confession, interest in the workings of pity, and consciousness of how language can fail in the face of atrocity. The texts that follow suggest the variety of moves writers made to galvanize the attention of the reading public.

JOHN NEWTON

John Newton (1725–1807) is remembered today as the author of "Amazing Grace," a beautiful hymn interwoven in complex ways with the history of slavery. By 1852 the hymn was so important to the tradition of African American gospel music that the novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe arranged for her enslaved hero in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to sing it at a moment of despondency. There is a second, conflicting way, though, in which "Amazing Grace" is linked to the history of slavery—through the biography of its author. When in 1779 Newton wrote "Faith's Review and Expectation" (as "Amazing Grace" was originally titled), he was already a celebrity minister in the Anglican Church, famous for the narrative of his spiritual awakening he had published in 1764. He was also a former captain of a slave ship, who during the 1750s had made three voyages down Africa's windward coast, doing so *after* his conversion. Late in life, Newton looked back at his slaver past a second time as he stepped forth in print as a champion of abolition. To read "Amazing Grace" alongside this book *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade* (1788), which Newton presented as his act of "public confession," is to see how Evangelical Christianity's themes of sin and redemption provided a framework for the abolitionists' political engagement. It suggests how the abolitionists' preoccupation with their own spiritual welfare would overshadow sometimes their consciousness of African suffering.

Faith's Review and Expectation (Amazing Grace)

Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound)
That sav'd a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears reliev'd;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believ'd!

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promis'd good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the vail,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God who call'd me here below,
Will be for ever mine.

1779

THOMAS CLARKSON

Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846) was merely seeking academic honors when he chanced to enter a Latin composition contest on the topic of slavery. However, the evidence the recent Cambridge graduate gathered to prepare his essay shocked him deeply. He won the prize and had an epiphany: "A thought came into my mind," he wrote, looking back in his riveting *History of the Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade* (1808), "that if the contents of the Essay were true, it was time some person should see these calamities to their end." Forgoing the church career that awaited him, Clarkson arranged to publish an English version of his essay and began traveling. This determined activist would cover 35,000 miles on horseback over the following seven years. He scoured England for witnesses who might testify to the suffering that slavery inflicted on its victims, a group that for Clarkson, as for Newton, included the working-class seamen who were often "impressed"—recruited by force—into its service. Sometimes at great risk to himself (the Liverpool merchants wanted him dead), he assembled the first comprehensive account of the slave trade. Whether by excavating ships' muster rolls stored in London's Custom House or inventorying the shackles, thumbscrews, and instruments for force feeding that he found for sale in Liverpool marine supply shops, Clarkson empowered abolitionism with hard facts. Clarkson's genius, however, also lay in his realization that antislavery writing would need to tap the resources of imaginative literature so as to bring those facts from faraway up close and prompt readers to reimagine themselves as witnesses to slavery's atrocities. Pivoting on what the author calls an "Imaginary scene in Africa" and an "Imaginary conversation with an African," the first text reprinted here, from the opening of part III of Clarkson's *Essay* (the revised 1788 edition), suggests his technique. In the second excerpt from his *Essay*, Clarkson first details the "accommodation" that the

enslaved people experienced during the Middle Passage and then tells the story of a particular voyage: that of the *Zong*, whose captain in September 1781 ordered more than a hundred enslaved Africans thrown overboard so that the ship's owners could collect on the insurance policy they had taken out on their cargo.

From Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species

From *Part III, Chapter 1 ("Imaginary conversation with an African")*

* * *

I shall suppose myself on a particular part of the continent of Africa, and relate a scene, which, from its agreement with unquestionable facts, might not unreasonably be presumed to have been presented to my view, had I been actually there.

And first, I will turn my eyes to the cloud of dust that is before me. It seems to advance rapidly, and, accompanied with dismal shrieks and yellings, to make the very air, that is above it, tremble as it rolls along. What can possibly be the cause? I will inquire of that melancholy African, who is walking dejected upon the shore; whose eyes are stedfastly fixed on the approaching object, and whose heart, if I can judge from the appearance of his countenance, must be greatly agitated.

"Alas!" says the the unhappy African, "the cloud that you see approaching, rises from a train of wretched slaves. They are going to the ships behind you. They are destined for the English colonies, and, if you will stay here but for a little time, you will see them pass. They arrived here about two days ago from the inland country. I saw the fleet come in, which had gone to fetch them, and, upon looking into the different canoes, found them lying at the bottom, their hands and feet being tied together. As soon as they were landed, they were conveyed to the houses of the black traders, which you see at a little distance, where they were immediately oiled, and fed, and made up for sale." * * *

We then discovered that the inhabitants of the depopulated village had all of them passed us, and that the part of the train, to which we were now opposite, was a body of kidnapped people. Here we indulged our imagination. We thought we beheld in one of them a father, in another an husband, and in another a son, each of whom was forced from his various and tender connections, and without

even the opportunity of bidding them adieu. While we were engaged in these and other melancholy reflections, the whole body of slaves had intirely passed us. We turned almost insensibly to look at them again, when we discovered an unhappy man at the end of the train, who could scarcely keep pace with the rest. His feet seemed to have suffered much, either from the fetters, which had confined them in the canoe, or from long and constant travelling, for he was limping painfully along.

"This man," resumes the African, "has travelled a considerable way. He lived at a great distance from hence, and had a large family, for whom he was daily to provide. As he went out one night to a neighbouring spring, to procure water for his thirsty children, he was kidnapped by two *slave-hunters*, who sold him in the morning to some country merchants for a *bar of iron.* These drove him with other slaves, procured almost in the same manner, to the nearest market, where some of the travelling traders purchased him for a *pistol.* These handed him down to the fair, from whence the canoes fetched him. His wife and children have been long waiting for his return. But he is gone for ever from their sight: and they must be now disconsolate, being certain by his delay, that he must have fallen into the hands of the *Christians.*"

"And now, as I have mentioned the name of *Christians*, a name, by which the Europeans distinguish themselves from us, I could wish to be informed of the meaning which such an appellation may convey. They consider themselves as *men*, but us unfortunate Africans, whom they term *Heathens*, as the beasts that serve us. But ah! how different is the fact! What is *Christianity*, but a system of *murder* and *oppression?* The cries and yells of the unfortunate people, who are now soon to embark for the regions of servitude, have already pierced my heart. Have you not heard me sigh while we have been talking? Do you not see the tears that now trickle down my cheeks? and yet these hardened *Christians* are unable to be moved at all: nay, they will scourge them amidst their groans, and even smile, while they are torturing them to death. Happy,

happy Heathenism! which can detest the vices of Christianity, and feel for the distresses of mankind."

"But" I reply, "You are totally mistaking: *Christianity* is the most perfect and lovely of moral systems. It blesses even the hand of persecution itself, and returns good for evil. But the people against whom you so justly declaim, are not *Christians.* They are *infidels.* They are *monsters.* They are out of the common course of nature. Their countrymen at home are generous and brave. They support the sick, the lame, and the blind. They fly to the succour of the distressed. They have noble and stately buildings for the sole purpose of benevolence. They are in short, of all nations, the most remarkable for humanity and justice."

"But why then," replies the honest African, "do they suffer this? Why is Africa a scene of blood and desolation? Why are her children wrested from her, to administer to the luxuries and greatness of those whom they never offended? And why are these dismal cries in vain?"

"Alas!" I reply again, "can the cries and groans, with which the air now trembles, be heard across this extensive continent? Can the southern winds convey them to the ear of Britain? If they could reach the generous Englishman at home, they would pierce his heart, as they have already pierced your own. He would sympathize with you in your distress. He would be enraged at the conduct of his countrymen, and resist their tyranny."—

But here a shriek unusually loud, accompanied with a dreadful rattling of chains, interrupted the discourse. * * *

From *Part III, Chapter 3 ("The dimensions of a slave vessel" and the* Zong *Incident)*

* * *

As much has been said by the advocates for this trade, of the accommodation which slaves experience during the middle passage, I shall say a few words on that head.

The height of their apartments varies of course according to the size of the vessel, but may be stated to be from six feet to less than three; so that it is impossible for them to stand erect in most of the vessels that transport them, and in some scarcely to sit down in the same posture.

In cases of this kind it is better to be explicit, and to mention particular facts. I shall therefore give the reader the dimensions of two vessels that sailed about six months ago, from a British port to the Coast of Africa, for slaves. I do not mean as tenders[1] to other ships, but to collect them on their own account, and to carry them to the colonies.

One of them was a vessel of *twenty-five* tons. The length of the upper part of the hold, or roof of the rooms where the slaves were to be confined, was thirty-one feet. The greatest breadth of the bottom or floor, was ten feet four inches, and the least five. The depth or height, was rather less than four. This vessel was calculated, and sailed for *seventy* slaves.

It is clear that none of the unfortunate people, perhaps at this moment on board, can stand upright, but that they must sit down, and contract their limbs within the limits of little more than three square feet, during the whole of the middle passage. I cannot compare the scene on board this vessel, to any other than that of a pen of sheep; with this difference only, that the one have the advantages of a wholesome air, while that, which the others breathe, is putrid.

The other vessel measured *eleven* tons. The length of the apartment for the slaves was twenty-two feet. The greatest breadth of the floor eight, and the least four. The depth was two feet eight inches. This vessel was calculated and sailed for *thirty* slaves.

Any person of a moderate height, standing upon dry ground, by the side of this vessel, might overlook every thing upon the deck; as her height from the keel to the beam was but five feet eight inches, three of which were engrossed by ballast, cargo, and provisions, and the rest was left for—*slaves.*

The only idea, that will perhaps strike the reader, in examining these dimensions, will be, that the apartment must be in shape and size, as well as in heat, similar to an *oven.* I know of no other object of just comparison; and to shew how preposterously the advocates for slavery talk, when they declaim upon the accommodations for slaves; this very *boat* was built for the pleasure and convenience of about *six* free people upon the Severn.[2]

If it should be said that the larger vessels have better accommodations, I reply, that it can only be in the height of the room, the slaves being stowed equally close. I assert farther, that in some of these they have not had so much room upon the floor by one square foot, as in those, which have been just specified; for I have known the number of slaves, which many of them have carried, and have had their apartments measured.

Being stowed then in the manner thus described, they soon begin to experience the effects, which might naturally be presumed to arise from their situation. In consequence of the pestilential breath of so many confined in so small a space, they become sickly, and from the vicissitude of heat and cold, of heat when confined below, and of cold when suddenly brought up for air, a flux[3] is generated. Whenever this disorder attacks them, no pen can be adequate to the task of describing their situation.

Imagine only for a moment the gratings to be opened, but particularly after a rain, which has occasioned them to be covered for some time.

The first scene that presents itself, is a cluster of unhappy people, who, overcome by excessive heat and stench, have fainted away.

The next that occurs, is that of one of them endeavouring to press forward to the light, to catch a mouthful of wholesome air, but hindered by the partner of his chains, who is lying dead at his feet, and whom he has not sufficient strength to drag after him.

The third is conspicuous in the instance of those, who are just on the point of fainting, and who are wallowing in the blood and mucus of the intestines, with which the floor is covered.

Such are the scenes, that universally present themselves in the case supposed; and how agonizing and insufferable their situation must have been during this period of their confinement, none, I believe, can possibly conceive, unless they had been the partners of their chains.

* * *

With respect to the conduct of the *receivers*, I shall mention an instance, which happened in September of the year 1781.

The captain of a ship, then on the middle passage, had lost a considerable number of his slaves by death. The mortality was still spreading, and so rapidly, that it was impossible to say either where, or when it would end. Thus circumstanced, and uneasy at the thought of the loss which was likely to accrue to his owners, he began to rack his ingenuity to repair it. He came at length to the diabolical resolution of selecting those that were the most sickly, and of throwing them into the sea: conceiving, that if he could plead a necessity for the deed, the loss would devolve from the owners to the underwriters of the vessel.

The plea, which he proposed to set up, was a want of water, though neither the seamen nor the slaves had been put upon short allowance.

Thus armed, as he imagined, with an invincible excuse, he began to execute his design. He selected accordingly *one hundred* and

thirty-two of the most sickly of the slaves. *Fifty-four* of these were immediately thrown into the sea, and *forty-two* were made to be partakers of their fate on the succeeding day.

But here, as if Providence expressly disapproved of the design, and had determined to cut off his excuse for sacrificing the rest, and exhibit a proof against him, a shower of rain immediately succeeded the transaction, and lasted for three days.

Notwithstanding this, the *remaining twenty-six* were brought upon deck to complete the number of victims, which avarice had at first determined to sacrifice to her shrine. The first sixteen submitted to be thrown into the sea; but the rest, with a noble resolution, would not suffer the contaminated *receivers* to touch them, but leapt after their companions, and shared their fate.

Thus was perpetrated a deed, unparalleled in the memory of man, or in the history of former times, and of so black and complicated a nature, that were it to be perpetuated to future generations, and to rest on the testimony of an individual, it could not possibly be believed.

I have now afforded a specimen, though in a manner inadequate to convey a just idea, of the different tragical scenes, that happen during the middle passage, and before the arrival of the vessels at their destined ports. To mention others, would be only to increase a painful, and to perform an unnecessary task. I shall therefore close my description here, sorry that, though I have studied to be concise, I should have felt myself obliged to lay open to the feelings of the reader, such a source of uneasiness and pain.

1788

Endnotes

- Note 1: Small supply boats.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: River that flows into the Bristol Channel in the west of England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Diarrhea or dysentery.Return to reference 3

WILLIAM COWPER

The life of William Cowper (1731–1800) was darkened by struggles with mental illness and, in later years, by his conviction of his certain damnation: his attempt at suicide in 1763 was, he believed, a sin for which no divine forgiveness could be obtained. Cowper sought relief from this knowledge of his outcast condition in country seclusion. Fleeing London, where he had studied law, in 1768 he settled with his friends the Unwins in rural Olney. There Cowper became a neighbor of John Newton, with whom he co-authored the *Olney Hymns* (1779). The poetry he published afterward, especially his long poem in meditative blank verse, *The Task* (1785), made him the most widely read poet of his generation, an inspiration for Charlotte Smith, Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. Also contributing to Cowper's fame were the handful of short poems supporting abolition that he published in the late 1780s. "The Negro's Complaint"—one of the most powerful of these poems thanks to its unsettling use of ballad form and its self-asserting speaker prophesying divine retribution—was commissioned by the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Trade in Slaves. They added the subtitle "A subject for conversation at the tea table" and arranged for thousands of copies to be printed and mailed across England.

The Negro’s Complaint

To the tune of “Hosier’s Ghost” or As near Porto Bello lying.[1]

Forced from Home and all its pleasures
  Afric’s coast I left forlorn,
To encrease a stranger’s treasures
  O’er the raging billows borne;
Men from England bought and sold me,
  Pay’d my price in paltry gold,
But though slave they have enroll’d me
  Minds are never to be sold.

Still in thought as free as ever
  What are England’s rights, I ask,
Me from my delights to sever,
  Me to torture, me to task?
Fleecy locks and black complexion
  Cannot forfeit Nature’s claim;
Skins may differ, but Affection
  Dwells in White and Black the same.

Why did all-creating Nature
  Make the plant for which we toil?
Sighs must fan it, tears must water,
  Sweat of ours must dress[2] the soil.
Think, ye Masters iron-hearted
  Lolling at your jovial boards,°
Think how many backs have smarted
  For the sweets your Cane affords.

Is there, as ye sometimes tell us,
  Is there One who reigns on high?

Has he bid you buy and sell us
Speaking from his throne the sky?
Ask him if your knotted scourges,
Matches, blood-extorting screws°
Are the means that Duty urges
Agents of his Will to use?

Hark—He answers. Wild tornadoes
Strewing yonder flood with wrecks,
Wasting Towns, Plantations, Meadows,
Are the voice with which he speaks.
He foreseeing what vexations
Afric's sons should undergo,
Fix'd their Tyrants' habitations
Where his whirlwinds answer—No.

By our blood in Afric wasted
'Ere our necks received the chain,
By the mis'ries that we tasted
Crossing in your barks° the main,°
By our suff'rings since ye brought us
To the man-degrading mart,
All sustain'd with patience taught us
Only by a broken heart—

Deem our nation Brutes no longer
'Till some reason ye shall find
Worthier of regard and stronger
Than the Colour of our Kind.
Slaves of Gold! Whose sordid dealings
Tarnish all your boasted pow'rs
Prove that *You* have Human Feelings
'Ere ye proudly question *Ours.*

1788 1789

Endnotes

- Note 1: The 18th-century ballad “Admiral Hosier’s Ghost,” by the poet Richard Glover, told the story of Francis Hosier’s 1726 blockade of the Spanish-controlled Porto Bello in the Caribbean, during which Hosier, along with thousands of his sailors, died from disease; that ballad had itself been set to a popular tune known as “The Sailor’s Complaint.”Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Fertilize. One thing that makes sugarcane production extraordinarily labor intensive is that sugarcane thrives only with heavy manuring.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *dining tables*Return to reference °
- °: *thumbscrews*Return to reference °
- °: *ships* Return to reference °
- °: *ocean*Return to reference °

OLAUDAH EQUIANO

"Written by Himself": the words concluding the title given to Equiano's 1789 memoir themselves make a statement about this African's literacy and membership in the community of rational argumentation. "The life of an African written by himself is certainly a curiosity," wrote Mary Wollstonecraft in her review, "as it has been a favourite philosophic whim to degrade the numerous nations, on whom the sun-beams more directly dart, . . . and hastily to conclude that nature . . . designed to stamp them with a mark of slavery." "Written by Himself" also encapsulates the challenge that his *Interesting Narrative* posed not only to British racism but also to the iconography of African passivity elaborated in many abolitionist writings. These tended to picture the slave trade's Black victims as recipients either of White people's malice or of their mercy: in this iconography suicide was Blacks' only self-assertive act.

Recent archival discoveries indicate that Equiano (ca. 1745–1797) must at some moments in his life have told people that he had been born in South Carolina. However, many scholars continue to accept the account of his upbringing he gives within his memoir. There he identifies himself as an African by birth and explains how his idyllic childhood in what is now modern Nigeria was brought to a traumatic end when he was kidnapped by slave traders. He was shipped first to Barbados and then to North America, ending up the property of a British naval officer. He remained six years in the service of Michael Pascal, obtaining some informal education and undergoing Christian baptism. In 1763 Pascal abruptly sold him, despite previously encouraging the young man in the belief that his service had already won him his liberty. Eventually, in 1766, the Quaker who was Equiano's next purchaser permitted him to buy his freedom. The price was £40, money that Equiano earned through the skillful trading he did on the side while laboring on this master's ships. As a freeman Equiano exercised many trades before turning author:

hairdresser, seaman aboard a polar expedition, even overseer on a Central American plantation founded on slave labor. After his return to London in 1779 he both became involved in the abolitionist campaign spearheaded by Clarkson and made allies among the working-class membership of the radical London Corresponding Society. He spent the final years of his life lecturing to promote abolition and his book, which went through multiple editions and brought Equiano the prosperity that enabled him to support in comfort his English wife and their two daughters.

Throughout the *Interesting Narrative*, which is simultaneously a travelogue, an intervention into the abolition debate, and a spiritual autobiography, Equiano construes the events of his life as a series of providential deliverances. It is part of the complex art of his narrative that, however extensive these debts to God, he comes across, as well, as one of the period's most resolute self-made men.

From The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself

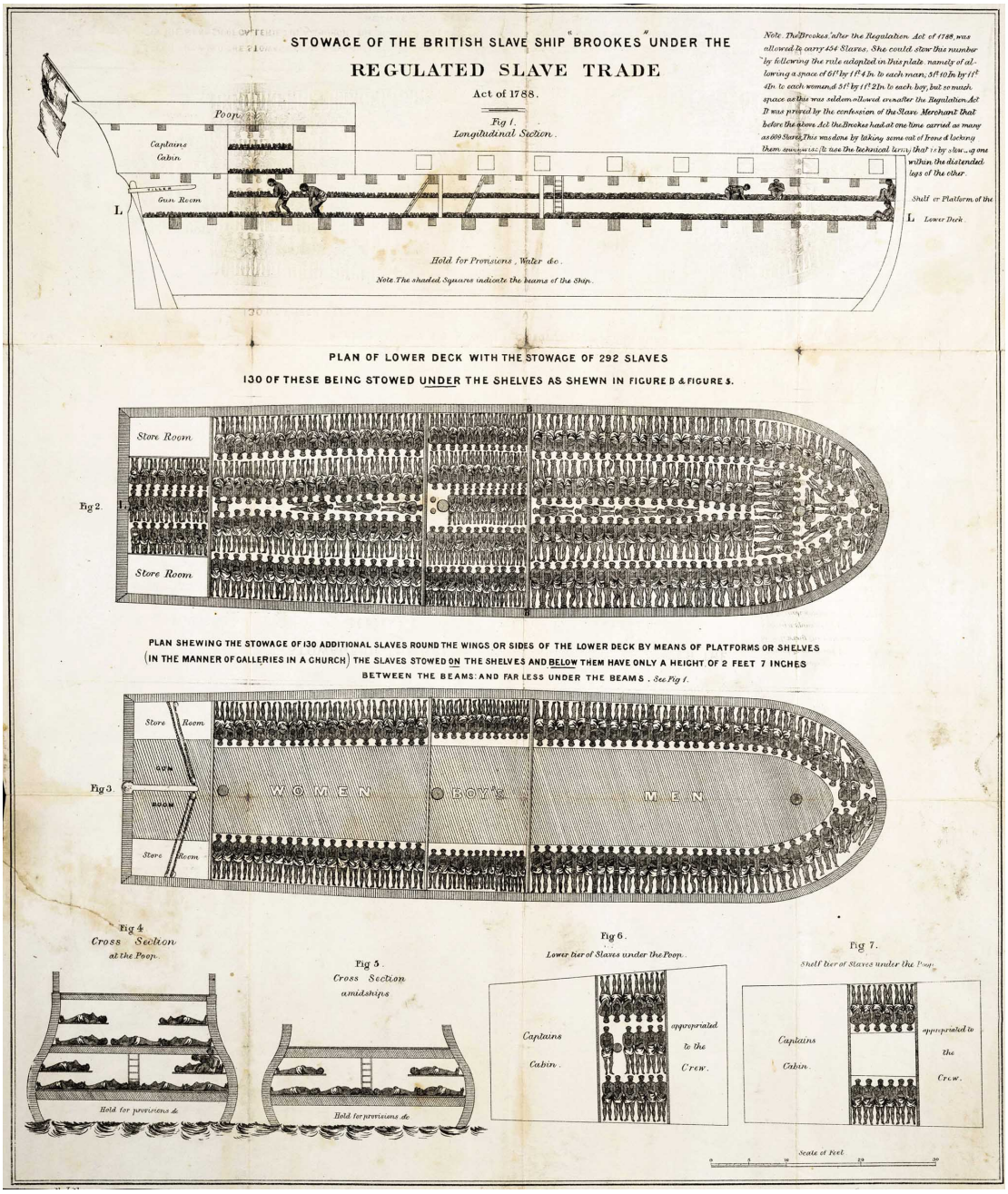
From *Chapter 3*

[FROM VIRGINIA TO ENGLAND]

We were landed up a river a good way from the sea, about Virginia county, where we saw few or none of our native Africans, and not one soul who could talk to me.[1] I was a few weeks weeding grass, and gathering stones in a plantation; and at last all my companions were distributed different ways, and only myself was left. I was now exceedingly miserable, and thought myself worse off than any of the rest of my companions; for they could talk to each other, but I had no person to speak to that I could understand. In this state I was constantly grieving and pining and wishing for death rather than any thing else. While I was in this plantation the gentleman, to whom I suppose the estate belonged, being unwell, I was one day sent for to his dwelling house to fan him; when I came into the room where he was I was very much affrighted at some things I saw, and the more so as I had seen a black woman slave as I came through the house, who was cooking the dinner, and the poor creature was cruelly loaded with various kinds of iron machines; she had one particularly on her head, which locked her mouth so fast that she could scarcely speak; and could not eat nor drink. I was much astonished and shocked at this contrivance, which I afterwards learned was called the iron muzzle. Soon after I had a fan put into my hand, to fan the gentleman while he slept; and so I did indeed with great fear. While he was fast asleep I indulged myself a great deal in looking about the room, which to me appeared very fine and curious. The first object that engaged my attention was a watch which hung on the chimney and was going. I was quite surprised at the noise it made, and was afraid it would tell the gentleman any thing I might do amiss: and when I immediately after observed a picture hanging in the room, which appeared constantly to look at me, I was still more affrighted, having never seen such things as these before. At one time I thought it was something relative to magic; and not seeing it

move I thought it might be some way the whites had to keep their great men when they died, and offer them libation as we used to do to our friendly spirits. In this state of anxiety I remained till my master awoke, when I was dismissed out of the room, to my no small satisfaction and relief; for I thought that these people were all made up of wonders. In this place I was called Jacob; but on board the African snow[2] was called Michael. I had been some time in this miserable, forlorn, and much dejected state, without having any one to talk to, which made my life a burden, when the kind and unknown hand of the Creator (who in very deed leads the blind in a way they know not) now began to appear, to my comfort; for one day the captain of a merchant ship, called the Industrious Bee, came on some business to my master's house. This gentleman, whose name was Michael Henry Pascal, was a lieutenant in the royal navy, but now commanded this trading ship, which was somewhere in the confines of the county many miles off. While he was at my master's house it happened that he saw me, and liked me so well that he made a purchase of me. I think I have often heard him say he gave thirty or forty pounds sterling for me; but I do not now remember which. However, he meant me for a present to some of his friends in England: and I was sent accordingly from the house of my then master, one Mr. Campbell, to the place where the ship lay; I was conducted on horseback by an elderly black man (a mode of travelling which appeared very odd to me). When I arrived I was carried on board a fine large ship, loaded with tobacco, &c. and just ready to sail for England. I now thought my condition much mended; I had sails to lie on, and plenty of good victuals to eat; and every body on board used me very kindly, quite contrary to what I had seen of any white people before; I therefore began to think that they were not all of the same disposition. A few days after I was on board we sailed for England. I was still at a loss to conjecture my destiny. By this time, however, I could smatter a little imperfect English; and I wanted to know as well as I could where we were going. Some of the people of the ship used to tell me they were going to carry me back to my own country, and this made me very happy. I was quite rejoiced at the sound of going back; and thought if I should get

home what wonders I should have to tell. But I was reserved for another fate, and was soon undeceived when we came within sight of the English coast. While I was on board this ship, my captain and master named me *Gustavus Vasa.*[3] I at that time began to understand him a little, and refused to be called so, and told him as well as I could that I would be called Jacob; but he said I should not, and still called me Gustavus; and when I refused to answer to my new name, which at first I did, it gained me many a cuff; so at length I submitted, and was obliged to bear the present name, by which I have been known ever since.



The Slave Ship *Brookes.* This engraving of the plan of a Liverpool-based slave ship, stowed with its human cargo, was published in 1789 by the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Trade in Slaves and made, Thomas Clarkson recalled, "an instantaneous impression of horror upon all who saw it."

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* * *

It was about the beginning of the spring 1757 when I arrived in England; and I was near twelve years of age at that time. I was very much struck with the buildings and the pavement of the streets in Falmouth:[4] and, indeed, any object I saw filled me with new surprise. One morning, when I got upon deck, I saw it covered all over with the snow that fell over-night: as I had never seen any thing of the kind before, I thought it was salt; so I immediately ran down to the mate and desired him, as well as I could, to come and see how somebody in the night had thrown salt all over the deck. He, knowing what it was, desired me to bring some of it down to him: accordingly I took up a handful of it, which I found very cold indeed; and when I brought it to him he desired me to taste it. I did so, and I was surprised beyond measure. I then asked him what it was; he told me it was snow: but I could not in anywise understand him. He asked me if we had no such thing in my country; and I told him, No. I then asked him the use of it, and who made it; he told me a great man in the heavens, called God: but here again I was to all intents and purposes at a loss to understand him; and the more so, when a little after I saw the air filled with it, in a heavy shower, which fell down on the same day. After this I went to church; and having never been at such a place before, I was again amazed at seeing and hearing the service. I asked all I could about it; and they gave me to understand it was worshipping God, who made us and all things. I was still at a great loss, and soon got into an endless field of inquiries, as well as I was able to speak and ask about things. However, my little friend Dick[5] used to be my best interpreter; for I could make free with him, and he always instructed me with pleasure: and from what I could understand by him of this God, and in seeing these white people did not sell one another, as we did, I was much pleased; and in this I thought they were much happier than we Africans. I was astonished at the wisdom of the white people in all things I saw; but was amazed at their not sacrificing, or making any offerings, and eating with unwashed hands, and touching the dead. I likewise could not help remarking the particular slenderness of their women, which I did not at first like; and I

thought they were not so modest and shamefaced as the African women.

I had often seen my master and Dick employed in reading; and I had a great curiosity to talk to the books, as I thought they did; and so to learn how all things had a beginning: for that purpose I have often taken up a book, and have talked to it, and then put my ears to it, when alone, in hopes it would answer me; and I have been very much concerned when I found it remained silent.

My master lodged at the house of a gentleman in Falmouth, who had a fine little daughter about six or seven years of age, and she grew prodigiously fond of me; insomuch that we used to eat together, and had servants to wait on us. I was so much caressed by this family that it often reminded me of the treatment I had received from my little noble African master.[6] After I had been here a few days, I was sent on board of the ship; but the child cried so much after me that nothing could pacify her till I was sent for again. It is ludicrous enough, that I began to fear I should be betrothed to this young lady; and when my master asked me if I would stay there with her behind him, as he was going away with the ship, which had taken in the tobacco again, I cried immediately, and said I would not leave her. At last, by stealth, one night I was sent on board the ship again; and in a little time we sailed for Guernsey, where she was in part owned by a merchant, one Nicholas Doberry. As I was now amongst a people who had not their faces scarred, like some of the African nations where I had been, I was very glad I did not let them ornament me in that manner when I was with them. When we arrived at Guernsey, my master placed me to board and lodge with one of his mates, who had a wife and family there; and some months afterwards he went to England, and left me in care of this mate, together with my friend Dick: This mate had a little daughter, aged about five or six years, with whom I used to be much delighted. I had often observed that when her mother washed her face it looked very rosy; but when she washed mine it did not look so: I therefore tried oftentimes myself if I could not by washing make my face of the same colour as my little play-mate (Mary), but it

was all in vain; and I now began to be mortified at the difference in our complexions.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: We pick up Equiano's story when, a young boy, having survived the voyage from Africa, he commences his life as an enslaved person on a Virginia plantation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A two-masted vessel equipped with an additional half-mast.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: After the Swedish nobleman (1496–1560) who led a successful revolt against Danish rule of his country and became Sweden's king.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Harbor town on England's southwest coast.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Richard Baker, the White American boy who befriended Equiano during the voyage from Virginia.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Before being traded to the Englishmen who would convey him across the Atlantic, Equiano had been enslaved in an African household, where he became the playmate of the son.Return to reference 6

From *Chapter 4*

[SOLD AGAIN]

I thought now of nothing but being freed, and working for myself, and thereby getting money to enable me to get a good education; for I always had a great desire to be able at least to read and write; and while I was on ship-board I had endeavoured to improve myself in both. While I was in the *Æ*tna[7] particularly, the captain's clerk taught me to write, and gave me a smattering of arithmetic as far as the rule of three. There was also one Daniel Queen, about forty years of age, a man very well educated, who messed with me[8] on board this ship, and he likewise dressed and attended the captain. Fortunately this man soon became very much attached to me, and took very great pains to instruct me in many things. He taught me to shave and dress hair a little, and also to read in the Bible, explaining many passages to me, which I did not comprehend. I was wonderfully surprised to see the laws and rules of my country written almost exactly here; a circumstance which I believe tended to impress our manners and customs more deeply on my memory. I used to tell him of this resemblance; and many a time we have sat up the whole night together at this employment. In short, he was like a father to me; and some even used to call me after his name; they also styled me the black Christian. Indeed I almost loved him with the affection of a son. Many things I have denied myself that he might have them; and when I used to play at marbles or any other game, and won a few halfpence, or got any little money, which I sometimes did, for shaving any one, I used to buy him a little sugar or tobacco, as far as my stock of money would go. He used to say, that he and I never should part; and that, when our ship was paid off, as I was as free as himself or any other man on board, he would instruct me in his business, by which I might gain a good livelihood. This gave me new life and spirits; and my heart burned within me, while I thought the time long till I obtained my freedom. For though

my master had not promised it to me, yet, besides the assurances I had received that he had no right to detain me, he always treated me with the greatest kindness, and reposed in me an unbounded confidence; he even paid attention to my morals; and would never suffer me to deceive him, or tell lies, of which he used to tell me the consequences; and that if I did so God would not love me; so that, from all this tenderness, I had never once supposed, in all my dreams of freedom, that he would think of detaining me any longer than I wished.

In pursuance of our orders we sailed from Portsmouth for the Thames, and arrived at Deptford[9] the 10th of December, where we cast anchor just as it was high water. The ship was up about half an hour, when my master ordered the barge to be manned; and all in an instant, without having before given me the least reason to suspect any thing of the matter, he forced me into the barge; saying, I was going to leave him, but he would take care I should not. I was so struck with the unexpectedness of this proceeding, that for some time I did not make a reply, only I made an offer to go for my books and chest of clothes, but he swore I should not move out of his sight; and if I did he would cut my throat, at the same time taking his hanger.[1] I began, however, to collect myself; and, plucking up courage, I told him I was free, and he could not by law serve me so. But this only enraged him the more; and he continued to swear, and said he would soon let me know whether he would or not, and at that instant sprung himself into the barge from the ship, to the astonishment and sorrow of all on board. The tide, rather unluckily for me, had just turned downward, so that we quickly fell down the river along with it, till we came among some outward-bound West Indiamen; for he was resolved to put me on board the first vessel he could get to receive me. The boat's crew, who pulled against their will, became quite faint different times, and would have gone ashore; but he would not let them. Some of them strove then to cheer me, and told me he could not sell me, and that they would stand by me, which revived me a little; and I still entertained hopes; for as they pulled along he asked some vessels to receive me, but

they could not. But, just as we had got a little below Gravesend, we came alongside of a ship which was going away the next tide for the West Indies; her name was the Charming Sally, Captain James Doran; and my master went on board and agreed with him for me; and in a little time I was sent for into the cabin. When I came there Captain Doran asked me if I knew him; I answered that I did not; "Then," said he "you are now my slave." I told him my master could not sell me to him, nor to any one else. "Why," said he, "did not your master buy you?" I confessed he did. "But I have served him," said I, "many years, and he has taken all my wages and prize-money,[2] for I only got one sixpence during the war; besides this I have been baptized;[3] and by the laws of the land no man has a right to sell me:" And I added, that I had heard a lawyer and others at different times tell my master so. They both then said that those people who told me so were not my friends; but I replied—it was very extraordinary that other people did not know the law as well as they. Upon this Captain Doran said I talked too much English; and if I did not behave myself well, and be quiet, he had a method on board to make me. I was too well convinced of his power over me to doubt what he said; and my former sufferings in the slaveship presenting themselves to my mind, the recollection of them made me shudder.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 7: Pascal was given command of this Royal Navy ship in 1759, at the height of the Seven Years' War with France.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Dined together, as a fellow member of the crew.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Site of the Royal Dockyards on the Thames River, east of London. Portsmouth is a port on England's south coast.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Short sword.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Ships captured in naval battles were sold, along with their cargoes, and the money was distributed among the victorious crew as prizes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Though it had been formally repudiated in 1729 in a legal opinion issued by England's attorney general and solicitor general, the belief that their baptism as Christians should automatically release individuals from slavery persisted.Return to reference 3

From *Chapter 5*

[CRUELTY OF THE WEST INDIAN PLANTERS]

On the 13th of February 1763, from the mast-head, we descried our destined island Montserrat; and soon after I beheld those

> "Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can rarely dwell. Hope never comes
> That comes to all, but torture without end
> Still urges."[4]

At the sight of this land of bondage, a fresh horror ran through all my frame, and chilled me to the heart. My former slavery now rose in dreadful review to my mind, and displayed nothing but misery, stripes, and chains; and, in the first paroxysm of my grief, I called upon God's thunder, and his avenging power, to direct the stroke of death to me, rather than permit me to become a slave, and be sold from lord to lord.

* * *

While I was in Montserrat I knew a negro man, named Emanuel Sankey, who endeavoured to escape from his miserable bondage, by concealing himself on board of a London ship: but fate did not favour the poor oppressed man; for, being discovered when the vessel was under sail, he was delivered up again to his master. This *Christian master* immediately pinned the wretch down to the ground at each wrist and ancle, and then took some sticks of sealing wax, and lighted them, and dropped it all over his back. There was another master who was noted for cruelty; and I believe he had not a slave but what had been cut, and had pieces fairly taken out of the flesh: and, after they had been punished thus, he used to make them get into a long wooden box or case he had for that purpose, in

which he shut them up during pleasure. It was just about the height and breadth of a man; and the poor wretches had no room, when in the case, to move.

It was very common in several of the islands, particularly in St. Kitt's, for the slaves to be branded with the initial letters of their master's name; and a load of heavy iron hooks hung about their necks. Indeed on the most trifling occasions they were loaded with chains; and often instruments of torture were added. The iron muzzle, thumb screws, &c. are so well known, as not to need a description, and were sometimes applied for the slightest faults. I have seen a negro beaten till some of his bones were broken, for even letting a pot boil over. Is it surprising that usage like this should drive the poor creatures to despair, and make them seek a refuge in death from those evils which render their lives intolerable—while,

> "With shuddering horror pale, and eyes aghast,
> They view their lamentable lot, and find
> No rest!"[5]

1789

Endnotes

- Note 4: From Milton's description of Hell: *Paradise Lost* 1.65–68, slightly misquoted (where Milton wrote "never," Equiano writes "rarely").Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Again citing Milton's description of Hell: *Paradise Lost* 2.616–18. The merchant to whom, after their arrival in Montserrat, Captain Doran sells Equiano eventually permits him to purchase his freedom.Return to reference 5

HANNAH MORE AND EAGLESFIELD SMITH

The complicated publication history of "The Sorrows of Yamba" hints at how the abolitionist cause could yoke together people from divergent backgrounds and with conflicting political views. The poem was long identified as a work by Hannah More (1745–1833), an author who began her career as a playwright, but who in the 1780s, prompted by her growing Evangelicalism and the spiritual counsel of John Newton, turned her formidable energies instead to charity work and didactic and polemical writings. Some of these writings urged moral reformation on fashionable ladies. Others aimed to inculcate habits of piety, industry, and submissiveness in the newly literate poor and to steer them away from the ideas of equality filling books such as Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man.* "The Sorrows of Yamba" debuted in print as part of the "Cheap Repository," a series of tracts targeting this sector of the reading public that More and her sisters began publishing anonymously in 1795. Philanthropists bought up millions of these tracts, priced at a halfpence or penny each, so as to distribute their "entertaining" yet "useful" stories and ballads in Sunday schools, workhouses, and prisons; an Anglican bishop sent trunkfuls to the West Indies. Romanticist scholar Alan Richardson has discovered, however, that the Cheap Repository version of "The Sorrows" reworks a poem that Scottish author Eaglesfield Smith (ca. 1770–1838) appears to have sent to More in manuscript form and which he subsequently republished in the *Universal Magazine* in 1797, perhaps to reassert his authorship. Little is known about Smith, but another of his poems suggests a sympathy for the French Revolution that More would have deplored. More's far-reaching alterations of Smith's original poem converted a tragedy to a conversion narrative. The missionary who appears at line 81 in time to rescue Yamba from suicide and to redeem the reputation of White Englishmen is her invention.

From The Sorrows of Yamba; or, The Negro Woman's Lamentation

To the Tune of *Hosier's Ghost*

In St. Lucie's distant isle,[1]
  Still with Afric's love I burn;
Parted many a thousand mile,
  Never, never to return.

Come, kind death! and give me rest;
  Yamba has no friend but thee;
Thou canst ease my throbbing breast;
  Thou canst set the Prisoner free.

Down my cheeks the tears are dripping,
  Broken is my heart with grief;
Mangled my poor flesh with whipping,
  Come, kind Death! and bring relief.

Born on Afric's golden coast,
  Once I was as blest as you;
Parents tender I could boast,
  Husband dear, and children too.

Whity man he came from far,
  Sailing o'er the briny flood;
Who, with help of British Tar,°
  Buys up human flesh and blood.

With the baby, at my breast
  (Other two were sleeping by)
In my hut I sat at rest,

With no thought of danger nigh.

From the bush at even-tide,
Rush'd the fierce man-stealing crew;
Seiz'd the children by my side,
Seiz'd the wretched Yamba too.

Then for love of filthy gold,
Strait they bore me to the sea,
Cramm'd me down a Slave-ship's hold,
Where were hundreds stow'd like me.

Naked on the platform lying,
Now we cross the tumbling wave;
Shrieking, sickening, fainting, dying;
Deed of shame for Britons brave!

At the savage Captain's beck,
Now, like brutes, they make us prance;
Smack the cat[2] about the deck,
And in scorn they bid us dance.

Nauseous horse-beans they bring nigh,
Sick and sad we cannot eat;
Cat must cure the sulks, they cry,
Down their throats we'll force the meat.

I, in groaning pass'd the night,
And did roll my aching head;
At the break of morning light,
My poor child was cold and dead.

Happy, happy, there she lies;
Thou shalt feel the lash no more;
Thus full many a Negro dies,
Ere we reach the destin'd shore.

Thee, sweet infant, none shall sell;
Thou hast gain'd a wat'ry grave;
Clean escap'd the tyrants fell,
While thy mother lives a slave.

* * *

Mourning thus my wretched state
(Ne'er may I forget the day)
Once in dusk of evening late,
Far from home I dar'd to stray.

Dar'd, alas! with impious haste,
Tow'rds the roaring sea to fly;
Death itself I long'd to taste,
Long'd to cast me in and die.

There I met upon the Strand,°
English Missionary good;
He had Bible book in hand,
Which poor me no understood.

Led by pity from afar,
He had left his native ground;
Thus, if some inflict a scar,
Others fly to cure the wound.

Strait he pull'd me from the shore,
Bid me no self-murder do;
Talk'd of state when life is o'er,
All from Bible good and true.

Then he led me to his cot,°
Sooth'd and pitied all my woe;
Told me 'twas the Christian's lot,
Much to suffer here below.

Told me then of God's dear Son,
(Strange and wond'rous is the story)
What sad wrong to him was done,
Tho' he was the Lord of Glory

Told me, too, like one who knew him,
(Can such love as this be true?)
How he died for them that slew him,
Died for wretched Yamba too.

* * *

Now I'll bless my cruel capture,
(Hence I've known a Saviour's name)
Till my grief is turn'd to rapture,
And I half forget the blame.

But tho' here a Convert rare,
Thanks her God for Grace divine;
Let not man the glory share;
Sinner, still the guilt is thine.

Here an injured Slave forgives,
There a host for vengeance cry;
Here a single Yamba lives,
There a thousand droop and die.

* * *

1795, 1797

Endnotes

- Note 1: Saint Lucia, island in the eastern Caribbean Sea, claimed through the 18th century by both Britain and France.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Whip called the “cat o’ nine tails.”Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *sailor*Return to reference °
- °: *beach*Return to reference °
- °: *cottage*Return to reference °

WILLIAM COBBETT

The *Political Register*, a digest of news combined with commentary that appeared weekly from 1802 until 1835, made William Cobbett (1763–1835) the most influential British journalist of the nineteenth century. The paper began as a loyalist organ, but, over time, as Cobbett came to support parliamentary reform, it morphed into the vehicle for an increasingly heated criticism of the government. When Cobbett launched a broadside version of the *Political Register* in 1816, priced at two pence to target working-class readers, his former allies condemned him for "poisoning the minds of the people." In this long, varied career, Cobbett's loathing for William Wilberforce was one of the few constants, with another being Cobbett's suspicion of the abolitionist cause embraced by Wilberforce and his fellow Evangelical do-gooders: mere sentimentalism, or even a plot, Cobbett sometimes implied, to direct attention away from the plight of English workers—"poor white slaves in this kingdom." A *Political Register* essay from 1823 called on Wilberforce to ponder the lives of factory workers paid starvation wages, "and then believe, if you can, . . . that we shall think you a man of humanity, making as you do such a bawling about [the Blacks'] imaginary sufferings, and saying not a word about the sufferings of . . . your own country people." Olaudah Equiano's career illustrated how working-class radicalism and abolition could be fused (see p. 542, above), but Cobbett, convinced of Africans' racial inferiority, would not contemplate such solidarity. The editorial excerpted here appeared in the *Political Register* in the first year of its run, just as the parliamentary campaign for abolition was reviving. It takes the form of a letter that Cobbett claims to have sent six years earlier to the bishop of Rochester, warning this member of the House of Lords of dire consequences should the Abolition Bill pass.

From Slave Trade

* * *

That the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament authorize a slave trade, your lordship dares not deny; nay, my lord, you must allow they do more. Under the law, the slave trade is in a manner commanded by God Almighty, and under the Gospel dispensation, the holding in slavery persons purchased as slaves, is not only mentioned by our blessed Saviour and his apostles, without censure or disapprobation, but rules are given by St. Paul and 1st Peter, how slaves ought to demean themselves to their masters.

* * *

If the purchasing slaves be now inhuman and unjust, it must always have been so; and the keeping persons in slavery, so unjustly acquired, must have been equally so: and your lordship must either allow the purchase and possession of slaves to be consistent with the law of God (unless you can shew when that law was abrogated) or acknowledge that the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints, confessors, fathers, and bishops of the church of God, both under the law and the Gospel, who have purchased, sold, or possessed slaves (bond men and bond maids), have acted with cruelty, oppression, inhumanity, and injustice. Such an opinion would be directly contrary to those doctrines which your lordship teaches, and which you and Mr. Wilberforce profess to believe.

This notable discovery, of the inhumanity and injustice of the slave trade, has never been made until the present aera of anarchy and confusion, wherein impious men have presumed to set up their own ideas of humanity and justice (in contradiction to the laws of God) as the standard of perfection.

* * *

It may have hitherto escaped your lordship's attention, that the present attack on the property and reputation of the West-India planters, and the African merchants, originates from the same set of people who, one hundred and fifty years ago, voted peers and bishops to be useless. Do you think, my lord, these people to have so far changed their principles, as not to have as strong an inclination as formerly, "to bind kings in chains, and nobles in links of iron?"[1] Can you, my Lord, suppose these people less capable of injuring your lordships than they were, in the middle of the last century, because they have for their allies the philosophers, the illuminers, the atheists, and the jacobins of France? What these people have been capable of, they have already shewn you; they have availed themselves of the mistaken zeal of Mr. Wilberforce, the humane society in the Old Jewry,[2] and their missionary, the Rev. Mr. Clarkson, in preaching the doctrines of liberty and equality to the negroes.

Under pretence of abolishing slavery, and the slave trade, they have not only been the means of spreading ruin and desolation throughout the French West-India colonies, and in some of those belonging to Great-Britain (*St. Vincent's* and *Grenada*), inhabited by Frenchmen; but also of abolishing the Christian religion; imprisoning, banishing, or murdering nobles, bishops, and priests; and, as heretofore, of converting churches, and other buildings dedicated to religion, into arsenals, stables, and slaughter-houses; while the rents, revenues, and tythes of peers, bishops, and priests, have been the reward of the spoilers.

My Lord, the principal means whereby the anarchists of France have been enabled to effect their dreadful, rebellious, and anti-christian purposes, were by encouraging a disbelief of the sacred Scriptures, and revealed religion. Will the setting at naught and slighting the authority of the Scriptures (which are a strong support of our claim of right to buy slaves), strengthen that belief in them,

which is the best and surest foundation on which the title of your lordships to the respect of the laity is built?

* * *

1796?Endnotes 1802

- Note 1: A reference to the dismantling of the Anglican Church that occurred during Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, at the height of Puritan power in England (1649–60). The quotation is from Psalms 149:8, often cited as a description of the Puritans' goals.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Name of the street in the City of London where the Committee for Effecting the Abolition of the Trade in Slaves was headquartered.Return to reference 2

ROBERT WEDDERBURN

From October to December 1817 Robert Wedderburn (1762?–1835?) published a weekly periodical, priced at three and half pence per issue, that he dedicated to the intertwined causes of antislavery and working-class resistance: *The Axe Laid to the Root, or a Fatal Blow to Oppressors, Being an Address to the Planters and Negroes of Jamaica.* His title alludes to a line in the Gospel of Luke (6:9) in which John the Baptist warns the people against the wrath to come. It also calls to mind Thomas Paine, who in works such as *Rights of Man* (see p. 206, above) often resorted to this New Testament metaphor for the eradication of an old order. Historians of English radicalism often instance Wedderburn's life when they document how the revolutionary energies of the 1790s survived in Britain into the mid-nineteenth century despite a draconian government crackdown. Though nominally addressed to White and Black Jamaicans, Wedderburn's writings spoke powerfully to the impoverished Londoners among whom he lived for most of his adult life. He presented Afro-Carib people's battles for freedom as an inspiration the English poor might draw on when they turned against their oppressors.

Born in Jamaica, Wedderburn was the son of an African-born enslaved woman and the Scottish doctor and plantation owner who held her as property. Manumitted in early childhood by his father, though never acknowledged by him as his son, Wedderburn made his way to England by way of war service in the Royal Navy. Arriving in London around 1779 or 1780, he took up the trade of journeyman tailor, while also throwing himself (despite his lack of formal education) into the theological controversies of the day. Eventually he obtained a license to preach as a Unitarian minister. In that guise, he ran a chapel—located in a hayloft in a seedy London neighborhood—that also served as a debating club, where, after paying a small admission fee, people gathered to listen to

Wedderburn and others debate such questions as "Has a slave an Inherent right to slay his master who refuses him his liberty?" and "Which of the two parties are likely to be victorious, the Rich or the Poor, in the event of Universal War?" Readers today are positioned to appreciate Wedderburn's oratorical gifts thanks—ironically enough—to the written transcripts made by the spies who infiltrated radical sites of sociability and then reported back to the government. The writings comprising *The Axe* retain something of the rough energy that magnetized Wedderburn's listeners—and evidently were meant to be read aloud. We include two prose pieces from the periodical's first number.

From The Axe Laid to the Root

To the Editor.[1]

Be it known to the world, that, I Robert Wedderburn, son of James Wedderburn, esq. of Inveresk, near Musselborough, by Rosannah his slave, whom he sold to James Charles Shalto Douglas, esq. in the parish of St. Mary, in the island of Jamaica, while pregnant with the said Wedderburn, who was not held as a slave, (a provision being made in the agreement, that the child when born should be free.) This Wedderburn, doth charge all potentates, governors, and governments of every description with felony, who does wickedly violate the sacred rights of man—by force of arms, or otherwise, seizing the persons of men and dragging them from their native country, and selling their stolen persons and generations—Wedderburn demands, in the name of God, in the name of natural justice, and in the name of humanity, that all slaves be set free; for innocent individuals are entitled to the protection of civil society; and that all stealers, receivers, and oppressors in this base practic be forgiven, as the crime commenced in the days of ignorance, and is now exposed in the enlightened age of reason.

Oh, ye oppressed, use no violence to your oppressors, convince the world you are rational beings, follow not the example of St. Domingo, let not your jubilee, which will take place, be stained with the blood of your oppressors, leave revengeful practices for European kings and ministers.[2]

My advice to you, is, to appoint a day wherein you will all pretend to sleep one hour beyond the appointed time of your rising to labour; let the appointed day be twelve months before it takes place; let it be talked of in your market place, and on the roads. The universality of your sleeping and non-resistance, will strike terror to your oppressors. Go to your labour peaceably after the hour is expired; and repeat it once a year, till you obtain your liberty. Union

among you, will strike tremendous terror to the receivers of stolen persons. But do not petition, for it is degrading to human nature to petition your oppressors. Above all, mind and keep possession of the land you now possess as slaves;[3] for without that, freedom is not worth possessing; for if you once give up the possession of your lands, your oppressors will have power to starve you to death, through making laws for their own accommodation; which will force you to commit crimes in order to obtain subsistance: as the landholders in Europe are serving those that are dispossessed of lands: for it is a fact, that thousands of families are now in a starving state; the prisons are full: humanity impells the executive power to withdraw the sentence of death on criminals, whilst the landholders, in fact, are surrounded with every necessary of life. Take warning by the sufferings of the European poor, and never give up your lands you now possess, for it is your right by God and nature, for the "earth was given to the children of men."[4]

Oh, ye christians, you are convinced of the crime of stealing human beings; and some have put a stop to it. By law, give up the stolen families in possession, and perfect your repentance. I call on a mighty people, and their sovereign, to burst the chains of oppression, and let the oppressed go free, says "the Lord;" and so says Wedderburn the deluded Spencean. Oh, ye Africans and relatives now in bondage to the Christians, because you are innocent and poor; receive this the only tribute the offspring of an African can give, for which, I may ere long be lodged in a prison, without even a trial; for it is a crime now in England to speak against oppression.

Dear countrymen and relatives, it is natural to expect you will enquire what is meant by a deluded Spencean; I must inform you it is a title given by ignorant or self-interested men, to the followers of one Thomas Spence,[5] who knew that the earth was given to the children of men, making no difference for colour or character, just or unjust; and that any person calling a piece of land his own private property, was a criminal; and though they may sell it, or will it to their children, it is only transferring of that which was first obtained by force or fraud, this old truth, newly discovered, has completely

terrified the landholders in England, and confounded the Attorney General and the Crown Lawyers; and what is more alarming, it is not in the power of the legislature, with all their objections to the doctrines to make a law to prevent the publishing of self evident truths, while a shadow of the British Constitution remains. The landholders, whose interest it is to oppose, is driven to the necessity of falsefying and misrepresenting the motives of the disciples of Spence; but truth once known, will dispel falsehood, as the rising sun excludes darkness.

Your humble servant being a Spencean Philanthropist, is proud to wear the name of a madman; if the landholders please, they may call me a traitor, or one who is possessed with the spirit of Beelzebub.[6] What can the landholders, priests or lawyers say, or do more than they did against Christ; yet, his doctrine is on record, which says "woe unto them that add house to house, or field to field."[7] When you are exorted to hold the land, and never give it up to your oppressors, you are not told to hold it as private property, but as tenants at will to the sovereignty of the people.

Beware of the clergy of every description, they are bound by law and interest, in all countries, to preach agreable to the will of the governor under whom they live: as proof of which, they must have a licence, if not of the established church. Listen to them as far as your reason dictates of a future state, but never suffer them to interfere in your worldly affairs; for they are cunning, and therefore are more capable of vice than you are; for instance, one was hung at Kingston, for coining; one in London, for forgery; one for a rape; one for murder; one was detected throwing the sleave of his surplice over the plate, while he robbed it, even at the time he was administering the Lord's supper, in the Borough; and Bishop Burn, of Kent, who had 800£. per annum, confessed on his death bed, he had practised the same offence for 40 years, and all these were college bred men, and of course gentlemen. You know also they buy and sell your persons as well as others, and thereby encouraging that base practice. This is not doing as they would be done by.

Adieu, for the present, my afflicted countrymen and relatives yet in bondage, though the prince, lords, and commons, are convinced it is a crime deserving of death, to steal and hold a man in bondage.

I am a West-Indian, a lover of liberty, and would dishonour human nature if I did not shew myself a friend to the liberty of others.

ROBERT WEDDERBURN.

* * *

To all who love to hear of the increase of liberty, are these few lines directed.

The slaves of Jamaica, are ready now to demand a day of their masters, in addition to the day and a half that was allowed before, being taught by the methodists that it is a crime to labour on the sabbath day; and it is the opinion of many, that they will have it.

This information is by my brother's wife, who is held as a slave by a clergyman of the church of England; whether she obtained this information from the conversation which passed at her master's table, or whether it is her own observation, on what she had heard among her fellow slaves, I will not avow; but this information is confirmed by a letter from a book-keeper to his mother, who informed me, that it is the opinion of her son, that the island of Jamaica will be in the hands of the blacks within twenty years. Prepare for flight, ye planters, for the fate of St. Domingo awaits you. Get ready your blood hounds, the allies which you employed against the Maroons.[8] Recollect the fermentation will be universal. Their weapons are their bill-hooks;[9] their store of provision is every where in abundance; you know they can live upon sugar canes, and a vast variety of herbs and fruits,—yea, even upon the buds of trees. You cannot cut off their supplies. They will be victorious in their flight, slaying all before them; they want no turnpike roads: they will not stand to engage organized troops, like the silly Irish rebels. Their method of fighting is to be found in the scriptures, which they are

now learning to read. They will slay man, woman, and child, and not spare the virgin, whose interest is connected with slavery, whether black, white, or tawny. O ye planters, you know this has been done; the cause which produced former bloodshed still remains,—of necessity similar effects must take place. The holy alliance of Europe, cannot prevent it, they have enough to do at home, being compelled to keep a standing army in the time of peace, to enforce the civil law.

My heart glows with revenge, and cannot forgive. Repent ye christians, for flogging my aged grandmother before my face, when she was accused of witchcraft by a silly European.[1] O Boswell, ought not your colour and countrymen to be visited with wrath, for flogging my mother before my face, at the time when she was far advanced in pregnancy.[2] What was her crime? did not you give her leave to visit her aged mother; (she did not acquaint her mistress at her departure,) this was her fault. But it originates in your crime in holding her as a slave—could not you wait till she returned, but travel 15 miles to punish her on that visit. You set a pattern to your slaves to treat your wife with contempt, by taking your negro wenches to your adultrous bed, in preference to your wedded wife. It being a general practice in the island, is no excuse for you,—who was a scholar and professed to be a christian—how can I forgive you? Oh! my father, what do you deserve at my hands? Your crimes will be visited upon your legitimate offspring: for the sins of a wicked father will be visited upon his children, who continues in the practice of their father's crimes. Ought I not to encourage your slaves, O my brother, to demand their freedom even at the danger of your life, if it could not be obtained without.[3] Do not tell me you hold them by legal right. No law can be just which deprives another of his liberty, except for criminal offences: such law-makers according to the rules of equity, are felons of the deepest dye; for they attempt to justify wickedness. The time is fast approaching, when such rulers must act righteously, or be drawn from their seats; for truth and justice must prevail—combined armies cannot stop their progress—religious superstition, the support of tyrants, gives way.

The priesthood who took the lead, are compelled to sculk in the rear, and take shelter under Bell's system of education, to impress on the minds of youth their nonsensical creed; dreading the purity of the Lancasterian mode.[4] But you my countrymen, can act without education; the equality of your present station in slavery, is your strength. You all feel the injury—you are all capable of making resistance. Your oppressors know—they dread you—they can foresee their downfal when you determine to obtain your liberty, and possess your natural right—that is freedom. Beware, and offend not your God, like the jews of old, in choosing a king; agrandize no man by forms of law. He who preserves your liberty, will of necessity receive universal praise, like Washington, to endless generations, without the aid of hireling priests to celebrate his fame.

Check if possible by law and practice, that avarice in man, which is never satisfied. If you suffer any among you to become emensly rich, he will want homage, and a title; yea, he will dispose of your lives, liberty, and property; and to support his divine right, he will establish a priesthood—he will call in foreign usurpers to assist him to oppress you. Under the protection of foreign bayonets, he will threaten to erect a gallows at every door. France is reduced to this state of humiliation. A black king is capable of wickedness, as well as a white one. WEDDERBURN.

1817

Endnotes

- Note 1: The editor was Wedderburn himself, a ploy hiding the fact that his periodical was a one-man operation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wedderburn draws on the Bible for the concept of jubilee: in Leviticus 25, the people are commanded every fifty years to mark a jubilee by canceling debt and freeing the enslaved. St. Domingo is Haiti, the Caribbean colony that, after an uprising by the enslaved people, declared its independence from France in 1804; long into the 19th century, it continued to

be linked in the British mind to violence and vengeance.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Referring to the provision grounds, plots of land conceded to enslaved people that enabled them to grow their own food. In the emancipation era, provision grounds would become a source of worry for British plantation owners: with access to those grounds, their labor force was more independent of their authority than they liked.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Quoting Psalms 115:16.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Thomas Spence (1750–1814), whom Wedderburn met in 1813, was a bookseller (who in the 1790s had been arrested repeatedly for selling seditious books and pamphlets) and political philosopher. His publications proposing that the institution of private property was inconsistent with justice and outlining plans for the nationalization of Britain's agricultural land remained influential among the English poor for a generation.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The devil.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Quoting the prophet Isaiah (5:8).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In the warfare they waged in 1795–96 against the Maroon (free Black) communities of Jamaica, the British colonial authorities used bloodhounds that they imported from Cuba.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Machetes used in sugarcane cultivation.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: During his childhood in Kingston, Wedderburn lived with his grandmother, known as Talkee Amy. Around age eleven, as he recounts in greater detail in his *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824), he witnessed her flogging by a White man whom she had raised.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Boswell was the Scottish physician who purchased Wedderburn's mother, Rosanna, after her sale by Wedderburn's father.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Wedderburn's half-brother Andrew Colville was a West Indian merchant.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Referring to the Bell-Lancaster controversy, a public dispute over the contrasting plans for literacy education for the poor that had been proffered by Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838) and Andrew Bell (1753–1832). The latter's scheme had Anglican religious education at its center and was therefore championed by figures such as Coleridge, who first plunged into the controversy in lectures he gave in 1808. Wedderburn, Nonconformist in religion, took the opposing side.Return to reference 4

ELIZABETH HEYRICK

Elizabeth Heyrick (1769–1831), born in Leicester to a middle-class family with Unitarian, progressive views, converted to Quakerism following the death of her husband John in 1797. Around this time, she began a career of committed, outspoken activism on a number of fronts, joining campaigns for a minimum wage, workers' rights, and animal rights, and against slavery and capital punishment, all topics of her political writing. Her boldly argued pamphlet *Immediate, not Gradual Abolition* was issued in the aftermath of the 1823 slave uprising in Demerara (part of modern Guyana), then under British control. Mixing religious rhetoric with economic and political analysis, Heyrick takes aim not only at those defending slavery but also at the leading (male-dominated) abolitionist groups, who at the time mostly advocated a cautious approach to emancipation; Heyrick insists instead that there is no justification for delaying outlawing the institution of slavery once and for all. If in some respects Heyrick's call for abstinence from West Indian products looks back to the sugar and tea boycotts of the 1790s, her emphasis on the economic power of individual consumers to remedy unjust conditions—and her insistence on consumers' complicity in the harms effected by the systems that bring them the goods they buy—resonate strikingly with present-day debates about the ethics of consumption and the effectiveness of consumer action on issues such as labor practices and the environment. Widely reprinted in Evangelical newspapers and magazines, the pamphlet had an international influence that continued after passage of the Emancipation Act in 1833: the introduction to an 1836 American reprinting by the Philadelphia Ladies' Anti-slavery Society, one of several stateside editions to appear in the late 1830s, credited Heyrick with pushing abolitionist discourse on both sides of the Atlantic toward "immediatism," and stressed the applicability of her critique of slavery in the West Indies to the problem of slavery in the

United States, where emancipation was then still almost thirty years away.

From Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition

It is now seventeen years since the *Slave Trade* was abolished by the Government of this country, but *Slavery* is still perpetuated in our West India colonies, and the horrors of the Slave Trade are aggravated rather than mitigated.[1] By making it felony for British subjects to be concerned in that inhuman traffic, England has only transferred her share of it to other countries. She has, indeed, by negociation and remonstrance, endeavoured to persuade them to follow her example. But has she succeeded? How should she, whilst there is so little consistency in her conduct? Who will listen to her pathetic declamations on the injustice and cruelty of the Slave Trade, whilst she rivets the chains upon her own slaves, and subjects them to all the injustice and cruelty which she so eloquently deplores when her own interest is no longer at stake? Before we can have any rational hope of prevailing on our guilty neighbours to abandon this atrocious commerce; to relinquish the gain of oppression; the wealth obtained by rapine and violence; by the deep groans, the bitter anguish of our unoffending fellow creatures; we must purge ourselves from these pollutions; we must break the iron yoke from off the neck of *our own slaves*, and let the wretched captives in our own islands go free. Then, and not till then, we shall speak to the surrounding nations with the *all-commanding eloquence of sincerity and truth*, and our persuasions will be backed by the *irresistible argument of consistent example*. But to invite others to be just and merciful whilst we grasp in our own hands the rod of oppression; to solicit others to relinquish the wages of iniquity whilst we are putting them into our own pockets—what is it but cant and hypocrisy? Do such preachers of justice and mercy ever make converts? On the contrary, do they not render themselves ridiculous and contemptible?

But let us, *individually*, bring this great question closely home to our own bosoms. We that hear, and read, and approve, and applaud

the powerful appeals, the irrefragable arguments against the Slave Trade, and against slavery, are we *ourselves* sincere, or hypocritical? Are *we* the true friends of justice, or do we only cant about it? To which party do *we* really belong? to the friends of emancipation, or of perpetual slavery? Every individual belongs to one party or the other; not speculatively, or professionally merely, but practically. The perpetuation of slavery in our West India colonies, is not an abstract question, to be settled between the Government and the Planters; it is a question in which we are *all* implicated; we are all guilty, (with shame and compunction let us admit the opprobrious truth) of supporting and perpetuating slavery. The West Indian planter and the people of this country, stand in the same moral relation to each other, as the thief and the receiver of stolen goods.[2] The planter refuses to set his wretched captive at liberty, treats him as a beast of burden, compels his reluctant unremunerated labourer under the lash of the cart whip, why? because WE furnish the stimulant to all this injustice, rapacity, and cruelty, by PURCHASING ITS PRODUCE. Heretofore, it may have been thoughtlessly and unconsciously, but now this palliative is removed;—the veil of ignorance is rent aside;—the whole nation must now divide itself into the *active supporters*, and the *active opposers* of slavery; there is no longer any ground for a neutral party to stand upon.

The state of slavery, in our West Indian islands, is now become notorious; *the secret is out;* the justice and humanity, the *veracity* also, of slave owners, is exactly ascertained; the credit due to their assertions, that their slaves are better fed, better clothed, are more comfortable, more *happy* than our English peasantry, is now universally understood.[3] The tricks and impostures practised by the colonial assemblies, to hoodwink the people, to humbug the Government, and to bamboozle the *saints* (as the friends of emancipation are scornfully termed) have all been detected; and the cry of the nation has been raised, from one end to the other, against this complicated system of knavery and imposture; of intolerable oppression, of relentless and savage barbarity.

But is all this knowledge to end in exclamations, in petitions, and remonstrances? Is there nothing to be *done,* as well as said? Are there no tests to prove our sincerity; no sacrifices to be offered in confirmation of our zeal? Yes, there is *one,* (but it is in itself so small and insignificant that it seems almost burlesque to dignify it with the name of sacrifice) it is ABSTINENCE FROM THE USE OF WEST INDIAN PRODUCTIONS, *sugar*, especially, in the cultivation of which slave labour is chiefly occupied. Small, however, and insignificant as the sacrifice may appear, it would, at once, give the death blow to West Indian slavery. When there was no longer a market for the productions of *slave labour*, then, and *not till then*, will the slaves be emancipated.[4]

* * *

The enemies of slavery have hitherto ruined their cause by the senseless cry of *gradual* emancipation.[5] It is marvellous that the *wise* and the *good* should have suffered themselves to have been imposed upon by this wily artifice of the slave holder; for with him must the project of gradual emancipation have first originated. The share holder knew very well, that his prey would be secure, so long as the abolitionists could be cajoled into a demand for *gradual* instead of *immediate* abolition. He knew very well, that the contemplation of a *gradual* emancipation, would beget a *gradual indifference to emancipation itself*. He knew very well, that even the *wise* and the *good*, may, by habit and familiarity, be brought to endure and tolerate almost any thing. He had caught the poet's idea, that—

> Vice is a monster of such frightful mein,
> As to be hated, need but to he seen;
> But, seen too oft, *familiar with her face*,
> *We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*[6]

He caught the idea, and knew how to turn it to advantage. He knew very well, that the faithful delineation of the horrors of West

Indian slavery would produce such a general insurrection of sympathetic and indignant feeling; such abhorrence of the oppressor, such compassion for the oppressed, as must soon have been fatal to the whole system. He knew very well, that a strong moral fermentation had begun, which, had it gone forward, must soon have purified the nation from this foulest of its corruptions; that the cries of the people for emancipation, would have been too unanimous, and too importunate for the Government to resist, and that slavery would, long ago, have been exterminated throughout the British dominions. Our example might have spread from kingdom to kingdom, from continent to continent, and the slave trade, and slavery, might, by this time, have been abolished all the world over: "A sacrifice of a sweet savour," might have ascended to the Great Parent of the Universe; "His kingdom might have come, and his will (thus far) have been done on earth, as it is in Heaven."[7]

But this GRADUAL ABOLITION, has been the grand marplot of human virtue and happiness; the very master-piece of satanic policy. By converting the cry for *immediate*, into *gradual* emancipation, the prince of slave holders, "transformed himself, with astonishing dexterity, into an angel of light," and, thereby, "deceived the very elect."[8] He saw very clearly, that if public justice and humanity, especially, if *Christian* justice and humanity, could be brought to demand only a *gradual* extermination of the enormities of the slave system; if they could be brought to *acquiesce*, but for one year, or for one month, in the slavery of our African brother, in robbing him of all the rights of humanity, and degrading him to a level with the brutes; that then, they could imperceptibly be brought to acquiesce in all this for an unlimited duration. He saw, very clearly, that the time for the extermination of slavery, was precisely that, when its horrid impiety and enormity were *first distinctly known and strongly felt*. He knew, that every moment's unnecessary delay, between the discovery of an imperious duty, and the setting earnestly about its accomplishment, was dangerous, if not fatal to success. He knew, that strong excitement, was necessary to strong effort; that intense feeling was necessary to stimulate intense exertion; that, as strong

excitement, and intense feeling are generally transient, in proportion to their strength and intensity, the most effectual way of crushing a great and virtuous enterprize, was to gain time; to defer it to "a more convenient season," when the zeal and ardour of the first convictions of duty had subsided; when our sympathies had become languid; when considerations of the difficulties and hazards of the enterprize, the solicitations of ease and indulgence should have chilled the warm glow of humanity; quenched the fervid heroism of virtue; when familiarity with relations of violence and outrage, crimes and miseries, should have abated the horror of their first impression, and at length induced indifference.

* * *

It is utterly astonishing, with such an object as West Indian slavery before us, rendered palpable, in all its horrors, almost to our very senses, by a multitude of indubitable facts, collected from various sources of the highest authority, all uniting in the same appalling evidence; with the sight of our fellow-creatures in bondage so rigorous; in moral and physical degradation so abject; under a tyranny so arbitrary, wanton and barbarous; it is utterly astonishing, that our compassion and sympathy should be so timid and calculating, so slow and cautious.

Under the contemplation of *individual* suffering, comparatively trifling, both in nature and duration, our compassion is prompt and quick in its movements; our exertions, spontaneous and instinctive; we go the shortest way to work, in effecting the relief of the sufferer. But, in emancipating *eight hundred thousand* of our fellow creatures and fellow subjects from a worse than Egyptian bondage, we advance towards the object, by a route, the most indirect and circuitous; we petition Parliament, year after year, for *gradual* emancipation: to what purpose?

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Britain's 1807 abolition of the slave trade (though not slavery) was a point of national pride, as it preceded action by other European nations. An 1811 act made involvement in the slave trade punishable as a felony.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Beginning in the late 17th century, Quaker antislavery writers argued that slavery violated the biblical injunction against stealing, identifying slavery with the theft of bodies. Heyrick extends that logic to commodities produced through the slave system.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Proslavery writers including William Cobbett used the claim that West Indian slaves were better off than working-class people in England to portray abolition as a threat to English laborers. Heyrick elsewhere links the rights of enslaved persons in the colonies with English workers' rights.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: As some commentators at the time noted, avoiding the purchase of West Indian sugar often meant, in practice, buying sugar from East India, which was also produced under exploitative conditions, often through forms of compulsory labor.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Gradualism was a central tenet for many abolitionists, reflecting both their sense of what was politically practicable and a world view that equated sudden change with the potential for violence or economic disruption.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Heyrick slightly misquotes Pope's *Essay on Man,* Epistle 2, lines 217–20.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Invoking biblical authority, Heyrick quotes Ephesians 5:2 and emends the Lord's Prayer from Matthew 6:10.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In Matthew 24:24, Christ warns against false prophets appearing in end times whose impostures might "deceive the very elect."Return to reference 8

MARY PRINCE

In 1831 Mary Prince, born a slave in Bermuda sometime around 1788, then living as a freewoman in London, became the English tradition's first Black female autobiographer. As the journalist Thomas Pringle explains in the preface that vouches for this often devastating memoir's authenticity, the "idea of writing Mary Prince's history was first suggested by herself." "She wished it to be done, she said"—Pringle, secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, furthered her project by arranging for a White lady visitor to take down her words—so the "good people in England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered."

Prince's motives for recalling past sufferings were personal as well. In England, where Prince's last owner, the merchant John Wood, had brought her in 1828 to labor as a washerwoman and nanny to his children, emancipation had been the law of the land since the legal decision in the 1772 Somerset case. Prince was therefore quick to recognize that Wood had inadvertently presented her with an opportunity: "I knew that I was free in England," she explains. If, however, Prince returned to the West Indies, so as to rejoin the husband her master had forced her to leave behind, she would forfeit that freedom and revert to her slave status. *The History of Mary Prince* protests this dilemma. It demonstrated to the reading public of 1831, who bought up three editions of the pamphlet, that their complacency about the morality of empire was premature and that the freedom Black subjects could claim under the empire's laws remained fatally qualified.

Soon after 1831 Prince disappears from the historical record. It is unknown whether publication of the *History* proved effective for Prince personally, but it doubtless helped speed passage of the Emancipation Bill in 1833.

From The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself

I was born at Brackish-Pond, in Bermuda, on a farm belonging to Mr. Charles Myners. My mother was a household slave; and my father, whose name was Prince, was a sawyer belonging to Mr. Trimmingham, a ship-builder at Crow-Lane. When I was an infant, old Mr. Myners died, and there was a division of the slaves and other property among the family. I was bought along with my mother by old Captain Darrel, and given to his grandchild, little Miss Betsey Williams. Captain Williams, Mr. Darrel's son-in-law, was master of a vessel which traded to several places in America and the West Indies, and he was seldom at home long together.

Mrs. Williams was a kind-hearted good woman, and she treated all her slaves well. She had only one daughter, Miss Betsey, for whom I was purchased, and who was about my own age. I was made quite a pet of by Miss Betsey, and loved her very much. She used to lead me about by the hand, and call me her little nigger. This was the happiest period of my life; for I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave, and too thoughtless and full of spirits to look forward to the days of toil and sorrow.

My mother was a household slave in the same family. I was under her own care, and my little brothers and sisters were my play-fellows and companions. My mother had several fine children after she came to Mrs. Williams,—three girls and two boys. The tasks given out to us children were light, and we used to play together with Miss Betsey, with as much freedom almost as if she had been our sister.

My master, however, was a very harsh, selfish man; and we always dreaded his return from sea. His wife was herself much afraid of him; and, during his stay at home, seldom dared to shew her usual kindness to the slaves. He often left her, in the most distressed

circumstances, to reside in other female society, at some place in the West Indies of which I have forgot the name. My poor mistress bore his ill-treatment with great patience, and all her slaves loved and pitied her. I was truly attached to her, and, next to my own mother, loved her better than any creature in the world. My obedience to her commands was cheerfully given: it sprung solely from the affection I felt for her, and not from fear of the power which the white people's law had given her over me.

* * *

At this time Mrs. Williams died. I was told suddenly of her death, and my grief was so great that, forgetting I had the baby in my arms,[1] I ran away directly to my poor mistress's house; but reached it only in time to see the corpse carried out. Oh, that was a day of sorrow,—a heavy day! All the slaves cried. My mother cried and lamented her sore; and I (foolish creature!) vainly entreated them to bring my dear mistress back to life: I knew nothing rightly about death then, and it seemed a hard thing to bear. When I thought about my mistress I felt as if the world was all gone wrong; and for many days and weeks I could think of nothing else. I returned to Mrs. Pruden's; but my sorrow was too great to be comforted, for my own dear mistress was always in my mind. Whether in the house or abroad, my thoughts were always talking to me about her.

I staid at Mrs. Pruden's about three months after this; I was then sent back to Mr. Williams to be sold. Oh, that was a sad sad time! I recollect the day well. Mrs. Pruden came to me and said, "Mary, you will have to go home directly; your master is going to be married, and he means to sell you and two of your sisters to raise money for the wedding." Hearing this I burst out a crying,—though I was then far from being sensible of the full weight of my misfortune, or of the misery that waited for me. Besides, I did not like to leave Mrs. Pruden, and the dear baby, who had grown very fond of me. For some time I could scarcely believe that Mrs. Pruden was in earnest, till I received orders for my immediate return.—Dear Miss Fanny!

how she cried at parting with me, whilst I kissed and hugged the baby, thinking I should never see him again. I left Mrs. Pruden's, and walked home with a heart full of sorrow. The idea of being sold away from my mother and Miss Betsey was so frightful, that I dared not trust myself to think about it. We had been bought of Mr. Myners, as I have mentioned, by Miss Betsey's grandfather, and given to her, so that we were by right *her* property, and I never thought we should be separated or sold away from her.

When I reached the house, I went in directly to Miss Betsey. I found her in great distress; and she cried out as soon as she saw me, "Oh, Mary! my father is going to sell you all to raise money to marry that wicked woman. You are *my* slaves, and he has no right to sell you; but it is all to please her." She then told me that my mother was living with her father's sister at a house close by, and I went there to see her. It was a sorrowful meeting; and we lamented with a great and sore crying our unfortunate situation. "Here comes one of my poor picaninnies!" she said, the moment I came in, "one of the poor slave-brood who are to be sold to-morrow."

Oh dear! I cannot bear to think of that day,—it is too much.—It recalls the great grief that filled my heart, and the woeful thoughts that passed to and fro through my mind, whilst listening to the pitiful words of my poor mother, weeping for the loss of her children. I wish I could find words to tell you all I then felt and suffered. The great God above alone knows the thoughts of the poor slave's heart, and the bitter pains which follow such separations as these. All that we love taken away from us—Oh, it is sad, sad! and sore to be borne!—I got no sleep that night for thinking of the morrow; and dear Miss Betsey was scarcely less distressed. She could not bear to part with her old playmates, and she cried sore and would not be pacified.

The black morning at length came; it came too soon for my poor mother and us. Whilst she was putting on us the new osnaburgs[2] in which we were to be sold, she said, in a sorrowful voice, (I shall never forget it!) "See, I am *shrouding* my poor children; what a task for a mother!"—She then called Miss Betsey to take leave of us. "I

am going to carry my little chickens to market," (these were her very words.) "take your last look of them; may be you will see them no more." "Oh, my poor slaves! my own slaves!" said dear Miss Betsey, "you belong to me; and it grieves my heart to part with you."—Miss Betsey kissed us all, and, when she left us, my mother called the rest of the slaves to bid us good bye. One of them, a woman named Moll, came with her infant in her arms. "Ay!" said my mother, seeing her turn away and look at her child with the tears in her eyes, "your turn will come next." The slaves could say nothing to comfort us; they could only weep and lament with us. When I left my dear little brothers and the house in which I had been brought up, I thought my heart would burst.

Our mother, weeping as she went, called me away with the children Hannah and Dinah, and we took the road that led to Hamble Town,[3] which we reached about four o'clock in the afternoon. We followed my mother to the market-place, where she placed us in a row against a large house, with our backs to the wall and our arms folded across our breasts. I, as the eldest, stood first, Hannah next to me, then Dinah; and our mother stood beside, crying over us. My heart throbbed with grief and terror so violently, that I pressed my hands quite tightly across my breast, but I could not keep it still, and it continued to leap as though it would burst out of my body. But who cared for that? Did one of the many by-standers, who were looking at us so carelessly, think of the pain that wrung the hearts of the negro woman and her young ones? No, no! They were not all bad, I dare say, but slavery hardens white people's hearts towards the blacks; and many of them were not slow to make their remarks upon us aloud, without regard to our grief—though their light words fell like cayenne on the fresh wounds of our hearts. Oh those white people have small hearts who can only feel for themselves.

At length the vendue master,[4] who was to offer us for sale like sheep or cattle, arrived, and asked my mother which was the eldest. She said nothing, but pointed to me. He took me by the hand, and led me out into the middle of the street, and, turning me slowly

round, exposed me to the view of those who attended the vendue. I was soon surrounded by strange men, who examined and handled me in the same manner that a butcher would a calf or a lamb he was about to purchase, and who talked about my shape and size in like words—as if I could no more understand their meaning than the dumb beasts. I was then put up to sale. The bidding commenced at a few pounds, and gradually rose to fifty-seven,[5] when I was knocked down to the highest bidder; and the people who stood by said that I had fetched a great sum for so young a slave.

I then saw my sisters led forth, and sold to different owners; so that we had not the sad satisfaction of being partners in bondage. When the sale was over, my mother hugged and kissed us, and mourned over us, begging of us to keep up a good heart, and do our duty to our new masters. It was a sad parting; one went one way, one another, and our poor mammy went home with nothing.

* * *

My new master was one of the owners or holders of the salt ponds,[6] and he received a certain sum for every slave that worked upon his premises, whether they were young or old. This sum was allowed him out of the profits arising from the salt works. I was immediately sent to work in the salt water with the rest of the slaves. This work was perfectly new to me. I was given a half barrel and a shovel, and had to stand up to my knees in the water, from four o'clock in the morning till nine, when we were given some Indian corn boiled in water, which we were obliged to swallow as fast as we could for fear the rain should come on and melt the salt. We were then called again to our tasks, and worked through the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire, and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the sufferers with great torment. We came home at twelve; ate our corn soup, called *blawly*, as fast as we

could, and went back to our employment till dark at night. We then shovelled up the salt in large heaps, and went down to the sea, where we washed the pickle from our limbs, and cleaned the barrows and shovels from the salt. When we returned to the house, our master gave us each our allowance of raw Indian corn, which we pounded in a mortar and boiled in water for our suppers.

We slept in a long shed, divided into narrow slips, like the stalls used for cattle. Boards fixed upon stakes driven into the ground, without mat or covering, were our only beds. On Sundays, after we had washed the salt bags, and done other work required of us, we went into the bush and cut the long soft grass, of which we made trusses for our legs and feet to rest upon, for they were so full of the salt boils that we could get no rest lying upon the bare boards.

Though we worked from morning till night, there was no satisfying Mr. D——.[7] I hoped, when I left Capt. I——, that I should have been better off, but I found it was but going from one butcher to another. There was this difference between them: my former master used to beat me while raging and foaming with passion; Mr. D—— was usually quite calm. He would stand by and give orders for a slave to be cruelly whipped, and assist in the punishment, without moving a muscle of his face; walking about and taking snuff with the greatest composure. Nothing could touch his hard heart—neither sighs, nor tears, nor prayers, nor streaming blood; he was deaf to our cries, and careless of our sufferings.—Mr. D—— has often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with the cow-skin,[8] with his own hand, till my body was raw with gashes. Yet there was nothing very remarkable in this; for it might serve as a sample of the common usage of the slaves on that horrible island. * * *

My old master[9] often got drunk, and then he would get in a fury with his daughter, and beat her till she was not fit to be seen. I remember on one occasion, I had gone to fetch water, and when I was coming up the hill I heard a great screaming; I ran as fast as I could to the house, put down the water, and went into the chamber, where I found my master beating Miss D—— dreadfully. I strove with

all my strength to get her away from him; for she was all black and blue with bruises. He had beat her with his fist, and almost killed her. The people gave me credit for getting her away. He turned round and began to lick me. Then I said, "Sir, this is not Turk's Island." I can't repeat his answer, the words were too wicked—too bad to say. He wanted to treat me the same in Bermuda as he had done in Turk's Island.

He had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked, and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water. This was worse to me than all the licks. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I would not come, my eyes were so full of shame. He would then come to beat me. One time I had plates and knives in my hand, and I dropped both plates and knives, and some of the plates were broken. He struck me so severely for this, that at last I defended myself, for I thought it was high time to do so. I then told him I would not live longer with him, for he was a very indecent man—very spiteful, and too indecent; with no shame for his servants, no shame for his own flesh. So I went away to a neighbouring house and sat down and cried till the next morning, when I went home again, not knowing what else to do.

After that I was hired to work at Cedar Hills, and every Saturday night I paid the money to my master. I had plenty of work to do there—plenty of washing; but yet I made myself pretty comfortable. I earned two dollars and a quarter a week, which is twenty pence a day.

During the time I worked there, I heard that Mr. John Wood was going to Antigua. I felt a great wish to go there, and I went to Mr. D ——, and asked him to let me go in Mr. Wood's service. Mr. Wood did not then want to purchase me; it was my own fault that I came under him, I was so anxious to go. It was ordained to be, I suppose; God led me there. The truth is, I did not wish to be any longer the slave of my indecent master.[1]

* * *

I still live in the hope that God will find a way to give me my liberty, and give me back to my husband. I endeavour to keep down my fretting, and to leave all to Him, for he knows what is good for me better than I know myself. Yet, I must confess, I find it a hard and heavy task to do so.

I am often much vexed, and I feel great sorrow when I hear some people in this country say, that the slaves do not need better usage, and do not want to be free.[2] They believe the foreign people,[3] who deceive them, and say slaves are happy. I say, Not so. How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts?—and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated? Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner?—women that have had children exposed in the open field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women, and children are exposed alike. Since I have been here. I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things. They tie up slaves like hogs—moor[4] them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses never were flogged;—and yet they come home and say, and make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. It is not so. All slaves want to be free—to be free is very sweet. I will say the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend, Miss S——,[5] is now writing down for me. I have been a slave myself—I know what slaves feel—I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery—that they don't want to be free—that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave say so. I never heard a Buckra man[6] say so, till I heard tell of it in England. Such people ought to be ashamed of

themselves. They can't do without slaves, they say. What's the reason they can't do without slaves as well as in England? No slaves here—no whips—no stocks—no punishment, except for wicked people. They hire servants in England; and if they don't like them, they send them away: they can't lick them. Let them work ever so hard in England, they are far better off than slaves. If they get a bad master, they give warning and go hire to another. They have their liberty. That's just what *we* want. We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment, and proper wages like English servants, and proper time given in the week to keep us from breaking the Sabbath. But they won't give it: they will have work—work—work, night and day, sick or well, till we are quite done up; and we must not speak up nor look amiss, however much we be abused. And then when we are quite done up, who cares for us, more than for a lame horse? This is slavery. I tell it, to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore.

1831

Endnotes

- Note 1: At this point in her narrative, Prince has been parted from her mother and siblings, Mrs. Williams having been unable to afford her keep. Aged twelve, she has been hired out to a neighboring family, the Prudens, to tend to their baby and has grown fond of him and his brother James and sister Fanny.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Coarse linen or cotton clothing reserved for enslaved people or servants.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hamilton, the capital of Bermuda.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Auctioneer.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Bermuda currency: about £38 sterling [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Taken from Bermuda to Grand Turk Island, Prince would for a decade form part of the workforce that harvested salt from the *salinas*, catchments for sea water.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the Preface Pringle explains that he has suppressed the names of some of Prince's owners, Mr. D— among them, for fear of disturbing their surviving relations. To what extent the *History* is also marked by acts of censorship that are less visible is a much debated question. It seems likely that some details in Prince's oral account, especially those involving her sexual exploitation by her masters, were omitted when it was set down in writing.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A type of whip.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Returned to Bermuda, Prince is once again the property of Robert Darrell, her "old master." Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In the omitted portion of her *History* that follows Prince recounts how with the Woods, for whom she had been working as a charwoman and washerwoman, she left the Caribbean island of Antigua for London, where she eventually met the Pringles.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The whole of this paragraph especially, is given as nearly as was possible in Mary's precise words [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: She means West Indians [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A West Indian phrase: to fasten or tie up [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Susanna Strickland (1803–1885), better known by her married name, Susanna Moodie. In 1832, after her marriage to John Moodie, she emigrated to Ontario, where she earned fame as the author of several books documenting life in the Canadian colony.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: White man.Return to reference 6

CHARLES LAMB
1775–1834

Charles Lamb was a near contemporary of Wordsworth and Coleridge. He numbered these two poets among his close friends, published his own early poems in combination with those of Coleridge in 1796 and 1797, and supported the *Lyrical Ballads* and some of the other new poetry of his time. Yet Lamb lacks almost all the traits and convictions we think of as characteristically "Romantic." He happily lived all his life in the city and its environs. He could not abide Shelley or his poetry, and he distrusted Coleridge's supernaturalism and Wordsworth's oracular sublimities and religion of nature, preferring those elements in their poems that were human and realistic. In an age when many of the important writers were fervent radicals and some became equally fervent reactionaries, Lamb remained uncommitted in both politics and religion, and although on intimate terms with such dedicated reformers as William Hazlitt, William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, and Leigh Hunt, he chose them as friends, as he said, not for their opinions but "for some individuality of character which they manifested." In his own writings he shared Wordsworth's concern with memories' power to transform the present moment and, like him, interjected a sense of the ideal into his representations of the actual and everyday. "The streets of London," Hazlitt wrote, assessing the essays Lamb published under the pseudonym Elia in the *London Magazine*, "are his fairy-land, teeming with wonder, with

life and interest to his retrospective glance, as it did to the eager eye of childhood."

Lamb was born in London at the Inner Temple, center of the English legal profession. His father, who began his working life as a footman, was assistant to a lawyer there. His paternal as well as maternal grandparents were servants. At the age of seven he entered Christ's Hospital, the school Coleridge also attended. Childhood ended early. He left the school before he was fifteen and soon thereafter became a clerk in the accounting department of the East India Company, a huge commercial house, where he remained for thirty-three years. His adult life was quiet and unadventurous, but under its calm surface lay great tragedy. When he was twenty-two his beloved sister, Mary, ten years his senior, exhausted by her labors as a dressmaker and the work of caring for her invalid parents, began to show signs of a breakdown. One day she turned in a manic rage on the little girl who was her apprentice. When Mrs. Lamb tried to intercede, her daughter stabbed her in the heart. The jury's verdict was lunacy, but the intercession of her father's former employer spared Mary permanent confinement in an asylum. Instead, she was remanded to the custody of Charles, who devoted the rest of his life to her and their common household. Mary's attacks of insanity recurred, and when the terribly familiar symptoms began to show themselves, Charles and Mary would walk arm in arm and weeping to the asylum, carrying a straitjacket with them.

Most of the time, however, Mary was her normally serene and gracious self, and shared her brother's love of company and genius for friendship. The evening gatherings at the Lambs' attracted a varied company that included many of the leading writers and artists of England. Charles drew furiously on a pipe of strong tobacco and drank copiously; as the alcohol eased his habitual stammer, his puns and practical jokes grew ever more outrageous. He had, in fact, a complex temperament, in which the playfulness overlay a somber melancholy and the eccentricity sometimes manifested a touch of malice.

To supplement his salary at the East India House, Lamb had early turned to writing in a variety of literary forms: sonnets; blank verse; a sentimental novel; a tragedy; and a farce, *Mr. H——*, which was hissed by the audience, including its honest author, when it was produced at Drury Lane (the uneasiness with the theater that informs his essay "On the Tragedies of Shakespeare" probably reflects this experience). He also collaborated with his sister, Mary, on a series of children's books, including the excellent *Tales from Shakespeare*, and wrote some brilliant critical commentaries in his anthology, important for the Elizabethan revival of that period, titled *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived about the Time of Shakespeare.* Not until 1820, however, at the age of forty-five, did Lamb discover the form that would make his name, when he began to write essays for John Scott's new *London Magazine.*

Lamb's achievement in those contributions to the *London* was to accommodate the intimacies of the familiar essay, a genre dating back to Montaigne in the sixteenth century, to a modern world of magazine writing that aimed to reach a general public. The *Essays of Elia* make the magazine—an impersonal medium that contributed conspicuously to the information overload of the age—appear to be a forum in which a reader might really *know* an author. A sense of the paradoxes of that project—a sense that the illusions of personality in the personal essay might be easily debunked—is never far away in Lamb's writings, lending a fascinating edge to their charm and complicating the autobiographical impulse that seems to link them to the works of his contemporaries. Under the pseudonym Elia, which, Lamb said, was the name of an Italian clerk he had known briefly while employed in the South Sea House, Lamb projects in his essays the character of a man who is whimsical but strong-willed, self-deprecating yet self-absorbed, with strong likes and dislikes, a specialist in nostalgia and in that humor which balances delicately on the verge of pathos. But Elia is also, as Lamb noted, an anagram for "a lie": the essays' seemingly unguarded self-revelation is intertwined with the cunning of a deliberate and dedicated artist in prose. And to write about himself Lamb developed

a prose style that was colored throughout by archaic words and expressions that continually alluded to literary precursors, including the works of other eccentrics such as Robert Burton and Laurence Sterne—as if he were suggesting that he was most distinctively himself when most immersed in his beloved old books.

Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading[1]

> To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now I think a man of quality and breeding may be much amused with the natural sprouts of his own.
>
> —Lord Foppington in *The Relapse*[2]

An ingenious acquaintance of my own was so much struck with this bright sally of his Lordship, that he has left off reading altogether, to the great improvement of his originality. At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low.[3] I can read any thing which I call a *book.* There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.

In this catalogue of *books which are no books—biblia a-biblia*—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught Boards bound and lettered at the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacks, Statutes at Large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes which "no gentleman's library should be without":[4] the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's *Moral Philosophy.*[5] With these exceptions, I can read almost any thing. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and

hope it is some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what "seem its leaves," to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay.[6] To expect a Steele, or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith.[7] To view a well-arranged assortment of blockheaded Encyclopaedias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of Russia, or Morocco,[8] when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably re-clothe my shivering folios; would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Lully to look like himself again in the world.[9] I never see these impostors, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of Magazines, for instance, in full suit. The dishabille,[1] or half-binding (with Russia backs ever) is *our* costume. A Shakespeare, or a Milton (unless the first editions), it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's *Seasons,*[2] again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn, and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "Circulating Library" *Tom Jones*, or *Vicar of Wakefield!*[3] How they speak of the thousand thumbs, that have turned over their pages with delight!—of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or harder-working mantuamaker[4]) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup,[5] in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?

In some respects the better a book is, the less it demands from binding. Fielding, Smollet, Sterne,[6] and all that class of perpetually

self-reproductive volumes—Great Nature's Stereotypes[7]—we see them individually perish with less regret, because we know the copies of them to be "eterne."[8] But where a book is at once both good and rare—where the individual is almost the species, and when *that* perishes,

> We know not where is that Promethean torch
> That can its light relumine—[9]

such a book, for instance, as the *Life of the Duke of Newcastle*, by his Duchess[1]—no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep safe such a jewel.

Not only rare volumes of this description, which seem hopeless ever to be reprinted; but old editions of writers, such as Sir Philip Sydney, Bishop Taylor,[2] Milton in his prose-works, Fuller[3]—of whom we *have* reprints, yet the books themselves, though they go about, and are talked of here and there, we know, have not endenizened themselves (nor possibly ever will) in the national heart, so as to become stock books—it is good to possess these in durable and costly covers. I do not care for a First Folio of Shakespeare. I rather prefer the common editions of Rowe and Tonson, without notes, and with *plates*, which, being so execrably bad, serve as maps, or modest remembrancers, to the text; and without pretending to any supposable emulation with it, are so much better than the Shakespeare gallery *engravings*, which *did*.[4] I have a community of feeling with my countrymen about his Plays, and I like those editions of him best, which have been oftenest tumbled about and handled. —On the contrary, I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in Folio. The Octavo editions are painful to look at.[5] I have no sympathy with them. If they were as much read as the current editions of the other poet, I should prefer them in that shape to the older one. I do not know a more heartless sight than the reprint of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*.[6] What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion to modern censure? what hapless stationer could

dream of Burton ever becoming popular?—The wretched Malone could not do worse, when he bribed the sexton of Stratford church to let him white-wash the painted effigy of old Shakespeare,[7] which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, to the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eye-brow, hair, the very dress he used to wear—the only authentic testimony we had, however imperfect, of these curious parts and parcels of him. They covered him over with a coat of white paint. By ——, if I had been a justice of peace for Warwickshire, I would have clapt both commentator and sexton fast in the stocks, for a pair of meddling sacrilegious varlets.

I think I see them at their work—these sapient trouble-tombs.

Shall I be thought fantastical, if I confess, that the names of some of our poets sound sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear—to mine, at least—than that of Milton or of Shakespeare? It may be, that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which carry a perfume in the mention, are, Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.[8]

Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes, before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the *Fairy Queen* for a stopgap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons?[9]

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears.

Winter evenings—the world shut out—with less of ceremony the gentle Shakespeare enters. At such a season, the *Tempest*, or his own *Winter's Tale*—

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud—to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one—and it degenerates into an audience.

Books of quick interest, that hurry on for incidents, are for the eye to glide over only. It will not do to read them out. I could never listen to even the better kind of modern novels without extreme irksomeness.

A newspaper, read out, is intolerable. In some of the Bank offices it is the custom (to save so much individual time) for one of the clerks—who is the best scholar—to commence upon the Times, or the Chronicle, and recite its entire contents aloud *pro bono publico.*[1] With every advantage of lungs and elocution, the effect is singularly vapid. In barbers' shops and public-houses a fellow will get up, and spell out a paragraph, which he communicates as some discovery. Another follows with *his* selection. So the entire journal transpires at length by piece-meal. Seldom-readers are slow readers, and, without this expedient no one in the company would probably ever travel through the contents of a whole paper.

Newspapers always excite curiosity. No one ever lays one down without a feeling of disappointment.

What an eternal time that gentleman in black, at Nando's,[2] keeps the paper! I am sick of hearing the waiter bawling out incessantly, "the Chronicle is in hand, Sir."

Coming in to an inn at night—having ordered your supper—what can be more delightful than to find lying in the window-seat, left there time out of mind by the carelessness of some former guest—two or three numbers of the old Town and Country Magazine, with its amusing *tête-à-tête* pictures—"The Royal Lover and Lady G——"; "The Melting Platonic and the old Beau,"—and such like antiquated scandal? Would you exchange it—at that time, and in that place—for a better book?

Poor Tobin, who latterly fell blind, did not regret it so much for the weightier kinds of reading—the *Paradise Lost*, or *Comus*, he could have *read* to him—but he missed the pleasure of skimming over with his own eye a magazine, or a light pamphlet.

I should not care to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, and reading *Candide.*[3]

I do not remember a more whimsical surprise than having been once detected—by a familiar damsel—reclined at my ease upon the grass, on Primrose Hill (her Cythera),[4] reading—*Pamela.*[5] There was nothing in the book to make a man seriously ashamed at the exposure; but as she seated herself down by me, and seemed

determined to read in company, I could have wished it had been—any other book. We read on very sociably for a few pages; and, not finding the author much to her taste, she got up, and—went away. Gentle casuist, I leave it to thee to conjecture, whether the blush (for there was one between us) was the property of the nymph or the swain in this dilemma. From me you shall never get the secret.

I am not much a friend to out-of-doors reading. I cannot settle my spirits to it. I knew a Unitarian minister, who was generally to be seen upon Snowhill (as yet Skinner's-street *was not*), between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, studying a volume of Lardner.[6] I own this to have been a strain of abstraction beyond my reach. I used to admire how he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter with a porter's knot,[7] or a bread basket, would have quickly put to flight all the theology I am master of, and have left me worse than indifferent to the five points.[8]

There is a class of street-readers, whom I can never contemplate without affection—the poor gentry, who, not having wherewithal to buy or hire a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls—the owner, with his hard eye, casting envious looks at them all the while, and thinking when they will have done. Venturing tenderly, page after page, expecting every moment when he shall interpose his interdict, and yet unable to deny themselves the gratification, they "snatch a fearful joy."[9] Martin B——,[1] in this way, by daily fragments, got through two volumes of *Clarissa*,[2] when the stallkeeper damped his laudable ambition, by asking him (it was in his younger days) whether he meant to purchase the work. M. declares, that under no circumstances of his life did he ever peruse a book with half the satisfaction which he took in those uneasy snatches. A quaint poetess of our day[3] has moralised upon this subject in two very touching but homely stanzas.

I saw a boy with eager eye
Open a book upon a stall,
And read, as he'd devour it all;

Which when the stall-man did espy,
Soon to the boy I heard him call,
"You, Sir, you never buy a book,
Therefore in one you shall not look."
The boy pass'd slowly on, and with a sigh
He wish'd he never had been taught to read,
Then of the old churl's books he should have had no need.

Of sufferings the poor have many,
Which never can the rich annoy:
I soon perceiv'd another boy,
Who look'd as if he'd not had any
Food, for that day at least—enjoy
The sight of cold meat in a tavern larder.
This boy's case, then thought I, is surely harder,
Thus hungry, longing, thus without a penny,
Beholding choice of dainty-dressed meat:
No wonder if he wish he ne'er had learn'd to eat.

1822 1833

Endnotes

- Note 1: Published in the *London Magazine*, July 1822, and revised for *Last Essays of Elia* (1833), Lamb's essay, although often tongue in cheek, shrewdly challenges the hierarchies the era's reviewers and others used to rank different kinds of writing and sort out good, tasteful readers from bad. Elia's fondness for novels from circulating libraries is as unusual as his willingness to present himself as a receptive reader first and an original author second. For a contrast to his bookishness, see Wordsworth's "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned" (pp. 330–31 in this volume).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The would-be man of fashion in Sir John Vanbrugh's comedy of 1696, *The Relapse.*Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Two extremes in 18th-century prose: the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), philosopher and essayist, and the gang leader who inspired Henry Fielding's 1743 crime novel *Jonathan Wild the Great.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Elia's list begins with the types of books sold by stationers and ends with those authored by venerated and prolific moralists, philosophers, and historians of the 18th century.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: William Paley (1743–1805), theologian and philosopher. Josephus (37–100 C.E.), historian of the Jewish people.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population,* first published 1798, had by 1822 been through several editions and prompted several responses, including ones by Lamb's friends Godwin and Hazlitt.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The early 18th-century dramatists Richard Steele and George Farquhar, contrasted with the author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Russia and Morocco are two varieties of leather used in bookbinding.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Paracelsus (1493–1541) and Ramon Lully (1235–1317), authors with connections to alchemy—the search for the philosopher's stone, which could transmute base metals into gold, and for the elixir of life.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Negligent or casual dress.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: James Thomson's widely read poem of natural description, published in 1730.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Novels by Henry Fielding and Oliver Goldsmith, published in 1748 and 1766.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dressmaker. "Milliner": bonnet maker. Mary Lamb, a great reader of novels borrowed from circulating libraries, was a mantua-maker.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The waters of the river Lethe, which flowed through Hades, caused forgetfulness.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The novelists Tobias Smollett (1721–1771) and Laurence Sterne (1713–1768).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Refers to the molds that at the start of the 19th century had begun to be employed in the printing process, considerably enhancing the speed and efficiency of book production.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Lady Macbeth, suggesting the killing of Banquo and Fleance: "in them nature's copy's not eterne" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 3.2.39).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Compare Othello's words as he contemplates Desdemona's murder (Shakespeare, *Othello* 5.2.12–13).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The 1667 biography of her husband by the poet and playwright Margaret Cavendish.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), author of *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Anglican clergyman and antiquarian Thomas Fuller (1608–1661).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Illustrations by leading English artists were provided for the deluxe edition of Shakespeare issued by the print seller John Boydell in 1802. Elia favors the editions that were prepared by Nicholas Rowe and his publisher Jacob Tonson starting in 1709.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Francis Beaumont (1585?–1616) and John Fletcher (1579–1625), Elizabeth dramatists and collaborators. Lamb's folio edition of their works is also mentioned in "Old China." Folio editions are distinguished from octavo by size: folio is the largest format for books, produced when a full-sized printer's sheet is folded once, whereas an octavo book is sized for pages folded so that each is one-eighth the size of a full sheet. By Lamb's day, book formats were to an extent correlated with their contents: the more cultural authority granted the type of literature or the author, the larger the format.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Robert Burton's vast treatise from 1621; there was an 1800 reprint. Burton's unmethodical, motley prose, which seemingly broaches a thousand topics to take on one, gave

Lamb a model for his style in the Elia essays.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Shakespeare editor Edmond Malone (1741–1812). The repainting of Shakespeare's bust occurred in 1793.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Poet and dramatist Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) and poets Michael Drayton (1563–1631), William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585–1649), and Abraham Cowley (1610–1667).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Launcelot Andrewes (1551–1626).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: For the common good (Latin).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Coffeehouse in London's Fleet Street.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Voltaire, the author of the satirical *Candide, or Optimism* (1759), was notorious for his freethinking in religious matters.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Greek island sacred to the goddess of love. Primrose Hill is a green space in north London.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Samuel Richardson's 1740 novel in letters chronicling the failed seduction of a very virtuous maidservant.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Theologian Nathaniel Lardner (1684–1768).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The padded yoke a London market porter wore to help him carry his burden.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The five points of Calvinist belief: Original Sin, Predestination, Irresistible Grace, Particular Redemption, and the Final Perseverance of the Saints.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Compare the description of schoolboys' play in Thomas Gray's 1742 "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" (line 40).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Lambs' friend Martin Burney, nephew of the novelist Frances Burney.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A million-word novel, Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747–48) took up seven volumes.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Mary Lamb. The poem had appeared earlier in the Lambs' *Poetry for Children* (1809).Return to reference 3

Old China

I have an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china closet, and next for the picture gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference, but by saying that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to; but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.

I had no repugnance then—why should I now have?—to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques, that under the notion of men and women float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a china teacup.

I like to see my old friends—whom distance cannot diminish—figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on terra firma still—for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, had made to spring up beneath their sandals.

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.

Here is a young and courtly mandarin, handing tea to a lady from a salver—two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect! And here the same lady, or another—for likeness is identity on teacups—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world) must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead—a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream!

Farther on—if far or near can be predicated of their world—see horses, trees, pagodas, dancing the hays.[1]

Here—a cow and rabbit couchant,[2] and coextensive—so objects show, seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay.[3]

I was pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson[4] (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon), some of these *speciosa miracula*[5] upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using; and could not help remarking how favorable circumstances had been to us of late years that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort—when a passing sentiment seemed to overshade the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.[6]

"I wish the good old times would come again," she said, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state"—so she was pleased to ramble on—"in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and, O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!)—we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

"Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher,[7] which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington,[8] fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to

me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating*, you called it)—and while I was repairing some of these loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit—your old corbeau[9]—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now.

"When you came home with twenty apologies for laying out a less number of shillings upon that print after Leonardo,[1] which we christened the 'Lady Blanch'; when you looked at the purchase, and thought of the money—and thought of the money, and looked again at the picture—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Now, you have nothing to do but to walk into Colnaghi's,[2] and buy a wilderness of Leonardos. Yet do you?

"Then, do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter's Bar, and Waltham,[3] when we had a holiday—holidays, and all other fun, are gone now we are rich—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day's fare of savory cold lamb and salad—and how you would pry about at noontide for some decent house, where we might go in and produce our store—only paying for the ale that you must call for—and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a tablecloth—and wish for such another honest hostess as Izaak Walton has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea, when he went a-fishing—and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us—but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savorily, scarcely grudging Piscator[4] his Trout Hall? Now—when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom, moreover, we *ride* part of

the way—and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense—which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps,[5] when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage and a precarious welcome.

"You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we used to sit, when we saw the *Battle of Hexham,* and the *Surrender of Calais,*[6] and Bannister and Mrs. Bland in the *Children in the Wood*[7]—when we squeezed out our shillings apiece to sit three or four times in a season in the one-shilling gallery—where you felt all the time that you ought not to have brought me—and more strongly I felt obligation to you for having brought me—and the pleasure was the better for a little shame—and when the curtain drew up, what cared we for our place in the house, or what mattered it where we were sitting, when our thoughts were with Rosalind in Arden, or with Viola at the Court of Ilyria.[8] You used to say that the gallery was the best place of all for enjoying a play socially—that the relish of such exhibitions must be in proportion to the infrequency of going—that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were obliged to attend the more, and did attend, to what was going on, on the stage—because a word lost would have been a chasm, which it was impossible for them to fill up. With such reflections we consoled our pride then—and I appeal to you whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accommodation than I have done since in more expensive situations in the house? The getting in indeed, and the crowding up those inconvenient staircases, was bad enough—but there was still a law of civility to woman recognized to quite as great an extent as we ever found in the other passages—and how a little difficulty overcome heightened the snug seat and the play, afterwards! Now we can only pay our money and walk in. You cannot see, you say, in the galleries now. I am sure we saw, and heard too, well enough then—but sight, and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.

"There was pleasure in eating strawberries, before they became quite common—in the first dish of peas, while they were yet dear—

to have them for a nice supper, a treat. What treat can we have now? If we were to treat ourselves now—that is, to have dainties a little above our means, it would be selfish and wicked. It is the very little more that we allow ourselves beyond what the actual poor can get at that makes what I call a treat—when two people living together, as we have done, now and then indulge themselves in a cheap luxury, which both like; while each apologizes, and is willing to take both halves of the blame to his single share. I see no harm in people making much of themselves, in that sense of the word. It may give them a hint how to make much of others. But now—what I mean by the word—we never do make much of ourselves. None but the poor can do it. I do not mean the veriest poor of all, but persons as we were, just above poverty.

"I know what you were going to say, that it is mighty pleasant at the end of the year to make all meet—and much ado we used to have every Thirty-first Night of December to account for our exceedings—many a long face did you make over your puzzled accounts, and in contriving to make it out how we had spent so much—or that we had not spent so much—or that it was impossible we should spend so much next year—and still we found our slender capital decreasing—but then, betwixt ways, and projects, and compromises of one sort or another, and talk of curtailing this charge, and doing without that for the future—and the hope that youth brings, and laughing spirits (in which you were never poor till now), we pocketed up our loss, and in conclusion, with 'lusty brimmers' (as you used to quote it out of *hearty cheerful Mr. Cotton*,[9] as you called him), we used to welcome in 'the coming guest.' Now we have no reckoning at all at the end of the old year—no flattering promises about the new year doing better for us."

Bridget is so sparing of her speech on most occasions that when she gets into a rhetorical vein, I am careful how I interrupt it. I could not help, however, smiling at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up out of a clear income of poor —— hundred pounds a year. "It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must

put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superflux into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other, if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of. The resisting power—those natural dilations of the youthful spirit, which circumstances cannot straiten—with us are long since passed away. Competence to age is supplementary youth, a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride where we formerly walked: live better and lie softer—and shall be wise to do so—than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return—could you and I once more walk our thirty miles a day—could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young, and you and I be young to see them—could the good old one-shilling gallery days return—they are dreams, my cousin, now—but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted fireside, sitting on this luxurious sofa—be once more struggling up those inconvenient staircases, pushed about, and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers—could I once more hear those anxious shrieks of yours—and the delicious *Thank God, we are safe*, which always followed when the topmost stair, conquered, let in the first light of the whole cheerful theater down beneath us—I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Croesus had, or the great Jew R——[1] is supposed to have, to purchase it. And now do just look at that merry little Chinese waiter holding an umbrella, big enough for a bed-tester,[2] over the head of that pretty insipid half Madonnaish chit of a lady in that very blue summerhouse."

1823 1823

Endnotes

- Note 1: An English country dance.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lying down with the head raised (term from heraldry).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The old European name for China.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A Chinese green tea.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shining wonders (Latin).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Lamb's essays, his name for his sister, Mary.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Elizabethan dramatic collaborators, whose plays were first collected in a large folio volume in 1647.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In the north of London, where the Lambs had been living.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A dark green cloth, almost black (hence its name, the French for raven).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), the great Italian painter. The painting is the one known as *Modesty and Vanity.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Colnaghi was a London print seller. In the issue of the *London Magazine* in which "Old China" first appeared, the artist Thomas Griffiths Wainewright (using the signature "C. van Vinkboom") works some advice for Colnaghi into his essay: namely, to immediately "import a few impressions . . . of those beautiful plates from Da Vinci," including "Miss Lamb's favourite, 'Lady Blanche,' " as he foresees that this issue "will occasion a considerable call for them."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: All three are suburbs to the north of London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The fisherman in Izaak Walton's *Complete Angler* (1653).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Snacks.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Comedies by George Colman (1762–1836).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: By Thomas Morton (1764–1838).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Viola in his *Twelfth Night.*Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Charles Cotton (1630–1687), a favorite poet of Lamb's. The quotations are from his poem "The New Year." "Lusty brimmers": glasses filled to the brim.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Nathan Meyer Rothschild (1777–1836), founder of the English branch of the great European banking house.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Bed canopy.Return to reference 2

JANE AUSTEN
1775–1817

Although nowadays her portrait adorns coffee mugs and T-shirts, and journalists, making much of the movie adaptations of her novels, like to imagine her as the center of attention at Hollywood parties, Jane Austen spent her short, secluded life away from the spotlight. Other members of her large family—she was one of eight children born to an Anglican clergyman and his wife—appear to have lived more in the world and closer to this turbulent period's great events than she did. Two brothers fought as naval officers in the Napoleonic Wars; another became the banker to the flashy London set of the prince regent; her cousin Eliza, born in India, wed a captain in the French army who perished by the guillotine. Austen, however, spent most of her life in Hampshire, the same rural area of southern England in which she was born. Her formal education was limited to a short time at boarding school. Otherwise she and her beloved sister Cassandra had to scramble, like most girls of their class, into what education they could while at home and amid their father's books. As neither Austen daughter married, home was where these two remained the whole of their adult lives.

Jane Austen turned down a proposal of marriage in 1802, possibly intuiting how difficult it would be to combine authorship with life as a wife, mother, and gentry hostess. She had started writing at the age of twelve, for her family's amusement and her own, and in 1797 began sending work to publishers in London. At

that stage they were for the most part unreceptive. In 1803 one paid £10 for the copyright of the novel we know as *Northanger Abbey*, but then declined to publish it, so that Austen had at last, after tangled negotiations, to buy it back. Finally she published *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) at her own expense, then *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and *Mansfield Park* (1814). Next—by this time under the prestigious auspices of John Murray, who was also Byron's publisher—came *Emma* (1816) and, posthumously, after Austen's death at forty-one, *Persuasion* and a revised version of *Northanger Abbey* (both 1818). The Austen name was never publicly associated with any of these books, whose discreet title pages merely identified "a lady" as the author (though, as was also the case with Sir Walter Scott's Waverley novels, success made Austen's authorship an open secret). The modesty of that signature, however, is belied by the assurance of Austen's narrative voice, the confidence with which (to adapt the famous first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*) it subjects "truths universally acknowledged" to witty critical scrutiny.

The six novels are all, in Austen's words, "pictures of domestic life in country villages." The world they depict might seem provincial and insular. For the most part the working classes are absent or present only as silent servants; the soldiers and sailors who were protecting England from Napoleon are presented mainly as welcome additions to a ball. Yet the novels also document with striking detail how, within those country villages, the boundaries that had formerly defined the category of "the gentleman" were becoming permeable under the influence of the changes wrought by revolution and war, and how competition for social status was becoming that much fiercer. Through their heroines, readers can see, as well, how harshly the hard facts of economic life bore down on gentlewomen during this period when a lady's security depended on her making a good marriage. The conundrum at the center of the fiction is whether such a marriage can be compatible with the independence of mind and moral integrity that Austen, like her heroines, cherishes.

Austen also wrote so as to explore what the novel form could be and do. Along with the reviewers of the time, she criticized the form,

but unlike them, she did so to perfect it. With striking flexibility the new narrative voice that she introduced into novel writing shifts back and forth between a romantic point of view and an irony that reminds us of romance's limits—that reminds us that romance features its own sort of provincialism. At the same time Austen also distanced the novel form from the didactic agenda cultivated by her many contemporaries who were convinced that the only respectable fiction was the antiromance that weaned its readers of their romantic expectations. Her delight in mocking their preachy fictions is not only evident in the parodies that she wrote in the 1790s (including *Love and Friendship*, a forerunner of George Eliot's "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists") but is a feature of her mature novels, which as a rule conclude in ways that deviate quite flagrantly from the patterns of reward and punishment a moralist might prefer. "I leave it to be settled by whomsoever it may concern," the narrator of *Northanger Abbey* declares in a parting shot, and in characteristic epigrammatic style, "whether the tendency of this work be altogether to recommend parental tyranny, or reward filial disobedience." "[P]ictures of perfection," Austen wrote in a letter, "make me sick and wicked."

Austen's example is so central to what the novel as a form has become that it can be difficult from our present-day vantage point to recognize the iconoclasm in her depictions of the undervalued business of everyday life. It can be hard to see how much her originality—her creation of characters who are both ordinary and unforgettable, her accounts of how they change—challenged her contemporaries' expectations about novels' plots, settings, and characterizations. Her dissent from those expectations is palpable, however, in a "Plan of a Novel, According to Hints from Various Quarters," the satire Austen wrote after *Emma*, and which assembles the various "hints" she had received from well-wishers about what she should write next. The immediate occasion for the "Plan" was the series of letters Austen received from the Reverend James Stanier Clarke, librarian to the prince regent, who having conveyed to her the prince's wish that *Emma* should be dedicated to him,

continued the correspondence so as to suggest topics that Austen should engage for the next novel—in particular, a historical romance about the royal house of Saxe Cobourg. Austen in reply affirmed the comic spirit of all her works: "I could not sit seriously down to write a serious Romance under any other motive than to save my Life, and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first Chapter."

Love and Friendship This work, an anarchic parody written when the author was fourteen, puts front and center Austen's gifts for ironic assassination and her sharp-eyed sense of the preachiness not simply of her period's moralists but more particularly of her period's rebels against orthodox morality. In this miniaturized novel in letters, Austen constructs a world whose inhabitants are absurdly faithful to codes of conduct they extract from their readings of novels in letters. The protagonists of *Love and Friendship* are energetic students of the clichés of fashionable sentimentalism. They adore Nature, like many poets favoring the romantic Scottish Highlands and picturesque Wales; they know that free spirits, true radicals, should elevate the dictates of the heart over the head. The young Austen calls attention to the messages about gender roles embedded in novel writers' celebrations of the strong feelings that make heroines swoon. She shares Wollstonecraft's impatience with how, as the latter put it in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* the culture makes women slaves to their emotions—"blown about by every momentary gust of feeling." This work is usually classified among Austen's juvenilia, but it has the worldliness and bravado we expect from a much older author.

Our text modernizes the irregular spelling and, to a lesser extent, the punctuation of the manuscript, which Austen titled "Love and Fr*ei*ndship."

Love and Friendship

A Novel in a Series of Letters

"Deceived in Friendship & Betrayed in Love"

LETTER THE FIRST *From Isabel to Laura*

How often, in answer to my repeated entreaties that you would give my daughter a regular detail of the misfortunes and adventures of your life, have you said "No, my friend, never will I comply with your request till I may be no longer in danger of again experiencing such dreadful ones." Surely that time is now at hand. You are this day fifty-five. If a woman may ever be said to be in safety from the determined perseverance of disagreeable lovers and the cruel persecutions of obstinate fathers, surely it must be at such a time of life.

Isabel

LETTER THE SECOND *Laura to Isabel*

Although I cannot agree with you in supposing that I shall never again be exposed to misfortunes as unmerited as those I have already experienced, yet to avoid the imputation of obstinacy or ill nature, I will gratify the curiosity of your daughter; and may the fortitude with which I have suffered the many afflictions of my past life prove to her a useful lesson for the support of those which may befall her in her own.

Laura

LETTER THE THIRD *Laura to Marianne*

As the daughter of my most intimate friend I think you entitled to that knowledge of my unhappy story, which your mother has so often solicited me to give you. My father was a native of Ireland and an inhabitant of Wales; my mother was the natural daughter of a Scotch peer by an Italian opera-girl[1]—I was born in Spain and received my education at a convent in France.

When I had reached my eighteenth year I was recalled by my parents to my paternal roof in Wales. Our mansion was situated in one of the most romantic parts of the vale of Usk.[2] Though my charms are now considerably softened and somewhat impaired by the misfortunes I have undergone, I was once beautiful. But lovely as I was, the graces of my person were the least of my perfections. Of every accomplishment[3] accustomary to my sex, I was mistress. When in the convent, my progress had always exceeded my instructions, my acquirements had been wonderful for my age, and I had shortly surpassed my masters.

In my mind, every virtue that could adorn it was centered; it was the rendezvous of every good quality and of every noble sentiment.

A sensibility[4] too tremblingly alive to every affliction of my friends, my acquaintance, and particularly to every affliction of my own, was my only fault, if a fault it could be called. Alas! how altered now! Though indeed my own misfortunes do not make less impression on me than they ever did, yet now I never feel for those of an other. My accomplishments too, begin to fade—I can neither sing so well nor dance so gracefully as I once did—and I have entirely forgot the *Minuet Dela Cour*.[5]

Adieu.

Laura

LETTER THE FOURTH *Laura to Marianne*

Our neighbourhood was small, for it consisted only of your mother. She may probably have already told you that, being left by her parents in indigent circumstances, she had retired into Wales on economical motives. There it was our friendship first commenced. Isabel was then one and twenty—Though pleasing both in her person and manners (between ourselves) she never possessed the hundredth part of my beauty or accomplishments. Isabel had seen the world. She had passed two years at one of the first boarding schools in London, had spent a fortnight in Bath,[6] and had supped one night in Southampton.[7]

"Beware, my Laura, (she would often say) beware of the insipid vanities and idle dissipations of the metropolis of England; beware of the unmeaning luxuries of Bath and of the stinking fish of Southampton."

"Alas! (exclaimed I) how am I to avoid those evils I shall never be exposed to? What probability is there of my ever tasting the dissipations of London, the luxuries of Bath, or the stinking fish of Southampton? I who am doomed to waste my days of youth and beauty in an humble cottage in the vale of Usk."

Ah! little did I then think I was ordained so soon to quit that humble cottage for the deceitful pleasures of the world.

Adieu.

Laura

LETTER THE FIFTH *Laura to Marianne*

One evening in December as my father, my mother, and myself were arranged in social converse round our fireside, we were on a sudden greatly astonished by hearing a violent knocking on the outward door of our rustic cot.[8]

My father started—"What noise is that?" (said he.) "It sounds like a loud rapping at the door"—(replied my mother.) "It does indeed." (cried I.) "I am of your opinion; (said my father) it certainly does appear to proceed from some uncommon violence exerted against

our unoffending door." "Yes, (exclaimed I) I cannot help thinking it must be somebody who knocks for admittance."

"That is another point (replied he;) We must not pretend to determine on what motive the person may knock—though that someone *does* rap at the door, I am partly convinced."

Here, a second tremendous rap interrupted my father in his speech and somewhat alarmed my mother and me.

"Had we not better go and see who it is? (said she) The servants are out." "I think we had." (replied I.) "Certainly, (added my father) by all means." "Shall we go now?" (said my mother.) "The sooner the better." (answered he). "Oh! let no time be lost." (cried I.)

A third more violent rap than ever again assaulted our ears. "I am certain there is somebody knocking at the door." (said my mother.) "I think there must," (replied my father) "I fancy the servants are returned; (said I) I think I hear Mary going to the door." "I'm glad of it (cried my father) for I long to know who it is."

I was right in my conjecture; for Mary instantly entering the room informed us that a young gentleman and his servant were at the door, who had lost their way, were very cold, and begged leave to warm themselves by our fire.

"Won't you admit them?" (said I) "You have no objection, my dear?" (said my Father.) "None in the world." (replied my mother.)

Mary, without waiting for any further commands, immediately left the room and quickly returned, introducing the most beauteous and amiable youth I had ever beheld. The servant, she kept to herself.

My natural sensibility had already been greatly affected by the sufferings of the unfortunate stranger, and no sooner did I first behold him, than I felt that on him the happiness or misery of my future life must depend.

Adieu.
Laura

LETTER THE SIXTH *Laura to Marianne*

The noble youth informed us that his name was Lindsay—for particular reasons, however, I shall conceal it under that of Talbot. He told us that he was the son of an English baronet,[9] that his mother had been many years no more, and that he had a sister of the middle size. "My father (he continued) is a mean and mercenary wretch—it is only to such particular friends as this dear party that I would thus betray his failings. Your virtues, my amiable Polydore (addressing himself to my father), yours, dear Claudia, and yours, my charming Laura, call on me to repose in you my confidence." We bowed. "My Father, seduced by the false glare of fortune and the deluding pomp of title, insisted on my giving my hand to Lady Dorothea. No, never, exclaimed I. Lady Dorothea is lovely and engaging; I prefer no woman to her; but, know sir, that I scorn to marry her in compliance with your wishes. No! Never shall it be said that I obliged my father."

We all admired the noble manliness of his reply. He continued.

"Sir Edward was surprised; he had perhaps little expected to meet with so spirited an opposition to his will. 'Where, Edward, in the name of wonder (said he) did you pick up this unmeaning gibberish? You have been studying novels, I suspect.' I scorned to answer: it would have been beneath my dignity. I mounted my horse and, followed by my faithful William, set forwards for my aunt's."

"My father's house is situated in Bedfordshire, my aunt's in Middlesex, and, though I flatter myself with being a tolerable proficient in geography, I know not how it happened, but I found myself entering this beautiful vale, which I find is in South Wales, when I had expected to have reached my aunt's."[1]

"After having wandered some time on the banks of the Usk without knowing which way to go, I began to lament my cruel destiny in the bitterest and most pathetic manner. It was now perfectly dark, not a single star was there to direct my steps, and I know not what might have befallen me, had I not at length discerned through the solemn gloom that surrounded me a distant light, which, as I approached it, I discovered to be the cheerful blaze of your fire. Impelled by the combination of misfortunes under which

I laboured, namely fear, cold, and hunger, I hesitated not to ask admittance, which at length I have gained; and now, my adorable Laura (continued he, taking my hand), when may I hope to receive that reward of all the painful sufferings I have undergone during the course of my attachment to you, to which I have ever aspired? Oh! when will you reward me with yourself?"

"This instant, dear and amiable Edward." (replied I.) We were immediately united by my father, who though he had never taken orders had been bred to the church.[2]

Adieu.
Laura

LETTER THE SEVENTH *Laura to Marianne*

We remained but a few days after our marriage in the vale of Usk. After taking an affecting farewell of my father, my mother, and my Isabel, I accompanied Edward to his aunt's in Middlesex. Philippa received us both with every expression of affectionate love. My arrival was indeed a most agreeable surprise to her, as she had not only been totally ignorant of my marriage with her nephew, but had never even had the slightest idea of there being such a person in the world.

Augusta, the sister of Edward, was on a visit to her when we arrived. I found her exactly what her brother had described her to be—of the middle size. She received me with equal surprise, though not with equal cordiality, as Philippa. There was a disagreeable coldness and forbidding reserve in her reception of me which was equally distressing and unexpected. None of that interesting sensibility or amiable sympathy in her manners and address to me which should have distinguished our introduction to each other. Her language was neither warm, nor affectionate, her expressions of regard were neither animated nor cordial; her arms were not opened to receive me to her heart, though my own were extended to press her to mine.

A short conversation between Augusta and her brother, which I accidentally overheard, increased my dislike to her, and convinced me that her heart was no more formed for the soft ties of love than for the endearing intercourse of friendship.

"But do you think that my father will ever be reconciled to this imprudent connection?" (said Augusta.)

"Augusta (replied the noble youth) I thought you had a better opinion of me, than to imagine I would so abjectly degrade myself as to consider my father's concurrence in any of my affairs, either of consequence or concern to me. Tell me, Augusta, tell me with sincerity; did you ever know me consult his inclinations or follow his advice in the least trifling particular since the age of fifteen?"

"Edward (replied she) you are surely too diffident in your own praise. Since you were fifteen only!—My dear brother, since you were five years old, I entirely acquit you of ever having willingly contributed to the satisfaction of your father. But still I am not without apprehensions of your being shortly obliged to degrade yourself in your own eyes by seeking a support for your wife in the generosity of Sir Edward."

"Never, never, Augusta, will I so demean myself. (said Edward). Support! What support will Laura want which she can receive from him?"

"Only those very insignificant ones of victuals and drink." (answered she.)

"Victuals and drink! (replied my husband in a most nobly contemptuous manner) and dost thou then imagine that there is no other support for an exalted mind (such as is my Laura's) than the mean and indelicate employment of eating and drinking?"

"None that I know of so efficacious." (returned Augusta).

"And did you then never feel the pleasing pangs of love, Augusta? (replied my Edward). Does it appear impossible to your vile and corrupted palate to exist on love? Can you not conceive the luxury of living in every distress that poverty can inflict, with the object of your tenderest affection?"

"You are too ridiculous (said Augusta) to argue with; perhaps, however, you may in time be convinced that. . . ."

Here I was prevented from hearing the remainder of her speech, by the appearance of a very handsome young woman, who was ushered into the room at the door of which I had been listening. On hearing her announced by the name of "Lady Dorothea," I instantly quitted my post and followed her into the parlour, for I well remembered that she was the lady proposed as a wife for my Edward by the cruel and unrelenting baronet.

Although Lady Dorothea's visit was nominally to Philippa and Augusta, yet I have some reason to imagine that (acquainted with the marriage and arrival of Edward) to see me was a principal motive to it.

I soon perceived that, though lovely and elegant in her person and though easy and polite in her address, she was of that inferior order of beings with regard to delicate feeling, tender sentiments, and refined sensibility, of which Augusta was one.

She stayed but half an hour and neither, in the course of her visit, confided to me any of her secret thoughts, nor requested me to confide in her any of mine. You will easily imagine therefore, my dear Marianne, that I could not feel any ardent affection or very sincere attachment for Lady Dorothea.

Adieu.

Laura

LETTER THE EIGHTH *Laura to Marianne, in continuation*

Lady Dorothea had not left us long before another visitor, as unexpected a one as her Ladyship, was announced. It was Sir Edward, who, informed by Augusta of her brother's marriage, came doubtless to reproach him for having dared to unite himself to me without his knowledge. But Edward, foreseeing his design,

approached him with heroic fortitude as soon as he entered the room, and addressed him in the following manner.

"Sir Edward, I know the motive of your journey here—You come with the base design of reproaching me for having entered into an indissoluble engagement with my Laura without your consent—But, Sir, I glory in the act—. It is my greatest boast that I have incurred the displeasure of my father!"

So saying, he took my hand and, whilst Sir Edward, Philippa, and Augusta were doubtless reflecting with admiration on his undaunted bravery, led me from the parlour to his father's carriage, which yet remained at the door and in which we were instantly conveyed from the pursuit of Sir Edward.

The postilions[3] had at first received orders only to take the London road; as soon as we had sufficiently reflected, however, we ordered them to drive to M——., the seat of Edward's most particular friend, which was but a few miles distant.

At M——. we arrived in a few hours; and on sending in our names were immediately admitted to Sophia, the wife of Edward's friend. After having been deprived during the course of three weeks of a real friend (for such I term your mother), imagine my transports at beholding one, most truly worthy of the name. Sophia was rather above the middle size; most elegantly formed. A soft languor spread over her lovely features, but increased their beauty.—It was the characteristic of her mind—. She was all sensibility and feeling. We flew into each other's arms and, after having exchanged vows of mutual friendship for the rest of our lives, instantly unfolded to each other the most inward secrets of our hearts—. We were interrupted in this delightful employment by the entrance of Augustus (Edward's friend), who was just returned from a solitary ramble.

Never did I see such an affecting scene as was the meeting of Edward and Augustus.

"My life! my soul!" (exclaimed the former) "My adorable angel!" (replied the latter) as they flew into each other's arms. It was too pathetic for the feelings of Sophia and myself—We fainted alternately on a sofa.[4]

Adieu.
Laura

LETTER THE NINTH *From the same to the same*

Towards the close of the day we received the following letter from Philippa.

Sir Edward is greatly incensed by your abrupt departure; he has taken back Augusta with him to Bedfordshire. Much as I wish to enjoy again your charming society, I cannot determine to snatch you from that of such dear and deserving friends—When your visit to them is terminated, I trust you will return to the arms of your
Philippa

We returned a suitable answer to this affectionate note and, after thanking her for her kind invitation, assured her that we would certainly avail ourselves of it, whenever we might have no other place to go to. Though certainly nothing could, to any reasonable being, have appeared more satisfactory than so grateful a reply to her invitation, yet I know not how it was, but she was certainly capricious enough to be displeased with our behaviour and in a few weeks after, either to revenge our conduct, or relieve her own solitude, married a young and illiterate fortune-hunter. This imprudent step (though we were sensible[5] that it would probably deprive us of that fortune which Philippa had ever taught us to expect) could not on our own accounts excite from our exalted minds a single sigh; yet fearful lest it might prove a source of endless misery to the deluded bride, our trembling sensibility was greatly affected when we were first informed of the event. The affectionate entreaties of Augustus and Sophia that we would for ever consider their house as our home, easily prevailed on us to determine never more to leave them—. In the society of my Edward and this amiable pair, I passed the happiest moments of my life: Our

time was most delightfully spent, in mutual protestations of friendship, and in vows of unalterable love, in which we were secure from being interrupted by intruding and disagreeable visitors, as Augustus and Sophia had, on their first entrance in the neighbourhood, taken due care to inform the surrounding families that, as their happiness centered wholly in themselves, they wished for no other society. But alas! my dear Marianne, such happiness as I then enjoyed was too perfect to be lasting. A most severe and unexpected blow at once destroyed every sensation of pleasure. Convinced as you must be from what I have already told you concerning Augustus and Sophia, that there never were a happier couple, I need not, I imagine, inform you that their union had been contrary to the inclinations of their cruel and mercenary parents, who had vainly endeavoured with obstinate perseverance to force them into a marriage with those whom they had ever abhorred, but, with an heroic fortitude worthy to be related and admired, they had both constantly refused to submit to such despotic power.

After having so nobly disentangled themselves from the shackles of parental authority by a clandestine marriage, they were determined never to forfeit the good opinion they had gained in the world in so doing, by accepting any proposals of reconciliation that might be offered them by their fathers—to this farther trial of their noble independence, however, they never were exposed.

They had been married but a few months when our visit to them commenced, during which time they had been amply supported by a considerable sum of money which Augustus had gracefully purloined from his unworthy father's escritoire,[6] a few days before his union with Sophia.

By our arrival their expenses were considerably increased, though their means for supplying them were then nearly exhausted. But they, exalted creatures! scorned to reflect a moment on their pecuniary distresses and would have blushed at the idea of paying their debts.—Alas! what was their reward for such disinterested behaviour? The beautiful Augustus was arrested and we were all undone. Such perfidious treachery in the merciless perpetrators of

the deed will shock your gentle nature, dearest Marianne, as much as it then affected the delicate sensibility of Edward, Sophia, your Laura, and of Augustus himself. To complete such unparalleled barbarity, we were informed that an execution in the house would shortly take place.[7] Ah! what could we do but what we did! We sighed and fainted on the sofa.

Adieu.
Laura

LETTER THE TENTH *Laura in continuation*

When we were somewhat recovered from the overpowering effusions of our grief, Edward desired that we would consider what was the most prudent step to be taken in our unhappy situation, while he repaired to his imprisoned friend to lament over his misfortunes. We promised that we would, and he set forwards on his journey to town. During his absence we faithfully complied with his desire and, after the most mature deliberation, at length agreed that the best thing we could do was to leave the house of which we every moment expected the officers of justice to take possession. We waited therefore with the greatest impatience for the return of Edward, in order to impart to him the result of our deliberations—. But no Edward appeared—. In vain did we count the tedious moments of his absence—in vain did we weep—in vain even did we sigh—no Edward returned—. This was too cruel, too unexpected a blow to our gentle sensibility—we could not support it—we could only faint—. At length, collecting all the resolution I was mistress of, I arose and, after packing up some necessary apparel for Sophia and myself, I dragged her to a carriage I had ordered, and instantly we set out for London. As the habitation of Augustus was within twelve miles of town, it was not long ere we arrived there, and no sooner had we entered Holborn[8] than, letting down one of the front glasses,[9] I enquired of every decent-looking person that we passed "If they had seen my Edward?"

But as we drove too rapidly to allow them to answer my repeated enquiries, I gained little, or indeed, no information concerning him. "Where am I to drive?" said the postilion. "To Newgate,[1] gentle youth (replied I), to see Augustus." "Oh! no, no, (exclaimed Sophia) I cannot go to Newgate; I shall not be able to support the sight of my Augustus in so cruel a confinement—my feelings are sufficiently shocked by the *recital* of his distress, but to behold it will overpower my sensibility." As I perfectly agreed with her in the justice of her sentiments, the postilion was instantly directed to return into the country. You may perhaps have been somewhat surprised, my dearest Marianne, that in the distress I then endured, destitute of any support, and unprovided with any habitation, I should never once have remembered my father and mother or my paternal cottage in the vale of Usk. To account for this seeming forgetfulness I must inform you of a trifling circumstance concerning them which I have as yet never mentioned—. The death of my parents a few weeks after my departure is the circumstance I allude to. By their decease I became the lawful inheritress of their house and fortune. But alas! the house had never been their own, and their fortune had only been an annuity[2] on their own lives. Such is the depravity of the world! To your mother I should have returned with pleasure, should have been happy to have introduced to her my charming Sophia, and should have with cheerfulness have passed the remainder of my life in their dear society in the vale of Usk, had not one obstacle to the execution of so agreeable a scheme intervened; which was the marriage and removal of your mother to a distant part of Ireland.

Adieu.

Laura

LETTER THE ELEVENTH *Laura in continuation*

"I have a relation in Scotland (said Sophia to me as we left London) who, I am certain, would not hesitate in receiving me." "Shall I order the boy to drive there?" said I—but instantly recollecting myself, exclaimed "Alas, I fear it will be too long a journey for the horses."

Unwilling however to act only from my own inadequate knowledge of the strength and abilities of horses, I consulted the postilion, who was entirely of my opinion concerning the affair. We therefore determined to change horses at the next town and to travel post[3] the remainder of the journey—. When we arrived at the last inn we were to stop at, which was but a few miles from the house of Sophia's relation, unwilling to intrude our society on him unexpected and unthought of, we wrote a very elegant and well-penned note to him containing an account of our destitute and melancholy situation, and of our intention to spend some months with him in Scotland. As soon as we had dispatched this letter, we immediately prepared to follow it in person and were stepping into the carriage for that purpose, when our attention was attracted by the entrance of a coroneted coach and four[4] into the inn-yard. A gentleman considerably advanced in years descended from it—. At his first appearance my sensibility was wonderfully affected and ere I had gazed at him a second time, an instinctive sympathy whispered to my heart, that he was my grandfather.

Convinced that I could not be mistaken in my conjecture, I instantly sprang from the carriage I had just entered, and following the venerable stranger into the room he had been shewn to, I threw myself on my knees before him and besought him to acknowledge me as his grandchild.—He started, and, after having attentively examined my features, raised me from the ground and throwing his grandfatherly arms around my neck, exclaimed, "Acknowledge thee! Yes, dear resemblance of my Laurina and my Laurina's daughter, sweet image of my Claudia and my Claudia's mother, I do acknowledge thee as the daughter of the one and the granddaughter of the other." While he was thus tenderly embracing me, Sophia, astonished at my precipitate departure, entered the room in search of me—. No sooner had she caught the eye of the venerable peer, than he exclaimed with every mark of astonishment —"Another granddaughter ! Yes, yes, I see you are the daughter of my Laurina's eldest girl; your resemblance to the beauteous Matilda sufficiently proclaims it." "Oh!" replied Sophia, "when I first beheld

you the instinct of nature whispered me that we were in some degree related—But whether grandfathers, or grandmothers, I could not pretend to determine." He folded her in his arms, and whilst they were tenderly embracing, the door of the apartment opened and a most beautiful young man appeared. On perceiving him Lord St. Clair started and, retreating back a few paces, with uplifted hands, said, "Another grandchild! What an unexpected happiness is this! to discover in the space of three minutes, as many of my descendants! This, I am certain, is Philander, the son of my Laurina's third girl, the amiable Bertha; there wants now but the presence of Gustavus to complete the union of my Laurina's grandchildren."

"And here he is; (said a graceful youth who that instant entered the room) here is the Gustavus you desire to see. I am the son of Agatha, your Laurina's fourth and youngest daughter." "I see you are indeed; replied Lord St. Clair—But tell me (continued he, looking fearfully towards the door) tell me, have I any other grandchildren in the house." "None, my Lord." "Then I will provide for you all without further delay—Here are four banknotes of 50£ each—Take them and remember I have done the duty of a grandfather—." He instantly left the room and immediately afterwards the house.

Adieu.
Laura

LETTER THE TWELFTH *Laura in continuation*

You may imagine how greatly we were surprised by the sudden departure of Lord St. Clair. "Ignoble grandsire!" exclaimed Sophia. "Unworthy grandfather!" said I, and instantly fainted in each other's arms. How long we remained in this situation I know not; but when we recovered we found ourselves alone, without either Gustavus, Philander, or the banknotes. As we were deploring our unhappy fate, the door of the apartment opened and "Macdonald" was announced. He was Sophia's cousin. The haste with which he came to our relief so soon after the receipt of our note spoke so greatly in his favour that I hesitated not to pronounce him, at first sight, a tender and

sympathetic friend. Alas! he little deserved the name—for though he told us that he was much concerned at our misfortunes, yet by his own account it appeared that the perusal of them had neither drawn from him a single sigh, nor induced him to bestow one curse on our vindictive stars—. He told Sophia that his daughter depended on her returning with him to Macdonald Hall, and that as his cousin's friend he should be happy to see me there also. To Macdonald Hall, therefore, we went, and were received with great kindness by Janetta, the daughter of Macdonald, and the mistress of the mansion. Janetta was then only fifteen; naturally well disposed, endowed with a susceptible heart, and a sympathetic disposition, she might, had these amiable qualities been properly encouraged, have been an ornament to human nature; but, unfortunately, her father possessed not a soul sufficiently exalted to admire so promising a disposition, and had endeavoured by every means in his power to prevent its increasing with her years. He had actually so far extinguished the natural noble sensibility of her heart, as to prevail on her to accept an offer from a young man of his recommendation. They were to be married in a few months, and Graham was in the house when we arrived. *We* soon saw through his character—. He was just such a man as one might have expected to be the choice of Macdonald. They said he was sensible, well-informed, and agreeable; we did not pretend to judge of such trifles, but, as we were convinced he had no soul, that he had never read the *Sorrows of Werter*,[5] and that his hair bore not the slightest resemblance to auburn, we were certain that Janetta could feel no affection for him, or at least that she ought to feel none. The very circumstance of his being her father's choice, too, was so much in his disfavour, that had he been deserving her in every other respect, yet *that* of itself ought to have been a sufficient reason in the eyes of Janetta for rejecting him. These considerations we were determined to represent to her in their proper light and doubted not of meeting with the desired success from one naturally so well disposed, whose errors in the affair had only arisen from a want of proper confidence in her own opinion, and a suitable contempt of her father's. We found her,

indeed, all that our warmest wishes could have hoped for; we had no difficulty to convince her that it was impossible she could love Graham, or that it was her duty to disobey her father; the only thing at which she rather seemed to hesitate was our assertion that she must be attached to some other person. For some time, she persevered in declaring that she knew no other young man for whom she had the smallest affection; but upon explaining the impossibility of such a thing she said that she believed she *did like* Captain M'Kenzie better than anyone she knew besides. This confession satisfied us and, after having enumerated the good qualities of M'Kenzie and assured her that she was violently in love with him, we desired to know whether he had ever in anywise declared his affection to her.

"So far from having ever declared it, I have no reason to imagine that he has ever felt any for me." said Janetta. "That he certainly adores you (replied Sophia) there can be no doubt—. The attachment must be reciprocal—. Did he never gaze on you with admiration—tenderly press your hand—drop an involuntary tear—and leave the room abruptly?" "Never (replied she) that I remember —he has always left the room indeed when his visit has been ended, but has never gone away particularly abruptly or without making a bow." "Indeed, my love (said I) you must be mistaken—: for it is absolutely impossible that he should ever have left you but with confusion, despair, and precipitation—. Consider but for a moment, Janetta, and you must be convinced how absurd it is to suppose that he could ever make a bow, or behave like any other person." Having settled this point to our satisfaction, the next we took into consideration was to determine in what manner we should inform M'Kenzie of the favourable opinion Janetta entertained of him—. We at length agreed to acquaint him with it by an anonymous letter which Sophia drew up in the following manner.

> Oh! happy lover of the beautiful Janetta; oh! enviable possessor of *her* heart whose hand is destined to another, why do you thus delay a confession of your attachment to the amiable object of it ? Oh! consider that a few weeks will at once

put an end to every flattering hope that you may now entertain, by uniting the unfortunate victim of her father's cruelty to the execrable and detested Graham.

Alas! why do you thus so cruelly connive at the projected misery of her and of yourself by delaying to communicate that scheme which had doubtless long possessed your imagination? A secret union will at once secure the felicity of both.

The amiable M'Kenzie, whose modesty, as he afterwards assured us, had been the only reason of his having so long concealed the violence of his affection for Janetta, on receiving this billet flew on the wings of love to Macdonald Hall and so powerfully pleaded his attachment to her who inspired it that, after a few more private interviews, Sophia and I experienced the satisfaction of seeing them depart for Gretna Green,[6] which they chose for the celebration of their nuptials, in preference to any other place, although it was at a considerable distance from Macdonald Hall.

Adieu.

Laura

LETTER THE THIRTEENTH *Laura in Continuation*

They had been gone nearly a couple of hours, before either Macdonald or Graham had entertained any suspicion of the affair—. And they might not even then have suspected it, but for the following little accident. Sophia, happening one day to open a private drawer in Macdonald's library with one of her own keys, discovered that it was the place where he kept his papers of consequence and amongst them some banknotes of considerable amount. This discovery she imparted to me; and having agreed together that it would be a proper treatment of so vile a wretch as Macdonald to deprive him of money, perhaps dishonestly gained, it was determined that the next time we should either of us happen to go that way, we would take one or more of the banknotes from the drawer. This well-meant plan we had often successfully put in

execution; but alas! on the very day of Janetta's escape, as Sophia was majestically removing the fifth banknote from the drawer to her own purse, she was suddenly most impertinently interrupted in her employment by the entrance of Macdonald himself, in a most abrupt and precipitate manner. Sophia (who, though naturally all winning sweetness, could when occasions demanded it call forth the dignity of her sex) instantly put on a most forbidding look, and, darting an angry frown on the undaunted culprit, demanded in a haughty tone of voice "Wherefore her retirement was thus insolently broken in on?" The unblushing Macdonald, without even endeavouring to exculpate himself from the crime he was charged with, meanly endeavoured to reproach Sophia with ignobly defrauding him of his money. The dignity of Sophia was wounded; "Wretch (exclaimed she, hastily replacing the banknote in the drawer) how darest thou to accuse me of an act, of which the bare idea makes me blush?" The base wretch was still unconvinced and continued to upbraid the justly offended Sophia in such opprobrious language, that at length he so greatly provoked the gentle sweetness of her nature, as to induce her to revenge herself on him by informing him of Janetta's elopement, and of the active part we had both taken in the affair. At this period of their quarrel I entered the library and was, as you may imagine, equally offended as Sophia at the ill-grounded accusations of the malevolent and contemptible Macdonald. "Base miscreant (cried I) how canst thou thus undauntedly endeavour to sully the spotless reputation of such bright excellence? Why dost thou not suspect *my* innocence as soon?" "Be satisfied Madam (replied he) I *do* suspect it, and therefore must desire that you will both leave this house in less than half an hour."

"We shall go willingly; (answered Sophia) our hearts have long detested thee, and nothing but our friendship for thy daughter could have induced us to remain so long beneath thy roof."

"Your friendship for my daughter has indeed been most powerfully exerted by throwing her into the arms of an unprincipled fortune-hunter." (replied he.)

"Yes, (exclaimed I) amidst every misfortune, it will afford us some consolation to reflect that by this one act of friendship to Janetta, we have amply discharged every obligation that we have received from her father."

"It must indeed be a most grateful reflection, to your exalted minds." (said he.)

As soon as we had packed up our wardrobe and valuables, we left Macdonald Hall, and after having walked about a mile and a half we sat down by the side of a clear limpid stream to refresh our exhausted limbs. The place was suited to meditation—. A grove of full-grown elms sheltered us from the east—. A bed of full-grown nettles from the west—. Before us ran the murmuring brook and behind us ran the turnpike road. We were in a mood for contemplation and in a disposition to enjoy so beautiful a spot. A mutual silence, which had for some time reigned between us, was at length broke by my exclaiming—"What a lovely scene! Alas, why are not Edward and Augustus here to enjoy its beauties with us?"

"Ah! my beloved Laura (cried Sophia) for pity's sake, forbear recalling to my remembrance the unhappy situation of my imprisoned husband. Alas, what would I not give to learn the fate of my Augustus! to know if he is still in Newgate, or if he is yet hung. But never shall I be able so far to conquer my tender sensibility as to enquire after him. Oh! do not, I beseech you, ever let me again hear you repeat his beloved name—. It affects me too deeply—. I cannot bear to hear him mentioned; it wounds my feelings."

"Excuse me, my Sophia, for having thus unwillingly offended you —" replied I—and then changing the conversation, desired her to admire the noble grandeur of the elms which sheltered us from the eastern zephyr.[7] "Alas! my Laura (returned she) avoid so melancholy a subject, I entreat you.—Do not again wound my sensibility by observations on those elms. They remind me of Augustus—. He was like them, tall, majestic—he possessed that noble grandeur which you admire in them."

I was silent, fearful lest I might any more unwillingly distress her by fixing on any other subject of conversation which might again

remind her of Augustus.

"Why do you not speak, my Laura?" (said she, after a short pause) "I cannot support this silence—you must not leave me to my own reflections; they ever recur to Augustus."

"What a beautiful sky! (said I) How charmingly is the azure varied by those delicate streaks of white!"

"Oh! my Laura (replied she, hastily withdrawing her eyes from a momentary glance at the sky) do not thus distress me by calling my attention to an object which so cruelly reminds me of my Augustus's blue satin waistcoat striped with white! In pity to your unhappy friend, avoid a subject so distressing." What could I do? The feelings of Sophia were at that time so exquisite, and the tenderness she felt for Augustus so poignant, that I had not the power to start any other topic, justly fearing that it might in some unforeseen manner again awaken all her sensibility by directing her thoughts to her husband.—Yet to be silent would be cruel; she had entreated me to talk.

From this dilemma I was most fortunately relieved by an accident truly apropos;[8] it was the lucky overturning of a gentleman's phaeton,[9] on the road which ran murmuring behind us. It was a most fortunate accident as it diverted the attention of Sophia from the melancholy reflections which she had been before indulging. We instantly quitted our seats and ran to the rescue of those who but a few moments before had been in so elevated a situation as a fashionably high phaeton, but who were now laid low and sprawling in the dust—. "What an ample subject for reflection on the uncertain enjoyments of this world, would not that phaeton and the life of Cardinal Wolsey afford a thinking mind!"[1] said I to Sophia as we were hastening to the field of action.

She had not time to answer me, for every thought was now engaged by the horrid spectacle before us. Two gentlemen, most elegantly attired but weltering in their blood, was what first struck our eyes—we approached—they were Edward and Augustus—Yes, dearest Marianne, they were our husbands. Sophia shrieked and fainted on the ground—I screamed and instantly ran mad—. We

remained thus mutually deprived of our senses some minutes, and on regaining them were deprived of them again.—For an hour and a quarter did we continue in this unfortunate situation—Sophia fainting every moment and I running mad as often. At length a groan from the hapless Edward (who alone retained any share of life) restored us to ourselves—. Had we indeed before imagined that either of them lived, we should have been more sparing of our grief—but as we had supposed when we first beheld them that they were no more, we knew that nothing could remain to be done but what we were about—. No sooner therefore did we hear my Edward's groan than, postponing our lamentations for the present, we hastily ran to the dear youth and kneeling on each side of him implored him not to die—. "Laura (said he, fixing his now languid eyes on me) I fear I have been overturned."

I was overjoyed to find him yet sensible—.

"Oh! tell me, Edward (said I) tell me, I beseech you, before you die, what has befallen you since, that unhappy day in which Augustus was arrested and we were separated—"

"I will" (said he) and instantly fetching a deep sigh, expired—. Sophia immediately sunk again into a swoon—. *My* grief was more audible. My voice faltered, my eyes assumed a vacant stare, my face became as pale as death, and my senses were considerably impaired —.

"Talk not to me of phaetons (said I, raving in a frantic, incoherent manner)—give me a violin—. I'll play to him and soothe him in his melancholy hours—Beware, ye gentle nymphs, of Cupid's thunderbolts, avoid the piercing shafts of Jupiter—Look at that grove of firs—I see a leg of mutton—They told me Edward was not dead; but they deceived me—they took him for a cucumber—" Thus I continued, wildly exclaiming on my Edward's death—. For two hours did I rave thus madly and should not then have left off, as I was not in the least fatigued, had not Sophia, who was just recovered from her swoon, entreated me to consider that night was now approaching and that the damps began to fall. "And whither shall we go (said I) to shelter us from either?" "To that white cottage."

(replied she, pointing to a neat building which rose up amidst the grove of elms and which I had not before observed—) I agreed, and we instantly walked to it—we knocked at the door—it was opened by an old woman; on being requested to afford us a night's lodging, she informed us that her house was but small, that she had only two bedrooms, but that however, we should be welcome to one of them. We were satisfied and followed the good woman into the house, where we were greatly cheered by the sight of a comfortable fire—. She was a widow and had only one daughter, who was then just seventeen—One of the best of ages; but alas! she was very plain and her name was Bridget. . . . . Nothing therefore could be expected from her—she could not be supposed to possess either exalted ideas, delicate feelings, or refined sensibilities—She was nothing more than a mere good-tempered, civil, and obliging young woman; as such we could scarcely dislike her—she was only an object of contempt—.

Adieu.
Laura

LETTER THE FOURTEENTH *Laura in continuation*

Arm yourself, my amiable young friend, with all the philosophy you are mistress of; summon up all the fortitude you possess, for alas! in the perusal of the following pages your sensibility will be most severely tried. Ah! what were the misfortunes I had before experienced and which I have already related to you, to the one I am now going to inform you of. The death of my father, my mother, and my husband, though almost more than my gentle nature could support, were trifles in comparison to the misfortune I am now proceeding to relate. The morning after our arrival at the cottage, Sophia complained of a violent pain in her delicate limbs, accompanied with a disagreeable headache. She attributed it to a cold caught by her continued faintings in the open air as the dew was falling the evening before. This, I feared, was but too probably the case; since how could it be otherwise accounted for that I should

have escaped the same indisposition, but by supposing that the bodily exertions I had undergone in my repeated fits of frenzy had so effectually circulated and warmed my blood as to make me proof against the chilling damps of night, whereas Sophia, lying totally inactive on the ground, must have been exposed to all their severity. I was most seriously alarmed by her illness, which, trifling as it may appear to you, a certain instinctive sensibility whispered me would in the end be fatal to her.

Alas! my fears were but too fully justified; she grew gradually worse, and I daily became more alarmed for her.—At length she was obliged to confine herself solely to the bed allotted us by our worthy landlady—. Her disorder turned to a galloping consumption[2] and in a few days carried her off. Amidst all my lamentations for her (and violent you may suppose they were) I yet received some consolation in the reflection of my having paid every attention to her that could be offered in her illness. I had wept over her every day—had bathed her sweet face with my tears and had pressed her fair hands continually in mine—. "My beloved Laura (said she to me, a few hours before she died) take warning from my unhappy end and avoid the imprudent conduct which has occasioned it . . . beware of fainting-fits . . . Though at the time they may be refreshing and agreeable, yet, believe me, they will in the end, if too often repeated and at improper seasons, prove destructive to your constitution. . . . . My fate will teach you this . . . I die a martyr to my grief for the loss of Augustus. . . . One fatal swoon has cost me my life. . . . Beware of swoons, dear Laura . . . A frenzy fit is not one quarter so pernicious; it is an exercise to the body and, if not too violent, is, I dare say, conducive to health in its consequences—Run mad as often as you choose; but do not faint—."

These were the last words she ever addressed to me . . . It was her dying advice to her afflicted Laura, who has ever most faithfully adhered to it.

After having attended my lamented friend to her early grave, I immediately (though late at night) left the detested village in which she died, and near which had expired my husband and Augustus. I

had not walked many yards from it before I was overtaken by a stagecoach, in which I instantly took a place, determined to proceed in it to Edinburgh, where I hoped to find some kind pitying friend who would receive and comfort me in my afflictions.

It was so dark when I entered the coach that I could not distinguish the number of my fellow travellers; I could only perceive that they were many. Regardless, however, of any thing concerning them, I gave myself up to my own sad reflections. A general silence prevailed—a silence, which was by nothing interrupted but by the loud and repeated snores of one of the party.

"What an illiterate villain must that man be! (thought I to myself) What a total want of delicate refinement must he have who can thus shock our senses by such a brutal noise! He must, I am certain, be capable of every bad action! There is no crime too black for such a character!" Thus reasoned I within myself, and doubtless such were the reflections of my fellow travellers.

At length, returning day enabled me to behold the unprincipled scoundrel who had so violently disturbed my feelings. It was Sir Edward, the father of my deceased husband. By his side sat Augusta, and on the same seat with me were your mother and Lady Dorothea. Imagine my surprise at finding myself thus seated amongst my old acquaintance. Great as was my astonishment, it was yet increased, when, on look[ing] out of [the] windows, I beheld the husband of Philippa, with Philippa by his side, on the coach-box,[3] and when, on looking behind, I beheld Philander and Gustavus in the basket.[4] "Oh! heavens, (exclaimed I) is it possible that I should so unexpectedly be surrounded by my nearest relations and connections?" These words roused the rest of the party, and every eye was directed to the corner in which I sat; "Oh! my Isabel (continued I, throwing myself across Lady Dorothea into her arms) receive once more to your bosom the unfortunate Laura. Alas! when we last parted in the vale of Usk, I was happy in being united to the best of Edwards; I had then a father and a mother, and had never known misfortunes—But now deprived of every friend but you—".

"What! (interrupted Augusta) is my brother dead then? Tell us, I entreat you, what is become of him?" "Yes, cold and insensible[5] nymph, (replied I) that luckless swain, your brother, is no more, and you may now glory in being the heiress of Sir Edward's fortune."

Although I had always despised her from the day I had overheard her conversation with my Edward, yet in civility I complied with hers and Sir Edward's entreaties that I would inform them of the whole melancholy affair. They were greatly shocked—Even the obdurate heart of Sir Edward and the insensible one of Augusta were touched with sorrow by the unhappy tale. At the request of your mother I related to them every other misfortune which had befallen me since we parted. Of the imprisonment of Augustus and the absence of Edward—of our arrival in Scotland—of our unexpected meeting with our grandfather and our cousins—of our visit to Macdonald Hall—of the singular service we there performed towards Janetta—of her father's ingratitude for it. . . . . of his inhuman behaviour, unaccountable suspicions, and barbarous treatment of us, in obliging us to leave the house. . . . . of our lamentations on the loss of Edward and Augustus and finally of the melancholy death of my beloved companion.

Pity and surprise were strongly depictured in your mother's countenance, during the whole of my narration, but I am sorry to say, that to the eternal reproach of her sensibility, the latter infinitely predominated. Nay, faultless as my conduct had certainly been during the whole course of my late misfortunes and adventures, she pretended to find fault with my behaviour in many of the situations in which I had been placed. As I was sensible myself, that I had always behaved in a manner which reflected honour on my feelings and refinement, I paid little attention to what she said, and desired her to satisfy my curiosity by informing me how she came there, instead of wounding my spotless reputation with unjustifiable reproaches. As soon as she had complied with my wishes in this particular and had given me an accurate detail of everything that had befallen her since our separation (the particulars of which, if you are not already acquainted with, your mother will give you), I

applied to Augusta for the same information respecting herself, Sir Edward, and Lady Dorothea.

She told me that, having a considerable taste for the beauties of nature, her curiosity to behold the delightful scenes it exhibited in that part of the world had been so much raised by Gilpin's tour to the Highlands,[6] that she had prevailed on her father to undertake a tour of Scotland and had persuaded Lady Dorothea to accompany them. That they had arrived at Edinburgh a few days before and from thence had made daily excursions into the country around in the stage-coach they were then in, from one of which excursions they were at that time returning. My next enquiries were concerning Philippa and her husband, the latter of whom, I learned, having spent all her fortune, had recourse for subsistence to the talent in which he had always most excelled, namely, driving, and that having sold everything which belonged to them, except their coach, had converted it into a stage, and in order to be removed from any of his former acquaintance, had driven it to Edinburgh from whence he went to Sterling[7] every other day; that Philippa, still retaining her affection for her ungrateful husband, had followed him to Scotland and generally accompanied him in his little excursions to Sterling. "It has only been to throw a little money into their pockets (continued Augusta) that my father has always travelled in their coach to view the beauties of the country since our arrival in Scotland—for it would certainly have been much more agreeable to us to visit the Highlands in a post-chaise[8] than merely to travel from Edinburgh to Sterling and from Sterling to Edinburgh, every other day in a crowded and uncomfortable stage." I perfectly agreed with her in her sentiments on the affair, and secretly blamed Sir Edward for thus sacrificing his daughter's pleasure for the sake of a ridiculous old woman, whose folly in marrying so young a man ought to be punished. His behaviour, however, was entirely of a piece with his general character; for what could be expected from a man who possessed not the smallest atom of sensibility, who scarcely knew the meaning of sympathy, and who actually snored—.

Adieu.

LETTER THE FIFTEENTH *Laura in continuation*

When we arrived at the town where we were to breakfast, I was determined to speak with Philander and Gustavus, and to that purpose as soon as I left the carriage, I went to the basket and tenderly enquired after their health, expressing my fears of the uneasiness of their situation. At first they seemed rather confused at my appearance, dreading no doubt that I might call them to account for the money which our grandfather had left me and which they had unjustly deprived me of, but finding that I mentioned nothing of the matter, they desired me to step into the basket, as we might there converse with greater ease. Accordingly I entered, and whilst the rest of the party were devouring green tea and buttered toast, we feasted ourselves in a more refined and sentimental manner by a confidential conversation. I informed them of everything which had befallen me during the course of my life, and at my request they related to me every incident of theirs.

"We are the sons, as you already know, of the two youngest daughters which Lord St. Clair had by Laurina, an Italian opera girl. Our mothers could neither of them exactly ascertain who were our fathers; though it is generally believed that Philander is the son of one Philip Jones, a bricklayer, and that my father was Gregory Staves, a stay-maker[9] of Edinburgh. This is, however, of little consequence, for as our mothers were certainly never married to either of them, it reflects no dishonour on our blood, which is of a most ancient and unpolluted kind. Bertha (the mother of Philander) and Agatha (my own mother) always lived together. They were neither of them very rich; their united fortunes had originally amounted to nine thousand pounds, but as they had always lived upon the principal of it, when we were fifteen it was diminished to nine hundred. This nine hundred, they always kept in a drawer in one of the tables which stood in our common sitting parlour, for the convenience of having it always at hand. Whether it was from this

circumstance, of its being easily taken, or from a wish of being independent, or from an excess of sensibility (for which we were always remarkable), I cannot now determine, but certain it is that when we had reached our fifteenth year, we took the nine hundred pounds and ran away. Having obtained this prize we were determined to manage it with economy and not to spend it either with folly or extravagance. To this purpose we therefore divided it into nine parcels, one of which we devoted to victuals, the second to drink, the third to housekeeping, the fourth to carriages, the fifth to horses, the sixth to servants, the seventh to amusements, the eighth to clothes, and the ninth to silver buckles. Having thus arranged our expenses for two months (for we expected to make the nine hundred pounds last as long), we hastened to London and had the good luck to spend it in seven weeks and a day, which was six days sooner than we had intended. As soon as we had thus happily disencumbered ourselves from the weight of so much money, we began to think of returning to our mothers, but accidentally hearing that they were both starved to death, we gave over the design and determined to engage ourselves to some strolling company of players, as we had always a turn for the stage. Accordingly, we offered our services to one and were accepted; our company was indeed rather small, as it consisted only of the manager, his wife, and ourselves, but there were fewer to pay and the only inconvenience attending it was the scarcity of plays, which for want of people to fill the characters we could perform—. We did not mind trifles, however—. One of our most admired performances was *Macbeth*, in which we were truly great. The manager always played *Banquo* himself, his wife my *Lady Macbeth.* I did the *three witches*, and Philander acted *all the rest.* To say the truth, this tragedy was not only the best, but the only play we ever performed; and after having acted it all over England and Wales, we came to Scotland to exhibit it over the remainder of Great Britain. We happened to be quartered in that very town, where you came and met your grandfather—. We were in the inn-yard when his carriage entered and, perceiving by the arms[1] to whom it belonged, and, knowing

that Lord St. Clair was our grandfather, we agreed to endeavour to get something from him by discovering the relationship—. You know how well it succeeded—. Having obtained the two hundred pounds, we instantly left the town, leaving our manager and his wife to act *Macbeth* by themselves, and took the road to Sterling, where we spent our little fortune with great *éclat.*[2] We are now returning to Edinburgh to get some preferment[3] in the acting way; and such, my dear cousin, is our history."

I thanked the amiable youth for his entertaining narration, and after expressing my wishes for their welfare and happiness, left them in their little habitation and returned to my other friends who impatiently expected me.

My adventures are now drawing to a close, my dearest Marianne; at least for the present.

When we arrived at Edinburgh, Sir Edward told me that, as the widow of his son, he desired I would accept from his hands of four hundred a year. I graciously promised that I would, but could not help observing that the unsympathetic baronet offered it more on account of my being the widow of Edward than in being the refined and amiable Laura.

I took up my residence in a romantic village in the Highlands of Scotland, where I have ever since continued, and where I can, uninterrupted by unmeaning visits, indulge, in a melancholy solitude, my unceasing lamentations for the death of my father, my mother, my husband, and my friend.

Augusta has been for several years united to Graham, the man of all others most suited to her; she became acquainted with him during her stay in Scotland.

Sir Edward, in hopes of gaining an heir to his title and estate, at the same time married Lady Dorothea—. His wishes have been answered.

Philander and Gustavus, after having raised their reputation by their performances in the theatrical line at Edinburgh, removed to Covent Garden, where they still exhibit under the assumed names of *Lewis and Quick.*[4]

Philippa has long paid the debt of nature;[5] her husband, however, still continues to drive the stage-coach from Edinburgh to Sterling:—

Adieu, my dearest Marianne.

Laura

1790 1922

Endnotes

- Note 1: Illegitimate daughter of a Scottish nobleman and a woman who danced in the ballet corps of an opera company.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: River valley in south Wales that had been celebrated by William Gilpin in his handbook for tourists in quest of picturesque scenes, *Observations on the River Wye* (1782).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Central to the curriculum of female education, "accomplishments" were the skills in music, dance, and drawing that were supposed to make young ladies better companions for their future husbands.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sensibility, as a term designating the individual's capacity for sensitive emotional reaction, was celebrated in much late 18th-century literature at the same time that it was studied in medicine, investigations of the human nervous system especially. Sensibility was often linked to sympathy—the ability to enter into the feelings of another person—and hence to pity and benevolence, and was in this context assessed as a source of social harmony.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Literally, the court minuet—the stately formal dance that in the 18th century would begin a ball and be followed by livelier country dances.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fashionable spa town in the west of England.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Port town in the south of England, in Austen's home county of Hampshire.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Cottage.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A baronet, a member of the lower aristocracy, is entitled to be called "Sir" and can pass on his title to his son.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Bedfordshire is in the eastern midlands of England. Middlesex is just northwest of London. South Wales is many miles to the southwest of both.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Laura's father has never been ordained. This marriage is not legal.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The servants mounted on and guiding the horses that draw a coach.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A stage direction in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy *The Critic* (1779) directs the actors playing the mother and son to "faint alternately in each other's arms."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Conscious, aware.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Writing desk.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, the goods in the house, as property of a debtor who has forfeited them, will be seized by a sheriff's officer.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: District in London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Window of the coach.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A prison. That Augustus is thought to be there indicates he has been arrested as a thief rather than as a debtor.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Annual payment of a set sum.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: By speedy and expensive post coach.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The coach, drawn by four horses, is adorned with the image of a crown, indicating its occupant's noble rank.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), Goethe's novel in letters telling the story of the title character's hopeless love, was a hit in England when translated from its original German. It is often seen as a founding text of the European Romantic movement.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: A town in southern Scotland, in which marriages of minors could be quickly performed without questions being asked. It was for this reason the destination of many eloping couples during the period.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A breeze; usually one from the west.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Opportune.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Type of open carriage, named for the over-adventurous charioteer of Greek mythology.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The reference is to Cardinal Wolsey's fall from royal grace during the reign of Henry VIII. Laura, like any well-trained schoolgirl of the 18th century, knows how to moralize on topics from English history.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A rapidly developing case of tuberculosis.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Seat for the driver.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The overhanging back compartment on the outside of a stagecoach, where the passengers paying the cheapest fares were seated.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Incapable of feeling, callous.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Gilpin's *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty . . . On Several Parts of Great Britain; Particularly the High-Lands of Scotland* (1789).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Stirling, a town forty miles northeast of Edinburgh.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Augusta wishes that they had hired on their own a smaller, more comfortable carriage, rather than traveling in a public stagecoach that follows a predetermined route.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Maker of corsets.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The coat of arms painted on the side of a nobleman's or noblewoman's carriage.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Conspicuous success (French); literally, brilliant display.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Advancement.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: William Thomas Lewis and John Quick were well-known actors of the late 18th century. Covent Garden was one of the two London theaters licensed by royal patent.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, she has died.Return to reference 5

Plan of a Novel, According to Hints from Various Quarters[1]

Scene to be in the country, heroine the daughter of a clergyman, one who after having lived much in the world had retired from it, and settled in a curacy,[2] with a very small fortune of his own.—He, the most excellent man that can be imagined, perfect in character, temper, and manners—without the smallest drawback or peculiarity to prevent his being the most delightful companion to his daughter from one year's end to the other.—Heroine a faultless character herself—, perfectly good, with much tenderness and sentiment, and not the least wit—very highly accomplished, understanding modern languages and (generally speaking) everything that the most accomplished young women learn, but particularly excelling in music—her favourite pursuit—and playing equally well on the piano forte and harp—and singing in the first stile. Her person, quite beautiful—dark eyes and plump cheeks.—Book to open with the description of father and daughter—who are to converse in long speeches, elegant language—and a tone of high, serious sentiment.—The father to be induced, at his daughter's earnest request, to relate to her the past events of his life. This narrative will reach through the greatest part of the first volume—as besides all the circumstances of his attachment to her mother and their marriage, it will comprehend his going to sea as chaplain to a distinguished naval character about the court, his going afterwards to court himself, which introduced him to a great variety of characters and involved him in many interesting situations, concluding with his opinion of the benefits to result from tythes being done away, and his having buried his own mother (heroine's lamented grandmother) in consequence of the high priest of the parish in which she died, refusing to pay her remains the respect due to them. The father to be of a very literary turn, an enthusiast in literature, nobody's enemy but his own[3]—at the same

time most zealous in the discharge of his pastoral duties, the model of an exemplary parish priest.[4]—The heroine's friendship to be sought after by a young woman in the same neighbourhood, of talents and shrewdness, with light eyes and a fair skin, but having a considerable degree of wit, heroine shall shrink from the acquaintance.—From this outset, the story will proceed, and contain a striking variety of adventures. Heroine and her father never above a fortnight together in one place,[5] *he* being driven from his curacy by the vile arts of some totally unprincipled and heartless young man, desperately in love with the heroine, and pursuing her with unrelenting passion—no sooner settled in one country of Europe than they are necessitated to quit it and retire to another—always making new acquaintance, and always obliged to leave them.—This will of course exhibit a wide variety of characters—but there will be no mixture; the scene will be for ever shifting from one set of people to another—but all the good will be unexceptionable in every respect —and there will be no foibles or weaknesses but with the wicked, who will be completely depraved and infamous, hardly a resemblance of humanity left in them.—Early in her career, in the progress of her first removals, heroine must meet with the hero—all perfection of course—and only prevented from paying his addresses to her,[6] by some excess of refinement.—Wherever she goes, somebody falls in love with her, and she receives repeated offers of marriage—which she always refers wholly to her father, exceedingly angry that *he* should not be first applied to.—Often carried away by the anti-hero, but rescued either by her father or the hero—often reduced to support herself and her father by her talents and work for her bread;—continually cheated and defrauded of her hire,[7] worn down to a skeleton, and now and then starved to death—. At last, hunted out of civilized society, denied the poor shelter of the humblest cottage, they are compelled to retreat into Kamschatka[8] where the poor father, quite worn down, finding his end approaching, throws himself on the ground, and after four or five hours of tender advice and paternal admonition to his miserable child, expires in a fine burst of literary enthusiasm, intermingled with

invectives again[st] holders of tythes.—Heroine inconsolable for some time—but afterwards crawls back towards her former country —having at least twenty narrow escapes of falling into the hands of anti-hero—and at last in the very nick of time, turning a corner to avoid him, runs into the arms of the hero himself, who having just shaken off the scruples which fetter'd him before, was at the very moment setting off in pursuit of her.—The tenderest and completest eclaircissement[9] takes place, and they are happily united.—Throughout the whole work, heroine to be in the most elegant society and living in high style. The name of the work *not* to be *Emma*—but of the same sort as S & S and P & P.

1816 1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: Austen's teasing account of the novel she *would* write if she took to heart the advice people gave her about what her fiction ought to be is another manuscript preserved by her family. It was first published in her nephew James Austen-Leigh's *Memoir of Jane Austen* (1870). In the original manuscript, Austen supplied marginal glosses, mainly omitted here, indicating the source of each "hint" the "Plan" incorporates. Her would-be advisers included, in addition to the Reverend James Stanier Clarke (the librarian to the Prince Regent), neighbors; family members, most prominently her niece Fanny Knight; a parson, J. G. Sherer, who had been displeased, Austen reported, with her "pictures of clergymen"; and William Gifford, the editor of the *Quarterly Review* as well as the adviser who had read *Emma* for the publisher John Murray.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, settled in the position of curate, the assistant (often badly paid) to the incumbent priest of the parish.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: For this summary of the clergyman's tale that will fill up her novel's projected first volume, Austen lifts a number of

phrases directly from Clarke's letters. Clarke wished to see Austen address the benefits of the abolition of tithes (the taxes supporting the Anglican Church and clergy) and thought his own story of having buried his mother would make good material for her novel.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Mr. Sherer [*Austen's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Many critics [*Austen's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, seeking her hand in marriage.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Wages.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Kamchatka; a peninsula on the eastern edge of Asia, extending into the Bering Sea, acquired by Russia in the 18th century. The novels of Austen's contemporaries tended to be cosmopolitan in setting and often did send heroines wandering across Europe. Austen, however, may be thinking particularly of Sophie de Cottin's *Elizabeth; or Exiles of Siberia* (1806; English translation, 1809).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The clarification of mysteries and misunderstandings that brings a narrative to closure (French).Return to reference 9

WILLIAM HAZLITT
1778–1830

"I started in life," William Hazlitt wrote, "with the French Revolution, and I have lived, alas! to see the end of it. . . . Since then, I confess, I have no longer felt myself young, for with that my hopes fell." He was born into a radical circle, for the elder William Hazlitt, his father, was a Unitarian minister who declared from the pulpit his advocacy both of American independence and of the French Revolution. When young William was five years old, his father took the family to America in search of liberty and founded the first Unitarian church in Boston, but four years later he returned to settle at Wem, in Shropshire. Despite the persistent attacks of reviewers and the backsliding of his once-radical friends, Hazlitt never wavered in his loyalty to liberty, equality, and the principles behind the overthrow of the monarchy in France. His first literary production, at the age of thirteen, was a letter to a newspaper in indignant protest against the mob that sacked Joseph Priestley's house, when the scientist and preacher had celebrated publicly the second anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. His last book, published in the year he died, was a four-volume life of Napoleon, in which he expressed a vehement, but qualified, admiration of Napoleon as a man of heroic will and power in the service of the emancipation of mankind.

Hazlitt was a long time finding his vocation. When he attended the Hackney College, London, between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, he plunged into philosophical studies. In 1799 he took up

the study of painting and did not relinquish the ambition to become a portraitist until 1812. His first books dealt with philosophy, economics, and politics; and his first job as a journalist was as parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle.* It was not until 1813, when he was thirty-six, that he began contributing dramatic criticism and miscellaneous essays to various periodicals and so discovered what he had been born to do. Years of wide reading and hard thinking had made him thoroughly ready: within the next decade he demonstrated himself to be a highly popular lecturer on Shakespeare, Elizabethan drama, and English poetry from Chaucer to his own day; a superb connoisseur of the theater and of painting; a master of the familiar essay; and with Coleridge, one of the two most important literary critics of his time. Coleridge elaborates his theory of poetry as part of a general philosophy of human imagination and human society. Hazlitt, on the other hand, disapproves of what he calls the "modern or metaphysical school of criticism." His distinctive critical gift is to communicate what he calls his "impressions"—that is, the immediacy of his firsthand responses to a passage or work of literature.

Unlike his contemporaries Coleridge, Lamb, and De Quincey, whose writings look back to the elaborate prose stylists of the earlier seventeenth century, Hazlitt developed a fast-moving, hard-hitting prose in a style that he called "plain, point-blank speaking." He wrote, indeed, nearly as fast as he talked, almost without correction and (despite the density of literary quotations) without reference to books or notes. This rapidity was possible only because his essays are relatively planless. Hazlitt characteristically lays down a topic, then piles up relevant observations and instances; the essay accumulates instead of developing; often, it does not round to a conclusion, but simply stops. Hazlitt's prose is unfailingly energetic, but his most satisfying essays, considered as works of literary art, are those that have a narrative subject matter to give him a principle of organization.

In demeanor Hazlitt was awkward and self-conscious; Coleridge described him in 1803 as "brow-hanging, shoe-contemplative,

strange.” He had grown up as a member of a highly unpopular minority, in both religion and politics; he found his friends deserting to the side of reaction; and his natural combativeness was exacerbated by the persistent abuse directed against him by writers in the conservative press and periodicals. In the course of his life, he managed to quarrel, in private and in print, with almost everyone whom he had once admired and liked, including Coleridge, Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, and even his most intimate and enduring friend, Lamb. But what appealed to his admirers, as to modern readers of his essays, is his courage and uncompromising honesty, and above all his zest for life in its diversity—including even, as he announced in the title of an essay, “The Pleasure of Hating.” He relished, and was able to convey completely, the particular qualities of things—a passage of poetry, a painting, a natural prospect, or a well-directed blow in a prize fight. Despite the recurrent frustrations of his fifty-two years of existence, he was able to say, with his last breath, “Well, I’ve had a happy life.”

From Characters of Shakespeare's Plays

From *Coriolanus*[1]

Shakespear has in this play shewn himself well versed in history and state-affairs. *Coriolanus* is a store-house of political commonplaces. Any one who studies it may save himself the trouble of reading Burke's Reflections, or Paine's Rights of Man, or the Debates in both Houses of Parliament since the French Revolution or our own.[2] The arguments for and against aristocracy or democracy, on the privileges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher. Shakespear himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question,[3] perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. What he says of them is very true: what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it.—The cause of the people is indeed but little calculated as a subject for poetry: it admits of rhetoric, which goes into argument and explanation, but it presents no immediate or distinct images to the mind, "no jutting frieze, buttress, or coigne of vantage" for poetry "to make its pendant bed and procreant cradle in."[4] The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power. The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty: it takes from one thing to add to another: it accumulates circumstances together to give the greatest possible effect to a favourite object. The understanding is a dividing and measuring faculty: it judges of things, not according to their immediate impression on the mind, but according to their relations to one another. The one is a monopolizing faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of present excitement by inequality and disproportion; the other is a distributive faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of ultimate good, by justice and proportion. The

one is an aristocratical, the other a republican faculty. The principle of poetry is a very anti-levelling principle. It aims at effect, it exists by contrast. It admits of no medium. It is every thing by excess. It rises above the ordinary standard of sufferings and crimes. It presents a dazzling appearance. It shews its head turretted, crowned, and crested. Its front is gilt and bloodstained. Before it "it carries noise, and behind it tears."[5] It has its altars and its victims, sacrifices, human sacrifices.[6] Kings, priests, nobles, are its train-bearers, tyrants and slaves its executioners.—"Carnage is its daughter."[7]—Poetry is right-royal. It puts the individual for the species, the one above the infinite many, might before right. A lion hunting a flock of sheep or a herd of wild asses, is a more poetical object than they; and we even take part with the lordly beast, because our vanity or some other feeling makes us disposed to place ourselves in the situation of the strongest party. So we feel some concern for the poor citizens of Rome when they meet together to compare their wants and grievances, till Coriolanus comes in, and with blows and big words drives this set of "poor rats," this rascal scum, to their homes and beggary before him.[8] There is nothing heroical in a multitude of miserable rogues not wishing to be starved, or complaining that they are like to be so: but when a single man comes forward to brave their cries and to make them submit to the last indignities, from mere pride and self-will, our admiration of his prowess is immediately converted into contempt for their pusillanimity. The insolence of power is stronger than the plea of necessity. The tame submission to usurped authority or even the natural resistance to it has nothing to excite or flatter the imagination: it is the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others that carries an imposing air of superiority with it. We had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed. The love of power in ourselves and the admiration of it in others are both natural to man: the one makes him a tyrant, the other a slave. Wrong dressed out in pride, pomp, and circumstance has more attraction than abstract right.—Coriolanus complains of the fickleness of the people: yet the instant he cannot gratify his pride and obstinacy at their expense, he

turns his arms against his country. If his country was not worth defending, why did he build his pride on its defence? He is a conqueror and a hero; he conquers other countries, and makes this a plea for enslaving his own; and when he is prevented from doing so, he leagues with its enemies to destroy his country. He rates the people "as if he were a God to punish, and not a man of their infirmity."[9] He scoffs at one of their tribunes for maintaining their rights and franchises: "Mark you his absolute *shall*?"[1] not marking his own absolute *will* to take every thing from them, his impatience of the slightest opposition to his own pretensions being in proportion to their arrogance and absurdity. If the great and powerful had the beneficence and wisdom of Gods, then all this would have been well: if with a greater knowledge of what is good for the people, they had as great a care for their interest as they have themselves, if they were seated above the world, sympathising with the welfare, but not feeling the passions of men, receiving neither good nor hurt from them, but bestowing their benefits as free gifts on them, they might then rule over them like another Providence. But this is not the case. Coriolanus is unwilling that the senate should shew their "cares" for the people, lest their "cares" should be construed into "fears," to the subversion of all due authority; and he is no sooner disappointed in his schemes to deprive the people not only of the cares of the state, but of all power to redress themselves, than Volumnia is made madly to exclaim,

> "Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome,
> And occupations perish."[2]

This is but natural: it is but natural for a mother to have more regard for her son than for a whole city; but then the city should be left to take some care of itself. The care of the state cannot, we here see, be safely entrusted to maternal affection, or to the domestic charities of high life. The great have private feelings of their own, to which the interests of humanity and justice must courtesy. Their interests are so far from being the same as those of the community, that they are in direct and necessary opposition to them; their power

is at the expense of *our* weakness; their riches of *our* poverty; their pride of *our* degradation; their splendour of *our* wretchedness; their tyranny of *our* servitude. If they had the superior knowledge ascribed to them (which they have not) it would only render them so much more formidable; and from Gods would convert them into Devils. The whole dramatic moral of *Coriolanus* is that those who have little shall have less, and that those who have much shall take all that others have left. The people are poor; therefore they ought to be starved. They are slaves; therefore they ought to be beaten. They work hard; therefore they ought to be treated like beasts of burden. They are ignorant; therefore they ought not to be allowed to feel that they want food, or clothing, or rest, that they are enslaved, oppressed, and miserable. This is the logic of the imagination and the passions; which seek to aggrandise what excites admiration and to heap contempt on misery, to raise power into tyranny, and to make tyranny absolute; to thrust down that which is low still lower, and to make wretches desperate: to exalt magistrates into kings, kings into gods; to degrade subjects to the rank of slaves, and slaves to the condition of brutes. The history of mankind is a romance, a mask, a tragedy, constructed upon the principles of *poetical justice;* it is a noble or royal hunt, in which what is sport to the few, is death to the many,[3] and in which the spectators halloo and encourage the strong to set upon the weak, and cry havoc in the chase, though they do not share in the spoil. We may depend upon it that what men delight to read in books, they will put in practice in reality.

* * *

1817

Endnotes

- Note 1: In this chapter from Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), discussion of Shakespeare's tragedy

Coriolanus, which Hazlitt had watched performed in 1816, occasions a provoking exploration of the poetic imagination's relationship to politics and political justice. The essay was fueled by Hazlitt's gloom over the repressive politics of the day and his disappointment with the poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge in particular, who appeared to have forsaken their commitment to the cause of liberty. Shakespeare's play had taken the political structures of classical Rome during its republican era and mapped them onto his own time and place. Hazlitt's essay does the same with *Coriolanus*, finding in the play a mirror of the political situation in Regency England, as well as probing the role that aesthetic pleasure has played in upholding that situation.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, Britain's Glorious Revolution of 1688, which expelled the Stuart dynasty from the throne. Edmund Burke's attack on the French people's pursuit of liberty in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, from 1790, was followed in 1791 by Thomas Paine's defense of the Revolution in his pamphlet *Rights of Man.* For excerpts from their texts, see "An Age of Revolutions" (p. 189, above).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, Shakespeare favored despotism over democracy.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From *Macbeth* 1.6.6–8: Banquo, entering Macbeth's castle with King Duncan, describes how martins have made their nests in the castle walls.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "Before him he carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears": lines from *Coriolanus* 2.1.144–45 applied to Shakespeare's protagonist on his triumphal return from military campaigning.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Hazlitt mimes Burke's syntax in a passage in *Reflections* in which Burke declares that, unlike the liberty of the French revolutionists, the liberty the English cherish "has a pedigree and illustrating ancestors": "It has its bearings and its ensigns armorial. It has its gallery of portraits; its monumental inscriptions; its records, evidences, and titles."Return to reference 6

- Note 7: A strategically placed citation of Wordsworth's 1816 "Thanksgiving Ode" in which, celebrating the victory against Napoleon at Waterloo, Wordsworth seemed to announce also his new role as a defender of the political establishment. Wordsworth writes there that God's most dreaded instrument "in working out a pure intent / Is Man—arrayed for mutual slaughter— / Yes, Carnage is Thy Daughter."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hazlitt refers to the opening scene of *Coriolanus*, in which Shakespeare's protagonist scornfully dismisses a mob of the Roman common people who have gathered to protest a food shortage. When this fierce veteran of Rome's wars is later convinced to run for a position as a Roman consul, he will prove catastrophically incapable of the maneuvering that would ensure his survival in the realm of politics. Banished, Coriolanus turns on the city he once served.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: *Coriolanus* 3.1.85–86.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *Coriolanus* 3.1.92–93.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Coriolanus* 4.1.14–15: language with which Coriolanus's mother curses Rome for banishing her son.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Echoing a line from a fable of Aesop's, in which boys playing near a pond spot some frogs and begin pelting them with stones. One frog cries out for the boys to stop: "What is sport to you, is death to us."Return to reference 3

On Going a Journey

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out of doors, nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.[1]

> The fields his study, nature was his book.[2]

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticizing hedgerows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering places;[3] and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbowroom, and fewer encumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

> —a friend in my retreat,
> Whom I may whisper solitude is sweet.[4]

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

> May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
> That in the various bustle of resort
> Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired,[5]

that I absent myself from the town for awhile, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post chaise or in a tilbury,[6] to exchange good things with, and vary the

same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud, I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sunburnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasuries,"[7] burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull commonplaces, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!"[8] I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "the very stuff of the conscience."[9] Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart, set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far distant horizon? I should be but bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, a neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship,"[1] say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's,[2] that "he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time." So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts. "Let me have a companion of my way," says

Sterne, "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun goes down."[3] It is beautifully said: but in my opinion, this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show,[4] it is insipid; if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of nature, without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey, in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomize them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with any one for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a beanfield crossing the road, perhaps your fellow traveler has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is shortsighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the color of a cloud which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unprepared to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill humor. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—they may recall a number of ideas, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company seems extravagance or affectation; on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it (otherwise the end is not answered) is a task to which few are competent. We must

"give it an understanding, but no tongue."[5] My old friend C——,[6] however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing."[7] If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have someone with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden.[8] They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had";[9] and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following.

> —Here be woods as green
> As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
> As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
> Face of the curled stream, with flow'rs as many
> As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
> Here be all new delights, cool streams and wells,
> Arbors o'ergrown with woodbine, caves, and dells:
> Choose where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,
> Or gather rushes to make many a ring
> For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love,
> How the pale Phoebe, hunting in a grove,
> First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
> She took eternal fire that never dies;
> How she conveyed him softly in a sleep,
> His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
> Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
> Gilding the mountain with her brother's light,
> To kiss her sweetest.—
>
> FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS.[1]

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the

evening clouds: but at the sight of nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot: I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects: it should be reserved for table talk. L——[2] is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out of doors; because he is the best within. I grant, there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey; and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavor of the viands we expect at the end of it. How fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn!"[3] These eventful moments in our lives are in fact too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop: they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea,

> The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,[4]

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher,[5] a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed upon cow-heel;[6] and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation,[7] to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen—*Procul, O procul este profani!*[8] These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger

takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker, or from the West Riding[9] of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathize with him, and he *breaks no squares*.[1] I associate nothing with my traveling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs, I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits; or from having someone with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world: but your "unhoused free condition is put into circumscription and confine."[2] The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of oneself, uncumbered with a name,"[3] Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweetbreads, and to owe nothing but the score[4] of the evening—and no longer seeking for applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the Gentleman in the parlor!* One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed commonplaces that we appear in the world: an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores[5] with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham Common,[6] where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St.

Neot's (I think it was), where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons,[7] into which I entered at once; and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's drawings,[8] which I compared triumphantly (for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist) with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in the boat between me and the fading twilight—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*,[9] which I picked up at an inn at Bridge-water, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame D'Arblay's *Camilla*.[1] It was on the tenth of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise,* at the inn at Llangollen,[2] over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux describes his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bonne bouche*[3] to crown the evening with. It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighborhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point, you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheater, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks"[4] below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and a budding ash tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the high road that commanded the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.

The beautiful is vanished, and returns not.[5]

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the traces of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced! I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now? Not only I myself have changed; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O sylvan Dee, as then thou wert, in joy, in youth and gladness; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely![6]

There is hardly any thing that shows the shortsightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than traveling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again;[7] but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy has only a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions; we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye; we take our fill of it; and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it: the horizon that shuts it from our sight also blots it from our memory like a dream. In traveling through a wild barren country, I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter, "all is a desert."[8] All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county;

kingdom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast—the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written on a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population, known by the name of China to us? An inch of pasteboard on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piecemeal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate associations, everyone must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!—To return to the question I have quitted above.

I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge[9] will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure, the first consideration always is where we shall go: in taking a solitary ramble, the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind then is its own place";[1] nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honors indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once

took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—showed them the seat of the Muses at a distance,

> With glistering spires and pinnacles adorned[2]—

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and colleges—was at home in the Bodleian; and at Blenheim quite superseded the powdered Ciceroni that attended us,[3] and that pointed in vain with his wand to commonplace beauties in matchless pictures.—As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen: there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by oneself, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support.—Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbor, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France,"[4] erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones. I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled: nothing remains

but the Bourbons[5] and the French people!—There is undoubtedly a sensation in traveling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else: but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump"[6] all our present comforts and connexions. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad.[7] In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful and in one sense instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves, as well as to our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

> Out of my country and myself I go.[8]

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them: but we can be said only to fulfill our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in traveling abroad, if I could any where borrow another life to spend afterwards at home!

1822, 1825

Endnotes

- Note 1: Silently quoting the Roman Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.), who, both in *On the Commonwealth* (book 1) and *On Duties* (book 3), reports the aphorism as having been recorded by Cato the Elder, an earlier Roman statesman, from the conversation of his

compatriot Scipio Africanus: "I am never less at leisure than when I am at leisure, never less alone than when I am alone."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: "Spring," line 32, in *The Farmer's Boy* (1800) by Robert Bloomfield, a working-class poet.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bathing resorts.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: William Cowper, *Retirement* (1782), lines 741–42.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Milton, *Comus*, lines 378–80.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Lightweight, open, two-wheeled carriage; "post chaise": hired carriage.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Shakespeare, *Henry V* 1.2.165.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A refrain in Thomas Gray's *The Descent of Odin: An Ode* (1768).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.2.2.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Shakespeare, *I Henry IV* 1.3.208.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Cobbett (1763–1835), author of *Rural Rides* (1830), in which he comments upon the conditions he observed while on an inspection tour of rural England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Altered from Laurence Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (1760–69), vol. 3.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An episode of pantomime in early English dramas.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Hamlet* 1.2.250.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Coleridge.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Beaumont and Fletcher's tragicomedy *Philaster* (1611), 5.5.165–66: "I did hear you talk, / Far above singing."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hazlitt had visited Coleridge and Wordsworth at Alfoxden, Somersetshire, in 1798.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Altered from Michael Drayton's *Elegy to * * * Henry Reynolds Esquire* (1627), lines 109–10.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess* (a pastoral drama, 1610), 1.3. Phoebe (also known as Diana) is the moon goddess who fell in love with the handsome young shepherd

Endymion on Mount Latmus, in southwestern Anatolia. "Her brother's light" is that of Apollo, the sun god.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Charles Lamb. "Table talk": mealtime conversation.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Altered from *I Henry IV* 3.3.68–69.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: William Cowper, *The Task* 4.39–40.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A thin slice of bacon or ham.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The foot of a cow stewed so as to make a jelly. The episode occurs in Cervantes' *Don Quixote,* part 2 (1615), chapter 49.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: An allusion to the seemingly random associations of ideas in the speech and thought of the characters in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760–67).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: "Away! away! ye unhallowed ones!" Cried out by the priestess as she calls up Hecate, goddess of the underworld (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.258).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The western division.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, doesn't change the circumstances. ("To break squares" meant to violate the regular order of doing something.)Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.2.26–27.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Dryden, *To My Honored Kinsman, John Driden* (1700), line 18. "Incognito": anonymity; with one's name undivulged.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Bill for food and drink.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Clears off debts.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Somersetshire.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Simon Gribelin (1661–1733), who made engraved copies of the cartoons (full-scale drawings) that Raphael had designed for tapestries to be hung on the walls of the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican. "St. Neot's": a town in Huntingdonshire.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Richard Westall (1765–1838), an English painter. The Severn is a river flowing through Wales and western England.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: *Paul et Virginie* was a widely read novel of sentiment by the French author Bernardin de St. Pierre in 1787.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *Camilla, or a Picture of Youth* (1796), a novel by Madame D'Arblay, whose maiden name was Frances Burney.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A town in Wales. *La Nouvelle Héloise* is a novel by Rousseau published in 1761; the hero is St. Preux. The "Jura" is a mountain range on the French-Swiss border; the "Pays de Vaud" is a canton in Switzerland.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A sugary dessert, eaten after a meal.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Coleridge, "Ode to the Departing Year" (1796), lines 125–26; the quotation that follows ("glittered green . . .") is from the same poem, line 124.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: From Coleridge's translation of Schiller's drama *The Death of Wallenstein* (1799–1800), 5.1.68. "Faded into the light of common day" is a reminiscence of Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," line 77.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See the description of the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:8–10.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A reminiscence of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," line 61.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The line is in fact spoken by Harriet, the heroine of George Etheredge's Restoration comedy *The Man of Mode, or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), 5.2. Hyde Park, in London, was favored by people of fashion.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The prehistoric circle of upright slabs of stone, on Salisbury Plain.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *Paradise Lost* 1.254.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Paradise Lost* 3.550. "*Eclat"*: pomp. The "party" consisted of Charles and Mary Lamb.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *Cicerone* is Italian for a guide. The Bodleian is the central library at Oxford. Blenheim Palace, at Woodstock, near Oxford, was built for the Duke of Marlborough in 1704.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: From William Roscoe's *Song Written for . . . the Anniversary of 14th August, 1791.* Hazlitt had visited France in 1802–03 to make copies of paintings in the Louvre.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The French royal family, which had been deposed during the revolution, was restored in 1814 after the fall of Napoleon.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Abandon, leave behind.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In Boswell's *Life of Johnson,* entry for May 13, 1778.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From the poem *Voyage to Parnassus* by Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), as Cervantes bids farewell to Madrid.Return to reference 8

THOMAS DE QUINCEY
1785–1859

Born in Manchester, the son of a wealthy merchant involved in the West Indian cotton trade, Thomas De Quincey was the fourth of eight children. Before his tenth birthday he experienced the deaths of a series of family members, his father included; the loss that more than any other haunted him his entire life was that of his favorite sister and "nursery playmate," Elizabeth, two years his senior, who died suddenly in 1792. Sent from home to school at seven, De Quincey was a precocious scholar, especially in Latin and Greek, and a gentle and bookish introvert; he found it difficult to adapt himself to discipline and routine and was thrown into panic by any emergency that called for decisive action. He ran away from Manchester Grammar School and, after a summer spent tramping through Wales, broke off completely from his family and guardians and went to London in the hope that he could obtain from moneylenders an advance on his prospective inheritance. There at the age of seventeen he spent a terrible winter of loneliness and poverty, befriended only by some kindly sex workers. These early experiences with the sinister aspect of city life later became persistent elements in his dreams of terror.

After a reconciliation with his guardians, he entered Worcester College, Oxford, on an inadequate allowance. He spent the years 1803–8 in sporadic attendance, isolated as usual, then left abruptly

in the middle of his examination for the A.B. with honors because he could not face the ordeal of an oral examination.

De Quincey had been an early admirer of Wordsworth and Coleridge. No sooner did he come of age and into his inheritance than, with his usual combination of generosity and recklessness, he made Coleridge an anonymous gift of £300. He became an intimate friend of the Wordsworths at Grasmere, and when they left Dove Cottage for Allan Bank, a larger house in the same village, took up his own residence at Dove Cottage to be near them. For a time he lived the life of a rural scholar, but then fell in love with Margaret Simpson, the daughter of a minor local landholder and farmer and, after they had a son, married her in February 1817. This affair led to an estrangement from the Wordsworths and left him in severe financial difficulties. Worse still, De Quincey at this time became completely enslaved to opium. Following the ordinary medical practice of the time, he had been taking the drug for a variety of painful ailments; but now, driven by poverty and despair as well as pain, he indulged in huge quantities of laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol) and was never thereafter able to free himself from addiction to what he called "the pleasures and pains of opium." It was during periods of maximum use, and especially in the recurrent agonies of cutting down his opium dosage, that he experienced the grotesque and terrifying reveries and nightmares that he wove into his literary fantasies.

Desperate for income, De Quincey at last turned to writing at the age of thirty-six. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, which he contributed to the *London Magazine*, scored an immediate success and was at once reprinted as a book, but it earned him little money. In 1828 he moved with his three children to Edinburgh, to write for *Blackwood's Magazine.* For almost the rest of his life, he led a harried existence, beset by many physical ills, struggling with his indecisiveness and depression and the horrors of the opium habit, dodging his creditors and the constant threat of imprisonment for debt. All the while he ground out articles on any salable subject in a ceaseless struggle to keep his children, who ultimately numbered

eight, from starving to death. Only after his mother died and left him a small income was he able, in his sixties, to live in comparative ease and freedom under the care of his devoted and practical-minded daughters. His last decade he spent mainly in gathering, revising, and expanding his essays for his "Collective Edition"; the final volume appeared in 1860, the year after his death.

De Quincey's life was chaotic, and in tone his best-known writings run the gamut from quirky wit to nightmarish sensationalism. Nonetheless, he was a conventional and conservative person—a rigid moralist, a Tory, and a faithful champion of the Church of England. Everybody who knew him testified to his gentleness, his courteous and musical speech, and his exquisite manners. Less obvious, under the surface timidity and irresolution, were the toughness and courage that sustained him through a long life of seemingly hopeless struggle.

A voracious reader (when he absconded from school, he was slowed down by a weighty trunk of books he was determined to take with him), De Quincey was a writer of encyclopedic intellectual interests and great versatility. A new twenty-one volume edition of his collected works encompasses the many essays he wrote on the philosophy and literature of Germany, as well as a book that explained the highly technical theories of value outlined by the economist David Ricardo. The collected works also include commentaries on politics and theology, numerous pieces of literary criticism (such as his "specimen of psychological criticism" "On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*"), and vivid biographical sketches of the many writers he knew personally, most notably Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and Lamb. His most distinctive and impressive achievements, however, are the writings that start with fact and move into macabre fantasy ("On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts") and especially those that begin as quiet autobiography and develop into an elaborate construction made up from the materials of his reveries and dreams (*Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, Autobiographic Sketches, Suspiria de Profundis* [*Sighs from the Depths*], and "The English Mail Coach"). In these

achievements De Quincey opened up to English literature the nightside of human consciousness, with its grotesque strangeness, its angst, and its pervasive sense of guilt and alienation. “In dreams,” he wrote, long before Sigmund Freud, “perhaps under some secret conflict of the midnight sleeper, lighted up to the consciousness at the time, but darkened to the memory as soon as all is finished, each several child of our mysterious race completes for himself the treason of the aboriginal fall.” And for these dream writings he developed a mode of organization that is based on thematic statement, variation, and development in the art of music, in which he had a deep and abiding interest. Although by temperament a conservative, De Quincey was in his writings a radical innovator whose experiments look ahead to the materials and methods of later masters in prose and verse such as James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot.

From Confessions of an English Opium-Eater[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The *Confessions* were published anonymously in two issues of the *London Magazine*, September and October 1821, and were reprinted as a book in the following year. In 1856 De Quincey revised the book for the collected edition of his writings, expanding it to more than twice its original length. The author was over seventy years old at the time and privately expressed the judgment that the expanded edition lacks the immediacy and artistic economy of the original. The selections here are from the version of the *Confessions* printed in 1822.
  The work is divided into three parts. The first part,
  Return to reference 1

From *Preliminary Confessions*[2]

[OXFORD STREET AND ANN]

* * * Another person there was at that time, whom I have since sought to trace with far deeper earnestness, and with far deeper sorrow at my failure. This person was a young woman, and one of that unhappy class who subsist upon the wages of prostitution. I feel no shame, nor have any reason to feel it, in avowing, that I was then on familiar and friendly terms with many women in that unfortunate condition. The reader needs neither smile at this avowal, nor frown. For, not to remind my classical readers of the old Latin proverb—"*Sine Cerere,"* &c.,[3] it may well be supposed that in the existing state of my purse, my connection with such women could not have been an impure one. But the truth is, that at no time of my life have I been a person to hold myself polluted by the touch or approach of any creature that wore a human shape: on the contrary, from my very earliest youth it has been my pride to converse familiarly, *more Socratico,*[4] with all human beings, man, woman, and child, that chance might fling in my way: a practice which is friendly to the knowledge of human nature, to good feelings, and to that frankness of address which becomes a man who would be thought a philosopher. For a philosopher should not see with the eyes of the poor limitary[5] creature, calling himself a man of the world, and filled with narrow and self-regarding prejudices of birth and education, but should look upon himself as a Catholic[6] creature, and as standing in an equal relation to high and low—to educated and uneducated, to the guilty and the innocent. Being myself at that time of necessity a peripatetic, or a walker of the street, I naturally fell in more frequently with those female peripatetics who are technically called street-walkers. Many of these women had occasionally taken my part against watchmen who wished to drive me off the steps of houses where I was sitting. But one amongst them, the one on whose account I have at all

introduced this subject—yet no! let me not class thee, oh noble-minded Ann ——, with that order of women; let me find, if it be possible, some gentler name to designate the condition of her to whose bounty and compassion, ministering to my necessities when all the world had forsaken me, I owe it that I am at this time alive.—For many weeks I had walked at nights with this poor friendless girl up and down Oxford Street, or had rested with her on steps and under the shelter of porticos. She could not be so old as myself: she told me, indeed, that she had not completed her sixteenth year. By such questions as my interest about her prompted, I had gradually drawn forth her simple history. Hers was a case of ordinary occurrence (as I have since had reason to think), and one in which, if London beneficence had better adapted its arrangements to meet it, the power of the law might oftener be interposed to protect, and to avenge. But the stream of London charity flows in a channel which, though deep and mighty, is yet noiseless and underground; not obvious or readily accessible to poor houseless wanderers; and it cannot be denied that the outside air and framework of London society is harsh, cruel, and repulsive. In any case, however, I saw that part of her injuries might easily have been redressed; and I urged her often and earnestly to lay her complaint before a magistrate: friendless as she was, I assured her that she would meet with immediate attention; and that English justice, which was no respecter of persons, would speedily and amply avenge her on the brutal ruffian who had plundered her little property. She promised me often that she would; but she delayed taking the steps I pointed out from time to time: for she was timid and dejected to a degree which showed how deeply sorrow had taken hold of her young heart: and perhaps she thought justly that the most upright judge, and the most righteous tribunals, could do nothing to repair her heaviest wrongs. Something, however, would perhaps have been done: for it had been settled between us at length, but unhappily on the very last time but one that I was ever to see her, that in a day or two we should go together before a magistrate, and that I should speak on her behalf. This little service it was destined, however, that I should never realize. Meantime, that which she rendered to me,

and which was greater than I could ever have repaid her, was this:—One night, when we were pacing slowly along Oxford Street, and after a day when I had felt more than usually ill and faint, I requested her to turn off with me into Soho Square: thither we went; and we sat down on the steps of a house, which, to this hour, I never pass without a pang of grief, and an inner act of homage to the spirit of that unhappy girl, in memory of the noble action which she there performed. Suddenly, as we sat, I grew much worse: I had been leaning my head against her bosom; and all at once I sank from her arms and fell backwards on the steps. From the sensations I then had, I felt an inner conviction of the liveliest kind that without some powerful and reviving stimulus, I should either have died on the spot—or should at least have sunk to a point of exhaustion from which all re-ascent under my friendless circumstances would soon have become hopeless. Then it was, at this crisis of my fate, that my poor orphan companion—who had herself met with little but injuries in this world—stretched out a saving hand to me. Uttering a cry of terror, but without a moment's delay, she ran off into Oxford Street, and in less time than could be imagined, returned to me with a glass of port wine and spices, that acted upon my empty stomach (which at that time would have rejected all solid food) with an instantaneous power of restoration: and for this glass the generous girl without a murmur paid out of her own humble purse at a time—be it remembered!—when she had scarcely wherewithal to purchase the bare necessaries of life, and when she could have no reason to expect that I should ever be able to reimburse her.——Oh! youthful benefactress! how often in succeeding years, standing in solitary places, and thinking of thee with grief of heart and perfect love, how often have I wished that, as in ancient times the curse of a father was believed to have a supernatural power, and to pursue its object with a fatal necessity of self-fulfillment—even so the benediction of a heart oppressed with gratitude, might have a like prerogative; might have power given to it from above to chase—to haunt—to waylay[7]—to overtake—to pursue thee into the central darkness of a London brothel, or (if it were possible) into the darkness of the grave—there

to awaken thee with an authentic message of peace and forgiveness, and of final reconciliation!

I do not often weep: for not only do my thoughts on subjects connected with the chief interests of man daily, nay hourly, descend a thousand fathoms "too deep for tears";[8] not only does the sternness of my habits of thought present an antagonism to the feelings which prompt tears—wanting of necessity to those who, being protected usually by their levity from any tendency to meditative sorrow, would by that same levity be made incapable of resisting it on any casual access of such feelings:—but also, I believe that all minds which have contemplated such objects as deeply as I have done, must, for their own protection from utter despondency, have early encouraged and cherished some tranquilizing belief as to the future balances and the hieroglyphic meanings of human sufferings. On these accounts, I am cheerful to this hour; and, as I have said, I do not often weep. Yet some feelings, though not deeper or more passionate, are more tender than others; and often, when I walk at this time in Oxford Street by dreamy lamplight, and hear those airs played on a barrel-organ[9] which years ago solaced me and my dear companion (as I must always call her), I shed tears, and muse with myself at the mysterious dispensation which so suddenly and so critically separated us for ever.[1] * * *

Endnotes

- Note 2: The seventeen-year-old De Quincey had run away from school and, although originally planning to head north from Manchester so as to introduce himself to Wordsworth (whose poetry he worshiped), had ended up taking refuge in London, his whereabouts unknown to his mother and his guardians. He had slept outdoors for two months but has now been permitted, by a disreputable and seedy lawyer, to sleep in an unoccupied, unfurnished, and rat-infested house. There he and a ten-year-old girl, nameless and of uncertain parentage, huddle together for warmth, eking out a famished existence on whatever scraps

he can scavenge from his landlord's frugal breakfast. He goes on to describe his friendship with a young sex worker, Ann.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: *Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus*—"without Ceres and Bacchus [food and wine], love grows cold."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the manner of Socrates; that is, by a dialogue of questions and answers.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Limited.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the sense of "inclusive in tastes and understanding."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From Wordsworth's "She was a phantom of delight," line 10: "To haunt, to startle, and waylay." De Quincey was an early and enthusiastic admirer of Wordsworth's poetry.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From the last line of Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Instrument played by an organ-grinder.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: De Quincey goes on to narrate that, having been given some money by a family friend who recognized him in the street, he had traveled to Eton to ask a young nobleman whom he knew to stand security for a loan that De Quincey was soliciting from a moneylender. When he returned to London three days later, Ann had disappeared. "If she lived," he writes, "doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other, at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps, even within a few feet of each other—a barrier no wider in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity!"Return to reference 1

From *Introduction to the Pains of Opium*[2]

[THE MALAY]

* * * I remember, about this time, a little incident, which I mention, because, trifling as it was, the reader will soon meet it again in my dreams, which it influenced more fearfully than could be imagined. One day a Malay[3] knocked at my door. What business a Malay could have to transact amongst English mountains, I cannot conjecture: but possibly he was on his road to a seaport about forty miles distant.

The servant who opened the door to him was a young girl born and bred amongst the mountains, who had never seen an Asiatic dress of any sort: his turban, therefore, confounded her not a little: and, as it turned out that his attainments in English were exactly of the same extent as hers in the Malay, there seemed to be an impassable gulf fixed between all communication of ideas, if either party had happened to possess any. In this dilemma, the girl, recollecting the reputed learning of her master (and, doubtless, giving me credit for a knowledge of all the languages of the earth, besides, perhaps, a few of the lunar ones), came and gave me to understand that there was a sort of demon below, whom she clearly imagined that my art could exorcise from the house. I did not immediately go down: but, when I did, the group which presented itself, arranged as it was by accident, though not very elaborate, took hold of my fancy and my eye in a way that none of the statuesque attitudes exhibited in the ballets at the Opera House, though so ostentatiously complex, had ever done. In a cottage kitchen, but paneled on the wall with dark wood that from age and rubbing resembled oak, and looking more like a rustic hall of entrance than a kitchen, stood the Malay—his turban and loose trousers of dingy white relieved upon the dark paneling:[4] he had placed himself nearer to the girl than she seemed to relish; though her native spirit of mountain intrepidity contended with the feeling of

simple awe which her countenance expressed as she gazed upon the tiger-cat before her. And a more striking picture there could not be imagined, than the beautiful English face of the girl, and its exquisite fairness, together with her erect and independent attitude, contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enameled or veneered with mahogany, by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations. Half-hidden by the ferocious-looking Malay, was a little child from a neighboring cottage who had crept in after him, and was now in the act of reverting its head, and gazing upwards at the turban and the fiery eyes beneath it, whilst with one hand he caught at the dress of the young woman for protection. My knowledge of the Oriental tongues is not remarkably extensive, being indeed confined to two words—the Arabic word for barley, and the Turkish for opium (madjoon), which I have learnt from Anastasius.[5] And, as I had neither a Malay dictionary, nor even Adelung's *Mithridates,*[6] which might have helped me to a few words, I addressed him in some lines from the Iliad; considering that, of such languages as I possessed, Greek, in point of longitude, came geographically nearest to an Oriental one. He worshiped[7] me in a most devout manner, and replied in what I suppose was Malay. In this way I saved my reputation with my neighbors: for the Malay had no means of betraying the secret. He lay down upon the floor for about an hour, and then pursued his journey. On his departure, I presented him with a piece of opium. To him, as an Orientalist, I concluded that opium must be familiar: and the expression of his face convinced me that it was. Nevertheless, I was struck with some little consternation when I saw him suddenly raise his hand to his mouth, and (in the schoolboy phrase) bolt the whole, divided into three pieces, at one mouthful. The quantity was enough to kill three dragoons and their horses: and I felt some alarm for the poor creature: but what could be done? I had given him the opium in compassion for his solitary life, on recollecting that if he had traveled on foot from London, it must be nearly three weeks since he could have exchanged a thought with any human being. I could not think of violating the laws of hospitality, by having

him seized and drenched with an emetic, and thus frightening him into a notion that we were going to sacrifice him to some English idol. No: there was clearly no help for it:—he took his leave: and for some days I felt anxious: but as I never heard of any Malay being found dead, I became convinced that he was used[8] to opium: and that I must have done him the service I designed, by giving him one night of respite from the pains of wandering.

This incident I have digressed to mention, because this Malay (partly from the picturesque exhibition he assisted to frame, partly from the anxiety I connected with his image for some days) fastened afterwards upon my dreams, and brought other Malays with him worse than himself, that ran "amuck"[9] at me, and led me into a world of troubles. * * *

Endnotes

- Note 2: It is 1816. De Quincey is living at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, and for three years has been addicted to laudanum (opium dissolved in alcohol). At this time he has succeeded in reducing his daily dosage from eight thousand to one thousand drops, with a consequent improvement in health and energy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Native of the Malay peninsula in Southeast Asia.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, his white clothing is cast in relief by the dark paneling.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Anastasius, or Memoirs of a Greek*, was a novel published anonymously by Thomas Hope in 1819. It included a description of the physical effects of opium that De Quincey considered to be a "grievous misrepresentation."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: *Mithridates, or The Universal Table of Languages*, by the German philologist J. C. Adelung (1732–1806).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Bowed down to.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: This, however, is not a necessary conclusion: the varieties of effect produced by opium on different constitutions are infinite [*De Quincey's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: See the common accounts in any Eastern traveller or voyager of the frantic excesses committed by Malays who have taken opium, or are reduced to desperation by ill luck at gambling [*De Quincey's note*]. "Amuck": also spelled "amok," as a term denoting frenzy, it entered English by way of travel literature and was used initially as a generic designation for inhabitants of the Malay peninsula.Return to reference 9

From *The Pains of Opium*

[OPIUM REVERIES AND DREAMS]

I have thus described and illustrated my intellectual torpor, in terms that apply, more or less, to every part of the four years during which I was under the Circean[1] spells of opium. But for misery and suffering, I might, indeed, be said to have existed in a dormant state. I seldom could prevail on myself to write a letter; an answer of a few words, to any that I received, was the utmost that I could accomplish; and often *that* not until the letter had lain weeks, or even months, on my writing table. Without the aid of M.[2] all records of bills paid, or *to be* paid, must have perished: and my whole domestic economy, whatever became of Political Economy,[3] must have gone into irretrievable confusion.—I shall not afterwards allude to this part of the case: it is one, however, which the opium-eater will find, in the end, as oppressive and tormenting as any other, from the sense of incapacity and feebleness, from the direct embarrassments incident to the neglect or procrastination of each day's appropriate duties, and from the remorse which must often exasperate the stings of these evils to a reflective and conscientious mind. The opium-eater loses none of his moral sensibilities, or aspirations: he wishes and longs, as earnestly as ever, to realize what he believes possible, and feels to be exacted by duty; but his intellectual apprehension of what is possible infinitely outruns his power, not of execution only, but even of power to attempt. He lies under the weight of incubus and nightmare: he lies in sight of all that he would fain perform, just as a man forcibly confined to his bed by the mortal languor of a relaxing disease, who is compelled to witness injury or outrage offered to some object of his tenderest love:—he curses the spells which chain him down from motion:—he would lay down his life if he might get up and walk; but he is powerless as an infant, and cannot even attempt to rise.

I now pass to what is the main subject of these latter confessions, to the history and journal of what took place in my dreams; for these were the immediate and proximate cause of my acutest suffering.

The first notice I had of any important change going on in this part of my physical economy, was from the re-awakening of a state of eye generally incident to childhood, or exalted states of irritability. I know not whether my reader is aware that many children, perhaps most, have a power of painting, as it were, upon the darkness, all sorts of phantoms; in some, that power is simply a mechanic affection of the eye; others have a voluntary, or a semi-voluntary power to dismiss or to summon them; or, as a child once said to me when I questioned him on this matter, "I can tell them to go, and they go; but sometimes they come, when I don't tell them to come." Whereupon I told him that he had almost as unlimited a command over apparitions, as a Roman centurion[4] over his soldiers.—In the middle of 1817, I think it was, that this faculty became positively distressing to me: at night, when I lay awake in bed, vast processions passed along in mournful pomp; friezes of never-ending stories, that to my feelings were as sad and solemn as if they were stories drawn from times before Oedipus or Priam—before Tyre—before Memphis.[5] And, at the same time, a corresponding change took place in my dreams; a theater seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain, which presented nightly spectacles of more than earthly splendor. And the four following facts may be mentioned, as noticeable at this time:

1. That, as the creative state of the eye increased, a sympathy seemed to arise between the waking and the dreaming states of the brain in one point—that whatsoever I happened to call up and to trace by a voluntary act upon the darkness was very apt to transfer itself to my dreams; so that I feared to exercise this faculty; for, as Midas turned all things to gold, that yet baffled his hopes and defrauded his human desires,[6] so whatsoever things capable of being visually represented I did but think of in the darkness, immediately shaped themselves into phantoms of the eye; and, by a

process apparently no less inevitable, when thus once traced in faint and visionary colors, like writings in sympathetic ink,[7] they were drawn out by the fierce chemistry of my dreams, into insufferable splendor that fretted my heart.

2. For this, and all other changes in my dreams, were accompanied by deep-seated anxiety and gloomy melancholy, such as are wholly incommunicable by words. I seemed every night to descend, not metaphorically, but literally to descend, into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I could ever reascend. Nor did I, by waking, feel that I *had* re-ascended. This I do not dwell upon; because the state of gloom which attended these gorgeous spectacles, amounting at least to utter darkness, as of some suicidal despondency, cannot be approached by words.

3. The sense of space, and in the end, the sense of time, were both powerfully affected. Buildings, landscapes, &c. were exhibited in proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as the vast expansion of time; I sometimes seemed to have lived for 70 or 100 years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a millennium passed in that time, or, however, of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience.

4. The minutest incidents of childhood, or forgotten scenes of later years, were often revived: I could not be said to recollect them; for if I had been told of them when waking, I should not have been able to acknowledge them as parts of my past experience. But placed as they were before me, in dreams like intuitions, and clothed in all their evanescent circumstances and accompanying feelings, I *recognized* them instantaneously. I was once told by a near relative[8] of mine, that having in her childhood fallen into a river, and being on the very verge of death but for the critical assistance which reached her, she saw in a moment her whole life, in its minutest incidents, arrayed before her simultaneously as in a mirror; and she had a faculty developed as suddenly for comprehending the whole and

every part. This, from some opium experiences of mine, I can believe; I have, indeed, seen the same thing asserted twice in modern books, and accompanied by a remark which I am convinced is true; viz. that the dread book of account, which the Scriptures speak of,[9] is, in fact, the mind itself of each individual. Of this, at least, I feel assured, that there is no such thing as *forgetting* possible to the mind; a thousand accidents may, and will, interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions on the mind; accidents of the same sort will also rend away this veil; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains forever; just as the stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day, whereas, in fact, we all know that it is the light which is drawn over them as a veil—and that they are waiting to be revealed, when the obscuring daylight shall have withdrawn.

Having noticed these four facts as memorably distinguishing my dreams from those of health, I shall now cite a case illustrative of the first fact; and shall then cite any others that I remember, either in their chronological order, or any other that may give them more effect as pictures to the reader.

I had been in youth, and even since, for occasional amusement, a great reader of Livy,[1] whom, I confess, that I prefer, both for style and matter, to any of the Roman historians; and I had often felt as most solemn and appalling sounds, and most emphatically representative of the majesty of the Roman people, the two words so often occurring in Livy—*Consul Romanus*;[2] especially when the consul is introduced in his military character. I mean to say, that the words king—sultan—regent, &c. or any other titles of those who embody in their own persons the collective majesty of a great people, had less power over my reverential feelings. I had also, though no great reader of history, made myself minutely and critically familiar with one period of English history, viz. the period of the Parliamentary War, having been attracted by the moral grandeur of some who figured in that day, and by the many interesting memoirs which survive those unquiet times. Both these parts of my lighter reading, having furnished me often with matter of reflection,

now furnished me with matter for my dreams. Often I used to see, after painting upon the blank darkness a sort of rehearsal whilst waking, a crowd of ladies, and perhaps a festival, and dances. And I heard it said, or I said to myself, "These are English ladies from the unhappy times of Charles I. These are the wives and the daughters of those who met in peace, and sat at the same tables, and were allied by marriage or by blood; and yet, after a certain day in August, 1642,[3] never smiled upon each other again, nor met but in the field of battle; and at Marston Moor, at Newbury, or at Naseby,[4] cut asunder all ties of love by the cruel saber, and washed away in blood the memory of ancient friendship."—The ladies danced, and looked as lovely as the court of George IV.[5] Yet I knew, even in my dream, that they had been in the grave for nearly two centuries.—This pageant would suddenly dissolve: and at a clapping of hands, would be heard the heart-quaking sound of *Consul Romanus;* and immediately came "sweeping by," in gorgeous paludaments, Paulus or Marius,[6] girt round by a company of centurions, with the crimson tunic hoisted on a spear,[7] and followed by the *alalagmos*[8] of the Roman legions.

Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's Antiquities of Rome, Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his *Dreams*,[9] and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, &c. &c. expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself: follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it come to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose, at least, that his labors must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher:

on which again Piranesi is perceived, but this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld: and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labors: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall.—With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams. In the early stage of my malady, the splendors of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural: and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds. From a great modern poet[1] I cite part of a passage which describes, as an appearance actually beheld in the clouds, what in many of its circumstances I saw frequently in sleep:

> The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
> Was of a mighty city—boldly say
> A wilderness of building, sinking far
> And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,
> Far sinking into splendor—without end!
> Fabric[2] it seem'd of diamond, and of gold,
> With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
> And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
> Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright
> In avenues disposed; there towers begirt
> With battlements that on their restless fronts
> Bore stars—illumination of all gems!
> By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
> Upon the dark materials of the storm
> Now pacified: on them, and on the coves,
> And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
> The vapors had receded,—taking there
> Their station under a cerulean sky, &c. &c.

The sublime circumstance—"battlements that on their *restless* fronts bore stars"—might have been copied from my architectural dreams, for it often occurred.—We hear it reported of Dryden, and of

Fuseli[3] in modern times, that they thought proper to eat raw meat for the sake of obtaining splendid dreams: how much better for such a purpose to have eaten opium, which yet I do not remember that any poet is recorded to have done, except the dramatist Shadwell:[4] and in ancient days, Homer is, I think, rightly reputed to have known the virtues of opium.[5]

To my architecture succeeded dreams of lakes—and silvery expanses of water:—these haunted me so much, that I feared (though possibly it will appear ludicrous to a medical man) that some dropsical state or tendency of the brain[6] might thus be making itself (to use a metaphysical word) *objective;* and the sentient organ *project* itself as its own object.—For two months I suffered greatly in my head—a part of my bodily structure which had hitherto been so clear from all touch or taint of weakness (physically, I mean), that I used to say of it, as the last Lord Orford[7] said of his stomach, that it seemed likely to survive the rest of my person.—Till now I had never felt a headache even, or any the slightest pain, except rheumatic pains caused by my own folly. However, I got over this attack, though it must have been verging on something very dangerous.

The waters now changed their character—from translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they now became seas and oceans. And now came a tremendous change, which, unfolding itself slowly like a scroll, through many months, promised an abiding torment; and, in fact, it never left me until the winding up of my case. Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear: the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens: faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries:—my agitation was infinite,—my mind tossed—and surged with the ocean.[8]

The Malay has been a fearful enemy for months. I have been every night, through his means, transported into Asiatic scenes. I know not whether others share in my feelings on this point; but I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego England, and to live in China, and among Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad. The causes of my horror lie deep; and some of them must be common to others. Southern Asia, in general, is the seat of awful images and associations. As the cradle of the human race, it would alone have a dim and reverential feeling connected with it. But there are other reasons. No man can pretend that the wild, barbarous, and capricious superstitions of Africa, or of savage tribes elsewhere, affect him in the way that he is affected by the ancient, monumental, cruel, and elaborate religions of Indostan, &c. The mere antiquity of Asiatic things, of their institutions, histories, modes of faith, &c. is so impressive, that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual. A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man[9] renewed. Even Englishmen, though not bred in any knowledge of such institutions, cannot but shudder at the mystic sublimity of *castes*[1] that have flowed apart, and refused to mix, through such immemorial tracts of time; nor can any man fail to be awed by the names of the Ganges, or the Euphrates. It contributes much to these feelings, that southern Asia is, and has been for thousands of years, the part of the earth most swarming with human life; the great *officina gentium.*[2] Man is a weed in those regions. The vast empires also, into which the enormous population of Asia has always been cast, give a further sublimity to the feelings associated with all Oriental names or images. In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, and the barrier of utter abhorrence, and want of sympathy, placed between us by feelings deeper than I can analyze. I could sooner live with lunatics, or brute animals. All this, and much more than I can say, or have time to say, the reader must enter into

before he can comprehend the unimaginable horror which these dreams of Oriental imagery, and mythological tortures, impressed upon me. Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sunlights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Indostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and all her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas: and was fixed, for centuries, at the summit, or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshiped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia: Vishnu hated me: Seeva[3] laid wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile[4] trembled at. I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.

I thus give the reader some slight abstraction of my Oriental dreams,[5] which always filled me with such amazement at the monstrous scenery, that horror seemed absorbed, for a while, in sheer astonishment. Sooner or later, came a reflux of feeling that swallowed up the astonishment, and left me, not so much in terror, as in hatred and abomination of what I saw. Over every form, and threat, and punishment, and dim sightless incarceration, brooded a sense of eternity and infinity that drove me into an oppression as of madness. Into these dreams only, it was, with one or two slight exceptions, that any circumstances of physical horror entered. All before had been moral and spiritual terrors. But here the main agents were ugly birds, or snakes, or crocodiles; especially the last. The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him; and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables,

&c. All the feet of the tables, sofas, &c. soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions: and I stood loathing and fascinated. And so often did this hideous reptile haunt my dreams, that many times the very same dream was broken up in the very same way: I heard gentle voices speaking to me (I hear every thing when I am sleeping); and instantly I awoke: it was broad noon; and my children were standing, hand in hand, at my bedside; come to show me their colored shoes, or new frocks, or to let me see them dressed for going out. I protest that so awful was the transition from the damned crocodile, and the other unutterable monsters and abortions of my dreams, to the sight of innocent *human* natures and of infancy, that, in the mighty and sudden revulsion of mind, I wept, and could not forbear it, as I kissed their faces.

June 1819

I have had occasion to remark, at various periods of my life, that the deaths of those whom we love, and indeed the contemplation of death generally, is (*ceteris paribus*)[6] more affecting in summer than in any other season of the year. And the reasons are these three, I think: first, that the visible heavens in summer appear far higher, more distant, and (if such a solecism may be excused) more infinite; the clouds, by which chiefly the eye expounds the distance of the blue pavilion stretched over our heads, are in summer more voluminous, massed, and accumulated in far grander and more towering piles: secondly, the light and the appearances of the declining and the setting sun are much more fitted to be types and characters of the Infinite: and, thirdly (which is the main reason), the exuberant and riotous prodigality of life naturally forces the mind more powerfully upon the antagonist thought of death, and the wintry sterility of the grave. For it may be observed, generally, that wherever two thoughts stand related to each other by a law of antagonism, and exist, as it were, by mutual repulsion, they are apt to suggest each other. On these accounts it is that I find it

impossible to banish the thought of death when I am walking alone in the endless days of summer; and any particular death, if not more affecting, at least haunts my mind more obstinately and besiegingly in that season. Perhaps this cause, and a slight incident which I omit, might have been the immediate occasions of the following dream; to which, however, a predisposition must always have existed in my mind; but having been once roused, it never left me, and split into a thousand fantastic varieties, which often suddenly reunited, and composed again the original dream.

I thought that it was a Sunday morning in May, that it was Easter Sunday, and as yet very early in the morning. I was standing, as it seemed to me, at the door of my own cottage. Right before me lay the very scene which could really be commanded from that situation, but exalted, as was usual, and solemnized by the power of dreams. There were the same mountains, and the same lovely valley at their feet; but the mountains were raised to more than Alpine height, and there was interspace far larger between them of meadows and forest lawns; the hedges were rich with white roses; and no living creature was to be seen, excepting that in the green churchyard there were cattle tranquilly reposing upon the verdant graves, and particularly round about the grave of a child whom I had tenderly loved,[7] just as I had really beheld them, a little before sunrise in the same summer, when that child died. I gazed upon the well-known scene, and I said aloud (as I thought) to myself, "It yet wants much of sunrise; and it is Easter Sunday; and that is the day on which they celebrate the first-fruits of resurrection. I will walk abroad; old griefs shall be forgotten today; for the air is cool and still, and the hills are high, and stretch away to heaven; and the forest-glades are as quiet as the churchyard; and, with the dew, I can wash the fever from my forehead, and then I shall be unhappy no longer." And I turned, as if to open my garden gate; and immediately I saw upon the left a scene far different; but which yet the power of dreams had reconciled into harmony with the other. The scene was an Oriental one; and there also it was Easter Sunday, and very early in the morning. And at a vast distance were visible, as a stain upon the

horizon, the domes and cupolas of a great city—an image or faint abstraction, caught perhaps in childhood from some picture of Jerusalem. And not a bow-shot from me, upon a stone, and shaded by Judean palms, there sat a woman; and I looked; and it was—Ann! She fixed her eyes upon me earnestly; and I said to her at length: "So then I have found you at last." I waited: but she answered me not a word. Her face was the same as when I saw it last, and yet again how different! Seventeen years ago, when the lamplight fell upon her face, as for the last time I kissed her lips (lips, Ann, that to me were not polluted), her eyes were streaming with tears: the tears were now wiped away; she seemed more beautiful than she was at that time, but in all other points the same, and not older. Her looks were tranquil, but with unusual solemnity of expression; and I now gazed upon her with some awe, but suddenly her countenance grew dim, and, turning to the mountains, I perceived vapors rolling between us; in a moment, all had vanished; thick darkness came on; and, in the twinkling of an eye, I was far away from mountains, and by lamplight in Oxford Street, walking again with Ann—just as we walked seventeen years before, when we were both children.

As a final specimen, I cite one of a different character, from 1820.

The dream commenced with a music which now I often heard in dreams—a music of preparation and of awakening suspense; a music like the opening of the Coronation Anthem,[8] and which, like *that*, gave the feeling of a vast march—of infinite cavalcades filing off—and the tread of innumerable armies. The morning was come of a mighty day—a day of crisis and of final hope for human nature, then suffering some mysterious eclipse, and laboring in some dread extremity. Somewhere, I knew not where—somehow, I knew not how—by some beings, I knew not whom—a battle, a strife, an agony, was conducting—was evolving like a great drama, or piece of music; with which my sympathy was the more insupportable from my confusion as to its place, its cause, its nature, and its possible issue. I, as is usual in dreams (where, of necessity, we make

ourselves central to every movement), had the power, and yet had not the power, to decide it. I had the power, if I could raise myself, to will it; and yet again had not the power, for the weight of twenty Atlantics was upon me, or the oppression of inexpiable guilt. "Deeper than ever plummet sounded,"[9] I lay inactive. Then, like a chorus, the passion deepened. Some greater interest was at stake; some mightier cause than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed. Then came sudden alarms: hurryings to and fro: trepidations of innumerable fugitives, I knew not whether from the good cause or the bad: darkness and lights: tempest and human faces: and at last, with the sense that all was lost, female forms, and the features that were worth all the world to me, and but a moment allowed—and clasped hands, and heart-breaking partings, and then—everlasting farewells! and with a sigh, such as the caves of hell sighed when the incestuous mother uttered the abhorred name of death,[1] the sound was reverberated—everlasting farewells! and again, and yet again reverberated—everlasting farewells!

And I awoke in struggles, and cried aloud—"I will sleep no more!"[2]

1821 1821

Endnotes

- Note 1: Like those of Circe, the enchantress in the *Odyssey* who turned Odysseus's men into swine.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Margaret Simpson, whom De Quincey had married in 1817.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Inspired by David Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy* (1817), De Quincey had begun to write, but never completed, a work he called *Prolegomena to All Future Systems of Political Economy.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A Roman officer commanding a troop of a hundred soldiers (a "century").Return to reference 4

- Note 5: De Quincey is calling the roll of great civilizations in the past. Oedipus was the king of Thebes. Priam was the king of Troy. Tyre was the chief city of Phoenicia. Memphis was the capital of ancient Egypt.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: When granted his rash wish that all he touched should turn to gold, King Midas was horrified to discover that his food, drink, and beloved daughter all became gold at his touch.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Invisible ink.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: According to family report De Quincey's mother.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The book listing everyone's name at the Last Judgment (Revelation 20:12).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Titus Livius (59 B.C.E.–17 C.E.), author of a history of Rome in 142 books.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Roman consul (Latin); one of two officials, elected annually, who wielded the chief military and judicial authority in Republican Rome.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The raising of the king's banner on Castle Hill, Nottingham, on August 22, 1642, signaled the beginning of the English Civil Wars.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Scenes of the defeat of King Charles's forces in the Civil Wars.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The reigning monarch at the time De Quincey was writing.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Lucius Paulus (d. 160 B.C.E.) and Caius Marius (d. 86 B.C.E.) were Roman generals who won famous victories. "Paludaments": the cloaks worn by Roman generals.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The signal which announced a day of battle [*De Quincey's note in the revised edition*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A word expressing collectively the gathering of the Roman war-cries [*De Quincey's note in the revised edition*]. The word is Greek.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Giovanni Piranesi (1720–1778), a Venetian especially famed for his many etchings of ancient and modern Rome. He

did not publish prints called *Dreams;* De Quincey doubtless refers to his series called *Carceri d'Invenzione*, "Imaginary Prisons." The description that De Quincey recalls from Coleridge's conversation is remarkably apt for these terrifying architectural fantasies.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The quotation is from Wordsworth's *The Excursion*, book 2, lines 834ff. It describes a cloud structure after a storm.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, building.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: John Henry Fuseli (1741–1825) was born in Switzerland and painted in England. He was noted for his paintings of nightmarish fantasies.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Thomas Shadwell was a Restoration dramatist and poet. He is now better known as the target of Dryden's satire (in *Mac Flecknoe* and elsewhere) than as a writer in his own right.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In the *Odyssey*, book 4, Homer praises nepenthe (which is probably opium) as a "drug to heal all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: De Quincey's sister Elizabeth died at age nine of hydrocephalus, water on the brain. "Dropsical": afflicted with dropsy—an accumulation of fluid in the bodily tissues and cavities.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Horace Walpole, 18th-century wit and letter writer, author of the Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare De Quincey's earlier description of his repeated hunts through the London streets for his friend Ann: "I suppose that, in the literal and unrhetorical use of the word *myriad*, I may say that on my different visits to London, I have looked into many, many myriads of female faces, in the hope of meeting her."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A person who lived in the time before the great flood described in Genesis.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The reference is to the Hindu caste system of India, with its sharp divisions between four hereditary social

classes.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Manufactory of populations (Latin).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Among the Hindu deities Brahma is the creative aspect of divine reality, Vishnu is its maintainer, and Shiva its destroyer.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The ibis (a long-legged wading bird) and the crocodile were considered sacred in ancient Egypt. Isis was the ancient Egyptian goddess of fertility. She was the sister and wife of Osiris, whose annual death and rebirth represented the seasonal cycle of nature.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: For a discussion of the cultural context of De Quincey's "Oriental dreams," see "The Romantic Imagination and the 'Oriental Nations,' " p. 918 in this volume.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Other things being the same (Latin).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The child is Wordsworth's daughter Catherine, who died at the age of four. She is the subject of Wordsworth's sonnet "Surprised by joy."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Composed by George Frideric Handel for the coronation of George II in 1727.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* guilt-ridden King Alonso, believing that his son has drowned, says he will "seek him deeper then e'er plummet sounded / And with him there lie mudded" (3.3.101–02).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The reference is to *Paradise Lost*, book 2, lines 777ff. The "incestuous mother" is Sin, who is doubly incestuous: she is the daughter of Satan, who begot Death upon her, and she was in turn raped by her son and gave birth to a pack of "yelling Monsters."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Macbeth says: "Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more, / Macbeth does murder sleep' " (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 2.2.33–34).Return to reference 2

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON
1788–1824

In his *History of English Literature*, written in the late 1850s, the French critic Hippolyte Taine gave only a few condescending pages to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Percy Shelley, and Keats and then devoted a long chapter to Lord Byron, "the greatest and most English of these artists; he is so great and so English that from him alone we shall learn more truths of his country and of his age than from all the rest together." This comment reflects the fact that Byron had achieved an immense European reputation during his own lifetime, while admirers of his English contemporaries were much more limited in number. Through much of the nineteenth century he continued to be rated as one of the greatest of English poets and the very prototype of literary Romanticism. His influence was manifested everywhere, among the major poets and novelists (Balzac and Stendhal in France, Pushkin and Dostoyevsky in Russia, and Melville in America), painters (especially Delacroix), and composers (including Beethoven and Berlioz).

Yet even as poets, painters, and composers across Europe and the Americas struck Byronic attitudes, Byron's place within the canon of English Romantic poetry was becoming insecure. The same Victorian critics who first described the Romantic period *as* a literary period warned readers against the immorality of Byron's poetry, finding in his voluptuous imagination and aristocratic disdain for the commonplace an affront to their own, middle-class values: "Close

thy Byron; open thy Goethe," Thomas Carlyle urged in *Sartor Resartus* (1834), meaning to redirect the nation toward healthier reading matter. After getting a glimpse of the scandalous stuff recorded in Byron's journals, Felicia Hemans ceased to wear the brooch in which she had preserved a lock of the poet's hair: she could venerate him no longer. Indeed, Byron would have had qualms about being considered a representative figure of a period that also included Wordsworth (memorialized in Byron's *Don Juan* as "Wordy") or Keats (a shabby Cockney brat, Byron claimed) or scribbling women such as Hemans. These reservations were reciprocated. Of Byron's best-known male contemporaries, only Shelley thought highly of either the man or his work (although there are signs that, among the naysayers, the negative reactions were tinged with some resentment at Byron's success in developing a style that spoke to a popular audience). Byron in fact insisted that, measured against the poetic practice of Alexander Pope, he and his contemporaries were "all in the wrong, one as much as another. . . . We are upon a wrong revolutionary poetical system, or systems, not worth a damn in itself." Pope's Horatian satires, along with Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy,* exerted a significant influence on the style that Byron developed for his epic survey of modern folly, *Don Juan.*

Still, even as he had recourse to old-fashioned eighteenth-century models, Byron cultivated a skepticism about established systems of belief that, in its restlessness and defiance, expressed the intellectual and social ferment of his era. And through much of his best poetry, he shared his contemporaries' fascination with the internal dramas of the individual mind (although Byron explored personality in an improvisatory and mercurial manner that could not have been more different from Wordsworth's autobiographical accounts of his psychological development). Readers marveled over the intensity of the feelings his verse communicated—"its force, fire, and thought," said the novelist Sydney Owenson—and the vividness of the sense of self they found in it. Byron's chief claim to be considered an arch-Romantic is that he provided the age with what Taine called its "ruling personage; that is, the model that

contemporaries invest with their admiration and sympathy." This personage is the "Byronic hero." He is first sketched in the opening canto of *Childe Harold*, then recurs in various guises in the verse romances and dramas that followed. In his developed form, as we find it in *Manfred*, he is an alien, mysterious, and gloomy spirit, superior in his passions and powers to the common run of humanity, whom he regards with disdain. He harbors the torturing memory of an enormous, nameless guilt that drives him toward an inevitable doom. And he exerts an attraction on other characters that is the more compelling because it involves their terror at his obliviousness to ordinary human concerns and values. This figure, infusing the archrebel in a nonpolitical form with a strong erotic interest, was imitated in life as well as in art and helped shape the intellectual and the cultural history of the later nineteenth century. The literary descendants of the Byronic hero include Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, Captain Ahab in *Moby-Dick*, and the hero of Pushkin's great poem *Eugene Onegin.* Byron also lived on in the guise of the Undead, thanks to the success of a novella by his former friend and traveling companion John Polidori, whose "The Vampyre" (1819) mischievously made Byron its model for the title character. Earlier Byron had in his writings helped introduce the English to the eastern Mediterranean's legends of bloodsucking evil spirits; it was left to Polidori, however, to portray the vampire as a habitué of England's most fashionable social circles. The fact that, for all their menace, vampires—from Bela Lugosi's Count Dracula to Anne Rice's L'Estat—remain models of well-dressed, aristocratic elegance represents yet another tribute to the staying power of Byron's image.

Byron's contemporaries insisted on identifying the author with his fictional characters, reading his writing as veiled autobiography even when it dealt with supernatural themes. (They also read other people's writing this way: to Polidori's chagrin, authorship of "The Vampyre" was attributed to Byron.) Byron's letters and the testimony of his friends show, however, that, except for recurrent moods of deep depression, his own temperament was in many respects opposite to that of his heroes. While he was passionate and willful,

he was also a witty conversationalist capable of taking an ironic attitude toward his own activities as well as those of others. But although Byronism was largely a fiction, produced by a collaboration between Byron's imagination and that of his public, the fiction was historically more important than the actual person.

Byron was descended from two aristocratic families, both of them colorful, violent, and dissolute. His grandfather was an admiral nicknamed "Foulweather Jack"; his great-uncle was the fifth Baron Byron, known to his rural neighbors as the "Wicked Lord," who was tried by his peers for killing his kinsman William Chaworth in a drunken duel; his father, Captain John Byron, was a rake and fortune hunter who rapidly spent his way through the fortunes of two wealthy wives. Byron's mother was a Scotswoman, Catherine Gordon of Gight, the last descendant of a line of lawless Scottish lairds. After her husband died (Byron was then three), she brought up her son in near poverty in Aberdeen, where he was indoctrinated with the Calvinistic morality of Scottish Presbyterianism. Catherine Byron was an ill-educated and extremely irascible woman who nevertheless had an abiding love for her son; they fought violently when together, but corresponded affectionately enough when apart, until her death in 1811.

When Byron was ten the death of his great-uncle, preceded by that of more immediate heirs to the title, made him the sixth Lord Byron. In a fashion suitable to his new status, he was sent to Harrow School, then to Trinity College, Cambridge. He had a deformed foot, made worse by inept surgical treatment, about which he felt acute embarrassment. His lameness made him avid for athletic prowess; he played cricket and made himself an expert boxer, fencer, and horseman and a powerful swimmer. Both at Cambridge and at his ancestral estate of Newstead, he engaged with more than ordinary zeal in the expensive pursuits and fashionable dissipations of a young Regency lord. As a result, despite a sizable and increasing income, he got into financial difficulties from which he did not entirely extricate himself until late in his life. In the course of his schooling, he formed many close and devoted friendships, the

most important with John Cam Hobhouse, a sturdy political liberal and commonsense moralist who exerted a steadying influence throughout Byron's turbulent life.

Despite his distractions at the university, Byron found time to try his hand at lyric verse, some of which was published in 1807 in a slim and conventional volume titled *Hours of Idleness.* This was treated so harshly by the *Edinburgh Review* that Byron was provoked to write in reply his first important poem, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, a vigorous satire in which he incorporated brilliant ridicule (whose tactlessness he later came to regret) of important contemporaries, including Scott, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the *Edinburgh* critics.

After attaining his M.A. degree and his legal independence from his guardians, Byron set out with Hobhouse in 1809 on a tour through Portugal and Spain to Malta, and then to little-known Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor. There, in the classic locale for Greek love, he encountered a culture that accepted sexual relations between older aristocratic men and beautiful boys, and he accumulated materials that, sometimes rather slyly, he incorporated into many of his important poems, including his last work, *Don Juan.* The first literary product was *Childe Harold;* he wrote the opening two cantos while on the tour that the poem describes; published them in 1812 soon after his return to England; and, in his own oft-quoted phrase, "awoke one morning and found myself famous." He became the celebrity of fashionable London and increased his literary success with a series of highly readable Eastern tales; in these the Byronic hero, represented against various exotic backdrops as a "Giaour" (an "infidel" within Muslim society), or a "Corsair" (a pirate), or in other forms, flaunts his misanthropy and undergoes violent and romantic adventures that current gossip attributed to the author. In his chronic shortage of money, Byron could well have used the huge income from these publications, but instead maintained his status as an aristocratic amateur by giving the royalties away. Occupying his inherited seat in the House of Lords, he also became briefly active on the liberal side of the Whig Party and spoke

courageously in defense of the Nottingham weavers who had resorted to smashing the newly invented textile machines that had thrown them out of work. He also supported other liberal measures, including that of Catholic Emancipation.

Byron was extraordinarily handsome—"so beautiful a countenance," Coleridge wrote, "I scarcely ever saw . . . his eyes the open portals of the sun—things of light, and for light." Because of a constitutional tendency to obesity, however, he was able to maintain his looks only by resorting again and again to a starvation diet of biscuits, soda water, and strong purgatives. Often as a result of female initiative rather than his own, Byron entered into a sequence of liaisons with ladies of fashion. One of these, the flamboyant and eccentric young Lady Caroline Lamb, caused him so much distress by her pursuit that Byron turned for relief to marriage with Annabella Milbanke, who was in every way Lady Caroline's opposite, for she was unworldly and intellectual (with a special passion for mathematics) and naively believed that she could reform her husband. This ill-starred marriage produced a daughter (Augusta Ada) and many scenes in which Byron, goaded by financial difficulties, behaved so frantically that his wife questioned his sanity; after only one year the union ended in a legal separation. The final blow came when Lady Byron discovered her husband's incestuous relations with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh. The two had been raised apart, so that they were almost strangers when they met as adults. Byron's affection for his sister, however guilty, was genuine and endured all through his life. This affair, enhanced by rumors about Byron's earlier liaisons with men, proved a delicious morsel even to the jaded palate of a public that was used to eating up stories of aristocratic vice. Byron was ostracized by all but a few friends and was finally forced to leave England forever on April 25, 1816.

Byron now resumed the travels incorporated in the third and fourth cantos of *Childe Harold.* At Geneva he lived for several months in close and intellectually fruitful relation to Percy and Mary Shelley, who were accompanied by Mary's stepsister, Claire Clairmont —a misguided seventeen-year-old who had had an affair with Byron

while he was still in England and who in January 1817 bore him a daughter, Allegra. In the fall of 1817, Byron established himself in Venice, where he began a year and a half of debauchery that, he estimated, involved liaisons with more than two hundred women. This period, however, was also one of great literary creativity. Often working through the night, he finished his tragedy *Manfred;* wrote the fourth canto of *Childe Harold;* and then, feeling more and more trapped by the poetic modes that had won him his popularity, tested out an entirely new mode in *Beppo: A Venetian Story*, a comic verse tale about a deceived husband in which he previewed the playful narrative manner and the ottava rima stanzas of *Don Juan.* In December 1818 he began the composition of *Don Juan.*

Exhausted and bored by promiscuity, Byron in 1819 settled into a placid and relatively faithful relationship with Teresa Guiccioli, the young wife of the elderly Count Alessandro Guiccioli; according to the Italian upper-class mores of the times, having contracted a marriage of convenience, she could now with some propriety take Byron as her lover. Through the countess's nationalistic family, the Gambas, Byron became involved with a group of political conspirators seeking to end the Austrian Empire's control over northern Italy. When the Gambas were forced by the authorities to move to Pisa, Byron followed them there and, for the second time, joined the Shelleys. There grew up about them the "Pisan Circle," which in addition to the Gambas included their friends Thomas Medwin and Edward and Jane Williams, as well as the Greek nationalist leader Prince Mavrocordatos, the picturesque Irish Count Taaffe, and the adventurer Edward Trelawny, a great teller of tall tales who seems to have stepped out of one of Byron's romances. Leigh Hunt, the journalist and essayist, joined them, drawing Byron and Percy Shelley into his plan to make Italy the base for a radical political journal, *The Liberal.* This circle was gradually broken up, however, first by the Shelleys' anger over Byron's treatment of his daughter Allegra (Byron had sent the child to be brought up as a Catholic in an Italian convent, where she died of a fever in 1822); then by the expulsion of the Gambas, whom Byron followed to

Genoa; and finally by the drowning of Percy Shelley and Edward Williams in July 1822.

Byron meanwhile had been steadily at work on a series of closet tragedies—plays, in Byron's words, "expressly written *not* for the theatre"—(including *Cain, Sardanapalus*, and *Marino Faliero*) and on his devastating satire on the life and death of George III, *The Vision of Judgment.* But increasingly he devoted himself to the continuation of *Don Juan.* He had always been diffident in his self-judgments and easily swayed by literary advice. But now, confident that he had at last found his true gifts as a poet, he kept on, in spite or persistent objections against the supposed immorality of the poem by the English public, by his publisher John Murray, by his friends and well-wishers, and by his extremely decorous lover, the Countess Guiccioli —by almost everyone, in fact, except the idealist Shelley, who thought *Juan* incomparably better than anything he himself could write and insisted "that every word of it is pregnant with immortality."

Byron finally broke off literature for action when he organized an expedition to assist in the Greek war for independence from the Ottoman Empire. He knew too well the conditions in Greece, and had too skeptical an estimate of human nature, to entertain hope of success; but, in part because his own writings had helped kindle European enthusiasm for the Greek cause, he now felt honor-bound to try what could be done. In the dismal, marshy town of Missolonghi, he lived a Spartan existence, training troops whom he had subsidized and exhibiting practical grasp and a power of leadership amid a chaos of factionalism, intrigue, and military ineptitude. Worn out, he succumbed to a series of feverish attacks and died just after he had reached his thirty-sixth birthday. To this day Byron is revered by the Greek people as a national hero.

Students of Byron still feel, as his friends had felt, the magnetism of his volatile temperament. As Mary Shelley wrote six years after his death, when she read Thomas Moore's edition of his *Letters and Journals:* "The Lord Byron I find there is our Lord Byron—the fascinating—faulty—childish—philosophical being—daring the world

—docile to a private circle—impetuous and indolent—gloomy and yet more gay than any other." Of his contradictions Byron was well aware; he told his friend Lady Blessington: "I am so changeable, being everything by turns and nothing long—I am such a strange *mélange* of good and evil, that it would be difficult to describe me." Yet he remained faithful to his code: a determination to tell the truth as he saw it about the world and about himself (his refusal to suppress or conceal any of his moods is in part what made him seem so contradictory) and a dedication to the freedom of nations and individuals. As he went on to say to Lady Blessington: "There are but two sentiments to which I am constant—a strong love of liberty, and a detestation of cant."

The texts printed here are from *Byron's Poetry and Prose*: *A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Alice Levine.

Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos[1]

May 9, 1810

1

If, in the month of dark December,
  Leander, who was nightly wont
(What maid will not the tale remember?)
  To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

2

If, when the wintry tempest roar'd,
  He sped to Hero, nothing loth,
And thus of old thy current pour'd,
  Fair Venus! how I pity both!

3

For *me*, degenerate modern wretch,
  Though in the genial month of May,
My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
  And think I've done a feat to-day.

4

But since he cross'd the rapid tide,
  According to the doubtful story,
To woo,—and—Lord knows what beside,
  And swam for Love, as I for Glory;

5

’Twere hard to say who fared the best:
  Sad mortals! thus the Gods still plague you!
He lost his labour, I my jest:
  For he was drown’d, and I’ve the ague.

1810 1812

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Hellespont (now called the Dardanelles) is the narrow strait between Europe and Asia. In the ancient story, retold in Christopher Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*, young Leander of Abydos, on the Asian side, swam nightly to visit Hero, a priestess of the goddess Venus at Sestos, until he was drowned when he made the attempt in a storm. Byron and a young Lieutenant Ekenhead swam the Hellespont in the reverse direction on May 3, 1810. Byron alternated between complacency and humor in his many references to the event. In a note to the poem, he mentions that the distance was “upwards of four English miles, though the actual breadth is barely one. The rapidity of the current is such that no boat can row directly across. . . . The water was extremely cold, from the melting of the mountain snows.”Return to reference 1

She Walks in Beauty[1]

1

She walks in beauty, like the night
  Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
  Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
  Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

2

One shade the more, one ray the less,
  Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
  Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
  How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

3

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
  So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
  But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
  A heart whose love is innocent!

June 1814 1815

Endnotes

- Note 1: From *Hebrew Melodies* (1815), a collection of lyrics on Old Testament themes that Byron composed to accompany the musician Isaac Nathan's settings of traditional synagogue chants. Byron wrote these lines about his beautiful cousin by marriage, Anne Wilmot, who at the ball where they first met wore a black mourning gown brightened with spangles. In their context as the opening poem of *Hebrew Melodies*, the lines praise any one of a number of Old Testament heroines.Return to reference 1

Darkness[1]

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling° in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again

With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food:
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again;—a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death,
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung° them, or the dropping dead
Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies; they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld

Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful—was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless,° treeless, manless, lifeless—
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal; as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

Diodati, July, 1816

1816

Endnotes

- Note 1: A powerful blank-verse description of the end of life on earth. New geological sciences and an accompanying interest in what the fossil record indicated about the extinction of species made such speculations hardly less common in Byron's time than in ours. Mary Shelley would later take up the theme in her novel *The Last Man* (1826; see p. 1022, below).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *in the dark*Return to reference °
- °: *withered*Return to reference °
- °: *without vegetation*Return to reference °

So we’ll go no more a roving[1]

So we’ll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And Love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
Yet we’ll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.

1817 1830

Endnotes

- Note 1: Composed in the Lenten aftermath of a period of late-night carousing during the Carnival season in Venice, and included in a letter to Thomas Moore, February 28, 1817. Byron wrote, “I find ‘the sword wearing out the scabbard,’ though I have but just turned the corner of twenty-nine.” The poem is based on the refrain of a bawdy Scottish song, “The Jolly Beggar”: “And we’ll gang nae mair a roving / Sae late into the nicht.”Return to reference 1

From Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: A romance or narrative of adventure.Return to reference 1

From *Canto the First*

["SIN'S LONG LABYRINTH"]

1

Oh, thou! in Hellas° deem'd of heavenly birth,
Muse! form'd or fabled at the minstrel's will!
Since shamed full oft by later lyres on earth,
Mine dares not call thee from thy sacred hill:
Yet there I've wander'd by thy vaunted rill;
Yes! sigh'd o'er Delphi's long-deserted shrine,
Where, save that feeble fountain, all is still;
Nor mote° my shell awake the weary Nine[2]
To grace so plain a tale—this lowly lay° of mine.

2

Whilome[3] in Albion's° isle there dwelt a youth,
Who ne in virtue's ways did take delight;
But spent his days in riot most uncouth,
And vex'd with mirth the drowsy ear of Night.
Ah, me! in sooth he was a shameless wight,°
Sore given to revel and ungodly glee;
Few earthly things found favour in his sight
Save concubines and carnal companie,
And flaunting wassailers[4] of high and low degree.

3

Childe Harold was he hight:°—but whence his name
And lineage long, it suits me not to say;
Suffice it, that perchance they were of fame,

And had been glorious in another day:
But one sad losel[5] soils a name for aye,
However mighty in the olden time;
Nor all that heralds rake from coffin'd clay,
Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme,
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime.

4

Childe Harold bask'd him in the noontide sun,
Disporting there like any other fly;
Nor deem'd before his little day was done
One blast might chill him into misery.
But long ere scarce a third of his pass'd by,
Worse than adversity the Childe befell;
He felt the fulness of satiety:
Then loathed he in his native land to dwell,
Which seem'd to him more lone than Eremite's[6] sad cell.

5

For he through Sin's long labyrinth had run,
Nor made atonement when he did amiss,
Had sigh'd to many though he loved but one,
And that loved one, alas! could ne'er be his.
Ah, happy she! to 'scape from him whose kiss
Had been pollution unto aught so chaste;
Who soon had left her charms for vulgar bliss,
And spoil'd her goodly lands to gild his waste,
Nor calm domestic peace had ever deign'd to taste.

6

And now Childe Harold was sore sick at heart,

And from his fellow bacchanals[7] would flee;
'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,
But Pride congeal'd the drop within his ee:°
Apart he stalk'd in joyless reverie,
And from his native land resolved to go,
And visit scorching climes beyond the sea;
With pleasure drugg'd, he almost long'd for woe,
And e'en for change of scene would seek the shades below.

Endnotes

- Note 2: The Muses, whose "vaunted rill" (line 5) was the Castalian spring. "Shell": lyre. Hermes is fabled to have invented the lyre by stretching strings over the hollow of a tortoise shell.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Once upon a time; one of the many archaisms that Byron borrowed from Spenser.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Noisy, insolent drinkers (Byron is thought to refer to his own youthful carousing with friends at Newstead Abbey).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Rascal. Byron's great-uncle, the fifth Lord Byron, had killed a kinsman in a drunken duel.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A religious hermit.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Worshipers of Bacchus, ancient Roman god of wine and revelry.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *Greece*Return to reference °
- °: *may*Return to reference °
- °: *song*Return to reference °
- °: *England's*Return to reference °
- °: *creature*Return to reference °
- °: *called*Return to reference °

- °: *eye*Return to reference °

From *Canto the Third*

[“ONCE MORE UPON THE WATERS”]

1

Is thy face like thy mothers, my fair child!
ADA![8] sole daughter of my house and heart?
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,
And when we parted,—not as now we part,
But with a hope.—
Awaking with a start,
The waters heave around me; and on high
The winds lift up their voices: I depart,
Whither I know not; but the hour’s gone by,
When Albion’s lessening shores could grieve or glad mine eye.

2

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome, to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe’er it lead!
Though the strain’d mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean’s foam, to sail
Where’er the surge may sweep, or tempest’s breath prevail.

3

In my youth’s summer[9] I did sing of One,
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind;
Again I seize the theme, then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind

Bears the cloud onwards: in that Tale I find
The furrows of long thought, and dried-up tears,
Which, ebbing, leave a sterile track behind,
O’er which all heavily the journeying years
Plod the last sands of life,—where not a flower appears.

4

Since my young days of passion—joy, or pain,
Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string,
And both may jar:[1] it may be, that in vain
I would essay as I have sung to sing.
Yet, though a dreary strain, to this I cling;
So that it wean me from the weary dream
Of selfish grief or gladness—so it fling
Forgetfulness around me—it shall seem
To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme.

5

He, who grown aged in this world of woe,
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
So that no wonder waits him; nor below
Can love, or sorrow, fame, ambition, strife,
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
Of silent, sharp endurance: he can tell
Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife
With airy images, and shapes which dwell
Still unimpair’d, though old, in the soul’s haunted cell.

6

’Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow

With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought![2] with whom I traverse earth,
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mix'd with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crush'd feelings' dearth.

7

Yet must I think less wildly:—I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poison'd. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what time can not abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate.

8

Something too much of this:—but now 'tis past,
And the spell closes with its silent seal.[3]
Long absent HAROLD re-appears at last;
He of the breast which fain no more would feel,
Wrung with the wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal;
Yet Time, who changes all, had alter'd him
In soul and aspect as in age: years steal
Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb;
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.

9

His had been quaff'd too quickly, and he found
The dregs were wormwood; but he fill'd again,
And from a purer fount, on holier ground,
And deem'd its spring perpetual; but in vain!
Still round him clung invisibly a chain
Which gall'd for ever, fettering though unseen,
And heavy though it clank'd not; worn with pain,
Which pined although it spoke not, and grew keen,
Entering with every step he took through many a scene.

10

Secure in guarded coldness, he had mix'd
Again in fancied safety with his kind,
And deem'd his spirit now so firmly fix'd
And sheathed with an invulnerable mind,
That, if no joy, no sorrow lurk'd behind;
And he, as one, might 'midst the many stand
Unheeded, searching through the crowd to find
Fit speculation; such as in strange land
He found in wonder-works of God and Nature's hand.

11

But who can view the ripen'd rose, nor seek
To wear it? who can curiously behold
The smoothness and the sheen of beauty's cheek,
Nor feel the heart can never all grow old?
Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold
The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
Harold, once more within the vortex, roll'd
On with the giddy circle, chasing Time,

Yet with a nobler aim than in his youth's fond° prime.

12

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man; with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quell'd
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompell'd,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebell'd;
Proud though in desolation; which could find
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.

13

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where roll'd the ocean, thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam;
The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tome°
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake,
For Nature's pages glass'd° by sunbeams on the lake.

14

Like the Chaldean,[4] he could watch the stars,
Till he had peopled them with beings bright
As their own beams; and earth, and earth-born jars,
And human frailties, were forgotten quite:

Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy; but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts, as if to break the link
That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

15

But in Man's dwellings he became a thing
Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,
Droop'd as a wild-born falcon with clipt wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home:
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barr'd-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage, so the heat
Of his impeded soul would through his bosom eat.

16

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
With nought of hope left, but with less of gloom;
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made Despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild,—as on the plunder'd wreck
When mariners would madly meet their doom
With draughts intemperate on the sinking deck,—
Did yet inspire a cheer, which he forebore to check.

Endnotes

- Note 8: Byron's daughter Augusta Ada, born in December 1815, a month before her parents separated. Byron's "hope" (line 5)

had been for a reconciliation, but he was never to see Ada again.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Byron wrote canto 1 at age twenty-one; he is now twenty-eight.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Sound discordant.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, Childe Harold, his literary creation.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, he sets the seal of silence on his personal tale ("spell").Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A people of ancient Babylonia, expert in astronomy.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *foolish*Return to reference °
- °: *book*Return to reference °
- °: *made glassy*Return to reference °

17

Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire's dust!
An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchred below!
Is the spot mark'd with no colossal bust?
Nor column trophied for triumphal show?[5]
None; but the moral's truth tells simpler so,
As the ground was before, thus let it be;—
How that red rain hath made the harvest grow!
And is this all the world has gain'd by thee,
Thou first and last of fields! king-making Victory?

18

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo;[6]
How in an hour the power which gave annuls
Its gifts, transferring fame as fleeting too!
In "pride of place" here last the eagle flew,[7]
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain,
Pierced by the shaft of banded nations[8] through;
Ambitions life and labours all were vain;
He wears the shatter'd links of the world's broken chain.[9]

19

Fit retribution! Gaul[1] may champ the bit
And foam in fetters;—but is Earth more free?
Did nations combat to make *One* submit;
Or league to teach all kings true sovereignty?
What! shall reviving Thraldom again be
The patch'd-up idol of enlighten'd days?

Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
Pay the Wolf homage? proffering lowly gaze
And servile knees to thrones? No; *prove*[2] before ye
praise!

20

If not, o'er one fallen despot boast no more!
In vain fair cheeks were furrow'd with hot tears
For Europe's flowers long rooted up before
The trampler of her vineyards; in vain years
Of death, depopulation, bondage, fears,
Have all been borne, and broken by the accord
Of roused-up millions: all that most endears
Glory, is when the myrtle wreathes a sword
Such as Harmodius drew on Athens' tyrant lord.[3]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 5: Referring to the triumphal arches erected in ancient Rome to honor conquering generals, a custom Napoleon had revived.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, near Brussels, had occurred only the year before, on June 18, 1815. The battlefield, where almost fifty thousand English, Prussian, and French soldiers were killed in a single day, quickly became a gruesome tourist attraction. See "Romantic Literature and Wartime," p. 742 in this volume.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: "Pride of place," is a term of falconry, and means the highest pitch of flight [*Byron's note*, which continues by referring to the use of the term in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 2.4]. The eagle was the symbol of Napoleon.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: The Grand Alliance formed in opposition to Napoleon.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Napoleon was then a prisoner at St. Helena.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: France. Byron, like other liberals, saw the defeat of the Napoleonic tyranny as a victory for tyrannical kings and the forces of reaction throughout Europe.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Await the test (proof) of experience.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In 514 B.C.E. Harmodius and Aristogeiton, hiding their daggers in myrtle (symbol of love), killed Hipparchus, tyrant of Athens.Return to reference 3

36

There sunk the greatest, nor the worst of men,[4]
Whose spirit antithetically mixt
One moment of the mightiest, and again
On little objects with like firmness fixt,
Extreme in all things! hadst thou been betwixt,
Thy throne had still been thine, or never been;
For daring made thy rise as fall: thou seek'st
Even now to re-assume the imperial mien,°
And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the scene!

37

Conqueror and captive of the earth art thou!
She trembles at thee still, and thy wild name
Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now
That thou art nothing, save the jest of Fame,
Who woo'd thee once, thy vassal, and became
The flatterer of thy fierceness, till thou wert
A god unto thyself; nor less the same
To the astounded kingdoms all inert,
Who deem'd thee for a time whate'er thou didst assert.

38

Oh, more or less than man—in high or low,
Battling with nations, flying from the field;
Now making monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
More than thy meanest° soldier taught to yield;
An empire thou couldst crush, command, rebuild,

But govern not thy pettiest passion, nor,
However deeply in men's spirits skill'd,
Look through thine own, nor curb the lust of war,
Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest
star.

39

Yet well thy soul hath brook'd the turning tide
With that untaught innate philosophy,
Which, be it wisdom, coldness, or deep pride,
Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.
When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast
smiled
With a sedate and all-enduring eye;—
When Fortune fled her spoil'd and favourite child,
He stood unbow'd beneath the ills upon him piled.

40

Sager than in thy fortunes; for in them
Ambition steel'd thee on too far to show
That just habitual scorn which could contemn
Men and their thoughts; 'twas wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wert to use
Till they were turn'd unto thine overthrow;
'Tis but a worthless world to win or lose;
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who
choose.[5]

41

If, like a tower upon a headlong rock,
Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone,

Such scorn of man had help'd to brave the shock;
But men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne,
Their admiration thy best weapon shone;
The part of Philip's son[6] was thine, not then
(Unless aside thy purple had been thrown)
Like stern Diogenes[7] to mock at men;
For sceptred cynics earth were far too wide a den.

42

But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire
And motion of the soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

43

This makes the madmen who have made men mad
By their contagion; Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists,[8] Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule:

44

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

45

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.[9]

* * *

52

Thus Harold inly said, and pass'd along,
Yet not insensibly to all which here
Awoke the jocund birds to early song
In glens which might have made even exile dear:
Though on his brow were graven lines austere,
And tranquil sternness which had ta'en the place
Of feelings fierier far but less severe,
Joy was not always absent from his face,

But o’er it in such scenes would steal with transient trace.

53

Nor was all love shut from him, though his days
Of passion had consumed themselves to dust.
It is in vain that we would coldly gaze
On such as smile upon us; the heart must
Leap kindly back to kindness, though disgust
Hath wean’d it from all worldlings: thus he felt,
For there was soft remembrance, and sweet trust
In one fond breast,[1] to which his own would melt,
And in its tenderer hour on that his bosom dwelt.

54

And he had learn’d to love,—I know not why,
For this in such as him seems strange of mood,—
The helpless looks of blooming infancy,
Even in its earliest nurture; what subdued,
To change like this, a mind so far imbued
With scorn of man, it little boots to know;
But thus it was; and though in solitude
Small power the nipp’d affections have to grow,
In him this glow’d when all beside had ceased to glow.

55

And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
Than the church links withal; and, though unwed,
That love was pure, and, far above disguise,
Had stood the test of mortal enmities
Still undivided, and cemented more

By peril, dreaded most in female eyes;
But this was firm, and from a foreign shore
Well to that heart might his these absent greetings
495 pour!

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 4: Napoleon, here portrayed with many characteristics of the Byronic hero.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An inversion: "all who choose such lot" (that is, who choose to play such a game of chance).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Alexander the Great, son of Philip of Macedon.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Greek philosopher of Cynicism, contemporary of Alexander. It is related that Alexander was so struck by his independence of mind that he said, "If I were not Alexander, I should wish to be Diogenes."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Learned men. But the term often carries a derogatory sense—thinkers with a penchant for tricky reasoning.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In the stanzas here omitted, Harold is sent sailing up the Rhine, meditating on the "thousand battles" that "have assailed thy banks."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Commentators agree that the reference is to Byron's half-sister, Augusta Leigh.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *character*Return to reference °
- °: *lowest*Return to reference °

[SWITZERLAND][2]

68

Lake Leman° woos me with its crystal face,
The mirror where the stars and mountains view
The stillness of their aspect in each trace
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue:
There is too much of man here, to look through
With a fit mind the might which I behold;
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew
Thoughts hid, but not less cherish'd than of old,
Ere mingling with the herd had penn'd me in their fold.

69

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind:
All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
Of our infection, till too late and long
We may deplore and struggle with the coil,°
In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

70

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years
In fatal penitence, and in the blight
Of our own soul turn all our blood to tears,
And colour things to come with hues of Night;
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight

To those that walk in darkness: on the sea,
The boldest steer but where their ports invite,
But there are wanderers o’er Eternity
Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor’d ne’er
shall be.

71

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,[3]
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake;—
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,
Than join the crushing crowd, doom’d to inflict or
bear?

72

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Class’d among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.[4]

73

And thus I am absorb’d, and this is life:
I look upon the peopled desert past,
As on a place of agony and strife,

Where, for some sin, to sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous, as the blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

74

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When elements to elements conform,
And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

75

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forego
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turn’d below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?

* * *

85

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

86

It is the hush of night, and all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
Mellow'd and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
Save darken'd Jura,[5] whose capt heights appear
Precipitously steep; and drawing near,
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more;

87

He is an evening reveller, who makes
His life an infancy, and sings his fill;
At intervals, some bird from out the brakes°
Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
But that is fancy, for the starlight dews
All silently their tears of love instil,
Weeping themselves away, till they infuse

Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

88

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star,

89

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast,
All is concenter'd in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

90

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are *least* alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm,
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,[6]

Binding all things with beauty;—’twould disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.

91

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places and the peak
Of earth-o’ergazing mountains, and thus take[7]
A fit and unwall’d temple, there to seek
The Spirit, in whose honour shrines are weak,
Uprear’d of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
With Nature’s realms of worship, earth and air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer!

92

Thy sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

93

And this is in the night:—Most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—
A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,

And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again ’tis black,—and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o’er a young earthquake’s birth.

94

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted:
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life’s bloom, and then departed—
Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters,—war within themselves to wage.

95

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way,
The mightiest of the storms hath ta’en his stand:
For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunder-bolts from hand to hand,
Flashing and cast around: of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills hath fork’d
His lightnings,—as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as desolation work’d,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurk’d.

96

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll[8]
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.
But where of ye, oh tempests! is the goal?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

97

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

98

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contain'd no tomb,—
And glowing into day: we may resume
The march of our existence: and thus I,
Still on thy shores, fair Leman! may find room
And food for meditation, nor pass by

Much, that may give us pause, if ponder'd fittingly.

* * *

113

I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flatter'd its rank breath, nor bow'd
To its idolatries a patient knee,—
Nor coin'd my cheek to smiles,—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed[9] my mind, which thus itself subdued.

114

I have not loved the world, nor the world me,—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things,—hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem,
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream.

115

My daughter! with thy name this song begun—
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end
—
I see thee not,—I hear thee not,—but none

Can be so wrapt in thee; thou art the friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never should'st behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
And reach into thy heart,—when mine is cold,—
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

116

To aid thy mind's development,—to watch
Thy dawn of little joys,—to sit and see
Almost thy very growth,—to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects,—wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,—
This, it should seem, was not reserved for me;
Yet this was in my nature:—as it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

117

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me; though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation,—and a broken claim:
Though the grave closed between us,—'twere the same,
I know that thou wilt love me; though to drain
My blood from out thy being were an aim,
And an attainment,—all would be in vain,—
Still thou would'st love me, still that more than life retain.

118

The child of love,—though born in bitterness
And nurtured in convulsion,—of thy sire

These were the elements,—and thine no less.
As yet such are around thee,—but thy fire
Shall be more temper'd, and thy hope far higher.
Sweet be thy cradled slumbers! O'er the sea,
And from the mountains where I now respire,
Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,
As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me!

1812, 1816

Endnotes

- Note 2: Byron with his traveling companion and physician, John Polidori, spent the gloomy summer of 1816 near Geneva, in a villa rented for its proximity to the household that Percy Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (who would marry Shelley at the end of the year), and her step-sister Claire Clairmont had set up there. The famous ghost-story–telling contest in which these five participated, and which saw the genesis of both *Frankenstein* and Polidori's "The Vampyre," took place that June. The Shelley household's involvement in *Childe Harold* is extensive. The fair copy of this canto was in fact written out by Claire, and Percy would eventually deliver it to Byron's publisher in London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: River rising in Switzerland and flowing through France into the Mediterranean.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: During the tour around Lake Geneva that they took in late June 1816, Percy Shelley introduced Byron to the poetry of Wordsworth and Wordsworth's concepts of nature. Those ideas are reflected in canto 3, but the voice is Byron's own.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The mountain range between Switzerland and France, visible from Lake Geneva.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The sash of Venus, which conferred the power to attract love.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: It is to be recollected, that the most beautiful and impressive doctrines of the Founder of Christianity were delivered, not in the *Temple*, but on the *Mount* [*Byron's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Old form of knell: the sound of a bell.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Defiled. In a note Byron refers to *Macbeth* 3.1.66 ("For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind").Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *Geneva*Return to reference °
- °: *tumult*Return to reference °
- °: *thickets*Return to reference °

Manfred *Manfred* is Byron's first dramatic work. As its subtitle, "A Dramatic Poem," indicates, it was not intended to be produced on the stage; Byron also referred to it as a "metaphysical" drama—that is, a drama of ideas. He began writing it in the autumn of 1816 while living in the Swiss Alps, whose grandeur stimulated his imagination; he finished the drama the following year in Italy.

Manfred's literary forebears include the villains of Gothic fiction (another Manfred can be found in Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*; see p. 292, above) and of the Gothic dramas Byron had encountered during his time on the board of managers of London's Drury Lane theater. Manfred also shares traits with the Greek Titan Prometheus, rebel against Zeus, ruler of the gods; Milton's Satan; Ahasuerus, the legendary Wandering Jew who, having ridiculed Christ as he bore the Cross to Calvary, is doomed to live until Christ's Second Coming; and Faust, who yielded his soul to the devil in exchange for superhuman powers. Byron denied that he had ever heard of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and because he knew no German he had not read Goethe's *Faust*, of which part 1 had been published in 1808. But during an August 1816 visit to Byron and the Shelley household, Matthew Lewis (author of the Gothic novel *The Monk*; see pp. 304–09, above) had read parts of *Faust* to him aloud, translating as he went, and Byron worked memories of this oral translation into his own drama in a way that evoked Goethe's admiration.

Like Byron's earlier heroes, Childe Harold and the protagonists of some of his Eastern tales, Manfred is hounded by remorse—in this instance, for a transgression that (it is hinted but never quite specified) is incest with his sister Astarte; it is also hinted that Astarte has taken her own life. While this element in the drama is often regarded as Byron's veiled confession of his incestuous relations with his half-sister, Augusta, and while Byron, ever the attention-seeker, in some ways courted this interpretation, the theme of incest was a common one in Gothic and Romantic writings. It features in *The Monk* and Walpole's closet drama *The Mysterious*

Mother (1768), and, at about the time Byron was composing his drama, it was also being explored by Mary and Percy Shelley.

The character of Manfred is its author's most impressive representation of the Byronic hero. Byron's invention is to have Manfred, unlike Faust, disdainfully reject the offer of a pact with the powers of darkness. He thereby sets himself up as the totally autonomous man, independent of any external authority or power, whose own mind, as he says in the concluding scene (3.4.127–40), generates the values by which he lives "in sufferance or in joy," and by reference to which he judges, requites, and finally destroys himself. In his work *Ecce Homo*, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, recognizing Byron's anticipation of his own *Übermensch* (the "superman" who posits for himself a moral code beyond all traditional standards of good and evil), asserted that the character of Manfred was greater than that of Goethe's Faust.

Manfred

A DRAMATIC POEM

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.[1]

Dramatis Personae

MANFRED
CHAMOIS HUNTER
ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE
MANUEL
HERMAN
WITCH OF THE ALPS
ARIMANES
NEMESIS
THE DESTINIES
SPIRITS, &C.

The Scene of the Drama is amongst the Higher Alps—partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the Mountains.

Act 1

Endnotes

- Note 1: Hamlet's comment after having seen his father's ghost (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.5.168–69).Return to reference 1

SCENE 1

MANFRED *alone.—Scene, a Gothic Gallery.*[2]*—Time, Midnight.*

MAN. The lamp must be replenish'd, but even then
It will not burn so long as I must watch:
My slumbers—if I slumber—are not sleep,
But a continuance of enduring thought,
Which then I can resist not: in my heart
There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
To look within; and yet I live, and bear
The aspect and the form of breathing men.
But grief should be the instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
Philosophy and science, and the springs
Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world,
I have essay'd, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself—
But they avail not: I have done men good,
And I have met with good even among men—
But this avail'd not: I have had my foes,
And none have baffled, many fallen before me—
But this avail'd not:—Good, or evil, life,
Powers, passions, all I see in other beings,
Have been to me as rain unto the sands,
Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
Nor fluttering throb, that beats with hopes or wishes,
Or lurking love of something on the earth.—
Now to my task.—
Mysterious Agency!
Ye spirits of the unbounded Universe!
Whom I have sought in darkness and in light—
Ye, who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler essence—ye, to whom the tops
Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,
And earth's and ocean's caves familiar things—

I call upon ye by the written charm
Which gives me power upon you—Rise! appear!
[*A pause.*]
They come not yet.—Now by the voice of him
Who is the first among you[3]—by this sign,
Which makes you tremble—by the claims of him
Who is undying,[4]—Rise! appear!—Appear!
[*A pause.*]
If it be so.—Spirits of earth and air,
Ye shall not thus elude me: by a power,
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
Which had its birthplace in a star condemn'd,
The burning wreck of a demolish'd world,
A wandering hell in the eternal space;
By the strong curse which is upon my soul,
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will.—Appear!

[*A star is seen at the darker end of the gallery: it is stationary; and voice is heard singing.*]

FIRST SPIRIT.[5]

Mortal! to thy bidding bow'd,
From my mansion in the cloud,
Which the breath of twilight builds,
And the summer's sunset gilds
With the azure and vermilion,
Which is mix'd for my pavilion;
Though thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridden;
To thine adjuration° bow'd,
Mortal—be thy wish avow'd!

Voice of the SECOND SPIRIT.

Mont Blanc[6] is the monarch of mountains;
They crown'd him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a diadem of snow.
Around his waist are forests braced,

The Avalanche in his hand;
But ere it fall, that thundering ball
Must pause for my command.
The Glacier's cold and restless mass
Moves onward day by day;
But I am he who bids it pass,
Or with its ice delay.
I am the spirit of the place,
Could make the mountain bow
And quiver to his cavern'd base—
And what with me wouldst *Thou?*

Voice of the THIRD SPIRIT.

In the blue depth of the waters,
Where the wave hath no strife,
Where the wind is a stranger,
And the sea-snake hath life,
Where the Mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells;
Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells;
O'er my calm Hall of Coral
The deep echo roll'd—
To the Spirit of Ocean
Thy wishes unfold!

FOURTH SPIRIT.

Where the slumbering earthquake
Lies pillow'd on fire,
And the lakes of bitumen°
Rise boilingly higher;
Where the roots of the Andes
Strike deep in the earth,
As their summits to heaven
Shoot soaringly forth;
I have quitted my birthplace,
Thy bidding to bide—
Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy will be my guide!

FIFTH SPIRIT.

I am the Rider of the wind,
  The Stirrer of the storm;
The hurricane I left behind
  Is yet with lightning warm;
To speed to thee, o'er shore and sea
  I swept upon the blast:
The fleet I met sail'd well, and yet
'Twill sink ere night be past.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

My dwelling is the shadow of the night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

SEVENTH SPIRIT.

The star which rules thy destiny
Was ruled, ere earth began, by me:
It was a world as fresh and fair
As e'er revolved round sun in air;
Its course was free and regular,
Space bosom'd not a lovelier star.
The hour arrived—and it became
A wandering mass of shapeless flame,
A pathless comet, and a curse,
The menace of the universe;
Still rolling on with innate force,
Without a sphere, without a course,
A bright deformity on high,
The monster of the upper sky!
And thou! beneath its influence born—
Thou worm! whom I obey and scorn—
Forced by a power (which is not thine,
And lent thee but to make thee mine)
For this brief moment to descend,
Where these weak spirits round thee bend
And parley with a thing like thee—
What wouldst thou, Child of Clay! with me?

The SEVEN SPIRITS.

Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds, thy star,
Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay!
Before thee at thy quest their spirits are—
What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals—say?

MAN. Forgetfulness—
FIRST SPIRIT. Of what—of whom—and why?
MAN. Of that which is within me; read it there—
Ye know it, and I cannot utter it.
SPIRIT. We can but give thee that which we possess:
Ask of us subjects, sovereignty, the power
O'er earth, the whole, or portion, or a sign
Which shall control the elements, whereof
We are the dominators, each and all,
These shall be thine.
MAN. Oblivion, self-oblivion—
Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms
Ye offer so profusely what I ask?
SPIRIT. It is not in our essence, in our skill;
But—thou mayst die.
MAN. Will death bestow it on me?
SPIRIT. We are immortal, and do not forget;
We are eternal; and to us the past
Is, as the future, present. Art thou answer'd?
MAN. Ye mock me—but the power which brought ye here
Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at my will!
The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,[7]
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd in clay!
Answer, or I will teach you what I am.
SPIRIT. We answer as we answer'd; our reply
Is even in thine own words.
MAN. Why say ye so?
SPIRIT. If, as thou say'st, thine essence be as ours,
We have replied in telling thee, the thing
Mortals call death hath nought to do with us.

MAN. I then have call'd ye from your realms in vain;
Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.
SPIRIT. Say;
What we possess we offer; it is thine:
Bethink ere thou dismiss us, ask again—
Kingdom, and sway, and strength, and length of days—
MAN. Accursed! what have I to do with days?
They are too long already.—Hence—begone!
SPIRIT. Yet pause: being here, our will would do thee service;
Bethink thee, is there then no other gift
Which we can make not worthless in thine eyes?
MAN. No, none: yet stay—one moment, ere we part—
I would behold ye face to face. I hear
Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,
As music on the waters; and I see
The steady aspect of a clear large star;
But nothing more. Approach me as ye are,
Or one, or all, in your accustom'd forms.
SPIRIT. We have no forms, beyond the elements
Of which we are the mind and principle:
But choose a form—in that we will appear.
MAN. I have no choice; there is no form on earth
Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting—Come!
SEVENTH SPIRIT. [*appearing in the shape of a beautiful female figure*].[8]
Behold!
MAN. Oh God! if it be thus, and *thou*
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy. I will clasp thee,
And we again will be—— [*The figure vanishes.*]
My heart is crush'd!
[MANFRED *falls senseless.*]
(*A Voice is heard in the Incantation*[9] which follows.)
When the moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;

When the falling stars are shooting,
And the answer’d owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep;
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gather’d in a cloud;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turn’d around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse;
And a spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
And to thee shall Night deny
All the quiet of her sky;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring;
From thy own smile I snatched the snake,
For there it coil'd as in a brake;°
From thy own lip I drew the charm
Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art
Which pass'd for human thine own heart;
By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,[1]
I call upon thee! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell![2]

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear;
Lo! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been pass'd—now wither!

Endnotes

- Note 2: A large chamber built in the medieval Gothic style with high, pointed arches.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Arimanes, who appears in 2.4.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Probably God, to whom traditional magic conjurations often allude.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Spirits, successively, are those of the Air, Mountain, Ocean, Earth, Winds, Night, and Manfred's guiding Star.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The highest mountain in the Alps. Percy Shelley paid tribute to it in a poem published in the same year as *Manfred.*Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In Greek myth Prometheus molded man from clay and stole fire from heaven to give it to humans.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: This shape may be an image of Astarte, whose phantom appears in 2.3.97.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Byron had published this "incantation"—a magical spell—as a separate poem six months before *Manfred*, with a note explaining that the poem was "a Chorus in an unfinished Witch drama began some years ago."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, by your kinship with Cain, who murdered his brother, Abel.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare Satan's words in Milton's *Paradise Lost* 4.75: "Which way I fly is Hell; my self am Hell."Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *summons*Return to reference °
- °: *tarlike mineral*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °

SCENE 2

The Mountain of the Jungfrau.[3]*—Time, Morning.—*
MANFRED *alone upon the Cliffs.*

MAN. The spirits I have raised abandon me—
The spells which I have studied baffle me—
The remedy I reck'd of° tortured me;
I lean no more on super-human aid,
It hath no power upon the past, and for
The future, till the past be gulf'd in darkness,
It is not of my search.—My mother Earth!
And thou fresh breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright eye of the universe,
That openest over all, and unto all
Art a delight—thou shin'st not on my heart.
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril—yet do not recede;
And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:
There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live;
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of spirit, and to be
My own soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself—
The last infirmity of evil.[4] Ay,
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,
[*An eagle passes.*]
Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,
Well may'st thou swoop so near me—I should be

Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,
With a pervading vision.—Beautiful!
How beautiful is all this visible world!
How glorious in its action and itself!
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will,
Till our mortality predominates,
And men are—what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other. Hark! the note,
[*The Shepherd's pipe in the distance is heard.*]
The natural music of the mountain reed—
For here the patriarchal days[5] are not
A pastoral fable—pipes in the liberal° air,
Mix'd with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd;
My soul would drink those echoes.—Oh, that I were
The viewless° spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying
With the blest tone which made me!

Enter from below a CHAMOIS[6] HUNTER.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Even so
This way the chamois leapt: her nimble feet
Have baffled me; my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail.—What is here?
Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reach'd
A height which none even of our mountaineers,
Save our best hunters, may attain: his garb
Is goodly, his mien° manly, and his air
Proud as a free-born peasant's, at this distance.—
I will approach him nearer.

MAN. (*not perceiving the other*). To be thus—
Grey-hair'd with anguish, like these blasted pines,

Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,
A blighted trunk upon a cursed root,
Which but supplies a feeling to decay—
And to be thus, eternally but thus,
Having been otherwise! Now furrow'd o'er
With wrinkles, plough'd by moments, not by years
And hours—all tortured into ages—hours
Which I outlive!—Ye toppling crags of ice!
Ye avalanches, whom a breath draws down
In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me—
I hear ye momently above, beneath,
Crash with a frequent conflict; but ye pass,
And only fall on things that still would live;
On the young flourishing forest, or the hut
And hamlet of the harmless villager.

C. HUN. The mists begin to rise from up the valley;
I'll warn him to descend, or he may chance
To lose at once his way and life together.

MAN. The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
Like foam from the roused ocean of deep Hell,
Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heap'd with the damn'd like pebbles.—I am giddy.

C. HUN. I must approach him cautiously; if near,
A sudden step will startle him, and he
Seems tottering already.

MAN. Mountains have fallen,
Leaving a gap in the clouds, and with the shock
Rocking their Alpine brethren; filling up
The ripe green valleys with destruction's splinters;
Damming the rivers with a sudden dash,
Which crush'd the waters into mist, and made
Their fountains find another channel—thus,
Thus, in its old age, did Mount Rosenberg[7]—
Why stood I not beneath it?

C. HUN. Friend! have a care,
Your next step may be fatal!—for the love
Of him who made you, stand not on that brink!

MAN. (*not hearing him*). Such would have been for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth;
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime—as thus—thus they shall be—
In this one plunge.—Farewell, ye opening heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully—
Ye were not meant for me—Earth! take these atoms!
[*As* MANFRED *is in act to spring from the cliff, the* CHAMOIS HUNTER *seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp.*]

C. HUN. Hold, madman!—though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty blood—
Away with me——I will not quit my hold.

MAN. I am most sick at heart—nay, grasp me not—
I am all feebleness—the mountains whirl
Spinning around me——I grow blind——What art thou?

C. HUN. I'll answer that anon.—Away with me——
The clouds grow thicker—there—now lean on me—
Place your foot here—here, take this staff, and cling
A moment to that shrub—now give me your hand,
And hold fast by my girdle—softly—well—
The Chalet will be gain'd within an hour—
Come on, we'll quickly find a surer footing,
And something like a pathway, which the torrent
Hath wash'd since winter.—Come, 'tis bravely done—
You should have been a hunter.—Follow me.
[*As they descend the rocks with difficulty, the scene closes.*]

Endnotes

- Note 3: A high Alpine mountain in south-central Switzerland.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An echo of Milton's "Lycidas," where fame is identified as "That last infirmity of a noble mind" (line 71).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The days of the Old Testament patriarchs, who were shepherds.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A goatlike antelope found in the European mountains.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: In 1806, ten years before the composition of *Manfred*, a huge landslide on Mount Rossberg ("Rosenberg") had destroyed four villages and killed 457 people.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *considered*Return to reference °
- °: *free-moving*Return to reference °
- °: *invisible*Return to reference °
- °: *appearance*Return to reference °

Act 2

SCENE 1

A Cottage amongst the Bernese Alps.[8]

MANFRED *and the* CHAMOIS HUNTER.

C. HUN. No, no—yet pause—thou must not yet go forth:
Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other, for some hours, at least;
When thou art better, I will be thy guide—
But whither?
MAN. It imports not: I do know
My route full well, and need no further guidance.
C. HUN. Thy garb and gait bespeak thee of high lineage—
One of the many chiefs, whose castled crags
Look o'er the lower valleys—which of these
May call thee lord? I only know their portals;
My way of life leads me but rarely down
To bask by the huge hearths of those old halls,
Carousing with the vassals; but the paths,
Which step from out our mountains to their doors,
I know from childhood—which of these is thine?
MAN. No matter.
C. HUN. Well, sir, pardon me the question,
And be of better cheer. Come, taste my wine;
'Tis of an ancient vintage; many a day
'T has thawed my veins among our glaciers, now
Let it do thus for thine—Come, pledge me fairly.
MAN. Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never—never sink in the earth?
C. HUN. What dost thou mean? thy senses wander from thee.
MAN. I say 'tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed: but still it rises up,
Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from heaven,
Where thou art not—and I shall never be.
C. HUN. Man of strange words, and some half-maddening sin,

Which makes thee people° vacancy, whate'er
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet—
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience——
MAN. Patience and patience! Hence—that word was made
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey;
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—
I am not of thine order.
C. HUN. Thanks to heaven!
I would not be of thine for the free fame
Of William Tell;[9] but whatsoe'er thine ill,
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless.
MAN. Do I not bear it?—Look on me—I live.
C. HUN. This is convulsion, and no healthful life.
MAN. I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now
To those which I must number: ages—ages—
Space and eternity—and consciousness,
With the fierce thirst of death—and still unslaked!
C. HUN. Why, on thy brow the seal of middle age
Hath scarce been set; I am thine elder far.
MAN. Think'st thou existence doth depend on time?
It doth; but actions are our epochs: mine
Have made my days and nights imperishable,
Endless, and all alike, as sands on the shore,
Innumerable atoms, and one desert,
Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break,
But nothing rests, save carcasses and wrecks,
Rocks, and the salt-surf weeds of bitterness.
C. HUN. Alas! he's mad—but yet I must not leave him.
MAN. I would I were—for then the things I see
Would be but a distemper'd° dream.
C. HUN. What is it
That thou dost see, or think thou look'st upon?
MAN. Myself, and thee—a peasant of the Alps—
Thy humble virtues, hospitable home,
And spirit patient, pious, proud, and free;
Thy self-respect, grafted on innocent thoughts;
Thy days of health, and nights of sleep; thy toils,

By danger dignified, yet guiltless; hopes
Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave,
With cross and garland over its green turf,
And thy grandchildren's love for epitaph;
This do I see—and then I look within—
It matters not—my soul was scorch'd already!

C. HUN. And would'st thou then exchange thy lot for mine?

MAN. No, friend! I would not wrong thee, nor exchange
My lot with living being: I can bear—
However wretchedly, 'tis still to bear—
In life what others could not brook to dream,
But perish in their slumber.

C. HUN. And with this—
This cautious feeling for another's pain,
Canst thou be black with evil?—say not so.
Can one of gentle thoughts have wreak'd revenge
Upon his enemies?

MAN. Oh! no, no, no!
My injuries came down on those who loved me—
On those whom I best loved; I never quell'd°
An enemy, save in my just defence—
My wrongs were all on those I should have cherished
But my embrace was fatal.

C. HUN. Heaven give thee rest!
And penitence restore thee to thyself;
My prayers shall be for thee.

MAN. I need them not,
But can endure thy pity. I depart—
'Tis time—farewell!—Here's gold, and thanks for thee—
No words—it is thy due.—Follow me not—
I know my path—the mountain peril's past:
And once again, I charge thee, follow not!

[*Exit* MANFRED.]

Endnotes

- Note 8: A mountain range in south-central Switzerland.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: The hero who, according to legend, liberated Switzerland from Austrian oppression in the 14th century.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *populate*Return to reference °
- °: *disturbed*Return to reference °
- °: *killed*Return to reference °

SCENE 2

A lower Valley in the Alps.—A Cataract.

Enter MANFRED.

It is not noon—the sunbow's rays[1] still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
And fling its lines of foaming light along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse.[2] No eyes
But mine now drink this sight of loveliness;
I should be sole in this sweet solitude,
And with the Spirit of the place divide
The homage of these waters.—I will call her.

[MANFRED *takes some of the water into the palm of his hand, and flings it into the air, muttering the adjuration. After a pause, the* WITCH OF THE ALPS *rises beneath the arch of the sunbow of the torrent.*]

Beautiful Spirit! with thy hair of light,
And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
The charms of Earth's least mortal daughters grow
To an unearthly stature, in an essence
Of purer elements; while the hues of youth,—
Carnation'd like a sleeping infant's cheek,
Rock'd by the beating of her mother's heart,
Or the rose tints, which summer's twilight leaves
Upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow,
The blush of earth embracing with her heaven,—
Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make tame
The beauties of the sunbow which bends o'er thee.
Beautiful Spirit! in thy calm clear brow,
Wherein is glass'd° serenity of soul,
Which of itself shows immortality,
I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit

At times to commune with them—if that he
Avail him of his spells—to call thee thus,
And gaze on thee a moment.

WITCH. Son of Earth!
I know thee, and the powers which give thee power;
I know thee for a man of many thoughts,
And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both,
Fatal and fated in thy sufferings.
I have expected this—what would'st thou with me?

MAN. To look upon thy beauty—nothing further.
The face of the earth hath madden'd me, and I
Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce
To the abodes of those who govern her—
But they can nothing aid me. I have sought
From them what they could not bestow, and now
I search no further.

WITCH. What could be the quest
Which is not in the power of the most powerful,
The rulers of the invisible?

MAN. A boon;
But why should I repeat it? 'twere in vain.

WITCH. I know not that; let thy lips utter it.

MAN. Well, though it torture me, 'tis but the same;
My pang shall find a voice. From my youth upwards
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,
Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
Nor midst the creatures of clay that girded me
Was there but one who—but of her anon.
I said, with men, and with the thoughts of men,
I held but slight communion; but instead,
My joy was in the Wilderness, to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge

Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave
Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.
In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look, list'ning, on the scatter'd leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one,—
Hating to be so,—cross'd me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again. And then I dived,
In my lone wanderings, to the caves of death,
Searching its cause in its effect; and drew
From wither'd bones, and skulls, and heap'd up dust,
Conclusions most forbidden.[3] Then I pass'd
The nights of years in sciences untaught,
Save in the old time; and with time and toil,
And terrible ordeal, and such penance
As in itself hath power upon the air,
And spirits that do compass air and earth,
Space, and the peopled infinite, I made
Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,
Such as, before me, did the Magi,[4] and
He who from out their fountain dwellings raised
Eros and Anteros, at Gadara,[5]
As I do thee:—and with my knowledge grew
The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy
Of this most bright intelligence; until——

WITCH. Proceed.

MAN. Oh! I but thus prolong'd my words,
Boasting these idle attributes, because
As I approach the core of my heart's grief—
But to my task. I have not named to thee
Father or mother, mistress, friend, or being,
With whom I wore the chain of human ties;

If I had such, they seem'd not such to me—
Yet there was one——
WITCH. Spare not thyself—proceed.
MAN. She was like me in lineaments—her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty;
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe: nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not;
And tenderness—but that I had for her;
Humility—and that I never had.
Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
I loved her, and destroy'd her!
WITCH. With thy hand?
MAN. Not with my hand, but heart—which broke her heart—
It gazed on mine, and wither'd. I have shed
Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed—
I saw—and could not stanch it.
WITCH. And for this—
A being of the race thou dost despise,
The order which thine own would rise above,
Mingling with us and ours, thou dost forego
The gifts of our great knowledge, and shrink'st back
To recreant mortality——Away!
MAN. Daughter of Air! I tell thee, since that hour—
But words are breath—look on me in my sleep,
Or watch my watchings—Come and sit by me!
My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies;—I have gnash'd
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset;—I have pray'd
For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.
I have affronted death—but in the war
Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
And fatal things pass'd harmless—the cold hand
Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,

Back by a single hair, which would not break.
In fantasy, imagination, all
The affluence of my soul—which one day was
A Croesus in creation[6]—I plunged deep,
But, like an ebbing wave, it dash'd me back
Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought.
I plunged amidst mankind—Forgetfulness
I sought in all, save where 'tis to be found,
And that I have to learn—my sciences,[7]
My long pursued and super-human art,
Is mortal here—I dwell in my despair—
And live—and live for ever.

WITCH. It may be
That I can aid thee.

MAN. To do this thy power
Must wake the dead, or lay me low with them.
Do so—in any shape—in any hour—
With any torture—so it be the last.

WITCH. That is not in my province; but if thou
Wilt swear obedience to my will, and do
My bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes.

MAN. I will not swear—Obey! and whom? the spirits
Whose presence I command, and be the slave
Of those who served me—Never!

WITCH. Is this all?
Hast thou no gentler answer?—Yet bethink thee,
And pause ere thou rejectest.

MAN. I have said it.

WITCH. Enough!—I may retire then—say!

MAN. Retire!

[*The* WITCH *disappears.*]

MAN. (*alone*). We are the fools of time and terror: Days
Steal on us and steal from us; yet we live,
Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.
In all the days of this detested yoke—
This heaving burthen, this accursed breath,
This vital weight upon the struggling heart,
Which sinks with sorrow, or beats quick with pain,

Or joy that ends in agony or faintness—
In all the days of past and future, for
In life there is no present, we can number
How few—how less than few—wherein the soul
Forbears to pant for death, and yet draws back
As from a stream in winter, though the chill
Be but a moment's. I have one resource
Still in my science—I can call the dead,
And ask them what it is we dread to be:
The sternest answer can but be the Grave,
And that is nothing—if they answer not—
The buried Prophet answered to the Hag
Of Endor;[8] and the Spartan Monarch drew
From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
An answer and his destiny—he slew
That which he loved, unknowing what he slew,
And died unpardon'd—though he call'd in aid
The Phyxian Jove, and in Phigalia roused
The Arcadian Evocators to compel
The indignant shadow to depose her wrath,[9]
Or fix her term of vengeance—she replied
In words of dubious import, but fulfill'd.
If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful—
Happy and giving happiness. What is she?
What is she now?—a sufferer for my sins—
A thing I dare not think upon—or nothing.
Within few hours I shall not call in vain—
Yet in this hour I dread the thing I dare:
Until this hour I never shrunk to gaze
On spirit, good or evil—now I tremble,
And feel a strange cold thaw upon my heart.
But I can act even what I most abhor,
And champion human fears.—The night approaches.

[*Exit.*]

Endnotes

- Note 1: This iris is formed by the rays of the sun over the lower part of the Alpine torrents: it is exactly like a rainbow come to pay a visit, and so close that you may walk into it: this effect lasts until noon [*Byron's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Revelation 6:8: "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare passages from Victor Frankenstein's account of his scientific investigations. "To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death"; "Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave . . . ?" (chap. 4).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Masters of occult knowledge (plural of *magus*).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Byron's note to lines 92–93 identifies this figure as Iamblicus, the 4th-century Neoplatonic philosopher, who called up Eros, god of love, and Anteros, god of unrequited love, from the hot springs named after them at Gadara, in Syria.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, my imagination had at one time been, in its creative powers, as rich as King Croesus (the legendary monarch famed for his wealth). Manfred's self-description in this passage, as longing for a death that is denied him, is modeled on the legend, often treated in Romantic literature, of the Wandering Jew.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Occult bodies of knowledge.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Woman of Endor, at the behest of King Saul, summoned up the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel, who foretold that in an impending battle the Philistines would conquer the Israelites and kill Saul and his sons (1 Samuel 28:7–19).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Plutarch relates that King Pausanias ("the Spartan Monarch") had accidentally killed Cleonice ("the Byzantine maid"), whom he desired as his mistress. Her ghost haunted him until he called up her spirit to beg her forgiveness. She told him, enigmatically, that he would quickly be freed from his troubles; soon after that, he was killed. Another Pausanias, author of the *Description of Greece,* adds the details that King Pausanias, in the vain attempt to purge his guilt, had called for aid from Jupiter Phyxius and consulted the Evocators at Phigalia, in Arcadia, who had the power to call up the souls of the dead.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *reflected*Return to reference °

SCENE 3

The Summit of the Jungfrau Mountain.

Enter FIRST DESTINY.[1]

The moon is rising broad, and round, and bright;
And here on snows, where never human foot
Of common mortal trod, we nightly tread,
And leave no traces; o'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam,
Frozen in a moment—a dead whirlpool's image.
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork of some earthquake—where the clouds
Pause to repose themselves in passing by—
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils;
Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes,[2] for to-night
Is our great festival—'tis strange they come not.

A Voice without, singing.

The Captive Usurper,[3]
  Hurl'd down from the throne,
Lay buried in torpor,
  Forgotten and lone;
I broke through his slumbers,
  I shiver'd his chain,
I leagued him with numbers—
  He's Tyrant again!
With the blood of a million he'll answer my care,
With a nation's destruction—his flight and despair.

Second Voice, without.

The ship sail'd on, the ship sail'd fast,
But I left not a sail, and I left not a mast;
There is not a plank of the hull or the deck,
And there is not a wretch to lament o'er his wreck;
Save one, whom I held, as he swam, by the hair,

And he was a subject well worthy my care;
A traitor on land, and a pirate at sea—
But I saved him to wreak further havoc for me!

FIRST DESTINY, *answering.*

The city lies sleeping;
The morn, to deplore it,
May dawn on it weeping:
Sullenly, slowly,
The black plague flew o'er it—
Thousands lie lowly;
Tens of thousands shall perish—
The living shall fly from
The sick they should cherish;
But nothing can vanquish
The touch that they die from.
Sorrow and anguish,
And evil and dread,
Envelope a nation—
The blest are the dead,
Who see not the sight
Of their own desolation—
This work of a night—
This wreck of a realm—this deed of my doing—
For ages I've done, and shall still be renewing!

Enter the SECOND *and* THIRD DESTINIES.

The Three.

Our hands contain the hearts of men,
Our footsteps are their graves;
We only give to take again
The spirits of our slaves!

FIRST DES. Welcome!—Where's Nemesis?[4]
SECOND DES. At some great work;
But what I know not, for my hands were full.
THIRD DES. Behold she cometh.

Enter NEMESIS.

FIRST DES. Say, where hast thou been?
My sisters and thyself are slow to-night.
NEM. I was detain'd repairing shatter'd thrones,
Marrying fools, restoring dynasties,[5]
Avenging men upon their enemies,
And making them repent their own revenge;
Goading the wise to madness; from the dull
Shaping out oracles to rule the world
Afresh, for they were waxing out of date,
And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
To weigh kings in the balance, and to speak
Of freedom, the forbidden fruit.—Away!
We have outstay'd the hour—mount we our clouds!
[*Exeunt.*]

Endnotes

- Note 1: The three Destinies are modeled on both the witches of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the three Fates of classical mythology, who, in turn, spin, measure, and then cut the thread of an individual's life.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The name is derived from Ahriman, who in the dualistic Zoroastrian religion was the principle of darkness and evil.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Napoleon. The song of the first Voice alludes to Napoleon's escape from his captivity on the island of Elba in March 1815. After his defeat at the Battle of Waterloo he was imprisoned on another island, St. Helena, in October 1815.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Greek and Roman goddess of vengeance, particularly of the sin of hubris, overweening presumption against the gods.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Alluding to Byron's marriage and to the restoration of monarchies across Europe that followed the Battle of Waterloo.Return to reference 5

SCENE 4

The Hall of Arimanes—Arimanes on his Throne, a Globe of Fire, surrounded by the Spirits.

Hymn of the SPIRITS.

Hail to our Master!—Prince of Earth and Air!
Who walks the clouds and waters—in his hand
The sceptre of the elements, which tear
Themselves to chaos at his high command!
He breatheth—and a tempest shakes the sea;
He speaketh—and the clouds reply in thunder;
He gazeth—from his glance the sunbeams flee;
He moveth—earthquakes rend the world asunder.
Beneath his footsteps the volcanoes rise;
His shadow is the Pestilence; his path
The comets herald through the crackling skies;
And planets turn to ashes at his wrath.
To him War offers daily sacrifice;
To him Death pays his tribute; Life is his,
With all its infinite of agonies—
And his the spirit of whatever is!

Enter the DESTINIES *and* NEMESIS.

FIRST DES. Glory to Arimanes! on the earth
His power increaseth—both my sisters did
His bidding, nor did I neglect my duty!
SECOND DES. Glory to Arimanes! we who bow
The necks of men, bow down before his throne!
THIRD DES. Glory to Arimanes! we await
His nod!
NEM. Sovereign of Sovereigns! we are thine,
And all that liveth, more or less, is ours,
And most things wholly so; still to increase
Our power, increasing thine, demands our care,

And we are vigilant—Thy late commands
Have been fulfill'd to the utmost.

Enter MANFRED.

A SPIRIT. What is here?
A mortal!—Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
Bow down and worship!
SECOND SPIRIT. I do know the man—
A Magian° of great power, and fearful skill!
THIRD SPIRIT. Bow down and worship, slave!—
What, know'st thou not
Thine and our Sovereign?—Tremble, and obey!
ALL THE SPIRITS. Prostrate thyself, and thy condemned clay,
Child of the Earth! or dread the worst.
MAN. I know it;
And yet ye see I kneel not.
FOURTH SPIRIT. 'Twill be taught thee.
MAN. 'Tis taught already;—many a night on the earth,
On the bare ground, have I bow'd down my face,
And strew'd my head with ashes; I have known
The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation.
FIFTH SPIRIT. Dost thou dare
Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
What the whole earth accords, beholding not
The terror of his Glory?—Crouch! I say.
MAN. Bid *him* bow down to that which is above him,
The overruling Infinite—the Maker
Who made him not for worship—let him kneel,
And we will kneel together.
THE SPIRITS. Crush the worm!
Tear him in pieces!—

FIRST DES. Hence! Avaunt!—he's mine.
Prince of the Powers invisible! This man
Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote; his sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature, like
Our own; his knowledge, and his powers and will,
As far as is compatible with clay,
Which clogs the ethereal essence, have been such
As clay hath seldom borne; his aspirations
Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
And they have only taught him what we know—
That knowledge is not happiness, and science
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.
This is not all—the passions, attributes
Of earth and heaven, from which no power, nor being,
Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
Have pierced his heart; and in their consequence
Made him a thing, which I, who pity not,
Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine,
And thine, it may be—be it so, or not,
No other Spirit in this region hath
A soul like his—or power upon his soul.
NEM. What doth he here then?
FIRST DES. Let him answer that.
MAN. Ye know what I have known; and without power
I could not be amongst ye: but there are
Powers deeper still beyond—I come in quest
Of such, to answer unto what I seek.
NEM. What would'st thou?
MAN. Thou canst not reply to me.
Call up the dead—my question is for them.
NEM. Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch°

The wishes of this mortal?

ARI. Yea.

NEM. Whom would'st thou
Uncharnel?

MAN. One without a tomb—call up Astarte.[6]

NEMESIS.

Shadow! or Spirit!
Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit
The whole or a part
Of the form of thy birth,
Of the mould of thy clay,
Which return'd to the earth,
Re-appear to the day!
Bear what thou borest,
The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest
Redeem from the worm.
Appear!—Appear!—Appear!
Who sent thee there requires thee here!

[*The Phantom of* ASTARTE *rises and stands in the midst.*]

MAN. Can this be death? there's bloom upon her cheek;
But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic°—like the unnatural red
Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.
It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread
To look upon the same—Astarte!—No,
I cannot speak to her—but bid her speak—
Forgive me or condemn me.

NEMESIS.

By the power which hath broken
The grave which enthrall'd thee,
Speak to him who hath spoken,
Or those who have call'd thee!

MAN. She is silent,
And in that silence I am more than answer'd.

NEM. My power extends no further. Prince of air!
It rests with thee alone—command her voice.

ARI. Spirit—obey this sceptre!

NEM. Silent still!
She is not of our order, but belongs
To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain,
And we are baffled also.

MAN. Hear me, hear me—
Asarte! my beloved! speak to me:
I have so much endured—so much endure—
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—and that I shall die;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence—in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality—
A future like the past. I cannot rest.
I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art—and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music—Speak to me!
For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,

And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answer'd me—many things answer'd me—
Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all.
Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.
Speak to me! I have wander'd o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around—they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone—
Speak to me! though it be in wrath;—but say—
I reck not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Manfred!

MAN. Say on, say on—
I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!

PHAN. Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills.
Farewell!

MAN. Yet one word more—am I forgiven?

PHAN. Farewell!

MAN. Say, shall we meet again?

PHAN. Farewell!

MAN. One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me.

PHAN. Manfred!

[*The Spirit of* ASTARTE *disappears.*]

NEM. She's gone, and will not be recall'd;
Her words will be fulfill'd. Return to the earth.

A SPIRIT. He is convulsed—This is to be a mortal
And seek the things beyond mortality.

ANOTHER SPIRIT. Yet, see, he mastereth himself, and makes
His torture tributary to his will.
Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.

NEM. Hast thou further question
Of our great sovereign, or his worshippers?
MAN. None.
NEM. Then for a time farewell.
MAN. We meet then —
Where? On the earth?
NEM. That will be seen hereafter.
MAN. Even as thou wilt: and for the grace accorded
I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well!
[*Exit* MANFRED.]
(*Scene closes.*)

Endnotes

- Note 6: Byron applies to Manfred's beloved the name of Astarte (also known as Ashtoreth), goddess of love and fertility, the Eastern equivalent of the Greek goddess Aphrodite.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *magus, sorcerer*Return to reference °
- °: *confirm*Return to reference °
- °: *feverish flush*Return to reference °

Act 3

SCENE 1

A Hall in the Castle of Manfred.

MANFRED *and* HERMAN.

MAN. What is the hour?
HER. It wants but one till sunset,
And promises a lovely twilight.
MAN. Say,
Are all things so disposed of in the tower
As I directed?
HER. All, my lord, are ready:
Here is the key and casket.
MAN. It is well:
Thou may'st retire. [*Exit* HERMAN.]
MAN. (*alone*). There is a calm upon me—
Inexplicable stillness! which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.
If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,[7]
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear
From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought "Kalon,"[8] found,
And seated in my soul. It will not last,
But it is well to have known it, though but once:
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
And I within my tablets would note down
That there is such a feeling. Who is there?

Re-enter HERMAN.

HER. My lord, the abbot of St. Maurice[9] craves
To greet your presence.

Enter the ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.

ABBOT. Peace be with Count Manfred!
MAN. Thanks, holy father! welcome to these walls;
Thy presence honours them, and blesseth those
Who dwell within them.
ABBOT. Would it were so, Count!—

But I would fain confer with thee alone.

MAN. Herman, retire.—What would my reverend guest?

[*Exit* HERMAN.]

ABBOT. Thus, without prelude:—Age and zeal, my office,[1]
And good intent, must plead my privilege;
Our near, though not acquainted neighbourhood,
May also be my herald. Rumours strange,
And of unholy nature, are abroad,
And busy with thy name; a noble name
For centuries: may he who bears it now
Transmit it unimpaired!

MAN. Proceed,—I listen.

ABBOT. 'Tis said thou holdest converse with the things
Which are forbidden to the search of man;
That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the shade of death,
Thou communest. I know that with mankind,
Thy fellows in creation, thou dost rarely
Exchange thy thoughts, and that thy solitude
Is as an anchorite's,[2] were it but holy.

MAN. And what are they who do avouch these things?

ABBOT. My pious brethren—the scared peasantry—
Even thy own vassals—who do look on thee
With most unquiet eyes. Thy life's in peril.

MAN. Take it.

ABBOT. I come to save, and not destroy—
I would not pry into thy secret soul;
But if these things be sooth, there still is time
For penitence and pity: reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church to heaven.

MAN. I hear thee. This is my reply: whate'er
I may have been, or am, doth rest between
Heaven and myself.—I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator. Have I sinn'd
Against your ordinances? prove and punish!

ABBOT. My son! I did not speak of punishment,
But penitence and pardon;—with thyself

The choice of such remains—and for the last,
Our institutions and our strong belief
Have given me power to smooth the path from sin
To higher hope and better thoughts; the first
I leave to heaven,—"Vengeance is mine alone!"
So saith the Lord,[3] and with all humbleness
His servant echoes back the awful word.

MAN. Old man! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer—nor purifying form
Of penitence—nor outward look—nor fast—
Nor agony—nor, greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep despair,
Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
Would make a hell of heaven—can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd
He deals on his own soul.

ABBOT. All this is well;
For this will pass away, and be succeeded
By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
With calm assurance to that blessed place,
Which all who seek may win, whatever be
Their earthly errors, so they be atoned:
And the commencement of atonement is
The sense of its necessity.—Say on—
And all our church can teach thee shall be taught;
And all we can absolve thee shall be pardon'd.

MAN. When Rome's sixth emperor[4] was near his last,
The victim of a self-inflicted wound,
To shun the torments of a public death
From senates once his slaves, a certain soldier,
With show of loyal pity, would have stanch'd
The gushing throat with his officious robe;
The dying Roman thrust him back, and said—
Some empire still in his expiring glance—

"It is too late—is this fidelity?"

ABBOT. And what of this?

MAN. I answer with the Roman—
"It is too late!"

ABBOT. It never can be so,
To reconcile thyself with thy own soul,
And thy own soul with heaven. Hast thou no hope?
'Tis strange—even those who do despair above,
Yet shape themselves some fantasy on earth,
To which frail twig they cling, like drowning men.

MAN. Ay—father! I have had those earthly visions
And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither—it might be to fall;
But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies),
Lies low but mighty still.—But this is past,
My thoughts mistook themselves.

ABBOT. And wherefore so?

MAN. I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway—and soothe—and sue—
And watch all time—and pry into all place—
And be a living lie—who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such
The mass are; I disdain'd to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.

ABBOT. And why not live and act with other men?

MAN. Because my nature was averse from life;
And yet not cruel; for I would not make,
But find a desolation:—like the wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone Simoom,[5]
Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er
The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,

And revels o’er their wild and arid waves,
And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly; such hath been
The course of my existence; but there came
Things in my path which are no more.

ABBOT. Alas!
I ’gin to fear that thou art past all aid
From me and from my calling; yet so young,
I still would——

MAN. Look on me! there is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,
Without the violence of warlike death;
Some perishing of pleasure—some of study—
Some worn with toil—some of mere weariness—
Some of disease—and some insanity—
And some of wither’d, or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are number’d in the lists of Fate,
Taking all shapes, and bearing many names.
Look upon me! for even of all these things
Have I partaken; and of all these things,
One were enough; then wonder not that I
Am what I am, but that I ever was,
Or having been, that I am still on earth.

ABBOT. Yet, hear me still——

MAN. Old man! I do respect
Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain:
Think me not churlish; I would spare thyself,
Far more than me, in shunning at this time
All further colloquy—and so—farewell.

[*Exit* MANFRED.]

ABBOT. This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness—
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts

Mix'd, and contending without end or order,
All dormant or destructive: he will perish,
And yet he must not; I will try once more,
For such are worth redemption; and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end.
I'll follow him—but cautiously, though surely.

[*Exit* ABBOT.]

Endnotes

- Note 7: "The most diverse" or, possibly, "the most foolish" (*motley* was the multicolored suit worn by a court jester).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Greek for both "the Beautiful" and "the Good."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In the Rhone Valley in Switzerland.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Position in the church.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A person who, for religious reasons, lives in seclusion.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Romans 12:19: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Byron transfers to Otho, the sixth emperor, a story that the historian Suetonius tells about the death of an earlier emperor, Nero.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A hot, sand-laden wind in the Sahara and Arabian deserts.Return to reference 5

SCENE 2

Another Chamber.

MANFRED *and* HERMAN.

HER. My lord, you bade me wait on you at sunset:
He sinks behind the mountain.

MAN. Doth he so?
I will look on him.

[MANFRED *advances to the Window of the Hall.*]

Glorious Orb! the idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons
Of the embrace of angels, with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring spirits[6] who can ne'er return.—
Most glorious orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops, the hearts
Of the Chaldean° shepherds, till they pour'd
Themselves in orisons!° Thou material God!
And representative of the Unknown—
Who chose thee for his shadow! Thou chief star!
Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues
And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee,
Even as our outward aspects;—thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look: thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature. He is gone:
I follow.

[*Exit* MANFRED.]

Endnotes

- Note 6: Genesis 6:4: “There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.” Byron interprets “the sons of God” as denoting disobedient angels.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *Babylonian*Return to reference °
- °: *prayers*Return to reference °

SCENE 3

The Mountains.—The Castle of Manfred at some distance.—A Terrace before a Tower.—Time, Twilight.

HERMAN, MANUEL, *and other Dependants of* MANFRED.

HER. 'Tis strange enough; night after night, for years,
He hath pursued long vigils in this tower,
Without a witness. I have been within it,—
So have we all been oft-times; but from it,
Or its contents, it were impossible
To draw conclusions absolute, of aught
His studies tend to. To be sure, there is
One chamber where none enter: I would give
The fee° of what I have to come these three years,
To pore upon its mysteries.

MANUEL. 'Twere dangerous;
Content thyself with what thou know'st already.

HER. Ah! Manuel! thou art elderly and wise,
And couldst say much; thou hast dwelt within the castle—
How many years is't?

MANUEL. Ere Count Manfred's birth,
I served his father, whom he nought resembles.

HER. There be more sons in like predicament.
But wherein do they differ?

MANUEL. I speak not
Of features or of form, but mind and habits;
Count Sigismund was proud,—but gay and free,—
A warrior and a reveller; he dwelt not
With books and solitude, nor made the night
A gloomy vigil, but a festal time,
Merrier than day; he did not walk the rocks
And forests like a wolf, nor turn aside
From men and their delights.

HER. Beshrew[7] the hour,
But those were jocund times! I would that such
Would visit the old walls again; they look
As if they had forgotten them.

MANUEL. These walls
Must change their chieftain first. Oh! I have seen
Some strange things in them, Herman.
HER. Come, be friendly;
Relate me some to while away our watch:
I've heard thee darkly speak of an event
Which happen'd hereabouts, by this same tower.
MANUEL. That was a night indeed! I do remember
'Twas twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening;—yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's[8] pinnacle, so rested then,—
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon;
Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,—
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings—her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The lady Astarte, his——
Hush! who comes here?

Enter the ABBOT.

ABBOT. Where is your master?
HER. Yonder, in the tower.
ABBOT. I must speak with him.
MANUEL. 'Tis impossible;
He is most private, and must not be thus
Intruded on.
ABBOT. Upon myself I take
The forfeit of my fault, if fault there be—
But I must see him.
HER. Thou hast seen him once
This eve already.
ABBOT. Sirrah! I command thee,
Knock, and apprize the Count of my approach.
HER. We dare not.
ABBOT. Then it seems I must be herald

Of my own purpose.

MANUEL. Reverend father, stop—
I pray you pause.

ABBOT. Why so?

MANUEL. But step this way,
And I will tell you further.

[*Exeunt.*]

Endnotes

- Note 7: Curse (used jokingly).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A peak a few miles north of the Jungfrau.Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *ownership*Return to reference °

SCENE 4

Interior of the Tower.

MANFRED *alone.*

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains.—Beautiful!
I linger yet with Nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn'd the language of another world.
I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering,—upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum's wall,
Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;
The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watchdog bay'd beyond the Tiber;[9] and
More near from out the Caesars' palace[1] came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appear'd to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot—where the Caesars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night amidst
A grove which springs through levell'd battlements
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths.
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth;—
But the gladiators' bloody Circus[2] stands,
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!
While Caesar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.—
And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which soften'd down the hoar austerity

Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,
As 'twere anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old!—
The dead, but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.—
'Twas such a night!
'Tis strange that I recall it at this time;
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight
Even at the moment when they should array
Themselves in pensive order.

Enter the ABBOT.

ABBOT. My good lord!
I crave a second grace for this approach;
But yet let not my humble zeal offend
By its abruptness—all it hath of ill
Recoils on me; its good in the effect
May light upon your head—could I say *heart*—
Could I touch *that*, with words or prayers, I should
Recall a noble spirit which hath wander'd
But is not yet all lost.

MAN. Thou know'st me not;
My days are number'd, and my deeds recorded:
Retire, or 'twill be dangerous—Away!

ABBOT. Thou dost not mean to menace me?

MAN. Not I;
I simply tell thee peril is at hand,
And would preserve thee.

ABBOT. What dost thou mean?

MAN. Look there!
What dost thou see?

ABBOT. Nothing.

MAN. Look there, I say,
And steadfastly;—now tell me what thou seest?

ABBOT. That which should shake me,—but I fear it not—
I see a dusk and awful figure rise
Like an infernal god from out the earth;

His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds: he stands between
Thyself and me—but I do fear him not.

MAN. Thou hast no cause—he shall not harm thee—but
His sight may shock thine old limbs into palsy.
I say to thee—Retire!

ABBOT. And I reply—
Never—till I have battled with this fiend:—
What doth he here?

MAN. Why—ay—what doth he here?
I did not send for him,—he is unbidden.

ABBOT. Alas! lost mortal! what with guests like these
Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake:
Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?
Ah! he unveils his aspect: on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of hell—
Avaunt!——

MAN. Pronounce—what is thy mission?

SPIRIT. Come!

ABBOT. What art thou, unknown being? answer!—speak!

SPIRIT. The genius[3] of this mortal.—Come! 'tis time.

MAN. I am prepared for all things, but deny
The power which summons me. Who sent thee here?

SPIRIT. Thou'lt know anon—Come! come!

MAN. I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine,
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!

SPIRIT. Mortal! thine hour is come—Away! I say.

MAN. I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee:
Away! I'll die as I have lived—alone.

SPIRIT. Then I must summon up my brethren.—Rise!

[*Other Spirits rise up.*]

ABBOT. Avaunt! ye evil ones!—Avaunt! I say,—
Ye have no power where piety hath power,
And I do charge ye in the name—

SPIRIT. Old man!

We know ourselves, our mission, and thine order;
Waste not thy holy words on idle uses,
It were in vain: this man is forfeited.
Once more I summon him—Away! away!

MAN. I do defy ye,—though I feel my soul
Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;
Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye—earthly strength
To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
Shall be ta'en limb by limb.

SPIRIT. Reluctant mortal!
Is this the Magian who would so pervade
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal?—Can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life? the very life
Which made thee wretched!

MAN. Thou false fiend, thou liest!
My life is in its last hour,—*that* I know,
Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
I do not combat against death, but thee
And thy surrounding angels; my past power
Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
But by superior science—penance—daring—
And length of watching—strength of mind—and skill
In knowledge of our fathers—when the earth
Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
And gave ye no supremacy: I stand
Upon my strength—I do defy—deny—
Spurn back, and scorn ye!—

SPIRIT. But thy many crimes
Have made thee——

MAN. What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,
And greater criminals?—Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
The mind which is immortal makes itself

Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
Is its own origin of ill and end—
And its own place and time[4]—its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of death is on me—but not yours!
[*The Demons disappear.*]

ABBOT. Alas! how pale thou art—thy lips are white—
And thy breast heaves—and in thy gasping throat
The accents rattle—Give thy prayers to heaven—
Pray—albeit but in thought,—but die not thus.

MAN. 'Tis over—my dull eyes can fix thee not;
But all things swim around me, and the earth
Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well—
Give me thy hand.

ABBOT. Cold—cold—even to the heart—
But yet one prayer—Alas! how fares it with thee?

MAN. Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die.[5]
[MANFRED *expires.*]

ABBOT. He's gone—his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight—
Whither? I dread to think—but he is gone.

1816–17 1817

Endnotes

- Note 9: The river that flows through Rome.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The palace of the Roman emperors. It stands on the Palatine hill, immediately southwest of the Coliseum.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The circular arena within the Coliseum where professional gladiators fought to the death as public entertainment.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The spirit or deity presiding over a human being from birth.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The last of several echoes by Manfred of Satan's claim that "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, and a Hell of Heaven" (*Paradise Lost* 1.254–55). See also lines 1.1.251 and 3.1.70–73.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: When this line was dropped in the printing of the first edition, Byron wrote angrily to his publisher: "You have destroyed the whole effect and moral of the poem by omitting the last line of Manfred's speaking."Return to reference 5

Don Juan Byron began his masterpiece (pronounced in the English fashion, *Don Joó-un*) in July 1818, published it in installments beginning with cantos 1 and 2 in 1819, and continued working on it almost until his death. Initially he improvised the poem from episode to episode. "I *have* no plan," he said, "I *had* no plan; but I had or have materials." The work was composed with remarkable speed (the 888 lines of canto 13, for example, were dashed off within a week), and it aims at the effect of improvisation rather than of artful compression; it asks to be read rapidly, at a conversational pace.

The poem breaks off with the sixteenth canto, but even in its unfinished state *Don Juan* is the longest satirical poem, and indeed one of the longest poems of any kind, in English. Its hero, the Spanish libertine, had in the original legend been superhuman in his sexual energy and wickedness. Throughout Byron's version the unspoken but persistent joke is that this archetypal lady-killer of European legend is in fact more acted upon than active. Unfailingly amiable and well intentioned, he is guilty largely of youth, charm, and a courteous and compliant spirit. The women do all the rest.

The chief models for the poem were the Italian seriocomic versions of medieval chivalric romances; the genre had been introduced by Pulci in the fifteenth century and was adopted by Ariosto in his *Orlando Furioso* (1532). From these writers Byron caught the mixed moods and violent oscillations between the sublime and the ridiculous as well as the colloquial management of the complex ottava rima—an eight-line stanza in which the initial interlaced rhymes (*ababab*) build up to the comic turn in the final couplet (*cc*). Byron was influenced in the English use of this Italian form by a mildly amusing poem published in 1817, under the pseudonym of "Whistlecraft," by his friend John Hookham Frere. Other recognizable antecedents of *Don Juan* are Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, both of which had employed the naive traveler as a satiric device, and Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*, with its comic exploitation of a narrative medium blatantly subject to the whimsy of the author. But

even the most original literary works play variations on inherited conventions. Shelley at once recognized his friend's poem as "something wholly new and relative to the age."

Byron's literary advisers thought the poem unacceptably immoral, and John Murray took the precaution of printing the first two installments (cantos 1–2, then 3–5) without identifying Byron as the author or himself as the publisher. The eleven completed cantos that followed were, because of Murray's continuing jitters, brought out in 1823–24 by the radical publisher John Hunt. In those cantos Byron's purpose deepened. He set out to create a comic yet devastatingly critical history of the Europe of his own age, sending the impressionable Juan from west to east and back again, from his native Spain to a Russian court (by way of a primitive Greek island and the 1790 siege of the Turkish town of Ismail) and then into the English gentry's country manors. These journeys, which facilitated Byron's satire on almost all existing forms of political organization, would, according to the scheme that he projected for the poem as a whole, ultimately have taken Juan to a death by guillotining in Revolutionary France.

Yet the controlling element of *Don Juan* is not the narrative but the narrator. His running commentary on Juan's misadventures, his reminiscences, and his opinionated remarks on the epoch of political reaction in which he is actually telling Juan's story together add another level to the poem's engagement with history. The narrator's reflections also at the same time lend unity to *Don Juan*'s effervescent variety. Tellingly, the poem opens with the first-person pronoun and immediately lets us into the storyteller's predicament: "I want a hero. . . ." The voice then goes on, for almost two thousand stanzas, with effortless volubility and shifts of mood. The poet, who in his brilliant successful youth created the gloomy Byronic hero, in his later and sadder life created a character (not the hero, but the narrator of *Don Juan*) who is one of the great comic inventions in English literature.

From Don Juan

Fragment[1]

On the back of the Poet's MS. of Canto I

I would to heaven that I were so much clay,
  As I am blood, bone, marrow, passion, feeling—
Because at least the past were pass'd away—
  And for the future—(but I write this reeling,
Having got drunk exceedingly to-day,
  So that I seem to stand upon the ceiling)
I say—the future is a serious matter—
And so—for God's sake—hock° and soda-water!

Endnotes

- Note 1: This stanza was written on the back of a page of the manuscript of canto I.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *German wine*Return to reference °

From Canto I

[JUAN AND DONNA JULIA]

1

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan—
We all have seen him, in the pantomime,[1]
Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

* * *

5

Brave men were living before Agamemnon[2]
And since, exceeding valorous and sage,
A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
But then they shone not on the poet's page,
And so have been forgotten:—I condemn none,
But can't find any in the present age
Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);
So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

6

Most epic poets plunge "in medias res"[3]

(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road),[4]
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before—by way of episode,
While seated after dinner at his ease,
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

7

That is the usual method, but not mine—
My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

8

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
Famous for oranges and women—he
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
So says the proverb—and I quite agree;
Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,
Cadiz perhaps—but that you soon may see:—
Don Juan's parents lived beside the river,
A noble stream, and call'd the Guadalquivir.

9

His father's name was Jóse[5]—*Don*, of course,
A true Hidalgo,° free from every stain
Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source
Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;
A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,
Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,

Than Jóse, who begot our hero, who
Begot—but that's to come—Well, to renew:

10

His mother was a learned lady, famed
For every branch of every science known—
In every Christian language ever named,
With virtues equall'd by her wit alone,
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
In their own way by all the things that she did.

11

Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart
All Calderon and greater part of Lopé,[6]
So that if any actor miss'd his part
She could have served him for the prompter's
copy;
For her Feinagle's[7] were an useless art,
And he himself obliged to shut up shop—he
Could never make a memory so fine as
That which adorn'd the brain of Donna Inez.

12

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic[8] all,
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy—her morning dress was dimity,°
Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

13

She knew the Latin—that is, "the Lord's prayer,"
  And Greek—the alphabet—I'm nearly sure;
She read some French romances here and there,
  Although her mode of speaking was not pure;
For native Spanish she had no great care,
  At least her conversation was obscure;
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,
As if she deem'd that mystery would ennoble 'em.

* * *

22

'Tis pity learned virgins ever wed
  With persons of no sort of education,
Or gentlemen, who, though well born and bred,
  Grow tired of scientific conversation:
I don't choose to say much upon this head,
  I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?

23

Don Jóse and his lady quarrell'd—*why*,
  Not any of the many could divine,
Though several thousand people chose to try,
  'Twas surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
I loathe that low vice—curiosity;
  But if there's any thing in which I shine,
'Tis in arranging all my friends' affairs,
Not having, of my own, domestic cares.

24

And so I interfered, and with the best
  Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;
I think the foolish people were possess'd,

For neither of them could I ever find,
Although their porter afterwards confess'd—
But that's no matter, and the worst's behind,
For little Juan o'er me threw, down stairs,
A pail of housemaid's water unawares.

25

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,
And mischief-making monkey from his birth;
His parents ne'er agreed except in doting
Upon the most unquiet imp on earth;
Instead of quarrelling, had they been but both in
Their senses, they'd have sent young master for
To school, or had him soundly whipp'd at home,
To teach him manners for the time to come.

26

Don Jóse and the Donna Inez led
For some time an unhappy sort of life,
Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;
They lived respectably as man and wife,
Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,
And gave no outward signs of inward strife,
Until at length the smother'd fire broke out,
And put the business past all kind of doubt.

27

For Inez call'd some druggists, and physicians,
And tried to prove her loving lord was *mad,*[9]
But as he had some lucid intermissions,
She next decided he was only *bad;*
Yet when they ask'd her for her depositions,
No sort of explanation could be had,
Save that her duty both to man and God
Required this conduct—which seem'd very odd.

28

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,
And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,
All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;
And then she had all Seville for abettors,
Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);
The hearers of her case became repeaters,
Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,
Some for amusement, others for old grudges.

29

And then this best and meekest woman bore
With such serenity her husband's woes,
Just as the Spartan ladies did of yore,
Who saw their spouses kill'd, and nobly chose
Never to say a word about them more——
Calmly she heard each calumny that rose,
And saw *his* agonies with such sublimity,
That all the world exclaim'd, "What magnanimity!

* * *

32

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
Then their relations, who made matters worse:
('Twere hard to say upon a like occasion
To whom it may be best to have recourse—
I can't say much for friend or yet relation):
The lawyers did their utmost for divorce,
But scarce a fee was paid on either side
Before, unluckily, Don Jóse died.

33

He died: and most unluckily, because,
  According to all hints I could collect
From counsel learned in those kinds of laws,
  (Although their talk's obscure and circumspect)
His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;°
  A thousand pities also with respect
To public feeling, which on this occasion
Was manifested in a great sensation.

* * *

37

Dying intestate,° Juan was sole heir
  To a chancery suit, and messuages,[1] and lands,
Which, with a long minority and care,
  Promised to turn out well in proper hands:
Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,
  And answer'd but to nature's just demands;
An only son left with an only mother
Is brought up much more wisely than another.

38

Sagest of women, even of widows, she
  Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,
And worthy of the noblest pedigree:
  (His sire was of Castile, his dam from Aragon.)
Then for accomplishments of chivalry,
  In case our lord the king should go to war again,
He learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery.

39

But that which Donna Inez most desired,
  And saw into herself each day before all

The learned tutors whom for him she hired,
Was, that his breeding should be strictly moral:
Much into all his studies she enquired,
And so they were submitted first to her, all,
Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery
To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.[2]

40

The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
The arts, at least all such as could be said
To be the most remote from common use,
In all these he was much and deeply read;
But not a page of any thing that's loose,
Or hints continuation of the species,
Was ever suffer'd, lest he should grow vicious.

41

His classic studies made a little puzzle,
Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,
Who in the earlier ages made a bustle,
But never put on pantaloons or bodices;
His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,
And for their Aeneids, Iliads, and Odysseys,
Were forced to make an odd sort of apology,
For Donna Inez dreaded the Mythology.

42

Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,
Although Longinus[3] tells us there is no hymn
Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample;

But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with "Formosum Pastor Corydon."[4]

43

Lucretius' irreligion[5] is too strong
For early stomachs, to prove wholesome food;
I can't help thinking Juvenal[6] was wrong,
Although no doubt his real intent was good,
For speaking out so plainly in his song,
So much indeed as to be downright rude;
And then what proper person can be partial
To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?

44

Juan was taught from out the best edition,
Expurgated by learned men, who place,
Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,
The grosser parts; but fearful to deface
Too much their modest bard by this omission,
And pitying sore his mutilated case,
They only add them all in an appendix,[7]
Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index;

* * *

52

For my part I say nothing—nothing—but
This I will say—my reasons are my own—
That if I had an only son to put
To school (as God be praised that I have none),
'Tis not with Donna Inez I would shut
Him up to learn his catechism alone,
No—no—I'd send him out betimes to college,
For there it was I pick'd up my own knowledge.

53

For there one learns—'tis not for me to boast,
Though I acquired—but I pass over *that,*
As well as all the Greek I since have lost:
I say that there's the place—but *"Verbum sat,"*[8]
I think I pick'd up too, as well as most,
Knowledge of matters—but no matter *what*—
I never married—but, I think, I know
That sons should not be educated so.

54

Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,
Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit: he seem'd
Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;
And every body but his mother deem'd
Him almost man; but she flew in a rage
And bit her lips (for else she might have scream'd)
If any said so, for to be precocious
Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

55

Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all
Selected for discretion and devotion,
There was the Donna Julia, whom to call
Pretty were but to give a feeble notion
Of many charms in her as natural
As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,
Her zone to Venus,[9] or his bow to Cupid,
(But this last simile is trite and stupid.)

56

The darkness of her Oriental eye
Accorded with her Moorish origin;
(Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by;

In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin.)
When proud Granada fell, and, forced to fly,
Boabdil wept,[1] of Donna Julia's kin
Some went to Africa, some stay'd in Spain,
Her great great grandmamma chose to remain.

57

She married (I forget the pedigree)
With an Hidalgo, who transmitted down
His blood less noble than such blood should be;
At such alliances his sires would frown,
In that point so precise in each degree
That they bred *in and in*, as might be shown,
Marrying their cousins—nay, their aunts, and nieces,
Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.

58

This heathenish cross restored the breed again,
Ruin'd its blood, but much improved its flesh;
For from a root the ugliest in Old Spain
Sprung up a branch as beautiful as fresh;
The sons no more were short, the daughters plain:
But there's a rumour which I fain would hush,
'Tis said that Donna Julia's grandmamma
Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

59

However this might be, the race° went on
Improving still through every generation,
Until it centred in an only son,
Who left an only daughter; my narration
May have suggested that this single one
Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion
I shall have much to speak about), and she
Was married, charming, chaste,[2] and twenty-three.

60

Her eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
Flash'd an expression more of pride than ire,
And love than either; and there would arise
A something in them which was not desire,
But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul
Which struggled through and chasten'd down the whole.

61

Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
Bright with intelligence, and fair, and smooth;
Her eyebrow's shape was like th' aërial bow,
Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,
Mounting, at times, to a transparent glow,
As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,
Possess'd an air and grace by no means common:
Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

62

Wedded she was some years, and to a man
Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;
And yet, I think, instead of such a ONE
'Twere better to have two of five-and-twenty,
Especially in countries near the sun:
And now I think on't, "mi vien in mente,"[3]
Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

63

'Tis a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,
And all the fault of that indecent sun,

Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,
  But will keep baking, broiling, burning on,
That howsoever people fast and pray,
  The flesh is frail, and so the soul undone:
What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,
Is much more common where the climate's sultry.

64

Happy the nations of the moral North!
  Where all is virtue, and the winter season
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth
  ('Twas snow that brought St. Francis back to
  reason);
Where juries cast up what a wife is worth,
  By laying whate'er sum, in mulct,[4] they please on
The lover, who must pay a handsome price,
Because it is a marketable vice.

65

Alfonso was the name of Julia's lord,
  A man well looking for his years, and who
Was neither much beloved nor yet abhorr'd:
  They lived together, as most people do,
Suffering each other's foibles by accord,
  And not exactly either *one* or *two;*
Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it,
For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

* * *

69

Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,
  Caress'd him often—such a thing might be
Quite innocently done, and harmless styled,

When she had twenty years, and thirteen he;
But I am not so sure I should have smiled
When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three;
These few short years make wondrous alterations,
Particularly amongst sun-burnt nations.

70

Whate'er the cause might be, they had become
Changed; for the dame grew distant, the youth shy,
Their looks cast down, their greetings almost dumb,
And much embarrassment in either eye;
There surely will be little doubt with some
That Donna Julia knew the reason why,
But as for Juan, he had no more notion
Than he who never saw the sea of ocean.

71

Yet Julia's very coldness still was kind,
And tremulously gentle her small hand
Withdrew itself from his, but left behind
A little pressure, thrilling, and so bland
And slight, so very slight, that to the mind
'Twas but a doubt; but ne'er magician's wand
Wrought change with all Armida's[5] fairy art
Like what this light touch left on Juan's heart.

72

And if she met him, though she smiled no more,
She look'd a sadness sweeter than her smile,
As if her heart had deeper thoughts in store
She must not own, but cherish'd more the while
For that compression in its burning core;
Even innocence itself has many a wile,
And will not dare to trust itself with truth,

And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

* * *

75

Poor Julia's heart was in an awkward state;
She felt it going, and resolved to make
The noblest efforts for herself and mate,
For honour's, pride's, religion's, virtue's sake;
Her resolutions were most truly great,
And almost might have made a Tarquin[6] quake:
She pray'd the Virgin Mary for her grace,
As being the best judge of a lady's case.

76

She vow'd she never would see Juan more,
And next day paid a visit to his mother,
And look'd extremely at the opening door,
Which, by the Virgin's grace, let in another;
Grateful she was, and yet a little sore—
Again it opens, it can be no other,
'Tis surely Juan now—No! I'm afraid
That night the Virgin was no further pray'd.

77

She now determined that a virtuous woman
Should rather face and overcome temptation,
That flight was base and dastardly, and no man
Should ever give her heart the least sensation;
That is to say, a thought beyond the common
Preference, that we must feel upon occasion,
For people who are pleasanter than others,
But then they only seem so many brothers.

78

And even if by chance—and who can tell?
The devil's so very sly—she should discover
That all within was not so very well,
And, if still free, that such or such a lover
Might please perhaps, a virtuous wife can quell
Such thoughts, and be the better when they're over;
And if the man should ask, 'tis but denial:
I recommend young ladies to make trial.

79

And then there are such things as love divine,
Bright and immaculate, unmix'd and pure,
Such as the angels think so very fine,
And matrons, who would be no less secure,
Platonic, perfect, "just such love as mine:"
Thus Julia said—and thought so, to be sure;
And so I'd have her think, were I the man
On whom her reveries celestial ran.

* * *

86

So much for Julia. Now we'll turn to Juan,
Poor little fellow! he had no idea
Of his own case, and never hit the true one;
In feelings quick as Ovid's Miss Medea,[7]
He puzzled over what he found a new one,
But not as yet imagined it could be a
Thing quite in course, and not at all alarming,
Which, with a little patience, might grow charming.

* * *

90

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
Himself at length within the leafy nooks
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;
There poets find materials for their books,
And every now and then we read them through,
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

91

He, Juan, (and not Wordsworth) so pursued
His self-communion with his own high soul,
Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,
Had mitigated part, though not the whole
Of its disease; he did the best he could
With things not very subject to control,
And turn'd, without perceiving his condition,
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

92

He thought about himself, and the whole earth,
Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,
And how the deuce they ever could have birth;
And then he thought of earthquakes, and of wars,
How many miles the moon might have in girth,
Of air-balloons, and of the many bars
To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies;—
And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

93

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
Which some are born with, but the most part learn
To plague themselves withal, they know not why:

'Twas strange that one so young should thus
concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
Do *you* think 'twas philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

94

He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,
And heard a voice in all the winds; and then
He thought of wood-nymphs and immortal bowers,
And how the goddesses came down to men:
He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,
And when he look'd upon his watch again,
He found how much old Time had been a winner—
He also found that he had lost his dinner.

* * *

103

'Twas on a summer's day—the sixth of June:—
I like to be particular in dates,
Not only of the age, and year, but moon;
They are a sort of post-house, where the Fates
Change horses, making history change its tune,
Then spur away o'er empires and o'er states,
Leaving at last not much besides chronology,
Excepting the post-obits[8] of theology.

104

'Twas on the sixth of June, about the hour
Of half-past six—perhaps still nearer seven—
When Julia sate within as pretty a bower
As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven
Described by Mahomet, and Anacreon Moore,[9]

To whom the lyre and laurels have been given,
With all the trophies of triumphant song—
He won them well, and may he wear them long!

105

She sate, but not alone; I know not well
How this same interview had taken place,
And even if I knew, I should not tell—
People should hold their tongues in any case;
No matter how or why the thing befell,
But there were she and Juan, face to face—
When two such faces are so, 'twould be wise,
But very difficult, to shut their eyes.

106

How beautiful she look'd! her conscious[1] heart
Glow'd in her cheek, and yet she felt no wrong.
Oh Love! how perfect is thy mystic art,
Strengthening the weak, and trampling on the strong,
How self-deceitful is the sagest part
Of mortals whom thy lure hath led along—
The precipice she stood on was immense,
So was her creed° in her own innocence.

107

She thought of her own strength, and Juan's youth
And of the folly of all prudish fears,
Victorious virtue, and domestic truth,
And then of Don Alfonso's fifty years:
I wish these last had not occurr'd, in sooth,
Because that number rarely much endears,
And through all climes, the snowy and the sunny,
Sounds ill in love, whate'er it may in money.

* * *

113

The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon:
The devil's in the moon for mischief; they
Who call'd her chaste, methinks, began too soon
Their nomenclature; there is not a day,
The longest, not the twenty-first of June,
Sees half the business in a wicked way
On which three single hours of moonshine smile—
And then she looks so modest all the while.

114

There is a dangerous silence in that hour,
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all itself, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self-control;
The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
Sheds beauty and deep softness o'er the whole,
Breathes also to the heart, and o'er it throws
A loving languor, which is not repose.

115

And Julia sate with Juan, half embraced
And half retiring from the glowing arm,
Which trembled like the bosom where 'twas placed;
Yet still she must have thought there was no harm,
Or else 'twere easy to withdraw her waist;
But then the situation had its charm,
And then——God knows what next—I can't go on;
I'm almost sorry that I e'er begun.

116

Oh Plato! Plato! you have paved the way,

With your confounded fantasies, to more
Immoral conduct by the fancied sway
Your system feigns o'er the controulless core
Of human hearts, than all the long array
Of poets and romancers:—You're a bore,
A charlatan, a coxcomb—and have been,
At best, no better than a go-between.

117

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,
Until too late for useful conversation;
The tears were gushing from her gentle eyes,
I wish, indeed, they had not had occasion,
But who, alas! can love, and then be wise?
Not that remorse did not oppose temptation,
A little still she strove, and much repented,
And whispering "I will ne'er consent"—consented.

* * *

126

'Tis sweet to win, no matter how, one's laurels,
By blood or ink; 'tis sweet to put an end
To strife; 'tis sometimes sweet to have our quarrels,
Particularly with a tiresome friend:
Sweet is old wine in bottles, ale in barrels;
Dear is the helpless creature we defend
Against the world; and dear the schoolboy spot
We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot.

127

But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
Is first and passionate love—it stands alone,
Like Adam's recollection of his fall;

The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd—all's known—
And life yields nothing further to recall
Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,
No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven
Fire which Prometheus[2] filch'd for us from heaven.

* * *

133

Man's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
'Tis pity though, in this sublime world, that
Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure;
Few mortals know what end they would be at,
But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure,
The path is through perplexing ways, and when
The goal is gain'd, we die, you know—and then——

134

What then?—I do not know, no more do you—
And so good night.—Return we to our story:
'Twas in November, when fine days are few,
And the far mountains wax a little hoary,
And clap a white cape on their mantles blue;
And the sea dashes round the promontory,
And the loud breaker boils against the rock,
And sober suns must set at five o'clock.

135

'Twas, as the watchmen say, a cloudy night;
No moon, no stars, the wind was low or loud
By gusts, and many a sparkling hearth was bright

With the piled wood, round which the family
crowd;
There's something cheerful in that sort of light,
Even as a summer sky's without a cloud:
I'm fond of fire, and crickets, and all that,
A lobster salad, and champagne, and chat.

136

'Twas midnight—Donna Julia was in bed,
Sleeping, most probably,—when at her door
Arose a clatter might awake the dead,
If they had never been awoke before,
And that they have been so we all have read,
And are to be so, at the least, once more;—
The door was fasten'd, but with voice and fist
First knocks were heard, then "Madam—Madam—
hist!

137

"For God's sake, Madam—Madam—here's my master,
With more than half the city at his back—
Was ever heard of such a curst disaster!
'Tis not my fault—I kept good watch—Alack!
Do pray undo the bolt a little faster—
They're on the stair just now, and in a crack°
Will all be here; perhaps he yet may fly—
Surely the window's not so *very* high!"

138

By this time Don Alfonso was arrived,
With torches, friends, and servants in great
number;
The major part of them had long been wived,
And therefore paused not to disturb the slumber
Of any wicked woman, who contrived

By stealth her husband's temples to encumber:[3]
Examples of this kind are so contagious.
Were *one* not punish'd, *all* would be outrageous.

139

I can't tell how, or why, or what suspicion
Could enter into Don Alfonso's head;
But for a cavalier of his condition°
It surely was exceedingly ill-bred,
Without a word of previous admonition,
To hold a levee[4] round his lady's bed,
And summon lackeys, arm'd with fire and sword,
To prove himself the thing he most abhorr'd.

140

Poor Donna Julia! starting as from sleep,
(Mind—that I do not say—she had not slept)
Began at once to scream, and yawn, and weep;
Her maid Antonia, who was an adept,
Contrived to fling the bed-clothes in a heap,
As if she had just now from out them crept:
I can't tell why she should take all this trouble
To prove her mistress had been sleeping double.

141

But Julia mistress, and Antonia maid,
Appear'd like two poor harmless women, who
Of goblins, but still more of men afraid,
Had thought one man might be deterr'd by two,
And therefore side by side were gently laid,
Until the hours of absence should run through,
And truant husband should return, and say,
"My dear, I was the first who came away."

142

Now Julia found at length a voice, and cried,
"In heaven's name, Don Alfonso, what d' ye mean?
Has madness seized you? would that I had died
Ere such a monster's victim I had been!
What may this midnight violence betide,
A sudden fit of drunkenness or spleen?
Dare you suspect me, whom the thought would kill?
Search, then, the room!"—Alfonso said, "I will."

143

He search'd, *they* search'd, and rummaged every where,
Closet and clothes' press, chest and window-seat,
And found much linen, lace, and several pair
Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete,
With other articles of ladies fair,
To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat:
Arras[5] they prick'd and curtains with their swords,
And wounded several shutters, and some boards.

144

Under the bed they search'd, and there they found[6] —
No matter what—it was not that they sought;
They open'd windows, gazing if the ground
Had signs or footmarks, but the earth said nought;
And then they stared each others' faces round:
'T is odd, not one of all these seekers thought,
And seems to me almost a sort of blunder,
Of looking *in* the bed as well as under.

145

During this inquisition, Julia's tongue

Was not asleep—"Yes, search and search," she cried,
"Insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!
It was for this that I became a bride!
For this in silence I have suffer'd long
A husband like Alfonso at my side;
But now I'll bear no more, nor here remain,
If there be law, or lawyers, in all Spain.

146

"Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,
If ever you indeed deserved the name,
Is't worthy of your years?—you have threescore—
Fifty, or sixty, it is all the same—
Is't wise or fitting, causeless to explore
For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?
Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,
How dare you think your lady would go on so?"

* * *

159

The Senhor Don Alfonso stood confused;
Antonia bustled round the ransack'd room,
And, turning up her nose, with looks abused
Her master, and his myrmidons,[7] of whom
Not one, except the attorney, was amused;
He, like Achates,[8] faithful to the tomb,
So there were quarrels, cared not for the cause,
Knowing they must be settled by the laws.

160

With prying snub-nose, and small eyes, he stood,
Following Antonia's motions here and there,

With much suspicion in his attitude;
For reputations he had little care;
So that a suit or action were made good,
Small pity had he for the young and fair,
And ne’er believed in negatives, till these
Were proved by competent false witnesses.

161

But Don Alfonso stood with downcast looks,
And, truth to say, he made a foolish figure;
When, after searching in five hundred nooks,
And treating a young wife with so much rigour,
He gain’d no point, except some self-rebukes,
Added to those his lady with such vigour
Had pour’d upon him for the last half-hour,
Quick, thick, and heavy—as a thunder-shower.

162

At first he tried to hammer an excuse,
To which the sole reply was tears, and sobs,
And indications of hysterics, whose
Prologue is always certain throes, and throbs,
Gasps, and whatever else the owners choose:
Alfonso saw his wife, and thought of Job’s;[9]
He saw too, in perspective, her relations,
And then he tried to muster all his patience.

163

He stood in act to speak, or rather stammer,
But sage Antonia cut him short before
The anvil of his speech received the hammer,
With “Pray, sir, leave the room, and say no more,
Or madam dies.”—Alfonso mutter’d, “D—n her,”
But nothing else, the time of words was o’er;
He cast a rueful look or two, and did,

He knew not wherefore, that which he was bid.

164

With him retired his *"posse comitatus,"*[1]
The attorney last, who linger'd near the door,
Reluctantly, still tarrying there as late as
Antonia let him—not a little sore
At this most strange and unexplain'd *"hiatus"*
In Don Alfonso's facts, which just now wore
An awkward look; as he revolved the case,
The door was fasten'd in his legal face.

165

No sooner was it bolted, than—Oh shame!
Oh sin! Oh sorrow! and Oh womankind!
How can you do such things and keep your fame,
Unless this world, and t'other too, be blind?
Nothing so dear as an unfilch'd good name!
But to proceed—for there is more behind:
With much heartfelt reluctance be it said,
Young Juan slipp'd, half-smother'd, from the bed.

166

He had been hid—I don't pretend to say
How, nor can I indeed describe the where—
Young, slender, and pack'd easily, he lay,
No doubt, in little compass, round or square;
But pity him I neither must nor may
His suffocation by that pretty pair;
'Twere better, sure, to die so, than be shut
With maudlin Clarence in his Malmsey butt.[2]

* * *

169

What's to be done? Alfonso will be back
  The moment he has sent his fools away.
Antonia's skill was put upon the rack,
  But no device could be brought into play—
And how to parry the renew'd attack?
  Besides, it wanted but few hours of day:
Antonia puzzled; Julia did not speak,
But press'd her bloodless lip to Juan's cheek.

170

He turn'd his lip to hers, and with his hand
  Call'd back the tangles of her wandering hair;
Even then their love they could not all command,
  And half forgot their danger and despair:
Antonia's patience now was at a stand—
  "Come, come, 'tis no time now for fooling there,"
She whisper'd, in great wrath—"I must deposit
This pretty gentleman within the closet:"

* * *

173

Now, Don Alfonso entering, but alone,
  Closed the oration of the trusty maid:
She loiter'd, and he told her to be gone,
  An order somewhat sullenly obey'd;
However, present remedy was none,
  And no great good seem'd answer'd if she staid:
Regarding both with slow and sidelong view,
She snuff'd the candle, curtsied, and withdrew.

174

Alfonso paused a minute—then begun

Some strange excuses for his late proceeding;
He would not justify what he had done,
To say the best, it was extreme ill-breeding;
But there were ample reasons for it, none
Of which he specified in this his pleading:
His speech was a fine sample, on the whole,
Of rhetoric, which the learn'd call *"rigmarole."*

* * *

180

Alfonso closed his speech, and begg'd her pardon,
Which Julia half withheld, and then half granted,
And laid conditions, he thought, very hard on,
Denying several little things he wanted:
He stood like Adam lingering near his garden,
With useless penitence perplex'd and haunted,
Beseeching she no further would refuse,
When, lo! he stumbled o'er a pair of shoes.

181

A pair of shoes!—what then? not much, if they
Are such as fit with ladies' feet, but these
(No one can tell how much I grieve to say)
Were masculine; to see them, and to seize,
Was but a moment's act.—Ah! well-a-day!
My teeth begin to chatter, my veins freeze—
Alfonso first examined well their fashion,
And then flew out into another passion.

182

He left the room for his relinquish'd sword,
And Julia instant to the closet flew.
"Fly, Juan, fly! for heaven's sake—not a word—
The door is open—you may yet slip through

The passage you so often have explored—
  Here is the garden-key—Fly—fly—Adieu!
Haste—haste! I hear Alfonso's hurrying feet—
Day has not broke—there's no one in the street."

183

None can say that this was not good advice,
  The only mischief was, it came too late;
Of all experience 'tis the usual price,
  A sort of income-tax laid on by fate:
Juan had reach'd the room-door in a trice,
  And might have done so by the garden-gate,
But met Alfonso in his dressing-gown,
Who threaten'd death—so Juan knock'd him down.

184

Dire was the scuffle, and out went the light;
  Antonia cried out "Rape!" and Julia "Fire!"
But not a servant stirr'd to aid the fight.
  Alfonso, pommell'd to his heart's desire,
Swore lustily he'd be revenged this night;
  And Juan, too, blasphemed an octave higher;
His blood was up: though young, he was a Tartar,[3]
And not at all disposed to prove a martyr.

185

Alfonso's sword had dropp'd ere he could draw it,
  And they continued battling hand to hand,
For Juan very luckily ne'er saw it;
  His temper not being under great command,
If at that moment he had chanced to claw it,
  Alfonso's days had not been in the land
Much longer.—Think of husbands', lovers' lives!
And how ye may be doubly widows—wives!

186

Alfonso grappled to detain the foe,
And Juan throttled him to get away,
And blood (’twas from the nose) began to flow;
At last, as they more faintly wrestling lay,
Juan contrived to give an awkward blow,
And then his only garment quite gave way;
He fled, like Joseph,[4] leaving it; but there,
I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair.

187

Lights came at length, and men, and maids, who found
An awkward spectacle their eyes before;
Antonia in hysterics, Julia swoon’d,
Alfonso leaning, breathless, by the door;
Some half-torn drapery scatter’d on the ground,
Some blood, and several footsteps, but no more:
Juan the gate gain’d, turn’d the key about,
And liking not the inside, lock’d the out.

188

Here ends this canto.—Need I sing, or say,
How Juan, naked, favour’d by the night,
Who favours what she should not, found his way,
And reach’d his home in an unseemly plight?
The pleasant scandal which arose next day,
The nine days’ wonder which was brought to light,
And how Alfonso sued for a divorce,
Were in the English newspapers, of course.

189

If you would like to see the whole proceedings,
The depositions, and the cause at full,

The names of all the witnesses, the pleadings
Of counsel to nonsuit,[5] or to annul,
There's more than one edition, and the readings
Are various, but they none of them are dull;
The best is that in short-hand ta'en by Gurney,[6]
Who to Madrid on purpose made a journey.

190

But Donna Inez, to divert the train
Of one of the most circulating scandals
That had for centuries been known in Spain,
Since Roderic's Goths, or older Genseric's
Vandals,[7]
First vow'd (and never had she vow'd in vain)
To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles;
And then, by the advice of some old ladies,
She sent her son to be embark'd at Cadiz.

191

She had resolved that he should travel through
All European climes, by land or sea,
To mend his former morals, or get new,
Especially in France and Italy
(At least this is the thing most people do).
Julia was sent into a nunnery
And there, perhaps, her feelings may be better
Shown in the following copy of her letter:—

192

"They tell me 'tis decided; you depart:
'Tis wise—'tis well, but not the less a pain;
I have no further claim on your young heart,
Mine is the victim, and would be again;
To love too much has been the only art

I used;—I write in haste, and if a stain
Be on this sheet, ’tis not what it appears;
My eyeballs burn and throb, but have no tears.

193

“I loved, I love you, for that love have lost
State, station, heaven, mankind’s, my own esteem,
And yet can not regret what it hath cost,
So dear is still the memory of that dream;
Yet, if I name my guilt, ’tis not to boast,
None can deem harshlier of me than I deem:
I trace this scrawl because I cannot rest—
I’ve nothing to reproach, nor to request.

194

“Man’s love is of his life a thing apart,
’Tis woman’s whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart,
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
And few there are whom these can not estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone.

195

“My breast has been all weakness, is so yet;
I struggle, but cannot collect my mind;
My blood still rushes where my spirit’s set,
As roll the waves before the settled wind;
My brain is feminine, nor can forget—
To all, except your image, madly blind;
As turns the needle[8] trembling to the pole
It ne’er can reach, so turns to you, my soul.

196

"You will proceed in beauty, and in pride,
  Beloved and loving many; all is o'er
For me on earth, except some years to hide
  My shame and sorrow deep in my heart's core;
These I could bear, but cannot cast aside
  The passion which still rages as before,—
And so farewell—forgive me, love me—No,
That word is idle now—but let it go.

197

"I have no more to say, but linger still,
  And dare not set my seal upon this sheet,
And yet I may as well the task fulfil,
  My misery can scarce be more complete:
I had not lived till now, could sorrow kill;
  Death flies the wretch who fain the blow would meet,
And I must even survive this last adieu,
And bear with life, to love and pray for you!"

198

This note was written upon gilt-edged paper
  With a neat crow-quill, rather hard, but new;
Her small white fingers scarce could reach the taper,[9]
  But trembled as magnetic needles do,
And yet she did not let one tear escape her;
  The seal a sun-flower; *"Elle vous suit partout,"*[1]
The motto, cut upon a white cornelian;
The wax was superfine, its hue vermilion.

199

This was Don Juan's earliest scrape; but whether
I shall proceed with his adventures is
Dependent on the public altogether;
We'll see, however, what they say to this,
Their favour in an author's cap's a feather,
And no great mischief's done by their caprice;
And if their approbation we experience,
Perhaps they'll have some more about a year hence.

200

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
New characters; the episodes are three:
A panoramic view of hell's in training,
After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
So that my name of Epic's no misnomer.

201

All these things will be specified in time,
With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,
The *Vade Mecum*[2] of the true sublime,
Which makes so many poets, and some fools:
Prose poets like blank-verse, I'm fond of rhyme,
Good workmen never quarrel with their tools;
I've got new mythological machinery,[3]
And very handsome supernatural scenery.

202

There's only one slight difference between
Me and my epic brethren gone before,
And here the advantage is my own, I ween;
(Not that I have not several merits more,
But this will more peculiarly be seen;)

They so embellish, that 'tis quite a bore
Their labyrinth of fables to thread through,
Whereas this story's actually true.

203

If any person doubt it, I appeal
To history, tradition, and to facts,
To newspapers, whose truth all know and feel,
To plays in five, and operas in three acts;
All these confirm my statement a good deal,
But that which more completely faith exacts
Is, that myself, and several now in Seville,
Saw Juan's last elopement with the devil.[4]

204

If ever I should condescend to prose,
I'll write poetical commandments, which
Shall supersede beyond all doubt all those
That went before; in these I shall enrich
My text with many things that no one knows,
And carry precept to the highest pitch:
I'll call the work "Longinus o'er a Bottle,
Or, Every Poet his *own* Aristotle."

205

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;[5]
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge,
Southey;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and
mouthy:
With Crabbe[6] it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell's Hippocrene[7] is somewhat drouthy:
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor

Commit—flirtation with the muse of Moore.[8]

206

Thou shalt not covet Mr. Sotheby's[9] Muse,
His Pegasus,[1] nor any thing that's his;
Thou shalt not bear false witness like "the Blues"[2]—
(There's one, at least, is very fond of this);
Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose:
This is true criticism, and you may kiss—
Exactly as you please, or not,—the rod;
But if you don't, I'll lay it on, by G—d![3]

207

If any person should presume to assert
This story is not moral, first, I pray,
That they will not cry out before they're hurt,
Then that they'll read it o'er again, and say,
(But, doubtless, nobody will be so pert)
That this is not a moral tale, though gay;
Besides, in Canto Twelfth, I mean to show
The very place where wicked people go.

* * *

213

But now at thirty years my hair is grey—
(I wonder what it will be like at forty?
I thought of a peruke° the other day—)
My heart is not much greener; and, in short, I
Have squander'd my whole summer while 'twas May,
And feel no more the spirit to retort; I
Have spent my life, both interest and principal,
And deem not, what I deem'd, my soul invincible.

214

No more—no more—Oh! never more on me
The freshness of the heart can fall like dew,
Which out of all the lovely things we see
Extracts emotions beautiful and new,
Hived in our bosoms like the bag o' the bee:
Think'st thou the honey with those objects grew?
Alas! 'twas not in them, but in thy power
To double even the sweetness of a flower.

215

No more—no more—Oh! never more, my heart,
Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!
Once all in all, but now a thing apart,
Thou canst not be my blessing or my curse:
The illusion's gone for ever, and thou art
Insensible, I trust, but none the worse,
And in thy stead I've got a deal of judgment,
Though heaven knows how it ever found a
lodgement.

216

My days of love are over; me no more
The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,
Can make the fool of which they made before,—
In short, I must not lead the life I did do;
The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
The copious use of claret is forbid too,
So for a good old-gentlemanly vice,
I think I must take up with avarice.

217

Ambition was my idol, which was broken
Before the shrines of Sorrow, and of Pleasure;

And the two last have left me many a token
O'er which reflection may be made at leisure:
Now, like Friar Bacon's brazen head, I've spoken,
"Time is, Time was, Time's past:"[4]—a chymic treasure[5]
Is glittering youth, which I have spent betimes—
My heart in passion, and my head on rhymes.

218

What is the end of Fame? 'tis but to fill
A certain portion of uncertain paper:
Some liken it to climbing up a hill,
Whose summit, like all hills, is lost in vapour;
For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,
And bards burn what they call their "midnight taper,"
To have, when the original is dust,
A name, a wretched picture, and worse bust.[6]

219

What are the hopes of man? Old Egypt's King
Cheops erected the first pyramid
And largest, thinking it was just the thing
To keep his memory whole, and mummy hid;
But somebody or other rummaging,
Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops.

220

But I being fond of true philosophy,
Say very often to myself, "Alas!
All things that have been born were born to die,

And flesh (which Death mows down to hay) is grass;[7]
You've pass'd your youth not so unpleasantly,
And if you had it o'er again—'twould pass—
So thank your stars that matters are no worse,
And read your Bible, sir, and mind your purse."

221

But for the present, gentle reader! and
Still gentler purchaser! the bard—that's I—
Must, with permission, shake you by the hand,
And so your humble servant, and good-b'ye!
We meet again, if we should understand
Each other; and if not, I shall not try
Your patience further than by this short sample—
'Twere well if others follow'd my example.

222

"Go, little book, from this my solitude!
I cast thee on the waters—go thy ways!
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
The world will find thee after many days."
When Southey's read, and Wordsworth understood,
I can't help putting in my claim to praise—
The four first rhymes are Southey's every line:[8]
For God's sake, reader! take them not for mine.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Juan of legend was a popular subject in English pantomime.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Homer's *Iliad* the king commanding the Greeks in the siege of Troy. This line is translated from a Latin ode by Horace.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Into the middle of things (Latin; Horace's *Art of Poetry* 148).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the smoothest road for heroic poetry.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Normally "José"; Byron transferred the accent to keep his meter.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Calderón de la Barca and Lope de Vega, the great Spanish dramatists of the early 17th century.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Gregor von Feinagle, a German expert on the art of memory who had lectured in England in 1811.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Athenian. *Attic salt* is a term for the famed wit of the Athenians.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lady Byron had thought her husband might be insane and sought medical advice on the matter. This and other passages obviously allude to his wife, although Byron insisted that Donna Inez was not intended to be a caricature of Lady Byron. In her determination to preserve her son's innocence, Donna Inez also shares traits with Byron's mother.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Houses and the adjoining lands. "Chancery suit": a case in what was then the highest English court, notorious for its delays.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Includes biology, physiology, and particularly botany, popular in the era in part because study of plants' stamens and pistils offered a form of surreptitious sex education.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In *On the Sublime* 10, the Greek rhetorician Longinus praises a passage of erotic longing from one of Sappho's odes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Virgil's *Eclogue* 2 begins: "The shepherd, Corydon, burned with love for the handsome Alexis."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In *De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)*, Lucretius argues that the universe can be explained in entirely

materialist terms without reference to any god.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: The Latin satires of Juvenal attacked the corruption of Roman society in the 1st century C.E. and displayed its vices.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Fact! There is, or was, such an edition, with all the obnoxious epigrams of Martial placed by themselves at the end [*Byron's note*]. Martial, another Latin poet, was a contemporary of Juvenal.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A word [to the wise] is sufficient (Latin).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The belt ("zone") of Venus made its wearer sexually irresistible.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Moorish king of Granada (the last Islamic enclave in Spain) wept when his capital fell and he and his people were forced to emigrate to Africa (1492).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, faithful to her husband.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: It comes to my mind (Italian).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: By way of a fine or legal penalty.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The sorceress in Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581) who seduces Rinaldo into forgetting his vows as a crusader.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A member of a legendary family of Roman kings noted for tyranny and cruelty; perhaps a reference specifically to Lucius Tarquinius, the villain of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In *Metamorphoses* 7 Ovid tells the story of Medea's mad infatuation for Jason.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, postobit bonds (*post obitum*, "after death" [Latin]): loans to an heir that fall due after the death of the person whose estate he or she is to inherit. Byron's meaning is probably that only theology purports to tell us what rewards are due in heaven.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Byron's friend the poet Thomas Moore, who in 1800 had translated the *Odes* of the ancient Greek Anacreon and whose popular Orientalist poem *Lalla Rookh* (1817) had portrayed the

"heathenish heaven" of Islam as populated by "houris," beautiful maidens who in the afterlife will give heroes their reward.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Secretly aware (of her feelings).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Titan Prometheus incurred the wrath of Zeus by stealing fire from heaven for humans.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, with horns that, growing on the forehead, were the traditional emblem of the cuckolded husband.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Morning reception.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A tapestry hanging on a wall.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Perhaps a chamber pot.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Servants, so named for the followers Achilles led to the Trojan War.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The *fidus Achates* ("faithful Achates") of Virgil's *Aeneid*, whose loyalty to Aeneas has become proverbial.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Job's wife advised her afflicted husband to "curse God, and die." He replied, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh" (Job 2:9–10).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The complete form of the modern word *posse* (*posse comitatus* means literally "power of the county" [Latin], that is, the body of citizens summoned by a sheriff to preserve order in the county).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Clarence, brother of Edward IV and of the future Richard III, was executed for treason, reputedly by being drowned in a cask ("butt") of malmsey, a sweet and aromatic wine.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A formidable opponent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Genesis 39:7ff. the chaste Joseph flees from the advances of Potiphar's wife, leaving "his garment in her hand."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Judgment against the plaintiff for failure to establish his case.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: William B. Gurney (1777–1855), official shorthand writer for the houses of Parliament and a famous court reporter.Return

to reference 6

- Note 7: The Germanic tribes that overran Spain and other parts of southern Europe in the 5th through 8th centuries, notorious for rape and violence.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of a compass.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The candle (to melt wax to seal the letter).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: She follows you everywhere (French). Byron himself owned a seal inscribed with this motto, as well as a cornelian gemstone, given him by John Edleston, the boy with whom he had a romantic friendship while at Cambridge. Byron's 1807 poem "The Cornelian" memorializes this relationship.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Go with me (Latin, literal trans.); handbook. Byron is deriding the neoclassical view that Aristotle's *Poetics* proposes "rules" for writing epic and tragedy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The assemblage of supernatural personages and incidents introduced into a literary work.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The usual plays on the Juan legend ended with Juan in hell; an early 20th-century version is George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: This is one of many passages, in prose and verse, in which Byron vigorously defends Dryden and Pope against his Romantic contemporaries.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: George Crabbe, whom Byron admired, was the author of *The Village* and other realistic poems of rural life.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Fountain on Mount Helicon whose waters supposedly gave inspiration. Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Thomas Campbell, Samuel Rogers, and Thomas Moore were lesser poets of the Romantic period; the last two were close friends of Byron and members of London's liberal Whig circles.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The wealthy William Sotheby, minor poet and translator, is satirized, as Botherby, in Byron's *Beppo.*Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The winged horse symbolizing poetic inspiration. Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, Bluestockings, a contemporary term for female intellectuals, among whom Byron numbered his wife (line 1644).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Byron's parody of the Ten Commandments seemed blasphemous to some commentators. In 1817 the radical publisher William Hone was put on trial for the ostensible blasphemy of a political satire that had used the form of the Anglican Church's creed and catechism.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Spoken by a bronze bust in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594). This comedy was based on legends about the magical power of Roger Bacon, the 13th-century Franciscan monk who was said to have built with diabolical assistance a brazen head capable of speech.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "Chymic": alchemic. That is, the "treasure" is counterfeit gold.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Byron was unhappy with the portrait bust of him recently made by the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: An echo of Isaiah 40:6 and 1 Peter 1:24: "All flesh is grass."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The lines are part of the last stanza of Southey's "Epilogue to the Lay of the Laureate."Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *nobleman*Return to reference °
- °: *cotton*Return to reference °
- °: *lawsuit*Return to reference °
- °: *without a will*Return to reference °
- °: *family line*Return to reference °
- °: *belief*Return to reference °
- °: *moment*Return to reference °

- °: *rank*Return to reference °
- °: *wig*Return to reference °

From Canto II

* * *

[THE SHIPWRECK]

11

Juan embark'd—the ship got under way,
The wind was fair, the water passing rough:
A devil of a sea rolls in that bay,
As I, who've cross'd it oft, know well enough;
And, standing upon deck, the dashing spray
Flies in one's face, and makes it weather-tough:
And there he stood to take, and take again,
His first—perhaps his last—farewell of Spain.

12

I can't but say it is an awkward sight
To see one's native land receding through
The growing waters; it unmans one quite,
Especially when life is rather new:
I recollect Great Britain's coast looks white,
But almost every other country's blue,
When gazing on them, mystified by distance,
We enter on our nautical existence.

* * *

17

And Juan wept, and much he sigh'd and thought,

While his salt tears dropp'd into the salt sea,
"Sweets to the sweet" (I like so much to quote;
You must excuse this extract, 'tis where she,
The Queen of Denmark, for Ophelia brought
Flowers to the grave);[1] and, sobbing often, he
Reflected on his present situation,
And seriously resolved on reformation.

18

"Farewell, my Spain! a long farewell!" he cried,
"Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
Of its own thirst to see again thy shore:
Farewell, where Guadalquivir's waters glide!
Farewell, my mother! and, since all is o'er,
Farewell, too, dearest Julia!—(Here he drew
Her letter out again, and read it through.)

19

"And, oh! if e'er I should forget, I swear—
But that's impossible, and cannot be—
Sooner shall this blue ocean melt to air,
Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea,
Than I resign thine image, oh, my fair!
Or think of any thing excepting thee;
A mind diseased no remedy can physic
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew sea-sick).

20

"Sooner shall heaven kiss earth (here he fell sicker),
Oh, Julia! what is every other woe?
(For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor,
Pedro, Battista, help me down below.)

Julia, my love! (you rascal, Pedro, quicker)—
  Oh, Julia! (this curst vessel pitches so)—
Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!”
(Here he grew inarticulate with retching)

21

He felt that chilling heaviness of heart,
  Or rather stomach, which, alas! attends,
Beyond the best apothecary’s art,
  The loss of love, the treachery of friends,
Or death of those we dote on, when a part
  Of us dies with them as each fond hope ends:
No doubt he would have been much more pathetic,
But the sea acted as a strong emetic.[2]

* * *

52

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell—
  Then shriek’d the timid, and stood still the brave,
—
Then some leap’d overboard with dreadful yell,
  As eager to anticipate their grave;
And the sea yawn’d around her like a hell,
  And down she suck’d with her the whirling wave,
Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he die.

53

And first one universal shriek there rush’d,
  Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hush’d,
  Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash

Of billows; but at intervals there gush'd,
Accompanied with a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

* * *

56

Juan got into the long-boat, and there
Contrived to help Pedrillo[3] to a place;
It seem'd as if they had exchanged their care,
For Juan wore the magisterial face
Which courage gives, while poor Pedrillo's pair
Of eyes were crying for their owner's case:
Battista, though (a name call'd shortly Tita)
Was lost by getting at some aqua-vita.°

57

Pedro, his valet, too, he tried to save,
But the same cause, conducive to his loss,
Left him so drunk, he jump'd into the wave
As o'er the cutter's edge he tried to cross,
And so he found a wine-and-watery grave;
They could not rescue him although so close,
Because the sea ran higher every minute,
And for the boat—the crew kept crowding in it.

* * *

66

'Tis thus with people in an open boat,
They live upon the love of life, and bear
More than can be believed, or even thought,

And stand like rocks the tempest's wear and tear;
And hardship still has been the sailor's lot,
Since Noah's ark went cruising here and there;
She had a curious crew as well as cargo,
Like the first old Greek privateer, the Argo.[4]

67

But man is a carnivorous production,
And must have meals, at least one meal a day;
He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction,[5]
But, like the shark and tiger, must have prey;
Although his anatomical construction
Bears vegetables, in a grumbling way,
Your labouring people think beyond all question,
Beef, veal, and mutton, better for digestion.

68

And thus it was with this our hapless crew,
For on the third day there came on a calm,
And though at first their strength it might renew,
And lying on their weariness like balm,
Lull'd them like turtles sleeping on the blue
Of ocean, when they woke they felt a qualm,
And fell all ravenously on their provision,
Instead of hoarding it with due precision.

* * *

72

The seventh day,[6] and no wind—the burning sun
Blister'd and scorch'd, and, stagnant on the sea,
They lay like carcasses; and hope was none,
Save in the breeze that came not; savagely

They glared upon each other—all was done,
Water, and wine, and food,—and you might see
The longings of the cannibal arise
(Although they spoke not) in their wolfish eyes.

73

At length one whisper'd his companion, who
Whisper'd another, and thus it went round,
And then into a hoarser murmur grew,
An ominous, and wild, and desperate sound;
And when his comrade's thought each sufferer knew,
'Twas but his own, suppress'd till now, he found:
And out they spoke of lots for flesh and blood,
And who should die to be his fellow's food.

74

But ere they came to this, they that day shared
Some leathern caps, and what remain'd of shoes;
And then they look'd around them, and despair'd,
And none to be the sacrifice would choose;
At length the lots were torn up, and prepared,
But of materials that much shock the Muse—
Having no paper, for the want of better,
They took by force from Juan Julia's letter.

75

The lots were made, and mark'd, and mix'd, and handed,
In silent horror, and their distribution
Lull'd even the savage hunger which demanded,
Like the Promethean vulture,[7] this pollution;
None in particular had sought or plann'd it,
'Twas nature gnaw'd them to this resolution,

By which none were permitted to be neuter—
And the lot fell on Juan's luckless tutor.

76

He but requested to be bled to death:
  The surgeon had his instruments, and bled
Pedrillo, and so gently ebb'd his breath,
  You hardly could perceive when he was dead.
He died as born, a Catholic in faith,
  Like most in the belief in which they're bred,
And first a little crucifix he kiss'd,
And then held out his jugular and wrist.

77

The surgeon, as there was no other fee,
  Had his first choice of morsels for his pains;
But being thirstiest at the moment, he
  Preferr'd a draught from the fast-flowing veins:
Part was divided, part thrown in the sea,
  And such things as the entrails and the brains
Regaled two sharks, who follow'd o'er the billow—
The sailors ate the rest of poor Pedrillo.

78

The sailors ate him, all save three or four,
  Who were not quite so fond of animal food;
To these was added Juan, who, before
  Refusing his own spaniel, hardly could
Feel now his appetite increased much more;
  'Twas not to be expected that he should,
Even in extremity of their disaster,
Dine with them on his pastor and his master.

79

'Twas better that he did not; for, in fact,
The consequence was awful in the extreme;
For they, who were most ravenous in the act,
Went raging mad—Lord! how they did blaspheme!
And foam and roll, with strange convulsions rack'd,
Drinking salt-water like a mountain-stream,
Tearing, and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing,
And, with hyaena-laughter, died despairing.[8]

* * *

1818–19 1819

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Hamlet* 5.1.227.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In stanzas 22–51 (here omitted) the ship, bound for Leghorn in Italy, runs into a storm and is battered into a helpless, sinking wreck.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Juan's tutor.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the Greek myth the *Argo* is the ship on which Jason set out in quest of the Golden Fleece. Byron ironically calls it a "privateer" (a private ship licensed by a government in wartime to attack and pillage enemy vessels).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Woodcocks probe the turf with their long flexible bills, seeming to suck air as they feed.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: On the fourth day the crew had killed and eaten Juan's pet spaniel. Byron based the episode of cannibalism that follows on various historical accounts of disasters at sea, including his grandfather Admiral Byron's 1768 narrative of his misadventure off the coast of Patagonia.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Because Prometheus had stolen fire from heaven to give to humans, Zeus punished him by chaining him to a

mountain peak, where an eagle fed on his ever-renewing liver.Return to reference 7

- Note 8:
  After the long-boat in which he and his shipmates took refuge breaks up in another storm, Juan is washed ashore, the sole survivor. There, on the beach of a Greek island, he is discovered by a young woman, Haidee, daughter of a pirate and the "greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles" thanks to her father's ill-gotten gains. Juan's love affair with Haidee, chronicled in the remainder of canto II, is interrupted in canto III when her pirate father returns from his latest voyage and erupts in rage on finding them together. Haidee dies, broken-hearted, but Juan's adventures continue when her father ships him off as a slave. Newly arrived in the slave market of
  Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *brandy*Return to reference °

From Canto XI[1]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Canto XI opens with Don Juan's arrival in England. Empress Catherine has sent him there on a diplomatic mission and in the hope that travel will restore her overtaxed lover's declining health.Return to reference 1

[DON JUAN'S JOURNEY TO LONDON]

8

Don Juan had got out on Shooter's Hill;[2]
Sunset the time, the place the same declivity
Which looks along that vale of good and ill
Where London streets ferment in full activity;
While every thing around was calm and still,
Except the creak of wheels, which on their pivot he
Heard,—and that bee-like, bubbling, busy hum
Of cities, that boil over with their scum:—

9

I say, Don Juan, wrapt in contemplation,
Walk'd on behind his carriage, o'er the summit,
And lost in wonder of so great a nation,
Gave way to't, since he could not overcome it.
"And here," he cried, "is Freedom's chosen station:
Here peals the people's voice, nor can entomb it
Racks, prisons, inquisitions; resurrection
Awaits it, each new meeting or election.

10

"Here are chaste wives, pure lives; here people pay
But what they please; and if that things be dear,
Tis only that they love to throw away
Their cash, to show how much they have a-year.
Here laws are all inviolate; none lay
Traps for the traveller; every highway's clear:
Here—" he was interrupted by a knife,
With,—"Damn your eyes! your money or your life!"—

11

These freeborn sounds proceeded from four pads°
  In ambush laid, who had perceived him loiter
Behind his carriage; and, like handy lads,
  Had seized the lucky hour to reconnoitre,[3]
In which the heedless gentleman who gads
  Upon the road, unless he prove a fighter,
May find himself within that isle of riches
Exposed to lose his life as well as breeches.

12

Juan, who did not understand a word
  Of English, save their shibboleth,[4] "God damn!"
And even that he had so rarely heard,
  He sometimes thought 'twas only their "Salim,"[5]
Or "God be with you!"—and 'tis not absurd
  To think so; for half English as I am[6]
(To my misfortune) never can I say
I heard them wish "God with you," save that way;—

13

Juan yet quickly understood their gesture,
  And being somewhat choleric° and sudden,
Drew forth a pocket pistol from his vesture,°
  And fired it into one assailant's pudding°—
Who fell, as rolls an ox o'er in his pasture,
  And roar'd out, as he writhed his native mud in,
Unto his nearest follower or henchman.
"Oh Jack! I'm floor'd by that 'ere bloody Frenchman!"

14

On which Jack and his train set off at speed.
And Juan's suite, late scatter'd at a distance,
Came up, all marvelling at such a deed,
And offering, as usual, late assistance.
Juan, who saw the moon's late minion[7] bleed
As if his veins would pour out his existence,
Stood calling out for bandages and lint,
And wish'd he had been less hasty with his flint.°

15

"Perhaps." thought he, "it is the country's wont°
To welcome foreigners in this way: now
I recollect some innkeepers who don't
Differ, except in robbing with a bow,
In lieu of a bare blade and brazen front.
But what is to be done? I can't allow
The fellow to lie groaning on the road:
So take him up; I'll help you with the load."

16[8]

But ere they could perform this pious duty,
The dying man cried, "Hold! I've got my gruel!
Oh! for a glass of *max*! We've miss'd our booty;
Let me die where I am!" And as the fuel
Of life shrunk in his heart, and thick and sooty
The drops fell from his death-wound, and he drew ill
His breath,—he from his swelling throat untied
A kerchief, crying, "Give Sal that!"—and died.

17

The cravat stain'd with bloody drops fell down
Before Don Juan's feet: he could not tell

Exactly why it was before him thrown,
Nor what the meaning of the man's farewell.
Poor Tom was once a kiddy upon town,
A thorough varmint, and a *real* swell,[9]
Full flash, all fancy, until fairly diddled,°
His pockets first and then his body riddled.

18

Don Juan, having done the best he could
In all the circumstances of the case,
As soon as "Crowner's quest"[1] allow'd, pursued
His travels to the capital apace;—
Esteeming it a little hard he should
In twelve hours' time, and very little space,
Have been obliged to slay a freeborn native
In self-defence: this made him meditative.

19

He from the world had cut off a great man,
Who in his time had made heroic bustle.
Who in a row like Tom could lead the van,
Booze in the ken, or at the spellken hustle?[2]
Who queer a flat? Who (spite of Bow-street's ban)[3]
On the high toby-spice so flash the muzzle?[4]
Who on a lark, with black-eyed Sal (his blowing),°
So prime, so swell, so nutty,° and so knowing?[5]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 2: Eight miles southeast of London and affording a panoramic view of the city, Shooter's Hill was favored by

thieves, who could conceal themselves in the nearby woods.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Scout out the situation.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A word that can be used as a test that will betray the outsider who has infiltrated a group. In the Old Testament Book of Judges (12:6), men's inability to pronounce the word *Shibboleth*—Hebrew for ear of grain—reveals them to be Ephraimites and gets them killed by the Gileadites.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Islamic greeting: "Peace be with you."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Byron was Scottish on his mother's side.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Alluding to Shakespeare's *Henry IV,* Part 1 (1.3.23), where Falstaff describes his fellow thieves as the "minions" (favorites) "of the moon."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Byron peppers stanzas 16 through 19 with specimens of "flash" language—slang favored by England's criminal subculture. A glossary from 1823 explains that "flash" is "the language of persons whose transactions demand concealment, yet require that they should mix with those from whom it should be concealed." This language, first uttered by the highwayman and then adopted by the narrator, is meant to be as baffling for much of Byron's audience as it is for Spanish-speaking Juan. Byron could, however, assume knowingness on the part of some readers: for a certain set of elite men about town, flash was fashionable. "I've got my gruel" is slang for "I've been killed"; "max" is gin.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lines 133–34, more slang: "kiddy," a thief who shows off his success with expensive clothing; "varmint," someone natty or dashing; "swell," someone elegantly dressed.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Coroner's inquest.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: More slang: "ken," house where thieves congregate; "spellken," theater.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: To “queer a flat” is to con a credulous person. “Bow-street’s”: London street where the police had their headquarters.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: More slang: “high toby-spice,” robbery on horseback; “flash the muzzle,” swagger openly.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: “The advance of Science and of Language has rendered it unnecessary to translate the above good and true English, spoken in its original purity by the select Mobility and their Patrons”: *Byron’s own note*, which continues by quoting a song, popular in his youth, that uses many of the flash terms he has included in his text. “Mobility” is slang for the “mob,” the opposite of “nobility.” Byron concludes the note by advising gentlemen readers who need a translation to consult “John Jackson, Esq[uire], Professor of Pugilism,” the prize-fighter who founded the boxing academy Byron had attended in London.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *foot pads, muggers*Return to reference °
- °: *irritable*Return to reference °
- °: *clothes*Return to reference °
- °: *stomach*Return to reference °
- °: *pistol*Return to reference °
- °: *custom*Return to reference °
- °: *cheated*Return to reference °
- °: *mistress*Return to reference °
- °: *lusty*Return to reference °

[ARRIVAL IN LONDON][6]

32

Juan, whose was a delicate commission,
  Private, though publicly important, bore
No title to point out with due precision
  The exact affair on which he was sent o'er.
'Twas merely known, that on a secret mission
  A foreigner of rank had graced our shore,
Young, handsome, and accomplish'd, who was said
(In whispers) to have turn'd his sovereign's head.

33

Some rumour also of some strange adventures
  Had gone before him, and his wars and loves:
And as romantic heads are pretty painters,
  And, above all, an Englishwoman's roves
Into the excursive, breaking the indentures°
  Of sober reason, wheresoe'er it moves.
He found himself extremely in the fashion.
Which serves our thinking people for a passion.

34

I don't mean that they are passionless, but quite
  The contrary; but then 'tis in the head;
Yet as the consequences are as bright
  As if they acted with the heart instead,
What after all can signify the site
  Of ladies' lucubrations?° So they lead
In safety to the place for which you start,
What matters if the road be head or heart?

35

Juan presented in the proper place,
To proper placemen,° every Russ credential;
And was received with all the due grimace,
By those who govern in the mood potential,[7]
Who, seeing a handsome stripling° with smooth face.
Thought (what in state affairs is most essential)
That they as easily might *do* the youngster,
As hawks may pounce upon a woodland songster.

36

They err'd, as aged men will do; but by
And by we'll talk of that; and if we don't,
'Twill be because our notion is not high
Of politicians and their double front,
Who live by lies, yet dare not boldly lie—
Now what I love in women is, they won't
Or can't do otherwise than lie, but do it
So well, the very truth seems falsehood to it.

37

And, after all what is a lie? 'Tis but
The truth in masquerade; and I defy
Historians, heroes, lawyers, priests, to put
A fact without some leaven of a lie.
The very shadow of true Truth would shut
Up annals, revelations, poesy,
And prophecy—except it should be dated
Some years before the incidents related.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 6: Don Juan’s arrival in London’s fashionable West End gives Byron the chance to revisit in imagination the city he had left behind forever in 1816.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In grammar the mood potential, also known as the subjunctive, is used to express possibility. Byron’s punning point is that these placemen are not the actual governors but, exerting influence, might as well be.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *bonds*Return to reference °
- °: *studies*Return to reference °
- °: *public officials*Return to reference °
- °: *youth*Return to reference °

[SOCIAL SUCCESS]

45

In the great world,—which, being interpreted,
  Meaneth the west or worst end of a city,
And about twice two thousand people bred
  By no means to be very wise or witty,
But to sit up while others lie in bed,
  And look down on the universe with pity,—
Juan, as an inveterate patrician,
Was well received by persons of condition.

46

He was a bachelor, which is a matter
  Of import both to virgin and to bride,
The former's hymeneal° hopes to flatter;
  And (should she not hold fast by love or pride)
Tis also of some moment to the latter;
  A rib's a thorn in a wed gallant's side,
Requires decorum, and is apt to double
The horrid sin—and what's still worse, the trouble.

47

But Juan was a bachelor—of arts,
  And parts, and hearts; he danced and sung, and had
An air as sentimental as Mozart's
  Softest of melodies; and could be sad
Or cheerful, without any "flaws or starts,"[8]
  Just at the proper time; and though a lad,
Had seen the world—which is a curious sight,
And very much unlike what people write.

48

Fair virgins blush'd upon him; wedded dames
  Bloom'd also in less transitory hues;
For both commodities dwell by the Thames,
  The painting and the painted; youth, ceruse,[9]
Against his heart preferr'd their usual claims,
  Such as no gentleman can quite refuse:
Daughters admired his dress, and pious mothers
Enquired his income, and if he had brothers.

49

The milliners° who furnish "drapery Misses"[1]
  Throughout the season, upon speculation
Of payment ere the honey-moon's last kisses
  Have waned into a crescent's coruscation,°
Thought such an opportunity as this is,
  Of a rich foreigner's initiation,
Not to be overlook'd—and gave such credit,
That future bridegrooms swore, and sigh'd, and paid
  it.

50

The Blues,[2] that tender tribe, who sigh o'er sonnets,
  And with the pages of the last Review
Line the interior of their beads or bonnets,
  Advanced in all their azure's highest hue:
They talk'd bad French or Spanish, and upon its
  Late authors ask'd him for a hint or two;
And which was softest, Russian or Castilian?
And whether in his travels he saw Ilion?[3]

51

Juan, who was a little superficial,
And not in literature a great Drawcansir,[4]
Examined by this learned and especial
Jury of matrons, scarce knew what to answer:
His duties warlike, loving or official,
His steady application as a dancer,
Had kept him from the brink of Hippocrene,[5]
Which now he found was blue instead of green.

52

However, he replied at hazard, with
A modest confidence and calm assurance,
Which lent his learned lucubrations pith,
And pass'd for arguments of good endurance.
That prodigy, Miss Araminta Smith
(Who at sixteen translated "Hercules Furens"[6]
Into as furious English), with her best look,
Set down his sayings in her common-place book.[7]

53

Juan knew several languages—as well
He might—and brought them up with skill, in time
To save his fame with each accomplish'd belle,
Who still regretted that he did not rhyme.
There wanted but this requisite to swell
His qualities (with them) into sublime:
Lady Fitz-Frisky, and Miss Maevia Mannish,
Each long'd extremely to be sung in Spanish.

54

However, he did pretty well, and was
Admitted as an aspirant to all
The coteries, and, as in Banquo's glass,[8]

At great assemblies or in parties small,
He saw ten thousand living authors pass,
That being about their average numeral;
Also the eighty "greatest living poets,"
As every paltry magazine can show *its*.

55

In twice five years the "greatest living poet,"
Like to the champion in the fisty ring,°
Is call'd on to support his claim, or show it,
Although 'tis an imaginary thing.
Even I—albeit I'm sure I did not know it,
Nor sought of foolscap[9] subjects to be king,—
Was reckon'd a considerable time,
The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.[1]

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 8: Quoting Lady Macbeth, who, aiming to get her husband to pull himself together after the murder of the king, shames him for his "flaws and starts" (*Macbeth* 3.4.63).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Ceruse is an ingredient in both paint and cosmetics. Both youthful women who blush naturally and matrons who use cosmetics to appear as young women are laying claim to Juan's heart.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: 'Drapery Misses'—This term is probably anything now but a *mystery;* it was, however, almost so to me when I first returned from the East in 1811–1812.—It means a pretty, a high-born, a fashionable young female, well-instructed by her friends, and furnished by her Milliner with a wardrobe upon credit, to be repaid, when *married,* by the *husband* [*Byron's*

note, which continues with a reminiscence about the pretty young heiress who first explained to him this feature of the marriage market].Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Bluestockings, female intellectuals.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Troy, setting for Homer's epic the *Iliad*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A blustering, tyrannical character in George Villiers's comedy *The Rehearsal* (1671).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Spring on Mount Helicon, sacred to the muses.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: *Hercules Insane*, tragedy by the Latin poet Seneca the Younger (ca. 4 B.C.E.–65 C.E.).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Notebook she has filled up with transcriptions of choice excerpts from her reading.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In *Macbeth* 4.1, the witches conjure up the apparitions of eight kings, each resembling the murdered Banquo. The last in the sequence holds out a glass (mirror) in which, to his horror, Macbeth beholds the images of even more of Banquo's regal descendants. The numerousness of the aspirants to literary fame whom Juan encounters in London is horrifying too, Byron suggests.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Large sheets of paper.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In the succeeding lines, Byron extends this comparison with Napoleon by likening his less successful publications to Napoleon's military setbacks. "Juan" was his Moscow, Byron states (line 441), alluding to the defeat that in 1812 was a turning point in Napoleon's fortunes.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *marital*Return to reference °
- °: *seamstresses*Return to reference °
- °: *gleam of light*Return to reference °
- °: *boxing ring*Return to reference °

74

Our hero, as a hero, young and handsome,
Noble, rich, celebrated, and a stranger,
Like other slaves of course must pay his ransom
Before he can escape from so much danger
As will environ a conspicuous man. Some
Talk about poetry, and "rack and manger,"[2]
And ugliness, disease, as toil and trouble;—
I wish they knew the life of a young noble.

75

They are young, but know not youth—it is anticipated;
Handsome but wasted, rich without a sou;[3]
Their vigour in a thousand arms is dissipated;
Their cash comes *from*, their wealth goes *to* a Jew;
Both senates see their nightly votes participated
Between the tyrant's and the tribunes' crew;
And having voted, dined, drank, gamed, and whored,
The family vault receives another lord.

76

"Where is the world?" cries Young,[4] at *eighty*
—"Where
The world in which a man was born?" Alas!
Where is the world of *eight* years past? *Twas there*—
I look for it—'tis gone, a Globe of Glass!
Crack'd, shiver'd, vanish'd, scarcely gazed on, ere

A silent change dissolves the glittering mass.
Statesmen, chiefs, orators, queens, patriots, kings,
And dandies all are gone on the wind's wings.

77[5]

Where is Napoleon the Grand? God knows:
Where little Castlereagh? The devil can tell:
Where Grattan, Curran, Sheridan, all those
Who bound the bar or senate in their spell?
Where is the unhappy Queen, with all her woes?
And where the Daughter, whom the Isles loved well?
Where are those martyr'd saints the Five per cents?°
And where—oh, where the devil are the rents?

78

Where's Brummel? Dish'd. Where's Long Pole Wellesley? Diddled.[6]
Where's Whitbread? Romilly? Where's George the Third?[7]
Where is his will? (That's not so soon unriddled.)[8]
And where is "Fum" the Fourth, our "royal bird?"
Gone down, it seems, to Scotland to be fiddled
Unto by Sawney's violin, we have heard:[9]
"Caw me, caw thee"—for six months hath been hatching,
This scene of royal itch and loyal scratching.

79

Where is Lord This? And where my Lady That?
The Honourable Mistresses and Misses?
Some laid aside like an old opera hat,
Married, unmarried, and remarried: (this is

An evolution oft performed of late.)
Where are the Dublin shouts—and London hisses?
Where are the Grenvilles? Turn'd as usual.[1] Where
My friends the Whigs? Exactly where they were.[2]

80

Where are the Lady Carolines and Franceses?[3]
Divorced or doing thereanent.[4] Ye annals
So brilliant, where the list of routs and dances is,—
Thou Morning Post,[5] sole record of the panels
Broken in carriages, and all the phantasies
Of fashion,—say what streams now fill those channels?
Some die, some fly, some languish on the Continent,
Because the times have hardly left them one tenant.

81

Some who once set their caps at cautious dukes,
Have taken up at length with younger brothers:
Some heiresses have bit at sharpers'° hooks:
Some maids have been made wives, some merely mothers;
Others have lost their fresh and fairy looks:
In short, the list of alterations bothers.
There's little strange in this, but something strange is
The unusual quickness of these common changes.

82

Talk not of seventy years as age![6] in seven
I have seen more changes, down from monarchs to
The humblest individual under heaven,
Than might suffice a moderate century through.

I knew that nought was lasting, but now even
Change grows too changeable, without being new:
Nought's permanent among the human race,
Except the Whigs *not* getting into place.

83

I have seen Napoleon, who seem'd quite a Jupiter,
Shrink to a Saturn. I have seen a Duke[7]
(No matter which) turn politician stupider,
If that can well be, than his wooden look.
But it is time that I should hoist my "blue Peter,"[8]
And sail for a new theme;—I have seen—and shook
To see it—the king hiss'd, and then carest;°
But don't pretend to settle which was best.

84

I have seen the Landholders without a rap[9]—
I have seen Joanna Southcote[1]—I have seen
The House of Commons turn'd to a tax-trap—
I have seen that sad affair of the late Queen—
I have seen crowns worn instead of a fool's cap—
I have seen a Congress doing all that's mean[2]—
I have seen some nations like o'erloaded asses
Kick off their burthens—meaning the high classes.

85

I have seen small poets, and great prosers, and
Interminable—*not eternal*—speakers—
I have seen the funds at war with house and land—
I have seen the country gentlemen turn squeakers
—
I have seen the people ridden o'er like sand

By slaves on horseback[3]—I have seen malt liquors
Exchanged for "thin potations" by John Bull[4]—
I have seen John half detect himself a fool.—

86

But "carpe diem,"[5] Juan, "carpe, carpe!"
To-morrow sees another race as gay
And transient, and devour'd by the same harpy.[6]
"Life's a poor player,"—then "play out the play,[7]
Ye villains!" and above all keep a sharp eye
Much less on what you do than what you say:
Be hypocritical, be cautious, be
Not what you *seem*, but always what you *see.*

87

But how shall I relate in other cantos
Of what befell our hero in the land,
Which 'tis the common cry and lie to vaunt as
A moral country? But I hold my hand—
For I disdain to write an Atalantis;[8]
But 'tis as well at once to understand
You are *not* a moral people, and you know it
Without the aid of too sincere a poet.

88

What Juan saw and underwent shall be
My topic, with of course the due restriction
Which is required by proper courtesy;
And recollect the work is only fiction,
And that I sing of neither mine nor me,
Though every scribe, in some slight turn of diction,
Will hint allusions never *meant*. Ne'er doubt
This—when I speak, I *don't hint*, but *speak out*.

89

Whether he married with the third or fourth
   Offspring of some sage husband-hunting countess,
Or whether with some virgin of more worth
   (I mean in Fortune's matrimonial bounties)
He took to regularly peopling Earth,
   Of which your lawful awful wedlock fount is,—
Or whether he was taken in for damages,
For being too excursive° in his homages,—

90

Is yet within the unread events of time.
   Thus far, go forth, thou Lay!° which I will back
Against the same given quantity of rhyme,
   For being as much the subject of attack
As ever yet was any work sublime,
   By those who love to say that white is black.
So much the better!—I may stand alone,
But would not change my free thoughts for a throne.

October 1822 1823

Endnotes

- Note 2: Rack and ruin—that is, waste and destruction.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, without a cent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The poet Edward Young published his final work, *Resignation* (1762), at age eighty.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As follow-up to another mention of Napoleon, Byron turns to naming the famous people who have died since he left England: in this stanza, Viscount Castlereagh (1769–1822), the British politician who helped engineer the restoration of the post-Napoleonic political order after the Battle of Waterloo, and

who committed suicide in 1822; Henry Grattan (1746–1820), Anglo-Irish politician and patriot; John Philpott Curran (1750–1817), another Anglo-Irish politician; Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), playwright, owner of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in London, and parliamentarian; Queen Caroline, estranged wife of King George IV (1768–1821), tried for adultery at her husband's instigation in 1820; her daughter and sometime heir to the throne, Princess Charlotte, who died in childbirth in 1817, aged twenty-one.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Two men who were ruined financially ("dished" and "diddled"): William Pole Tylney Long Wellesley (1788–1857), dandy who lost his fortune; Beau Brummel (1778–1840), another dandy and sometime leader of English high society who in 1816 was forced by his debts to flee to France.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sir Samuel Romilly (1752–1818) and Samuel Whitbread (1758–1815), legal reformer and Whig politician respectively, both dead by suicide.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: George III died in 1820, having left the second of the wills he prepared unsigned and therefore without authority.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Byron refers to George IV by the unflattering names the Anglo-Irish poet Thomas Moore had bestowed on him in an 1818 satire *Fum and Hum, The Two Birds of Royalty.* In 1822, George IV made a royal tour to Scotland, where he was fêted—in a servile manner, Byron thought—by Walter Scott, among others. "Sawney" is a derogatory term for a Scotsman.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: George Grenville (1712–1770) had changed parties in the 18th century; his son William (1759–1834) did the same in the 19th.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Whigs, the party of reform, were out of power in 1815 and remained so in 1822.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Referencing two women who became scandalous because of either an affair or a supposed affair with Byron: Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster (1793–1837) and Lady Caroline

Lamb (1785–1828), who made Byron the center of her kiss-and-tell Gothic novel *Glenarvon*, published in 1816 just before his departure from England.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Scots dialect for "something like it."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A Whig newspaper: both Mary Robinson and Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote for it earlier in the Romantic era.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Echoing Psalms 90:10: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Probably the Duke of Wellington (1769–1852), who entered Tory politics after commanding the allied army that defeated Napoleon at Waterloo.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Flag that a ship raises to signal its immediate departure.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Without a penny.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Southcott (1750–1814) was a self-described religious prophet and founder of a working-class messianic movement.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Likely the Congress of Vienna in 1814, the series of international meetings that established Europe's authoritarian post-Napoleonic order.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Probably referencing the Peterloo Massacre, also the subject of Percy Shelley's "The Mask of Anarchy" (see p. 790, below). On August 16, 1819, thousands of supporters of political reform gathered on St. Peter's Field in Manchester; the crowd was bloodily dispersed when the cavalry were ordered in, and in the mayhem at least nine were killed and hundreds injured.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Alluding to Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part 2 4.2.129, where Falstaff says that if he had sons he would advise them to swear off "thin potations." John Bull—name for the archetypal Englishman—is doing the opposite and opting for the inferior beverage. Brewers often deceived their customers by adulterating their wares.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Latin: "seize the day." From Horace's *Odes* 1.2.8.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Rapacious female monster in classical mythology.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Citing, first, Macbeth, who says, "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player" (5.4.24), and then Falstaff, who in *Henry IV*, Part 1 says, "Out, ye rogues! Play out the play" (2.4.467).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Referring to *Secret Memoirs and Manners of several Persons of Quality . . . from the New Atalantis* (1709), in which the early English novelist Delarivier Manley (1663–1724) satirically exposed, in thinly disguised form, the court scandals of her day.Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *government bonds*Return to reference °
- °: *swindlers'*Return to reference °
- °: *caressed*Return to reference °
- °: *wide-ranging*Return to reference °
- °: *song*Return to reference °

On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year

Missolonghi, Jan. 22, 1824.

1

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move,
Yet though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

2

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

3

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile!

4

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of Love I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

5

But 'tis not *thus*—and 'tis not *here*

Such thoughts should shake my Soul, nor *now,*
Where Glory decks the hero's bier
Or binds his brow.

6

The Sword—the Banner—and the Field—
Glory and Greece around us see!
The Spartan borne upon his shield
Was not more free!

7

Awake! (not Greece—she *is* awake!)
Awake, my Spirit! think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake
And then strike home!

8

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy Manhood;—unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.

9

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*
The land of honourable Death
Is here:—up to the Field! and give
Away thy Breath.

10

Seek out—less often sought than found—
A Soldier's Grave, for thee the best;
Then look around and choose thy ground
And take thy Rest.

Jan. 1824 1824

Romantic Literature and Wartime

By birth British Romantic authors were the fortunate inhabitants, as Shakespeare's John of Gaunt had declared, of a "sceptered isle" moated about by the sea. Home for them was at a safe distance from battlefields on the European continent, in the Americas, or in the West and East Indian colonies: since 1745–46, the years witnessing the quelling of the last of the Jacobite Rebellions, military conflict had almost by definition been something that did not take place on British ground. Nonetheless, the sense that no peace could or should be found in that home shaped in important ways Romantic authors' understanding of literature's public role. Romanticism was a wartime phenomenon. Between the outbreak of hostilities in 1793, which followed hard on the heels of Jacobin France's trial and execution of its former king, and the Duke of Wellington's victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, Britain and France waged an almost unremitting war.

Invasion by France, much feared by inhabitants of the southeast of England particularly, never came to pass, but there were extended periods, in 1798 and 1803–04, when Napoleon's armies encamped on the Channel coast, only twenty-one miles from Dover, their flotillas of invasion barges readied. At these moments of high alert, cartoonists on the government payroll, such as James Gillray, did their gory best to evoke "the Promis'd Horrors of the French Invasion" and so ensure that those out of reach of the artillery were nonetheless bombarded with images of French atrocity. As William Wordsworth's "Discharged Soldier" suggests, for many civilians the distant conflicts also became more immediate whenever they encountered, "linger[ing] in the public ways," the numerous wounded veterans who survived their military duty but were reduced to vagrancy and beggary upon their return home. The sense of

foreboding aroused by the nameless soldier in Wordsworth's 1798 poem, survivor of "war and battle and . . . pestilence" in "the tropical isles," may register Wordsworth's fearful awareness that English rural society could not escape being affected by the militarism his government was exporting across the globe. This topic is meant to suggest, through examples like these, the many ways in which, between 1793 and 1815, war's violence came home to Englishmen and women's imaginations.

This intractable, twenty-two-year conflict represented a new kind of warfare. Certainly Britain had repeatedly been on a war footing during the eighteenth century, the most recent hostilities being those terminated by the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. Britons' nationalism had developed in concert with their francophobia since the sixteenth century: as Catholic Other and rival for trade and later colonies, France had long occupied the role of Britain's archenemy. The conflict with the new French Republic that began in 1793 was, however, unprecedented in both scale and intensity—a dress rehearsal, historians say, for the "total war" of the twentieth century. It spanned the globe. It involved huge portions of the British population: the navy expanded by a factor of eight during these years, the army by a factor of six, and measures for civil defense adopted following the first invasion scare involved the formation of huge auxiliary forces of civilian volunteers. Ultimately one-sixth to one-fifth of the nation's adult men were enrolled in the armed forces. This level of mobilization would remain unmatched until World War I.

"The people became a participant in war; instead of governments and armies as heretofore, the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance": the Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz's retrospect on how the French Republic changed history by altering the conduct of war also applies to Britain, despite Britain's official opposition to the political innovations happening across the Channel. Though the wars Britain waged between 1793 and 1815 did enrich the empire with new overseas possessions (many former French colonies), the prospect of territorial expansion was not the principal

reason that this warfare had come to command "the full weight of the nation." The support that ordinary people voluntarily lent to the war effort (not least by paying the high taxes that it required) instead demonstrated (or so loyalist propaganda proposed) Britons' attachment to the constitution, or their wish to redeem the national character, which had become effete or addicted to luxury, or their hatred of Napoleonic tyranny.

The British Crown was quick to realize that the defense of the realm would also necessarily involve the management of public opinion. The government invested in an intensive campaign of communal festivity and patriotic pageantry—witness the five days of ceremonies, attended by tens of thousands, held when Admiral Horatio Nelson was laid to rest at St. Paul's Cathedral, following his death at Trafalgar. Few people in British towns would have been able to remain aloof from this particular campaign, to feel that they could count on being left alone in peace or, for that matter, in quiet. Church bells were rung for victories; patriotic choruses of "God save the king" sometimes erupted, mid-performance, from the stalls of theaters; recruiting sergeants beat their drums as they trawled the streets looking to lure the local poor with enlistment bounties and promises of escape. ("I hate that drum's discordant sound / Parading round and round and round," John Scott's much-reprinted poem on recruitment began; that drum beat is echoed in the opening of Anna Letitia Barbauld's anti-war *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*.) An additional way in which the warfare that stepped forth in 1793 differed from wars of the past was that the hostilities with France both coincided with and fueled a rapid expansion of the newspaper industry. News of fleet movements, generals' strategies, casualties, victories, and defeats was more intensely disseminated and reported than in previous conflicts, a fact that made the management of public opinion at once more urgent and more difficult. Battles waged in distant climes became news stories that were consumed in British parlors, amid middle-class families' daily routines. "Boys and girls, / And women . . . all read of war, / the best amusement for our

morning meal!" Coleridge observed with consternation in "Fears of Solitude."

Of course, Romantic poetry and fiction were themselves part of this media blitz—war sold books as well as newspapers—though poems and novels did not so much broadcast war news as provide instruction as to how readers should feel about that news. That instruction changed over the course of the period. In the eighteenth century some thinkers had decried war as an absurd, archaic dueling that vainglorious monarchs engaged in at the expense of their subjects. (William Godwin repeats in *Political Justice* some biting lines from Jonathan Swift: "Sometimes the quarrel between two princes is to decide which of them shall possess a third of his dominions, where neither of them pretends to any right. Sometimes one prince quarrels with another, for fear the other should quarrel with him.") Critiques in this vein continued to circulate after 1793: profiling current war poetry in 1799 the reviewers for the *Anti-Jacobin Review* accused contemporary poets of keeping victory out of sight so as to emphasize war's pains, stating that "we are presented with nothing but contusions and amputations, plundered peasants and deserted looms." But antiwar poetry was soon overshadowed by the new accounts construing the battle against the French as a crusade for a holy cause or as a purifying ordeal that might bring about individual and national regeneration. Many nineteenth-century writers and readers reembraced the epic, a genre with a legacy of bloodlust, emphasizing war's glories and the opportunities for virile heroism battle afforded. Sir Walter Scott was at the forefront of this abandonment of what a reviewer called "the mild pacific tone" of modern poetry, for in his works, this reviewer said, he had assumed "the ancient function of a bard, to celebrate military prowess, and set off pride, ferocity, and revenge." Modern war was becoming a matter of mechanically drilled mass armies, each side aiming to dominate the other through sheer force of numbers, but in poems engaging a picturesque, premodern past—be they Scott's *Marmion* (1808) or Robert Southey's *Roderick, the Last*

of the Goths (1814)—martial might could step forth once again as a gloriously individual and impassioned thing.

WILLIAM GODWIN

With its faith in the perfectibility of our political arrangements, the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) is now recognized as the exemplary statement of the utopianism of the 1790s: according to William Hazlitt, with this text William Godwin (1756–1836) "carried with him all the most sanguine and fearless understandings of the time." The *Enquiry* distills an Enlightenment tradition of anti-war arguments as it traces how government, "once intended to suppress injustice," now gives rise to "oppression, despotism, war, and conquest."

From Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness

From *Of the Causes of War*

* * *

One of the most essential principles of political justice is diametrically the reverse of that which impostors and patriots have too frequently agreed to recommend. Their perpetual exhortation has been, "Love your country. Sink the personal existence of individuals in the existence of the community. Make little account of the particular men of whom the society consists, but aim at the general wealth, prosperity and glory. Purify your mind from the gross ideas of sense, and elevate it to the single contemplation of that abstract individual of which particular men are so many detached members, valuable only for the place they fill."[1]

The lessons of reason on this head are precisely opposite. "Society is an ideal existence, and not on its own account entitled to the smallest regard. The wealth, prosperity and glory of the whole are unintelligible chimeras. Set no value on any thing, but in proportion as you are convinced of its tendency to make individual men happy and virtuous. Benefit by every practicable mode man wherever he exists; but be not deceived by the specious idea of affording services to a body of men, for which no individual man is the better. Society was instituted, not for the sake of glory, not to furnish splendid materials for the page of history, but for the benefit of its members. The love of our country, if we would speak accurately, is another of those specious illusions, which have been invented by impostors in order to render the multitude the blind instruments of their crooked designs."

Meanwhile let us beware of passing from one injurious extreme to another. Much of what has been usually understood by the love of our country is highly excellent and valuable, though perhaps nothing that can be brought within the strict interpretation of the phrase. A wise man will not fail to be the votary of liberty and equality. He will be ready to exert himself in their defence wherever they exist. It cannot be a matter of indifference to him, when his own liberty and that of other men with whose excellence and capabilities he has the best opportunity of being acquainted, are involved in the event of the struggle to be made. But his attachment will be to the cause, and not to the country. Wherever there are men who understand the value of political justice and are prepared to assert it, that is his country. Wherever he can most contribute to the diffusion of these principles and the real happiness of mankind, that is his country. Nor does he desire for any country any other benefit than justice.

* * *

Because individuals were liable to error, and suffered their apprehensions of justice to be perverted by a bias in favour of themselves, government was instituted. Because nations were susceptible of a similar weakness, and could find no sufficient umpire to whom to appeal, war was introduced. Men were induced deliberately to seek each other’s lives, and to adjudge the controversies between them, not according to the dictates of reason and justice, but as either should prove most successful in devastation and murder. This was no doubt in the first instance the extremity of exasperation and rage. But it has since been converted into a trade. One part of the nation pays another part to murder and be murdered in their stead; and the most trivial causes, a supposed insult or a sally of youthful ambition, have sufficed to deluge provinces with blood.

We can have no adequate idea of this evil, unless we visit, at least in imagination, a field of battle. Here men deliberately destroy each other by thousands without any resentment against or even

knowledge of each other. The plain is strewed with death in all its various forms. Anguish and wounds display the diversified modes in which they can torment the human frame. Towns are burned, ships are blown up in the air while the mangled limbs descend on every side, the fields are laid desolate, the wives of the inhabitants exposed to brutal insult, and their children driven forth to hunger and nakedness. It would be despicable to mention, along with these scenes of horror, and the total subversion of all ideas of moral justice they must occasion in the auditors and spectators, the immense treasures which are wrung in the form of taxes from those inhabitants whose residence is at a distance from the scene.

1793

Endnotes

- Note 1: Here Godwin footnotes Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762).Return to reference 1

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

This haunting poem, which Wordsworth composed in early 1798 (at around the time he was also working on "The Ruined Cottage"), was left unpublished during Wordsworth's lifetime, though he eventually incorporated the lines into *The Prelude*, book 4. There this disquieting meeting with a returned veteran of foreign wars interrupts the poet's account of his first summer vacation from college. Pestilence (line 138) afflicted many soldiers and sailors, especially those unlucky enough to see service in the West Indies. Epidemics of yellow fever, dysentery, and other diseases are estimated to have killed more servicemen than military encounters.

The Discharged Soldier

I love to walk
Along the public way when for the night,
Deserted in its silence, it assumes
A character of deeper quietness
Than pathless solitudes. At such a time
I slowly mounted up a steep ascent
Where the road's watry surface to the ridge
Of that sharp rising glittered in the moon
And seemed before my eyes another stream
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook
That murmured in the valley. On I passed
Tranquil, receiving in my own despite
Amusement, as I slowly passed along,
From such near objects as from time to time
Perforce disturbed the slumber of the sense
Quiescent, and disposed to sympathy,
With an exhausted mind worn out by toil
And all unworthy of the deeper joy
Which waits on distant prospect, cliff or sea,
The dark blue vault, and universe of stars.
Thus did I steal along that silent road,
My body from the stillness drinking in
A restoration like the calm of sleep
But sweeter far. Above, before, behind,
Around me, all was peace and solitude:
I looked not round, nor did the solitude
Speak to my eye, but it was heard and felt.
Oh happy state! What beauteous pictures now
Rose in harmonious imagery—they rose
As from some distant region of my soul
And came along like dreams, yet such as left

Obscurely mingled with their passing forms
A consciousness of animal delight,
A self-possession felt in every pause
And every gentle movement of my frame.
While thus I wandered, step by step led on,
It chanced a sudden turning of the road
Presented to my view an uncouth shape
So near that, stepping back into the shade
Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
Myself unseen. He was in stature tall,
A foot above man's common measure tall,
And lank, and upright. There was in his form
A meagre stiffness. You might almost think
That his bones wounded him. His legs were long,
So long and shapeless that I looked at them
Forgetful of the body they sustained.
His arms were long and lean; his hands were bare;
His visage, wasted though it seemed, was large
In feature; his cheeks sunken; and his mouth
Shewed ghastly in the moonlight. From behind
A mile-stone propped him, and his figure seemed
Half-sitting and half-standing. I could mark
That he was clad in military garb,
Though faded yet entire. His face was turned
Towards the road, yet not as if he sought
For any living thing. He appeared
Forlorn and desolate, a man cut off
From all his kind, and more than half detached
From his own nature.
He was alone,
Had no attendant, neither dog, nor staff,
Nor knapsack—in his very dress appeared
A desolation, a simplicity
That appertained to solitude. I think
If but a glove had dangled in his hand
It would have made him more akin to man.

Long time I scanned him with a mingled sense
Of fear and sorrow. From his lips meanwhile
There issued murmuring sounds as if of pain
Or of uneasy thought; yet still his form
Kept the same fearful steadiness. His shadow
Lay at his feet and moved not. In a glen
Hard by a village stood, whose silent doors
Were visible among the scattered trees,
Scarce distant from the spot an arrow's flight.
I wished to see him move, but he remained
Fixed to his place, and still from time to time
Sent forth a murmuring voice of dead complaint,
A groan scarce audible. Yet all the while
The chained mastiff in his wooden house
Was vexed, and from among the village trees
Howled never ceasing. Not without reproach
Had I prolonged my watch, and now confirmed,
And my heart's specious cowardice subdued,
I left the shady nook where I had stood
And hailed the Stranger. From his resting-place
He rose, and with his lean and wasted arm
In measured gesture lifted to his head
Returned my salutation. A short while
I held discourse on things indifferent
And casual matter. He meanwhile had ceased
From all complaint—his station had resumed,
Propped by the mile stone as before, and when erelong
I asked his history, he in reply
Was neither slow nor eager, but unmoved,
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,
A stately air of mild indifference,
He told a simple fact: that he had been
A Soldier, to the tropic isles had gone,
Whence he had landed now some ten days past;
That on his landing he had been dismissed,

And with the little strength he yet had left
Was travelling to regain his native home.
At this I turned and through the trees looked down
Into the village—all were gone to rest,
Nor smoke nor any taper light appeared,
But every silent window to the moon
Shone with a yellow glitter. 'No one there,'
Said I, 'is waking; we must measure back
The way which we have come. Behind yon wood
A labourer dwells, an honest man and kind;
He will not murmur should we break his rest,
And he will give you food if food you need,
And lodging for the night.' At this he stooped,
And from the ground took up an oaken staff
By me yet unobserved, a traveller's staff,
Which I suppose from his slack hand had dropped,
And, such the languor of the weary man,
Had lain till now neglected in the grass,
But not forgotten. Back we turned and shaped
Our course toward the cottage. He appeared
To travel without pain, and I beheld
With ill-suppressed astonishment his tall
And ghostly figure moving at my side.
As we advanced I asked him for what cause
He tarried there, nor had demanded rest
At inn or cottage. He replied, 'In truth
My weakness made me loth to move, and here
I felt myself at ease and much relieved,
But that the village mastiff fretted me,
And every second moment rang a peal
Felt at my very heart. There was no noise,
Nor any foot abroad—I do not know
What ailed him, but it seemed as if the dog
Were howling to the murmur of the stream.'
While thus we travelled on I did not fail
To question him of what he had endured

From war and battle and the pestilence.
He all the while was in demeanor calm,
Concise in answer: solemn and sublime
He might have seemed, but that in all he said
There was a strange half-absence and a tone
Of weakness and indifference, as of one
Remembering the importance of his theme,
But feeling it no longer. We advanced
Slowly, and ere we to the wood were come
Discourse had ceased. Together on we passed
In silence through the shades gloomy and dark,
Then turning up along an open field
We gained the cottage. At the door I knocked,
And called aloud, 'My Friend, here is a man
By sickness overcome; beneath your roof
This night let him find rest, and give him food—
The service if need be I will requite.'
Assured that now my comrade would repose
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth
He would not linger in the public ways
But at the door of cottage or of inn
Demand the succour which his state required,
And told him, feeble as he was 'twere fit
He asked relief or alms. At this reproof
With the same ghastly mildness in his look
He said, 'My trust is in the God of heaven,
And in the eye of him that passes me.'
By this the labourer had unlocked the door,
And now my comrade touched his hat again
With his lean hand, and in a voice that seemed
To speak with a reviving interest
Till then unfelt, he thanked me. I returned
The blessing of the poor unhappy man,
And so we parted.

1798

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

"We now read with listless unconcern of events which, but a very few years ago, would have filled all Europe with astonishment," Coleridge wrote in the the *Morning Post* newspaper, an insight into public apathy that he develops at length in this poem of crisis. "Fears in Solitude" (1798; first published in the same volume as "Frost at Midnight") is often read as documenting a pivotal moment in Coleridge's political allegiances: here the radical, known for his enthusiasm for the French Revolution and opposition to war, presents himself as patriot.

From Fears in Solitude

Written in April 1798, during the Alarm of an Invasion

A green and silent spot, amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
No singing sky-lark ever poised himself.
The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
All golden with the never-bloomless furze,
Which now blooms most profusely: but the dell,
Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate
As vernal corn-field, or the unripe flax,
When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
The level sunshine glimmers with green light.
Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
Knew just so much of folly, as had made
His early manhood more securely wise!
Here he might lie on fern or withered heath,
While from the singing lark (that sings unseen
The minstrelsy that solitude loves best),
And from the sun, and from the breezy air,
Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
Made up a meditative joy, and found
Religious meanings in the forms of nature!
And so, his senses gradually wrapt
In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
And dreaming hears thee still, O singing lark,
That singest like an angel in the clouds!

My God! It is a melancholy thing
For such a man, who would full fain preserve
His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
For all his human brethren—O my God!
It weighs upon the heart, that he must think
What uproar and what strife may now be stirring
This way or that way o'er these silent hills—
Invasion, and the thunder and the shout,
And all the crash of onset; fear and rage,
And undetermined conflict—even now,
Even now, perchance, and in his native isle;
Carnage and groans beneath this blessed sun!
We have offended, Oh! My countrymen!
We have offended very grievously
And been most tyrannous.

* * *

Thankless too for peace,
(Peace long preserved by fleets and perilous seas)
Secure from actual warfare, we have loved
To swell the war-whoop, passionate for war!
Alas! for ages ignorant of all
Its ghastlier workings, (famine or blue plague,
Battle, or siege, or flight through wintry snows,)
We, this whole people, have been clamorous
For war and bloodshed; animating sports,
The which we pay for as a thing to talk of,
Spectators and not combatants! No guess
Anticipative of a wrong unfelt,
No speculation on contingency,
However dim and vague, too vague and dim
To yield a justifying cause; and forth,

(Stuffed out with big preamble, holy names,
And adjurations of the God in Heaven,)
We send our mandates for the certain death
Of thousands and ten thousands! Boys and girls,
And women, that would groan to see a child
Pull off an insect's leg, all read of war,
The best amusement for our morning meal!
The poor wretch, who has learnt his only prayers
From curses, who knows scarcely words enough
To ask a blessing from his Heavenly Father,
Becomes a fluent phraseman, absolute
And technical in victories and defeats,
And all our dainty terms for fratricide;
Terms which we trundle smoothly o'er our tongues
Like mere abstractions, empty sounds to which
We join no feeling and attach no form!
As if the soldier died without a wound;
As if the fibres of this godlike frame
Were gored without a pang; as if the wretch,
Who fell in battle, doing bloody deeds,
Passed off to Heaven, translated and not killed;
As though he had no wife to pine for him,
No God to judge him! Therefore, evil days
Are coming on us, O my countrymen!
And what if all-avenging Providence,
Strong and retributive, should make us know
The meaning of our words, force us to feel
The desolation and the agony
Of our fierce doings?
Spare us yet awhile,
Father and God! O! spare us yet awhile!
Oh! Let not English women drag their flight
Fainting beneath the burthen of their babes,
Of the sweet infants, that but yesterday
Laughed at the breast! Sons, brothers, husbands, all
Who ever gazed with fondness on the forms

Which grew up with you round the same fire-side,
And all who ever heard the sabbath-bells
Without the infidel's scorn, make yourselves pure!
Stand forth! be men! repel an impious foe,
Impious and false, a light yet cruel race,
Who laugh away all virtue, mingling mirth
With deeds of murder; and still promising
Freedom, themselves too sensual to be free,
Poison life's amities, and cheat the heart
Of faith and quiet hope, and all that soothes,
And all that lifts the spirit! Stand we forth;
Render them back upon the insulted ocean,
And let them toss as idly on its waves
As the vile sea-weed, which some mountain-blast
Swept from our shores! And oh! may we return
Not with a drunken triumph, but with fear,
Repenting of the wrongs with which we stung
So fierce a foe to frenzy!

* * *

1798

ROBERT SOUTHEY

Antiwar verse of the 1790s often pits collective celebration against individual mourning in the manner of "The Victory," which Robert Southey (1774–1843), at that point still a political radical, published in his *Poems* of 1799. The devastation of the war widow who learns only belatedly of her husband's death, having listened at first to the tidings "with dreadful hope," also appears frequently in poetry from this decade.

The Victory

Hark—how the church-bells thundering harmony
Stuns the glad ear! tidings of joy have come,
Good tidings of great joy! two gallant ships
Met on the element,—they met, they fought
A desperate fight!—good tidings of great joy!
Old England triumphed! yet another day
Of glory for the ruler of the waves!
For those who fell, ’twas in their country’s cause,
They have their passing paragraphs of praise
And are forgotten.
There was one who died
In that day’s glory, whose obscurer name
No proud historian’s page will chronicle.
Peace to his honest soul! I read his name,
’Twas in the list of slaughter, and blest God
The sound was not familiar to mine ear.
But it was told me after that this man
Was one whom lawful violence[1] had forced
From his own home and wife and little ones,
Who by his labour lived; that he was one
Whose uncorrupted heart could keenly feel
A husband’s love, a father’s anxiousness,
That from the wages of his toil he fed
The distant dear ones, and would talk of them
At midnight when he trod the silent deck
With him he valued, talk of them, of joys
That he had known—oh God! and of the hour
When they should meet again, till his full heart
His manly heart at last would overflow
Even like a child’s with very tenderness.
Peace to his honest spirit! Suddenly

It came, and merciful the ball of death,
For it came suddenly and shattered him,
And left no moment's agonizing thought
On those he loved so well.
He ocean deep
Now lies at rest. Be Thou her comforter
Who art the widow's friend. Man does not know
What a cold sickness made her blood run back
When first she heard the tidings of the fight;
Man does not know with what a dreadful hope
She listened to the names of those who died,
Man does not know, or knowing will not heed,
With what an agony of tenderness
She gazed upon her children, and beheld
His image who was gone. Oh God! be thou
Her comforter who art the widow's friend!

1799

Endnotes

- Note 1: The person alluded to was pressed into the service [*Southey's note*].Return to reference 1

MARY ROBINSON

On July 18, 1800, in a ceremony lasting three hours and attracting numerous civilian spectators, George III inspected the thirty-two thousand troops assembled near his royal residence at Windsor. Twelve days later, in the the *Morning Post* newspaper, Mary Robinson (1757?–1800) published this poetic catalog memorializing the "hurly-burly" of the day. The poem was reprinted in 1804 with the title "Winkfield Plain: or a Description of a Camp in the Year 1800." In her novel *Pride and Prejudice* (published 1813, but drafted in the late 1790s) Jane Austen would also turn her satiric gaze on the social and sexual disruptions engendered by the wartime economy. She might have had Robinson's poem in view as she detailed the daydreams the novel's irrepressible flirt Lydia Bennet indulges about Brighton, site of another military encampment: "She saw all the glories of the c its tents stretched forth in beauteous uniformity of lines, crowded with the young and the gay, and dazzling with scarlet; and to complete the view, she saw herself seated beneath a tent, tenderly flirting with at least six officers at once."

The Camp

Tents, *marquees*, and baggage waggons;
Suttling houses,[1] beer in flaggons;
Drums and trumpets, singing, firing;
Girls seducing, *beaux* admiring;
Country lasses gay and smiling,
City lads their hearts beguiling;
Dusty roads, and horses frisky;
Many an *Eton boy* in whisky,[2]
Tax'd carts full of farmer's daughters;
Brutes condemn'd, and man—who slaughters!
Public-houses, booths, and castles;
Belles of fashion, serving vassals;
Lordly Gen'rals fiercely staring,
Weary soldiers, sighing, swearing!
Petit maitres° always dressing—
In the glass themselves caressing;
Perfum'd, painted, patch'd and blooming
Ladies—manly airs assuming!
Dowagers of fifty, simp'ring
Misses, for a lover whimp'ring—
Husbands drill'd to household tameness;
Dames heart sick of wedded sameness.
Princes setting girls a-madding—
Wives for ever fond of gadding—
Princesses with lovely faces,
Beauteous children of the Graces!
Britain's pride and Virtue's treasure,
Fair and gracious, beyond measure!
Aid de Camps, and youthful pages—
Prudes, and vestals° of all ages!—
Old coquets, and matrons surly,

Sounds of distant *hurly burly*!
Mingled voices uncouth singing;
Carts, full laden, forage bringing;
Sociables,[3] and horses weary;
Houses warm, and dresses airy;
Loads of fatten'd poultry; pleasure
Serv'd (TO NOBLES) without measure.
Doxies[4] who the waggons follow;
Beer, for thirsty hinds° to swallow;
Washerwomen, fruit-girls cheerful,
ANTIENT LADIES—*chaste* and *fearful*!
Tradesmen, leaving shops, and seeming
More of *war* than profit dreaming;
Martial sounds, and braying asses;
Noise, that ev'ry noise surpasses!
All confusion, din, and riot—
NOTHING CLEAN—and NOTHING QUIET.

1800

Endnotes

- Note 1: Establishments selling supplies to soldiers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Besides being a drink, a whisky was a fashionable two-wheeled carriage. Eton, the famous public school, is in Windsor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Carriages with facing seats.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Mistresses, perhaps sex workers.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *fops*Return to reference °
- °: *virgins*Return to reference °
- °: *farm boys*Return to reference °

ANNA LETITIA BARBAULD

Barbauld's bitter poem on the moral and economic condition of England in the year 1811, written at a moment when it seemed that the nation's wars with France might be protracted interminably, concludes by imagining the end of the British Empire. The historian of the future will see "Europe sit in dust, as Asia now" (line 126), and England will at that future moment be a mere memory, at best representing for America what Greece and Rome in the nineteenth century represent for England. The poem, published in 1812, was both one of the most widely reviewed of Barbauld's works and the most reviled: the reviewer for the Tory *Quarterly Review* sniped, "We had hoped . . . that the empire might have been saved without the intervention of a lady-author . . . we must take the liberty of warning her to desist from satire, which indeed is satire on herself alone."

From Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, a Poem

Still the loud death drum, thundering from afar,
O’er the vext nations pours the storm of war:
To the stern call still Britain bends her ear,
Feeds the fierce strife, the alternate hope and fear;
Bravely, though vainly, dares to strive with Fate,
And seeks by turns to prop each sinking state.
Colossal Power with overwhelming force
Bears down each fort of Freedom in its course;
Prostrate she lies beneath the Despot’s[1] sway,
While the hushed nations curse him—and obey.
  Bounteous in vain, with frantic man at strife,
Glad Nature pours the means—the joys of life;
In vain with orange blossoms scents the gale,
The hills with olives clothes, with corn the vale;
Man calls to Famine, nor invokes in vain,
Disease and Rapine follow in her train;
The tramp of marching hosts disturbs the plough,
The sword, not sickle, reaps the harvest now,
And where the Soldier gleans the scant supply,
The helpless Peasant but retires to die;
No laws his hut from licensed outrage shield,
And war’s least horror is the ensanguined field.
  Fruitful in vain, the matron counts with pride
The blooming youths that grace her honoured side;
No son returns to press her widow’d hand,
Her fallen blossoms strew a foreign strand.
—Fruitful in vain, she boasts her virgin race,
Whom cultured arts adorn and gentlest grace;
Defrauded of its homage, Beauty mourns,

And the rose withers on its virgin thorns.
Frequent, some stream obscure, some uncouth name
By deeds of blood is lifted into fame;
Oft o'er the daily page some soft-one bends
To learn the fate of husband, brothers, friends,
Or the spread map with anxious eye explores,
Its dotted boundaries and penciled shores,
Asks *where* the spot that wrecked her bliss is found,
And learns its name but to detest the sound.
  And thinks't thou, Britain, still to sit at ease,
An island Queen amidst thy subject seas,
While the vext billows, in their distant roar,
But soothe thy slumbers, and but kiss thy shore?
To sport in wars, while danger keeps aloof,
Thy grassy turf unbruised by hostile hoof?
So sing thy flatterers; but, Britain, know,
Thou who hast shared the guilt must share the woe.
Nor distant is the hour; low murmurs spread,
And whispered fears, creating what they dread;
Ruin, as with an earthquake shock, is here,
There, the heart-witherings of unuttered fear,
And that sad death, whence most affection bleeds,
Which sickness, only of the soul, precedes.
Thy baseless wealth dissolves in air away,
Like mists that melt before the morning ray:
No more on crowded mart or busy street
Friends, meeting friends, with cheerful hurry greet;
Sad, on the ground thy princely merchants bend
Their altered looks, and evil days portend,
And fold their arms, and watch with anxious breast
The tempest blackening in the distant West.[2]
  Yes, thou must droop; thy Midas dream is o'er;
The golden tide of Commerce leaves thy shore,
Leaves thee to prove the alternate ills that haunt

Enfeebling Luxury and ghastly Want;
Leaves thee, perhaps, to visit distant lands,
65 And deal the gifts of Heaven with equal hands.

* * *

1812

Endnotes

- Note 1: Napoleon's.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: War with the United States was imminent.Return to reference 2

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

In canto VIII (1823) of *Don Juan*, following an escape from the Turkish harem into which he was sold in the fifth canto, the fictional hero's fortunes take him into a real theater of war. He joins the Russian army and participates in the conquest of Ismail (1790): the Turkish forces defending that city had been ordered to stand their ground, and 40,000 of them are thought to have been killed in the siege. These military adventures, Byron's narrator suggests, perhaps with excessive candor, fulfill the generic contract that he, as participant in a literary tradition begun by Homer, made with his reader back in canto I: as these adventures have been "all very accurate, you must allow / And *Epic*" (stanza 138), the poet has kept his side of the bargain. But the epic premise that "glory's a great thing" (stanza 14) appears to hold truer in canto VIII for bards who sing of battlefields (and win government pensions by doing so) than for troops who fight and die on them.

From Don Juan, Canto VIII

* * *

12

Three hundred cannon threw up their emetic,
  And thirty thousand muskets flung their pills
Like hail to make a bloody diuretic.
  Mortality, thou hast thy monthly bills.
Thy plagues, thy famines, thy physicians yet tick
  Like the deathwatch within our ears the ills
Past, present, and to come, but all may yield
To the true portrait of one battlefield.

13

There the still varying pangs, which multiply
  Until their very number makes men hard
By the infinities of agony,
  Which meet the gaze, whate'er it may regard—
The groan, the roll in dust, the all-white eye
  Turned back within its socket—these reward
Your rank and file by thousands, while the rest
May win perhaps a ribbon at the breast!

14

Yet I love glory—glory's a great thing.
  Think what it is to be in your old age
Maintained at the expense of your good king.
  A moderate pension shakes full many a sage,
And heroes are but made for bards to sing,

Which is still better. Thus in verse to wage
Your wars eternally, besides enjoying
Half-pay for life, makes mankind worth destroying.

15

The troops already disembarked pushed on
To take a battery on the right; the others
Who landed lower down, their landing done,
Had set to work as briskly as their brothers.
Being grenadiers they mounted one by one,
Cheerful as children climb the breasts of mothers,
O'er the entrenchment and the palisade,
Quite orderly, as if upon parade.

16

And this was admirable, for so hot
The fire was, that were red Vesuvius loaded,
Besides its lava, with all sorts of shot
And shells or hells, it could not more have goaded.
Of officers a third fell on the spot,
A thing which victory by no means boded
To gentlemen engaged in the assault.
Hounds, when the huntsman tumbles, are at fault.

17

But here I leave the general concern,
To track our hero on his path of fame.
He must his laurels separately earn;
For fifty thousand heroes, name by name,
Though all deserving equally to turn
A couplet, or an elegy to claim,
Would form a lengthy lexicon of glory
And what is worse still, a much longer story.

18

And therefore we must give the greater number
To the *Gazette*, which doubtless fairly dealt
By the deceased, who lie in famous slumber
In ditches, fields, or wheresoe'er they felt
Their clay for the last time their souls encumber.
Thrice happy he whose name has been well spelt
In the dispatch; I knew a man whose loss
Was printed Grove, although his name was Grose.

19

Juan and Johnson joined a certain corps
And fought away with might and main, not knowing
The way, which they had never trod before,
And still less guessing where they might be going,
But on they marched, dead bodies trampling o'er,
Firing and thrusting, slashing, sweating, glowing,
But fighting thoughtlessly enough to win
To their *two* selves *one* whole bright bulletin.

20

Thus on they wallowed in the bloody mire
Of dead and dying thousands, sometimes gaining
A yard or two of ground, which brought them nigher
To some odd angle for which all were straining;
At other times, repulsed by the close fire,
Which really poured as if all hell were raining,
Instead of heaven, they stumbled backwards o'er
A wounded comrade, sprawling in his gore.

21

Though 'twas Don Juan's first of fields, and though

The nightly muster and the silent march
In the chill dark, when courage does not glow
So much as under a triumphal arch,
Perhaps might make him shiver, yawn, or throw
A glance on the dull clouds (as thick as starch,
Which stiffened heaven) as if he wished for day;
Yet for all this he did not run away.

* * *

1823

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
1792–1822

Percy Bysshe Shelley, radical in every aspect of his life and thought, emerged from a solidly conservative background. His ancestors had been Sussex aristocrats since early in the seventeenth century; his grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, made himself the richest man in Horsham, Sussex; his father, Timothy Shelley, was a hardheaded and conventional member of Parliament. Percy Shelley was in line for a baronetcy and, as befitted his station, was sent to be educated at Eton and Oxford. As a youth he was slight of build, eccentric in manner, and unskilled in sports or fighting and, as a consequence, was mercilessly bullied by older and stronger boys. He later said that he saw the petty tyranny of schoolmasters and schoolmates as representative of man's general inhumanity to man, and dedicated his life to a war against injustice and oppression. As he described the experience in the Dedication to *Laon and Cythna*:

> So without shame, I spake:—"I will be wise,
> And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
> Such power, for I grow weary to behold
> The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
> Without reproach or check." I then controuled
> My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

At Oxford in the autumn of 1810, Shelley's closest friend was Thomas Jefferson Hogg, a self-centered, self-confident young man who shared Shelley's love of philosophy and scorn of orthodoxy. Shelley at this early date had already published, anonymously, two Gothic novels and three slim volumes of verse, including his recently rediscovered *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, an antiwar poem in heroic couplets. With Hogg he collaborated on a pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism,* which claimed that God's existence cannot be proved on empirical grounds, and, provocatively, the co-authors mailed it to the bishops and heads of the colleges at Oxford. Shelley refused to repudiate the document and, to his shock and grief, was peremptorily expelled, terminating a university career that had lasted only six months. This event opened a breach between Shelley and his father that widened over the years.

Shelley went to London, where he took up the cause of Harriet Westbrook, the pretty and warmhearted daughter of a well-to-do tavern keeper, whose father, Shelley wrote to Hogg, "has persecuted her in a most horrible way by endeavoring to compel her to go to school." Harriet threw herself on Shelley's protection, and "gratitude and admiration," he wrote, "all demand that I shall love her *forever.*" He eloped with Harriet to Edinburgh and married her, against his conviction that marriage was a tyrannical and degrading social institution. He was then eighteen years of age; his bride, sixteen. The couple moved restlessly from place to place, living on a small allowance granted reluctantly by their families. In February 1812, accompanied by Harriet's sister Eliza, they traveled to Dublin to distribute Shelley's *Address to the Irish People* and otherwise take part in the movement for Catholic emancipation and for the amelioration of that oppressed and poverty-stricken people.

Back in London Shelley eagerly sought the acquaintance of the radical novelist and philosopher William Godwin, author of *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), and in 1813 he published his first important work, *Queen Mab, A Philosophical Poem*, which owes much to Godwin's optimistic conviction in *Political Justice* that the regeneration of the human species was at hand and that in these

modern times "the phalanx of reason" would prove "invulnerable" in its advance. In Shelley's long poem, which he printed at his own expense, so as to maneuver around blasphemy and sedition laws, the fairy Queen Mab reveals to a journeying soul visions of the woeful past, a dreadful present, and a utopian future. Queen Mab's denunciations of institutional religion, aristocracy, and monarchy are elaborated at length in the poem's many endnotes. These atheistic and revolutionary sentiments made Shelley infamous for the rest of his life. They also, somewhat to his embarrassment in later life, came to the attention of the radical press, which kept *Queen Mab* in print, in cheap, pirated editions, for the rest of the century.

In the following spring Shelley, who had drifted away from Harriet, fell in love with Godwin's and the late Mary Wollstonecraft's beautiful and intelligent daughter, Mary. Convinced that cohabitation without love was immoral, he abandoned Harriet, fled to France with Mary (taking along her stepsister, Claire Clairmont), and—in accordance with his belief in nonexclusive love—invited Harriet to come live with them as another sister. Shelley's elopement with Mary outraged her father, even though his own views of marriage had once been, on the testimony of *Political Justice*, no less radical than Shelley's and even though Shelley, despite his own financial difficulties, had earlier taken over Godwin's substantial debts. When he returned to London, Shelley found that the public, his family, and many friends regarded him as not only an atheist and a revolutionist but also a libertine. When two years later Harriet, pregnant by an unknown lover, drowned herself in a fit of despair, the courts denied Shelley the custody of their two children. (His first child with Mary Godwin had died earlier, only twelve days after her birth in February 1815.) Percy and Mary married in December 1816, and in spring 1818 they moved to Italy.

In Italy Shelley resumed his restless way of life, evading the people to whom he owed money by moving from town to town and house to house. His health was usually bad. Although the death of his grandfather in 1815 had provided a substantial income, he dissipated so much of it by his warmhearted but imprudent support

of Godwin and other needy acquaintances that he was constantly short of funds. Within a year of their arrival in Italy, the Shelleys lost two children to illness: their infant daughter Clara (b. 1817) died from dysentery in Venice in September 1818, and their son William died, aged three, in Rome the following June. Grief over these deaths destroyed the earlier harmony of the Shelleys' marriage; the birth in November 1819 of another son, Percy Florence (their only child to survive to adulthood), was not enough to mend the rift.

In these circumstances Shelley wrote his greatest works. Exile from England prompted him, on the one hand, to envision himself as an alien and outcast, bereft of an audience, and rejected by the human race to whose welfare he had dedicated his powers. It also prompted him, on the other hand, to imagine and, to a lesser extent, initiate new kinds of intellectual alliances and forms of ethical and political community, ambitions manifested in his friendship with Lord Byron and in the invitations to join him in Italy that he extended to Keats, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Peacock, and others. The poems of 1819–21, so rich and complex in part because they often seek to reconcile these conflicting accounts of the poetic self in relation to community, include (from 1819 alone) *Prometheus Unbound*, an epic-scale "lyrical drama" (meant to be read rather than performed) about the Greek Titan's survival and transcendence of oppression; his Jacobean-style revenge tragedy of incest and parricide, *The Cenci;* his visionary call for revolution, *The Mask of Anarchy*; a witty satire on Wordsworth, *Peter Bell the Third*; a penetrating, proto-Marxist essay, "A Philosophical View of Reform"; and numerous lyric poems. Later came "A Defence of Poetry"; *Epipsychidion*, a rhapsodic view of love as a spiritual union beyond earthly limits; *Adonais*, his elegy on Keats, representing the younger poet as a victim of a politicized review culture; and *Hellas*, a lyrical drama inspired by the Greek war for liberation from the Ottoman Empire.

These writings are enriched by Shelley's omnivorous reading, in the natural sciences, ancient and modern philosophy, Dante, Milton, the Bible—reading that he carried on, as his friend Hogg said, "in

season and out of season, at table, in bed, and especially during a walk" until he became one of the most erudite of the English poets. In particular the late works often evince Shelley's study of Plato (whose *Ion* and *Symposium* he translated) and of the Neoplatonists. The Platonic division of the cosmos into two worlds—the ordinary world of change, mortality, evil, and suffering, which is contrasted with the ideal world of perfect and eternal forms, of which the world of sense experience is only a distant and illusory reflection—was immensely attractive to Shelley. His *Adonais* set out that contrast memorably: "Life like a dome of many-coloured glass / Stains the white radiance of eternity" (lines 462–63). At the same time, however, the idealism these lines register as they evoke a beauty that is offset by the "stain" of temporal existence was often, within Shelley's late writings, tempered by his enthusiastic study of British empiricist philosophy, which limits knowledge to what is given in sense experience, and tempered, especially, by the affinities he felt for the radical skepticism of David Hume. Works such as "Mont Blanc" are shaped by his sense that there are narrow limits to what human beings can know with certainty. Out of this divided intellectual inheritance, Shelley developed, some critics have proposed, a "skeptical idealism," an attitude that also colors the hopes for radical social and political reform that he retained even at a historical moment that seemed (with the restoration of the old autocratic monarchies after 1815, with the suffering of the poor in the economic depression that followed the end of the war) to have delivered an insurmountable setback to the cause of liberty. For him such hopes were moral obligations, more than they were expressions of intellectual certainty. We must continue to hope because, by keeping open the possibility of a better future, hope releases the imaginative and creative powers that are the only means of achieving that end. Shelley had a motto in Italian inscribed on a ring that he often wore: "Il buon tempo verra" ("the good time will come").

When in 1820 the Shelleys settled finally at Pisa, he came closer to finding contentment than at any other time in his adult life. A

group of friends, Shelley's "Pisan Circle," gathered around them, including for a while Byron and the swashbuckling Cornishman Edward Trelawny. Chief in Shelley's affections were Edward Williams, a retired lieutenant of a cavalry regiment serving in India, and his common-law wife Jane, with whom Shelley became infatuated and to whom he addressed some of his best lyrics and verse letters. The end came suddenly, and in a way prefigured uncannily in the last stanza of *Adonais*, in which he had described his spirit as a ship driven by a violent storm out into the dark unknown. On July 8, 1822, Shelley and Edward Williams were sailing their open boat, the *Don Juan*, on the Gulf of Spezia. A violent squall swamped the boat. When several days later the bodies were washed ashore, they were cremated, and Shelley's ashes were buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome, near the graves of John Keats and William Shelley, the poet's young son.

Shelley's character has been the subject of heated and contradictory estimates, and commentators have also disagreed, analogously, in their assessments of his success at mixing politics and poetry. The actions that he justified to himself because they were true to his convictions often led to disastrous consequences for those near him, especially women; and even recent scholars, while repudiating the vicious attacks made by Shelley's contemporaries, attribute some of those actions to a self-assured egotism that masked itself as idealism. Yet Byron, who knew Shelley intimately, and did not readily pay compliments, wrote to his publisher John Murray, in response to attacks on Shelley at the time of his death: "You are all brutally mistaken about Shelley, who was, without exception, the *best* and least selfish man I ever knew." Vilified by the Tory press during his lifetime, Shelley's politics recommended his poetry to many later political radicals: the Chartists in the middle of the nineteenth century, Marx and Engels at the end, and at the start of the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi and many guiding lights of the British Labour Party. And, despite their ideological differences, Wordsworth recognized early on the extent to which Shelley in that poetry had expanded English versification's metrical and stanzaic

resources: "Shelley," Wordsworth said, "is one of the best *artists* of us all."

The texts here are those prepared by Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat for *Shelley's Poetry and Prose: A Norton Critical Edition*, 2nd ed. (2001); Reiman also edited for this anthology a few poems not included in that edition.

Mutability

We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly!—yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:

Or like forgotten lyres,° whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.—A dream has power to poison sleep;
We rise.—One wandering thought pollutes the day;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away:

It is the same!—For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free:
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

ca. 1814–15 1816

Notes

- °: *wind harps* Return to reference °

To Wordsworth[1]

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark° in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,[2]—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

ca. 1814–15 1816

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shelley's grieved comment on the poet of nature and of social radicalism after his views had become conservative.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Perhaps an allusion to "Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty," the title that Wordsworth gave to the section of sonnets such as "London, 1802" when he republished them in his *Poems* of 1807.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *small ship*Return to reference °

Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude

Shelley wrote *Alastor* in the fall and early winter of 1815 and published it in March 1816. According to his friend Thomas Love Peacock, the poet was "at a loss for a title, and I proposed that which he adopted: Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude. The Greek word *Alastor* is an evil genius. . . . I mention the true meaning of the word because many have supposed *Alastor* to be the name of the hero" (*Memoirs of Shelley*). Peacock's definition of an *alastor* as "an *evil* genius" has compounded the problems in interpreting this work: the term *evil* does not seem to fit the attitude expressed within the poem toward the protagonist's solitary quest, the poem seems to clash with statements in Shelley's preface, and the first and second paragraphs of the preface seem inconsistent with each other. These problems, however, may be largely resolved if we recognize that, in this early achievement (he was only twenty-three when he wrote *Alastor*), Shelley established his characteristic procedure of working with multiple perspectives. Both preface and poem explore alternative and conflicting possibilities in what Shelley calls "doubtful knowledge"—matters that are humanly essential but in which no certainty is humanly possible.

By the term *allegorical* in the opening sentence of his preface, Shelley seems to mean that his poem, like medieval and Renaissance allegories such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, represents an aspiration in the spiritual realm by the allegorical vehicle of a journey and quest in the material world. As Shelley's first paragraph outlines, the poem's protagonist, for whom objects in the natural world "cease to suffice," commits himself to the search for a female Other who will fulfill his intellectual, imaginative, and sensuous needs. The second paragraph of the preface, by contrast, passes judgment on the visionary protagonist in terms of the values of "actual men"—that is, the requirements of human and social life in this world. From this point of view, the visionary has been "avenged" (punished) for turning away from community in pursuit of his individual psychic needs. The diversity of attitudes expressed within the poem becomes easier to understand

if, on the basis of the many echoes of Wordsworth in the opening invocation, we identify the narrator of the story as a Wordsworthian poet for whom the natural world is sufficient to satisfy both the demands of his imagination and his need for community. This narrative poet, it can be assumed, undertakes to tell compassionately, but from his own perspective, the history of a nameless visionary who has surrendered everything in the quest for a goal beyond possibility.

In this early poem, Shelley establishes a form, a conceptual frame, and the imagery for the Romantic quest that he reiterated in his later poems and that also served as a paradigm for many other poems, from Byron's *Manfred* and Keats's *Endymion* to the quest poems of Shelley's later admirer William Butler Yeats. At the same time, in presenting a protagonist who journeys farther and farther east, from Greece onward to Jerusalem and then India, *Alastor* also prefigures story lines that Victorian adventure novels would construct for their empire-building heroes.

Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude

Preface

The poem entitled "ALASTOR," may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image.[1] He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare

to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

> "The good die first,
> And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
> Burn to the socket!"[2]

December 14, 1815

Alastor; or, The Spirit of Solitude

Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid amarem, amans amare.—Confess. St. August.[3]

Earth, ocean, air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother[4] has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety[5] to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon° with mine;[6]

If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,°
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,[7]
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs;
If spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses, have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted° favour now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favour my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings[8]
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchymist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge: . . . and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveil'd thy inmost sanctuary,

Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless,° as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,°
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,[9]
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.[1]

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:—
A lovely youth,—no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress[2] wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:—
Gentle, and brave, and generous,—no lorn° bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sung, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he past, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision, and bright silver dream,
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air,
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great

Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had past, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes[3]
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent° with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.[4]
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,[5]
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake,° suspend
Her timid steps to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful° ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec,[6] and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes,[7] and whatsoe'er of strange
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphynx,
Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble daemons[8] watch
The Zodiac's[9] brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,[1]
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth, through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes, nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps:—
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love:—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath

Of innocent dreams arose: then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered,° and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet wandering on, through Arabie
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,[2]
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus[3] from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire,[4] far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-coloured woof° and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire: wild numbers° then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath

Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burthen: at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom: . . . she drew back a while,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved° and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock he started from his trance—
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues

Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;°
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs, and breath, and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost,
In the wide pathless desart of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep?[5] Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent° mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault, with loathliest vapours hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conduct, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart,
The insatiate hope which it awakened, stung
His brain even like despair.
While day-light held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness.—As an eagle grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates°
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aëry wilderness:[6] thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,

Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on
Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep[7]
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk,[8] and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings[9] scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone
As in a furnace burning secretly
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of wind
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career: the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after-times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false° names
Brother, and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore[1]
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight.—"Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird; thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope convulsed his curling lips
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge,[2] and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts he looked around.
There was no fair fiend[3] near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop° floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;

For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny; sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat, he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.[4]

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat.—A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafed sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining° on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on,
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,

Entwin’d in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O’er the fair front and radiant eyes of day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean’s mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven° wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean. Safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form,
Had been an elemental god.[5]

At midnight
The moon arose: and lo! the etherial cliffs[6]
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose cavern’d base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound for ever.—Who shall save?—
The boat fled on,—the boiling torrent drove,—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulphed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed.—“Vision and Love!”
The Poet cried aloud, “I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long!”

The boat pursued

The winding of the cavern. Day-light shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved°
With alternating dash the knarled roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting, yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round, and round, and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where, through an opening of the rocky bank,
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.—Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulph embosom it?
Now shall it fall?—A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar,
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave

A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore.[7] Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks
Mocking[8] its moans, respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated° leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt, some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below.
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang

Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make net-work of the dark blue light of day,
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose, twined with jasmine,
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half seen; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky, darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliaged lattice twinkling fair,
Or, painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth

Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves, the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence, and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;—
But, undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was,—only . . . when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness, . . . two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell.—The rivulet
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced; like childhood laughing as it went:
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.—"O stream!
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?

Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulphs,
Thy searchless° fountain, and invisible course
Have each their type in me: and the wide sky,
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!"

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch
Of fever, he did move; yet, not like him,
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome° evening sky.
Grey rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook: tall spires of windlestrae[9]
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but knarled roots[1] of antient pines
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here,
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and where irradiate° dewy eyes

Had shone, gleam stony orbs:—so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm, he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice[2]
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
Mid toppling stones, black gulphs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems, with its accumulated crags,
To overhang the world: for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-coloured even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near° scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,
Made contrast with the universe. A pine,[3]
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response, at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river,
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void

Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the grey precipice and solemn pine
And torrent, were not all;—one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth, and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot, that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves for ever green,
And berries dark, the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor, and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore,
In wanton sport, those bright leaves, whose decay,
Red, yellow, or etherially pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'Tis the haunt
Of every gentle wind, whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude:—one voice
Alone inspired its echoes,—even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colours of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and horned[4] moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge

That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness: not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.—O, storm of death!
Whose sightless[5] speed divides this sullen night:
And thou, colossal Skeleton,° that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world, from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee. Ruin calls
His brother Death. A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head, his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest° chasm;—and thus he lay,

Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and despair,
The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose, the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling:—his last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun° beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests, and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor[6] sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still:
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night:[7]—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image, silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapour° fed with golden beams
That ministered on[8] sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wonderous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voiced waves—a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched for ever,
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

O, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance![9] O, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man[1] has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! O, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,[2]
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled
Like some frail exhalation;° which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,—ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper[3] low or joyous orison,°
Lifts still its solemn voice:—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not. Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless° wind, shall live alone

In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shews o' the world are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe too "deep for tears,"[4] when all
Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

1815 1816

Endnotes

- Note 1: For Shelley's expansion of this account of love as an idealized projection of all that is best in the self, see his essay "On Love," p. 787, below.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth's *The Excursion* 1.519–21; the passage occurs also in *The Ruined Cottage* 96–98, which Wordsworth reworked into the first book of *The Excursion* (1814).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: St. Augustine's *Confessions* 3.1: "Not yet did I love, though I loved to love, seeking what I might love, loving to love." Augustine thus describes his state of mind when he was addicted to illicit sexual love; the true object of his desire, which compels the tortuous spiritual journey of his life, he later discovered to be the infinite and transcendent God.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Nature, invoked as common mother to both the elements and the poet.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Wordsworth, "My heart leaps up," lines 8–9: "And I could wish my days to be / Bound each to each by natural piety." Wordsworth also used these lines as the epigraph to his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, with my love.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The sunset colors.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," lines 141–42: "those obstinate questionings / Of sense and outward things."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The narrator calls on the Mother, his natural muse, to make him her wind harp.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey," lines 94ff.: "A presence . . . / Whose dwelling is . . . the round ocean and the living air, / And the blue sky, and in the mind of man: / A motion and a spirit."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The cypress represented mourning. "Votive": offered to fulfill a vow to the gods.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lakes of pitch, flowing from a volcano.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An olive-green semiprecious stone.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shelley was himself a vegetarian.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An ancient city in what is now Lebanon. Tyre was once an important commercial city on the Phoenician coast.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The ancient capital of Upper Egypt. Memphis is the ruined capital of Lower Egypt.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In Greek mythology, not evil spirits but minor deities or attendant spirits.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In the temple of Isis at Denderah, Egypt, the Zodiac is represented on the ceiling. Journeying among the great civilizations of the past has taken the Poet backward in time to older and older cultures—from the Greeks to the Phoenicians, the Jews, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians. Finally he reaches Ethiopia (line 115), which had been described as the "cradle of the sciences."Return to reference 9

- Note 1: That is, by quotations inscribed in the stone.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A desert in southern Persia.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Rivers in Asia.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Now known as Kashmir, an Indian state bordered on the northeast by the Himalayas. In this choice of setting, Shelley was influenced by *The Missionary*, the 1811 novel by Sydney Owenson. See "The Romantic Imagination and the 'Oriental Nations' " on p. 931, below.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, is death the only access to this maiden of his dream?Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The eagle and serpent locked in mortal combat is a recurrent image in Shelley's poems (see *Prometheus Unbound* 3.1.72–73).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A mountain stronghold in the northern part of ancient Arabia. Aornos is a high mountain. "Petra": the rock (literal trans.).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Bactria, in ancient Persia, is now part of Afghanistan.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The Parthians inhabited northern Persia.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The shore of Lake Aral, about 175 miles east of the Caspian Sea.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, the maiden in the sleeper's dream.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Apparently he suspects there may have been an external agent luring him to the death described in the preceding lines.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: If the Poet's boat is being carried upstream on the Oxus River from the Aral Sea to the river's headwaters in the Hindu Kush Mountains (the "Indian Caucasus" that is the setting for *Prometheus Unbound*), then the journey is taking him to a region that the naturalist Buffon (whom Shelley often read) had identified as the cradle of the human race. But it is also possible that the starting point for this journey is the Caspian Sea, in

which case the journey would end near the traditional site of the Garden of Eden.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A god of one of the natural elements (see line 1).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, cliffs high in the air.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The "yellow flowers" overhanging their own reflection (lines 406–8), probably narcissus, may signify the narcissistic temptation of the Poet to be satisfied with a projection of his own self. But his need for an unearthly Other revives, and "the strong impulse" (line 415) drives him on.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: As often in Shelley, "mocking" has a double sense: mimicking as well as ridiculing the sounds of the forest (line 421).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Windlestraw (Scottish dial.); tall, dried stalks of grass.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Probably an error for "stumps" or "trunks."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Headlong fall (of the stream, line 540).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Pine trees in Shelley often signify persistence and steadfastness amid change and vicissitudes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The moon is crescent shaped with the points rising, as in Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode": "the new Moon / With the old Moon in her arms."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Invisible, or perhaps "unseeing."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the moon. The word *meteor* was once used for any phenomenon in the skies, as our modern term *meteorology* suggests.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The ebbing of the Poet's life parallels the descent of the "homed moon," to the moment when only the two "points of light"—its horns—show above the hills.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Attended, acted as a servant to.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Medea brewed a magic potion to rejuvenate the dying Aeson; where some of the potion spilled on the ground, flowers sprang up (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.275ff.).Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The Wandering Jew. According to a medieval legend, he had taunted Christ on the way to the crucifixion and was condemned to wander the world, deathless, until Christ's second coming.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Cave in which he has visions. "Dark magician": an alchemist attempting to produce the elixir of enduring life. Alchemy intrigued both Shelleys. See Mary Shelley's "The Mortal Immortal" (p. 1026, below).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Evening prayer.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From the last line of Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality": "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *gift*Return to reference °
- °: *evening*Return to reference °
- °: *customary*Return to reference °
- °: *motionless*Return to reference °
- °: *temple*Return to reference °
- °: *abandoned*Return to reference °
- °: *crowded*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °
- °: *bewildered*Return to reference °
- °: *weave*Return to reference °
- °: *verse*Return to reference °
- °: *wrapped up*Return to reference °
- °: *phantom*Return to reference °
- °: *jutting, overhanging*Return to reference °
- °: *hastens*Return to reference °
- °: *mistaken*Return to reference °
- °: *small open boat*Return to reference °
- °: *crashing*Return to reference °
- °: *torn asunder*Return to reference °

- °: *washed* Return to reference °
- °: *intertwined* Return to reference °
- °: *undiscoverable* Return to reference °
- °: *luminous* Return to reference °
- °: *illumined* Return to reference °
- °: *nearby* Return to reference °
- °: *death* Return to reference °
- °: *darkest* Return to reference °
- °: *darkened* Return to reference °
- °: *cloud* Return to reference °
- °: *mist* Return to reference °
- °: *prayer* Return to reference °
- °: *unfeeling* Return to reference °

Mont Blanc[1]

Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni

1

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap forever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

2

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
Thou many-coloured, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud shadows and sunbeams: awful° scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice gulphs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest;—thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder° time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging

To hear—an old and solemn harmony;
Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep
Of the etherial waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptured[2] image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desart fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;—
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate phantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that° or thou° art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,[3]
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there![4]

3

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep,—that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurled
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep

Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless° gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene—
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desart peopled by the storms alone,
Save° when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracts° her there—how hideously
Its shapes are heaped around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.°—Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-dæmon[5] taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire, envelope once this silent snow?
None can reply—all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt,[6] or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be
But for such faith[7] with nature reconciled;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which[8] the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

4

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the dædal[9] earth; lightning, and rain,

Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower;—the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be;
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die; revolve, subside and swell.
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primæval mountains
Teach the adverting° mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shattered stand: the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaimed. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man, flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves

Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling[1]
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,[2]
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

5

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights,
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them:—Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou,° and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

1816 1817

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem, in which Shelley both echoes and argues with the poetry of natural description written by Wordsworth and Coleridge, was firstpublished as the conclusion to the *History o*

a Six Weeks' Tour. This was a book that Percy and Mary Shelley wrote together detailing the excursion that they and Claire Clairmont took in July 1816 to the valley of Chamonix, in what now southeastern France. That valley lies at the foot of Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in the Alps and in all Europe.

In the *History* Percy Shelley commented on his poem: "It wa composed under the immediate impression of the deep and powerful feelings excited by the objects it attempts to describe Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, not formed by humans.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, in the part of the mind that creates poetry.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In these difficult lines (41–48) Shelley seems to be recalling Plato's allegory in the *Republic* of the mind as cave. Plato describes human beings' sense of reality as if it were based only on the shadows cast by firelight on the walls and we remained ignorant of the light of reality outside the cave. The syntax in the passage blurs the distinction between what is inside the human viewer's mind and outside in the world that he views: the thoughts (line 41) seek in the poet's creative faculty ("the still cave of the witch Poesy") some "shade," "phantom," or "faint image" of the ravine of the Arve, and when the ravine is thereby remembered (when "the breast" from which the images has fled "recalls them"), then the ravine exists.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A supernatural being, halfway between mortals and the gods. Here it represents the force that makes earthquakes. Shelley views this landscape as the product of violent geological upheavals in the past.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Awe-filled open-mindedness.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, only through holding such a faith. Drafts of the poem support this reading: Shelley also wrote "In such wise faith with Nature reconciled" and "In such a faith."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The reference is to "voice," line 80.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Intricately formed; derived from Daedalus, builder of the labyrinth in Crete.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: This description (as well as that in lines 9–11) seems to be an echo of Coleridge's description of the chasm and sacred river in the recently published "Kubla Khan," lines 12–24 (see p. 491, above).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Arve, which flows into Lake Geneva. Nearby the river Rhone flows out of Lake Geneva to begin its course through France and into the Mediterranean.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °
- °: *earlier, ancient*Return to reference °
- °: *thy darkness* Return to reference °
- °: *the ravine*Return to reference °
- °: *invisible*Return to reference °
- °: *except*Return to reference °
- °: *tracks*Return to reference °
- °: *split*Return to reference °
- °: *observant*Return to reference °
- °: *Mont Blanc*Return to reference °

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty[1]

1

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
  Floats though unseen amongst us,—visiting
  This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower.—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,[2]
    It visits with inconstant glance
    Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,—
    Like clouds in starlight widely spread,—
    Like memory of music fled,—
    Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

2

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
  With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
  Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
    Ask why the sunlight not forever
    Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
Why aught° should fail and fade that once is shewn,
    Why fear and dream and death and birth
    Cast on the daylight of this earth
    Such gloom,—why man has such a scope

For love and hate, despondency and hope?

3

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
  To sage or poet these responses given—
  Therefore the name of God and ghosts and
  Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,[3]
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to
  sever,
    From all we hear and all we see,
    Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
    Or music by the night wind sent
    Through strings of some still instrument,
    Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

4

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
  And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
  Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his
  heart.[4]
    Thou messenger of sympathies,
    That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
    Like darkness to a dying flame![5]
    Depart not as thy shadow came,
    Depart not—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

5

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
  Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
  And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;[6]
    I was not heard—I saw them not—
    When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
    All vital things that wake to bring
    News of buds and blossoming,—
    Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in extacy!

6

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
  To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
  With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
    Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night[7]—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
    Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
    This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

7

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear[8] himself, and love all human kind.

1816 1817

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Intellectual": nonmaterial, that which is beyond access to the human senses. In this poem intellectual beauty is something postulated to account for occasional states of awareness that lend splendor, grace, and truth both to the natural world and to people's moral consciousness.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Used as a verb.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The names (line 27) represent nothing better than the feeble guesses that philosophers and poets have made in attempting to answer the questions posed in stanza 2, but these guesses also delude us as though they were magic spells.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, "man would be immortal . . . if thou didst keep."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Darkness may be said to nourish the dying flame by providing the contrast that offsets its light.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Lines 49–52 refer to Shelley's youthful experiments with magic and conjuring. In one manuscript version this line reads "I called on that false name with which our youth is fed"; the next line continues, "He answered not." This version would have

clinched Shelley's scandalous reputation for atheism.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, stayed up until the night, envious of their delight, had reluctantly departed.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Probably in the old sense: "to stand in awe of."Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *anything*Return to reference °

Ozymandias[1]

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless° legs of stone
Stand in the desart. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive,° stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;[2]
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

1817 1818

Endnotes

- Note 1: According to Diodorus Siculus, Greek historian of the 1st century B.C.E., the largest statue in Egypt had the inscription "I am Ozymandias, king of kings; if anyone wishes to know what I am and where I lie, let him surpass me in some of my exploits." Ozymandias was the Greek name for Ramses II of Egypt, 13th century B.C.E.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "The hand" is the sculptor's, who had "mocked" (both imitated and satirized) the sculptured passions; "the heart" is the king's, which has "fed" his passions.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *without a torso*Return to reference °
- °: *outlive*Return to reference °

On Love[1]

What is Love? Ask him who lives what is life; ask him who adores what is God.

I know not the internal constitution of other men, nor even of thine whom I now address. I see that in some external attributes they resemble me, but when, misled by that appearance, I have thought to appeal to something in common and unburthen my inmost soul to them, I have found my language misunderstood, like one in a distant and savage land. The more opportunities they have afforded me for experience, the wider has appeared the interval between us, and to a greater distance have the points of sympathy been withdrawn. With a spirit ill-fitted to sustain such proof, trembling and feeble through its tenderness, I have every where sought, and have found only repulse and disappointment.

Thou demandest what is Love. It is that powerful attraction towards all we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves. If we reason, we would be understood; if we imagine, we would that the airy children of our brain were born anew within another's; if we feel, we would that another's nerves should vibrate to our own, that the beams of their eyes should kindle at once and mix and melt into our own; that lips of motionless ice should not reply to lips quivering and burning with the heart's best blood:—this is Love. This is the bond and the sanction which connects not only man with man, but with every thing which exists. We are born into the world, and there is something within us, which from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness. It is probably in correspondence with this law that the infant drains milk from the bosom of its mother; this propensity develops itself with the development of our nature. We dimly see

within our intellectual nature, a miniature as it were of our entire self, yet deprived of all that we condemn or despise, the ideal prototype of every thing excellent and lovely that we are capable of conceiving as belonging to the nature of man. Not only the portrait of our external being, but an assemblage of the minutest particles of which our nature is composed:[2] a mirror whose surface reflects only the forms of purity and brightness: a soul within our own soul that describes a circle around its proper Paradise, which pain and sorrow and evil dare not overleap. To this we eagerly refer all sensations, thirsting that they should resemble and correspond with it. The discovery of its antitype; the meeting with an understanding capable of clearly estimating our own; an imagination which should enter into and seize upon the subtle and delicate peculiarities which we have delighted to cherish and unfold in secret, with a frame, whose nerves, like the chords of two exquisite lyres, strung to the accompaniment of one delightful voice, vibrate with the vibrations of our own; and a combination of all these in such proportion as the type within demands: this is the invisible and unattainable point to which Love tends; and to attain which, it urges forth the powers of man to arrest the faintest shadow of that, without the possession of which, there is no rest nor respite to the heart over which it rules. Hence in solitude, or that deserted state when we are surrounded by human beings and yet they sympathize not with us, we love the flowers, the grass, the waters, and the sky. In the motion of the very leaves of spring, in the blue air, there is then found a secret correspondence with our heart. There is eloquence in the tongueless wind, and a melody in the flowing brooks and the rustling of the reeds beside them, which by their inconceivable relation to something within the soul awaken the spirits to dance of breathless rapture, and bring tears of mysterious tenderness to the eyes, like the enthusiasm of patriotic success, or the voice of one beloved singing to you alone. Sterne says that if he were in a desert he would love some cypress.[3] So soon as this want or power is dead, man becomes a living sepulchre of himself, and what yet survives is the mere husk of what once he was.

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Shelley's essay, likely composed in the summer of 1818 just after he translated Plato's *Symposium*, first appeared in print in *The Keepsake for 1829*—a miscellany of poems, stories, and engravings, edited by Frederick Mansel Reynolds. *The Keepsake* belonged to the group of publications that, debuting in Britain in the 1820s, were known as the literary annuals: sumptuously produced, bound in silk, these books were promoted as especially appropriate and tasteful gifts to be given to young women. Mary Shelley, who supplied Reynolds with her late husband's manuscript, was herself a frequent contributor to *The Keepsake*: see "The Mortal Immortal," p. 1026, below.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: These words are ineffectual and metaphorical. Most words are so,—no help! [*Shelley's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Paraphrase of a passage in Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), in which the narrator contrasts his approach to traveling with that of travelers less easily pleased: "was I in a desart, I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections."Return to reference 3

Stanzas Written in Dejection—December 1818, near Naples[1]

The Sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight
The winds, the birds, the Ocean-floods;
The City's voice itself is soft, like Solitude's.

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown;
I sit upon the sands alone;
The lightning of the noontide Ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas, I have nor hope nor health
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage[2] in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned;
Nor fame nor power nor love nor leisure—
Others I see whom these surround,
Smiling they live and call life pleasure:
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne and yet must bear
Till Death like Sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the Sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,[3]
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan—
They might lament,—for I am one
Whom men love not, and yet regret;
Unlike this day, which, when the Sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger though enjoyed, like joy in Memory yet.

1818 1824

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shelley's first wife, Harriet, had drowned herself; Clara, his baby daughter with Mary Shelley, had just died; and he was plagued by ill health, pain, financial worries, and the sense that he had failed as a poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Probably the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (2nd century C.E.), Stoic philosopher who wrote twelve books of *Meditations.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, as I will lament this sweet day when it has gone.Return to reference 3

Sonnet [Lift not the painted veil]

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life; though unreal shapes be pictured there
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread,—behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin Destinies, who ever weave
Their shadows o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it. . . . he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love
But found them not, alas; nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows—a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene—a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher, found it not.[1]

1818–20 1824

Endnotes

- Note 1: Compare Ecclesiastes 1:2: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."Return to reference 1

The Mask of Anarchy On August 16, 1819, a crowd of sixty thousand, men, women, and children, gathered on St. Peter's Field in Manchester to support reform of the system of political representation. The event had been in preparation for months: the organizers aimed to make the gathering a display not just of the people's numerical strength but also their discipline. On the day, the magistrates sent in the local militia, backed up by a force of saber-wielding cavalry, to arrest one of the speakers, Henry "Orator" Hunt, and to disperse the peaceable, unarmed crowd. The ensuing mayhem left more than six hundred wounded—including men, women, and children—and resulted in at least nine deaths (tallies of the casualties, as well as estimates of the size of the crowd, have varied, starting with conflicting reports in the event's immediate aftermath, but some modern historians put the death toll as high as fifteen). The opposition press quickly circulated eyewitness accounts of the events, which came to be known as the Peterloo Massacre. The name invited a comparison to the Battle of Waterloo: that had been viewed as a national glory, but this was a national shame.

Shelley began this protest poem shortly after the news reached him in Italy, writing, as he reported, in a "torrent" of "indignation." In September he sent it to Leigh Hunt for publication in Hunt's journal the *Examiner.* Justifiably fearful that he would be charged with libel, Hunt postponed its publication until 1832. At that point, with the passage, at last, of a bill reforming Parliament, the concluding vision (in Hunt's words) of the "rise and growth of the Public Enlightenment" seemed prophetic, and the poem read as a call for peaceable reform, not violent revolution. In the 1832 printing the title was *The Masque of Anarchy.* That allusion to the masque, the performance genre celebrating aristocrats' class identity and authority, compounds the poem's ironies. Through the pageantry of the court-masque, seventeenth-century aristocrats had enacted their transcendence of the disorder personified by the vulgar performers of the anti-masque. In the upside-down world of role reversals that Shelley envisions, Anarchy—a term the British government used to stigmatize democratic reform—plays host to aristocratic revels.

The Mask of Anarchy

Written on the Occasion of the Massacre at Manchester

As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh—
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;[1]
Seven bloodhounds followed him:

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;[2]
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.[3]

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers° or spies.

Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.[4]

And he wore a kingly crown,
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw—
"I AM GOD, AND KING, AND LAW!"

With a pace stately and fast,
Over English land he past,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

And a mighty troop around,
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword,
For the service of their Lord.

And with glorious triumph, they
Rode through England proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed the Pageant swift and free,
Tearing up, and trampling down;
Till they came to London town.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,

Felt his heart with terror sicken
Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

For with pomp to meet him came
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired Murderers,[5] who did sing
"Thou art God, and Law, and King.

"We have waited, weak and lone
For thy coming, Mighty One!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold."

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering—"Thou art Law and God."—

Then all cried with one accord;
"Thou art King, and God, and Lord;
Anarchy, to Thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now!"

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,
Bowed and grinned to every one,
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the Nation.[6]

For he knew the Palaces
Of our Kings were rightly his;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,[7]
And the gold-inwoven robe.

So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,[8]
And was proceeding with intent

To meet his pensioned[9] Parliament

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said:
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air:

"My father Time is weak and grey
With waiting for a better day;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

"He has had child after child
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me—
Misery, oh, Misery!"

Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses' feet,
Expecting, with a patient eye,
Murder, Fraud and Anarchy.

When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose,
Small at first, and weak, and frail
Like the vapour of a vale:[1]

Till as clouds grow on the blast,
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

It grew—a Shape arrayed in mail[°]
Brighter than the Viper's scale,
And upborne on wings whose grain[°]
Was as the light of sunny rain.

On its helm, seen far away,
A planet, like the Morning's, lay;[2]
And those plumes its light rained through
Like a shower of crimson dew.

With step as soft as wind it past
O'er the heads of men—so fast
That they knew the presence there,
And looked,—but all was empty air.

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken
As waves arise when loud winds call
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

And the prostrate multitude
Looked—and ankle-deep in blood,
Hope that maiden most serene
Was walking with a quiet mien:

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth—
The Horse of Death tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust, the murderers thronged behind.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
A sense awakening and yet tender
Was heard and felt—and at its close
These words of joy and fear arose

As if their own indignant Earth
Which gave the sons of England birth
Had felt their blood upon her brow,
And shuddering with a mother's throe°

Had turned every drop of blood
By which her face had been bedewed
To an accent unwithstood,—
As if her heart had cried aloud:

"Men of England, heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another;

"Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number
Shake your chains to Earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few.

"What is Freedom?—ye can tell
That which slavery is, too well—
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

" 'Tis to work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell

"So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment.

" 'Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak,°
When the winter winds are bleak,—
They are dying whilst I speak.

" 'Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye;

" 'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousand fold
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.[3]

"Paper coin—that forgery
Of the title deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

" 'Tis to be a slave in soul
And to hold no strong controul
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

"And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain
'Tis to see the Tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you—
Blood is on the grass like dew.

"Then it is to feel revenge
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood—and wrong for wrong—
Do not thus when ye are strong.

"Birds find rest, in narrow nest
When weary of their winged quest;
Beasts find fare, in woody lair
When storm and snow are in the air.

"Asses, swine, have litter spread
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one—
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none![4]

"This is Slavery—savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den
Would endure not as ye do—
But such ills they never knew.

"What art thou Freedom? O! could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand—tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery:

"Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.°

"For the labourer thou art bread,
And a comely table spread
From his daily labour come
In a neat and happy home.

"Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude—
No—in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.

"To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.[5]

"Thou art Justice—ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England—thou
Shield'st alike the high and low.

"Thou art Wisdom—Freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which Priests make such ado.

"Thou art Peace—never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.°

"What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood?
It availed, Oh, Liberty!
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

"Thou art Love—the rich have kist
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee[6]

"Or turn their wealth to arms, and make
War for thy beloved sake
On wealth, and war, and fraud—whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

"Science, Poetry and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot°
So serene, they curse it not.

"Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,

All that can adorn and bless
Art thou—let deeds not words express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

"Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

"Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be
Witness the solemnity.

"From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast,
From every hut, village and town
Where those who live and suffer moan
For others' misery or their own,

"From the workhouse[7] and the prison
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old
Groan for pain, and weep for cold—

"From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares[8]—

"Lastly from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around

"Those prison halls of wealth and fashion
Where some few feel such compassion

For those who groan, and toil, and wail
As must make their brethren pale—

"Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or° to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold—

"Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free—

"Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes° let them be
With their shade to cover ye.

"Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea
Troops of armed emblazonry.

"Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

"Let the fixed bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood
Looking keen as one for food.

"Let the horsemen's scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

"Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war,

"And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armed steeds
Pass, a disregarded shade
Through your phalanx undismayed.

"Let the Laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute,

"The old laws of England—they
Whose reverend heads with age are grey,
Children of a wiser day;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo—Liberty!

"On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state
Rest the blood that must ensue,
And it will not rest on you.

"And if then the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew,—
What they like, that let them do.

"With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.

"Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

"Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand—
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.

"And the bold, true warriors
Who have hugged Danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company.

Memorializing the Peterloo Massacre. Detail from an illustration by George Cruikshank for William Hone's *A Slap at Slop and the Bridge-Stree Gang* (1821), a stinging attack on the conservative press that had attempted to justify the soldiers' brutality.

"And that slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

"And these words shall then become
Like oppression's thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again—again—again—

"Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you—
Ye are many—they are few."

1819 1832

Endnotes

- Note 1: Viscount Castlereagh, foreign secretary and parliamentary leader of the governing Tory Party. His bloody suppression of rebellion in Ireland in 1798 and his role, following the peace of 1815, in engineering the restoration of Europe's autocrats made him a hated figure for liberals.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Baron Eldon, the lord chancellor, head of the judiciary, who in the court of Chancery denied Shelley access to Ianthe and Charles, the children born to Shelley's first wife. Fraud sports the ermine-trimmed gown customary for chief justices.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Henry Addington, Viscount Sidmouth, England's home secretary, responsible for policing and internal security and so overseer of a network of spies who infiltrated radical organizations and betrayed their members to the forces of the law. Hypocrisy rides a crocodile, an animal legendarily said to weep over its human prey before devouring it. With the mention of the Bible, these lines may also allude to the huge investment in church building that in 1818 Parliament made at Sidmouth's instigation: a project of pacification targeting the industrial towns that were hotbeds of political unrest.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Compare Saint John in Revelation 6:8: "And I looked and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." Benjamin West's apocalyptic painting *Death on a Pale Horse,* which Shelley could have seen in London in 1817, may inform his description of Anarchy's destructive army in the next four stanzas.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, British soldiers, who wear red coats ("Clothed in arms like blood and flame").Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Anarchy shares his expensive education with the Prince Regent, who during his youth ran up enormous debts that Parliament repeatedly paid off. The allusion might also be to the ballooning of the national debt that occurred as a consequence of Britain's military expenditures.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Symbols of royal authority: the globe is the golden orb the monarch carries, with the scepter, on occasions of state.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Bank of England, the nation's central bank, and the Tower of London, a military arsenal where the crown jewels were safeguarded.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Receiving annuities for services rendered. Parliament has been bribed.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare 1 Kings 18:44 when the prophet Elijah, to demonstrate God's might to King Ahab, alerts him that his land is about to be relieved from drought: "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Venus, as the morning star.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In 1797 the Bank of England was granted the power to refuse to convert paper notes presented to it to gold coin; fearing a run on the bank's gold reserves, the government meant through this measure to safeguard the gold that it required in order to wage its war with France. This Bank Restriction Act was the precondition for the launch of England's first official paper currency ("the Ghost of Gold"). By the war's end, with the money system severed from its backing in gold, the English currency depreciated in value to a drastic extent, and with harmful effects, the purchasing power of working-class wages, which did not rise,

was correspondingly diminished. In describing the authorities as perpetrating "forgery" in creating "paper coin" (line 180), Shelley alludes to the many capital prosecutions that the bank undertook of malefactors who forged its paper notes. His lines, however, make the criminality that of the bank itself.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Compare Jesus's warning in Matthew 8:20 to the scribe who wishes to join his followers: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Perhaps recalling the coiled snake, with the caption "Don't tread on me," that became an emblem of the American Revolution.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Compare Jesus's advice to a rich man: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Institution conceptualized as an alternative to traditional forms of charity, in which poor people who applied for help would be confined and set to work for meager wages.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Harmful weeds. Compare Jesus's parable of the wheat and the tares, which grow together in a single field but which at harvest time will be separated (Matthew 13:24–30).Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *nobles*Return to reference °
- °: *armor*Return to reference °
- °: *color*Return to reference °
- °: *labor pain*Return to reference °
- °: *waste away*Return to reference °
- °: *rumor*Return to reference °
- °: *revolutionary France*Return to reference °
- °: *cottage*Return to reference °
- °: *either*Return to reference °

- °: *shields*Return to reference °

England in 1819[1]

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King;[2]
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring;
Rulers who neither see nor feel nor know,
But leechlike to their fainting country cling
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow.
A people starved and stabbed in th' untilled field;[3]
An army, whom liberticide[4] and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield;
Golden and sanguine laws[5] which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;
A senate, Time's worst statute, unrepealed—
Are graves from which a glorious Phantom[6] may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

1819 1839

Endnotes

- Note 1: Knowing full well that this sonnet on a turbulent time of injustice and unrest would read as sedition, Shelley, when he sent it to Leigh Hunt, his friend and the editor of the *Examiner*, wrote, "I don't expect you to publish it, but you may show it to whom you wish." Shelley also planned to include it in a book of political poetry, "a little volume of popular songs . . . destined to awaken and direct the imagination of the reformers," but that plan came to nothing. The sonnet finally appeared as a part of a grouping of "Poems of 1819" in Mary Shelley's 1839 edition of her late husband's work.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: George III, who had been declared insane in 1811. He died in 1820.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Alluding to the Peterloo Massacre on August 16, 1819. In St. Peter's Field, near Manchester, a troop of cavalry had charged into a crowd attending a peaceful rally in support of parliamentary reform.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The killing of liberty.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Laws bought with gold and leading to bloodshed.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, a revolution.Return to reference 6

To Sidmouth and Castlereagh[1]

As from their ancestral oak
  Two empty ravens wind their clarion,
Yell by yell, and croak by croak,
When they scent the noonday smoke
  Of fresh human carrion:—

As two gibbering night-birds flit
  From their bowers of deadly yew
Through the night to frighten it—
When the moon is in a fit,
  And the stars are none, or few:—

As a shark and dogfish wait
  Under an Atlantic isle
For the Negro-ship, whose freight
Is the theme of their debate,
  Wrinkling their red gills the while—

Are ye—two vultures sick for battle,
  Two scorpions under one wet stone,
Two bloodless wolves whose dry throats rattle,
Two crows perched on the murrained[2] cattle,
  Two vipers tangled into one.

1819 1832

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Shelley's powerful satire is directed against Viscount Castlereagh, foreign secretary during 1812–22, who took a leading part in the European settlement after the Battle of Waterloo, and Viscount Sidmouth (1757–1844), the home

secretary, whose cruelly coercive measures (supported by Castlereagh) against unrest in the laboring classes were in large part responsible for the Peterloo Massacre.

When this poem was reprinted by Mary Shelley in 1839, it was given the title "Similes for Two Political Characters of 1819." Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A *murrain* is a malignant disease of domestic animals.Return to reference 2

Ode to the West Wind[1]

1

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic[2] red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O Thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring[3] shall blow

Her clarion[4] o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver;[5] hear, O hear!

2

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's
commotion,
Loose clouds like Earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and
Ocean,

Angels[6] of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad,[7] even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou Dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours,° from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain and fire and hail will burst: O hear!

3

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his chrystalline streams,[8]

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,[9]
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves:[1] O hear!

4

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O Uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne’er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

5

Make me thy lyre,[2] even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth![3]
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened Earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains [*Shelley's note*]. As in other major Romantic poems—for example, the opening of Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode," and the conclusion to Shelley's *Adonais*—the rising wind, linked with the cycle of the seasons, is presented as the correspondent in the external world to an inner change, a burst of creative power. In many languages the words for wind, breath, soul, and inspiration
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Referring to the kind of fever that occurs in tuberculosis.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The west wind that will blow in the spring.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A high, shrill trumpet.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Refers to the Hindu gods Siva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Preserver.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the old sense of messengers.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A female worshiper who danced frenziedly in the worship of Dionysus (Bacchus), the Greek god of wine and vegetation. As vegetation god he was fabled to die in the fall and to be resurrected in the spring.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: The currents that flow in the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes with a visible difference in color.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: West of Naples, the locale of imposing villas built in the glory days of imperial Rome. Their ruins are reflected in the waters of the bay, a sight Mary Shelley also describes in the Introduction to *The Last Man* (see p. 1022, below).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The vegetation at the bottom of the sea . . . sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it [*Shelley's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Eolian lyre, which responds to the wind with rising and falling musical chords.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This line may play on the secondary sense of "leaves" as pages in a book.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *clouds*Return to reference °

Prometheus Unbound Shelley composed this work in Italy between the autumn of 1818 and the spring of 1819. After adding a fourth act, he published it the following summer. Upon its completion he wrote in a letter, "It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts." It is based on the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus, which dramatizes the sufferings of Prometheus, unrepentant champion of humanity, who, because he had stolen fire from heaven, was condemned by Zeus to be chained to Mount Caucasus and to be tortured by a vulture feeding on his liver; in a lost sequel Aeschylus reconciled Prometheus with his oppressor. Shelley continued Aeschylus's story but transformed it into a symbolic drama about the origin of evil and the possibility of overcoming it. In such early writings as *Queen Mab*, Shelley had expressed his belief that injustice and suffering could be eliminated by an external revolution that would wipe out or radically reform the causes of evil, attributed to existing social, political, and religious institutions. Implicit in *Prometheus Unbound*, on the other hand, is the view that both evil and the possibility of reform are the moral responsibility of men and women. Social chaos and wars are a gigantic projection of human moral disorder and inner division and conflict; tyrants are the outer representatives of the tyranny of our baser over our better elements; hatred for others is a product of self-contempt; and external political reform is impossible unless we have first reformed our own nature at its roots, by substituting selfless love for divisive hatred. Shelley thus incorporates into his secular myth—of universal regeneration by a triumph of humanity's moral imagination—the ethical teaching of Christ on the Mount, together with the classical morality represented in the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus.

From Prometheus Unbound

A Lyrical Drama in Four Acts

Audisne hæc Amphiarae, sub terram abdite?[1]

Preface

The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar licence.—The *Prometheus Unbound* of Æschylus, supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus by the permission of Jupiter delivered from his captivity by Hercules.[2]—Had I framed my story on this model I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Æschylus; an ambition, which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge, might well abate. But in truth I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of

Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language, and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan because, in addition to courage and majesty and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry[3] which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling, it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening of spring in that divinest climate, and the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found in many instances to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern Poetry; although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power, and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candour to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself, that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due, less to the peculiarities of their own minds, than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian Religion. We owe Milton to the progress and developement of the same spirit; the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a Republican,[4] and a bold enquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning,

and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.[5]

As to imitation; Poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them: one great poet is a masterpiece of nature, which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be a presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural and ineffectual. A Poet, is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others, and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is in this respect modified by all the objects of nature and art, by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors and musicians, are in one sense the creators and in another the creations of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Æschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, "a passion for reforming the world:"[6] what passion incited him to write and

publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus.[7] But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society,[8] let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Æschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid; and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.60: "Do you hear this, O Amphiaraus, concealed under the earth?" In Greek myth

Amphiaraus was a seer. Fleeing from an unsuccessful assault o Thebes, he was saved from his pursuers by Zeus, who by a thunderbolt opened a cleft in the earth that swallowed him up.

In his *Disputations* Cicero is arguing for the Stoic doctrine of the need to master pain and suffering. He quotes this line (a Latin translation from Aeschylus's lost drama *Epigoni*) in the course of an anecdote about Dionysius of Heraclea, who, tormented by kidney stones, abjures the doctrine of his Stoic teacher Zeno that pain is not an evil. By way of reproof his Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Shelley's description of the subject of Aeschylus's lost drama *Prometheus Unbound* is a speculation based on surviving fragments.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Slippery reasoning.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, Milton hoped that the overthrow of the monarchy during the Civil Wars would lead to England's rebirth as a republic.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: See Shelley's similar tribute to his great contemporaries in the concluding paragraph of his "Defence of Poetry" (p. 879, below).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: This is the title of chap. 16 in *The Principles of Moral Science* (1805), by the Scottish writer Robert Forsyth.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Thomas Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) argued that the rate of increase in population will soon exceed the rate of increase in the food supply necessary to sustain it. William Paley wrote *Evidences of Christianity* (1794), which undertakes to prove that the design apparent in natural phenomena, and especially in the human body, entails the existence of God as the great Designer. Shelley ironically expresses his contempt for the doctrines of both these thinkers, which he conceives as arguments for accepting uncomplainingly the present state of the world.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Shelley did not live to write this history.Return to reference 8

Prometheus Unbound

Act 1

SCENE: *A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.* PANTHEA and IONE[1] *are seated at his feet. Time, Night. During the Scene, Morning slowly breaks.*

PROMETHEUS Monarch of Gods and Dæmons,[2] and all Spirits
But One,[3] who throng those bright and rolling Worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs[4] of broken hearts,
With fear and self contempt and barren hope;
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless° in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.—
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours
And moments—aye° divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire:—
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned[5] to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,°
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.

Ah me, alas, pain, pain ever, forever!

No change, no pause, no hope!—Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven—the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below—
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me, alas, pain, pain ever, forever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing chrystals; the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's winged hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart;[6] and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind;
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is Day and Night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured East; for then they lead
Their wingless, crawling Hours,[7] one among whom
—As some dark Priest hales° the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet,[8] which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.

Disdain? Ah no! I pity thee.[9]—What Ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a Hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then, ere misery made me wise.—The Curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall.[1] Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voiced Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poised wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder louder than your own made rock
The orbed world! If then my words had power
—Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within, although no memory be
Of what is hate—let them not lose it now![2]
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE: *from the Mountains*

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood;
Oft as men convulsed with fears
We trembled in our multitude.

SECOND VOICE: *from the Springs*

Thunderbolts had parched out water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute 'mid shrieks of slaughter
Through a city and a solitude!

THIRD VOICE: *from the Air*

I had clothed since Earth uprose
  Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
  Been cloven by many a rending groan.

FOURTH VOICE: *from the Whirlwinds*

We had soared beneath these mountains
  Unresting ages;—nor had thunder
Nor yon Volcano's flaming fountains
  Nor any power above or under
  Ever made us mute with wonder!

FIRST VOICE

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

SECOND VOICE

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.—
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony
And heard, and cried, "Ah, woe is me!"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

THIRD VOICE

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven;
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the Day, like blood.

FOURTH VOICE

And we shrank back—for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—

Though silence is as hell to us.

THE EARTH

The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried "Misery!" then; the hollow Heaven replied,
"Misery!" And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds.
And the pale nations heard it,—"Misery!"

PROMETHEUS

I hear a sound of voices—not the voice
Which I gave forth.—Mother,° thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove
Both they and thou had vanished like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind!—Know ye not me,
The Titan, he who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
O rock-embosomed lawns and snow-fed streams
Now seen athwart frore vapours[3] deep below,
Through whose o'er-shadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who checked—
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer—
The falshood and the force of Him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildernesses?
Why answer ye not, still? brethren!

THE EARTH

They dare not.

PROMETHEUS

Who dares? for I would hear that curse again. . . .

Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
'Tis scarce like sound, it tingles through the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.—
Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?

THE EARTH

How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

PROMETHEUS

Thou art a living spirit—speak as they.

THE EARTH

I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell° King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.—
Subtle thou art and good, and though the Gods
Hear not this voice—yet thou art more than God
Being wise and kind—earnestly hearken now.—

PROMETHEUS

Obscurely through my brain like shadows dim
Sweep awful° thoughts, rapid and thick.—I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love,
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

THE EARTH

No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die . . .

PROMETHEUS

And what art thou,
O melancholy Voice?

THE EARTH

I am the Earth,
Thy mother, she within whose stony veins
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale—until his thunder chained thee here.—
Then—see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us: their inhabitants beheld
My sphered light wane in wide Heaven; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities; foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled;
When Plague had fallen on man and beast and
worm,
And Famine,—and black blight on herb and tree,
And in the corn and vines and meadow-grass
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief,—and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer—aye, I heard
Thy curse, the which if thou rememberest not
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains and caves and winds, and yon wide Air
And the inarticulate people of the dead
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate

In secret joy and hope those dreadful words
But dare not speak them.

PROMETHEUS

Venerable Mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers and fruits and happy sounds
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.

THE EARTH

They shall be told.—Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster,[4] my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest, but the other
Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them, and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men
And all that faith creates, or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all the Gods
Are there, and all the Powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred Phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
And Demogorgon,[5] a tremendous Gloom;
And he, the Supreme Tyrant,[6] on his throne
Of burning Gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon,[7] or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.—

Ask and they must reply—so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.

PROMETHEUS

Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.—
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

IONE

My wings are folded o’er mine ears,
My wings are crossed over mine eyes,
Yet through their silver shade appears
And through their lulling plumes arise
A Shape, a throng of sounds:
May it be, no ill to thee[8]
O thou of many wounds!
Near whom for our sweet sister’s sake
Ever thus we watch and wake.

PANTHEA

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake and fire, and mountains cloven,—
The Shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o’er the slow cloud
His veined hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks but calm and strong
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

PHANTASM OF JUPITER

Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither

On direst storms? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud Sufferer, who art thou?

PROMETHEUS

Tremendous Image! as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought inform thine empty voice.

THE EARTH

Listen! and though your echoes must be mute,
Grey mountains and old woods and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves and isle-surrounding streams
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

PHANTASM

A spirit seizes me, and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud!

PANTHEA

See how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darkens above.

IONE

He speaks! O shelter me—

PROMETHEUS

I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll . . . yet speak—O speak!

PHANTASM

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;

Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Humankind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning and cutting hail and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Aye, do thy worst. Thou art Omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon etherial tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
Its darkness over those I love:
On me and mine I imprecate°
The utmost torture of thy hate
And thus devote to sleepless agony
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

But thou who art the God and Lord—O thou
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship—all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse,
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;[9]
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul by virtue of this Curse
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good,
Both infinite as is the Universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
An awful Image of calm power

Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally.
And after many a false and fruitless crime
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and time.

[*The Phantasm vanishes.*]

PROMETHEUS Were these my words, O Parent?

THE EARTH They were thine.

PROMETHEUS It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

THE EARTH

Misery, O misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea,
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquished.

FIRST ECHO

Lies fallen and vanquished?

SECOND ECHO

Fallen and vanquished!

IONE

Fear not—'tis but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill,
Trampling the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow

Under plumes of purple dye
  Like rose-ensanguined[1] ivory,
  A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
  A serpent-cinctured[2] wand.

PANTHEA

'Tis Jove's world-wandering Herald, Mercury.

IONE

And who are those with hydra tresses[3]
  And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
  Like vapours steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd—

PANTHEA

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,[4]
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

IONE

Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?

PANTHEA

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

FIRST FURY

Ha! I scent life!

SECOND FURY

Let me but look into his eyes!

THIRD FURY

The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses to a death-bird after battle!

FIRST FURY

Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell—what if the Son of Maia° soon
Should make us food and sport? Who can please long
The Omnipotent?

MERCURY

Back to your towers of iron
And gnash, beside the streams of fire, and wail
Your foodless teeth! . . . Geryon, arise! and Gorgon,[5]
Chimæra,[6] and thou Sphinx, subtlest of fiends,
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love and more unnatural hate:[7]
These shall perform your task.

FIRST FURY

O mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire—drive us not back!

MERCURY

Crouch then in silence.—
Awful° Sufferer!
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more.—Aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent, as yon clear lamps

That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach.—Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is, to lead them here,
Or what more subtle,° foul or savage fiends
People° the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! . . . There is a secret known
To thee and to none else of living things
Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme . . .
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane°
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart;
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.

PROMETHEUS

Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day: whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The chrystal-winged snow cling round my hair—
Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense—'tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,
He can feel hate, fear, shame—not gratitude:
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know, I cannot try:

For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity—
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword[8]
Which trembles o'er his crown—would he accept,
Or could I yield?—which yet I will not yield.
Let others flatter Crime where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence; secure are they:
For Justice when triumphant will weep down
Pity not punishment on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus the retributive hour[9]
Which since we spake is even nearer now.—
But hark, the hell-hounds clamour. Fear delay!
Behold! Heaven lowers° under thy Father's frown.

MERCURY

O that we might be spared—I to inflict
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
Thou knowest not the period[1] of Jove's power?

PROMETHEUS

I know but this, that it must come.

MERCURY

Alas!
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?

PROMETHEUS

They last while Jove must reign, nor more nor less
Do I desire or fear.

MERCURY

Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind

Flags wearily in its unending flight
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless;
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved.

PROMETHEUS

Perchance no thought can count them—yet they pass.

MERCURY

If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while
Lapped in voluptuous joy?—

PROMETHEUS

I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.

MERCURY

Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

PROMETHEUS

Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene
As light in the sun, throned. . . . How vain is talk!
Call up the fiends.

IONE

O sister, look! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded Cedar;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!

MERCURY

I must obey his words and thine—alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!

PANTHEA

See where the child of Heaven with winged feet
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.

IONE

Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die—they come, they come
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.

FIRST FURY

Prometheus!

SECOND FURY

Immortal Titan!

THIRD FURY

Champion of Heaven's slaves!

PROMETHEUS

He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan.—Horrible forms,
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms° so foul through monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.

FIRST FURY

We are the ministers of pain and fear
And disappointment and mistrust and hate
And clinging° crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep and bleed and live
When the great King betrays them to our will.

PROMETHEUS

O many fearful natures in one name!
I know ye, and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangour of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathed selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?

SECOND FURY

We knew not that—Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!

PROMETHEUS

Can aught exult in its deformity?

SECOND FURY

The beauty of delight makes lovers glad
Gazing on one another—so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal° crown of flowers
The aerial crimson falls, flushing her cheek—
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our Mother Night.

PROMETHEUS

I laugh° your power and his who sent you here
To lowest scorn.—Pour forth the cup of pain.

FIRST FURY

Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone?
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?

PROMETHEUS

Pain is my element as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not.

SECOND FURY

Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?

PROMETHEUS

I weigh° not what ye do, but what ye suffer
Being evil. Cruel was the Power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.

THIRD FURY

Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men—
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain
And foul desire round thine astonished heart
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony.

PROMETHEUS

Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

CHORUS OF FURIES

From the ends of the Earth, from the ends of the Earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, Come, Come!
O yet who shake hills with the scream of your mirth
When cities sink howling in ruin, and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the Sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wrack;

Come, Come, Come!
Leave the bed, low, cold and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;
Leave the hatred—as in ashes
Fire is left for future burning,—
It will burst in bloodier flashes
When ye stir it, soon returning;
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel;
Leave Hell's secrets half-unchanted
To the maniac dreamer: cruel
More than ye can be with hate,
Is he with fear.
Come, Come, Come!
We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burthen the blasts of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

IONE

Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.

PANTHEA

These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air:—their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

FIRST FURY

Your call was as a winged car°
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapt° us from red gulphs of war—

SECOND FURY

From wide cities, famine-wasted—

THIRD FURY

Groans half heard, and blood untasted—

FOURTH FURY

Kingly conclaves, stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold—

FIFTH FURY

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A FURY

Speak not—whisper not!
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

A FURY

Tear the veil!—

ANOTHER FURY

It is torn!

CHORUS

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters: a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire—which consume him forever.
One° came forth, of gentle worth,
Smiling on the sanguine earth;

His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.—
Hark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled.
Look again,—the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, Joy, Joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

SEMICHORUS I

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now—
See! a disenchanted Nation[2]
Springs like day from desolation;
To truth its state, is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
A legioned band of linked brothers
Whom Love calls children—

SEMICHORUS II

'Tis another's—
See how kindred murder kin!
'Tis the vintage-time for Death and Sin:
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within
Till Despair smothers
The struggling World—which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the* Furies *vanish, except one.*]

IONE

Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan—as storms tear the deep
And beasts hear the Sea moan in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

PANTHEA

Alas, I looked forth twice, but will no more.

IONE

What didst thou see?

PANTHEA

A woeful sight—a youth°
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

IONE

What next?

PANTHEA

The Heaven around, the Earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts,
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles:
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth—those groans are grief enough.

FURY Behold, an emblem—those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn and chains, but heap
Thousand-fold torment on themselves and him.

PROMETHEUS Remit the anguish of that lighted stare
—
Close those wan lips—let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood—it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.—
O horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse.[3] I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home,
As hooded ounces[4] cling to the driven hind,°
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells:
Some—hear I not the multitude laugh loud?—
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet like sea-uprooted isles
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.
FURY Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans;
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.
PROMETHEUS Worse?
FURY In each human heart terror survives
The ravin it has gorged:[5] the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true:
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes° of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.[6]
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.

The wise want love, and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich,—and would be just,—
But live among their suffering fellow men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.[7]
PROMETHEUS Thy words are like a cloud of winged snakes
And yet, I pity those they torture not.
FURY Thou pitiest them? I speak no more!
[*Vanishes.*]
PROMETHEUS Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, forever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumed mind,
Thou subtle Tyrant![8] . . . Peace is in the grave—
The grave hides all things beautiful and good—
I am a God and cannot find it there,
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce King, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.
PANTHEA Alas! what sawest thou?
PROMETHEUS There are two woes:
To speak and to behold; thou spare me one.[9]
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords—they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry.[1]
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud
As with one voice, "Truth, liberty and love!"
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from Heaven
Among them—there was strife, deceit and fear;
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.

This was the shadow of the truth I saw.

THE EARTH I felt thy torture, Son, with such mixed joy
As pain and Virtue give.—To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding ether;[2] they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,°
The future—may they speak comfort to thee!

PANTHEA

Look, Sister, where a troop of spirits gather
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!

IONE

And see! more come
Like fountain-vapours when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? is it the waterfall?

PANTHEA

'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS[3]

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of Heaven-oppressed mortality—
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim and dank and grey
Like a storm-extinguished day
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;

Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid and serene—
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave,
We make there, our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent°
Through the boundless element—
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!

IONE

More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
Mid the darkness upward cast—
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded through the sky
And one sound—above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of love;
'Twas the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immoveably;

And the triumphant Storm did flee,
Like a conqueror swift and proud
Between, with many a captive cloud
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half.—
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh.—
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath, a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank—then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT

I sate beside a sage's bed
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,
When a Dream with plumes of flame
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence and woe;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet:
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT

On a Poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;
Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses
But feeds on the aerial kisses

Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees i' the ivy-bloom
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings° of immortality!—
One of these awakened me
And I sped to succour thee.

IONE

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the East and West
Come, as two doves to one beloved nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air,
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere?
And hark! their sweet, sad voices! 'tis despair
Mingled with love, and then dissolved in sound.—

PANTHEA

Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.

IONE

Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
Orange and azure, deepening into gold:
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

FIFTH SPIRIT

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses.

That planet-crested Shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,°
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial° tresses:
His footsteps paved the world with light—but as I past 'twas fading
And hollow Ruin yawned behind. Great Sages bound in madness
And headless patriots and pale youths who perished unupbraiding,[4]
Gleamed in the Night I wandered o'er—till thou, O King of sadness,
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

SIXTH SPIRIT

Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the Earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with silent footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear,
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dreams visions of aerial joy, and call the monster, Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain—as he whom now we greet.

CHORUS

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
Following him destroyingly
On Death's white and winged steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee—

Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast and foul and fair,
Like a tempest through the air;
Thou shalt quell this Horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.—

PROMETHEUS

Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

CHORUS

In the atmosphere we breathe—
As buds grow red when snow-storms flee
From spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake, the elder brake°
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow°—
Wisdom, Justice, Love and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd-boys—the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

IONE

Where are the Spirits fled?

PANTHEA

Only a sense
Remains of them, like the Omnipotence
Of music when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

PROMETHEUS

How fair these air-born shapes! and yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love, and thou art far,

Asia! who when my being overflowed
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still—alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
Though I should dream, I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not . . . I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The saviour and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulph of things. . . .
There is no agony and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.

PANTHEA

Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?

PROMETHEUS

I said all hope was vain but love—thou lovest . . .

PANTHEA

Deeply in truth—but the Eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile—rugged once
And desolate and frozen like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters, from the ether°
Of her transforming presence—which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine.—Farewell!

Endnotes

- Note 1: Ione, Panthea, and Asia (introduced in the following scene) are sisters and Oceanids, that is, daughters of

Oceanus.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Supernatural beings, intermediaries between gods and mortals.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Demogorgon (see 2.4). Prometheus is addressing Jupiter.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Large sacrificial offerings.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, you would have been all-powerful, if I had deigned.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The vulture, tearing daily at Prometheus's heart, was kissed by Jupiter by way of reward.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Hours were represented in Greek myth and art by human figures with wings.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: One of a number of implied parallels between the agony of Prometheus and the passion of Christ.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: At this early point occurs the crisis of the action: the beginning of Prometheus's change of heart from hate to compassion, consummated in lines 303–05.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, remember. But the word's alternative sense, "revoke," will later become crucial.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Let my words not lose their power now.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Through frosty vapors.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Zoroaster founded in ancient Persia a dualistic religion that worshiped fire and light in opposition to the evil principle of darkness. Priests of the religion were called Magi (singular: Magus).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In a note to the name in a poem published in 1817, Thomas Love Peacock alludes to Milton's mention of Demogorgon (*Paradise Lost* 2.965) and explains: "He was the Genius of the Earth, and the Sovereign Power of the Terrestrial Dæmons. He dwelt originally with Eternity and Chaos, till, becoming weary of inaction, he organised the chaotic elements, and surrounded the earth with the heavens. In addition to Pan and the Fates, his children were Uranus, Titæa, Pytho, Eris, and Erebus." Thus, in Peacock's account, Demogorgon is the father

of the Sky, the Earth, and the Underworld, as well as the Fates.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: The shade or simulacrum of Jupiter.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Typhon, a hundred-headed giant, imprisoned beneath volcanic Mount Aetna. Hades (Pluto), king of the underworld.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Shelley uses the comma in the middle of lines like these to emphasize the internal rhymes.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Like the poisoned shirt of the centaur Nessus, which consumed Hercules' flesh when he put it on. The next two lines allude to the mock crowning of Christ with a crown of thorns.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Stained blood color.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mercury carries a caduceus, a staff encircled by two snakes with their heads facing each other, a symbol of peace befitting the role of Hermes/Mercury as the messenger of the gods.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Locks of hair resembling the many-headed snake, the hydra.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the Furies, avengers of crimes committed against the gods.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Gorgons were three mythical personages, with snakes for hair, who turned beholders into stone. Geryon was a monster with three heads and three bodies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Chimera, a fabled fire-breathing monster of Greek mythology with three heads (lion, goat, and dragon), the body of a lion and a goat, and a dragon's tail.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Sphinx, a monster with the body of a lion, wings, and the face and breasts of a woman, besieged Thebes by devouring those who could not answer her riddle. Oedipus solved the riddle (causing the Sphinx to kill herself), only to marry his mother ("unnatural love"), leading to the tragic events depicted in the Greek Theban plays.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: That is, the sword of Damocles, suspended by a single hair above the throne of Damocles, ruler of Syracuse in Sicily.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Time of retribution.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The end or conclusion.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Usually identified as France, breaking the spell of monarchy at the time of the Revolution.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, the name "Christ" has become, literally, a curse word, and metaphorically, a curse to humankind, in that His religion of love is used to justify religious wars and bloody oppression.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Cheetahs, or leopards, used in hunting (hoods were sometimes placed over their eyes to make them easier to control).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The prey that it has greedily devoured.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the good lack ("want") power except to weep "barren tears."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Fury ironically echoes Christ's plea for forgiveness of his crucifiers: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Jupiter (also addressed as "fierce King," line 642).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, spare me the woe of speaking (about what I have beheld).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: As in a brilliant display of banners.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A medium, weightless and infinitely elastic, once supposed to permeate the universe.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Identified by Earth at lines 658–63.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Without uttering reproaches.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *blinded*Return to reference °

- °: *always* Return to reference °
- °: *vegetation* Return to reference °
- °: *drags* Return to reference °
- °: *Earth* Return to reference °
- °: *cruel* Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring* Return to reference °
- °: *call down* Return to reference °
- °: *Mercury* Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring* Return to reference °
- °: *artful* Return to reference °
- °: *populate* Return to reference °
- °: *temple* Return to reference °
- °: *cowers* Return to reference °
- °: *apparitions* Return to reference °
- °: *clasping* Return to reference °
- °: *festive* Return to reference °
- °: *mock* Return to reference °
- °: *consider* Return to reference °
- °: *chariot* Return to reference °
- °: *carried* Return to reference °
- °: *Christ* Return to reference °
- °: *Christ* Return to reference °
- °: *doe* Return to reference °
- °: *temples* Return to reference °
- °: *mirror* Return to reference °
- °: *unconfined* Return to reference °
- °: *children* Return to reference °
- °: *wings* Return to reference °
- °: *heavenly* Return to reference °
- °: *thicket* Return to reference °
- °: *blossom* Return to reference °
- °: *purer air* Return to reference °

From *Act 2*

SCENE 4—*The Cave of* DEMOGORGON. ASIA *and* PANTHEA.[1]

PANTHEA What veiled form sits on that ebon throne?
ASIA The veil has fallen! . . .
PANTHEA I see a mighty Darkness
Filling the seat of power; and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian Sun,
Ungazed upon and shapeless—neither limb
Nor form—nor outline;[2] yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.
DEMOGORGON Ask what thou wouldst know.
ASIA What canst thou tell?
DEMOGORGON All things thou dar'st demand.
ASIA Who made the living world?
DEMOGORGON God.
ASIA Who made all
That it contains—thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?
DEMOGORGON God, Almighty God.
ASIA Who made that sense[3] which, when the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one beloved heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears, which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?
DEMOGORGON Merciful God.
ASIA And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily—and each one reels

Under the load towards the pit of death;
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
Pain whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?[4]

DEMOGORGON He reigns.

ASIA Utter his name—a world pining in pain
Asks but his name; curses shall drag him down.

DEMOGORGON He reigns.

ASIA I feel, I know it—who?

DEMOGORGON He reigns.

ASIA Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first
And Light and Love;—then Saturn,[5] from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow; such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms; but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim Universe like light,
Self-empire and the majesty of love,
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter
And with this law alone: "Let man be free,"
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith nor love nor law, to be
Omnipotent but friendless, is to reign;
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove,

With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves;
And in their desart° hearts fierce wants he sent
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth,[6] fadeless blooms;
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man, and tortured to his will
Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms,
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
Which is the measure of the Universe;
And Science struck the thrones of Earth and Heaven
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song,
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked[7]
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own
The human form, till marble grew divine,
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.[8]—

He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept—Death grew like sleep.—
He taught the implicated° orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars, and how the Sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar[9] sea;
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-winged chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian.[1] Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen . . .
Such the alleviations of his state
Prometheus gave to man—for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain—but who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of Earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?—
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, aye when
His adversary from adamantine° chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

DEMOGORGON All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA Whom calledst thou God?

DEMOGORGON I spoke but as ye speak—
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA Who is the master of the slave?
DEMOGORGON —If the Abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets:—but a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? what to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.
ASIA So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.—
One more demand . . . and do thou answer me
As my own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask.—Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the Sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?
DEMOGORGON Behold![2]
ASIA The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see Cars drawn by rainbow-winged steeds
Which trample the dim winds—in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer, urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others with burning eyes lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now—even now they clasped it; their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.—
DEMOGORGON These are the immortal Hours
Of whom thou didst demand.—One waits for thee.

ASIA A Spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulph.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
What art thou? whither wouldst thou bear me?
Speak!
SPIRIT I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect—ere yon planet
Has set, the Darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night Heaven's kingless
throne.
ASIA What meanest thou?
PANTHEA That terrible shadow[3] floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid° smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.—
Lo! it ascends the Car . . . the coursers fly
Terrified; watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night!
ASIA Thus I am answered—strange!
PANTHEA See, near the verge° another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery—the young Spirit
That guides it, has the dovelike eyes of hope.
How its soft smiles attract the soul!—as light
Lures winged insects[4] through the lampless air.

SPIRIT
My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream
And when the red morning is brightning
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness, I deem:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire—and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear—they outstrip the Typhoon;

Ere the cloud piled on Atlas[5] can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labours at noon:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Act 2 has opened with Asia—the feminine principle and embodiment of love, who was separated from Prometheus at the moment of his fall into divisive hate—in a lovely Indian valley at the first hour of the dawn of the spring season of redemption. Asia and her sister Panthea have been led, by a sweet and irresistible compulsion, first to the portal and then down into the depths of the cave of Demogorgon—the central enigma of Shelley's poem.

  As the father of all that exists, Demogorgon may represent the ultimate reason for the way things are. As such, Shelley appears to argue, Demogorgon must be a mystery inaccessible to knowledge and must be ignorant of the principle controlling him. In this scene Demogorgon can give only riddling answers to Asia's questions about the "why" of creation, good, and evil. Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Echoing Milton's description of Death, *Paradise Lost* 2.666–73.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Presumably the sense by which one is aware of the "unseen Power" that Shelley calls "Intellectual Beauty" (see "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," stanza 2, pp. 784–85, above).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The nouns "hope," "love," etc. (lines 24–28) are all objects of the verb "made" (line 19).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Greek myth Saturn's reign was the golden age. In Shelley's version Saturn refused to grant mortals knowledge and science, so that it was an age of ignorant innocence in which

the deepest human needs remained unfulfilled.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: In Greek myth, medicinal drugs and flowers. Asia is describing (lines 59–97) the various sciences and arts given to humans by Prometheus, the culture bringer.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, sculptors first merely reproduced but later improved on and heightened the beauty of the human form, so that the original was inferior to, and hence "mocked" by, the copy.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Expectant mothers looked at the beautiful statues so that their children might, by prenatal influence, be born with the beauty that makes beholders die of love.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The phase between old and new moons, when the moon is invisible.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A reference to the ships in which the Celtic (here, non-Greco-Roman) races of Europe were able to sail to India.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Demogorgon's answer is a gesture: he points to the approaching chariots ("Cars").Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Demogorgon (the "Darkness" of line 148), who is ascending (lines 150–55) to dethrone Jupiter.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The ancient image of the soul, or *psyche*, was a moth. The chariot described here will carry Asia to a reunion with Prometheus.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A mountain in North Africa that the Greeks regarded as so high that it supported the heavens.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *empty*Return to reference °
- °: *intertwined*Return to reference °
- °: *unbreakable*Return to reference °
- °: *red-glaring*Return to reference °

- °: *horizon*Return to reference °

SCENE 5—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the Top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire,[6]
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

ASIA Thou breathest on their nostrils—but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.
SPIRIT Alas, it could not.
PANTHEA O Spirit! pause and tell whence is the light
Which fills the cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.
SPIRIT The sun will rise not until noon.[7]—Apollo
Is held in Heaven by wonder—and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aerial hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.
PANTHEA Yes, I feel . . .
ASIA What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.
PANTHEA How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel, but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty.[8] Some good change
Is working in the elements which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled.—The Nereids tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline°
Was cloven at thy uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veined shell,[9] which floated on
Over the calm floor of the chrystal sea,
Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name, love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined Earth and Heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves,
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:

Such art thou now, nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings? Feelest thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee?—List! [*Music.*]

ASIA Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are—yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned; common as light is love
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide Heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God . . .
They who inspire it most are fortunate
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings
As I shall soon become.

PANTHEA List! Spirits speak.

VOICE (*in the air, singing*)[1]
Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them,
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others;—none beholds thee
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never
As I feel now, lost forever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
  Its dim shapes are clad with brightness
And the souls of whom thou lovest
  Walk upon the winds with lightness
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost . . . yet unbewailing!

ASIA

  My soul is an enchanted Boat
  Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing,
  And thine doth like an Angel sit
  Beside the helm conducting it
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever—forever—
  Upon that many winding River
  Between mountains, woods, abysses,
  A Paradise of wildernesses,
Till like one in slumber bound
Borne to the Ocean, I float down, around,
Into a Sea profound, of ever-spreading sound.

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions°
  In Music's most serene dominions,
Catching the winds that fan that happy Heaven.
  And we sail on, away, afar,
  Without a course—without a star—
But by the instinct of sweet Music driven
  Till, through Elysian garden islets
  By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
  Where never mortal pinnace° glided,
  The boat of my desire is guided—
Realms where the air we breathe is Love
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this Earth with what we feel above.

We have past Age's icy caves,
  And Manhood's dark and tossing waves

And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray;
Beyond the glassy gulphs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth to a diviner day,[2]
A Paradise of vaulted bowers
Lit by downward-gazing flowers
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld—somewhat like thee,
Which walk upon the sea, and chaunt melodiously!

Endnotes

- Note 6: Catch their breath.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The time of the reunion of Prometheus and Asia.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In an earlier scene Panthea had envisioned in a dream the radiant and eternal inner form of Prometheus emerging through his "wound-worn limbs." The corresponding transfiguration of Asia, prepared for by her descent to the underworld to question Demogorgon, now takes place.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The story told by the Nereids (sea nymphs) serves to associate Asia with Aphrodite, goddess of love, emerging (as in Botticelli's painting) from the Mediterranean on a seashell.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The voice attempts to describe, in a dizzying whirl of optical paradoxes, what it feels like to look on the naked essence of love and beauty.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Asia is describing what it feels like to be transfigured—in the image of moving backward in the stream of time, through youth and infancy and birth, in order to die to this life and be born again to a "diviner" existence.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *glassy sea*Return to reference °
- °: *wings*Return to reference °

- °: *small boat*Return to reference °

From *Act 3*

SCENE 1—*Heaven*, JUPITER *on his Throne;* THETIS *and the other Deities assembled.*

JUPITER Ye congregated Powers of Heaven who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
All else had been subdued to me—alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards Heaven with fierce reproach and doubt
And lamentation and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and Hell's coeval,[1] fear.
And though my curses through the pendulous° air
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake
And cling to it[2] —though under my wrath's night
It climb the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring . . . unrepressed; yet soon to fall:
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal Child,[3] the terror of the Earth,
Who waits but till the destined Hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld—
To redescend, and trample out the spark[4] . . .

Pour forth Heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,
And let it fill the dædal[5] cups like fire
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
Ye all triumphant harmonies arise

As dew from Earth under the twilight stars;
Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins
The soul of joy, ye everliving Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.—
And thou
Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis, bright Image of Eternity!—
When thou didst cry, "Insufferable might![6]
God! spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps[7] did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking through its foundations"—even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either—which unbodied now
Between us, floats, felt although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends—
Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Griding[8] the winds?—from Demogorgon's
throne.—
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O World,
The Earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[*The Car of the* HOUR *arrives.* DEMOGORGON *descends and moves toward the Throne of* JUPITER.]

Awful Shape, what art thou?
Speak!

DEMOGORGON Eternity—demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss;
I am thy child,[9] as thou wert Saturn's child,
Mightier than thee; and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness.—Lift thy lightnings not.

The tyranny of Heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold succeeding thee . . .
Yet if thou wilt—as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead—
Put forth thy might.

JUPITER Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons[1]
I trample thee! . . . thou lingerest?
Mercy! mercy!
No pity—no release, no respite! . . . Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge.
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge
On Caucasus—he would not doom me thus.—
Gentle and just and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? what then art thou? . . .
No refuge! no appeal— . . .
Sink with me then—
We two will sink in the wide waves of ruin
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,[2]
Into a shoreless sea.—Let Hell unlock
Its mounded Oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them° into the bottomless void
The desolated world and thee and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.
Ai! Ai![3]
The elements obey me not . . . I sink . . .
Dizzily down—ever, forever, down—
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory!—Ai! Ai!

Endnotes

- Note 1: Of the same age.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, "the soul of man" (line 5), as also in lines 14 and 16.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The son of Jupiter and Thetis. Jupiter believes that he has begotten a child who will assume the bodily form of the conquered Demogorgon and then return to announce his victory and the defeat of the resistance of Prometheus.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Of Prometheus's defiance.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Skillfully wrought (from the name of the Greek craftsman Daedalus). Ganymede (line 25) had been seized on Mount Ida by an eagle and carried to heaven to be Jupiter's cupbearer.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: This description of Jupiter's rape of Thetis is a grotesque parody of the reunion of Prometheus and Asia.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A serpent of Numidia (North Africa) whose bite was thought to cause putrefaction.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Cutting with a rasping sound.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Ironically, and in a figurative sense: Demogorgon's function follows from Jupiter's actions.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: After they overthrew the Titans, Jupiter and the Olympian gods imprisoned them in Tartarus, deep beneath the earth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The eagle (or vulture) and the snake locked in equal combat—a favorite Shelleyan image (see *Alastor*, lines 227–32, p. 770, above).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Traditional Greek cry of sorrow.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *overhanging*Return to reference °
- °: *wash them*Return to reference °

From SCENE 4—*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.*

PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE EARTH. [4]

* * *

[*The* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR *enters.*]

PROMETHEUS We feel what thou hast heard and seen
—yet speak.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR Soon as the sound had ceased
whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky, and the wide earth,
There was a change . . . the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had folded itself round the sphered world.
My vision then grew clear and I could see
Into the mysteries of the Universe.[5]
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire—
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms,[6]
Of thee, and Asia and the Earth, and me
And you fair nymphs, looking the love we feel,
In memory of the tidings it has borne,
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbænic snake[7]
The likeness of those winged steeds will mock[8]
The flight from which they find repose.—Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial[9] tongue

When all remains untold which ye would hear!—
As I have said, I floated to the Earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold! thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
"All hope abandon, ye who enter here";[1]
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own[2]
Which spurred him, like an outspent° horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
None with firm sneer trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love, and hope, till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept, a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill.
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.

And women too, frank, beautiful and kind
As the free Heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past: gentle, radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made Earth like Heaven—nor pride
Nor jealousy nor envy nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe,[3] love.

Thrones, altars, judgement-seats and prisons; wherein
And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong glozed on° by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no more remembered fame,
Which from their unworn obelisks[4] look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors, mouldering round.
Those imaged to the pride of Kings and Priests
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity
Amid the dwellings of the peopled Earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by God and man —
Which under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable
Were Jupiter,[5] the tyrant of the world;

And which the nations panic-stricken served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless
And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate—
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines.
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,[6]
Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,
All men believed and hoped, is torn aside—
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed—but man:
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree,—the King
Over himself; just, gentle, wise—but man:
Passionless? no—yet free from guilt or pain
Which were, for his will made, or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance and death and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended Heaven
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.[7]

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Endnotes

- Note 4: After Jupiter's annihilation (described in scene 2), Hercules unbinds Prometheus, who is reunited with Asia and retires to a cave "where we will sit and talk of time and change / . . . ourselves unchanged." In the speech that concludes the act (included here) the Spirit of the Hour describes what happened in the human world when he sounded the apocalyptic trumpet.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: That is, the Earth's atmosphere clarifies, no longer refracting the sunlight, and so allows the Spirit of the Hour to see what is happening on Earth.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The crescent-shaped ("moonlike") chariot, its apocalyptic mission accomplished, will be frozen to stone and will be surrounded by the sculptured forms of other agents in the drama. Phidias (5th century B.C.E.) was the noblest of Greek sculptors.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A mythical snake with a head at each end; it serves here as a symbolic warning that a reversal of the process is always possible.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: "Imitate" and also, in their immobility, "mock at" the flight they represent.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Biased or, possibly, telling only part of the story.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The inscription over the gate of Hell in Dante's *Inferno* 3.9.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, he was so abjectly enslaved that his own will accorded with the tyrant's will.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A drug (probably opium) that brings forgetfulness of pain and sorrow.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Egyptian obelisks (tapering shafts of stone), brought to Rome by its conquering armies, included hieroglyphs that—because they were still undeciphered in Shelley's time—seemed "monstrous and barbaric shapes" (line 168).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The "foul shapes" (line 180) were statues of the gods who, whatever their names, were all really manifestations of Jupiter.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, which was thought to be life by humans as they were before their regeneration.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  That is, a dim point in the extreme of empty space. The sense of lines 198–204 is if regenerate man were to be released from all earthly and biological impediments ("clogs"), he would become what even the stars are not—a pure ideal. Shelley's

original draft concluded here, but in autumn 1819 he added a jubilant fourth act. Drawing on the Renaissance court masque, which combined song and dance with spectacular display, this act represents the union of the universe's formerly divided elements. The ritual dances, first of the Hours with the "Spirits of the human mind" and, finally, of the Moon with her paramou the Earth, form a counterpart to the sexual reunion of

Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *exhausted*Return to reference °
- °: *annotated, explained*Return to reference °

The Cloud

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noon-day dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the Sun.
I wield the flail[1] of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits;
Over Earth and Ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;[2]
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,[3]
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,[4]
And his burning plumes outspread,[5]
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,[6]
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit Sea beneath,
Its ardours of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall° of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine aëry nest,
As still as a brooding dove.[7]

That orbed maiden with white fire laden
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof,° of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her, and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.[8]

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone°
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanos are dim and the stars reel and swim

When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof—
The mountains its columns be!
The triumphal arch, through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the Air, are chained to my chair,
°
Is the million-coloured Bow;
The sphere-fire° above its soft colours wove
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores, of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die—
For after the rain, when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams, with their convex gleams,
Build up the blue dome of Air[9]—
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,[1]
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise, and unbuild it again.—

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Either a weapon fashioned as a ball and chain or a tool for threshing grain.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, atmospheric electricity, guiding the cloud (line 18), discharges as lightning when "lured" by the attraction of an opposite charge.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The upper part of the cloud remains exposed to the sun.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: As bright as a burning meteor.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The sun's corona. Return to reference 5
- Note 6: High, broken clouds, driven by the wind.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: An echo of Milton's description of his Muse, identified with the Holy Spirit, who "with mighty wings outspread / Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss" (*Paradise Lost* 1.20–21).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The stars reflected in the water.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The blue color of the sky. The phenomenon, as Shelley indicates, results from the way "sunbeams" are filtered by the Earth's atmosphere.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The memorial monument of the dead cloud is the cloudless blue dome of the sky. (The point is that a cenotaph is a monument that does not contain a corpse.)Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *Earth's*Return to reference °
- °: *fitfully*Return to reference °
- °: *rich coverlet*Return to reference °
- °: *texture*Return to reference °
- °: *belt, sash*Return to reference °
- °: *chariot*Return to reference °
- °: *sunlight*Return to reference °

To a Sky-Lark[1]

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert—
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken Sun—
O'er which clouds are brightning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even[°]
Melts around thy flight,
Like a star of Heaven
In the broad day-light
Thou art unseen,—but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,[2]
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see—we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air

With thy voice is loud,
As when Night is bare
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams—and Heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour,
With music sweet as love—which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves—
By warm winds deflowered—
Till the scent, it gives

Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-
winged thieves:[3]

Sound of vernal° showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite° or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine:

Chorus Hymeneal[4]
Or triumphal chaunt
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields or waves or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of
pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be—
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee;
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem

Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a chrystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not—
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught—
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate and pride and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound—
Better than all treasures
That in books are found—
Thy skill to poet were, thou Scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

1820 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1: The European skylark is a small bird that sings only in flight, often when it is too high to be visible.Return to reference

1
- Note 2: The morning star, Venus.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The “warm winds,” line 53.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Marital (from Hymen, Greek god of marriage).Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *evening*Return to reference °
- °: *springtime*Return to reference °
- °: *spirit*Return to reference °

To Night

Swiftly walk o’er the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave
Where, all the long and lone daylight
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of day,
Kiss her until she be wearied out—
Then wander o’er City and sea and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn
I sighed for thee;
When Light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day[1] turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me? and I replied,
No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

1820 1824

Endnotes

- Note 1: Here the “Day” is the male sun, not the female “day” with whom the Spirit of Night dallies in the preceding stanza.Return to reference 1

To ——[Music, when soft voices die][1]

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory.—
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.°—

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed[2]—
And so thy thoughts,[3] when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

1821 1824

Endnotes

- Note 1: This poem was first published under the title "Memory" in Mary Shelley's edition of her husband's *Posthumous Poems* in 1824, with the two stanzas in the reverse order from what we give here. Our text is based on a version found in a notebook of Percy Shelley's now housed in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The square brackets in line 8 mark blank spaces left unfilled in the manuscript.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The bed of the dead rose.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, my thoughts of thee.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *enliven*Return to reference °

O World, O Life, O Time

O World, O Life, O Time,
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before,
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more, O never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight—
Fresh spring and summer [ ] and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more, O never more!

1824

Chorus from Hellas[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Hellas*, a closet drama written in the autumn of 1821, was inspired by the Greek war for independence from the Ottoman Empire. ("Hellas" is another name for Greece.) In his preface Shelley declared that he viewed this revolution as foretelling the final overthrow of all tyranny. The choruses throughout are sung by enslaved Greek women. We give the chorus that concludes the drama.Return to reference 1

The world's great age[2]

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years[3] return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds[4] outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far,
A new Peneus[5] rolls his fountains
Against the morning-star,
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads[6] on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo[7] cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus[8] sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies;
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso[9] for his native shore.

O, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian[1] rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free;
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime,

And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
  Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
  Than many unsubdued;[2]
Not gold, not blood their altar dowers°
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

O cease! must hate and death return?
  Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
  Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
O might it die or rest at last!

1821 1822

Endnotes

- Note 2: Prophecies of wars, and rumours of wars, etc., may safely be made by poet or prophet in any age, but to anticipate however darkly a period of regeneration and happiness is a more hazardous exercise of the faculty which bards possess or fain. It will remind the reader . . . of Isaiah and Virgil, whose ardent spirits . . . saw the possible and perhaps approaching state of society in which the "lion shall lie down with the lamb," and "*omnis feret omnia tellus.*" Let these great names be my authority and excuse [*Shelley's note*]. The quotations are from Isaiah's millennial prophecy (for example, chaps. 25, 45), and Virgil's prediction, in *Eclogue* 4, of a return of the golden age, when "all the earth will produce all things."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek myth the first period of history, when Saturn reigned.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Clothes (especially mourning garments) as well as dead vegetation.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The river in northeast Greece that flows through the beautiful vale of Tempe (line 11).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Cyclades, islands in the Aegean Sea.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: On which Jason sailed in his quest for the Golden Fleece.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The legendary player on the lyre who was torn to pieces by the frenzied Thracian women while he was mourning the death of his wife, Eurydice.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The nymph deserted by Ulysses on his voyage back from the Trojan War to his native Ithaca.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: King Laius of Thebes was killed in a quarrel by his son Oedipus, who did not recognize his father. Shortly thereafter Oedipus delivered Thebes from the ravages of the Sphinx by answering its riddle (lines 23–24).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Saturn and Love were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. "All" those "who fell" [are] the Gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; the "One who rose" [is] Jesus Christ . . . and the "many unsubdued" [are] the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America [*Shelley's note*].Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *gifts*Return to reference °

Adonais John Keats died in Rome on February 23, 1821, and was buried there in the Protestant Cemetery. In the Preface to *Adonais*, his elegy for Keats, Percy Shelley, who had buried his three-year-old son William in that "romantic and lonely cemetery" a year and a half earlier, describes the site as "an open space among the ruins covered in winter with violets and daisies." "It might make one in love with death," he adds, "to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place." In fact, after his drowning in 1822, Shelley's ashes would be interred in that sweet place also.

Shelley had met Keats, had invited him to be his guest at Pisa in Italy (an invitation Keats did not live to accept), and had gradually come to realize that Keats was, as the Preface to *Adonais* states, "among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age." In his elegy, which he began writing in April 1821, almost immediately after hearing of Keats's death, Shelley mourns Keats, honors him, and also pursues a case against the reviewers of Keats's poems—in particular the anonymous critic for the influential *Quarterly Review* (now known to be the Tory civil servant John Wilson Croker), who had written a grossly insulting review of Keats's *Endymion.* Shelley believed, wrongly, that Keats's disappointment over the review had caused his illness and death: Keats's "genius," he stated in the Preface, "was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful. . . . The savage criticism . . . produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind." Shelley's readiness to believe the exaggerated rumors about Keats's reaction to his bad reviews is the more understandable when one remembers that he had been savaged by reviewers on several occasions himself. It is also true that in this period of fierce political enmities rancorous book reviews were very near being the norm rather than the exception.

Shelley in a letter described *Adonais* as a "highly wrought piece of art." Its artistry consists in part in the care with which it follows the conventions of the pastoral elegy, the literary form established more than two thousand years earlier by the Greek poets Bion, Moschus, and Theocritus—Shelley had translated into English Bion's *Lament for Adonis* and Moschus's *Lament for Bion.* Those

conventions include an invocation to a muse; descriptions of nature's sympathetic participation in the grieving and of the procession of mourners; and most important, the final turn from despair to consolation in the discovery that, paradoxically, the grave is the gate to a higher existence. The name that Shelley gives to Keats in this pastoral elegy, "Adonais," likely derives from Adonis, the name of the beautiful mortal who was beloved by the goddess Venus. Slain by a wild boar while hunting, Adonis was restored to life and a kind of immortality on the condition that he spend only part of the year with Venus, and the remaining part with Proserpine in the underworld. This cycle of rebirth and death, symbolic of the alternate return of summer and winter, suggests why Adonis was central to ancient fertility myths. This cycle is also an integral element of *Adonais.*

Published first in Pisa in 1821, *Adonais* was not issued in England until 1829, in an edition sponsored by the so-called Cambridge Apostles, a group including the poets Alfred Tennyson and A. H. Hallam. The appearance of this edition marked the beginning of Keats's posthumous emergence from obscurity.

Adonais

An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, etc.

[Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled—
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead.][1]

1

I weep for Adonais—he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour,[2] selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,°
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: with me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!

2

Where wert thou mighty Mother,[3] when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness?[4] where was lorn° Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one,[5] with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse° beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

3

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead!

Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend;—oh, dream not that the amorous Deep°
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

4

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He[6] died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulph of death; but his clear Sprite°
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.[7]

5

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers° yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent° prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

6

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished—
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true love tears, instead of dew;[8]
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!

Thy extreme° hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipt before they blew°
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

7

To that high Capital,° where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

8

He will awake no more, oh, never more!—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace,
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

9

O, weep for Adonais!—The quick° Dreams,
The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks,[9] whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

10

And one[1] with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

11

One from a lucid° urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipt her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,°
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds,° as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

12

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont° to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,[2]
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,°
It flushed through his pale limbs, and past to its eclipse.

13

And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,

Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

14

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watchtower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

15

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,°
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds:[3]—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

16

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear[4]
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both

Thou Adonais: wan they stand and sere°
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.°

17

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale[5]
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning,[6] doth complain,°
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion° wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head[7] who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

18

Ah woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,°
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;°
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

19

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight,
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

20

The leprous corpse touched by this spirit tender
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath[8]
By sightless° lightning?—th' intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

21

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean°
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

22

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake,° in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song[9]
Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour° sprung.

23

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs

Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

24

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they
Rent° the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

25

In the death chamber for a moment Death
Shamed by the presence of that living Might
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!" cried Urania: her distress
Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and met her vain
caress.

26

"Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless[1] breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss shall all thoughts else survive

With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

27

"Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare° the unpastured dragon in his den?[2]
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?[3]
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,[4]
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

28

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
When like Apollo, from his golden bow,
The Pythian of the age[5] one arrow sped
And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

29

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect[6] then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven,[7] and when

It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps[8] the spirit's awful night."

30

Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles° rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity,[9] whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne sent
The sweetest lyrist[1] of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue.

31

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,[2]
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell;° he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.[3]

32

A pardlike° Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked;—a Power
Girt round with weakness;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;[4]
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

33

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy tresses grew[5]
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

34

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own;
As in the accents of an unknown land,
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: "who art thou?"
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined° brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's[6]—Oh! that it should be so!

35

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,[7]
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He,[8] who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one;
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

36

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm[9] would now itself disown:

It felt, yet could escape the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,[1]
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

37

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

38

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites[2] that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.—
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal,[3] which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

39

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,

And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

40

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;[4]
Envy and calumny° and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

41

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair![5]

42

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;[6]
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

43

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic° stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there,
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;[7]
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

44

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil.[8] When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what°
Shall be its earthly doom,° the dead live there[9]
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

45

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown[1]
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:°
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

46

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.

"Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"[2]

47

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth
Fond° wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous[3] Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might°
Satiate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;[4]
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

48

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre
O, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they[5] borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

49

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks° like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses[6] dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access[7]

Where, like an infant's smile,[8] over the dead,
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread.

50

And grey walls moulder round,[9] on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;[1]
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,[2]
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death[3]
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

51

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,[4]
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

52

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.[5]—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

53

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before; from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is past° from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

54

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of[6]
The fire for which all thirst;[7] now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

55

The breath whose might I have invoked in song[8]
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven![9]
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

1821 1821

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shelley prefixed to *Adonais* a Greek epigraph attributed to Plato; this is Shelley's translation of the Greek. The planet Venus

appears both as the morning star, Lucifer, and as the evening star, Hesperus or Vesper. Shelley makes of this phenomenon a key symbol for Adonais's triumph over death, in stanzas 44–46.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Shelley follows the classical mode of personifying the hours, which mark the passage of time and turn of the seasons.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Urania. She had originally been the muse of astronomy, but the name was also an epithet for Venus. Shelley converts Venus Urania, who in Greek myth had been the lover of Adonis, into the mother of Adonais.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Alludes to the anonymity of the review of *Endymion.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, one of the Echoes (line 14).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Milton, regarded as precursor of the great poetic tradition in which Keats wrote. He had adopted Urania as the muse of *Paradise Lost.* Lines 31–35 describe Milton's life during the restoration of the Stuart monarchy.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In "A Defence of Poetry," Shelley says that Milton was the third great epic poet, along with Homer and Dante. The following stanza describes the fate of other poets, up to Shelley's own time.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An allusion to an incident in Keats's *Isabella.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The products of Keats's imagination, figuratively represented (according to the conventions of the pastoral elegy) as his sheep.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: One of the Dreams (line 73).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The cautious intellect (of the listener).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Because of her unrequited love for Narcissus, who was enamored of his own reflection (line 141), the nymph Echo pined away until she was only a reflected sound.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Young Hyacinthus was loved by Phoebus Apollo, who accidentally killed him in a game of quoits. Apollo made the hyacinth flower spring from his blood.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: To whom Keats had written "Ode to a Nightingale."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the legend the aged eagle, to renew his youth, flies toward the sun until his old plumage is burned off and the film cleared from

his eyes.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: The reviewer of *Endymion.*Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The "sword" is the mind that knows; the "sheath" is its vehicle, the material body.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, the Echo in line 127.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Because her heart had been given to Adonais.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, the hostile reviewers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The allusion is to Perseus, who had cut off Medusa's head while avoiding the direct sight of her (which would have turned him to stone) by looking only at her reflection in his shield.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, when thy spirit, like the full moon, should have reached its maturity.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Byron, who had directed against critics of the age his satiric poem *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). The allusion is to Apollo, called "the Pythian" because he had slain the dragon Python.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, an insect that lives and dies in a single day.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: As the sun reveals the Earth but veils the other stars.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The other stars (creative minds), of lesser brilliance than the sun.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Byron, who had referred to his Childe Harold as one of the "wanderers o'er Eternity" (3.669).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Thomas Moore (1779–1852), from Ireland ("Ierne"), who had written poems about the oppression of his native land.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Shelley, represented in one of his aspects—such as the Poet in *Alastor*, rather than the author of *Prometheus Unbound.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Actaeon, while hunting, came upon the naked Diana bathing and, as a punishment, was turned into a stag and torn to pieces by his own hounds.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The heavy, overhanging hour of Keats's death.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Like the thyrsus, the leaf-entwined and cone-topped staff carried by Dionysus, to whom leopards (see line 280) are sacred. The

pansies, which are "overblown," that is, past their bloom, are emblems of sorrowful thought. The cypress is an emblem of mourning.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: His bloody ("ensanguined") brow bore a mark like that with which God had branded Cain for murdering Abel—or like that left by Christ's crown of thorns.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In imitation of a memorial statue.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Leigh Hunt, close friend of both Keats and Shelley.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Snake; that is, the anonymous reviewer.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The promise of later greatness in Keats's early poems "held . . . silent" the expression of "all envy, hate, and wrong" except the reviewer's.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A species of hawk that feeds on dead flesh.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Shelley adopts for this poem the Neoplatonic view that all life and all forms emanate from the Absolute, the eternal One. The Absolute is imaged as both a radiant light source and an overflowing fountain, which circulates continuously through the dross of matter (stanza 43) and back to its source.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: He has soared beyond the shadow cast by the Earth as it intercepts the sun's light.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shelley's science is accurate: it is the envelope of air around the Earth that, by diffusing and reflecting sunlight, veils the stars so that they are invisible during the day.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The nightingale, in allusion to Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, to the degree that a particular substance will permit.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The radiance of stars (that is, of poets) persists, even when they are temporarily "eclipsed" by another heavenly body, or obscured by the veil of the earth's atmosphere.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, in the thought of the "young heart."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Poets who (like Keats) died young, before achieving their full measure of fame: The seventeen-year-old Thomas Chatterton (1752–1770) was believed to have committed suicide out of despair over his poverty and lack of recognition. Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586) died in battle at thirty-two. The Roman poet Lucan (39–65 C.E.) killed himself

at twenty-six to escape a sentence of death for having plotted against the tyrant Nero.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Adonais assumes his place in the sphere of Vesper, the evening star, hitherto unoccupied ("kingless"), hence also "silent" amid the music of the other spheres.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Suspended, floating in space.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The poet bids the mourner to stretch his imagination so as to reach the poet's own cosmic viewpoint and then allow it to contract ("shrink") back to its ordinary vantage point on Earth—where, unlike Adonais in his heavenly place, we have an alternation of day and night.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Poets such as Keats.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Undergrowth. In Shelley's time the ruins of ancient Rome were overgrown with weeds and shrubs, almost as if the ground were returning to its natural state.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Protestant Cemetery, Keats's burial place. Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A glancing allusion to Shelley's three-year-old son, William, also buried there.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The wall of ancient Rome formed one boundary of the cemetery.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A burning log, white with ash.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The tomb of Caius Cestius, a Roman tribune, just outside the cemetery.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A common name for a cemetery in Italy is *camposanto*, "holy camp or ground." Shelley is punning on the Italian word.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Shelley's mourning for his son.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Earthly life colors ("stains") the pure white light of the One, which is the source of all light (see lines 339–40, n. 3). The azure sky, flowers, etc., of lines 466–68 exemplify earthly colors that, however beautiful, fall far short of the "glory" of the pure Light that they transmit but also refract ("transfuse").Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, according to the degree that each reflects.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The "thirst" of the human spirit is to return to the fountain and fire (the "burning fountain," line 339) that are its source.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Two years earlier Shelley had "invoked" (prayed to, and also asked for) "the breath of Autumn's being" in his "Ode to the West Wind" (p. 802, above).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In her 1839 edition of her husband's works, Mary Shelley, thinking of the manner of Percy's death, asked: "who but will regard as a prophecy the last stanza of the 'Adonais'?"Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *companions*Return to reference °
- °: *forlorn*Return to reference °
- °: *corpse*Return to reference °
- °: *abyss*Return to reference °
- °: *spirit*Return to reference °
- °: *candles*Return to reference °
- °: *radiant*Return to reference °
- °: *last; highest*Return to reference °
- °: *bloomed*Return to reference °
- °: *Rome*Return to reference °
- °: *living*Return to reference °
- °: *luminous*Return to reference °
- °: *rich garland*Return to reference °
- °: *arrows*Return to reference °
- °: *accustomed*Return to reference °
- °: *clasps*Return to reference °
- °: *song*Return to reference °
- °: *dried, withered*Return to reference °
- °: *pity*Return to reference °
- °: *lament*Return to reference °
- °: *England*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °
- °: *briar*Return to reference °
- °: *invisible*Return to reference °
- °: *low*Return to reference °
- °: *assuage*Return to reference °
- °: *Urania*Return to reference °
- °: *tore*Return to reference °
- °: *challenge*Return to reference °
- °: *cloaks*Return to reference °

- °: *funeral bell* Return to reference °
- °: *leopardlike* Return to reference °
- °: *bloodied* Return to reference °
- °: *slander* Return to reference °
- °: *formative, shaping* Return to reference °
- °: *whatever* Return to reference °
- °: *destiny* Return to reference °
- °: *justified* Return to reference °
- °: *foolish* Return to reference °
- °: *power* Return to reference °
- °: *ruins* Return to reference °
- °: *passed* Return to reference °

When the lamp is shattered

When the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed—
When the lute is broken
Sweet tones are remembered not—
When the lips have spoken
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute—
No song—but sad dirges
Like the wind through a ruined cell
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest—
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possest.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home and your bier?

Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high—
Bright Reason will mock thee
Like the Sun from a wintry sky—

From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

1822 1824

A Defence of Poetry

In 1820 Shelley's friend Thomas Love Peacock published an ironic essay, "The Four Ages of Poetry," implicitly directed against the towering claims for poetry and the poetic imagination made by his Romantic contemporaries. In this essay, Peacock adopted the premise of Wordsworth and other Romantic critics—that poetry in its origin was a primitive use of language and mind—but from this premise he proceeded to conclude that poetry had become a useless anachronism in his own Age of Bronze, a time defined by new sciences (including economics and political theory) and technologies that had the potential to improve the world. Peacock was a poet as well as an excellent prose satirist, and Shelley saw the joke; but he also recognized that the view that Peacock, as a satirist, had assumed was very close to that actually held in his day by Utilitarian philosophers and the material-minded public, which either attacked or contemptuously ignored the imaginative faculty and its achievements. He therefore undertook, as he good-humoredly wrote to Peacock, "to break a lance with you . . . in honor of my mistress Urania" (giving the cause for which he battled the name that Milton had used for the muse inspiring *Paradise Lost*), even though he was only "the knight of the shield of shadow and the lance of gossamere." The result was "A Defence of Poetry," planned to consist of three parts. The last two parts were never written, and even the existing section, written in 1821, remained unpublished until 1840, eighteen years after Shelley's death.

Shelley's emphasis in this essay is not on the particularity of individual poems but on the universal and permanent qualities and values that, he believes, all great poems, as products of imagination, have in common. Shelley in addition extends the term *poet* to include all creative minds that break out of the conditions of their historical time and place in order to envision such values. This category includes not only writers in prose as well as verse but also artists, legislators, prophets, and the founders of new social and religious institutions.

The “Defence” is an eloquent and enduring claim for the indispensability of the visionary and creative imagination in all the great human concerns. Few later social critics have equaled the cogency of Shelley’s attack on our acquisitive society and its narrowly material concepts of utility and progress. Such a bias has opened the way to enormous advances in the physical sciences and our material well-being, but without a proportionate development of our “poetic faculty,” the moral imagination. The result, Shelley says, is that “man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave.”

From A Defence of Poetry

or Remarks Suggested by an Essay Entitled "The Four Ages of Poetry"

According to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced; and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to colour them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity. The one[1] is the *to poiein,*[2] or the principle of synthesis, and has for its objects those forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself; the other is the *to logizein,*[3] or principle of analysis, and its action regards the relations of things, simply as relations; considering thoughts, not in their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results. Reason is the enumeration of quantities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those quantities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to Imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance.

Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be "the expression of the Imagination": and poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Æolian lyre,[4] which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody. But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody, alone, but harmony, by an

internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre. A child at play by itself will express its delight by its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions which awakened it; it will be the reflected image of that impression; and as the lyre trembles and sounds after the wind has died away, so the child seeks, by prolonging in its voice and motions the duration of the effect, to prolong also a consciousness of the cause. In relation to the objects which delight a child, these expressions are, what poetry is to higher objects. The savage (for the savage is to ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects in a similar manner; and language and gesture, together with plastic[5] or pictorial imitation, become the image of the combined effect of those objects, and of his apprehension of them. Man in society, with all his passions and his pleasures, next becomes the object of the passions and pleasures of man; an additional class of emotions produces an augmented treasure of expressions; and language, gesture, and the imitative arts, become at once the representation and the medium, the pencil and the picture, the chisel and the statue, the chord and the harmony. The social sympathies, or those laws from which as from its elements society results, begin to develope themselves from the moment that two human beings coexist; the future is contained within the present as the plant within the seed; and equality, diversity, unity, contrast, mutual dependence, become the principles alone capable of affording the motives according to which the will of a social being is determined to action, inasmuch as he is social; and constitute pleasure in sensation, virtue in sentiment, beauty in art, truth in reasoning, and love in the intercourse of kind. Hence men, even in the infancy of society, observe a certain order in their words and actions, distinct from that of the objects and the impressions

represented by them, all expression being subject to the laws of that from which it proceeds. But let us dismiss those more general considerations which might involve an enquiry into the principles of society itself, and restrict our view to the manner in which the imagination is expressed upon its forms.

In the youth of the world, men dance and sing and imitate natural objects, observing[6] in these actions, as in all others, a certain rhythm or order. And, although all men observe a similar, they observe not the same order, in the motions of the dance, in the melody of the song, in the combinations of language, in the series of their imitations of natural objects. For there is a certain order or rhythm belonging to each of these classes of mimetic representation, from which the hearer and the spectator receive an intenser and purer pleasure than from any other: the sense of an approximation to this order has been called taste, by modern writers. Every man in the infancy of art, observes an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which this highest delight results: but the diversity is not sufficiently marked, as that its gradations should be sensible,[7] except in those instances where the predominance of this faculty of approximation to the beautiful (for so we may be permitted to name the relation between this highest pleasure and its cause) is very great. Those in whom it exists in excess are poets, in the most universal sense of the word; and the pleasure resulting from the manner in which they express the influence of society or nature upon their own minds, communicates itself to others, and gathers a sort of reduplication from that community. Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things, and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them, become through time signs for portions or classes of thoughts[8] instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse. These similitudes or relations are finely said by Lord Bacon to be "the same footsteps of nature impressed upon the various subjects of the

world”[9]—and he considers the faculty which perceives them as the storehouse of axioms common to all knowledge. In the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry; and to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word the good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression. Every original language near to its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem:[1] the copiousness of lexicography and the distinctions of grammar are the works of a later age, and are merely the catalogue and the form of the creations of Poetry.

But Poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance and architecture and statuary and painting: they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion.[2] Hence all original religions are allegorical, or susceptible of allegory, and like Janus[3] have a double face of false and true. Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called in the earlier epochs of the world legislators or prophets:[4] a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters. For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretence of superstition which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry. A Poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. The grammatical forms which express the moods of time, and the difference of persons and the distinction of place are convertible with respect to the highest poetry without injuring it as poetry, and

the choruses of Æschylus, and the book of Job, and Dante's Paradise would afford, more than any other writings, examples of this fact, if the limits of this essay did not forbid citation. The creations of sculpture, painting, and music, are illustrations still more decisive.

Language, colour, form, and religious and civil habits of action are all the instruments and materials of poetry; they may be called poetry by that figure of speech which considers the effect as a synonime of the cause. But poetry in a more restricted sense[5] expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man. And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than colour, form, or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the controul of that faculty of which it is the creation. For language is arbitrarily produced by the Imagination and has relation to thoughts alone; but all other materials, instruments and conditions of art, have relations among each other, which limit and interpose between conception and expression. The former[6] is as a mirror which reflects, the latter as a cloud which enfeebles, the light of which both are mediums of communication. Hence the fame of sculptors, painters and musicians, although the intrinsic powers of the great masters of these arts, may yield in no degree to that of those who have employed language as the hieroglyphic of their thoughts, has never equalled that of poets in the restricted sense of the term; as two performers of equal skill will produce unequal effects from a guitar and a harp. The fame of legislators and founders of religions, so long as their institutions last, alone seems to exceed that of poets in the restricted sense; but it can scarcely be a question whether, if we deduct the celebrity which their flattery of the gross opinions of the vulgar usually conciliates, together with that which belonged to them in their higher character of poets, any excess will remain.

We have thus circumscribed the meaning of the word Poetry within the limits of that art which is the most familiar and the most

perfect expression of the faculty itself. It is necessary however to make the circle still narrower, and to determine the distinction between measured and unmeasured language;[7] for the popular division into prose and verse is inadmissible in accurate philosophy.

Sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent, and a perception of the order of those relations has always been found connected with a perception of the order of the relations of thoughts. Hence the language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence, than the words themselves, without reference to that peculiar order. Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour and odour, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed or it will bear no flower—and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel.[8]

An observation of the regular mode of the recurrence of this harmony in the language of poetical minds, together with its relation to music, produced metre, or a certain system of traditional forms of harmony of language. Yet it is by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form, so that the harmony which is its spirit, be observed. The practise is indeed convenient and popular, and to be preferred, especially in such composition as includes much form and action: but every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification. The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error. The distinction between philosophers and poets has been anticipated.[9] Plato was essentially a poet—the truth and splendour of his imagery and the melody of his language is the most intense that it is possible to conceive. He rejected the measure of the epic, dramatic, and lyrical forms, because he sought to kindle a harmony in thoughts divested of shape and action, and he forbore to invent any regular plan of

rhythm which would include, under determinate forms, the varied pauses of his style. Cicero[1] sought to imitate the cadence of his periods but with little success. Lord Bacon was a poet.[2] His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm, which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect; it is a strain which distends, and then bursts the circumference of the hearer's mind, and pours itself forth together with it into the universal element with which it has perpetual sympathy. All the authors of revolutions in opinion are not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal music. Nor are those supreme poets, who have employed traditional forms of rhythm on account of the form and action of their subjects, less capable of perceiving and teaching the truth of things, than those who have omitted that form. Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton (to confine ourselves to modern writers) are philosophers of the very loftiest power.

A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth. There is this difference between a story and a poem, that a story is a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other bond of connexion than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect; the other is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the creator, which is itself the image of all other minds. The one is partial, and applies only to a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur; the other is universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature. Time, which destroys the beauty and the use of the story of particular facts, stript of the poetry which should invest them, augments that of Poetry, and for ever develops new and wonderful applications of the eternal truth which it contains. Hence epitomes[3] have been called the moths of just history;[4] they eat out the poetry of it. The story of particular

facts is as a mirror which obscures and distorts that which should be beautiful: Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted.

The parts of a composition may be poetical, without the composition as a whole being a poem. A single sentence may be considered as a whole though it be found in a series of unassimilated portions; a single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought. And thus all the great historians, Herodotus, Plutarch, Livy,[5] were poets; and although the plan of these writers, especially that of Livy, restrained them from developing this faculty in its highest degree, they make copious and ample amends for their subjection, by filling all the interstices of their subjects with living images.

Having determined what is poetry, and who are poets, let us proceed to estimate its effects upon society.

Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits on which it falls, open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight. In the infancy of the world, neither poets themselves nor their auditors are fully aware of the excellence of poetry: for it acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness; and it is reserved for future generations to contemplate and measure the mighty cause and effect in all the strength and splendour of their union. Even in modern times, no living poet ever arrived at the fulness of his fame; the jury which sits in judgement upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers: it must be impanelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations. A Poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds: his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why. The poems of Homer and his contemporaries were the delight of infant Greece; they were the elements of that social system which is the column upon which all succeeding civilization has reposed. Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character; nor can we doubt that

those who read his verses were awakened to an ambition of becoming like to Achilles, Hector and Ulysses: the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism and persevering devotion to an object, were unveiled to the depths in these immortal creations: the sentiments of the auditors must have been refined and enlarged by a sympathy with such great and lovely impersonations, until from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves with the objects of their admiration. Nor let it be objected, that these characters are remote from moral perfection, and that they can by no means be considered as edifying patterns for general imitation. Every epoch under names more or less specious has deified its peculiar errors; Revenge is the naked Idol of the worship of a semi-barbarous age; and Self-deceit is the veiled Image of unknown evil before which luxury and satiety lie prostrate. But a poet considers the vices of his contemporaries as the temporary dress in which his creations must be arrayed, and which cover without concealing the eternal proportions of their beauty. An epic or dramatic personage is understood to wear them around his soul, as he may the antient armour or the modern uniform around his body; whilst it is easy to conceive a dress more graceful than either. The beauty of the internal nature cannot be so far concealed by its accidental vesture, but that the spirit of its form shall communicate itself to the very disguise, and indicate the shape it hides from the manner in which it is worn. A majestic form and graceful motions will express themselves through the most barbarous and tasteless costume. Few poets of the highest class have chosen to exhibit the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendour; and it is doubtful whether the alloy of costume, habit, etc., be not necessary to temper this planetary music[6] for mortal ears.

The whole objection, however, of the immorality of poetry[7] rests upon a misconception of the manner in which poetry acts to produce the moral improvement of man. Ethical science[8] arranges the elements which poetry has created, and propounds schemes and proposes examples of civil and domestic life: nor is it for want of admirable doctrines that men hate, and despise, and censure, and

deceive, and subjugate one another. But Poetry acts in another and diviner manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduces[9] all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them, as memorials of that gentle and exalted content[1] which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists. The great secret of morals is Love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination;[2] and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void for ever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens that faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. A Poet therefore would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither. By this assumption of the inferior office of interpreting the effect, in which perhaps after all he might acquit himself but imperfectly, he would resign the glory in a participation in the cause.[3] There was little danger that Homer, or any of the eternal Poets, should have so far misunderstood themselves as to have abdicated this throne of their widest dominion. Those in whom the poetical faculty, though great, is less intense, as Euripides, Lucan, Tasso,[4] Spenser, have frequently affected[5] a moral aim, and the effect of their poetry is

diminished in exact proportion to the degree in which they compel us to advert to this purpose.[6]

* * *

It is difficult to define pleasure in its highest sense; the definition involving a number of apparent paradoxes. For, from an inexplicable defect of harmony in the constitution of human nature, the pain of the inferior is frequently connected with the pleasures of the superior portions of our being. Sorrow, terror, anguish, despair itself are often the chosen expressions of an approximation to the highest good. Our sympathy in tragic fiction depends on this principle; tragedy delights by affording a shadow of the pleasure which exists in pain. This is the source also of the melancholy which is inseparable from the sweetest melody. The pleasure that is in sorrow is sweeter than the pleasure of pleasure itself. And hence the saying, "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of mirth."[7] Not that this highest species of pleasure is necessarily linked with pain. The delight of love and friendship, the ecstasy of the admiration of nature, the joy of the perception and still more of the creation of poetry is often wholly unalloyed.

The production and assurance of pleasure in this highest sense is true utility. Those who produce and preserve this pleasure are Poets or poetical philosophers.

The exertions of Locke, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau,[8] and their disciples, in favour of oppressed and deluded humanity, are entitled to the gratitude of mankind. Yet it is easy to calculate the degree of moral and intellectual improvement which the world would have exhibited, had they never lived. A little more nonsense would have been talked for a century or two; and perhaps a few more men, women, and children, burnt as heretics. We might not at this moment have been congratulating each other on the abolition of the Inquisition in Spain.[9] But it exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon,

nor Milton, had ever existed; if Raphael and Michael Angelo had never been born; if the Hebrew poetry had never been translated; if a revival of the study of Greek literature had never taken place; if no monuments of antient sculpture had been handed down to us; and if the poetry of the religion of the antient world had been extinguished together with its belief. The human mind could never, except by the intervention of these excitements, have been awakened to the invention of the grosser sciences, and that application of analytical reasoning to the aberrations of society, which it is now attempted to exalt over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself.

We have more moral, political and historical wisdom, than we know how to reduce into practice; we have more scientific and economical knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which it multiplies. The poetry in these systems of thought, is concealed by the accumulation of facts and calculating processes. There is no want of knowledge respecting what is wisest and best in morals, government, and political economy, or at least, what is wiser and better than what men now practise and endure. But we let "*I dare not* wait upon *I would*, like the poor cat i' the adage."[1] We want[2] the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life: our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest. The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave. To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labour, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? From what other cause has it arisen that these inventions which should have lightened, have added a weight to the curse imposed on Adam?[3] Poetry, and the principle of Self, of

which money is the visible incarnation, are the God and Mammon of the world.[4]

The functions of the poetical faculty are two-fold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good. The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieldy for that which animates it.

Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of things; it is as the odour and the colour of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and the splendour of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were Virtue, Love, Patriotism, Friendship etc.—what were the scenery of this beautiful Universe which we inhabit—what were our consolations on this side of the grave—and what were our aspirations beyond it—if Poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it: for the mind in creation is as a fading coal which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness: this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious

portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the poet. I appeal to the greatest Poets of the present day, whether it be not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labour and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions by the intertexture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself. For Milton conceived the Paradise Lost as a whole before he executed it in portions. We have his own authority also for the Muse having "dictated" to him the "unpremeditated song,"[5] and let this be an answer to those who would allege the fifty-six various readings of the first line of the Orlando Furioso.[6] Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting. This instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts: a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest[7] moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression: so that even in the desire and the regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over a sea, where the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain

only as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility[8] and the most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship is essentially linked with these emotions; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a Universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can colour all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this etherial world; a word, or a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations[9] of life, and veiling them or in language or in form sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes; its secret alchemy turns to potable gold[1] the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its forms.

All things exist as they are perceived: at least in relation to the percipient. "The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."[2] But poetry defeats the curse

which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.[3] It justifies that bold and true word of Tasso: *Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta.*[4]

A Poet, as he is the author to others of the highest wisdom, pleasure, virtue and glory, so he ought personally to be the happiest, the best, the wisest, and the most illustrious of men. As to his glory, let Time be challenged to declare whether the fame of any other institutor of human life be comparable to that of a poet. That he is the wisest, the happiest, and the best, inasmuch as he is a poet, is equally incontrovertible: the greatest poets have been men of the most spotless virtue, of the most consummate prudence, and, if we could look into the interior of their lives, the most fortunate of men: and the exceptions, as they regard those who possessed the poetic faculty in a high yet inferior degree, will be found on consideration to confirm rather than destroy the rule. Let us for a moment stoop to the arbitration of popular breath, and usurping and uniting in our own persons the incompatible characters of accuser, witness, judge and executioner, let us decide without trial, testimony, or form that certain motives of those who are "there sitting where we dare not soar"[5] are reprehensible. Let us assume that Homer was a drunkard, that Virgil was a flatterer, that Horace was a coward, that Tasso was a madman, that Lord Bacon was a peculator, that Raphael was a libertine, that Spenser was a poet laureate.[6] It is inconsistent with this division of our subject to cite living poets, but Posterity has done ample justice to the great names now referred to. Their errors have

been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins "were as scarlet, they are now white as snow";[7] they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and the redeemer Time. Observe in what a ludicrous chaos the imputations of real or fictitious crime have been confused in the contemporary calumnies against poetry and poets;[8] consider how little is, as it appears—or appears, as it is; look to your own motives, and judge not, lest ye be judged.[9]

Poetry, as has been said, in this respect differs from logic, that it is not subject to the controul of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence has no necessary connexion with consciousness or will. It is presumptuous to determine that these[1] are the necessary conditions of all mental causation, when mental effects are experienced insusceptible of being referred to them. The frequent recurrence of the poetical power, it is obvious to suppose, may produce in the mind an habit of order and harmony correlative with its own nature and with its effects upon other minds. But in the intervals of inspiration, and they may be frequent without being durable, a poet becomes a man, and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which others habitually live. But as he is more delicately organized than other men, and sensible[2] to pain and pleasure, both his own and that of others, in a degree unknown to them, he will avoid the one and pursue the other with an ardour proportioned to this difference. And he renders himself obnoxious to calumny,[3] when he neglects to observe the circumstances under which these objects of universal pursuit and flight have disguised themselves in one another's garments.

But there is nothing necessarily evil in this error, and thus cruelty, envy, revenge, avarice, and the passions purely evil, have never formed any portion of the popular imputations on the lives of poets.

I have thought it most favourable to the cause of truth to set down these remarks according to the order in which they were suggested to my mind, by a consideration of the subject itself, instead of following that of the treatise that excited me to make

them public.[4] Thus although devoid of the formality of a polemical reply; if the view they contain be just, they will be found to involve a refutation of the doctrines of the Four Ages of Poetry, so far at least as regards the first division of the subject. I can readily conjecture what should have moved the gall of the learned and intelligent author of that paper; I confess myself, like him, unwilling to be stunned by the Theseids of the hoarse Codri of the day. Bavius and Maevius[5] undoubtedly are, as they ever were, insufferable persons. But it belongs to a philosophical critic to distinguish rather than confound.

The first part of these remarks has related to Poetry in its elements and principles; and it has been shewn, as well as the narrow limits assigned them would permit, that what is called poetry, in a restricted sense, has a common source with all other forms of order and of beauty according to which the materials of human life are susceptible of being arranged, and which is poetry in an universal sense.

The second part[6] will have for its object an application of these principles to the present state of the cultivation of Poetry, and a defence of the attempt to idealize the modern forms of manners and opinions, and compel them into a subordination to the imaginative and creative faculty. For the literature of England, an energetic developement of which has ever preceded or accompanied a great and free developement of the national will, has arisen as it were from a new birth. In spite of the low-thoughted envy which would undervalue contemporary merit, our own will be a memorable age in intellectual achievements, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty.[7] The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is Poetry. At such periods there is an accumulation of the power of communicating and receiving intense and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature. The persons in whom this power resides, may often, as far as regards many portions of their nature,

have little apparent correspondence with that spirit of good of which they are the ministers. But even whilst they deny and abjure, they are yet compelled to serve, the Power which is seated upon the throne of their own soul. It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations, for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants[8] of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present, the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire: the influence which is moved not, but moves.[9] Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: The imagination. "The other" (later in the sentence) is the reason.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Making. The Greek word from which the English term *poet* derives means "maker," and the word *maker* was often used as equivalent to "poet" by Renaissance critics such as Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defence of Poesy*, which Shelley had carefully studied.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Calculating, reasoning.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A wind harp (see Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp," p. 471, above).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sculptural.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Following, obeying.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Discernible.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, abstract concepts.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* 3.1.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A group of poems (for example, "the Arthurian cycle") that deal with the same subject.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Here Shelley enlarges the scope of the term *poetry* to denote all the creative achievements, or imaginative breakthroughs, of humankind, including noninstitutional religious insights.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Roman god of beginnings and endings, often represented by two heads facing opposite directions.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Philip Sidney had pointed out, in his *Defence of Poesy*, that *vates*, the Roman term for "poet," signifies "a diviner, fore-seer, or Prophet."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, restricted to specifically verbal poetry, as against the inclusive sense in which Shelley has been applying the term.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, language, as opposed to the media of sculpture, painting, and music.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, in meter versus in prose.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: When the descendants of Noah, who spoke a single language, undertook to build the Tower of Babel, which would reach heaven, God cut short the attempt by multiplying languages so that the builders could no longer communicate (see Genesis 11:1–9).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, in what Shelley has already said.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Marcus Tullius Cicero, the great Roman orator of the 1st century B.C.E.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See the *Filium Labyrinthi* and the *Essay on Death* particularly [*Shelley's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Abstracts, summaries.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: By Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning* 2.2.4.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Titus Livius (59 B.C.E.–17 C.E.) wrote an immense history of Rome. Herodotus (ca. 480–ca. 425 B.C.E.) wrote the first

systematic history of Greece. Plutarch (ca. 46–ca. 120 C.E.) wrote *Parallel Lives* (of eminent Greeks and Romans).Return to reference 5

- Note 6: The music made by the revolving crystalline spheres of the planets, inaudible to human ears.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the preceding paragraph Shelley has been implicitly dealing with the charge, voiced by Plato in his *Republic*, that poetry is immoral because it represents evil characters acting evilly.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Moral philosophy.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Produces anew, re-creates.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Contentment.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Central to Shelley's theory is the concept (developed by 18th-century philosophers) of the sympathetic imagination—the faculty by which an individual is enabled to identify with the thoughts and feelings of others. Shelley insists that the faculty in poetry that enables us to share the joys and sufferings of invented characters is also the basis of all morality, for it compels us to feel for others as we feel for ourselves.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The "effect," or the explicit moral standards into which imaginative insights are translated at a particular time or place, is contrasted to the "cause" of all morality, the imagination itself.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), Italian poet, author of *Jerusalem Delivered*, an epic poem about a crusade. Euripides (ca. 484–406 B.C.E.), Greek writer of tragedies. Lucan (39–65 C.E.), Roman poet, author of the *Pharsalia.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Assumed, adopted.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the following, omitted, passage Shelley reviews the history of drama and poetry in relation to civilization and morality and proceeds to refute the charge that poets are less useful than "reasoners and merchants." He begins by defining *utility* in terms of pleasure and then distinguishes between the lower (physical and material) and the higher (imaginative) pleasures.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Ecclesiastes 7:2.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: I follow the classification adopted by the author of Four Ages of Poetry. But Rousseau was essentially a poet. The others, even Voltaire, were mere reasoners [*Shelley's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The Inquisition had been suspended following the Spanish Revolution of 1820, the year before Shelley wrote this essay; it was not abolished permanently until 1834.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The words with which Lady Macbeth encourages her husband's ambition (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 1.7.44–45).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lack.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: God says to Adam: "cursed is the ground for thy sake. . . . Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth. . . . In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground" (Genesis 3:17–19).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Matthew 6:24: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Paradise Lost* 9.21–24.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The epic poem by the 16th-century Italian poet Ariosto, noted for his care in composition.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the double sense of "most joyous" and "most apt or felicitous in invention."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Sensitivity, capacity for sympathetic feeling.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The dark intervals between the old and new moons.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Alchemists aimed to produce a drinkable ("potable") form of gold that would be an elixir of life, curing all diseases.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Satan's speech, *Paradise Lost* 1.254–55.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Shelley's version of a widespread Romantic doctrine that the poetic imagination transforms the familiar into the miraculous and re-creates the old world into a new world. See,

for example, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, chap. 4 (p. 521, above): "To carry on the feelings of childhood into the powers of manhood; to combine the child's sense of wonder and novelty with the appearances which every day for perhaps forty years has rendered familiar; . . . this is the character and privilege of genius."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: "No one merits the name of Creator except God and the Poet." Quoted by Pierantonio Serassi in his *Life of Torquato Tasso* (1785).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Satan's scornful words to the angels who discover him after he has surreptitiously entered Eden: "Ye knew me once no mate / For you, sitting where ye durst not soar" (*Paradise Lost* 4.828–29).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Charges that had in fact been made against these men. The use of "poet laureate" as a derogatory term was a dig at Robert Southey, who held that honor at the time Shelley was writing. "Peculator": an embezzler of public money. Raphael is the 16th-century Italian painter.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Isaiah 1:18.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Shelley alludes especially to the charges of immorality by contemporary reviewers against Byron and himself.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Christ's warning in Matthew 7:1.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, consciousness or will. Shelley again proposes that some mental processes are unconscious—outside our control or awareness.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, sensitive to, conscious of. Compare Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (p. 344, above): "What is a poet? . . . He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm, and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Exposed to slander.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Peacock's "Four Ages of Poetry."Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Would-be poets satirized by Virgil and Horace. "Theseids": epic poems about Theseus. Codrus (plural "Codri") was the Roman author of a long, dull *Theseid* attacked by Juvenal and others. In 1794 and 1795 the conservative critic William Gifford had borrowed from Virgil and Horace and published the *Baviad* and the *Maeviad*, hard-hitting and highly influential satires on popular poetry and drama.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Shelley, however, completed only the first part.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the age of Milton and the English Civil Wars.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Priests who are expositors of sacred mysteries.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Aristotle had said that God is the "Unmoved Mover" of the universe.Return to reference 9

JOHN CLARE
1793–1864

Since the mid-eighteenth century, when critics had begun to worry that the authentic vigor of poetry was being undermined in their age of modern learning and refinement, they had looked for untaught primitive geniuses among the nation's peasantry. In the early-nineteenth-century literary scene, John Clare was the nearest thing to a "natural poet" there was. An earlier peasant poet, Robert Burns, had managed to acquire a solid liberal education. Clare, however, was born at Helpston, a Northamptonshire village, the son of a field laborer and a mother who was entirely illiterate, and he obtained only enough schooling to enable him to read and write. Although he was a sickly and fearful child, he had to work hard in the field, where he found himself composing verse "for downright pleasure in giving vent to my feelings." The fragments of an autobiography that he wrote later in life describe movingly, and with humor, the stratagems that as a young man he devised to find the time and the materials for writing. A blank notebook could cost him a week's wages. In 1820 publication of his *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* attracted critical attention, and on a trip to London, he was made much of by leading writers of the day. But his celebrity soon dimmed, and his three later books of verse were financial failures. Under these and other disappointments his mind gave way in 1837, and he spent almost all the rest of his life in an asylum. The place was for him a refuge as well as a confinement, for he was

treated kindly, allowed to wander about the countryside, and encouraged to go on writing his verses. Some of his best achievements are the poems composed during his madness.

Clare did not, of course, write independently of literary influences, for he had studied the poetry of James Thomson, William Cowper, Burns, Milton, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. But he stayed true to his own experience of everyday country sights and customs. His nightingale poem, written in a long-established literary tradition, has many more particulars of nature than any of those by his predecessors, and his homely mouse, in the "nest poem" reprinted here, is a bit of pure rustic impressionism in a way that even Burns's moralized mouse is not (see "To a Mouse," p. 173, above). Some of Clare's introspective asylum poems achieve so haunting a poignancy and are spoken in so quietly distinctive a voice that they have made the great mass of manuscripts he left at his death an exciting place of discovery for scholars.

Those same manuscripts have been, however, a site of contention among Clare critics. Words are spelled erratically, and there is almost no punctuation: the pages are cluttered with revisions and erasures. In his own day Clare was respelled, punctuated, and generally tidied up by his publisher, John Taylor. (Taylor had done the same for John Keats, another of his poets who took a casual view of such matters.) Clare had mixed feelings about the transformation his writings underwent as they became printed books. Sometimes it felt like meddling. Critics and editors who propose that Clare's works should now be published without such emendation often cite a letter he sent to Taylor in 1822. "Grammer in learning is like Tyranny in government," Clare wrote: "confound the bitch, I'll never be her slave." As the analogy suggests, the standardization of his language that Taylor promoted, as he tried to broaden the poems' appeal and bring them into line with the expectations of a middle-class readership, could to the poet feel like an instance of class oppression. (Clare's aristocratic patrons in Northamptonshire certainly felt free to warn their protégé away from vulgarity and rebelliousness.) On the other hand, Clare actively

sought assistance in preparing his work for the press and often acknowledged that the work was better for that assistance: "If I cannot hear from John Taylor now and then I cannot rhyme." And Taylor took to print himself to dispute readers' objections to Clare's unconventional diction and their wish (as he put it) that Clare "would *thresh* and not *thump* the corn."

Between 1984 and 2003 Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, who number among those modern critics who believe that Clare's work should be presented without editors' emendations, took on the monumental task of transcribing Clare's thirty-five hundred manuscript poems for a nine-volume edition for Oxford University Press. Their edition aims for the utmost fidelity to the manuscripts. But in that form, however authentic, the poems can be difficult reading for an audience that is not already familiar with Clare's voice. The texts printed here are therefore presented as "reading" versions of Clare's lines and employ modern punctuation and spelling.

Life, Death, and Eternity

A shadow moving by one's side,
That would a substance seem—
That is, yet is not,—though descried—
Like skies beneath the stream;
A tree that's ever in the bloom,
Whose fruit is never rife;°
A wish for joys that never come—
Such are the hopes of Life.

A dark, inevitable night,
A blank that will remain;
A waiting for the morning light,
Where waiting is in vain;
A gulph, where pathway never led
To show the depth beneath;
A thing we know not, yet we dread—
That dreaded thing is Death.

The vaulted void of purple sky
That every where extends,
That stretches from the dazzled eye,
In space that never ends;
A morning whose uprisen sun
No setting e'er shall see;
A day that comes without a noon—
Such is Eternity.

1827

Notes

- °: *plentiful*Return to reference °

The Nightingale’s Nest

Up this green woodland ride° let’s softly rove,
And list° the nightingale—she dwelleth here.
Hush! let the wood gate softly clap, for fear
The noise may drive her from her home of love;
For here I’ve heard her many a merry year—
At morn and eve, nay, all the livelong day,
As though she lived on song. This very spot,
Just where that old man’s beard[1] all wildly trails
Rude arbours o’er the road and stops the way—
And where that child its blue-bell flowers hath got,
Laughing and creeping through the mossy rails°—
There have I hunted like a very boy,
Creeping on hands and knees through matted thorns
To find her nest and see her feed her young.
And vainly did I many hours employ:
All seemed as hidden as a thought unborn.
And where these crimping° fern leaves ramp° among
The hazel’s under-boughs, I’ve nestled down
And watched her while she sung; and her renown
Hath made me marvel that so famed a bird[2]
Should have no better dress than russet brown.
Her wings would tremble in her ecstasy,
And feathers stand on end, as ’twere with joy,
And mouth wide open to release her heart
Of its out-sobbing songs. The happiest part
Of summer’s fame she shared, for so to me
Did happy fancies shapen her employ;[3]
But if I touched a bush or scarcely stirred,
All in a moment stopt. I watched in vain:
The timid bird had left the hazel bush,

And at a distance hid to sing again.
Lost in a wilderness of listening leaves,
Rich ecstasy would pour its luscious strain,
Till envy spurred the emulating thrush
To start less wild and scarce inferior songs;
For cares with him for half the year remain,
To damp the ardour of his speckled breast,
While nightingales to summer's life belongs,
And naked trees and winter's nipping wrongs
Are strangers to her music and her rest.
Her joys are evergreen, her world is wide—
Hark! there she is as usual—let's be hush—
For in this black-thorn clump, if rightly guessed,
Her curious house is hidden. Part aside
These hazel branches in a gentle way,
And stoop right cautious 'neath the rustling boughs,
For we will have another search to-day,
And hunt this fern-strewn thorn clump round and round;
And where this seeded wood grass idly bows,
We'll wade right through, it is a likely nook:
In such like spots, and often on the ground,
They'll build where rude boys never think to look—
Aye, as I live! her secret nest is here,
Upon this whitethorn stulp°—I've searched about
For hours in vain. There! put that bramble by—
Nay, trample on its branches and get near.
How subtle is the bird! she started out
And raised a plaintive note of danger nigh,
Ere we were past the brambles; and now, near
Her nest, she sudden stops—as° choking fear
That might betray her home. So even now
We'll leave it as we found it: safety's guard
Of pathless solitude shall keep it still.
See, there she's sitting on the old oak bough,
Mute in her fears; our presence doth retard

Her joys, and doubt turns all her rapture chill.

Sing on, sweet bird! may no worse hap° befall
Thy visions, than the fear that now deceives.
We will not plunder music of its dower,°
Nor turn this spot of happiness to thrall;°
For melody seems hid in every flower,
That blossoms near thy home. These harebells all
Seem bowing with the beautiful in song;
And gaping cuckoo° with its spotted leaves
Seems blushing of the singing it has heard.
How curious is the nest; no other bird
Uses such loose materials, or weaves
Their dwellings in such spots: dead oaken leaves
Are placed without, and velvet moss within,
And little scraps of grass, and, scant and spare,
Of what seems scarce materials, down and hair;
For from man's haunts she seemeth nought to win.
Yet nature is the builder and contrives
Homes for her children's comfort even here;
Where solitude's disciples spend their lives
Unseen save when a wanderer passes near
That loves such pleasant places. Deep adown,
The nest is made an hermit's mossy cell.
Snug lie her curious eggs, in number five,
Of deadened green, or rather olive brown;
And the old prickly thorn-bush guards them well.
And here we'll leave them, still unknown to wrong,
As the old woodland's legacy of song.

1825–30 1835

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Clematis vitalba*, a vine.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The nightingale had been celebrated by, among others, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and, closer to Clare's time, William Cowper, Charlotte Smith, Mary Robinson, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats. In lines 22, 24–25, and 33, Clare echoes lines 57–58 of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" (see p. 970, below).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Give shape to her (the nightingale's) regular activities.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *riding path*Return to reference °
- °: *listen to*Return to reference °
- °: *fence rails*Return to reference °
- °: *curling* Return to reference °
- °: *shoot up*Return to reference °
- °: *stump*Return to reference °
- °: *as if*Return to reference °
- °: *fate*Return to reference °
- °: *dowry, gift*Return to reference °
- °: *misery*Return to reference °
- °: *a spring flower*Return to reference °

Insects

These tiny loiterers on the barley's beard
And happy units of a numerous herd
Of playfellows, the laughing Summer brings,
Mocking° the sunshine on their glittering wings.
How merrily they creep, and run, and fly!
No kin they bear to labour's drudgery,
Smoothing the velvet of the pale hedge-rose,
And where they fly for dinner no one knows—
The dew-drops feed them not—they love the shine
Of noon, whose suns may bring them golden wine.
All day they're playing in their Sunday dress—
When night reposes, for they can do no less;
Then, to the heath-bell's purple hood they fly,
And like to princes in their slumbers lie,
Secure from rain, and dropping dews, and all,
In silken beds and roomy painted hall.
So merrily they spend their summer-day,
Now in the corn-fields, now the new-mown hay,
One almost fancies that such happy things,
With coloured hoods and richly burnished wings,
Are fairy folk, in splendid masquerade
Disguised, as if of mortal folk afraid,
Keeping their joyous pranks a mystery still,
Lest glaring day should do their secrets ill.

1835

Notes

- °: *mimicking*Return to reference °

The Yellowhammer’s Nest

Just by the wooden bridge a bird flew up,
Frit° by the cowboy,° as he scrambled down
To reach the misty dewberry[1]—Let us stoop,
And seek its nest. The brook we need not dread—
’Tis scarcely deep enough a bee to drown,
As it sings harmless o’er its pebbly bed.
—Aye, here it is! stuck close beside the bank,
Beneath the bunch of grass, that spindles rank
Its husk-seeds tall and high:—’tis rudely planned
Of bleachèd stubbles, and the withered fare
That last year’s harvest left upon the land—
Lined thinly with the horse’s sable hair.
Five eggs, pen-scribbled o’er with ink their shells,
Resembling writing-scrawls, which Fancy reads
As Nature’s poesy, and pastoral spells—
They are the Yellowhammer’s; and she dwells,
Most poet-like, where brooks and flowery weeds
As sweet as Castaly[2] her fancy deems;
And that old mole-hill is Parnassus’ hill,
On which her partner haply sits and dreams
O’er all his joys of song. Let’s leave it still
A happy home of sunshine, flowers, and streams.
Yet is the sweetest place exposed to ill,
A noisome weed, that burthens every soil;
For snakes are known, with chill and deadly coil,
To watch such nests, and seize the helpless young;
And like as if the plague became a guest,
To leave a houseless home, a ruined nest:
Aye: mournful hath the little warbler sung
When such like woes have rent his gentle breast.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Species of blackberry.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Castaly fountain, on Mount Parnassus, the Greek mountain sacred to the muses. Its waters inspired those who drank them with the power of poetry.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *frightened* Return to reference °
- °: *cattle herd*Return to reference °

Pastoral Poesy

True poesy is not in words,
But images that thoughts express,
By which the simplest hearts are stirred
To elevated happiness.

Mere books would be but useless things
Where none had taste or mind to read,
Like unknown lands where beauty springs
And none are there to heed.

But poesy is a language meet,°
And fields are every one's employ;°
The wild flower 'neath the shepherd's feet
Looks up and gives him joy;

A language that is ever green,
That feelings unto all impart,
As hawthorn blossoms, soon as seen,
Give May to every heart.

The pictures that our summer minds
In summer's dwellings meet;
The fancies that the shepherd finds
To make his leisure sweet;

The dust mills that the cowboy delves
In banks for dust to run,[1]
Creates a summer in ourselves—
He does as we have done.

An image to the mind is brought,
Where happiness enjoys

An easy thoughtlessness of thought
And meets excess of joys.

The world is in that little spot
With him—and all beside
Is nothing, all a life forgot,
In feelings satisfied.

And such is poesy; its power
May varied lights employ,
Yet to all minds it gives the dower
Of self-creating joy.

And whether it be hill or moor,
I feel where'er I go
A silence that discourses more
That any tongue can do.

Unruffled quietness hath made
A peace in every place,
And woods are resting in their shade
Of social loneliness.

The storm, from which the shepherd turns
To pull his beaver° down,
While he upon the heath sojourns,
Which autumn bleaches brown,

Is music, aye, and more indeed
To those of musing mind
Who through the yellow woods proceed
And listen to the wind.

The poet in his fitful glee
And fancy's many moods
Meets it as some strange melody,
And poem of the woods.

It sings and whistles in his mind,
And then it talks aloud,
While by some leaning tree reclined
He shuns a coming cloud,

That sails its bulk against the sun,
A mountain in the light—
He heeds not for the storm begun
But dallies with delight.

And now a harp that flings around
The music of the wind,
The poet often hears the sound
When beauty fills the mind.

The morn with saffron° strips and gray,
Or blushing to the view,
Like summer fields when run away
In weeds of crimson hue,

Will simple shepherds' hearts imbue
With nature's poesy,
Who inly fancy while they view
How grand must heaven be.

With every musing mind she steals
Attendance[2] on their way;
The simplest thing her heart reveals
Is seldom thrown away.

The old man, full of leisure hours,
Sits cutting at his door
Rude fancy sticks to tie his flowers
—They're sticks and nothing more

With many passing by his door—

But pleasure has its bent;°
With him ’tis happiness and more,
Heart satisfied content.

Those box-edged borders that impart
Their fragrance near his door
Hath been the comfort of his heart
For sixty years and more.

That mossy thatch above his head
In winter’s drifting showers
To him and his old partner made
A music many hours.

It patted to their hearts a joy[3]
That humble comfort made—
A little fire to keep them dry
And shelter over head.

And such no matter what they call
Each all are nothing less
Than poesy’s power that gives to all
A cheerful blessedness.

So would I my own mind employ,
And my own heart impress,
That poesy’s self’s a dwelling joy
Of humble quietness.

So would I for the biding° joy
That to such thoughts belong,
That I life’s errand may employ
As harmless as a song.

1824–32 1935

Endnotes

- Note 1: The boy tending the cows has (as an amusement) dug miniature millstreams in the dirt.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: She (nature) demands attention (to her beauties).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The patter of the rain on the thatch (lines 93–94) enhanced the comfort of the fire and shelter indoors.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *suitable, proper*Return to reference °
- °: *concern*Return to reference °
- °: *beaver hat*Return to reference °
- °: *orange-yellow*Return to reference °
- °: *inclination*Return to reference °
- °: *abiding, lasting*Return to reference °

[The Lament of Swordy Well][1]

Petitioners are full of prayers
To fall in pity's way,
But if her hand the gift forbears
They'll sooner swear than pray.
They're not the worst to want who lurch
On plenty with complaints,
No more than those who go to church
Are e'er the better saints.

I hold no hat to beg a mite
Nor pick it up when thrown,
Nor limping leg I hold in sight
But pray to keep me own.
Where profit gets his clutches in
There's little he will leave;
Gain stooping for a single pin
Will stick it on his sleeve.

For passers-by I never pin
No troubles to my breast,
Nor carry round some names to win,
More money from the rest.
I'm Swordy Well, a piece of land
That's fell upon the town,
Who worked me till I couldn't stand
And crush me now I'm down.

In parish bonds I well may wail,
Reduced to every shift;
Pity may grieve at trouble's tale,
But cunning shares the gift.

Harvests with plenty on his brow
Leaves losses' taunts with me,
Yet gain comes yearly with the plough
And will not let me be.

Alas, dependence thou'rt a brute
Want° only understands;
His feelings wither branch and root
That falls in parish hands.
The muck that clouts the ploughman's shoe,
The moss that hides the stone,
Now I'm become the parish due
Is more than I can own.

Though I'm no man yet any wrong
Some sort of right may seek;
And I am glad if e'en a song
Gives me the room to speak.
I've got among such grubbling gear[2]
And such a hungry pack,
If I brought harvests twice a year,
They'd bring me nothing back.

When war their tyrant prices got,
I trembled with alarms;
They fell and saved my little spot,
Or towns had turned to farms.
Let profit keep an humble place
That gentry may be known;
Let pedigrees their honours trace
And toil enjoy its own.

The silver springs grown naked dykes
Scarce own a bunch of rushes;
When grain got high the tasteless tykes°
Grubbed up trees, banks, and bushes,

And me, they turned me inside out
For sand and grit and stones
And turned my old green hills about
And picked my very bones.

These things that claim my own as theirs
Were born but yesterday,
But ere I fell to town affairs
I were as proud as they.
I kept my horses, cows, and sheep
And built the town below
Ere they had cat or dog to keep—
And then to use me so.

Parish allowance, gaunt and dread,
Had it the earth to keep
Would even pine° the bees to dead
To save an extra keep.
Pride's workhouse[3] is a place that yields
From poverty its gains
And mine's a workhouse for the fields
A-starving the remains.

The bees fly round in feeble rings
And find no blossom by,
Then thrum° their almost weary wings
Upon the moss and die.
Rabbits that find my hills turned o'er
Forsake my poor abode;
They dread a workhouse like the poor
And nibble on the road.

If with a clover bottle now
Spring dares to lift her head,
The next day brings the hasty plough
And makes me misery's bed.

The butterflies may whir and come,
I cannot keep 'em now,
Nor can they bear my parish home
That withers on my brow.

No, now not e'en a stone can lie,
I'm just what e'er they like;
My hedges like the winter fly
And leave me but the dyke;
My gates are thrown from off the hooks,
The parish thoroughfare:
Lord, he that's in the parish books
Has little wealth to spare.

I couldn't keep a dust of grit
Nor scarce a grain of sand,
But bags and carts claimed every bit,
And now they've got the land.
I used to bring the summer's life
To many a butterfly,
But in oppression's iron strife
Dead tussocks° bow and sigh.

I've scarce a nook to call my own
For things that creep or fly;
The beetle hiding 'neath a stone
Does well to hurry by;
Stock[4] eats my struggles every day
As bare as any road;
He's sure to be in something's way
If e'er he stirs abroad.

I am no man to whine and beg,
But fond of freedom still,
I hing° no lies on pity's peg
To bring a grist to mill;

On pity's back I needn't jump,
My looks speak loud alone:
My only tree they've left a stump
And nought remains my own.

My mossy hills gain's greedy hand,
And more than greedy mind,
Levels into a russet land,
Nor leaves a bent° behind.
In summers gone I bloomed in pride,
Folks came for miles to prize
My flowers that bloomed nowhere beside
And scarce believed their eyes.

Yet worried with a greedy pack,
They rend and delve and tear
The very grass from off my back—
I've scarce a rag to wear.
Gain takes my freedom all away
Since its dull suit I wore,
And yet scorn vows I never pay
And hurts me more and more.

And should the price of grain get high—
Lord help and keep it low—
I shan't possess a single fly
Or get a weed to grow;
I shan't possess a yard of ground
To bid a mouse to thrive,
For gain has put me in a pound,
I scarce can keep alive.

I own I'm poor like many more,
But then the poor mun° live,
And many came for miles before
For what I had to give;

But since I fell upon the town
They pass me with a sigh;
I've scarce the room to say sit down
And so they wander by.

Though now I seem so full of clack,[°]
Yet when yer' riding by
The very birds upon my back
Are not more fain to fly.
I feel so lorn[°] in this disgrace,
God send the grain to fall;
I am the oldest in the place
And the worst served of all.

Lord bless ye, I was kind to all,
And poverty in me
Could always find a humble stall,
A rest and lodging free.
Poor bodies with an hungry ass
I welcomed many a day,
And gave him tether, room, and grass,
And never said him nay.

There was a time my bit of ground
Made freemen of the slave;
The ass no pindar'd[5] dare to pound
When I his supper gave.
The gypsies' camp was not afraid,
I made his dwelling free,
Till vile enclosure came and made
A parish slave of me.

The gypsies further on sojourn,
No parish bounds they like.
No sticks I own, and would earth burn,
I shouldn't own a dyke.

I am no friend to lawless work,
Nor would a rebel be,
And why I call a Christian Turk[6]
Is they are Turks to me.

And if I could but find a friend
With no deceit to sham,
Who'd send me some few sheep to tend,
And leave me as I am,
To keep my hills from cart and plough
And strife of mongrel men,
And as spring found me find me now,
I should look up again.

And save his Lordship's woods that past
The day of danger dwell,
Of all the fields I am the last
That my own face can tell.
Yet what with stone pits' delving holes
And strife to buy and sell,
My name will quickly be the whole,
That's left of Swordy Well.

1832–37 1935

Endnotes

- Note 1: Located near Clare's native village, Helpston, Swordy Well, also known as Swaddywell, was an ancient stone quarry first used by the Romans. During Clare's youth, waste grounds like these, formerly places where poor families gathered fuel or found pasturage for their cows or horses, were, through acts of Parliament, enclosed—converted to private property and fenced off from the community. As part of this enclosure movement, Swordy Well was handed over to overseers of the parish roads to be used for mending-stone. Clare's poem, unpublished and

untitled during his lifetime, gives this piece of land a voice with which to lament its misfortunes. Swordy Well speaks in the tones of a laboring man who hates how enclosure has made him a charity case.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, people digging for wealth, money-grubbers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An institution where the able-bodied poor who sought help from the parish were confined and set to work.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Generic term for a stupid person.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A pindar is a person in charge of impounding stray animals.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An ethnic slur then in common use for a cruel and barbaric person.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *poverty*Return to reference °
- °: *country bumpkins*Return to reference °
- °: *torment*Return to reference °
- °: *beat*Return to reference °
- °: *tufts of grass*Return to reference °
- °: *hang*Return to reference °
- °: *blade of grass*Return to reference °
- °: *must*Return to reference °
- °: *chatter*Return to reference °
- °: *forlorn*Return to reference °

[Mouse’s Nest]

I found a ball of grass among the hay
And progged° it as I passed and went away;
And when I looked I fancied something stirred,
And turned again and hoped to catch the bird—
When out an old mouse bolted in the wheat
With all her young ones hanging at her teats;
She looked so odd and so grotesque to me,
I ran and wondered what the thing could be,
And pushed the knapweed[1] bunches where I stood,
When the mouse hurried from the crawling brood.
The young ones squeaked, and when I went away
She found her nest again among the hay.
The water o’er the pebbles scarce could run
And broad old cesspools[2] glittered in the sun.

1835–37 1935

Endnotes

- Note 1: A plant with knobs of purple flowers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Rainwater pools on the surface of a peat bog (a “cess”). In the manuscript Clare in fact spelled this word “sexpools,” perhaps deliberately testing readers’ tolerance.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *prodded*Return to reference °

[The Badger]

The badger grunting on his woodland track
With shaggy hide and sharp nose scrowed° with
black
Roots in the bushes and the woods, and makes
A great huge burrow in the ferns and brakes.°
With nose on ground he runs an awkward pace,
And anything will beat him in the race.
The shepherd's dog will run him to his den
Followed and hooted by the dogs and men.
The woodman when the hunting comes about
Goes round at night to stop the foxes out[1]
And hurrying through the bushes, ferns, and brakes
Nor sees the many holes the badger makes,
And often through the bushes to the chin
Breaks the old holes, and tumbles headlong in.

When midnight comes a host of dogs and men
Go out and track the badger to his den,
And put a sack within the hole and lie
Till the old grunting badger passes by.[2]
He comes and hears—they let the strongest loose.
The old fox hears the noise[3] and drops the goose.
The poacher shoots and hurries from the cry,
And the old hare half wounded buzzes by.
They get a forkèd stick to bear him down
And clap° the dogs and bear him to the town,
And bait him all the day with many dogs,[4]
And laugh and shout and fright the scampering
hogs.
He runs along and bites at all he meets;

They shout and hollo° down the noisy streets.

He turns about to face the loud uproar
And drives the rebels to their very doors.
The frequent stone is hurled where'er they go;
When badgers fight, and every one's a foe.
The dogs are clapped and urged to join the fray,
The badger turns and drives them all away.
Though scarcely half as big, dimute and small,
He fights with dogs for hours and beats them all.
The heavy mastiff, savage in the fray,
Lies down and licks his feet and turns away.
The bulldog knows his match and waxes cold,
The badger grins and never leaves his hold.
He drives the crowd and follows at their heels
And bites them through—the drunkard swears and reels.

The frighted women take the boys away,
The blackguard° laughs and hurries on the fray.
He tries to reach the woods, an awkward race,
But sticks and cudgels quickly stop the chase.
He turns again and drives the noisy crowd
And beats the many dogs in noises loud.
He drives away and beats them every one,
And then they loose them all and set them on.
He falls as dead and kicked by boys and men,
Then starts and grins and drives the crowd again,
Till kicked and torn and beaten out he lies
And leaves his hold and cackles, groans, and dies.

Some keep a baited badger tame as hog[5]
And tame him till he follows like the dog.
They urge him on like dogs and show fair play.
He beats and scarcely wounded goes away.
Lapt up as if asleep, he scorns to fly

And seizes any dog that ventures nigh.
Clapped like a dog, he never bites the men,
But worries dogs and hurries to his den.
They let him out and turn a barrow° down
And there he fights the host of all the town.
He licks the patting hand, and tries to play
And never tries to bite or run away,
And runs away from the noise in hollow trees
Burnt by the boys to get a swarm of bees.

1832–37 1920

Endnotes

- Note 1: To ensure that there will be foxes for the hunters to pursue on the day of the hunt, the woodman blocks up, or *stops*, the mouths of the animals' dens the night before.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: By letting loose the dog, the badger hunters mean to force their quarry to bolt into its hole, where it will get entangled in the sack that they have placed there.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In a manuscript on natural history, Clare commented on the horror that a badger's screams—"like those of a woman under the agonys of murder"—could induce in listeners.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Clare's lifetime, middle- and upper-class commentators were increasingly vocal in their condemnations of badger baiting, a sport in which human beings would set their dogs on a badger and watch the ensuing battle. Parliament in 1835 passed laws that made it a misdemeanor to arrange such fights, doing so in spite of this blood sport's undiminished popularity among men of the rural working class. Fox hunting, a blood sport enjoyed by the aristocracy, was not banned until 2004.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: The baited badger would sometimes be pursued through the village streets by dogs and people, as in lines 29–54, but this concluding sonnet in Clare's sequence describes an alternative form of baiting, according to David Perkins (*Romanticism and Animal Rights* [2003], p. 168, n. 31). Here a semi-tamed badger is placed in a barrel and various dog owners compete to see whose dog can drag it out.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *marked, scratched*Return to reference °
- °: *bracken*Return to reference °
- °: *urge on*Return to reference °
- °: *holler*Return to reference °
- °: *despicable fellow*Return to reference °
- °: *barrel*Return to reference °

A Vision

1

I lost the love of heaven above;
I spurn'd the lust of earth below;
I felt the sweets of fancied love,—
And hell itself my only foe.

2

I lost earth's joys but felt the glow
Of heaven's flame abound in me:
Till loveliness and I did grow
The bard of immortality.

3

I loved, but woman fell away;
I hid me from her faded fame:
I snatch'd the sun's eternal ray,—
And wrote till earth was but a name.

4

In every language upon earth,
On every shore, o'er every sea,
I gave my name immortal birth,
And kept my spirit with the free.

Aug. 2, 1844 1924

I Am

1

I am—yet what I am, none cares or knows;
  My friends forsake me like a memory lost:—
I am the self-consumer of my woes;—
  They rise and vanish in oblivion's host,
Like shadows in love's frenzied stifled throes:—
And yet I am, and live—like vapours tossed

2

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,—
  Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life or joys,
  But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
Even the dearest that I love the best
Are strange—nay, rather, stranger than the rest.

3

I long for scenes where man hath never trod,
  A place where woman never smiled or wept,
There to abide with my Creator, God,
  And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie,
The grass below—above, the vaulted sky.

1842–46 1848

An Invite to Eternity

1

Wilt thou go with me, sweet maid,
Say maiden, wilt thou go with me
Through the valley depths of shade,
Of night and dark obscurity,
Where the path hath lost its way,
Where the sun forgets the day,
Where there's nor life nor light to see,
Sweet maiden, wilt thou go with me?

2

Where stones will turn to flooding streams,
Where plains will rise like ocean waves,
Where life will fade like visioned dreams
And mountains darken into caves,
Say maiden, wilt thou go with me
Through this sad non-identity,
Where parents live and are forgot
And sisters live and know us not?

3

Say maiden, wilt thou go with me
In this strange death of life to be,
To live in death and be the same
Without this life, or home, or name,
At once to be and not to be,
That was and is not—yet to see

Things pass like shadows—and the sky
Above, below, around us lie?

4

The land of shadows wilt thou trace
And look—nor know each other's face,
The present mixed with reasons gone
And past and present all as one?
Say maiden, can thy life be led
To join the living with the dead?
Then trace thy footsteps on with me—
We're wed to one eternity.

1847 1848

Clock a Clay[1]

1

In the cowslip's peeps I lie,[2]
Hidden from the buzzing fly,
While green grass beneath me lies,
Pearled wi' dew like fishes' eyes;
Here I lie, a Clock a Clay,
Waiting for the time o' day.

2

While grassy forests quake surprise,
And the wild wind sobs and sighs,
My gold home rocks as like to fall
On its pillars green and tall;
When the pattering rain drives by
Clock a Clay keeps warm and dry.

3

Day by day and night by night,
All the week I hide from sight;
In the cowslip's peeps I lie,
In rain and dew still warm and dry;
Day and night and night and day,
Red black-spotted Clock a Clay.

4

My home it shakes in wind and showers,

Pale green pillar topped wi' flowers,
Bending at the wild wind's breath,
Till I touch the grass beneath;
Here still I live, lone Clock a Clay,
Watching for the time of day.

ca. 1848 1873

Endnotes

- Note 1: The ladybird, or ladybug. The sixth and last lines allude to the children's game of telling the hour by the number of taps it takes to make the ladybird fly away home.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare the opening lines of Ariel's song in act 5 of Shakespeare's *The Tempest:* "Where the bee sucks, there suck I: / In a cowslip's bell I lie." "Cowslip": a yellow primrose. "Peeps": pips—single blossoms of flowers growing in a cluster.Return to reference 2

The Peasant Poet

He loved the brook's soft sound,
The swallow swimming by;
He loved the daisy-covered ground,
The cloud-bedappled sky.
To him the dismal storm appeared
The very voice of God,
And where the evening rack° was reared
Stood Moses with his rod.
And everything his eyes surveyed,
The insects i' the brake,
Were creatures God Almighty made—
He loved them for his sake:
A silent man in life's affairs,
A thinker from a boy,
A peasant in his daily cares—
The poet in his joy.

1842–64 1920

Notes

- °: *mass of clouds*Return to reference °

FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS
1793–1835

Born in Liverpool and brought up in Wales, Felicia Hemans published her first two volumes—*Poems* and *England and Spain, or Valour and Patriotism*—when she was fifteen. She followed these four years later with *The Domestic Affections and Other Poems* (1812) and from 1816 on into the 1830s produced new books of poetry almost annually: short sentimental lyrics, tales and "historic scenes," translations, songs for music, sketches of women, hymns for children. She also published literary criticism in magazines and wrote three plays. Her work was widely read, anthologized, memorized, and set to music throughout the nineteenth century and was especially popular and influential in the United States, where the first of many collected editions of her poems appeared in 1825. When she died she was eulogized by many poets, including William Wordsworth, Letitia Landon, and Elizabeth Barrett—a sign of the high regard in which she was held by her contemporaries.

A tablet erected by her brothers in the cathedral of St. Asaph, in north Wales, reads in part, "In memory of Felicia Hemans, whose character is best pourtrayed in her writings." But there are several characters in her poems, and some of them seem not entirely compatible with some of the others. She is frequently thought of as the poet (in the nineteenth century as "the poetess") of domestic affections, at the center of a cult of domesticity in which the home is conceptualized as a haven apart from the stresses of the public

world, to which only men are suited. Her poems have been viewed as celebrations of a feminine ethic founded on women's—especially mothers'—capacities for forbearance, piety, and long suffering. Among her most popular pieces in this vein, "Evening Prayer, at a Girls' School" depicts the happy ignorance of schoolgirls whose enjoyment of life will end when they reach womanhood, and "Indian Woman's Death-Song" is the lament of a Native American woman whose husband has abandoned her, sung as she plunges in her canoe over a cataract to suicide with an infant in her arms.

Many of Hemans's longer narratives, by contrast, recount the exploits of women warriors who, to avenge personal, family, or national injustice or insult, destroy enemies in a manner not conventionally associated with female behavior. In *The Widow of Crescentius*, Stephania stalks and poisons the German emperor Otho, the murderer of her husband; in "The Wife of Asdrubal," a mother publicly kills her own children and herself to show contempt for her husband, a betrayer of the Carthaginians whom he governed; the heroine of "The Bride of the Greek Isle," boarding the ship of the pirates who have killed her husband, annihilates them (and herself) in a conflagration rivaling the monumental explosion described in "Casabianca." Among the numerous themes of her work, patriotism and military action recur frequently; there may be a biographical basis for these motifs, given that her two oldest brothers distinguished themselves in the Peninsular War and her military husband (who deserted her and their five sons in 1818) had also served in Spain. But some of her most famous patriotic and military poems are now being viewed as critiques of the virtues and ideologies they had been thought by earlier readers to inculcate. "The Homes of England," for example, has been read as both asserting and undermining the idea that all homes are equal, ancestral estates and cottages alike; and in "Casabianca," the boy's automatic steadfastness has been interpreted as empty obedience rather than admirable loyalty.

Hemans was the highest paid writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* during her day. Her books sold more copies than those of any other

contemporary poet except Byron and Walter Scott. She was a shrewd calculator of the literary marketplace and a genius in her negotiations with publishers (which she carried on entirely through the mails). Her self-abasing women of the domestic affections and her scimitar-wielding superwomen of the revenge narratives exist side by side throughout her works. These and other seeming dissonances clearly enhanced the strong appeal of her poems to a wide range of readers, men as well as women.

England’s Dead

Son of the ocean isle!
Where sleep your mighty dead?
Show me what high and stately pile
Is rear’d o’er Glory’s bed.

Go, stranger! track the deep,
Free, free the white sail spread!
Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,
Where rest not England’s dead.

On Egypt’s burning plains,
By the pyramid o’ersway’d,
With fearful power the noonday reigns,
And the palm trees yield no shade.[1]

But let the angry sun
From heaven look fiercely red,
Unfelt by those whose task is done!—
There slumber England’s dead.

The hurricane hath might
Along the Indian shore,
And far by Ganges’ banks at night,
Is heard the tiger’s roar.

But let the sound roll on!
It hath no tone of dread,
For those that from their toils are gone;—
There slumber England’s dead.

Loud rush the torrent floods
The western wilds among,

And free, in green Columbia's woods,
The hunter's bow is strung.

But let the floods rush on!
Let the arrow's flight be sped!
Why should *they* reck whose task is done?—
There slumber England's dead!

The mountain storms rise high
In the snowy Pyrenees,
And toss the pine boughs through the sky,
Like rose leaves on the breeze.

But let the storm rage on!
Let the fresh wreaths be shed!
For the Roncesvalles' field[2] is won,—
There slumber England's dead.

On the frozen deep's repose
'Tis a dark and dreadful hour,
When round the ship the ice-fields close,
And the northern night clouds lower.

But let the ice drift on!
Let the cold-blue desert spread!
Their course with mast and flag is done,—
Even there sleep England's dead.

The warlike of the isles,
The men of field and wave!
Are not the rocks their funeral piles,
The seas and shores their grave?

Go, stranger! track the deep,
Free, free the white sail spread!
Wave may not foam, nor wild wind sweep,
Where rest not England's dead.

55

Endnotes

- Note 1: English forces defeated the French at Alexandria in the spring of 1801. The rest of the references—to 18th- and early 19th-century battles in India (lines 17–24), America (lines 25–32), Spain (lines 33–40), and on the sea (lines 41–48)—are more general.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Roncesvalles, the mountain pass in the Pyrenees between France and Spain, was a scene of action during the Peninsular War (1808–14).Return to reference 2

Casabianca[1]

The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though childlike form.

The flames roll'd on—he would not go
Without his Father's word;
That Father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He call'd aloud:—"Say, Father, say
If yet my task is done?"
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, Father!" once again he cried,
"If I may yet be gone!
And"—but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames roll'd on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,
And look'd from that lone post of death
In still, yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
"My Father! must I stay?"

While o’er him fast, through sail and shroud,
  The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
  They caught the flag on high,
And stream’d above the gallant child,
  Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound—
  The boy—oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
  With fragments strew’d the sea!—

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
  That well had borne their part,
But the noblest thing which perish’d there
  Was that young faithful heart!

1826

Endnotes

- Note 1: Young Casabianca, a boy about thirteen years old, son to the Admiral of the *Orient*, remained at his post (in the Battle of the Nile) after the ship had taken fire, and all the guns had been abandoned; and perished in the explosion of the vessel, when the flames had reached the powder [*Hemans’s note*]. The Battle of the Nile, in which Nelson captured and destroyed the French fleet in Aboukir Bay, took place on August 1, 1798. Admiral Casabianca and his son (who was in fact only ten) were among those killed by the British forces.Return to reference 1

Corinne at the Capitol[1]

Les femmes doivent penser qu'il est dans cette carrière bien peu de sorte qui puissent valoir la plus obscure vie d'une femme aimée et d'une mère heureuse.

MADAME DE STAEL[2]

Daughter of th' Italian heaven!
Thou, to whom its fires are given,
Joyously thy car° hath roll'd
Where the conqueror's pass'd of old;
And the festal sun that shone,
O'er three[3] hundred triumphs gone,
Makes thy day of glory bright,
With a shower of golden light.

Now thou tread'st th'ascending road,
Freedom's foot so proudly trode;
While, from tombs of heroes borne,
From the dust of empire shorn,
Flowers upon thy graceful head,
Chaplets° of all hues, are shed,
In a soft and rosy rain,
Touch'd with many a gemlike stain.

Thou hast gain'd the summit now!
Music hails thee from below;—
Music, whose rich notes might stir
Ashes of the sepulchre;
Shaking with victorious notes
All the bright air as it floats.
Well may woman's heart beat high

Unto that proud harmony!

Now afar it rolls—it dies—
And thy voice is heard to rise
With a low and lovely tone
In its thrilling power alone;
And thy lyre's deep silvery string,
Touch'd as by a breeze's wing,
Murmurs tremblingly at first,
Ere the tide of rapture burst.

All the spirit of thy sky
Now hath lit thy large dark eye,
And thy cheek a flush hath caught
From the joy of kindled thought;
And the burning words of song
From thy lip flow fast and strong,
With a rushing stream's delight
In the freedom of its might.

Radiant daughter of the sun!
Now thy living wreath is won.
Crown'd of Rome!—Oh! art thou not
Happy in that glorious lot?—
Happier, happier far than thou,
With the laurel[4] on thy brow,
She that makes the humblest hearth
Lovely but to one on earth!

1827 1827

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Hemans's poem comments on one of the most famous and controversial novels of early 19th-century Europe, *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), by the Swiss-French writer Germaine de Staël, an particularly on its second book, in which Staël's heroine, an

improvisatrice (a poet who speaks from rhapsodic inspiration rather than texts), is crowned at the Capitol in Rome in recognition of her genius, as Petrarch had been crowned in the 14th century. Corinne's triumph is short-lived, and at the novel's close, abandoned by her Scottish lover, she dies of a broken heart. Hemans confessed in a letter that some passages in *Corinne* "seem to give me back my own thoughts and feelings,

Return to reference 1

- Note 2: "Women must recognize that very little in this career equals in value the most obscure life of a beloved wife and happy mother." From Staël's *De l'Influence des Passions sur le Bonheur des Individus et des Nations* (*On the Influence of the Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations;* 1796).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The trebly hundred triumphs—BYRON [*Hemans's note*]. From a stinging account in *Childe Harold* (4.731) of the celebrations that greeted imperial Rome's victorious heroes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Wreaths of laurel were bestowed on honored poets in classical antiquity.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *chariot*Return to reference °
- °: *wreaths*Return to reference °

The Homes of England

Where’s the coward that would not dare

To fight for such a land?

—*Marmion*[1]

The stately Homes of England,
  How beautiful they stand!
Amidst their tall ancestral trees,
  O’er all the pleasant land.
The deer across their greensward bound
  Through shade and sunny gleam,
And the swan glides past them with the sound
  Of some rejoicing stream.

The merry Homes of England!
  Around their hearths by night,
What gladsome looks of household love
  Meet in the ruddy light!
There woman’s voice flows forth in song,
  Or childhood’s tale is told,
Or lips move tunefully along
  Some glorious page of old.

The blessed Homes of England!
  How softly on their bowers
Is laid the holy quietness
  That breathes from Sabbath-hours!
Solemn, yet sweet, the church-bell’s chime
  Floats through their woods at morn;
All other sounds, in that still time,

Of breeze and leaf are born.

The Cottage Homes of England!
By thousands on her plains,
They are smiling o’er the silvery brooks,
And round the hamlet-fanes.°
Through glowing orchards forth they peep,
Each from its nook of leaves,
And fearless there the lowly sleep,
As the bird beneath their eaves.

The free, fair Homes of England!
Long, long, in hut and hall,
May hearts of native proof be rear’d
To guard each hallow’d wall!
And green for ever be the groves,
And bright the flowery sod,
Where first the child’s glad spirit loves
Its country and its God!

1827

Endnotes

- Note 1: From Sir Walter Scott’s long poem *Marmion* (1808), 4.633–34, a tale of betrayal and bloody conflict between the English and the Scots. When she first published the poem, in *Blackwood’s*, April 1827, Hemans used as epigraph a passage from the work of another Scottish author, Joanna Baillie’s *Ethwald: A Tragedy*, part 2 (1802), 1.2.76–82.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *village churches*Return to reference °

Properzia Rossi

Properzia Rossi, a celebrated female sculptor of Bologna, possessed also of talents for poetry and music, died in consequence of an unrequited attachment.—A painting by Ducis represents her showing her last work, a basso-relievo of Ariadne, to a Roman Knight, the object of her affection, who regards it with indifference.[1]

————Tell me no more, no more
Of my soul's lofty gifts! Are they not vain
To quench its haunting thirst for happiness?
Have I not lov'd, and striven, and fail'd to bind
One true heart unto me, whereon my own
Might find a resting-place, a home for all
Its burden of affections? I depart,
Unknown, tho' Fame goes with me; I must leave
The earth unknown. Yet it may be that death
Shall give my name a power to win such tears
As would have made life precious.[2]

I

One dream of passion and of beauty more!
And in its bright fulfilment let me pour
My soul away! Let earth retain a trace
Of that which lit my being, tho' its race
Might have been loftier far.—Yet one more dream!
From my deep spirit one victorious gleam
Ere I depart! For thee alone, for thee!
May this last work, this farewell triumph be,
Thou, lov'd so vainly! I would leave enshrined
Something immortal of my heart and mind,
That yet may speak to thee when I am gone,

Shaking thine inmost bosom with a tone
Of lost affection;—something that may prove
What she hath been, whose melancholy love
On thee was lavish'd; silent pang and tear,
And fervent song, that gush'd when none were near,
And dream by night, and weary thought by day,
Stealing the brightness from her life away,—
While thou——Awake! not yet within me die.
Under the burden and the agony
Of this vain tenderness,—my spirit, wake!
Ev'n for thy sorrowful affection's sake,
Live! in thy work breathe out!—that he may yet,
Feeling sad mastery there, perchance regret
Thine unrequited gift.

II

It comes,—the power
Within me born, flows back; my fruitless dower°
That could not win me love. Yet once again
I greet it proudly, with its rushing train
Of glorious images:—they throng—they press—
A sudden joy lights up my loneliness,—
I shall not perish all!
The bright work grows
Beneath my hand, unfolding, as a rose,
Leaf after leaf, to beauty; line by line,
I fix my thought, heart, soul, to burn, to shine,
Thro' the pale marble's veins. It grows—and now
I give my own life's history to thy brow,
Forsaken Ariadne![3] thou shalt wear
My form, my lineaments; but oh! more fair,
Touch'd into lovelier being by the glow
Which in me dwells, as by the summer-light
All things are glorified. From thee my woe
Shall yet look beautiful to meet his sight,

When I am pass'd away. Thou art the mould
Wherein I pour the fervent thoughts, th' untold,
The self-consuming! Speak to him of me,
Thou, the deserted by the lonely sea,
With the soft sadness of thine earnest eye,
Speak to him, lorn° one, deeply, mournfully,
Of all my love and grief! Oh! could I throw
Into thy frame a voice, a sweet, and low,
And thrilling voice of song! when he came nigh,
To send the passion of its melody
Thro' his pierced bosom—on its tones to bear
My life's deep feeling, as the southern air
Wafts the faint myrtle's breath,—to rise, to swell,
To sink away in accents of farewell,
Winning but one, *one* gush of tears, whose flow
Surely my parted spirit yet might know,
If love be strong as death!

III

Now fair thou art,
Thou form, whose life is of my burning heart!
Yet all the vision that within me wrought,
I cannot make thee! Oh! I might have given
Birth to creations of far nobler thought,
I might have kindled, with the fire of heaven,
Things not of such as die! But I have been
Too much alone; a heart, whereon to lean,
With all these deep affections that o'erflow
My aching soul, and find no shore below;
An eye to be my star, a voice to bring
Hope o'er my path, like sounds that breathe of spring,
These are denied me—dreamt of still in vain,—
Therefore my brief aspirings from the chain,
Are ever but as some wild fitful song,

Rising triumphantly, to die ere long
In dirge-like echoes.

IV

Yet the world will see
Little of this, my parting work, in thee,
Thou shalt have fame! Oh, mockery! give the reed
From storms a shelter,—give the drooping vine
Something round which its tendrils may entwine,—
Give the parch'd flower a rain-drop, and the meed°
Of love's kind words to woman! Worthless fame!
That in *his* bosom wins not for my name
Th' abiding place it asked! Yet how my heart,
In its own fairy world of song and art,
Once beat for praise!—Are those high longings o'er?
That which I have been can I be no more?—
Never, oh! never more; tho' still thy sky
Be blue as then, my glorious Italy!
And tho' the music, whose rich breathings fill
Thine air with soul, be wandering past me still,
And tho' the mantle of thy sunlight streams
Unchang'd on forms instinct with° poet-dreams;
Never, oh! never more! Where'er I move,
The shadow of this broken-hearted love
Is on me and around! Too well *they* know,
Whose life is all within, too soon and well,
When there the blight hath settled;—but I go
Under the silent wings of Peace to dwell;
From the slow wasting, from the lonely pain,
The inward burning of those words—"*in vain,*"
Sear'd on the heart—I go. 'Twill soon be past.
Sunshine, and song, and bright Italian heaven,
And thou, oh! thou, on whom my spirit cast
Unvalued wealth,—who know'st not what was given

In that devotedness,—the sad, and deep,
And unrepaid—farewell! If I could weep
Once, only once, belov'd one! on thy breast,
Pouring my heart forth ere I sink to rest!
But that were happiness, and unto me
Earth's gift is *fame.* Yet I was form'd to be
So richly blest! With thee to watch the sky,
Speaking not, feeling but that thou wert nigh;
With thee to listen, while the tones of song
Swept ev'n as part of our sweet air along,
To listen silently;—with thee to gaze
On forms, the deified of olden days,—
This had been joy enough;—and hour by hour,
From its glad well-springs drinking life and power,
How had my spirit soar'd, and made its fame
A glory for thy brow!—Dreams, dreams!—the fire
Burns faint within me. Yet I leave my name—
As a deep thrill° may linger on the lyre
When its full chords are hush'd—awhile to live,
And one day haply in thy heart revive
Sad thoughts of me:—I leave it, with a sound,
A spell o'er memory, mournfully profound,
I leave it, on my country's air to dwell,—
Say proudly yet—" *'Twas hers who lov'd me well!"*

1828

Endnotes

- Note 1: Establishing her poem's connection to a tradition of ecphrastic verse, Hemans's initial note refers to two visual artists: Properzia de Rossi (ca. 1490–1530), the female sculptor active in early 16th-century Italy, whose life was recounted in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* (1550; 2nd ed., 1568); and Louis Ducis (1775–1847), the French painter who between 1818 and 1822 had exhibited at the Louvre a series of allegorical

paintings representing the various arts “under the influence of love.” The painting that Ducis devotes to the art of sculpture depicts Properzia de Rossi as she unveils her bas-relief sculpture of Ariadne to a man in Renaissance dress. He has that man regard her work, or perhaps Properzia herself, with evident admiration, however. The “indifference” that Hemans mentions in this note is her addition.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The blank verse epigraph is by Hemans.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek mythology, Ariadne, daughter of King Minos of Crete, in love with the Greek prince Theseus, helped Theseus defeat the monstrous Minotaur by teaching him how to find his way out of the labyrinth in which he had been imprisoned as a sacrifice to the monster. Theseus married Ariadne, but then deserted her on the island of Naxos, where, in some versions of the myth, she pined away.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *gift*Return to reference °
- °: *forlorn*Return to reference °
- °: *reward*Return to reference °
- °: *animated by*Return to reference °
- °: *vibration*Return to reference °

Indian Woman’s Death Song

An Indian woman, driven to despair by her husband’s desertion of her for another wife, entered a canoe with her children, and rowed it down the Mississippi towards a cataract. Her voice was heard from the shore singing a mournful death-song, until overpowered by the sound of the waters in which she perished. The tale is related in Long’s *Expedition to the Source of St Peter’s River.*[1]

> *Non, je ne puis vivre avec un coeur brisé. Il faut que je retrouve la joie, et que je m’unisse aux esprits libres de l’air.*
>
> *Bride of Messina,* Translated by Madame de Staël[2]

> *Let not my child be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman.*
>
> *The Prairie*[3]

Down a broad river of the western wilds,
Piercing thick forest glooms, a light canoe
Swept with the current: fearful was the speed
Of the frail bark, as by a tempest’s wing
Borne leaf-like on to where the mist of spray
Rose with the cataract’s thunder.—Yet within,
Proudly, and dauntlessly, and all alone,
Save that a babe lay sleeping at her breast,
A woman stood: upon her Indian brow
Sat a strange gladness, and her dark hair wav’d
As if triumphantly. She press’d her child,
In its bright slumber, to her beating heart,
And lifted her sweet voice, that rose awhile
Above the sound of waters, high and clear,
Wafting a wild proud strain, her song of death.

Roll swiftly to the Spirit's land, thou mighty stream and free!
Father of ancient waters,[4] roll! and bear our lives with thee!
The weary bird that storms have toss'd, would seek the sunshine's calm,
And the deer that hath the arrow's hurt, flies to the woods of balm.

Roll on!—my warrior's eye hath look'd upon another's face,
And mine hath faded from his soul, as fades a moonbeam's trace;
My shadow comes not o'er his path, my whisper to his dream,
He flings away the broken reed—roll swifter yet, thou stream!

The voice that spoke of other days is hush'd within *his* breast,
But *mine* its lonely music haunts, and will not let me rest;
It sings a low and mournful song of gladness that is gone,
I cannot live without that light—Father of waves! roll on!

Will he not miss the bounding step that met him from the chase?°
The heart of love that made his home an ever sunny place?
The hand that spread the hunter's board, and deck'd his couch of yore?—
He will not!—roll, dark foaming stream, on to the better shore!

Some blessed fount amidst the woods of that bright land must flow,
Whose waters from my soul may lave the memory of this woe;
Some gentle wind must whisper there, whose breath may waft away
The burden of the heavy night, the sadness of the day.

And thou, my babe! tho' born, like me, for woman's weary lot,
Smile!—to that wasting of the heart, my own! I leave thee not;
Too bright a thing art *thou* to pine in aching love away,
Thy mother bears thee far, young Fawn! from sorrow and decay.

She bears thee to the glorious bowers where none are heard to weep,
And where th' unkind one hath no power again to trouble sleep;
And where the soul shall find its youth, as wakening from a dream,—
One moment, and that realm is ours—On, on, dark rolling stream!

1828

Endnotes

- Note 1: William Hippolytus Keating, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Source of St. Peter's River* (1824), which compiles notes taken by Stephen Harriman Long and other members of an 1823 expedition that traveled up the Minnesota River (then

called St. Peter's River) to the northern Great Plains.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "No, I cannot live with a broken heart. I must regain joy and join the free spirits of the air": Staël cites Friedrich Schiller's tragedy *The Bride of Messina*, which she discusses in her book on German culture, *Germany* (1810).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: From the last of James Fenimore Cooper's series of Leatherstocking novels, *The Prairie* (1827), spoken by a Sioux woman.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "Father of waters," the Indian name for the Mississippi [*Hemans's note*].Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *huntReturn to reference °*

The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England

Look now abroad—another race has fill'd
Those populous borders—wide the wood recedes,
And towns shoot up, and fertile realms are till'd;
The land is full of harvests and green meads.

—BRYANT[1]

The breaking waves dash'd high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches toss'd;

And the heavy night hung dark,
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moor'd their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted, came;
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear;—
They shook the depths of the desert° gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free!

The ocean eagle soar'd
  From his nest by the white wave's foam;
And the rocking pines of the forest roar'd—
  This was their welcome home!

There were men with hoary° hair
  Amidst that pilgrim band;—
Why had *they* come to wither there,
  Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
  Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
  And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
  Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?—
  They sought a faith's pure shrine!

Aye, call it holy ground,
  The soil where first they trod!
They have left unstain'd what there they found—
  Freedom to worship God.

1825, 1828

Endnotes

- Note 1: The American poet William Cullen Bryant, *The Ages* (1821), lines 280–83. Hemans's title echoes another American text, the widely reprinted *Discourse, Delivered at Plymouth, Dec. 22, 1820*, by politician and orator Daniel Webster (1782–1852), commemorating the 200th anniversary of the founding of Plymouth Colony.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *desolate*Return to reference °
- °: *white*Return to reference °

The Image in Lava[1]

Thou thing of years departed!
What ages have gone by,
Since here the mournful seal was set
By love and agony!

Temple and tower have moulder'd,
Empires from earth have pass'd,—
And woman's heart hath left a trace
Those glories to outlast!

And childhood's fragile image
Thus fearfully enshrin'd,
Survives the proud memorials rear'd
By conquerors of mankind.

Babe! wert thou brightly slumbering
Upon thy mother's breast,
When suddenly the fiery tomb
Shut round each gentle guest?

A strange dark fate o'ertook you,
Fair babe and loving heart!
One moment of a thousand pangs—
Yet better than to part!

Haply of that fond bosom,
On ashes here impress'd,
Thou wert the only treasure, child!
Whereon a hope might rest.

Perchance all vainly lavish'd,
Its other love had been,

And where it trusted, nought remain'd
  But thorns on which to lean.

Far better then to perish,
  Thy form within its clasp,
Than live and lose thee, precious one!
  From that impassion'd grasp.

Oh! I could pass all relics
  Left by the pomps of old,
To gaze on this rude monument,
  Cast in affection's mould.

Love, human love! what art thou?
  Thy print upon the dust
Outlives the cities of renown
  Wherein the mighty trust!

Immortal, oh! immortal
  Thou art, whose earthly glow
Hath given these ashes holiness—
  It must, it *must* be so!

1827, 1828

Endnotes

- Note 1: The impression of a woman's form, with an infant clasped to the bosom, found at the uncovering of Herculaneum [*Hemans's note*]. When the poem was first printed in 1827 in the *New Monthly Magazine* this note referenced not Herculaneum but Pompeii; Paula Feldman, Hemans's modern editor, proposes in fact that the "image" the poem addresses recalls the petrified skeletons of a mother and child unearthed in Pompeii in 1812. Both these Roman towns, buried (mainly under volcanic ash, not lava) by the castastrophic eruption of Vesuvius in 79 C.E., had been lost to history until brought back to

light by 18th- and 19th-century archaeology.Return to reference 1

A Spirit's Return

"This is to be a mortal,
And seek the things beyond mortality!"

—MANFRED[1]

Thy voice prevails—dear friend, my gentle friend!
This long-shut heart for thee shall be unsealed,
And though thy soft eye mournfully will bend
Over the troubled stream, yet once revealed
Shall its freed waters flow; then rocks must close
For evermore, above their dark repose.

Come while the gorgeous mysteries of the sky
Fused in the crimson sea of sunset lie;
Come to the woods, where all strange wandering sound
Is mingled into harmony profound;
Where the leaves thrill with spirit, while the wind
Fills with a viewless° being, unconfined,
The trembling reeds and fountains—our own dell,
With its green dimness and Aeolian° breath,
Shall suit th' unveiling of dark records well—
Hear me in tenderness and silent faith!

Thou knew'st me not in life's fresh vernal morn—
I would thou hadst!—for then my heart on thine
Had poured a worthier love; now, all o'erworn
By its deep thirst for something too divine,
It hath but fitful music to bestow,
Echoes of harp-strings broken long ago.

Yet even in youth companionless I stood,

As a lone forest-bird ’midst ocean’s foam;
For me the silver cords of brotherhood
Were early loosed; the voices from my home
Passed one by one and melody and mirth
Left me a dreamer by a silent hearth.

But, with the fulness of a heart that burned
For the deep sympathies of mind, I turned
From that unanswering spot, and fondly sought
In all wild scenes with thrilling murmurs fraught,
In every still small voice and sound of power,
And flute-note of the wind through cave and bower,
A perilous delight!—for then first woke
My life’s lone passion, the mysterious quest
Of secret knowledge; and each tone that broke
From the wood-arches or the fountain’s breast,
Making my quick soul vibrate as a lyre,
But ministered to that strange inborn fire.
’Midst the bright silence of the mountain dells,
In noon-tide hours or golden summer-eves,
My thoughts have burst forth as a gale that swells
Into a rushing blast, and from the leaves
Shakes out response. O thou rich world unseen!
Thou curtained realm of spirits!—thus my cry
Hath troubled air and silence—dost thou lie
Spread all around, yet by some filmy screen
Shut from us ever? The resounding woods,
Do their depths teem with marvels?—and the floods,
And the pure fountains, leading secret veins
Of quenchless melody through rock and hill,
Have they bright dwellers?—are their lone domains
Peopled with beauty, which may never still
Our weary thirst of soul?—Cold, weak and cold,
Is earth’s vain language, piercing not one fold
Of our deep being! Oh, for gifts more high!
For a seer’s glance to rend mortality!

For a charmed rod, to call from each dark shrine
The oracles divine!

I woke from those high fantasies, to know
My kindred with the earth—I woke to love:
O gentle friend! to love in doubt and woe,
Shutting the heart the worshipped name above,
Is to love deeply—and *my* spirit's dower
Was a sad gift, a melancholy power
Of so adoring—with a buried care,
And with the o'erflowing of a voiceless prayer,
And with a deepening dream, that day by day,
In the still shadow of its lonely sway,
Folded me closer, till the world held nought
Save the *one* being to my centred thought.

There was no music but his voice to hear,
No joy but such as with *his* step drew near;
Light was but where he looked—life where he moved;
Silently, fervently, thus, thus I loved.
Oh! but such love is fearful!—and I knew
Its gathering doom:—the soul's prophetic sight
Even then unfolded in my breast, and threw
O'er all things round a full, strong, vivid light,
Too sorrowfully clear!—an undertone
Was given to Nature's harp, for me alone
Whispering of grief.—Of grief?—be strong, awake,
Hath not thy love been victory, O, my soul?
Hath not its conflict won a voice to shake
Death's fastnesses?—a magic to control
Worlds far removed?—from o'er the grave to thee
Love hath made answer; and *thy* tale should be
Sung like a lay of triumph!—Now return,
And take thy treasure from its bosomed urn,[2]
And lift it once to light!

In fear, in pain,
I said I loved—but yet a heavenly strain
Of sweetness floated down the tearful stream,
A joy flashed through the trouble of my dream!
I knew myself beloved!—we breathed no vow,
No mingling visions might our fate allow,
As unto happy hearts; but still and deep,
Like a rich jewel gleaming in a grave,
Like golden sand in some dark river's wave,
So did my soul that costly knowledge keep
So jealously!°—a thing o'er which to shed,
When stars alone beheld the drooping head,
Lone tears! yet ofttimes burdened with the excess
Of our strange nature's quivering happiness.

But, oh! sweet friend! we dream not of love's might
Till death has robed with soft and solemn light
The image we enshrine!—Before *that* hour,
We have but glimpses of the o'ermastering power
Within us laid!—*then* doth the spirit-flame
With sword-like lightning rend its mortal frame;
The wings of that which pants to follow fast
Shake their clay-bars, as with a prisoned blast—
The sea is in our souls!

He died—*he* died
On whom my lone devotedness was cast!
I might not keep one vigil by his side,
I, whose wrung heart watched with him to the last!
I might not once his fainting head sustain,
Nor bathe his parched lips in the hour of pain,
Nor say to him, "Farewell!"—He passed away—
Oh! had *my* love been there, its conquering sway
Had won him back from death! but thus removed,
Borne o'er the abyss no sounding-line hath proved,

Joined with the unknown, the viewless—he became
Unto my thoughts another, yet the same—
Changed—hallowed—glorified!—and his low grave
Seemed a bright mournful altar—mine, all mine:—
Brother and friend soon left me *that* sole shrine,
The birthright of the faithful!—*their* world's wave
Soon swept them from its brink.—Oh! deem thou not
That on the sad and consecrated spot
My soul grew weak!—I tell thee that a power
There kindled heart and lip—a fiery shower
My words were made—a might was given to prayer,
And a strong grasp to passionate despair,
And a dead triumph!—Know'st thou what I sought?
For what high boon my struggling spirit wrought?—
Communion with the dead!—I sent a cry,
Through the veiled empires of eternity,
A voice to cleave them! By the mournful truth,
By the lost promise of my blighted youth,
By the strong chain a mighty love can bind
On the beloved, the spell of mind o'er mind;
By words, which in themselves are magic high,
Armed and inspired, and winged with agony;
By tears, which comfort not, but burn, and seem
To bear the heart's blood in their passion stream;
I summoned, I adjured!°—with quickened sense,
With the keen vigil of a life intense,
I watched, an answer from the winds to wring,
I listened, if perchance the stream might bring
Token from worlds afar: I taught *one* sound
Unto a thousand echoes—one profound
Imploring accent to the tomb, the sky—
One prayer to night—"Awake, appear, reply!"
Hast thou been told that from the viewless bourne,°
The dark way never hath allowed return?
That all, which tears can move, with life is fled—
That earthly love is powerless on the dead?

Believe it not!—there is a large lone star
Now burning o’er yon western hill afar,
And under its clear light there lies a spot
Which well might utter forth—Believe it not!
I sat beneath that planet—I had wept
My woe to stillness, every night-wind slept;
A hush was on the hills; the very streams
Went by like clouds, or noiseless founts in dreams,
And the dark tree o’ershadowing me that hour,
Stood motionless, even as the gray church-tower
Whereon I gazed unconsciously:—there came
A low sound, like the tremor of a flame,
Or like the light quick shiver of a wing,
Flitting through twilight woods, across the air;
And I looked up!—Oh! for strong words to bring
Conviction o’er thy thought!—Before me there,
He, the departed, stood!—Ay, face to face,
So near, and yet how far!—his form, his mien,
Gave to remembrance back each burning trace
Within:—Yet something awfully serene,
Pure, sculpture-like, on the pale brow, that wore
Of the once-beating heart no token more;
And stillness on the lip—and o’er the hair
A gleam, that trembled through the breathless air;
And an unfathomed calm, that seemed to lie
In the grave sweetness of the illumined eye;
Told of the gulfs between our beings set,
And, as that unsheathed spirit-glance I met,
Made my soul faint:—with *fear?* Oh! *not* with fear!
With the sick feeling that in *his* far sphere
My love could be as nothing! But he spoke—
How shall I tell thee of the startling thrill
In that low voice, whose breezy tones could fill
My bosom’s infinite? O, friend! I woke
Then first to heavenly life!—Soft, solemn, clear
Breathed the mysterious accents on mine ear,

Yet strangely seemed as if the while they rose
From depths of distance, o’er the wide repose
Of slumbering waters wafted, or the dells
Of mountains, hollow with sweet-echo cells;
But, as they murmured on, the mortal chill
Passed from me, like a mist before the morn,
And, to that glorious intercourse upborne
By slow degrees, a calm, divinely still,
Possessed my frame: I sought that lighted eye—
From its intense and searching purity
I drank in *soul!*—I questioned of the dead—
Of the hushed, starry shores their footsteps tread,
And I was answered:—if remembrance there,
With dreamy whispers fill the immortal air;
If thought, here piled from many a jewel-heap,
Be treasure in that pensive land to keep;
If love, o’ersweeping change, and blight, and blast
Find *there* the music of his home at last;
I asked, and I was answered:—Full and high
Was that communion with eternity,
Too rich for aught so fleeting!—Like a knell
Swept o’er my sense its closing words, “Farewell,
On earth we meet no more!”[3]—and all was gone—
The pale bright settled brow—the thrilling tone,
The still and shining eye! and never more
May twilight gloom or midnight hush restore
That radiant guest! One full-fraught hour of heaven,
To earthly passion’s wild implorings given,
Was made my own—the ethereal fire hath shivered
The fragile censer[4] in whose mould it quivered
Brightly, consumingly! What now is left?
A faded world, of glory’s hues bereft—
A void, a chain!—I dwell ’midst throngs, apart,
In the cold silence of the stranger’s heart;
A fixed, immortal shadow stands between

My spirit and life's fast receding scene;
A gift hath severed me from human ties,
A power is gone from all earth's melodies,
Which never may return: their chords are broken,
The music of another land hath spoken—
No after-sound is sweet!—this weary thirst!
And I have heard celestial fountains burst!—
What *here* shall quench it?
Dost thou not rejoice,
When the spring sends forth an awakening voice
Through the young woods?—Thou dost!—And in the birth
Of early leaves, and flowers, and songs of mirth,
Thousands, like thee, find gladness!—Couldst thou know
How every breeze then summons *me* to go!
How all the light of love and beauty shed
By those rich hours, but woos me to the dead!
The *only* beautiful that change no more—
The only loved!—the dwellers on the shore
Of spring fulfilled!—The dead!—*whom* call we so?
They that breathe purer air, that feel, that know
Things wrapt from us!—Away!—within me pent,
That which is barred from its own element
Still droops or struggles!—But the day *will* come—
Over the deep the free bird finds its home,
And the stream lingers 'midst the rocks, yet greets
The sea at last; and the winged flower-seed meets
A soil to rest in:—shall not *I*, too, be,
My spirit-love! upborne to dwell with thee?
Yes! by the power whose conquering anguish stirred
The tomb, whose cry beyond the stars was heard,
Whose agony of triumph won thee back
Through the dim pass no mortal step may track,
Yet shall we meet!—that glimpse of joy divine
Proved thee for ever and for ever mine!

Endnotes

- Note 1: A spirit's verdict on Manfred's quest, spoken just after Manfred is convulsed by the disappearance of the Phantom of his beloved Astarte (*Manfred* 2.4.158–59; see p. 679). Hemans's poem can be read as commentary on Byron's play, Percy Shelley's *Alastor*, and Keats's *Endymion* (see the note to lines 216–17), all of which depict a protagonist's problems in communicating with an otherworldly lover.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Suggests an urn in which funerary ashes are kept.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This is the answer to Manfred's question to the Phantom of Astarte (2.4.154): "Say, shall we meet again?" Astarte vanishes, and Nemesis says, "She's gone, and will not be recall'd." Hemans's lines also echo Endymion's renunciation of his dream goddess at a crucial moment in Keats's *Endymion* (4.657–59): "The hour may come / When we shall meet in pure elysium. / On earth I may not love thee."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Container in which incense is burned.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *invisible*Return to reference °
- °: *wind-blown*Return to reference °
- °: *watchfully*Return to reference °
- °: *entreated*Return to reference °
- °: *invisible region*Return to reference °

The Romantic Imagination and the "Oriental Nations"

A significant proportion of the poems, novels, and plays written in Britain during the Romantic period are set thousands of miles away from the British Isles, in terrain stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean—contested territory that for much of the nineteenth century would be squabbled over by the British, Russian, and Ottoman Empires. In *Beppo* (1818), Lord Byron's narrator commented on the public's fascination with the strangeness of these distant lands and the salability of the English literature repackaging it for domestic consumption: "How quickly would I print (the world delighting) / A Grecian, Syrian, or Assyrian tale; / And sell you, mix'd with western sentimentalism / Some samples of the finest Orientalism." Byron evidences some bad faith in these flippant lines. In poetry published between 1813 and 1816 he had himself turned regularly to the Islamic world, making locales in the Ottoman Empire the standard backdrop for his stories of glamorous outsiders. Byron's series of "Turkish tales" joined other bestsellers that traded in like manner on the magnificence, marvel, and horror that the European imagination had come to associate with "Oriental" climes (a nebulous geographical term that concealed, needless to say, the cultural and religious differences that divided the many nations located beyond the eastern margins of Europe). There was, for instance, Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance* (1817), composed of separate long poems that Moore presented as entertainments produced for the court of the seventeenth-century Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. In 1819 and 1824 there were the Crusader novels by Sir Walter Scott, fictions set during the medieval moment when Europeans' desire to conquer Jerusalem for Christendom first brought them into sustained contact with the civilizations of the Arab-Muslim world. To look eastward for

one's themes became in Romantic-period literature a primary way to examine both cultural identity and difference and the tensions and longings dividing and connecting devotee and infidel, friend and enemy, self and other.

The popularity of these examinations registered geopolitical developments that had begun early in the eighteenth century: first, the chipping away of Mughal dominion over the Indian subcontinent, followed by the slow crumbling of the Ottoman Empire; the territorial gains the British Empire made at both those empires' expense, especially during its wars with Napoleonic France; and most of all, in the words of the critic Nigel Leask, "the transformation of India and parts of the Middle East from sources of tribute and producers of luxury goods to real or potential subject states, sources of raw material and consumer markets for [British] home manufactures." By the 1820s the British East India Company controlled almost the whole of the Indian subcontinent. The end of the Romantic period also saw Britain at last managing to exploit for its own advantage the mighty Chinese Empire, as it had long sought to do; China's autonomy began to be undermined when, to finance its military enterprises, the East India Company took to smuggling opium out of India for export there.

In other respects, though, the decisive event in the history of the Romantic imagination was not the advent of new revenue streams from the empire's Asian colonies or dependencies but the import of new stories. At the start of the eighteenth century, the course of European cultural development had been decisively redirected by the translation, first into French (1704), then English (1706), of the *Alf layla wa layla*, the *Arabian Nights Entertainments*. The tales included in this collection are supposed to have been told over 1,001 nights by the wily heroine, Scheherazade, who uses her narrative skills to awaken her cruel husband's curiosity and so postpone the execution that all the sultan's previous wives have suffered following their wedding nights. Western audiences went wild for this collection of stories from the Arabic heartland of Iraq and Syria. Coleridge reported that when he was a child *The Arabian Nights* made so deep

an impression that he had been "a dreamer" ever since. Cued by the stories of evil magicians, wish-granting genii, and artful storytellers that filled *The Arabian Nights*, as they also filled the faux-Oriental tales that succeeded it in their libraries, English writers increasingly identified the East as the imagination's own territory. Sometimes it was even heralded as the place where fictionality (make-believe) had begun.

The encounter with the traditions of the East was also valued, to different effect, for how it opened up new vistas for the Western literary imagination—how it offered an escape route from an overfamiliar classical and biblical heritage. The Calcutta-based jurist Sir William Jones was celebrated accordingly for how his imitations of medieval Sanskrit verse (founded, unlike most of the faux-Oriental writing of his compatriots, on deep linguistic knowledge) had expanded English literature's stock of poetical imagery. "Where can we find so much beauty as in the *Eastern* poems, which turn chiefly upon the loveliest objects in nature?" Jones asked. He conjured for readers back home in damp, smoky England a sunlit Eden, where the breezes carried murmurs of song and the fragrances of spices and flowers.

Jones's Orient, like that of *The Arabian Nights*, was good to dream with, if in a different way. At the same time, however, Jones was one of the first to insist that the Orient was also good to study. His founding of the Asiatick Society in Calcutta in 1784 heralded a new determination to supplement delicious fantasy with serious linguistic, historical, and scientific research. This scholarship, not incidentally, would also broaden the knowledge base from which colonial administrators might draw.

The representations of the East generated out of this compound of make-believe and empirical, factual study were not easy to resolve into a single picture. (Many Romantic authors seem in fact to have actively cultivated the irresolution. They tended to highlight, rather than play down, the discrepancy in tone between their tales of Eastern wonders and the scholarly notes with which they conventionally surrounded those tales. Absorption in otherness

needed to be countered, it appears, by distance and detachment.) The literary image of the Oriental nations was thus full of contradiction. Idealization often, and increasingly, went hand in hand with vilification. Stories of the harems of the Ottoman Empire and the *zenana* of India, for instance, tended to project, from one moment to the next, both a region of beauty and sensual pleasure and a region defined by a cruel sexual slavery, in which women were denied any measure of autonomy and even denied souls.

English observers who had internalized the French political theorist Montesquieu's account of Asiatic countries as despotism's natural milieu thus counterpointed Jones's pictures of "felix Arabia" (happy Arabia) with stories of the fearfulness and grief that defined life in a region where civil liberty lacked a foothold. The political theorist Judith Shklar explains that, within Montesquieu's discussion of despotism in *The Spirit of the Laws*, "the East is not so much a geographic area as a nightmare territory of the mind in which all the worst human impulses govern." Nonetheless, Montesquieu's tendency to look eastward for his examples of unchecked, arbitrary, self-indulging tyrants had real historical effects. He and European commentators writing in his wake made it appear that there was something inherently "Asiatic" about tyranny. Such representations could be used to alibi the increasing interventionism of the imperial powers. They helped repackage economic and political domination as civilizational uplift—as a rescue of populations who needed to be saved from their own slavish propensities.

Several visions of the Oriental nations contended in the public sphere, in other words, and underwrote diverging accounts of what Englishmen and women themselves might be in relationship to these cultural others. Arrayed chronologically, the writings excerpted in this section do suggest that the farther one progresses into the nineteenth century, the less likely one is to encounter the belief, held by William Jones, that Britain could learn from Hindu and Islamic cultures. Fewer writers gave voice to the feeling that the English heroine of Phebe Gibbes's *Hartly House, Calcutta* (1789) celebrates when dazzled by her first view of Indian splendor: "the European

world faded before my eyes, and I became *orientalised* at all points." Plots driven by cross-cultural identification and sympathy (Gibbes's, Sydney Owenson's in *The Missionary*) gave way over time to plots driven by antipathy, resentment, and fear.

As twenty-first-century postcolonial critics have observed, the often degrading images of the Middle Eastern and South Asian cultures manufactured in the Romantic period bolstered the English sense of moral superiority. They helped naturalize Western rule over these regions. But just as the *Arabian Nights*' Scheherazade might have foreseen, the European appetite for stories of the marvelous East remained insatiable all the same.

BARON DE MONTESQUIEU (CHARLES-LOUIS DE SECONDAT)

The French aristocrat the Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1755) is famous for his influence on the American constitution, whose architects derived the principle of checks and balances from the political philosopher's survey of "the laws, the various customs, and manners, of all the nations of the earth." *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) also shaped Anglo-American understandings of Asia. According to its deterministic account (founded in part on reports by European travelers), the peoples of Asia were condemned both by the sultry climate and by their nature to suffer under the yoke of despotic government: "Here they have no limitations or restrictions . . . [and] man is a creature that blindly submits to the absolute will of the sovereign." The excerpts below are taken from the 1777 English translation of the text in *The Complete Works of Montesquieu*.

From The Spirit of the Laws

Book V, Chapter 13: An Idea of Despotic Power

When the savages of Louisiana are desirous of fruit, they cut the tree to the root, and gather the fruit. This is an emblem of despotic government.

From *Book V, Chapter 14: In What Manner the Laws Are Relative to the Principles of Despotic Government*

The principle of despotic government is fear: but a timid, ignorant, and faint-spirited people have no occasion for a great number of laws.

Every thing ought to depend here on two or three ideas: hence there is no necessity that any new notions should be added. When we want to break a horse, we take care not to let him change his master, his lesson, or his pace. Thus an impression is made on his brain by two or three motions, and no more.

If a prince is shut up in a seraglio,[1] he cannot leave his voluptuous abode without alarming those who keep him confined. They will not bear that his person and power should pass into other hands. He seldom, therefore, wages war in person, and hardly ventures to intrust the command to his generals.

A prince of this stamp, unaccustomed to resistance in his palace, is enraged to see his will opposed by armed force: hence he is generally governed by wrath or vengeance. Besides, he can have no notion of true glory. War, therefore, is carried on, under such a government, in its full natural fury, and less extent is given to the law of nations than in other states.

Such a prince has so many imperfections, that they are afraid to expose his natural stupidity to public view. He is concealed in his palace, and the people are ignorant of his situation. It is lucky for him that the inhabitants of those countries need only the name of a prince to govern them.

When Charles XII was at Bender, he met with some opposition from the senate of Sweden:[2] upon which he wrote word home that he would send one of his boots to command them. This boot would have governed like a despotic prince.

If the prince is a prisoner, he is supposed to be dead, and another mounts the throne. The treaties made by the prisoner are void; his successor will not ratify them. And, indeed (as he is the law, the state, and the prince), when he is no longer a prince, he is

nothing: were he not, therefore, deemed to be deceased, the state would be subverted.

One thing which chiefly determined the Turks to conclude a separate peace with Peter I was the Muscovites telling the vizir,[3] that, in Sweden, another prince had been set upon the throne.

The preservation of the state is only the preservation of the prince, or rather of the palace where he is confined. Whatever does not directly menace this palace, or the capital, makes no impression on ignorant, proud, and prejudiced minds; and, as for the concatenation of events, they are unable to trace, to foresee, or even to conceive it. Politics, with its several springs and laws, must here be very much limited; the political government is as simple as the civil.

The whole is reduced to reconciling the political and civil administration to the domestic government, the officers of state to those of the seraglio.

Such a state is happiest when it can look upon itself as the only one in the world, when it is environed with deserts, and separated from those people whom they call barbarians. Since it cannot depend on the militia, it is proper it should destroy a part of itself.

As fear is the principle of despotic government, its end is tranquillity: but this tranquillity cannot be called a peace; no, it is only the silence of those towns which the enemy is ready to invade.

* * *

1748

Endnotes

- Note 1: Harem; the apartments in the sovereign's palace in which his wives and concubines were secluded.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: After Swedish forces were routed by the army of the Russian czar in 1709 (in the battle that kicks off Byron's 1819

poem *Mazeppa*), the Swedish king Charles XII began a five-year exile in Bender, then a town in the Ottoman Empire.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The Ottoman sultan’s chief minister.Return to reference 3

SIR WILLIAM JONES

A formidably talented linguist and legal scholar, Sir William Jones (1746–1794) spearheaded the Oriental Renaissance of the late eighteenth century. His translations of Arabic, Farsi, and Sanskrit poetry, some of which he began while an undergraduate at Oxford, had a tremendous impact on European literature. The excitement his writing generated was not so different from that greeting the humanists of fifteenth-century Italy when they rediscovered long-forgotten texts from classical antiquity. Jones's identification of the affinity between Sanskrit and classical Greek and Latin laid the foundation for historical linguistics: the idea of an Indo-European common grammar originates with an address he gave to the Asiatick Society of Calcutta in 1784. While serving as high court judge in Bengal from 1783 until his death, Jones cooperated with a group of Brahmin scholars on a massive digest of Hindu law that became the basis for courtroom practice throughout British India.

The essay excerpted here—a celebration of the fertility of the "Eastern" imagination that proceeds through a survey of Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Mughal poetry—appeared in Jones's *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Languages*. In linking the reinvigoration of modern Western poetry to a rejection of familiar neoclassical examples, it is sometimes seen as prophesying Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. We reprint its final paragraph.

From On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations

* * *

I must once more request, that in bestowing these praises on the writings of Asia, I may not be thought to derogate from the merit of the Greek and Latin poems, which have justly been admired in every age: yet I cannot but think that our European poetry has subsisted too long on the perpetual repetition of the same images, and incessant allusions to the same fables: and it has been my endeavour for several years to inculcate this truth, 'That, if the principal writings of the Asiatics, which are reposited in our public libraries, were printed with the usual advantage of notes and illustrations; and if the languages of the Eastern nations were studied in our places of education, where every other branch of useful knowledge is taught to perfection; a new and ample field would be open for speculation; we should have a more extensive insight into the history of the human mind, we should be furnished with a new set of images and similitudes, and a number of excellent compositions would be brought to light, which future scholars might explain, and future poets might imitate.'

1772

JAMES BEATTIE

"On Fable and Romance," a 1783 essay by an influential Scottish poet and philosopher, represents an early attempt to assess and contextualize the rapid expansion of novel writing and novel reading in eighteenth-century Britain. Also a reluctant attempt, inasmuch as James Beattie (1735–1803) ends his investigation of "modern romances," as he calls the new genre, by repudiating his topic: "Let not the usefulness of romance be estimated by the length of my discourse upon it," he writes. "Romances are a dangerous recreation." Some hint of that anxiety about fiction's allure is audible even in this early passage in the essay, where Beattie turns to "the Oriental nations" to trace the origins of the romance and, in doing so, registers the high profile that *The Arabian Nights* and the many English-language books that imitated its tales of marvels and magic enjoyed in his moment. Here Beattie insinuates that there is something Eastern—exotic, un-British—about the appetite for fantastic stories; he seems to associate the very concept of fictionality or make-believe ("fable") with the hedonistic landscape of Oriental despotism.

From On Fable and Romance

* * *

[T]he Oriental nations have long been famous for fabulous narrative. The indolence peculiar to the genial climates of Asia, and the luxurious life which the kings and other great men, of those countries, lead in their seraglios, have made them seek for this sort of amusement, and set a high value upon it. When an Eastern prince happens to be idle, as he commonly is, and at a loss for expedients to kill the time, he commands his Grand Visir, or his favourite, to tell him stories. Being ignorant, and consequently credulous; having no passion for moral improvement, and little knowledge of nature; he does not desire, that they should be probable, or of an instructive tendency: it is enough if they be astonishing. And hence it is, no doubt, that those oriental tales are so extravagant. Every thing is carried on by inchantment and prodigy; by fairies, genii, and demons, and wooden horses, which, on turning a peg, fly through the air with inconceivable swiftness.

Another thing remarkable in these eastern tales, is, that their authors expatiate, with peculiar delight, in the description of magnificence; rich robes, gaudy furniture, sumptuous entertainments, and palaces shining in gold, or sparkling with diamonds. This too is conformable to the character and circumstances of the people. Their great men, whose taste has never been improved by studying the *simplicity* of nature and art, pique themselves chiefly on the *splendour* of their equipage, and the vast quantities of gold, jewels, and curious things, which they can heap together in their repositories.

* * *

1783

SIR WILLIAM JONES

William Jones's "Hymn to Camdeo," the first of nine "hymns" he wrote for the deities of the Hindu pantheon, amalgamates exotic content with the familiar classical form of the Pindaric ode. Even so, the "Hymn" was for a few decades understood to be Jones's translation rather than his original composition. Camdeo, Jones explains in a preface, is the same as the Romans' Cupid, a god of love; but, he continues, "the *Indian* description of his person and arms, his family, attendants, and attributes has new and peculiar beauties."

Hymn to Camdeo

What potent God from Agra's[1] orient bow'rs
Floats through the lucid air, whilst living flow'rs
With sunny twine the vocal arbours wreathe,
And gales enamour'd heavenly fragrance breathe?
  Hail, power unknown! for at thy beck
  Vales and groves their bosoms deck,
  And every laughing blossom dresses
  With gems of dew his musky tresses.
I feel, I feel thy genial flame divine,
And hallow thee, and kiss thy shrine.

'Know'st thou not me?' Celestial sounds I hear!
'Know'st thou not me?' Ah, spare a mortal ear!
'Behold'—My swimming eyes entranc'd I raise,
But oh! they sink before the' excessive blaze.
  Yes, son of Maya,[2] yes, I know
  Thy bloomy shafts and cany[3] bow,
  Cheeks with youthful glory beaming,
  Locks in braids ethereal streaming,
Thy scaly standard,[4] thy mysterious arms,
And all thy pains and all thy charms.

God of each lovely sight, each lovely sound,
Soul-kindling, world-inflaming, star-ycrown'd,
Eternal Cama! Or doth Smara bright,
Or proud Ananga[5] give thee more delight?
  Whate'er thy seat, whate'er thy name,
  Seas, Earth, and Air, thy reign proclaim:
  Wreathy smiles and roseate pleasures
  Are thy richest, sweetest treasures.
All animals to thee their tribute bring,

And hail thee universal king.

Thy consort mild, Affection ever true,[6]
Graces thy side, her vest of glowing hue,
And in her train twelve blooming girls advance,
Touch golden strings and knit the mirthful dance.
  Thy dreaded implements they bear,
  And wave them in the scented air,
  Each with pearls her neck adorning,
  Brighter than the tears of morning.
Thy crimson ensign, which before them flies,
Decks with new stars the sapphire skies.

God of the flowery shafts and flowery bow,
Delight of all above and all below!
Thy lov'd companion, constant from his birth,
In heaven clep'd° Bessent, and gay Spring on earth,
  Weaves thy green robe and flaunting bow'rs,
  And from thy clouds draws balmy show'rs,
  He with fresh arrows fills thy quiver,
  (Sweet the gift, and sweet the giver!)
And bids the many-plumed warbling throng
Burst the pent blossoms with their song.

He bends the luscious cane, and twists the string
With bees, how sweet! but ah, how keen their sting!
He with five flowerets tips thy ruthless darts,
Which through five senses pierce enraptur'd hearts:
  Strong Chumpa, rich in odorous gold,
  Warm Amer, nurs'd in heavenly mould,
  Dry Nagkeser in silver smiling,
  Hot Kiticum our sense beguiling,
And last, to kindle fierce the scorching flame,
Loveshaft, which gods bright Bela name.[7]

Can men resist thy power, when Krishen yields,

Krishen, who still in Matra's holy fields
Tunes harps immortal, and to strains divine
Dances by moonlight with the Gopia nine?[8]
  But, when thy daring arm untam'd
  At Mahadeo a loveshaft aim'd,
  Heaven shook, and, smit with stony wonder,
  Told his deep dread in bursts of thunder,
Whilst on thy beauteous limbs an azure fire
Blaz'd forth, which never must expire.[9]

O thou for ages born, yet ever young,
For ages may thy Bramin's lay be sung!
And, when thy lory° spreads his emerald wings
To waft thee high above the towers of Kings,
  Whilst o'er thy throne the moon's pale light
  Pours her soft radiance through the night,
  And to each floating cloud discovers
  The haunts of bless'd or joyless lovers,
Thy mildest influence to thy bard impart,
To warm, but not consume his heart.

1784

Endnotes

- Note 1: City in northern India and location of the Taj Mahal.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the Vedic tradition that feeds into modern Hinduism, Maya names the power of illusion, the appearances concealing reality.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, made from sugarcane.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In his prefatory remarks, Jones mentions that Camdeo's attendants carry his flag, which shows "a fish on a red ground."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "Cáma" (love), "Smara" (remembrance), and "Ananga" (bodiless one) are alternative names for this deity.Return to

reference 5

- Note 6: Jones's modern editor, Michael Franklin, remarks on how with this line's reference to the god's "consort," Jones manages to "convey a type of marital fidelity" that is ill suited to both Western and Eastern notions of Eros.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Lines 55–60 identify the various species of Indian flowers that form part of the love god's weaponry. Banks was a keen botanist, sending seeds and roots of India's native plants back to the Royal Society in England.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Jones refers to the story, told in the poet Jayadeva's *The Song of Góvinda*, of the god Krishna's love for Rhapa, one of the nine gopi (milkmaids) with whom the deity liked to play. Jones's 1792 translation of this 12th-century Sanskrit epic, whose manuscript he rediscovered with the help of a Brahmin friend, was acclaimed throughout western Europe.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: "The seventh stanza," Jones states in his preface, "alludes to the bold attempt" Camdeo made "to wound the great god *Mahadeo* [also known as *Siva*], for which he was punished by a flame consuming his corporeal nature and reducing him to a mental essence; and hence his chief dominion is over the *minds* of mortals."Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *called*Return to reference °
- °: *parrot*Return to reference °

WILLIAM BECKFORD

Thanks to his inherited fortune, founded on his family's Jamaican estates, William Beckford (1760–1844) was for a time famous mainly as "England's wealthiest son." But in the wake of the public scandal sparked by his love affairs with, simultaneously, his cousin's wife and William Courtenay, the sixteen-year-old in line to be the next Earl of Devon, Beckford was also a social outcast. *Vathek* was completed not long after Beckford fled disgrace in England to begin an exile of eleven years on the European continent. He originally composed the book in French, during a "single sitting," his biographer reports, "of three days and two nights." This account suggests something of the intensity of Beckford's relation to the dark and glamorous fantasy world that his book assembles out of materials found in texts like *The Arabian Nights*—and the urgency of the escape from Englishness and English norms that the book's composition facilitated. In some measure, the story of the caliph Vathek's lust for power and this sensual tyrant's fatal deception at the hands of an even greater villain, a mysterious Indian magician known as the Giaour, was an intensely personal document: Beckford all but invited his readers to regard this Oriental despot's story as authorial autobiography.

However, on *Vathek*'s debut in English in 1786 some readers lit on alternative ways to understand the book, prompted by the 122 pages of scholarly notes on the customs of the Islamic world that Beckford's English translator, Samuel Henley, thought the story required. Henley's annotations to a book that was then known under the title *An Arabian Tale from an Unpublished Manuscript* were praised with enthusiasm for their accuracy, despite the evidence that many had been cribbed from a seventeenth-century French encyclopedia.

The clash between those two ways of reading and valuing *Vathek* suggests the duality in late eighteenth-century accounts of the

Middle East. It suggests how the Arabia of Beckford's tale could represent at once an object of ethnographic investigation—an investigation that could be made to serve the English nation's geopolitical interests—and a site of fantasy and refuge from workaday English reality.

From The History of the Caliph Vathek

Vathek, ninth *caliph* of the race of the Abassides, was the son of Motassem, and the grandson of Haroun Al Raschid.[1] From an early accession to the throne, and the talents he possessed to adorn it; his subjects were induced to expect that his reign would be long, and happy. His figure was pleasing, and majestick; but when he was angry, one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it was fixed, instantly fell backward and, sometimes, expired. For fear, however, of depopulating his dominions, and making his palace desolate, he but rarely gave way to his anger.

Being much addicted to women, and the pleasures of the table, he sought, by his affability, to procure agreeable companions; and he succeeded the better, as his generosity was unbounded; and his indulgences unrestrained: for he was by no means scrupulous: nor did he think, with the Caliph, Omar Ben Abdalaziz, that it was necessary to make a hell of this world, to enjoy Paradise in the next.

He surpassed in magnificence all his predecessors. The palace of Alkoremmi, which his father Motassem had erected, on the hill of Pied Horses and which commanded the whole city of Samarah,[2] was, in his idea, far too scanty: he added, therefore, five wings, or rather, other palaces, which he destined for the particular gratification of each of his senses.

In the first of these were tables continually covered, with the most exquisite dainties, which were supplied, both by night and by day, according to their constant consumption, whilst the most delicious wines, and the choicest cordials, flowed forth from a hundred fountains that were never exhausted. This Palace was called THE ETERNAL or UNSATIATING BANQUET.

The second was styled THE TEMPLE OF MELODY, or THE NECTAR OF THE SOUL. It was inhabited by the most skilful musicians and admired

poets of the time, who not only displayed their talents within, but, dispersing in bands without, caused every surrounding scene to reverberate their songs, which were continually varied in the most delightful succession.

The palace named THE DELIGHT OF THE EYES, or THE SUPPORT OF MEMORY was one entire enchantment. Rarities collected from every corner of the earth were there found in such profusion, as to dazzle and confound, but for the order in which they were arranged. One gallery exhibited the pictures of the celebrated Mani:[3] and statues that seemed to be alive. Here, a well-managed perspective attracted the sight; there, the magick of opticks agreeably deceived it: whilst the Naturalist, on his part, exhibited, in their several classes, the various gifts that Heaven had bestowed on our globe. In a word, Vathek omitted nothing in this palace that might gratify the curiosity of those who resorted to it; although he was not able to satisfy his own, for, he was, of all men, the most curious.

THE PALACE OF PERFUMES, which was termed likewise, THE INCENTIVE TO PLEASURE, consisted of various halls where the different perfumes which the earth produces, were kept perpetually burning in censers of gold. Flambeaus[4] and aromatick lamps were here lighted in open day. But the too powerful effects of this agreeable delirium might be avoided, by descending into an immense garden, where an assemblage of every fragrant flower diffused through the air the purest odours.

The fifth palace, denominated THE RETREAT OF JOY, or THE DANGEROUS, was frequented by troops of young females, beautiful as the Houris, and not less seducing, who never failed to receive, with caresses, all whom the Caliph allowed to approach them: for, he was by no means disposed to be jealous, as his own women were secluded within the palace he inhabited himself.

Notwithstanding the sensuality in which Vathek indulged, he experienced no abatement in the love of his people, who thought, that a sovereign immersed in pleasure was not less tolerable to his subjects, than one that employed himself in creating them foes. But the unquiet and impetuous disposition of the Caliph, would not allow

him to rest there. He had studied so much for his amusement in the life-time of his father as to acquire a great deal of knowledge; though not a sufficiency to satisfy himself, for, he wished to know everything, even sciences that did not exist. He was fond of engaging in disputes with the learned, but liked them not to push their opposition with warmth. He stopped the mouths of those, with presents, whose mouths could be stopped, whilst others, whom his liberality was unable to subdue, he sent to prison to cool their blood, a remedy that often succeeded.

Vathek discovered also a predilection for theological controversy; but it was not with the orthodox that he usually held. By this means he induced the zealots to oppose him, and then persecuted them in return; for, he resolved, at any rate, to have reason on his side.

The great prophet Mahomet, whose Vicars the Caliphs are, beheld with indignation from his abode in the seventh heaven, the irreligious conduct of such a viceregent. "Let us leave him to himself," said he to the Genii, who are always ready to receive his commands: "let us see to what lengths his folly and impiety will carry him: if he run into excess, we shall know how to chastise him. Assist him, therefore, to complete the tower which, in imitation of Nimrod,[5] he hath begun; not, like that great warriour, to escape being drowned, but from the insolent curiosity of penetrating the secrets of Heaven:—he will not divine the fate that awaits him."

The Genii obeyed; and when the workmen had raised their structure a cubit, in the day-time, two cubit more were added in the night. The expedition with which the fabrick arose was not a little flattering to the vanity of Vathek. He fancied that even insensible matter shewed a forwardness to subserve his designs; not considering that the successes of the foolish and wicked form the first rod of their chastisement.

His pride arrived at its height, when having ascended, for the first time, the eleven thousand stairs of his tower, he cast his eyes below, and beheld men not larger than pismires;[6] mountains, than shells; and cities, than bee-hives. The idea which such an elevation inspired of his own grandeur completely bewildered him; he was

almost ready to adore himself; till, lifting his eyes upward, he saw the stars, as high above him, as they appeared, when he stood on the surface of the earth. He consoled himself, however, for this transient perception of his littleness, with the thought of being great in the eyes of others; and flattered himself, that the light of his mind would extend beyond the reach of his sight, and transfer to the stars the decrees of his destiny.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: The names ground Beckford's tale in the history of Islamic civilization. In the 8th century, Haroun Al Raschid ruled a territory extending from northern Africa, through Iraq and Iran, all the way to modern Pakistan. "Caliph": from the Arabic *khalifa*, designating God's deputy on earth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A real city, located in modern-day Jordan.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Iranian founder of the sect of Manicheans.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Torches.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: He figures in the Book of Genesis and the Chronicles. Biblical commentaries often identified him with the building of the Tower of Babel.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ants.Return to reference 6

ROBERT SOUTHEY

Inspired by a formative childhood encounter with Bernard Picart and Jean Frédéric Bernard's monumental survey *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the World* (1723), Robert Southey (1774–1843) as a young man intended to write a series of epics that would one after another, on an annual basis, engage all the belief systems of the globe—"the Persian, the Runic, the Keltic, the Greek, the Jewish, the Roman Catholick, and the Japanese," as he outlined in 1808. The grandiose scheme was not realized, but in 1801 Southey did publish *Thalaba the Destroyer*, set in Islamic Arabia, and then the following year set to transposing his Arabian epic's tale of sorcery and revenge into a new setting, that of Hindu India. *The Curse of Kehama*, a poem of twenty-four books and more than a hundred pages of notes, was eventually published in 1810 (so many books, one guesses, because Southey was emulating Homer, and so many notes, because he was emulating Beckford and Henley).

The poem begins with the curse that the cruel Brahmin priest Kehama pronounces on Ladurlad, the peasant who has killed Kehama's heir in the effort to save Kailyal, a fellow peasant, from rape at his hands. Much of the narrative of *The Curse of Kehama* tracks Kehama's vengeful pursuit of Ladurlad and Kailyal, until, in a last-minute reversal of fortunes, his curse redounds on the tyrant's own head, and he is doomed to eternal suffering in hell. Here we pick up the story at an earlier moment, in Book 14, when the virtuous maiden Kailyal is on the verge of being forced into a ritual marriage of death with the god of the Juggernaut, an avatar of Krishna and the seven-headed god referred to in the following lines. Though the episode, titled "Jaga-Naut," has some of the flavor of the Gothic novels of Southey's day (and would be replayed in an even more lurid idiom in Charles Maturin's 1824 novel *Melmoth the Wanderer*), Southey's notes refer the reader to several factual sources.

From Jaga-Naut

Joy in the City of great Jaga-Naut!
Joy in the seven-headed Idol's shrine!
A virgin-bride his ministers have brought,
A mortal maid, in form and face divine,
Peerless among all daughters of mankind;
Search'd they the world again from East to West,
In endless quest,
Seeking the fairest and the best,
No maid so lovely might they hope to find; . .
For she hath breath'd celestial air,
And heavenly food hath been her fare,
And heavenly thoughts and feelings give her face
That heavenly grace.
Joy in the City of great Jaga-Naut,
Joy in the seven-headed Idol's shrine!
The fairest Maid his Yoguees[1] sought,
A fairer than the fairest have they brought,
A maid of charms surpassing human thought,
A maid divine.

Now bring ye forth the Chariot of the God!
Bring him abroad,
That through the swarming City he may ride;
And by his side
Place ye the Maid of more than mortal grace,
The Maid of perfect form and heavenly face!
Set her aloft in triumph, like a bride
Upon the bridal car,°
And spread the joyful tidings wide and far, . .
Spread it with trump and voice
That all may hear, and all who hear rejoice, . .

The Mighty One hath found his mate! the God
Will ride abroad!
To-night will he go forth from his abode!
Ye myriads who adore him,
Prepare the way before him!

Uprear'd on twenty wheels elate,
Huge as a Ship, the bridal car appear'd;
Loud creak its ponderous wheels, as through the gate
A thousand Bramins° drag the enormous load.
There, thron'd aloft in state,
The Image of the seven-headed God
Came forth from his abode; and at his side
Sate Kailyal like a bride;
A bridal statue rather might she seem,
For she regarded all things like a dream,
Having no thought, nor fear, nor will, nor aught
Save hope and faith, that liv'd within her still.

O silent Night, how have they startled thee
With the brazen trumpet's blare!
And thou, O Moon! whose quiet light serene
Filleth wide heaven, and bathing hill and wood,
Spreads o'er the peaceful valley like a flood,
How have they dimm'd thee with the torches glare,
Which round yon moving pageant flame and flare,
As the wild rout, with deafening song and shout,
Fling their long flashes out,
That, like infernal lightnings, fire the air.

A thousand pilgrims strain
Arm, shoulder, breast and thigh, with might and main,
To drag that sacred wain,°
And scarce can draw along the enormous load.

Prone fall the frantic votaries° in its road,
And, calling on the God,
Their self-devoted bodies there they lay
To pave his chariot-way.
On Jaga-Naut they call,
The ponderous Car rolls on, and crushes all.
Through blood and bones it ploughs its dreadful path.
Groans rise unheard; the dying cry,
And death and agony
Are trodden under foot by yon mad throng,
Who follow close, and thrust the deadly wheels along.

Pale grows the Maid at this accursed sight;
The yells which round her rise
Have rous'd her with affright,
And fear hath given to her dilated eyes
A wilder light.
Where shall those eyes be turn'd? she knows not where!
Downward they dare not look, for there
Is death, and horror, and despair;
Nor can her patient looks to Heaven repair,
For the huge Idol over her, in air,
Spreads his seven hideous heads, and wide
Extends their snaky necks on every side;
And all around, behind, before,
The bridal Car, is the raging rout,
With frantic shout, and deafening roar,
Tossing the torches' flames about.
And the double double peals of the drum are there,
And the startling burst of the trumpet's blare;
And the gong, that seems, with its thunders dread,
To stun the living, and waken the dead.
The ear-strings throb as if they were broke,

And the eye-lids drop at the weight of its stroke.
Fain would the Maid have kept them fast,
But open they start at the crack of the blast.

* * *

1801–10 1810

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, yogis. In an 1811 letter to the publisher John Murray, Southey offered a definition of *yoguee*: "Hindoo Devotee."Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *chariot*Return to reference °
- °: *Hindu priests*Return to reference °
- °: *wagon*Return to reference °
- °: *worshipers*Return to reference °

SYDNEY OWENSON

Set in seventeenth-century India, and using that setting to comment on what colonialism would become two centuries later, *The Missionary* narrates the doomed love between Hilarion, a Portuguese Franciscan monk, and Luxima, the Hindu priestess whose conversion he had aimed to secure. Throughout her career, the Anglo-Irish Sydney Owenson (1778?–1859) used her trademark blend of sentimental fiction and travel narrative to probe the relations between colonized and colonizer and query the possibility of cross-cultural understanding. *The Missionary* continues an investigation begun in Owenson's runaway success, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806)—in part about Irish resistance to English rule—and continued in her *Ida of Athens* (1809)—in part about Greece's rebellion against the Ottoman Empire.

In 1810 Southey had used the *The Curse of Kehama*—partially intended as his demonstration that, as he put it, Hinduism was "of all false religions . . . the most monstrous in its fables, and the most fatal in its effects"—to endorse the interventionism and proselytizing that were in this moment becoming key elements of British imperial policy. Owenson by contrast tells a story in which tragedy arises from religious dogmatism. As in the passages reprinted here, which record Hilarion's first encounter with Luxima, Owenson's protagonists suffer because they and their communities, Brahmin and Catholic, have internalized the prejudices making it impossible for them to love. Percy Shelley pressed *The Missionary* on friends after reading it in 1812 and wrote, "Since I have read it I have read no other—but I have thought strangely." In 1816 he turned that mental dislocation to account in *Alastor*, whose veiled maiden is a new version of Luxima.

From The Missionary: An Indian Tale[1]

* * *

The religious attendants of the Guru, mounted on Arabian horses, led the van;[2] followed by the Ramganny, or dancing priestesses of the temple, who sung, as they proceeded, the histories of their gods, while incarnate upon earth. Their movements were slow, languid, and graceful; and their hymns, accompanied by the tamboora, the seringa, and other instruments, whose deep, soft, and solemn tones, seem consecrated to the purposes of a tender and fanciful religion, excited in the soul of their auditors, emotions which belonged not all to Heaven.

This group, which resembled, in form and movement, the personfication of the first hours of Love and Youth, was succeeded by the Guru, mounted on an elephant, which moved with a majestic pace; his howdah,[3] of pure gold, sparkling to the radiance of the rising day. Disciples of the Brahman surrounded his elephant, and were immediately followed by a palanquin, which from its simplicity formed a striking contrast to the splendid objects that had preceded it. Its drapery, composed of the snowy muslin of the country, shone like the fleecy vapour on which the sun's first light reposes: its delicate shafts were entwined with the caressing fibres of the camalata, the flower of the Indian heaven, dedicated to Camdeo, the god of 'mystic love,' whose crimson blossoms breathed of odours which soothed, rather than intoxicated the senses.

The acclamations which had rent the air on the appearance of the Guru, died softly away as the palanquin approached. An awe more profound, a feeling more pure, more sublimated, seemed to take possession of the multitude; for, indistinctly seen through the transparent veil of the palanquin, appeared the most sacred of vestals, the Prophetess and Brachmachira of Cashmire. Her perfect

form, thus shrouded, caught, from the circumstance, a mysterious charm, and seemed like one of the splendid illusions, with which the enthusiasm of religion brightens the holy dream of its votarist, like the spirit which descends amidst the shadows of night upon the slumbers of the blessed. Considered as the offspring of Brahma, as a ray of the divine excellence, the Indians of the most distinguished rank drew back as she approached, lest their very breath should pollute that reigion of purity her respiration consecrated; and the odour of the sacred flowers, by which she was adorned, was inhaled with an eager devotion, as if it purified the soul it almost seemed to penetrate. The venerated palanquin was guarded by a number of pilgrim women, and the chief casts of the inhabitants of Lahore; while a band of the native troops closed the procession, which proceeded to the Pagoda of Crishna.

From the contemplation of a spectacle so new, so unexpected, the Missionary retired within his solitary tent, with that feeling of horror and disgust, which a profanation of the sentiment and purposes of religion might be supposed to excite, in a mind so pure, so zealous, so far above all the pomp and passions of life, and hitherto so ignorant of all the images connected with their representation. The music, the perfumes, the women, the luxury, and the splendour of the extraordinary procession, offended his piety, and almost disordered his imagination. He thought, for a moment, of the perils of an enterprise, undertaken in a country where the very air was unfavourable to virtue, and where all breathed a character of enjoyment, even over the awful[4] sanctity of religion; a species of enjoyment, to whose very existence he had been, hitherto, almost a stranger; but the genius of his zeal warmed in proportion to the obstacles he found he had to encounter.

* * *

The sibyl Priestess stood at the foot of the shrine of her tutelar deity, and the superstitious multitude fell prostrate at the feet of the Prophetess. They invoked her intercession with the god she served:

mothers held up their infants to her view; fathers inquired from her the fate of their absent sons; and many addressed her on the future events of their lives; while she, not more deceiving than deceived, became the victim of her own imposition, and stood in the midst of her votarists, in all the imposing charm of holy illusion. Her enthusiasm once kindled, her imagination became disordered: believing herself inspired, she looked the immortality she fancied, and uttered rhapsodies in accents so impressive and so tender, and with emotions so wild, and yet so touching, that the mind no longer struggled against the imposition of the senses, and the spirit of fanatical zeal confirmed the influence of human loveliness.

Hitherto, curiosity had induced the Missionary to follow the procession; but he now turned back, horror-struck. Too long had the apostle of Christianity been the witness of those impious rites, offered by the idolaters to the idolatress; and the indignation he felt at all he had seen, at all he had heared, produced an irritability of feeling, new to a mind so tranquil, and but little consonant to a character so regulated, so subdued, so far above even the laudable weakness of human nature. He considered the false Prophetess as the most fatal opponent to his intentions, and he looked to her conversion as the most effectual means to accomplish the success of his enterprise. He shuddered to reflect on the weakness and frailty of man, who is so often led to truth by the allurements which belong to error; and he devoted the remainder of the day to the consideration of those pious plans, by which he hoped, one day, to shade the brow of the Heathen Priestess with the sacred veil of the Christian Nun.

* * *

1811

Endnotes

- Note 1:

Hilarion has decided, counseled by the Brahmin philosopher who tutors him in the native languages, to launch his evangelizing by participating in the theological debates held to mark the arrival in the city of Lahore of the guru of Cashmire. The first of the excerpts here describes the guru's entrance into the city, along with his granddaughter Luxima. A "brachmachira," or nun, she is devoted, like her grandfather, to the Vedanti sect, which Hilarion's adviser describes as a faith centered on the notion that "a passionate and exclusive love of Heaven is that feeling only, which offers no illusion to the soul, and secures its eternal felicity." This description

Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Procession.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Canopied seat used for riding on an elephant's back.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Awe-inspiring.Return to reference 4

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

"The public are orientalizing," Byron wrote to Thomas Moore in August 1813, counseling his brother poet to engage with the East, that most salable of literary themes. Byron assiduously followed his own advice. He had already launched his line of "Turkish tales" with *The Giaour*, first published in June 1813 and then in longer and longer versions, over the next two years. Between 1813 and 1816, he followed up this narrative poem with similar, and similarly bestselling, tales: *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara,* and *The Siege of Corinth*.

The Giaour originated, Byron said, in a story he had heard sung in a Levantine coffeehouse he had visited by chance during his travels of 1809–10. It is a purposefully fragmentary narrative, divided between multiple narrators and vantage points on the action, and supplemented, in the manner of earlier literary reports from the eastern edge of Christian Europe, with notes about this foreign land's customs and topography, notes mainly omitted from the excerpt reprinted here. In prefatory remarks affixed to one edition, Byron gave the general outline of what his story would have been "when entire": it "*contained the adventures of a female slave, who was thrown, in the Mussulman* [Mohammedan] *manner, into the sea for infidelity, and avenged by a young Venetian.*" That slave is Leila, the favorite among the concubines whom the Turkish lord Hassan keeps in his harem. Her lover, the Venetian, is the poem's "Giaour." (Byron possibly encountered in Beckford's *Vathek* this exotic word for "foreigner" or "infidel"—pronounced, we think, so as to rhyme with "power.") The poem concludes with the narrative of the Christian friar who listens to the Giaour's confession in the monastery to which he has retreated to repent his sins. In the section presented here, the primary voice is also that of a bystander to the action, here a Turkish fisherman, who reports the "strange rumours" circulating in his city

following Leila's disappearance. This excerpt is from *The Giaour*'s fifth edition.

The Giaour. The translations of Byron's Turkish tales fired the imaginations of many visual artists in France, including Théodore Géricault. This 1823 lithograph, part of a suite of images Géricault devoted to the tales, pictures the Giaour.

From The Giaour: A Fragment of a Turkish Tale

* * *

Black Hassan from the Haram flies,
Nor bends on woman's face his eyes,
The unwonted chase° each hour employs,
Yet shares he not the hunter's joys.
Not thus was Hassan wont to fly
When Leila dwelt in his Serai.°
Doth Leila there no longer dwell?
That tale can only Hassan tell:
Strange rumours in our city say
Upon that eve she fled away;
When Rhamazan's last sun was set,
And flashing from each minaret
Millions of lamps proclaim'd the feast
Of Bairam[1] through the boundless East.
'Twas then she went as to the bath,
Which Hassan vainly search'd in wrath,
But she was flown her master's rage
In likeness of a Georgian page;
And far beyond the Moslem's power
Had wrong'd him with the faithless Giaour.
Somewhat of this had Hassan deem'd,
But still so fond, so fair she seem'd,
Too well he trusted to the slave
Whose treachery deserv'd a grave:
And on that eve had gone to mosque,
And thence to feast in his kiosk.[2]
Such is the tale his Nubians[3] tell,

Who did not watch their charge too well;
But others say, that on that night,
By pale Phingari's° trembling light,
The Giaour upon his jet black steed
Was seen—but seen alone to speed
With bloody spur along the shore,
Nor maid nor page behind him bore.

• • • • • • • • • • • •

Her eye's dark charm 'twere vain to tell,
But gaze on that of the Gazelle,
It will assist thy fancy well,
As large, as languishingly dark,
But Soul beam'd forth in every spark
That darted from beneath the lid,
Bright as the ruby of Giamschid.[4]
Yea, *Soul*, and should our prophet say
That form was nought but breathing clay,
By Alla! I would answer nay;
Though on Al-Sirat's arch I stood,[5]
Which totters o'er the fiery flood,
With Paradise within my view,
And all his Houris° beckoning through.
Oh! who young Leila's glance could read
And keep that portion of his creed[6]
Which saith, that woman is but dust,
A soulless toy for tyrant's lust?
On her might Muftis[7] gaze, and own
That through her eye the Immortal shone—
On her fair cheek's unfading hue,
The young pomegranate's blossoms strew
Their bloom in blushes ever new—
Her hair in hyacinthine flow
When left to roll its folds below;

As midst her handmaids in the hall
She stood superior to them all,
Hath swept the marble where her feet
Gleamed whiter than the mountain sleet
Ere from the cloud that gave it birth,
It fell, and caught one stain of earth.
The cygnet nobly walks the water—
So moved on earth Circassia's[8] daughter—
The loveliest bird of Franguestan!
As rears her crest the ruffled Swan,
And spurns the wave with wings of pride,
When pass the steps of stranger man
Along the banks that bound her tide;
Thus rose fair Leila's whiter neck:—
Thus armed with beauty would she check
Intrusion's glance, till Folly's gaze
Shrunk from the charms it meant to praise.
Thus high and graceful was her gait;
Her heart as tender to her mate—
Her mate—stern Hassan, who was he?
Alas! that name was not for thee!

• • • • • • • • • • • • • •

Stern Hassan hath a journey ta'en
With twenty vassals in his train,
Each arm'd as best becomes a man
With arquebuss° and ataghan;°
The chief before, as deck'd for war,
Bears in his belt the scimitar
Stain'd with the best of Arnaut° blood,
When in the pass the rebels stood,
And few return'd to tell the tale
Of what befell in Parne's vale.[9]
The pistols which his girdle bore
Were those that once a pasha wore,

Which still, though gemm’d and boss’d with gold,
Even robbers tremble to behold.—
’Tis said he goes to woo a bride
More true than her who left his side;
The faithless slave that broke her bower,
And, worse than faithless, for a Giaour!—

• • • • • • • • • • • • • • •

The sun’s last rays are on the hill,
And sparkle in the fountain rill,
Whose welcome waters cool and clear,
Draw blessings from the mountaineer;
Here may the loitering merchant Greek
Find that repose ’twere vain to seek
In cities lodg’d too near his lord,
And trembling for his secret hoard—
Here may he rest where none can see,
In crowds a slave, in deserts free;
And with forbidden wine may stain
The bowl a Moslem must not drain.—

• • • • • • • • • • • • •

The foremost Tartar’s in the gap,
Conspicuous by his yellow cap,
The rest in lengthening line the while
Wind slowly through the long defile;°
Above, the mountain rears a peak,
Where vultures whet the thirsty beak,
And their’s may be a feast to-night,
Shall tempt them down ere morrow’s light.
Beneath, a river’s wintry stream
Has shrunk before the summer beam,
And left a channel bleak and bare,
Save shrubs that spring to perish there.

Each side the midway path there lay
Small broken crags of granite gray,
By time or mountain lightning riven,
From summits clad in mists of heaven;
For where is he that hath beheld
The peak of Liakura[1] unveil'd?

• • • • • • • • • • • •

They reach the grove of pine at last,
"Bismillah![°] now the peril's past;
For yonder view the opening plain,
And there we'll prick our steeds amain:"
The Chiaus[°] spake, and as he said,
A bullet whistled o'er his head;
The foremost Tartar bites the ground!
Scarce had they time to check the rein
Swift from their steeds the riders bound,
But three shall never mount again,
Unseen the foes that gave the wound,
The dying ask revenge in vain.
With steel unsheath'd, and carbines[°] bent,
Some o'er their courser's harness leant,
Half shelter'd by the steed,
Some fly behind the nearest rock,
And there await the coming shock,
Nor tamely stand to bleed
Beneath the shaft of foes unseen,
Who dare not quit their craggy screen.
Stern Hassan only from his horse
Disdains to light, and keeps his course,
Till fiery flashes in the van[°]
Proclaim too sure the robber-clan
Have well secur'd the only way
Could now avail the promis'd prey;
Then curl'd his very beard with ire,

And glared his eye with fiercer fire.
"Though far and near the bullets hiss,
I've scaped a bloodier hour than this."
And now the foe their covert quit,
And call his vassals to submit;
But Hassan's frown and furious word
Are dreaded more than hostile sword,
Nor of his little band a man
Resign'd carbine or ataghan—
Nor raised the craven cry, Amaun![°]
In fuller sight, more near and near,
The lately ambush'd foes appear,
And issuing from the grove advance,
Some who on battle charger prance.—
Who leads them on with foreign brand,
Far flashing in his red right hand?
" 'Tis he—'tis he—I know him now,
I know him by his pallid brow;
I know him by the evil eye
That aids his envious treachery;
I know him by his jet-black barb,
Though now array'd in Arnaut garb,
Apostate from his own vile faith,[2]
It shall not save him from the death;
'Tis he, well met in any hour,
Lost Leila's love—accursed Giaour!"

As rolls the river into ocean,
In sable torrent wildly streaming;
As the sea-tide's opposing motion
In azure column proudly gleaming,
Beats back the current many a rood,
In curling foam and mingling flood;
While eddying whirl, and breaking wave,
Roused by the blast of winter rave;
Through sparkling spray in thundering clash,

The lightnings of the waters flash
In aweful whiteness o’er the shore,
That shines and shakes beneath the roar;
Thus—as the stream and ocean greet,
With waves that madden as they meet—
Thus join the bands whom mutual wrong,
And fate and fury drive along.
The bickering sabres’ shivering jar,
  And pealing wide—or ringing near
  Its echoes on the throbbing ear
The deathshot hissing from afar—
The shock—the shout—the groan of war—
  Reverberate along that vale,
  More suited to the shepherd’s tale:
Though few the numbers—their’s the strife,
That neither spares nor speaks for life!
Ah! fondly youthful hearts can press,
To seize and share the dear caress;
But Love itself could never pant
For all that Beauty sighs to grant,
With half the fervour Hate bestows
Upon the last embrace of foes,
When grappling in the fight they fold
Those arms that ne’er shall lose their hold.
Friends meet to part—Love laughs at faith;—
True foes, once met, are joined till death!

* * *

1813

Endnotes

- Note 1: Feast day that in the Islamic calendar ends Ramadan (or Rhamazan), the month of fasting.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Pavilion.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Men from Sudan. European accounts often identified them as the guards placed over the harem women.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The celebrated fabulous ruby of Sultan Giamschid, the embellisher of Ishtakhar [*Byron's note*, which continues several lines further, tracing, as though in parody of the era's philological researchers, the pronunciation of *Giamschid*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Al-Sirat, the bridge of breadth less than the thread of a famished spider, over which the Mussulmans must *skate* into Paradise, to which it is the only entrance . . . [*Byron's note*, which continues, quite jokily, with comments on the hellish region underneath the bridge].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Here Byron's long note records, and rejects as popular misconception, the belief that Islamic doctrine denied that women had souls.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Administrators of Sharia law.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Circassia, also called Franguestan (line 506), is a region in the Caucasus mountains, considered the border between Europe and Asia.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Valley beside Mount Parnitha, a densely forested mountain north of Athens. *The Giaour* is set in Turkish-occupied Greece, contested territory that in the early 18th century, when these adventures are meant to have taken place, was also coveted by the Venetian Empire.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A mountain in Greece.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: As leader of a band of Albanian (Arnaut) mercenaries, the Giaour betrays his own faith, Christianity.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *hunt*Return to reference °
- °: *harem*Return to reference °

- °: *moon's* Return to reference °
- °: *beautiful women* Return to reference °
- °: *gun* Return to reference °
- °: *sword* Return to reference °
- °: *Albanian* Return to reference °
- °: *narrow passage* Return to reference °
- °: *In Allah's name* Return to reference °
- °: *Turkish sergeant* Return to reference °
- °: *firearms* Return to reference °
- °: *front* Return to reference °
- °: *Pardon* Return to reference °

LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON

This much reprinted poem was originally published in the annual giftbook *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrapbook*, which Landon edited between 1832 and 1838. (For more about the poet, see p. 1035, below.) On its first appearance, the poem was presented as her literary accompaniment to an aquatint the *Scrapbook* had reprinted from an Indian travelogue by the infantry officer and amateur artist Robert Melville Grindlay.

Suttee or *sati*, the Hindu practice in which widows were immolated on their husbands' funeral pyres, focused much of the early nineteenth-century controversy over whether the British ought to intervene into the culture of their colony. An anti-sati movement also grew up at this time among native social reformers, led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772–1833). The practice was finally banned by the British government in 1829. Long after, however, English literature—not least literature by women—continued to gravitate toward sati as source material, both exploiting it as an occasion for Gothic horror and idealizing the dying widow as a willing martyr to altruistic love. Landon herself wrote about sati multiple times, before and after the ban.

"Preparations for a Suttee": one of the aquatint views included in Robert Melville Grindlay's lavish picture book *Scenery, Costumes, and Architecture Chiefly on the Western Side of India* (published in six parts between 1826 and 1830). Grindlay went to India as a teenager and served in the East India Company's army from 1804 to 1820.

Immolation of a Hindoo Widow

Gather her raven hair in one rich cluster,
Let the white champac° light it, as a star
Gives to the dusky night a sudden lustre,
Shining afar.

Shed fragrant oils upon her fragrant bosom,
Until the breathing air around grows sweet;
Scatter the languid jasmine's yellow blossom
Beneath her feet.

Those small white feet are bare—too soft are they
To tread on aught but flowers; and there is roll'd
Round the slight ankle, meet for such display,
The band of gold.

Chains and bright stones are on her arms and neck;
What pleasant vanities are linked with them,
Of happy hours, which youth delights to deck
With gold and gem.

She comes! So comes the Moon, when she has found
A silvery path wherein thro' heaven to glide.
Fling the white veil—a summer cloud—around;
She is a bride!

And yet the crowd that gather at her side
Are pale, and every gazer holds his breath.
Eyes fill with tears unbidden, for the bride—
The bride of Death!

She gives away the garland from her hair,

She gives the gems that she will wear no more;
All the affections, whose love-signs they were,
Are gone before.

The red pile blazes—let the bride ascend,
And lay her head upon her husband's heart,
Now in a perfect unison to blend—
No more to part.

1836

Notes

- °: *magnolia*Return to reference °

JOHN KEATS
1795–1821

John Keats's father was head stableman at a London livery stable; he married his employer's daughter and inherited the business. The poet's mother, by all reports, was an affectionate but negligent parent to her children; remarrying almost immediately after a fall from a horse killed her first husband, she left the eight-year-old John (her firstborn), his brothers, and a sister with their grandmother and did not reenter their lives for four years. The year before his father's death, Keats had been sent to the Reverend John Clarke's private school at Enfield, famous for its progressive curriculum, where he was a noisy, high-spirited boy; despite his small stature (when full-grown, he was barely over five feet in height), he distinguished himself in sports and fistfights. Here he had the good fortune to have as a mentor Charles Cowden Clarke, son of the headmaster, who later became a writer and an editor; he encouraged Keats's passion for reading and, both at school and in the course of their later friendship, introduced him to Spenser and other poets, to music, and to the theater.

When Keats's mother returned to her children, she was already ill, and in 1810 she died of tuberculosis. Although the livery stable had prospered, and £8,000 had been left in trust to the children by Keats's grandmother, the estate remained tied up in the law courts for all of Keats's lifetime. The children's guardian, Richard Abbey, an unimaginative and practical-minded businessman, took Keats out of

school at the age of fifteen and bound him apprentice to Thomas Hammond, a surgeon and apothecary at Edmonton. In 1815 Keats carried on his medical studies at Guy's Hospital, London, and the next year qualified to practice as an apothecary-surgeon—but almost immediately, over his guardian's protests, he abandoned medicine for poetry.

This decision was influenced by Keats's friendship with Leigh Hunt, then editor of the *Examiner* and a leading political radical, poet, and prolific writer of criticism and periodical essays. Hunt, the first successful author of Keats's acquaintance, added his enthusiastic encouragement of Keats's poetic efforts to that of Clarke. More important, he introduced him to writers greater than Hunt himself—William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, and Percy Shelley—as well as to Benjamin Robert Haydon, painter of grandiose historical and religious canvases. Through Hunt, Keats also met John Hamilton Reynolds and then Charles Wentworth Dilke and Charles Brown, who became his intimate friends and provided him with an essential circumstance for a fledgling poet: a sympathetic and appreciative audience.

The rapidity and sureness of Keats's development has no match. Although he did not begin writing poetry until his eighteenth year, by 1816 in the bold sonnet "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" he had found his voice. Later that same year he wrote "Sleep and Poetry," in which he laid out for himself a program deliberately modeled on the careers of the greatest poets, asking only

> for ten years, that I may overwhelm
> Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed
> That my own soul has to itself decreed.

For even while his health was good, Keats felt a foreboding of early death and applied himself to his art with a desperate urgency. In 1817 he went on to compose *Endymion*, an ambitious undertaking of more than four thousand lines. It is a rich allegory of a mortal's quest for an ideal feminine counterpart and a flawless happiness beyond earthly possibility; in a number of passages, it already

exhibits the sure movement and phrasing of his mature poetic style. But Keats's critical judgment and aspiration exceeded his achievement: long before he completed it, he declared impatiently that he carried on with the "slipshod" *Endymion* only as a "trial of invention" and began to block out *Hyperion*, conceived on the model of Milton's *Paradise Lost* in that most demanding of forms, the epic poem. His success in achieving the Miltonic manner is one of the reasons why Keats abandoned *Hyperion* before it was finished, for he recognized that he was uncommonly susceptible to poetic influences and regarded this as a threat to his individuality. "I will write independently," he insisted. "The Genius of Poetry must work out its own salvation in a man." He had refused the chance of intimacy with Shelley "that I might have my own unfettered scope"; he had broken away from Leigh Hunt's influence lest he get "the reputation of Hunt's *élève* [pupil]"; now he shied away from domination by Milton's powerfully infectious style.

In sentimental, later nineteenth-century accounts of "poor Keats," 1818 was cast as the year in which this rising genius, already frail and sensitive, was mortally crushed by vicious reviews. Percy Shelley helped initiate this myth in *Adonais*, which describes Keats as "a pale flower." Byron, who did not like Keats's verse, put it unsentimentally: Keats, he wrote, was "snuffed out by an article." It is true that the critics were brutal to Keats, those associated with the Tory journals especially. For these critics his poetry proved an irresistible target precisely because it had been promoted by the radical Hunt. *Endymion* was mauled in the *Quarterly Review*, and one of the articles on "the Cockney School of Poetry" that appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* condemned Keats as hopelessly vulgar, a writer who wanted to be a poet of nature but thought, as a social-climbing, undereducated Londoner would, that nature was "flowers seen in window-pots." "It is a better and wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet," the reviewer scolded: "so back to the shop Mr John." Keats had for his own part the good sense to recognize that the attacks were motivated by political prejudice and class snobbery, and he had already passed his own severe judgment

on *Endymion:* "My own domestic criticism," he said, "has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict." More important was the financial distress of his brother George and his young bride, who emigrated to Kentucky and lost their money in an ill-advised investment. Keats, short of funds and needing to supplement the family income, had now to find ways to make money from his writing: he turned to journalism and began planning plays. His brother Tom contracted tuberculosis, and the poet, in devoted attendance, helplessly watched him waste away until his death that December. In the summer of that year, Keats had taken a strenuous walking tour in the English Lake District, Scotland, and Ireland. It was a glorious adventure but a totally exhausting one in wet, cold weather, and he returned in August with a chronically ulcerated throat made increasingly ominous by the shadow of the tuberculosis that had killed his mother and brother. And in the late fall of that same year, Keats fell unwillingly but deeply in love with Fanny Brawne, the eighteen-year-old girl next door. They became engaged, knowing, though, that Keats's poverty and worsening health might well make their marriage impossible.

In this period of turmoil, Keats achieved the culmination of his brief poetic career. Between January and September of 1819, masterpiece followed masterpiece in astonishing succession: *The Eve of St. Agnes*, "La Belle Dame sans Merci," all of the "great odes," *Lamia*, and a sufficient number of fine sonnets to make him, with Wordsworth, the major Romantic craftsman in that form. All of these poems possess the distinctive qualities of the work of Keats's maturity: a slow-paced, gracious movement; a concreteness of description in which all the senses—tactile, gustatory, kinetic, visceral, as well as visual and auditory—combine to give the total apprehension of an experience; a delight at the sheer existence of things outside himself, the poet seeming to lose his own identity in a total identification with the object he contemplates; and a concentrated felicity of phrasing that reminded his friends, as it has many critics since, of the language of Shakespeare. Under the richly sensuous surface, we find Keats's characteristic presentation of all

experience as a tangle of inseparable but irreconcilable opposites. He finds melancholy in delight and pleasure in pain; he feels the highest intensity of love as an approximation to death; he inclines equally toward a life of indolence and "sensation" and toward a life of thought; he is aware both of the attraction of an imaginative dream world without "disagreeables" and the remorseless pressure of the actual; he aspires at the same time to aesthetic detachment and to social responsibility.

His letters, hardly less remarkable than his poetry, show that Keats felt on his pulses the conflicts he dramatized in his major poems. Above all, they reveal him wrestling with the problem of evil and suffering—what to make of our lives in the discovery that "the world is full of misery and heartbreak, pain, sickness and oppression." To the end of his life, he refused to seek solace for the complexity and contradictions of experience either in the abstractions of inherited philosophical doctrines or in the absolutes of a religious creed. At the close of his poetic career, in the latter part of 1819, Keats began to rework the epic *Hyperion* into the form of a dream vision that he called *The Fall of Hyperion.* In the introductory section of this fragment the poet is told by the prophetess Moneta that he has hitherto been merely a dreamer; he must know that

> The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
> Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes,

and that the height of poetry can be reached only by

> those to whom the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.

He was seemingly planning to undertake a new direction and subject matter, when illness and death intervened.

On the night of February 3, 1820, he coughed up blood. As a physician he refused to evade the truth: "I cannot be deceived in that colour; that drop of blood is my death warrant. I must die." That spring and summer a series of hemorrhages rapidly weakened

him. In the autumn he allowed himself to be persuaded to seek the milder climate of Italy in the company of Joseph Severn, a young painter, but these last months were only what he called "a posthumous existence." He died in Rome on February 23, 1821, and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery, where Mary and Percy Shelley had already interred their little son William, and where Percy's ashes, too, would be deposited in 1822. At times the agony of his disease, the seeming frustration of his hopes for great poetic achievement, and the despair of his passion for Fanny Brawne compelled even Keats's brave spirit to bitterness and jealousy, but he always recovered his gallantry. His last letter, written to Charles Brown, concludes: "I can scarcely bid you good bye even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow. God bless you! John Keats."

No one can read Keats's poems and letters without sensing the tragic waste of an extraordinary intellect and genius cut off so early. What he might have done is beyond conjecture; what we do know is that his poetry, when he stopped writing at the age of twenty-four, exceeds the accomplishment at the same age of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton.

The texts reprinted here are based on Jack Stillinger's edition, *The Poems of John Keats* (1978).

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer[1]

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;[2]
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene[3]
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;°
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Oct. 1816 1816

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Keats's mentor Charles Cowden Clarke introduced him to Homer in the robust translation by the Elizabethan poet and dramatist George Chapman. They read through the night, and Keats walked home at dawn. This sonnet reached Clarke by the ten o'clock mail that same morning. Readers have often assumed Keats got history wrong in this sonnet's sestet and confused Balboa, the first European explorer to see the Pacific, with Cortez, the conqueror of Mexico. But as Charles Rzepka pointed out in 2002, there is strictly speaking no reason to suppose Keats is concerned with original discoveries here (his Cortez stares at, rather than discovers, the Pacific):
  Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Realm, feudal possession.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Clear expanse of air.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *view*Return to reference °

From Sleep and Poetry[1]

["O FOR TEN YEARS"]

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed.
Then will I pass the countries that I see
In long perspective, and continually
Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass
Of Flora, and old Pan:[2] sleep in the grass,
Feed upon apples red, and strawberries,
And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees;
Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places,
To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,—
Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white
Into a pretty shrinking with a bite
As hard as lips can make it: till agreed,
A lovely tale of human life we'll read.
And one will teach a tame dove how it best
May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest;
Another, bending o'er her nimble tread,
Will set a green robe floating round her head,
And still will dance with ever varied ease,
Smiling upon the flowers and the trees:
Another will entice me on, and on
Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon;
Till in the bosom of a leafy world
We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd
In the recesses of a pearly shell.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell?

Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life,
Where I may find the agonies, the strife
Of human hearts: for lo! I see afar,
O'er sailing the blue cragginess, a car°
And steeds with streamy manes—the charioteer[3]
Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear:
And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly
Along a huge cloud's ridge; and now with sprightly
Wheel downward come they into fresher skies,
Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes.
Still downward with capacious whirl they glide;
And now I see them on a green-hill's side
In breezy rest among the nodding stalks.
The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks
To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear
Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear,
Passing along before a dusky space
Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase
Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep.
Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep:
Some with upholden hand and mouth severe;
Some with their faces muffled to the ear
Between their arms; some, clear in youthful bloom,
Go glad and smilingly athwart° the gloom;
Some looking back, and some with upward gaze;
Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways
Flit onward—now a lovely wreath of girls
Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls;
And now broad wings. Most awfully intent,
The driver of those steeds is forward bent,
And seems to listen: O that I might know
All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled—the car is fled
Into the light of heaven, and in their stead
A sense of real things comes doubly strong,

And, like a muddy stream, would bear along
My soul to nothingness: but I will strive
Against all doubtings, and will keep alive
The thought of that same chariot, and the strange
Journey it went.

* * *

Oct.–Dec. 1816 1817

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  At the age of twenty-one, Keats set himself a regimen of poetic training modeled on the course followed by the greatest poets. Virgil had established the pattern of beginning with pastoral writing and proceeding gradually to the point at which he was ready to undertake the epic, and this pattern had been deliberately followed by Spenser and Milton. Keats's version of this program, as he describes it here, is to begin with the realm "of Flora, and old Pan" (line 102) and, within ten years, to climb up to the level of poetry dealing with "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (lines 124–25). The program Keats set himself is illuminated by his analysis of
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, the carefree pastoral world. Flora was the Roman goddess of flowers. Pan was the Greek god of pastures, woods, and animal life.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The description that follows recalls the traditional portrayal of Apollo, god of the sun and poetry, and represents the higher poetic imagination, which bodies forth the matters "of delight, of mystery, and fear" (line 138) that characterize the grander poetic genres.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *chariot* Return to reference °
- °: *against* Return to reference °

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles[1]

My spirit is too weak—mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick eagle looking at the sky.
Yet 'tis a gentle luxury to weep
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old time—with a billowy main°—
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

Mar. 1 or 2, 1817 1817

Endnotes

- Note 1: Lord Elgin had brought to England in 1806 many of the marble statues and friezes that adorned the Parthenon at Athens. In 1817 Keats, along with his artist friend Haydon, viewed the marbles at the British Museum, which had just purchased them, an acquisition that was and remains controversial. Keats's sonnet first appeared on the same day in both Leigh Hunt's *Examiner* and, through Keats's friend Reynolds, the *Champion*, and then was reprinted in Haydon's magazine *Annals of the Fine Arts.*Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *ocean*Return to reference °

From Endymion: A Poetic Romance[1]

"The stretched metre of an antique song"

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem of more than four thousand lines (based on the classical myth of a mortal beloved by the goddess of the moon) tells of Endymion's long and agonized search for an immortal goddess whom he had seen in several visions. In the course of his wanderings, he comes upon an Indian maid who had been abandoned by the followers of Bacchus, god of wine and revelry. To his utter despair, he succumbs to a sensual passion for her, in apparent betrayal of his love for his heavenly ideal. The conclusion to Keats's "romance" offers a way of resolving this opposition, which runs throughout the poem, between the inevitably mortal pleasures of this world
  Return to reference 1

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS CHATTERTON

Preface

Knowing within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;—it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece,[2] and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more,[3] before I bid it farewell.

Teignmouth, April 10, 1818

Endnotes

- Note 2: In 1820 an anonymous reviewer of Keats's final volume of poems cited this phrase and, in a complaint that suggests the political charge that the poetic use of classical mythology could carry at this time, wrote disparagingly of "the nonsense that Mr. Keats . . . and Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley, and some of the poets about town, have been talking of 'the beautiful mythology of Greece' "; "To some persons . . . that mythology comes recommended chiefly by its grossness—its alliance to the sensitive pleasures which belong to the animal."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In *Hyperion*, which Keats was already planning.Return to reference 3

From *Book 1*

["A THING OF BEAUTY"]

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet
    breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite° of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old, and young sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills°
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,°
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms°
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

    Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light

Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They alway must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.
The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own vallies. * * *

Notes

- °: *Despite*Return to reference °
- °: *small streams*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °
- °: *judgments*Return to reference °

[THE "PLEASURE THERMOMETER"]

"Peona![4] ever have I long'd to slake
My thirst for the world's praises: nothing base,
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd—
Though now 'tis tatter'd; leaving my bark bar'd
And sullenly drifting: yet my higher hope
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.
Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks°
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz'd,[5] and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven! Fold
A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
And soothe thy lips: hist,° when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Eolian[6] magic from their lucid wombs:
Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;
Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave
Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,[7]
Where long ago a giant battle was;
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus[8] slept.
Feel we these things?—that moment have we stept
Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthralments far
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,

To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.
All its more ponderous and bulky worth
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
A steady splendour; but at the tip-top
There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
Of light, and that is love: its influence,
Thrown in our eyes, genders° a novel sense,
At which we start and fret; till in the end,
Melting into its radiance, we blend,
Mingle, and so become a part of it,—
Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
So wingedly: when we combine therewith,
Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,[9]
And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.[1]
Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,[2]
That men, who might have tower'd in the van°
Of all the congregated world, to fan
And winnow from the coming step of time
All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime
Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,
Have been content to let occasion die,
Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium.°
And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,
Than speak against this ardent listlessness:
For I have ever thought that it might bless
The world with benefits unknowingly;
As does the nightingale, upperched high,
And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves—
She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives
How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.[3]
Just so may love, although 'tis understood
The mere commingling of passionate breath,
Produce more than our searching witnesseth:

What I know not: but who, of men, can tell
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would swell
To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,
The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,
If human souls did never kiss and greet?

"Now, if this earthly love has power to make
Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake
Ambition from their memories, and brim
Their measure of content; what merest whim,
Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
To one, who keeps within his stedfast aim
A love immortal, an immortal too.
Look not so wilder'd; for these things are true,
And never can be born of atomies°
That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,
Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure,
My restless spirit never could endure
To brood so long upon one luxury,
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream."

Apr.–Nov. 1817 1818

Endnotes

- Note 4:
  The sister to whom Endymion confides his troubles. Of lines 769–857 Keats said to his publisher, John Taylor: "When I wrot it, it was the regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth. My having written that Argument will perhaps be of the greatest Service to me of anything I ever did—It set before me at once the gradations of Happiness even like a kind of Pleasur

Thermometer, and is my first step towards the chief attempt in the Drama—the playing of different Natures with Joy and Sorrow." The gradations on this "Pleasure Thermometer" mark the stages on the way to what Keats calls "happiness" (line 77
his secular version of the religious concept of "felicity" that i
Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Transformed by alchemy from a base to a precious metal.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From Aeolus, god of winds.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Make a sound.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The musician of Greek legend, whose beautiful music could move even inanimate things.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Its own elemental substance.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Young pelicans were once thought to feed on their mother's flesh. In a parallel way our life is nourished by another's life, with which it fuses in love.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Food that never satiates, that never ceases to satisfy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, in order to hear better.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *beckons*Return to reference °
- °: *listen*Return to reference °
- °: *engenders*Return to reference °
- °: *forefront*Return to reference °
- °: *heaven*Return to reference °
- °: *mites*Return to reference °

On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again[1]

O golden-tongued Romance, with serene lute!
  Fair plumed syren,[2] queen of far-away!
  Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute.
Adieu! for, once again, the fierce dispute
  Betwixt damnation and impassion'd clay
  Must I burn through; once more humbly assay°
The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit.
Chief Poet! and ye clouds of Albion,[3]
  Begetters of our deep eternal theme!
When through the old oak forest I am gone,
  Let me not wander in a barren dream:
But, when I am consumed in the fire,
Give me new phoenix[4] wings to fly at my desire.

Jan. 22, 1818 1838

Endnotes

- Note 1: Keats pauses, while revising *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*, to read again Shakespeare's great tragedy. The word *syren* (line 2) indicates Keats's feeling that "Romance" was enticing him from the poet's prime duty, to deal with "the agonies, the strife / Of human hearts" (*Sleep and Poetry*, lines 124–25).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Syrens (sirens) were sea nymphs whose singing lured listeners to their deaths.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Old name for England. *King Lear* is set in Celtic Britain.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The fabulous bird that periodically burns itself to death to rise anew from the ashes.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *test*Return to reference °

When I have fears that I may cease to be[1]

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high piled books, in charactry,[2]
Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

Jan. 1818 1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: The first, and one of the most successful, of Keats's attempts at the sonnet in the Shakespearean rhyme scheme.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Characters; printed letters of the alphabet.Return to reference 2

To Homer

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,
  Of thee I hear and of the Cyclades,[1]
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance
  To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.
So wast thou blind;—but then the veil was rent,
  For Jove uncurtain'd heaven to let thee live,
And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
  And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive;
Aye on the shores of darkness there is light,
  And precipices show untrodden green,
There is a budding morrow in midnight,
  There is a triple sight in blindness keen;
Such seeing hadst thou, as it once befel
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.[2]

1818 1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: A group of islands in the Aegean Sea, off Greece. Keats's allusion is to his ignorance of the Greek language. Schooling in Greek was a badge of gentlemanly identity in the period.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In late pagan cults Diana was worshiped as a three-figured goddess, the deity of nature and of the moon as well as the queen of Hell. The "triple sight" that blind Homer paradoxically commands is of these three regions and also of heaven, sea, and Earth (the realms of Jove, Neptune, and Pan, lines 6–8).Return to reference 2

The Eve of St. Agnes[1]

1

St. Agnes' Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's[2] fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

2

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre,° barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb° orat'ries,°
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think[3] how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

3

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd° to tears this aged man and poor;

But no—already had his deathbell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,°
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

4

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,°
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on
their breasts.

5

At length burst in the argent revelry,[4]
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting fairily
The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance.° These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

6

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,

And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honey'd middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

7

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a god in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train[5]
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retir'd, not cool'd by high disdain;
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere:
She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

8

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
The hallow'd hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels,° and the throng'd resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwink'd[6] with faery fancy; all amort,
Save to St. Agnes[7] and her lambs unshorn,[8]
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

9

So, purposing each moment to retire,

She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttress'd from moonlight,[9] stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

10

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame,[1] weak in body and in soul.

11

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,°
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:°
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

12

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip[2] dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."°

13

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume,
And as she mutter'd "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,
"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

14

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,[3]
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays[4]

This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle° time to grieve."

15

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook°
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

16

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go!—I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

17

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,

Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard° them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears."

18

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell° may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never miss'd."—Thus plaining,° doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.[5]

19

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legion'd fairies pac'd the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.[6]

20

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates° and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame[7]
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare

On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

21

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain°
The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.°
His poor guide hurried back with agues° in her brain.

22

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a mission'd spirit,[8] unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd°
and fled.

23

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:

No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale[9] should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

24

A casement° high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.[1]

25

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules° on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;°
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory,° like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

26

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;[2]
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;

Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

27

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd[3] she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;[4]
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

28

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo!—how fast
she slept.

29

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set

A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet![°]
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,[°]
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray[°] his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

30

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;[°]
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez,[5] and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

31

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
"And now, my love, my seraph[6] fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:[7]
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

32

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved[°] arm

Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers° in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seem'd he never, never could redeem
From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.[8]

33

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans mercy":[9]
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

34

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh° expell'd
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep:
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

35

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my love, I know not where to go."

36

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odour with the violet,—
Solution° sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

37

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown° sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

38

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil° dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famish'd pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

39

"Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land,
Of haggard[1] seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand;—
The bloated wassaillers° will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:[2]
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

40

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling° way they found.
—
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras,° rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

41

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flaggon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:[3]
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

42

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves[4] told,
For aye° unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

Jan.–Feb. 1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1: St. Agnes, martyred ca. 303 at the age of thirteen, is the patron saint of virgins. Legend has it that if a chaste young woman performs the proper ritual, she will dream of her future husband on the evening before St. Agnes's Day, January 21. Keats combines this superstition with the Romeo and Juliet theme of young love thwarted by feuding families and tells the story in a sequence of evolving Spenserian stanzas. The poem is Keats's first complete success in sustained narrative romance.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: One who is paid to pray for his benefactor. He "tells" (counts) the beads of his rosary to keep track of his prayers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, when he thinks.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Silver-adorned revelers.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Skirts sweeping along the ground.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Covered by a hood or blindfolded.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Entirely oblivious or dead ("amort") to everything except St. Agnes. Return to reference 7
- Note 8: On St. Agnes's Day it was the custom to offer lambs' wool at the altar, to be made into cloth by nuns.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Sheltered from the moonlight by the buttresses (the supports projecting from the wall).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Old (and, usually, homely) woman; an ironic development in English from the French meaning, "lovely lady."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the old sense: godmother or old friend.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A sieve made to hold water by witchcraft.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, uses magic in her attempt to evoke the vision of her lover.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, whether good or ill befalls her.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Probably the episode in the Arthurian legends in which Merlin, the magician, lost his life when the wily Vivien turned one of his own spells against him.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A drum-shaped embroidery frame.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, like an angel sent on a mission.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: An allusion to Ovid's story, in the *Metamorphoses*, of Philomel, who was raped by Tereus, her sister's husband. He cut out Philomel's tongue to prevent her from speaking of his crime, but she managed to weave her story and make herself understood to her sister, Procne. Just as Tereus was about to kill

both women, Philomel and Procne were metamorphosed into a nightingale and a swallow.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: That is, among the genealogical emblems ("heraldries") and other devices ("emblazonings"), a heraldic shield signified by its colors that the family was of royal blood.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Pre-Raphaelite–inspired painter Daniel Maclise represented this moment in Keats's romance in his painting of 1868, *Madeline after Prayer.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In a confused state between waking and sleeping.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Variously interpreted; perhaps: held tightly, cherished (or else kept shut, fastened with a clasp), like a Christian prayer book ("missal") in a land where the religion is that of dark-skinned pagans ("swart Paynims").Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, jellies softer ("soother") than the curds of cream, clear ("lucent") syrups tinged with cinnamon, and sweet gums ("manna") and dates transported in a great merchant ship ("argosy") from Fez, in Morocco.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: One of the highest orders of angels.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Hermit, religious solitary.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Entangled in a weave of fantasies.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: "The Lovely Lady without Pity," title of a work by the medieval poet Alain Chartier. Keats later adopted the title for his own ballad.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Wild, untamed (originally, a wild hawk).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Rhine wine and the sleep-producing mead (a heavy fermented drink made with honey).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Acknowledges a member of the household.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The prayers beginning *Ave Maria* ("Hail Mary").Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *lean* Return to reference °
- °: *silent* Return to reference °
- °: *chapels* Return to reference °
- °: *Charmed* Return to reference °
- °: *salvation* Return to reference °
- °: *ostentation* Return to reference °
- °: *stories* Return to reference °
- °: *tambourines* Return to reference °
- °: *staff* Return to reference °
- °: *soft* Return to reference °
- °: *tomb* Return to reference °
- °: *much* Return to reference °
- °: *restrain* Return to reference °
- °: *confront* Return to reference °
- °: *death knell* Return to reference °
- °: *complaining* Return to reference °
- °: *delicacies* Return to reference °
- °: *arrive at* Return to reference °
- °: *mightily* Return to reference °
- °: *shivering* Return to reference °
- °: *frightened* Return to reference °
- °: *window* Return to reference °
- °: *red (heraldry)* Return to reference °
- °: *gift, blessing* Return to reference °
- °: *halo* Return to reference °
- °: *sleep-producing charm* Return to reference °
- °: *high-pitched trumpet* Return to reference °
- °: *frighten* Return to reference °
- °: *melon* Return to reference °
- °: *unmanned, weak* Return to reference °
- °: *trays* Return to reference °
- °: *nearly* Return to reference °
- °: *fusion* Return to reference °

- °: *gust-blown* Return to reference °
- °: *vermilion, bright red* Return to reference °
- °: *drunken carousers* Return to reference °
- °: *in the dark* Return to reference °
- °: *tapestry* Return to reference °
- °: *ever* Return to reference °

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell[1]

Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell:
  No god, no demon of severe response,
Deigns to reply from heaven or from hell.
  Then to my human heart I turn at once—
Heart! thou and I are here sad and alone;
  Say, wherefore did I laugh? O mortal pain!
O darkness! darkness! ever must I moan,
  To question heaven and hell and heart in vain!
Why did I laugh? I know this being's lease—
  My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads:
Yet could I on this very midnight cease,
  And the world's gaudy ensigns° see in shreds.
Verse, fame, and beauty are intense indeed,
But death intenser—death is life's high meed.°

Mar. 1819 1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: In the letter to his brother and sister-in-law, George and Georgiana Keats, into which he copied this sonnet, March 19, 1819, Keats wrote: "Though the first steps to it were through my human passions, they went away, and I wrote with my Mind —and perhaps I must confess a little bit of my heart. . . . I went to bed, and enjoyed an uninterrupted sleep. Sane I went to bed and sane I arose."Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *banners*Return to reference °

- °: *reward*Return to reference °

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art[1]

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
  Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
  Like nature's patient, sleepless eremite,[2]
The moving waters at their priestlike task
  Of pure ablution[3] round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen masque
  Of snow upon the mountains and the moors;
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
  Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft swell and fall,
  Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.[4]

1819 1838

Endnotes

- Note 1: While on a tour of the Lake District in 1818, Keats had said that the austere scenes "refine one's sensual vision into a sort of north star which can never cease to be open lidded and steadfast over the wonders of the great Power." The thought developed into this sonnet, which Keats drafted in 1819, then copied into his volume of Shakespeare's poems at the end of September or the beginning of October 1820, while on his way to Italy, where he died.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hermit, religious solitary.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Washing, as part of a religious rite.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: In the earlier version: “Half passionless, and so swoon on to death.”Return to reference 4

La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad[1]

1

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge[°] has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

2

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

3

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

4

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful, a fairy's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

5

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;[2]
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

6

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A fairy's song.

7

She found me roots of relish° sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
"I love thee true."

8

She took me to her elfin grot°
And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.[3]

9

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
The latest° dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

10

I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death pale were they all;
They cried—"La belle dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

11

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam°
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

12

And this is why I sojourn here,
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Apr. 1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The title, though not the subject, was taken from a medieval poem by Alain Chartier and means "The Lovely Lady without Pity." The story of a mortal destroyed by his love for a supernatural femme fatale has been told repeatedly in myth, fairy tale, and ballad. The text printed here is Keats's earlier version of the poem, as transcribed by Charles Brown. The version published in 1820 begins, "Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight."
  Keats imitates a frequent procedure of folk ballads by casting the poem into the dialogue form. The first three stanzas are addressed to the knight, and the rest of the poem is his reply. Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Belt (of flowers).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Keats commented in a letter to his brother and sister-in-law, "Why four kisses—you will say—why four because I wish to restrain the headlong impetuosity of my Muse—she would have fain said 'score' without hurting the rhyme—but we must temper the Imagination as the Critics say with Judgment. I was obliged to choose an even number that both eyes might have fair play."Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *rushes*Return to reference °
- °: *flavor*Return to reference °
- °: *cave*Return to reference °
- °: *last*Return to reference °
- °: *twilight*Return to reference °

On Fame

Fame, like a wayward girl, will still be coy
  To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy,
  And dotes the more upon a heart at ease;
She is a gipsey, will not speak to those
  Who have not learnt to be content without her;
A jilt, whose ear was never whisper'd close,
  Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her;
A very gipsey is she, Nilus born,[1]
  Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar;[2]
Ye love-sick bards, repay her scorn for scorn;
  Ye lovelorn artists, madmen that ye are!
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu;
Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.

Apr. 1819 1838

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, born near the Nile, in Egypt, where gypsies were thought to have originated.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Genesis 39, the wife of Potiphar, an Egyptian soldier, does her best to seduce Joseph, the handsome slave her husband has bought. When she fails, she falsely accuses Joseph of rape, and Potiphar casts him into prison.Return to reference 2

Sonnet to Sleep

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
Shutting with careful fingers and benign
Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest° Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
Or wait the Amen ere thy poppy[1] throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes:
Save me from curious° conscience, that still hoards
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like the mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,[2]
And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

Apr. 1819 1838

Endnotes

- Note 1: Opium is made from the dried juice of the opium poppy.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The ridges in a lock that correspond to the notches of the key.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *softest*Return to reference °
- °: *scrupulous*Return to reference °

Ode to Psyche[1]

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers,° wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conched[2] ear:
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied:
'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,[3]
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced, and their pinions° too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:[4]
The winged boy I knew;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
His Psyche true!

O latest born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy![5]
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,[6]
Or Vesper,° amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heap'd with flowers;

Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,[7]
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted° forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,°
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swinged censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane°
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;[8]
And there by zephyrs,° streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads° shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,

With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love[9] in!

Apr. 1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem initiated the sequence of great odes that Keats wrote in the spring of 1819. It is copied into the same journal-letter that included the "Sonnet to Sleep" and "On the Sonnet," together with a comment about "endeavoring to discover a better sonnet stanza than we have." It is therefore likely that Keats's experiments with sonnet schemes led to the development of the intricate and varied stanzas of his odes and that he abandoned the sonnet on discovering the richer possibilities of the more spacious form.
  Psyche, which gives us our modern term *psychology*, means "mind" or "soul" (and also "butterfly") in Greek. In the story
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Soft and shaped like a seashell.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The purple dye once made in ancient Tyre.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Aurora was the goddess of the dawn.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The ranks of the gods who lived on Mount Olympus, according to the classical mythology now eclipsed (made "faded") by Christianity. "You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist who lived after the Augustan age, and consequently the Goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour—and perhaps never thought of in the old religion—I am more orthodox tha[n] to let a hethen Goddess be

so neglected” (Keats, in a long letter written over several months to George and Georgiana Keats in America, April 30, 1819).Return to reference 5

- Note 6: The moon, supervised by the goddess Phoebe (Diana).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, of worshipers.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, the trees shall stand, rank against rank, like layers of feathers.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, Cupid, god of love.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *verses*Return to reference °
- °: *wings*Return to reference °
- °: *evening star*Return to reference °
- °: *spirit-filled*Return to reference °
- °: *shining wings*Return to reference °
- °: *temple*Return to reference °
- °: *breezes*Return to reference °
- °: *wood nymphs*Return to reference °

On the Sonnet[1]

If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,
And, like Andromeda,[2] the sonnet sweet
Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness;
Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,
Sandals more interwoven and complete
To fit the naked foot of Poesy;
Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress
Of every chord,[3] and see what may be gain'd
By ear industrious, and attention meet;
Misers of sound and syllable, no less
Than Midas[4] of his coinage, let us be
Jealous of dead leaves in the bay-wreath crown;
So, if we may not let the Muse be free,
She will be bound with garlands of her own.

Apr. 1819 1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: In a letter including this sonnet, Keats wrote that "I have been endeavouring to discover a better sonnet stanza than we have," objecting especially to the "pouncing rhymes" of the Petrarchan form and the inevitable tick of the closing couplet in the Shakespearean stanza. This poem displays some of Keats's experimentation with conventional sonnet patterns.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Andromeda was chained to a rock in order to placate a sea monster, but was rescued by Perseus.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lyre-string.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: King Midas was granted his wish that all he touched should turn to gold.Return to reference 4

Ode to a Nightingale[1]

1

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
  My sense, as though of hemlock[2] I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
  One minute past, and Lethe[3]-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
  But being too happy in thine happiness,—
    That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
      In some melodious plot
  Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
    Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

2

O, for a draught of vintage![°] that hath been
  Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora[4] and the country green,
  Dance, and Provençal song,[5] and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
  Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,[6]
    With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
      And purple-stained mouth;
  That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
    And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

3

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
  What thou among the leaves hast never known,

The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;[7]
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

4

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,[8]
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;°
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous° glooms and winding mossy ways.

5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed° darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;[9]
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,

The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

6

Darkling° I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused° rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem° become a sod.

7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:°
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth,[1] when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;°
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements,° opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

8

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy[2] cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem° fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

May 1819 1819

Endnotes

- Note 1: Charles Brown, with whom Keats was then living in Hampstead, wrote: "In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass plot under a plum tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A poisonous herb, not the North American evergreen tree; a sedative if taken in small doses.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: River in Hades whose waters cause forgetfulness.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Roman goddess of flowers or the flowers themselves.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Provence, in southern France, was in the late Middle Ages renowned for its troubadours—writers and singers of love songs.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fountain of the muses on Mount Helicon, hence the waters of inspiration, here applied metaphorically to a beaker of wine.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Keats's brother Tom, wasted by tuberculosis, had died the preceding winter.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, by getting drunk not on wine (the "vintage" of stanza 2) but on the invisible ("viewless") wings of the poetic

imagination. (Bacchus, god of wine, was sometimes represented in a chariot drawn by "pards"—leopards.)Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Sweetbrier or honeysuckle.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The young widow in the biblical Book of Ruth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, imagination, "the viewless wings of Poesy" of line 33.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *wine*Return to reference °
- °: *fairies*Return to reference °
- °: *green-foliaged*Return to reference °
- °: *perfumed*Return to reference °
- °: *in darkness*Return to reference °
- °: *meditated*Return to reference °
- °: *mass for the dead*Return to reference °
- °: *peasant*Return to reference °
- °: *wheat*Return to reference °
- °: *windows*Return to reference °
- °: *hymn*Return to reference °

Ode on a Grecian Urn[1]

1

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
  Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan[2] historian, who canst thus express
  A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
  Of deities or mortals, or of both,
    In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?[3]
  What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
    What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

2

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
  Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear,[4] but, more endear'd,
  Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
  Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
    Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
    She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
  For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

3

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
  Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;

And, happy melodist, unwearied,
  For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
  For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
    For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
  That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
    A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

4

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
  To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
  And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
  Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
    Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
  Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
    Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

5

O Attic[5] shape! Fair attitude![6] with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,[7]
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
  Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
  When old age shall this generation waste,
    Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
  Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"[8]—that is all
    Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Another poem that Keats published in Haydon's *Annals of the Fine Arts.* This urn, with its sculptured reliefs of revelry and panting young lovers in chase and in flight, of a pastoral piper under spring foliage, and of the quiet procession of priest and townspeople, resembles parts of various vases, sculptures, and paintings, but it existed in all its particulars only in Keats's imagination. In the urn—which captures moments of intense experience in attitudes of grace and immobilizes them in marble—Keats found the perfect correlative for his concern with the longing for permanence in a world of change. The interpretation of the details with which he develops this
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Rustic, representing a woodland scene.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The valleys of Arcadia, a state in ancient Greece often used as a symbol of the pastoral ideal. Tempe is a beautiful valley in Greece that has come to represent rural beauty.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The ear of sense (as opposed to that of the "spirit," or imagination).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Greek. Attica was the region of Greece in which Athens was located.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Probably used in its early, technical sense: the pose struck by a figure in statuary or painting.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Ornamented all over ("overwrought") with an interwoven pattern ("brede"). The adjective "overwrought" might also modify "maidens" and even "men" and so hint at the emotional anguish of the figures portrayed on the urn.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  The quotation marks around this phrase are found in the volume of poems Keats published in 1820, but there are no

quotation marks in the version printed in *Annals of the Fine Ar* that same year or in the transcripts of the poem made by Keats's friends. This discrepancy has multiplied the diversity of critical interpretations of the last two lines. Critics disagree whether the whole of these lines is said by the urn, or "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" by the urn and the rest by the lyric speaker; whether the "ye" in the last line is addressed to the lyric speaker, to the readers, to the urn, or to the figures on th urn; whether "all ye know" is that beauty is truth, or this plus

Return to reference 8

Ode on Melancholy This is Keats's best-known statement of his recurrent theme of the mingled contrarieties of life. The remarkable last stanza, in which Melancholy becomes a veiled goddess worshiped in secret religious rites, implies that it is the tragic human destiny that beauty, joy, and life itself owe not only their quality but their value to the fact that they are transitory and turn into their opposites. Melancholy—a synonym for depression, involving a paralyzing self-consciousness engendered by an excess of thought—is a highly literary and even bookish ailment, as Keats knew. Shakespeare's Hamlet and Milton's speaker in "II Penseroso" are the disorder's most famous sufferers. Keats was also an admirer of Robert Burton's encyclopedic *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621).

The ode once had the following first stanza, which Keats canceled in manuscript:

Though you should build a bark of dead men's
bones,
And rear a phantom gibbet for a mast,
Stitch creeds together for a sail, with groans
To fill it out, bloodstained and aghast;
Although your rudder be a Dragon's tail,
Long sever'd, yet still hard with agony,
Your cordage large uprootings from the skull
Of bald Medusa: certes you would fail
To find the Melancholy, whether she
Dreameth in any isle of Lethe dull.

Ode on Melancholy

1

No, no, go not to Lethe,[1] neither twist
  Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
  By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;[2]
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,[3]
  Nor let the beetle,[4] nor the death-moth be
    Your mournful Psyche,[5] nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;°
  For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
    And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.[6]

2

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
  Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
  And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
  Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
    Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
  Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
    And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

3

She[7] dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
  And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips

Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;[8]
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.[9]

1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1: The waters of forgetfulness in Hades.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The wife of Pluto and queen of the underworld. "Nightshade" and "wolf's-bane" (line 2) are poisonous plants.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A symbol of death.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A reference to replicas of the large black beetle, the scarab, which were often placed by Egyptians in their tombs as a symbol of resurrection.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In ancient times Psyche (the soul) was sometimes represented as a butterfly or moth, fluttering out of the mouth of a dying man. The allusion may also be to the death's-head moth, which has skull-like markings on its back.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, sorrow needs contrast to sustain its intensity.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Usually taken to refer to Melancholy rather than to "thy mistress" in line 18.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Sensitive, refined.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A reference to the Greek and Roman practice of hanging trophies in the temples of the gods.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *secret rituals*Return to reference °

Ode on Indolence[1]

"They toil not, neither do they spin."[2]

1

One morn before me were three figures seen,
With bowed necks, and joined hands, side-faced;
And one behind the other stepp'd serene,
In placid sandals, and in white robes graced:
They pass'd, like figures on a marble urn,
When shifted round to see the other side;
They came again: as when the urn once more
Is shifted round, the first seen shades return;
And they were strange to me, as may betide
With vases, to one deep in Phidian[3] lore.

2

How is it, shadows, that I knew ye not?
How came ye muffled in so hush a masque?
Was it a silent deep-disguised plot
To steal away, and leave without a task
My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour;
The blissful cloud of summer-indolence
Benumb'd my eyes; my pulse grew less and less;
Pain had no sting, and pleasure's wreath no flower.
O, why did ye not melt, and leave my sense
Unhaunted quite of all but—nothingness?

3

A third time pass'd they by, and, passing, turn'd
  Each one the face a moment whiles to me;
Then faded, and to follow them I burn'd
  And ached for wings, because I knew the three:
The first was a fair maid, and Love her name;
  The second was Ambition, pale of cheek,
    And ever watchful with fatigued eye;
The last, whom I love more, the more of blame
  Is heap'd upon her, maiden most unmeek,—
    I knew to be my demon[4] Poesy.

4

They faded, and, forsooth! I wanted wings:
  O folly! What is Love? and where is it?
And for that poor Ambition—it springs
  From a man's little heart's short fever-fit;
For Poesy!—no,—she has not a joy,—
  At least for me,—so sweet as drowsy noons,
    And evenings steep'd in honied indolence;
O, for an age so shelter'd from annoy,
  That I may never know how change the moons,
    Or hear the voice of busy common-sense!

5

A third time came they by;—alas! wherefore?
  My sleep had been embroider'd with dim dreams;
My soul had been a lawn besprinkled o'er
  With flowers, and stirring shades, and baffled
  beams:
The morn was clouded, but no shower fell,
  Though in her lids hung the sweet tears of May;
    The open casement° press'd a new-leaved vine,
  Let in the budding warmth and throstle's lay;°

O shadows! 'twas a time to bid farewell!
Upon your skirts had fallen no tears of mine.

6

So, ye three ghosts, adieu! Ye cannot raise
My head cool-bedded in the flowery grass;
For I would not be dieted with praise,
A pet-lamb in a sentimental farce![5]
Fade softly from my eyes, and be once more
In masque-like figures on the dreamy urn;
Farewell! I yet have visions for the night,
And for the day faint visions there is store;
Vanish, ye phantoms, from my idle spright,°
Into the clouds, and never more return!

Spring 1819 1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: On March 19, 1819, Keats wrote to George and Georgiana Keats: "This morning I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless. . . . Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me: they seem rather like three figures on a greek vase —a Man and two women—whom no one but myself could distinguish in their disguisement. This is the only happiness; and is a rare instance of advantage in the body overpowering the Mind." The ode was probably written soon after this time, but was not published until 1848, long after the poet's death.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Matthew 6:28. Christ's comment on the lilies of the field —a parable justifying those who trust to God rather than worry about how they will feed or clothe themselves.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Phidias was the great Athenian sculptor of the 5th century B.C.E. who designed the marble sculptures for the

Parthenon.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Meaning both devil and, as in Greek myth, the spirit that attends constantly on the human individual.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In a letter of June 9, 1819, Keats wrote: "I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing; both from the overpowering idea of our dead poets and from abatement of my love of fame. I hope I am a little more of a Philosopher than I was, consequently a little less of a versifying Pet-lamb. . . . You will judge of my 1819 temper when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year has been writing an ode to Indolence."Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *window*Return to reference °
- °: *thrush's song*Return to reference °
- °: *spirit*Return to reference °

Lamia In a note printed at the end of the poem, Keats cited as his source the following story in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621):

> One Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth. . . . The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus's gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece.

In ancient demonology a lamia was a monster in woman's form who preyed on human beings. Several passages of Keats's romance seem, however, to call on readers to sympathize with this monster, as one might with Coleridge's Geraldine or Landon's Fairy of the Fountains. In the contest between Lamia and Apollonius it is hard to know what side to take.

The poem, written between late June and early September 1819, is a return, after the Spenserian stanzas of *The Eve of St. Agnes*, to the pentameter couplets Keats had used in *Endymion* and other early poems. Keats's friends Charles Armitage Brown and Richard

Woodhouse commented in letters on how *Lamia* was influenced by the characteristic meter of the Restoration poet John Dryden.

Lamia

Part 1

Upon a time, before the faery broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr[1] from the prosperous woods,
Before King Oberon's bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns
From rushes green, and brakes,° and cowslip'd lawns,[2]
The ever-smitten Hermes[3] empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons[4] poured
Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored.
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,°
And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose.
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.[5]

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,

And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret bed:
In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake!
When move in a sweet body fit for life,
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!"
The God, dove-footed,[6] glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant[7] in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian[8] shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,°
Eyed like a peacock,[9] and all crimson barr'd;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed
Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries,
She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish° fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:[1]
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls[2] complete:

And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.[3]
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus; while Hermes on his pinions° lay,
Like a stoop'd falcon[4] ere he takes his prey.

"Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,
I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear,
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moan.
I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart,[5]
Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?"
Whereat the star of Lethe[6] not delay'd
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:
"Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired!
Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
Where she doth breathe!" "Bright planet, thou hast said,"
Return'd the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"
"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"

Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green,
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
And by my power is her beauty veil'd
To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus'[7] sighs.
Pale grew her immortality, for woe
Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
I took compassion on her, bade her steep
Her hair in weïrd° syrops, that would keep
Her loveliness invisible, yet free
To wander as she loves, in liberty.
Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.[8]
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean[9] head,
Blush'd a live damask,[1] and swift-lisping said,
"I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now."
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,

She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
It was no dream; or say a dream it was,
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem
Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd;
Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd
To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lythe Caducean charm.[2]
So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,
Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour:
But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland,°
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees.°
Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent,°
Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear,
Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colours all inflam'd throughout her train,
She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took the place

Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;[3]
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;[4]
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent:° of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown; that vanish'd, also she
Melted and disappear'd as suddenly;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, "Lycius! gentle Lycius!"—Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar°
These words dissolv'd: Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore;[5]
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peæran rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned[6]
To see herself escap'd from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea°

Spread a green kirtle° to the minstrelsy:
A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counterchange;[7]
Intrigue with the specious chaos,[8] and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,°
And kept his rosy terms[9] in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so fairily
By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list,° strange or magnificent:
How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium,[1] or where
Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids[2] fair
Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine°
Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line.[3]
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,

To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow
In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
Jove heard his vows, and better'd his desire;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades.[4]
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he pass'd, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes
Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white
Turn'd—syllabling thus, "Ah, Lycius bright,
And will you leave me on the hills alone?
Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown."
He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;[5]
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long:
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore;

Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure:
"Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
For pity do not this sad heart belie°—
Even as thou vanishest so I shall die.
Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
Alone they can drink up the morning rain:
Though a descended Pleiad,[6] will not one
Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine?
So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine
Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
Thy memory will waste me to a shade:—
For pity do not melt!"—"If I should stay,"
Said Lamia, "here, upon this floor of clay,
And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
What canst thou say or do of charm enough
To dull the nice[7] remembrance of my home?
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
Empty of immortality and bliss!
Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
That finer spirits cannot breathe below
In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,
What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
My essence? What serener palaces,
Where I may all my many senses please,
And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts
  appease?
It cannot be—Adieu!" So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swoon'd, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.

The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,°
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh:
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their
panting fires.
And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguish'd days,
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retir'd, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by,
Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before
The Adonian feast;[8] whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she
adore?
Lycius from death awoke into amaze,

To see her still, and singing so sweet lays;
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well;
And every word she spake entic'd him on
To unperplex'd delight[9] and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris,[1] Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's pebbles[2] or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright,
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh;
And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprized.[3]
They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,[4]
Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,

Companion'd or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade
Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near
With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,
Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he,
"Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?
Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"—
"I'm wearied," said fair Lamia: "tell me who
Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you blind
Yourself from his quick eyes?" Lycius replied,
" 'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams."

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
Mild as a star in water; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Æolian[5]
Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone,

And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets: none knew where
They could inhabit; the most curious
Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house:
And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Nymphs and satyrs—like the dryads and fauns in line 5—were minor classical deities of the woods and fields, said here to have been driven off by Oberon, king of the fairies, who were supernatural beings of the postclassical era.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Cowslips are primroses, here blooming amid the grass.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Or Mercury; wing-footed messenger at the summons of Jove (line 11), Hermes was notoriously amorous.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Minor sea gods.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, the curls clung jealously to his bare shoulders. This line is the first of a number of Alexandrines, a six-foot line, used to vary the metrical movement—a device that Keats learned from Dryden. Another such device is the triplet, occurring first in lines 61–63.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, quietly as a dove.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Lying in a circular coil. Keats borrows the language of heraldry.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Intricately twisted, like the knot tied by King Gordius, which no one could undo.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Having multicolored spots, like the "eyes" in a peacock's tail.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Ariadne's jeweled wedding crown, or tiara ("tiar"), was given to her by the god Bacchus, who took her as his wife after she was abandoned by her faithless mortal lover Theseus. The crown, transformed into a constellation of stars in the sky, is represented in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne*, which Keats had seen when the painting was exhibited in London in 1816. Keats's memories of this painting may also inform his reference to Bacchus's chariot and leopards in "Ode to a Nightingale," line 32.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Pearls" had become almost a synonym for teeth in Elizabethan love poems.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Proserpine had been carried off to Hades by Pluto from the field of Enna, in Sicily.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: *Stoop* is the term for the plunge of a falcon on his prey.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A ray of Phoebus Apollo, god of the sun.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Hermes, when he appeared like a star on the banks of Lethe, in the darkness of Hades. (One of Hermes' offices was to guide the souls of the dead to the lower regions.)Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Satyr, a tutor of Bacchus, usually represented as a fat, jolly drunkard.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Either "like a psalm" or "like the sound of the psaltery" (an ancient stringed instrument).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Like that of Circe, the enchantress in the *Odyssey.*Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The color of a damask rose (large and fragrant pink rose). Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, put to the test the magic of the flexible Caduceus (the name given to Hermes' wand).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, the yellow of sulfur (thrown up by a volcano) replaced her former silvery moon color.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Embroidery, interwoven pattern. "Mail": interlinked rings, as in a coat of armor.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Cenchrea (Keats's "Cenchreas") was a harbor of Corinth, in southern Greece.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Felt intense excitement.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, of knowledgeable ("sciential") brain to disentangle ("unperplex") bliss from its closely related pain, to define their quarreled-over ("pettish") limits, and to separate out ("estrange") their points of contact and the swift changes of each condition into its opposite. See Keats's "Ode on Melancholy," lines 21–26 (p. 974, above).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, turn to her own artful purpose the seeming ("specious") chaos.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The terms spent studying in "Cupid's college."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Region inhabited by the virtuous after death.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sea nymphs, of whom Thetis (line 208, the mother of Achilles) was one.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, columns made by Mulciber (Vulcan, god of fire and metalworking) gleam in long lines around open courts (piazzas).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, he was absorbed in musing about the obscurities of Plato's philosophy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As Orpheus looked at Eurydice in Hades. Orpheus was allowed by Pluto to lead Eurydice back to Earth on condition that he not look back at her, but he could not resist doing so and hence lost her once more.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: One of the seven sisters composing the constellation Pleiades. The lines that follow allude to the ancient belief that the planets traveled inside crystalline spheres whose movements produced heavenly music.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Detailed, minutely accurate.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The feast of Adonis, beloved by Venus.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, delight not mixed with its neighbor, pain (see line 192).Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Fairylike creatures in Persian mythology.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Descended from the pebbles with which, in Greek myth, Pyrrha and Deucalion repeopled the earth after the flood.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bound up, absorbed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Temples of Venus, whose worship sometimes involved ritual prostitution. The city of Corinth was notorious in antiquity as a site of commerce and prostitution.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Like sounds from the wind harp (Aeolus is god of winds), which responds musically to a current of air.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *thickets*Return to reference °
- °: *accustomed*Return to reference °
- °: *leopard*Return to reference °
- °: *rather dark*Return to reference °
- °: *wings*Return to reference °
- °: *magical*Return to reference °
- °: *softly*Return to reference °
- °: *dregs*Return to reference °
- °: *sprinkled*Return to reference °
- °: *silvery red*Return to reference °
- °: *white*Return to reference °
- °: *meadow*Return to reference °
- °: *gown*Return to reference °
- °: *unspoiled*Return to reference °
- °: *wished*Return to reference °
- °: *palatial*Return to reference °
- °: *betray*Return to reference °
- °: *pleasure*Return to reference °

Part 2

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:—
That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,
Or clench'd it quite: but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.
Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tythe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost slept;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harbour'd in

That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn°
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery°
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing
bell.°
"Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whisper'd he:
"Why do you think?" return'd she tenderly:
"You have deserted me;—where am I now?
Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
No, no, you have dismiss'd me; and I go
From your breast houseless: ay, it must be so."
He answer'd, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirror'd small in paradise,
"My silver planet, both of eve and morn![6]
Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?
Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.[7]
My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abash'd withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
While through the thronged streets your bridal car°
Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's cheek

Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
"Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
Or friends or kinsfolk on the citied earth,
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?"
"I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one;
My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
Even as you list° invite your many guests;
But if, as now it seems, your vision rests

With any pleasure on me, do not bid
Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid.”
Lycius, perplex’d at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betray’d.

It was the custom then to bring away,
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veil’d, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone,
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but ’tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honour of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branch’d one to one
All down the aisled place; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
So canopied, lay an untasted feast

Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Mission'd her viewless° servants to enrich
The fretted[8] splendour of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper pannels; then, anon, there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful° guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appeared, and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,
And show to common eyes these secret bowers?
The herd approach'd; each guest, with busy brain,
Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain,°
And enter'd marveling: for they knew the street,
Remember'd it from childhood all complete
Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne;°
So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen:
Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere;
'Twas Apollonius: something too he laugh'd,
As though some knotty problem, that had daft°
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt:—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. " 'Tis no common rule,
Lycius," said he, "for uninvited guest

To force himself upon you, and infest
With an unbidden presence the bright throng
Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong,
And you forgive me." Lycius blush'd, and led
The old man through the inner doors broad-spread;
With reconciling words and courteous mien°
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's° spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume:
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft
Wool-woofed° carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose
Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast rear'd
On libbard's° paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn,[9] and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antichamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd,
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet°
Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth
could spring.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments:—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendour of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.

Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright:
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent,
In baskets of bright osier'd[1] gold were brought
High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
What for the sage, old Apollonius?
Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;[2]
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyrsus,[3] that his watching eyes may swim
Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,
Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?[4]

There was an awful° rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine[5]—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look
'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge° him. The bald-head philosopher
Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.
Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins;
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
"Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?
Know'st thou that man?" Poor Lamia answer'd not.
He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot
Own'd° they the lovelorn piteous appeal:
More, more he gaz'd: his human senses reel:
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
There was no recognition in those orbs.
"Lamia!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;

The myrtle[6] sicken'd in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seem'd a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
"Lamia!" he shriek'd; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
"Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
Wander'd on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illume
The deep-recessed vision:—all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
"Shut, shut those juggling[7] eyes, thou ruthless man!
Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn
Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
Of conscience, for their long offended might,
For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
Corinthians! look upon that gray-beard wretch!
Mark how, possess'd, his lashless eyelids stretch
Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!
My sweet bride withers at their potency."
"Fool!" said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
From Lycius answer'd, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor mov'd; "from every ill
Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"

Then Lamia breath'd death breath; the sophist's eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perceant,° stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motion'd him to be silent; vainly so,
He look'd and look'd again a level—No!
"A Serpent!" echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

July–Aug. 1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 6: The planet Venus, which is both the morning and the evening star.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Playfully: "You see how great your troubles were!"Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Adorned with fretwork (interlaced patterns).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The horn of plenty, overflowing with the products of Ceres, goddess of grain.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Plaited. An "osier" is a strip of willow used in weaving baskets.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A fern whose spikes resemble a serpent's tongue.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The vine-covered staff of Bacchus, used to signify drunkenness.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the sense of "natural philosophy," or science. Benjamin Haydon tells in his *Autobiography* how, at a hard-drinking and high-spirited dinner party, Keats had agreed with Charles Lamb (to what extent jokingly, it is not clear) that

Newton's *Optics* "had destroyed all the poetry of the rainbow by reducing it to the prismatic colors."Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Gnomes were guardians of mines.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Sacred to Venus, hence an emblem of love.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Deceiving, full of trickery.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *boundary*Return to reference °
- °: *empire*Return to reference °
- °: *death knell*Return to reference °
- °: *chariot*Return to reference °
- °: *choose*Return to reference °
- °: *invisible*Return to reference °
- °: *terrifying*Return to reference °
- °: *intently*Return to reference °
- °: *estate*Return to reference °
- °: *baffled*Return to reference °
- °: *appearance*Return to reference °
- °: *scholar's*Return to reference °
- °: *woven*Return to reference °
- °: *leopard's*Return to reference °
- °: *suitable*Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °
- °: *drink a toast to* Return to reference °
- °: *acknowledged*Return to reference °
- °: *piercing*Return to reference °

To Autumn[1]

1

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

2

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing[2] wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook[°]
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows,° borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;°
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;[3]
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Sept. 19, 1819 1820

Endnotes

- Note 1: Two days after this ode was composed, Keats wrote to J. H. Reynolds: "I never liked stubble fields so much as now—Aye, better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm—in the same way that some pictures look warm—this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: To "winnow" is to fan the chaff from the grain.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An enclosed plot of farmland.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *scythe*Return to reference °
- °: *willows*Return to reference °
- °: *region*Return to reference °

The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream Late in 1818, while he was serving as nurse to his dying brother Tom, Keats planned to undertake an epic poem, modeled on *Paradise Lost*, that he called *Hyperion.* Greek mythology gave Keats its subject—the displacement of Saturn and his fellow Titans by a new generation of gods, Zeus and the other Olympians. But in engaging this topic Keats addressed the epic question at the center of *Paradise Lost*: how did evil come into the world and why? The Titans had been fair and benign gods, and their rule had been a golden age of happiness. Yet at the beginning of the poem all the Titans except Hyperion, god of the sun, have been dethroned; and the uncomprehending Saturn again and again raises the question of how this injustice could have come to be.

In book 3 of the original *Hyperion*, the scenes among the Titans are supplemented by the experience of the Olympian Apollo, still a youth but destined to displace Hyperion as the sun god among the heavenly powers. He lives in "aching ignorance" of the universe and its processes but thirsts for knowledge. Suddenly Apollo reads in the face of his tutor Mnemosyne—goddess of memory, who will be mother of the Muses and so of all the arts—the silent record of the defeat of the Titans and at once soars to the knowledge that he seeks. Apollo cries out:

> Knowledge enormous makes a God of me.
> Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,
> Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
> Creations and destroyings, all at once
> Pour into the wide hollows of my brain,
> And deify me. . . .

This opening out of Apollo's awareness to the tragic nature of life is what the Titans lacked. As the fragment breaks off, Apollo is transfigured—not only into one who has earned the right to displace Hyperion as god of the sun, but also into the god of the highest poetry.

Keats abandoned this extraordinary fragment in April 1819. Late that summer, however, he took up the theme again, under the title *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream.* This time his primary model is Dante. In Dante's *Divine Comedy* all the narrated events are represented as a vision granted to the poet. In the same way, Keats begins *The Fall of Hyperion* with a frame story whose central event is that the poet-protagonist, in a dream, falls from a paradisal landscape into a wasteland and there earns the right to a vision. That vision reincorporates the events narrated in the first *Hyperion*: Moneta (her Latin name suggests "the Admonisher"), who stands in the same relationship to the poet as, in the earlier tale, Mnemosyne stood to Apollo, permits, or challenges, this protagonist to remember, with her, her own memories of the fall of the Titans. By devising this frame story, Keats shifted his center of poetic concern from the narration of epic action to an account of the evolving consciousness of the epic poet.

Keats abandoned this attempt at *The Fall of Hyperion* at the sixty-first line of the second canto. (A fragment was published, against his wishes, in his 1820 volume of poems.) He wrote to Reynolds on September 21, 1819:

> I have given up Hyperion. . . . Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful or rather artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations.

In the same letter Keats mentions having composed two days earlier the ode "To Autumn." In this, the poet had envisaged the circumstance of the cycle of life and death, and had articulated his experience in his own poetic voice.

The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream

Canto 1

Fanatics have their dreams, wherewith they weave
A paradise for a sect; the savage too
From forth the loftiest fashion of his sleep
Guesses at heaven: pity these have not
Trac'd upon vellum° or wild Indian leaf
The shadows of melodious utterance.
But bare of laurel[1] they live, dream, and die;
For Poesy alone can tell her dreams,
With the fine spell of words alone can save
Imagination from the sable charm
And dumb° enchantment. Who alive can say
"Thou art no poet; mayst not tell thy dreams"?
Since every man whose soul is not a clod
Hath visions, and would speak, if he had lov'd
And been well nurtured in his mother tongue.
Whether the dream now purposed to rehearse
Be poet's or fanatic's will be known
When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave.

Methought I stood where trees of every clime,
Palm, myrtle, oak, and sycamore, and beech,
With plantane, and spice blossoms, made a screen;
In neighbourhood of fountains, by the noise
Soft showering in mine ears, and, by the touch
Of scent, not far from roses. Turning round,
I saw an arbour with a drooping roof
Of trellis vines, and bells, and larger blooms,
Like floral-censers swinging light in air;
Before its wreathed doorway, on a mound

Of moss, was spread a feast of summer fruits,
Which, nearer seen, seem'd refuse of a meal
By angel tasted, or our mother Eve;[2]
For empty shells were scattered on the grass,
And grape stalks but half bare, and remnants more,
Sweet smelling, whose pure kinds I could not know.
Still was more plenty than the fabled horn[3]
Thrice emptied could pour forth, at banqueting
For Proserpine return'd to her own fields,[4]
Where the white heifers low. And appetite
More yearning than on earth I ever felt
Growing within, I ate deliciously;
And, after not long, thirsted, for thereby
Stood a cool vessel of transparent juice,
Sipp'd by the wander'd bee, the which I took,
And, pledging all the mortals of the world,
And all the dead whose names are in our lips,
Drank. That full draught is parent of my theme.[5]
No Asian poppy,° nor elixir fine
Of the soon fading jealous caliphat;[6]
No poison gender'd in close monkish cell
To thin the scarlet conclave of old men,[7]
Could so have rapt unwilling life away.
Among the fragrant husks and berries crush'd,
Upon the grass I struggled hard against
The domineering potion; but in vain:
The cloudy swoon came on, and down I sunk
Like a Silenus[8] on an antique vase.
How long I slumber'd 'tis a chance to guess.
When sense of life return'd, I started up
As if with wings; but the fair trees were gone,
The mossy mound and arbour were no more;
I look'd around upon the carved sides
Of an old sanctuary with roof august,
Builded so high, it seem'd that filmed clouds

Might spread beneath, as o'er the stars of heaven;
So old the place was, I remembered none
The like upon the earth; what I had seen
Of grey cathedrals, buttress'd walls, rent towers,
The superannuations° of sunk realms,
Or nature's rocks toil'd hard in waves and winds,
Seem'd but the faulture° of decrepit things
To° that eternal domed monument.
Upon the marble at my feet there lay
Store of strange vessels, and large draperies,
Which needs had been of dyed asbestus wove,
Or in that place the moth could not corrupt,[9]
So white the linen; so, in some, distinct
Ran imageries from a sombre loom.
All in a mingled heap confus'd there lay
Robes, golden tongs, censer, and chafing dish,
Girdles, and chains, and holy jewelries.[1]

Turning from these with awe, once more I rais'd
My eyes to fathom the space every way;
The embossed roof, the silent massy range
Of columns north and south, ending in mist
Of nothing, then to eastward, where black gates
Were shut against the sunrise evermore.
Then to the west I look'd, and saw far off
An image, huge of feature as a cloud,
At level of whose feet an altar slept,
To be approach'd on either side by steps,
And marble balustrade,° and patient travail
To count with toil the innumerable degrees.
Towards the altar sober-pac'd I went,
Repressing haste, as too unholy there;
And, coming nearer, saw beside the shrine
One minist'ring;[2] and there arose a flame.
When in mid-May the sickening east wind

Shifts sudden to the south, the small warm rain
Melts out the frozen incense from all flowers,
And fills the air with so much pleasant health
That even the dying man forgets his shroud;
Even so that lofty sacrificial fire,
Sending forth Maian[3] incense, spread around
Forgetfulness of every thing but bliss,
And clouded all the altar with soft smoke,
From whose white fragrant curtains thus I heard
Language pronounc'd. "If thou canst not ascend
These steps,[4] die on that marble where thou art.
Thy flesh, near cousin to the common dust,
Will parch for lack of nutriment—thy bones
Will wither in few years, and vanish so
That not the quickest eye could find a grain
Of what thou now art on that pavement cold.
The sands of thy short life are spent this hour,
And no hand in the universe can turn
Thy hour glass, if these gummed° leaves be burnt
Ere thou canst mount up these immortal steps."
I heard, I look'd: two senses both at once
So fine, so subtle, felt the tyranny
Of that fierce threat, and the hard task proposed.
Prodigious seem'd the toil; the leaves were yet
Burning,—when suddenly a palsied chill
Struck from the paved level up my limbs,
And was ascending quick to put cold grasp
Upon those streams° that pulse beside the throat:
I shriek'd; and the sharp anguish of my shriek
Stung my own ears—I strove hard to escape
The numbness; strove to gain the lowest step.
Slow, heavy, deadly was my pace: the cold
Grew stifling, suffocating, at the heart;
And when I clasp'd my hands I felt them not.
One minute before death, my iced foot touch'd

The lowest stair; and as it touch'd, life seem'd
To pour in at the toes: I mounted up,
As once fair angels on a ladder flew
From the green turf to heaven.[5]—"Holy Power,"
Cried I, approaching near the horned shrine,[6]
"What am I that should so be sav'd from death?
What am I that another death come not
To choke my utterance sacrilegious here?"
Then said the veiled shadow—"Thou hast felt
What 'tis to die and live again before
Thy fated hour. That thou hadst power to do so
Is thy own safety; thou hast dated on
Thy doom."[7]—"High Prophetess," said I, "purge off
Benign, if so it please thee, my mind's film."[8]
"None can usurp this height," return'd that shade,
"But those to whom the miseries of the world
Are misery, and will not let them rest.
All else who find a haven in the world,
Where they may thoughtless sleep away their days,
If by a chance into this fane° they come,
Rot on the pavement where thou rotted'st half."[9]—
"Are there not thousands in the world," said I,
Encourag'd by the sooth[1] voice of the shade,
"Who love their fellows even to the death;
Who feel the giant agony of the world;
And more, like slaves to poor humanity,
Labour for mortal good? I sure should see
Other men here: but I am here alone."
"They whom thou spak'st of are no vision'ries,"
Rejoin'd that voice—"They are no dreamers weak,
They seek no wonder but the human face;
No music but a happy-noted voice—
They come not here, they have no thought to come
—
And thou art here, for thou art less than they.

What benefit canst thou do, or all thy tribe,
To the great world? Thou art a dreaming thing;
A fever of thyself—think of the earth;
What bliss even in hope is there° for thee?
What haven? Every creature hath its home;
Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
Whether his labours be sublime or low—
The pain alone; the joy alone; distinct:
Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woe than all his sins deserve.
Therefore, that happiness be somewhat shar'd,
Such things as thou art are admitted oft
Into like gardens thou didst pass erewhile,
And suffer'd in° these temples; for that cause
Thou standest safe beneath this statue's knees."
"That I am favored for unworthiness,
By such propitious parley medicin'd
In sickness not ignoble, I rejoice,
Aye, and could weep for love of such award."
So answer'd I, continuing, "If it please,
Majestic shadow, tell me: sure not all[2]
Those melodies sung into the world's ear
Are useless: sure a poet is a sage;
A humanist, physician to all men.
That I am none I feel, as vultures feel
They are no birds when eagles are abroad.
What am I then? Thou spakest of my tribe:
What tribe?"—The tall shade veil'd in drooping white
Then spake, so much more earnest, that the breath
Mov'd the thin linen folds that drooping hung
About a golden censer from the hand
Pendent.—"Art thou not of the dreamer tribe?
The poet and the dreamer are distinct,
Diverse, sheer opposite, antipodes.
The one pours out a balm upon the world,

The other vexes it." Then shouted I
Spite of myself, and with a Pythia's spleen,[3]
"Apollo! faded, far flown Apollo!
Where is thy misty pestilence[4] to creep
Into the dwellings, through the door crannies,
Of all mock lyrists, large self worshipers,
And careless hectorers in proud bad verse.[5]
Though I breathe death with them it will be life
To see them sprawl before me into graves.[6]
Majestic shadow, tell me where I am:
Whose altar this; for whom this incense curls:
What image this, whose face I cannot see,
For the broad marble knees; and who thou art,
Of accent feminine, so courteous."
Then the tall shade in drooping linens veil'd
Spake out, so much more earnest, that her breath
Stirr'd the thin folds of gauze that drooping hung
About a golden censer from her hand
Pendent; and by her voice I knew she shed
Long treasured tears. "This temple sad and lone
Is all spar'd from the thunder of a war
Foughten long since by giant hierarchy
Against rebellion: this old image here,
Whose carved features wrinkled as he fell,
Is Saturn's;[7] I, Moneta, left supreme
Sole priestess of his desolation."—
I had no words to answer; for my tongue,
Useless, could find about its roofed home
No syllable of a fit majesty
To make rejoinder to Moneta's mourn.
There was a silence while the altar's blaze
Was fainting for sweet food: I look'd thereon
And on the paved floor, where nigh were pil'd
Faggots of cinnamon, and many heaps
Of other crisped spice-wood—then again

I look'd upon the altar and its horns
Whiten'd with ashes, and its lang'rous flame,
And then upon the offerings again;
And so by turns—till sad Moneta cried,
"The sacrifice is done, but not the less
Will I be kind to thee for thy good will.
My power, which to me is still a curse,
Shall be to thee a wonder; for the scenes
Still swooning vivid through my globed brain
With an electral changing misery
Thou shalt with those dull mortal eyes behold,
Free from all pain, if wonder pain thee not."
As near as an immortal's sphered words
Could to a mother's soften, were these last:
But yet I had a terror of her robes,
And chiefly of the veils, that from her brow
Hung pale, and curtain'd her in mysteries
That made my heart too small to hold its blood.
This saw that Goddess, and with sacred hand
Parted the veils. Then saw I a wan face,
Not pin'd° by human sorrows, but bright blanch'd
By an immortal sickness which kills not;
It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had pass'd
The lily and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face—
But for her eyes I should have fled away.
They held me back, with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half closed, and visionless° entire they seem'd
Of all external things—they saw me not,
But in blank splendor beam'd like the mild moon,
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
What eyes are upward cast. As I had found
A grain of gold upon a mountain's side,

And twing'd with avarice strain'd out my eyes
To search its sullen entrails rich with ore,
So at the view of sad Moneta's brow,
I ached to see what things the hollow brain
Behind enwombed: what high tragedy
In the dark secret chambers of her skull
Was acting, that could give so dread a stress
To her cold lips, and fill with such a light
Her planetary eyes; and touch her voice
With such a sorrow. "Shade of Memory!"
Cried I, with act adorant at her feet,
"By all the gloom hung round thy fallen house,
By this last temple, by the golden age,
By great Apollo, thy dear foster child,
And by thy self, forlorn divinity,
The pale Omega[8] of a wither'd race,
Let me behold, according as thou said'st,
What in thy brain so ferments to and fro."—
No sooner had this conjuration pass'd
My devout lips, than side by side we stood,
(Like a stunt bramble by a solemn pine)
Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,[9]
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star.
Onward I look'd beneath the gloomy boughs,
And saw, what first I thought an image huge,
Like to the image pedestal'd so high
In Saturn's temple. Then Moneta's voice
Came brief upon mine ear,—"So Saturn sat
When he had lost his realms."—Whereon there grew
A power within me of enormous ken,[°]
To see as a God sees, and take the depth
Of things as nimbly as the outward eye
Can size and shape pervade. The lofty theme
At those few words hung vast before my mind,

With half unravel'd web. I set myself
Upon an eagle's watch, that I might see,
And seeing ne'er forget. No stir of life
Was in this shrouded vale, not so much air
As in the zoning° of a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the deaf leaf fell there did it rest:
A stream went voiceless by, still deaden'd more
By reason of the fallen divinity
Spreading more shade: the Naiad° mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.
Along the margin sand large footmarks went
No farther than to where old Saturn's feet
Had rested, and there slept, how long a sleep!
Degraded, cold, upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unsceptred; and his realmless[1] eyes were clos'd,
While his bow'd head seem'd listening to the Earth,
His antient mother,[2] for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one who with a kindred hand
Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
Then came the griev'd voice of Mnemosyne,[3]
And griev'd I hearken'd. "That divinity
Whom thou saw'st step from yon forlornest wood,
And with slow pace approach our fallen King,
Is Thea,[4] softest-natur'd of our brood."
I mark'd the goddess in fair statuary
Surpassing wan Moneta by the head,[5]
And in her sorrow nearer woman's tears.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun;
As if the vanward clouds[6] of evil days

Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder labouring up.
One hand she press'd upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart; as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain;
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his hollow ear
Leaning, with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenor and deep organ tune;
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in this-like accenting; how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!—
"Saturn! look up—and for what, poor lost King?[7]
I have no comfort for thee, no—not one:
I cannot cry, *Wherefore thus sleepest thou?*
For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
Knows thee not, so afflicted, for a God;
And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre pass'd, and all the air
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
Thy thunder, captious° at the new command,
Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house;
And thy sharp lightning in unpracticed hands
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
With such remorseless speed still come new woes
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.[8]
Saturn, sleep on:—Me thoughtless,[9] why should I
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
Saturn, sleep on, while at thy feet I weep."

As when, upon a tranced summer night,
Forests, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,[1]
Dream, and so dream all night, without a noise,
Save from one gradual solitary gust,

Swelling upon the silence; dying off;
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words, and went; the while in tears
She press'd her fair large forehead to the earth,
Just where her fallen hair might spread in curls,
A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet.
Long, long, those two were postured motionless,
Like sculpture builded up upon the grave
Of their own power. A long awful time
I look'd upon them; still they were the same;
The frozen God still bending to the earth,
And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet;
Moneta silent. Without stay or prop
But my own weak mortality, I bore
The load of this eternal quietude,
The unchanging gloom, and the three fixed shapes
Ponderous upon my senses a whole moon.
For by my burning brain I measured sure
Her silver seasons shedded on the night,
And every day by day methought I grew
More gaunt and ghostly. Oftentimes I pray'd
Intense, that death would take me from the vale
And all its burthens. Gasping with despair
Of change, hour after hour I curs'd myself:
Until old Saturn rais'd his faded eyes,
And look'd around, and saw his kingdom gone,
And all the gloom and sorrow of the place,
And that fair kneeling Goddess at his feet.
As the moist scent of flowers, and grass, and leaves
Fills forest dells with a pervading air
Known to the woodland nostril, so the words
Of Saturn fill'd the mossy glooms around,
Even to the hollows of time-eaten oaks,
And to the windings in the foxes' hole,
With sad low tones, while thus he spake, and sent
Strange musings to the solitary Pan.

"Moan, brethren, moan; for we are swallow'd up
And buried from all godlike exercise
Of influence benign on planets pale,
And peaceful sway above man's harvesting,
And all those acts which deity supreme
Doth ease its heart of love in. Moan and wail.
Moan, brethren, moan; for lo! the rebel spheres
Spin round, the stars their antient courses keep,
Clouds still with shadowy moisture haunt the earth,
Still suck their fill of light from sun and moon,
Still buds the tree, and still the sea-shores murmur.
There is no death in all the universe,
No smell of death—there shall be death[2]—Moan,
moan,
Moan, Cybele,[3] moan, for thy pernicious babes
Have chang'd a God into a shaking palsy.
Moan, brethren, moan; for I have no strength left,
Weak as the reed—weak—feeble as my voice—
O, O, the pain, the pain of feebleness.
Moan, moan; for still I thaw—or give me help:
Throw down those imps[4] and give me victory.
Let me hear other groans, and trumpets blown
Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival
From the gold peaks of heaven's high piled clouds;
Voices of soft proclaim,° and silver stir
Of strings in hollow shells; and let there be
Beautiful things made new for the surprize
Of the sky children."—So he feebly ceas'd,
With such a poor and sickly sounding pause,
Methought I heard some old man of the earth
Bewailing earthly loss; nor could my eyes
And ears act with that pleasant unison of sense
Which marries sweet sound with the grace of form,
And dolorous accent from a tragic harp

With large limb'd visions.[5] More I scrutinized:
Still fix'd he sat beneath the sable trees,
Whose arms spread straggling in wild serpent forms,
With leaves all hush'd: his awful presence there
(Now all was silent) gave a deadly lie
To what I erewhile heard: only his lips
Trembled amid the white curls of his beard.
They told the truth, though, round, the snowy locks
Hung nobly, as upon the face of heaven
A midday fleece of clouds. Thea arose
And stretch'd her white arm through the hollow dark,
Pointing some whither: whereat he too rose
Like a vast giant seen by men at sea
To grow pale from the waves at dull midnight.[6]
They melted from my sight into the woods:
Ere I could turn, Moneta cried—"These twain
Are speeding to the families of grief,
Where roof'd in by black rocks they waste in pain
And darkness for no hope."—And she spake on,
As ye may read who can unwearied pass
Onward from the antichamber° of this dream,
Where even at the open doors awhile
I must delay, and glean my memory
Of her high phrase: perhaps no further dare.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The laurel, associated with Apollo, is the emblem of poetic fame.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In *Paradise Lost* 5.321ff. Eve serves the visiting angel Raphael with a meal of fruits and fruit juices.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The cornucopia, or horn of plenty.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: When Proserpine each year is released by her husband, Pluto, god of the underworld, for a sojourn on Earth, it is the

beginning of spring.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: The drink puts the poet to sleep and effects the dream within a dream that constitutes the remainder of the fragment.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A council of caliphs, Muslim rulers, who plot to kill each other with a poisonous drink ("elixir").Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The College of Cardinals. This scenario of poisoning, like the preceding Orientalist reference to intrigue among the caliphs, recalls a stock setting of the period's Gothic novels.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An elderly satyr, usually represented as drunk.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Matthew 6:20: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Offerings to the gods were spread on the floor of Greek temples.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Who identifies herself in line 226 as Moneta.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Maia was one of the Pleiades, a daughter of Atlas and (by Zeus) the mother of Hermes. She was the goddess of the month of May.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: These steps that the poet must ascend were probably suggested by the stairs going up the steep side of the purgatorial mount in Dante's *Purgatorio.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The ladder by which, in a dream, Jacob saw angels passing between heaven and Earth (Genesis 28:12 and *Paradise Lost* 3.510–15).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: As, for example, in Exodus 27:2, "And thou shalt make the horns of [the altar] upon the four corners thereof." In his description of the temple and its accoutrements, Keats deliberately mingles Hebrew, Christian, and pagan elements to represent the poet's passage through the stage represented by all religions, which are "dreams" made into the creed for "a sect" (lines 1–18).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: That is, you have postponed the time when you will be judged.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare Milton's plea, following his account of his blindness, for a celestial light that might "Shine inward": "Irradiate, there plant eyes, all mist from thence / Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight" (*Paradise Lost* 3.52–54).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, where you halfway rotted.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Soothing, also truth-telling.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Keats's friend Richard Woodhouse, whose manuscript copy of the poem is our principal source of the text, crossed out lines 187–210 with the marginal comment next to lines 197–99: "K. seems to have intended to erase this & the next 21 lines." Probably the basis for his opinion is the partial repetition of lines 187 and 194–98 in lines 211 and 216–20.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: With the anger ("spleen") of the Pythia, the priestess who served at Delphi as the oracle of Apollo, the god of poetry.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Apollo was a sender of plagues as well as the inspirer of prophecy and poetry. He was also the god of medicine. Keats's medical studies gave him special reason to be interested in this figure and the roles he combined.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: This has been thought to refer to Byron, or else to several contemporaries, including Shelley and Wordsworth. But the poetic types, not individuals, are what matter to Keats's argument.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In lines 147–210 we find a series of progressive distinctions: (1) between humanitarians who feel for "the miseries of the world" and people who are "thoughtless" sleepers (lines 147–53); (2) within the class of humanitarians, between those who actively "benefit . . . the great world" and the poets who are "vision'ries" and "dreamers" (lines 161–69); (3) and within the class of poets, between those who are merely dreamers and those who are sages and healers (lines 187–202). As in the colloquy between Asia and Demogorgon (see Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* 2.4.1–128, pp. 831–34, above), the

interchange here may be taken to represent, in dramatized form, a process of inner analysis and self-discovery on the part of the questing poet.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Compare the "shattered visage" of the fallen statue in Shelley's "Ozymandias" (p. 786, above).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The final letter of the Greek alphabet.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This had been the opening line of the original *Hyperion.* The rest of the poem is a revised version of part of that first narrative, with the poet now represented as allowed to envision the course of events that Moneta recalls in her memory (lines 282, 289–90).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Saturn's eyes, when open, express the fact that he has lost his realm.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Saturn and the other Titans were the children of heaven and Earth.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: As in 2.50, Keats substitutes for "Moneta" the "Mnemosyne" of the first *Hyperion.* This may be a slip but more likely indicates an alternative name for Moneta, in her role as participant in, as well as commentator on, the tragic action.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sister and wife of Hyperion.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, Thea was a head taller than Moneta.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The front line of clouds.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Keats several times recalls King Lear in representing the condition of Saturn. Keats's contemporaries may have thought, too, of George III, mad, blind, and dethroned by his son, who had become prince regent.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That disbelief has not an instant to catch its breath.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, how thoughtless I am!Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The grander version in the first *Hyperion*, 1.72ff., reads: "As when, upon a tranced summer-night / Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods, / Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars, / Dream."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The passing of the Saturnian golden age (paralleled by Keats with the fable of the loss of Eden) has introduced suffering, and will also introduce death.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The wife of Saturn and mother of the Olympian gods, who have overthrown their parents.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, his rebellious children, the Titans.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, the narrator could not attach this speech, like that of a feebly complaining old mortal, to the visible form of the large-limbed god who uttered it.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, like a giant who is seen at sea to emerge, pale, from the waves.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *parchment*Return to reference °
- °: *mute*Return to reference °
- °: *opium*Return to reference °
- °: *ruins*Return to reference °
- °: *defects*Return to reference °
- °: *compared to*Return to reference °
- °: *banister*Return to reference °
- °: *aromatic*Return to reference °
- °: *arteries*Return to reference °
- °: *temple*Return to reference °
- °: *on Earth*Return to reference °
- °: *allowed to enter*Return to reference °
- °: *exhausted*Return to reference °
- °: *blind*Return to reference °
- °: *range of vision*Return to reference °
- °: *course*Return to reference °
- °: *water nymph*Return to reference °
- °: *quarrelsome*Return to reference °
- °: *proclamation*Return to reference °
- °: *entry room*Return to reference °

Canto 2

"Mortal, that thou may'st understand aright,
I humanize my sayings to thine ear,
Making comparisons of earthly things;[7]
Or thou might'st better listen to the wind,
Whose language is to thee a barren noise,
Though it blows legend-laden through the trees.
In melancholy realms big tears are shed,
More sorrow like to this, and such-like woe,
Too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe.
The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound,
Groan for the old allegiance once more,
Listening in their doom for Saturn's voice.
But one of our whole eagle-brood still keeps
His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;
Blazing Hyperion on his orbed fire
Still sits, still snuffs the incense teeming up
From man to the Sun's God: yet unsecure;
For as upon the earth dire prodigies°
Fright and perplex, so also shudders he:
Nor at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's even screech,
Or the familiar visitings of one
Upon the first toll of his passing bell:[8]
But horrors portion'd° to a giant nerve
Make great Hyperion ache. His palace bright,
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks,
Glares a blood red through all the thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galeries:
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flush angerly: when he would taste the wreaths
Of incense breath'd aloft from sacred hills,
Instead of sweets, his ample palate takes

Savour of poisonous brass, and metals sick.
Wherefore when harbour'd in the sleepy west,
After the full completion of fair day,
For rest divine upon exalted couch
And slumber in the arms of melody,
He paces through the pleasant hours of ease,
With strides colossal, on from hall to hall;
While, far within each aisle and deep recess,
His winged minions° in close clusters stand
Amaz'd, and full of fear; like anxious men
Who on a wide plain gather in sad troops,
When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers.
Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance,
Goes, step for step, with Thea from yon woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Is sloping to the threshold of the west.
Thither we tend."—Now in clear light I stood,
Reliev'd from the dusk vale. Mnemosyne
Was sitting on a square edg'd polish'd stone,
That in its lucid depth reflected pure
Her priestess-garments. My quick eyes ran on
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond paved lustrous long arcades.
Anon rush'd by the bright Hyperion;
His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
That scar'd away the meek ethereal hours
And made their dove-wings tremble: on he flared[9]

July–Sept. 1819 1857

Endnotes

- Note 7: Compare the angel Raphael's words as he begins to recount to Adam the history of the rebellion in heaven: "what surmounts the reach / Of human sense, I shall delineate so, /

By lik’ning spiritual to corporal forms” (*Paradise Lost* 5.571–73).Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Lines 20–22 might be paraphrased: “Not, however, at such portents as a dog’s howl or the evening screech of the owl or with the well-known feelings [‘visitings’] of someone when he hears the first stroke of his own death knell.” It had been the English custom to ring the church bell when a person was close to death, to invite hearers to pray for his departing soul.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The manuscript breaks off at this point.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *terrifying omens*Return to reference °
- °: *proportioned*Return to reference °
- °: *followers*Return to reference °

This living hand, now warm and capable[1]

This living hand, now warm and capable
Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
And in the icy silence of the tomb,
So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood,
So in my veins red life might stream again,
And thou be conscience-calm'd—see, here it is—
I hold it towards you—

1819 1898

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  These lines, first published in H. B. Forman's edition of Keats's poems in 1898, were written on a sheet that later formed part of the draft of Keats's unfinished satire *The Jealousies.* They have been a key text in late 20th-century critical and theoretical discussions of interpretation. Readings range from the personal and autobiographical—Keats addressing a loved one (Fanny Brawne) or his posthumous readers (for example, users of this Norton anthology)—to the fictionalized and dramatic (for example, a fragment of a speech intended for the deranged Ludolph toward the end of Keats's and Charles Brown's never-produced tragedy *Otho the Great*). In their lyric

  Return to reference 1

Letters Keats's letters serve as a running commentary on his life, reading, thinking, and writing. They are, in his career, the equivalent of the essays, prefaces, and defenses of poetry produced by his contemporaries. His early reputation as a poet of pure luxury, sensation, and art for art's sake has undergone a radical change since, in the twentieth century, critics began to pay close attention to the letters. For Keats thought hard and persistently about life and art, and any seed of an ethical or critical idea that he picked up from his contemporaries (in particular, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Wordsworth) instantly germinated and flourished in the rich soil of his imagination. What T. S. Eliot said about the Metaphysical poets applies to Keats in his letters: his "mode of feeling was directly and freshly altered by [his] reading and thought." And like Donne, he looked not only into the heart but, literally, "into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tract." A number of Keats's casual comments on the poet and on poetry included here—especially those dealing with "negative capability" and the kind of imaginative identification with someone or something outside ourselves that we now call empathy—have become standard points of reference in aesthetic theory. But Keats regarded nothing that he said as final; each statement constituted only a stage in his continuing exploration into what he called "the mystery."

The texts here are from the edition of the *Letters* by Hyder E. Rollins (1958), which reproduces the original manuscripts precisely.

Letters

To Benjamin Bailey[1]

["The authenticity of the imagination"]

[November 22, 1817]

My dear Bailey,

* * * O I wish I was as certain of the end of all your troubles as that of your momentary start about the authenticity of the Imagination. I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth[2]—whether it existed before or not—for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love they are all in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty—In a Word, you may know my favorite Speculation by my first Book and the little song[3] I sent in my last—which is a representation from the fancy of the probable mode of operating in these Matters—The Imagination may be compared to Adam's dream[4]—he awoke and found it truth. I am the more zealous in this affair, because I have never yet been able to perceive how any thing can be known for truth by consequitive reasoning[5]—and yet it must be—Can it be that even the greatest Philosopher ever ~~when~~ arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections—However it may be, O for a Life of Sensations[6] rather than of Thoughts! It is "a Vision in the form of Youth" a Shadow of reality to come—and this consideration has further conv[i]nced me for it has come as auxiliary to another favorite Speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy ourselves here after by having what we called happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone and so repeated[7]—And yet such a fate can only befall those

who delight in sensation rather than hunger as you do after Truth—Adam's dream will do here and seems to be a conviction that Imagination and its empyreal[8] reflection is the same as human Life and its spiritual repetition. But as I was saying—the simple imaginative Mind may have its rewards in the repeti[ti]on of its own silent Working coming continually on the spirit with a fine suddenness—to compare great things with small—have you never by being surprised with an old Melody—in a delicious place—by a delicious voice, fe[l]t over again your very speculations and surmises at the time it first operated on your soul—do you not remember forming to yourself the singer's face more beautiful [than] it was possible and yet with the elevation of the Moment you did not think so—even then you were mounted on the Wings of Imagination so high—that the Prototype must be here after—that delicious face you will see—What a time! I am continually running away from the subject—sure this cannot be exactly the case with a complex Mind—one that is imaginative and at the same time careful of its fruits—who would exist partly on sensation partly on thought—to whom it is necessary that years should bring the philosophic Mind[9]—such an one I consider your's and therefore it is necessary to your eternal Happiness that you not only drink this old Wine of Heaven which I shall call the redigestion of our most ethereal Musings on Earth; but also increase in knowledge and know all things. I am glad to hear you are in a fair Way for Easter—you will soon get through your unpleasant reading and then!—but the world is full of troubles and I have not much reason to think myself pesterd with many—I think Jane or Marianne has a better opinion of me than I deserve—for really and truly I do not think my Brothers illness connected with mine—you know more of the real Cause than they do—nor have I any chance of being rack'd as you have been[1]—you perhaps at one time thought there was such a thing as Worldly Happiness to be arrived at, at certain periods of time marked out—you have of necessity from your disposition been thus led away—I scarcely remember counting upon any Happiness—I look not for it if it be not in the present hour—nothing startles me beyond the Moment. The

setting sun will always set me to rights—or if a Sparrow come before my Window I take part in its existince and pick about the Gravel. The first thing that strikes me on hea[r]ing a Misfortune having befalled another is this. "Well it cannot be helped.—he will have the pleasure of trying the resourses of his spirit, and I beg now my dear Bailey that hereafter should you observe any thing cold in me not to [put] it to the account of heartlessness but abstraction—for I assure you I sometimes feel not the influence of a Passion or Affection during a whole week—and so long this sometimes continues I begin to suspect myself and the genuiness of my feelings at other times—thinking them a few barren Tragedy-tears. * * *

Your affectionate friend
John Keats—

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of Keats's closest friends. Keats had stayed with him the month before at Oxford, where Bailey was an undergraduate.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: At the close of "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats also grapples with these categories. Where Keats uses "truth" we might substitute the words *real* or *reality.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The song was "O Sorrow," from book 4 of *Endymion.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Milton's *Paradise Lost* 8.452–90 Adam dreams that Eve has been created and awakes to find her real. Adam also describes an earlier pre-figurative dream in the same work, 8.283–311.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Consecutive reasoning—reasoning that moves by logical steps.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Probably not only sense experiences but also the intuitive perceptions of truths, as opposed to truth achieved by consecutive reasoning.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare the "Pleasure Thermometer" in *Endymion* 1.777ff. (p. 949, above).Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Heavenly.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: An echo of Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," line 187.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Keats's friends Jane and Mariane Reynolds feared that his ill health at this time threatened tuberculosis, from which his brother Tom was suffering. Bailey had recently experienced pain (been "racked") because of an unsuccessful love affair.Return to reference 1

To George and Thomas Keats

["NEGATIVE CAPABILITY"]

[December 21, 27 (?), 1817]

My dear Brothers

I must crave your pardon for not having written ere this. * * * I spent Friday evening with Wells[1] & went the next morning to see *Death on the Pale horse.* It is a wonderful picture, when West's[2] age is considered; But there is nothing to be intense upon; no women one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality. the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth[3]—Examine King Lear & you will find this examplified throughout; but in this picture we have unpleasantness without any momentous depth of speculation excited, in which to bury its repulsiveness—The picture is larger than Christ rejected—I dined with Haydon[4] the sunday after you left, & had a very pleasant day, I dined too (for I have been out too much lately) with Horace Smith & met his two Brothers with Hill & Kingston & one Du Bois,[5] they only served to convince me, how superior humour is to wit in respect to enjoyment—These men say things which make one start, without making one feel, they are all alike; their manners are alike; they all know fashionables; they have a mannerism in their very eating & drinking, in their mere handling a Decanter—They talked of Kean[6] & his low company—Would I were with that company instead of yours said I to myself! I know such like acquaintance will never do for me & yet I am going to Reynolds, on Wednesday—Brown & Dilke[7] walked with me & back from the Christmas pantomime.[8] I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke, on various subjects; several things dovetailed in my mind, & at once it struck me, what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which

Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability,*[9] that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium[1] of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge. This pursued through Volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.

Shelley's poem[2] is out & there are words about its being objected too, as much as Queen Mab was. Poor Shelley I think he has his Quota of good qualities, in sooth la!! Write soon to your most sincere friend & affectionate Brother

John

Endnotes

- Note 1: Charles Wells, a former schoolmate of Tom Keats.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Benjamin West (1738–1820), painter of historical pictures, was an American who moved to England and became president of the Royal Academy. The *Christ Rejected* mentioned a few sentences farther on is also by West.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Keats's solution to a problem at least as old as Aristotle's *Poetics:* why do we take pleasure in the aesthetic representation of a subject that in life would be ugly or painful? Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Keats's close friend Benjamin Haydon, painter of large-scale historical and religious pictures.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Smith was one of the best-known literary wits of the day; the others mentioned were men of letters or of literary interests.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Edmund Kean, noted Shakespearean actor. His popularity in the early 19th century was contentious because he

made no secret of his humble class origins. Keats had written an article on Kean for the *Champion.*Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Charles Armitage Brown, John Hamilton Reynolds, and Charles Wentworth Dilke were all writers and friends of Keats. Keats interrupted the writing of this letter after the dash; beginning with "Brown & Dilke" he is writing several days after the preceding sentences.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Christmas pantomimes were performed each year at Drury Lane and Covent Garden theaters.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This famous and elusive phrase has been much discussed. Keats coins it so as to distinguish between, on the one hand, a poetry that is evidently shaped by the writer's personal interests and beliefs and, on the other hand, a poetry of impersonality that records the writer's receptivity to the "uncertainties" of experience. This second kind of poetry, in which a sense of beauty overcomes considerations of truth versus falsehood, is that produced by the poet of "negative capability." See Keats's dislike, in his letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, February 3, 1818, of "poetry that has a palpable design upon us."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Latin *penetralia* signified the innermost and most secret parts of a temple.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Laon and Cythna* (1817), whose treatment of incest created scandal and which had to be withdrawn by the author. Shelley revised and republished it as *The Revolt of Islam* (1818). In *Queen Mab* (1813) Shelley had presented a radical program for the achievement of a millennial earthly state through the elimination of "kings, priests, and statesmen."Return to reference 2

To John Hamilton Reynolds[1]

[WORDSWORTH'S POETRY]

[February 3, 1818]

My dear Reynolds,

* * * It may be said that we ought to read our Contemporaries, that Wordsworth &c should have their due from us but for the sake of a few fine imaginative or domestic passages, are we to be bullied into a certain Philosophy engendered in the whims of an Egotist—Every man has his speculations, but every man does not brood and peacock over them till he makes a false coinage and deceives himself—Many a man can travel to the very bourne[2] of Heaven, and yet want confidence to put down his halfseeing. Sancho[3] will invent a Journey heavenward as well as any body. We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us—and if we do not agree, seems to put its hand in its breeches pocket.[4] Poetry should be great & unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself but with its subject.—How beautiful are the retired flowers! how would they lose their beauty were they to throng into the highway crying out, "admire me I am a violet! dote upon me I am a primrose! Modern poets differ from the Elizabethans in this. Each of the moderns like an Elector of Hanover governs his petty state, & knows how many straws are swept daily from the Causeways in all his dominions & has a continual itching that all the Housewives should have their coppers well scoured: the antients were ~~Emperors of large~~ Emperors of vast Provinces, they had only heard of the remote ones and scarcely cared to visit them.—I will cut all this—I will have no more of Wordsworth or Hunt[5] in particular—Why should we be of the tribe of Manasseh, when we can wander with Esau?[6] why should we kick against the Pricks, when we can walk on Roses? Why should we be owls, when we can be Eagles?

Why be teased with "nice Eyed wagtails," when we have in sight "the Cherub Contemplation"?[7]—Why with Wordsworths "Matthew with a bough of wilding in his hand" when we can have Jacques "under an oak &c"[8]—The secret of the Bough of Wilding will run through your head faster than I can write it—Old Matthew spoke to him some years ago on some nothing, & because he happens in an Evening Walk to imagine the figure of the old man—he must stamp it down in black & white, and it is henceforth sacred—I don't mean to deny Wordsworth's grandeur & Hunt's merit, but I mean to say we need not be teazed with grandeur & merit—when we can have them uncontaminated & unobtrusive. Let us have the old Poets, & robin Hood[9] Your letter and its sonnets gave me more pleasure than will the 4th Book of Childe Harold[1] & the whole of any body's life & opinions. * * *

Yr sincere friend and Coscribbler
John Keats.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A close friend who was at this time an insurance clerk and also an able poet and man of letters.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Boundary.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sancho Panza, the earthy squire in Cervantes' *Don Quixote.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, sulks and refuses to interact with us.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Leigh Hunt, a poet who earlier had strongly influenced Keats's style.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, why should we carry on a conventional way of life (as did the tribe of Manasseh in Old Testament history) when we can become adventurers (like Esau, who sold his birthright in Genesis 25:29–34 and became an outlaw).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Milton, "Il Penseroso," line 54. "Nice Eyed wagtails": from Hunt's *Nymphs.*Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Shakespeare's *As You Like It* 2.1.31. The Wordsworth phrase is from his poem "The Two April Mornings." "Wilding": a wild apple tree.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A reference to two sonnets on Robin Hood, written by Reynolds, which he had sent to Keats.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Canto 4 of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was being eagerly awaited by English readers.Return to reference 1

To John Taylor[1]

[KEATS'S AXIOMS IN POETRY]

[February 27, 1818]

My dear Taylor,

Your alteration strikes me as being a great improvement—the page, looks much better. * * * It is a sorry thing for me that any one should have to overcome Prejudices in reading my Verses—that affects me more than any hypercriticism on any particular Passage. In *Endymion* I have most likely but moved into the Go-cart from the leading strings.[2] In Poetry I have a few Axioms, and you will see how far I am from their Centre. 1st I think Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by Singularity—it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrance—2nd Its touches of Beauty should never be half way therby making the reader breathless instead of content: the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should like the Sun come natural natural too him—shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the Luxury of twilight—but it is easier to think what Poetry should be than to write it—and this leads me on to another axiom. That if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all. However it may be with me I cannot help looking into new countries with "O for a Muse of fire to ascend!"[3]—If Endymion serves me as a Pioneer perhaps I ought to be content. I have great reason to be content, for thank God I can read and perhaps understand Shakspeare to his depths, and I have I am sure many friends, who, if I fail, will attribute any change in my Life and Temper to Humbleness rather than to Pride—to a cowering under the Wings of great Poets rather than to a Bitterness that I am not appreciated. I am anxious to get Endymion printed that I may forget it and proceed. * * *

Your sincere and oblig[d] friend
John Keats—

P.S. You shall have a sho[r]t *Preface* in good time—

Endnotes

- Note 1: Partner in the publishing firm of Taylor and Hessey, to whom Keats wrote this letter while *Endymion* was being put through the press.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Go-carts were the wheeled walkers in which 19th-century toddlers learned to walk. Leading-strings were the harnesses with which they were guided and supported while they learned. Keats's point appears to be that as a poet he has not advanced and may even have regressed in *Endymion.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Altered from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, Prologue, line 1.Return to reference 3

To John Hamilton Reynolds

[MILTON, WORDSWORTH, AND THE CHAMBERS OF HUMAN LIFE]

[May 3, 1818]

My dear Reynolds.

* * * Were I to study physic or rather Medicine again,—I feel it would not make the least difference in my Poetry; when the Mind is in its infancy a Bias is in reality a Bias, but when we have acquired more strength, a Bias becomes no Bias. Every department of knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole. I am so convinced of this, that I am glad at not having given away my medical Books, which I shall again look over to keep alive the little I know thitherwards; and moreover intend through you and Rice to become a sort of Pip-civilian.[1] An extensive knowledge is needful to thinking people—it takes away the heat and fever; and helps, by widening speculation, to ease the Burden of the Mystery:[2] a thing I begin to understand a little, and which weighed upon you in the most gloomy and true sentence in your Letter. The difference of high Sensations with and without knowledge appears to me this—in the latter case we are falling continually ten thousand fathoms deep and being blown up again without wings[3] and with all [the] horror of a ~~Case~~ bare shoulderd Creature—in the former case, our shoulders are fledged[4] and we go thro' the same ~~Fir~~ air and space without fear. * * *

You say "I fear there is little chance of any thing else in this life." You seem by that to have been going through with a more painful and acute ~~test~~ zest the same labyrinth that I have—I have come to the same conclusion thus far. My Branchings out therefrom have been numerous: one of them is the consideration of Wordsworth's genius and as a help, in the manner of gold being the meridian Line of worldly wealth,—how he differs from Milton.[5]—And here I have

nothing but surmises, from an uncertainty whether Miltons apparently less anxiety for Humanity proceeds from his seeing further or no than Wordsworth: And whether Wordsworth has in truth epic passions, and martyrs himself to the human heart, the main region of his song[6]—In regard to his genius alone—we find what he says true as far as we have experienced and we can judge no further but by larger experience—for axioms in philosophy are not axioms until they are proved upon our pulses: We read fine—— things but never feel them to [the] full until we have gone the same steps as the Author.—I know this is not plain; you will know exactly my meaning when I say, that now I shall relish Hamlet more than I ever have done—Or, better—You are sensible no man can set down Venery[7] as a bestial or joyless thing until he is sick of it and therefore all philosophizing on it would be mere wording. Until we are sick, we understand not;—in fine, as Byron says, "Knowledge is Sorrow";[8] and I go on to say that "Sorrow is Wisdom"—and further for aught we can know for certainty! "Wisdom is folly." * * *

I will return to Wordsworth—whether or no he has an extended vision or a circumscribed grandeur—whether he is an eagle in his nest, or on the wing—And to be more explicit and to show you how tall I stand by the giant, I will put down a simile of human life as far as I now perceive it; that is, to the point to which I say we both have arrived at—Well—I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me—The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber, in which we remain as long as we do not think—We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle—within us—we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought,[9] than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one

of sharpening one's vision into the ~~head~~ heart and nature of Man—of convincing ones nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and oppression—whereby This Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all sides of it many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages—We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist—*We* are now in that state—We feel the "burden of the Mystery," To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote "Tintern Abbey" and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages. Now if we live, and go on thinking, we too shall explore them. he is a Genius and superior [to] us, in so far as he can, more than we, make discoveries, and shed a light in them—Here I must think Wordsworth is deeper than Milton—though I think it has depended more upon the general and gregarious advance of intellect, than individual greatness of Mind—From the Paradise Lost and the other Works of Milton, I hope it is not too presuming, even between ourselves to say, his Philosophy, human and divine, may be tolerably understood by one not much advanced in years, In his time englishmen were just emancipated from a great superstition—and Men had got hold of certain points and resting places in reasoning which were too newly born to be doubted, and too much ~~oppressed~~ opposed by the Mass of Europe not to be thought etherial and authentically divine—who could gainsay his ideas on virtue, vice, and Chastity in Comus, just at the time of the dismissal of Codpieces[1] and a hundred other disgraces? who would not rest satisfied with his hintings at good and evil in the Paradise Lost, when just free from the inquisition and burrning in Smithfield?[2] The Reformation produced such immediate and great benefits, that Protestantism was considered under the immediate eye of heaven, and its own remaining Dogmas and superstitions, then, as it were, regenerated, constituted those resting places and seeming sure points of Reasoning—from that I have mentioned, Milton, whatever he may have thought in the sequel,[3] appears to have been content with these by his writings—He did not think into the human heart, as Wordsworth has done—Yet Milton as a

Philosop[h]er, had sure as great powers as Wordsworth—What is then to be inferr'd? O many things—It proves there is really a grand march of intellect—, It proves that a mighty providence subdues the mightiest Minds to the service of the time being, whether it be in human Knowledge or Religion— * * * Tom[4] has spit a leetle blood this afternoon, and that is rather a damper—but I know—the truth is there is something real in the World Your third Chamber of Life shall be a lucky and a gentle one—stored with the wine of love—and the Bread of friendship— * * *

Your affectionate friend
John Keats.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Apparently "a small-scale layman." James Rice, a lawyer, was one of Keats's favorite friends.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey," line 38.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Recalls the description of Satan's flight through Chaos (Milton, *Paradise Lost* 2.933–34).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Grow wings.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, as gold is the standard of material wealth (in the way that the meridian line of Greenwich Observatory, England, is the reference for measuring degrees of longitude), so Milton is the standard of poetic value, by which we may measure Wordsworth.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the Prospectus to *The Recluse*, Wordsworth, laying out his poetic program, had identified "the Mind of Man" as "My haunt, and the main region of my song" (lines 40–41).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sexual indulgence.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Manfred* 1.1.10: "Sorrow is knowledge."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, innocent thought, with the implication (as in "maiden voyage") of a first undertaking.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: In the 15th and 16th centuries, the codpiece was a flap, often ornamental, that covered an opening in the front of men's breeches. In Milton's masque the chastity of a young lady is put to the proof by the evil enchanter Comus.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An open place northwest of the walls of the City of London where, in the 16th century, heretics were burned.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Later on.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Keats's younger brother, then eighteen, who was dying of tuberculosis.Return to reference 4

To Richard Woodhouse[1]

["A POET HAS NO IDENTITY"]

[October 27, 1818]

My dear Woodhouse,

Your Letter gave me a great satisfaction; more on account of its friendliness, than any relish of that matter in it which is accounted so acceptable in the "genus irritabile"[2] The best answer I can give you is in a clerklike manner to make some observations on two principle points, which seem to point like indices into the midst of the whole pro and con, about genius, and views and atchievements and ambition and cœtera. 1st As to the poetical Character itself, (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing per se and stands alone) it is not itself—it has no self—it is every thing and nothing—It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto,[3] be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated—It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen.[4] What shocks the virtuous philosop[h]er, delights the camelion[5] Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation.[6] A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity—he is continually in for[7]—and filling some other Body—The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures. If then he has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the Wonder that I should say I would write no more? Might I not at that very instant [have] been cogitating on the Characters of saturn and Ops?[8] It is a wretched thing to confess; but is a very fact that not one word I

ever utter can be taken for granted as an opinion growing out of my identical nature—how can it, when I have no nature? When I am in a room with People if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself: but the identity of every one in the room begins to to press upon me[9] that, I am in a very little time an[ni]hilated—not only among Men; it would be the same in a Nursery of children: I know not whether I make myself wholly understood: I hope enough so to let you see that no dependence is to be placed on what I said that day.

In the second place I will speak of my views, and of the life I purpose to myself—I am ambitious of doing the world some good: if I should be spared that may be the work of maturer years—in the interval I will assay to reach to as high a summit in Poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer. The faint conceptions I have of Poems to come brings the blood frequently into my forehead—All I hope is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs—that the solitary indifference I feel for applause even from the finest Spirits, will not blunt any acuteness of vision I may have. I do not think it will—I feel assured I should write from the mere yearning and fondness I have for the Beautiful even if my night's labours should be burnt every morning and no eye ever shine upon them. But even now I am perhaps not speaking from myself; but from some character in whose soul I now live. I am sure however that this next sentence is from myself. I feel your anxiety, good opinion and friendliness in the highest degree, and am

Your's most sincerely
John Keats

Endnotes

- Note 1: A young lawyer with literary interests who early recognized Keats's talents and prepared, or preserved, manuscript copies of many of his poems and letters.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: "The irritable race," a phrase Horace had applied to poets (*Epistles* 2.2.102).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hazlitt had defined gusto in an 1816 essay as "power or passion."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Iago is the villain in Shakespeare's *Othello* and Imogen the virtuous heroine in his *Cymbeline.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The chameleon is a lizard that camouflages itself by changing its color to match its surroundings.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, without affecting our practical judgment or actions. Compare Keats's discussion of "negative capability" in his letter to George and Thomas Keats begun on December 21, 1817 (p. 1009, above).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Instead of "in for," Keats may have intended to write "informing."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Characters in Keats's *Hyperion.* Woodhouse had recently written Keats to express concern at a remark by the poet that, because former writers had preempted the best poetic materials and styles, there was nothing new left for the modern poet.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Perhaps "*so* to press upon me."Return to reference 9

To George and Georgiana Keats[1]

["THE VALE OF SOUL-MAKING"]

[February 14–May 3, 1819]

My dear Brother & Sister—

* * * I have this moment received a note from Haslam[2] in which he expects the death of his Father who has been for some time in a state of insensibility—his mother bears up he says very well—I shall go to [town] tommorrow to see him. This is the world—thus we cannot expect to give way many hours to pleasure—Circumstances are like Clouds continually gathering and bursting—While we are laughing the seed of some trouble is put into ~~he~~ the wide arable land of events—while we are laughing it sprouts [it] grows and suddenly bears a poison fruit which we must pluck—Even so we have leisure to reason on the misfortunes of our friends; our own touch us too nearly for words. Very few men have ever arrived at a complete disinterestedness[3] of Mind: very few have been influenced by a pure desire of the benefit of others—in the greater part of the Benefactors ~~of~~ & to Humanity some meretricious motive has sullied their greatness—some melodramatic scenery has facinated them—From the manner in which I feel Haslam's misfortune I perceive how far I am from any humble standard of disinterestedness—Yet this feeling ought to be carried to its highest pitch, as there is no fear of its ever injuring society—which it would do I fear pushed to an extremity—For in wild nature the Hawk would loose his Breakfast of Robins and the Robin his of Worms The Lion must starve as well as the swallow—The greater part of Men make their way with the same instinctiveness, the same unwandering eye from their purposes, the same animal eagerness as the Hawk—The Hawk wants a Mate, so does the Man—look at them both they set about it and procure on[e] in the same manner—They want both a nest and they both set

about one in the same manner—they get their food in the same manner—The noble animal Man for his amusement smokes his pipe —the Hawk balances about the Clouds—that is the only difference of their leisures. This it is that makes the Amusement of Life—to a speculative Mind. I go among the Feilds and catch a glimpse of a stoat[4] or a fieldmouse peeping out of the withered grass—the creature hath a purpose and its eyes are bright with it—I go amongst the buildings of a city and I see a Man hurrying along—to what? The Creature has a purpose and his eyes are bright with it. But then as Wordsworth says, "we have all one human heart"[5]—there is an ellectric fire in human nature tending to purify—so that among these human creature[s] there is continually some birth of new heroism—The pity is that we must wonder at it: as we should at finding a pearl in rubbish—I have no doubt that thousands of people never heard of have had hearts completely disinterested: I can remember but two—Socrates and Jesus—their Histories evince it—What I heard a little time ago, Taylor observe with respect to Socrates, may be said of Jesus—That he was so great as man that though he transmitted no writing of his own to posterity, we have his Mind and his sayings and his greatness handed to us by others. It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by Men interested in the pious frauds of Religion. Yet through all this I see his splendour. Even here though I myself am pursueing the same instinctive course as the veriest human animal you can think of —I am however young writing at random—straining at particles of light in the midst of a great darkness—without knowing the bearing of any one assertion of any one opinion. Yet may I not in this be free from sin? May there not be superior beings amused with any graceful, though instinctive attitude my mind [may] fall into, as I am entertained with the alertness of a Stoat or the anxiety of a Deer? Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel—By a superior being our reasoning[s] may take the same tone—though erroneous they may be fine—This is the very thing in which consists poetry; and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy

—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth —Give me this credit—Do you not think I strive—to know myself? Give me this credit—and you will not think that on my own accou[n]t I repeat Milton's lines

> "How charming is divine Philosophy
> Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose
> But musical as is Apollo's lute"—[6]

No—no for myself—feeling grateful as I do to have got into a state of mind to relish them properly—Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced—Even a Proverb is no proverb to you till your Life has illustrated it— * * *

* * * I have been reading lately two very different books Robertson's America and Voltaire's Siecle De Louis xiv[7] It is like walking arm and arm between Pizarro and the great-little Monarch.[8] In How lementabl[e] a case do we see the great body of the people in both instances: in the first, where Men might seem to inherit quiet of Mind from unsophisticated senses; from uncontamination of civilisation; and especially from their being as it were estranged from the mutual helps of Society and its mutual injuries—and thereby more immediately under the Protection of Providence—even there they had mortal pains to bear as bad; or even worse than Baliffs,[9] Debts and Poverties of civilised Life—The whole appears to resolve into this—that Man is originally "a poor forked creature"[1] subject to the same mischances as the beasts of the forest, destined to hardships and disquietude of some kind or other. If he improves by degrees his bodily accommodations and comforts—at each stage, at each accent there are waiting for him a fresh set of annoyances—he is mortal and there is still a heaven with its Stars abov[e] his head. The most interesting question that can come before us is, How far by the persevering endeavours of a seldom appearing Socrates Mankind may be made happy—I can imagine such happiness carried to an extreme—but what must it end in?—Death—and who could in such a case bear with death—the whole troubles of life which are

now frittered away in a series of years, would the[n] be accumulated for the last days of a being who instead of hailing its approach, would leave this world as Eve left Paradise—But in truth I do not at all believe in this sort of perfectibility—the nature of the world will not admit of it—the inhabitants of the world will correspond to itself —Let the fish philosophise the ice away from the Rivers in winter time and they shall be at continual play in the tepid delight of summer. Look at the Poles and at the sands of Africa, Whirlpools and volcanoes—Let men exterminate them and I will say that they may arrive at earthly Happiness—The point at which Man may arrive is as far as the paralel state in inanimate nature and no further—For instance suppose a rose to have sensation, it blooms on a beautiful morning it enjoys itself—but there comes a cold wind, a hot sun—it can not escape it, it cannot destroy its annoyances—they are as native to the world as itself: no more can man be happy in spite, the world[l]y elements will prey upon his nature—The common cognomen of this world among the misguided and superstitious is "a vale of tears" from which we are to be redeemed by a certain arbitrary interposition of God and taken to Heaven—What a little circumscribe[d] straightened notion! Call the world if you Please "The vale of Soul-making" Then you will find out the use of the world (I am speaking now in the highest terms for human nature admitting it to be immortal which I will here take for granted for the purpose of showing a thought which has struck me concerning it) I say *"Soul making"* Soul as distinguished from an Intelligence—There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions—but they are not Souls ~~the~~ till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself. I[n]telligences are atoms of perception—they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God—how then are Souls to be made? How then are these sparks which are God to have identity given them—so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each ones individual existence? How, but by the medium of a world like this? This point I sincerely wish to consider because I think it a grander system of salvation than the chrysteain religion—or rather it is a system of Spirit-creation[2]—This is effected by three grand

materials acting the one upon the other for a series of years—These three Materials are the *Intelligence*—the *human heart* (as distinguished from intelligence or Mind) and the *World* or *Elemental space* suited for the proper action of *Mind and Heart* on each other for the purpose of forming the *Soul* or *Intelligence destined to possess the sense of Identity.* I can scarcely express what I but dimly perceive—and yet I think I perceive it—that you may judge the more clearly I will put it in the most homely form possible—I will call the *world* a School instituted for the purpose of teaching little children to read—I will call the *human heart* the *horn Book*[3] used in that School—and I will call the *Child able to read, the Soul* made from that *school* and its *hornbook.* Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul? A Place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways! Not merely is the Heart a Hornbook, It is the Minds Bible, it is the Minds experience, it is the teat from which the Mind or intelligence sucks its identity—As various as the Lives of Men are—so various become their souls, and thus does God make individual beings, Souls, Identical Souls of the sparks of his own essence—This appears to me a faint sketch of a system of Salvation which does not affront our reason and humanity—I am convinced that many difficulties which christians labour under would vanish before it—There is one wh[i]ch even now Strikes me—the Salvation of Children—In them the Spark or intelligence returns to God without any identity—it having had no time to learn of, and be altered by, the heart—or seat of the human Passions—It is pretty generally suspected that the chr[i]stian scheme has been coppied from the ancient persian and greek Philosophers. Why may they not have made this simple thing even more simple for common apprehension by introducing Mediators and Personages in the same manner as in the hethen mythology abstractions are personified—Seriously I think it probable that this System of Soul-making—may have been the Parent of all the more palpable and personal Schemes of Redemption, among the Zoroastrians the Christians and the Hindoos. For as one part of the human species must have their carved

Jupiter; so another part must have the palpable and named Mediatior and saviour, their Christ their Oromanes and their Vishnu[4] —If what I have said should not be plain enough, as I fear it may not be, I will [put] you in the place where I began in this series of thoughts—I mean, I began by seeing how man was formed by circumstances—and what are circumstances?—but touchstones of his heart—? and what are touch stones?—but proovings of his hearrt?[5]—and what are proovings of his heart but fortifiers or alterers of his nature? and what is his altered nature but his soul?—and what was his soul before it came into the world and had These provings and alterations and perfectionings?—An intelligences—without Identity—and how is this Identity to be made? Through the medium of the Heart? And how is the heart to become this Medium but in a world of Circumstances?—There now I think what with Poetry and Theology you may thank your Stars that my pen is not very long winded— * * *

This is the 3d of May & every thing is in delightful forwardness; the violets are not withered, before the peeping of the first rose; You must let me know every thing, how parcels go & come, what papers you have, & what Newspapers you want, & other things—God bless you my dear Brother & Sister

Your ever Affectionate Brother
John Keats—

Endnotes

- Note 1: Keats's brother and his wife, who had emigrated to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1818. This is part of a long letter that Keats wrote over a period of several months, and into which he transcribed several of his poems, including "Ode to Psyche." The date of this first extract is March 19.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Haslam, a young businessman and close friend.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Transcendence of self-interest, of one's selfish instincts.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: A weasel.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "The Old Cumberland Beggar," line 153.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: *Comus*, lines 475–77.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Two books of history, Voltaire's *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751) and William Robertson's *The History of America* (1777). In this second extract from the journal-letter, Keats is writing toward the end of April (on the 21st or 28th).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Louis XIV of France. Francisco Pizarro, the Spanish explorer whose exploits are described in Robertson's *America.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Officers of the law whose duties included making arrests for bad debts.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Shakespeare's *King Lear* 3.4.95–97. Lear says of "Poor Tom," "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Keats is struggling for an analogy that will embody his solution to the ancient riddle of evil, as an alternative to what he understands to be the Christian view: that evil exists as a test of the individual's worthiness of salvation in heaven, and this world is only a proving ground for a later and better life. Keats proposes that the function of the human experience of sorrow and pain is to feed and discipline the formless and unstocked "intelligence" that we possess at birth and thus to shape it into a rich and coherent "identity," or "soul." This result provides a justification ("salvation") for our suffering in terms of our earthly life: that is, experience is its own reward.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A child's primer, which used to consist of a sheet of paper mounted on thin wood, protected by a sheet of transparent horn.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The deity who creates and preserves the world, in Hindu belief. Oromanes (Ahriman) was the principle of evil, locked in a persisting struggle with Ormazd, the principle of

good, in the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Persia.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: That is, experiences by which the human heart is put to the test.Return to reference 5

To Fanny Brawne

[FANNY BRAWNE AS KEATS'S "FAIR STAR"]

[July 25, 1819]

My sweet Girl,

I hope you did not blame me much for not obeying your request of a Letter on Saturday: we have had four in our small room playing at cards night and morning leaving me no undisturb'd opportunity to write. Now Rice and Martin are gone I am at liberty. Brown to my sorrow confirms the account you give of your ill health. You cannot conceive how I ache to be with you: how I would die for one hour ——for what is in the world? I say you cannot conceive; it is impossible you should look with such eyes upon me as I have upon you: it cannot be. Forgive me if I wander a little this evening, for I have been all day employ'd in a very abstr[a]ct Poem[1] and I am in deep love with you—two things which must excuse me. I have, believe me, not been an age in letting you take possession of me; the very first week I knew you I wrote myself your vassal; but burnt the Letter as the very next time I saw you I thought you manifested some dislike to me. If you should ever feel for Man at the first sight what I did for you, I am lost. Yet I should not quarrel with you, but hate myself if such a thing were to happen—only I should burst if the thing were not as fine as a Man as you are as a Woman. Perhaps I am too vehement, then fancy me on my knees, especially when I mention a part of your Letter which hurt me; you say speaking of Mr. Severn[2] "but you must be satisfied in knowing that I admired you much more than your friend." My dear love, I cannot believe there ever was or ever could be any thing to admire in me especially as far as sight goes—I cannot be admired, I am not a thing to be admired. You are, I love you; all I can bring you is a swooning admiration of your Beauty. I hold that place among Men which snub-nos'd brunettes with meeting eyebrows do among women—they are trash

to me—unless I should find one among them with a fire in her heart like the one that burns in mine. You absorb me in spite of myself—you alone: for I look not forward with any pleasure to what is call'd being settled in the world; I tremble at domestic cares—yet for you I would meet them, though if it would leave you the happier I would rather die than do so. I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will, and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it. From no others would I take it. I am indeed astonish'd to find myself so careless of all cha[r]ms but yours—remembring as I do the time when even a bit of ribband was a matter of interest with me. What softer words can I find for you after this—what it is I will not read. Nor will I say more here, but in a Postscript answer any thing else you may have mentioned in your Letter in so many words—for I am distracted with a thousand thoughts. I will imagine you Venus tonight and pray, pray, pray to your star like a Hethen.[3]

Your's ever, fair Star,
John Keats.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Probably *The Fall of Hyperion.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Joseph Severn, who later looked after Keats in Rome during his final illness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See Keats's sonnet "Bright star" (pp. 963–64, above) for parallels to this and other remarks in the present letter.Return to reference 3

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY
1797–1851

Percy Shelley wrote of his young wife, in the Dedication to *Laon and Cythna:*

> They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
> Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.

The "glorious parents" were William Godwin, the leading reformer and radical philosopher of the time, and Mary Wollstonecraft, famed as the author of A *Vindication of the Rights of Woman.* Wollstonecraft had died from childbed fever when she gave birth to Mary. Four years later Godwin married a widow, Mary Jane Clairmont, who soon had more than she could cope with trying to manage a family of five children of diverse parentage, amid increasing financial difficulties. Mary bitterly resented her stepmother but adored her father, who, she later said, "was my God—and I remember many childish instances of the excess of attachment I bore for him."

To ease the situation Mary was sent at the age of fourteen to live in Dundee, Scotland, with the family of William Baxter, an admirer of Godwin. After two pleasant years roaming the countryside, daydreaming, and writing stories (which have been lost), she returned in 1814 to her father's house in London. There, at the age of sixteen, she encountered the twenty-one-year-old poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, a devotee of Godwin's and an almost daily visitor,

who had become estranged from his wife, Harriet. The young people fell in love; within a few months Mary was pregnant. On July 28 they ran off to Europe, taking with them her stepsister Jane Clairmont, who later changed her name to Claire. Mary described their happy though heedless wanderings through France, Switzerland, and Germany in her first book, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, published anonymously in 1817.

Back in England she gave premature birth to a daughter who lived only twelve days; a year later, in 1816, she bore a son, William. Shelley was usually in financial difficulties and often had to hide from his creditors to avoid arrest. Nonetheless, he contributed substantial sums (borrowed against his expectations as heir to his father, Sir Timothy) to Godwin's support, even though Godwin, despite his earlier advocacy of free love, refused to countenance Shelley's liaison with his daughter. Claire Clairmont meanwhile sought out and had a brief affair with Byron, who left her pregnant. In the spring of 1816, the Shelleys went abroad again with Claire, and at the latter's behest settled in Geneva, where Byron, accompanied by his physician and friend John William Polidori, set up residence in the nearby Villa Diodati. Mary Shelley tells us, in the introduction to *Frankenstein*, how her imagination was fired by their animated conversations during many social evenings. Encouraged and assisted by Shelley, she wrote *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*, her story of the man of science who, with catastrophic consequences, seeks to conquer nature, rival the divinity, and make new life, and who then withholds love from the life he has made. Since its anonymous publication in 1818, the novel has never been out of print. As the basis for innumerable plays (beginning in 1823) and movies (beginning in 1910), the story has become a central myth of modern Western culture.

The last six years of Mary's life with her husband, spent first in England and then in Italy, were filled with disasters. In October 1816 her sensitive and moody half-sister, Fanny Imlay, feeling herself an unloved burden on the Godwin household, committed suicide by an overdose of laudanum. Two months later Shelley's abandoned wife,

Harriet, pregnant by an unknown lover, drowned herself in the Serpentine lake at Hyde Park in London. Shelley at once married Mary, but the courts denied him custody of Harriet's two children on the grounds that he was morally unfit to rear them. In September 1818 came the death of Mary's third baby, Clara, followed less than nine months later by the death from malaria, rampant in Rome at the time, of her adored son, William: "We came to Italy thinking to do Shelley's health good," Mary wrote bitterly, "but the Climate is not [by] any means warm enough to be of benefit to him & yet it is that that has destroyed my two children." These tragedies and her own ill health threw her into a depression that was only partly relieved by the birth of a second son, Percy Florence, in November 1819, and was deepened again the next spring by a miscarriage, as later by the death, in April 1822, of Claire's daughter, Allegra, whom Byron had placed in an Italian convent. Mary Shelley's habitual reserve, which masked the depth of her feelings, now became an apathy that caused her to withdraw, emotionally, from her husband. He became distant in turn, giving their friend Jane Williams the affection he denied his wife. When he was drowned in the Gulf of Spezia in July 1822, Mary was left with a persisting sense that she had failed her husband when he most needed her.

An impoverished widow of twenty-four, she returned to England with two ambitions. One was to disseminate the poetry and to rescue the character of Shelley, whom she idolized in memory; the other was to support by her writings her surviving son. Her only financial assistance was a small allowance given her by Sir Timothy Shelley, which he threatened to cut off if she wrote a biography of his radical and scandal-haunted son. In the remaining quarter century of her life, Mary Shelley became a notable success as a professional woman of letters, publishing as "The Author of 'Frankenstein' " to comply with Sir Timothy's demand that she never use the Shelley name. After *Frankenstein* she wrote first a novella and then five more novels, of which the first two are the best. The novella, *Matilda*, written in 1819 but left in manuscript and not published until 1959, deals with the disastrous results of a father's

incestuous passion for a daughter who resembles his dead wife. *Valperga* (1823), set in the Italian Middle Ages, is a historical romance about a quasi-Napoleonic figure who sacrifices his love and humanity to his lust for political power and about the two women whom he betrays. *The Last Man* (1826), set in the twenty-first century, tracing the progress of a plague that destroys all of humankind except for one survivor, the novel's narrator, almost equals *Frankenstein* in its analysis of human isolation. This novel also served Shelley as a forum in which to write autobiographically, for as she reflected in a diary entry, her own companions, like her ever-mourning narrator's, were gone, become "the people of the grave." She in fact arranged to endow two characters in the novel, her narrator's associates, with traits recognizably those of Percy Shelley and Byron, whose death in Greece occurred as she began writing.

Shelley all this while also contributed short stories to the gift books and literary annuals that were a publishing phenomenon during the 1820s and 1830s: deluxe volumes, gorgeously bound and lavishly illustrated, whose literary selections mingled pieces by esteemed authors—Scott, Hemans, Wordsworth, Coleridge—with contributions by the most fashionable members of the aristocracy. (All writers, however, were by the makers of gift books deemed less important than the visual artists: the stories or poems were often commissioned to accompany preexisting illustrations.) In 1835–39 she contributed to the *Cabinet Cyclopedia* five volumes of admirable biographical and critical studies of continental authors. She also published several separate editions of her husband's writings in verse and prose. In accordance with what was then standard editorial procedure, she altered and emended Shelley's texts; she also added prefaces and notes, relating Shelley's writings to the circumstances of his life and thought, that have been an important resource for scholars of Romantic literature.

Not until old Sir Timothy died in 1844, leaving his title and estate to her son, did she find herself in comfortable circumstances. Her last years were cheered by the devotion of her son—who was an

amiable man but entirely lacked the genius of his parents—and by her close friendship with Jane St. John, an admirer of Shelley's poetry, whom Sir Percy Florence married in 1848. Mary Shelley died three years later, at the age of fifty-three.

During her widowhood she craved social acceptance and status and, although she maintained liberal principles, tried hard, by adapting herself to conventional standards in her writings and her life, to work free from the onus of what her contemporaries regarded as the scandalous careers of her mother, father, and husband. In later life she wrote an apologia in her journal, dated October 21, 1838, that reveals the stresses of a life spent trying to measure up to the example, yet escape the bad reputations, of her parents and husband.

> In the first place, with regard to "the good cause"—the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge, of the rights of women, etc.—I am not a person of opinions. . . . Some have a passion for reforming the world; others do not cling to particular opinions. That my parents and Shelley were of the former class, makes me respect it. . . . For myself, I earnestly desire the good and enlightenment of my fellow creatures, and see all, in the present course, tending to the same, and rejoice; but I am not for violent extremes, which only brings on an injurious reaction. . . .
>
> To hang back, as I do, brings a penalty. I was nursed and fed with a love of glory. To be something great and good was the precept given me by my father; Shelley reiterated it. . . . But Shelley died, and I was alone. . . . My total friendlessness, my horror of pushing, and inability to put myself forward unless led, cherished and supported—all this has sunk me in a state of loneliness no other human

being ever before, I believe, endured—except Robinson Crusoe. . . .

But I have never crouched to society—never sought it unworthily. If I have never written to vindicate the rights of women, I have ever defended women when oppressed. At every risk I have befriended and supported victims to the social system; but I make no boast, for in truth it is simple justice I perform; and so am I still reviled for being worldly. . . .

Such as I have written appears to me the exact truth.

From The Last Man

Introduction[1]

I visited Naples in the year 1818. On the 8th of December of that year, my companion and I crossed the Bay, to visit the antiquities which are scattered on the shores of Baiae.[2] The translucent and shining waters of the calm sea covered fragments of old Roman villas, which were interlaced by sea-weed, and received diamond tints from the chequering of the sun-beams; the blue and pellucid element was such as Galatea[3] might have skimmed in her car of mother of pearl; or Cleopatra, more fitly than the Nile, have chosen as the path of her magic ship.[4] Though it was winter, the atmosphere seemed more appropriate to early spring; and its genial warmth contributed to inspire those sensations of placid delight, which are the portion of every traveller, as he lingers, loath to quit the tranquil bays and radiant promontories of Baiae.

We visited the so called Elysian Fields and Avernus:[5] and wandered through various ruined temples, baths, and classic spots; at length we entered the gloomy cavern of the Cumaean Sibyl.[6] Our Lazzeroni[7] bore flaring torches, which shone red, and almost dusky, in the murky subterranean passages, whose darkness thirstily surrounding them, seemed eager to imbibe more and more of the element of light. We passed by a natural archway, leading to a second gallery, and enquired, if we could not enter there also. The guides pointed to the reflection of their torches on the water that paved it, leaving us to form our own conclusion; but adding it was a pity, for it led to the Sibyl's Cave. Our curiosity and enthusiasm were excited by this circumstance, and we insisted upon attempting the passage. As is usually the case in the prosecution of such enterprizes, the difficulties decreased on examination. We found, on each side of the humid pathway, "dry land for the sole of the foot."[8]

At length we arrived at a large, desert, dark cavern, which the Lazzeroni assured us was the Sibyl's Cave. We were sufficiently disappointed—Yet we examined it with care, as if its blank, rocky walls could still bear trace of celestial visitant. On one side was a small opening. Whither does this lead? we asked: can we enter here?—"*Questo poi, no*,"[9]—said the wild looking savage, who held the torch; "you can advance but a short distance, and nobody visits it."

"Nevertheless, I will try it," said my companion; "it may lead to the real cavern. Shall I go alone, or will you accompany me?"

I signified my readiness to proceed, but our guides protested against such a measure. With great volubility, in their native Neapolitan dialect, with which we were not very familiar, they told us that there were spectres, that the roof would fall in, that it was too narrow to admit us, that there was a deep hole within, filled with water, and we might be drowned. My friend shortened the harangue, by taking the man's torch from him; and we proceeded alone.

The passage, which at first scarcely admitted us, quickly grew narrower and lower; we were almost bent double; yet still we persisted in making our way through it. At length we entered a wider space, and the low roof heightened; but, as we congratulated ourselves on this change, our torch was extinguished by a current of air, and we were left in utter darkness. The guides bring with them materials for renewing the light, but we had none—our only resource was to return as we came. We groped round the widened space to find the entrance, and after a time fancied that we had succeeded. This proved however to be a second passage, which evidently ascended. It terminated like the former; though something approaching to a ray, we could not tell whence, shed a very doubtful twilight in the space. By degrees, our eyes grew somewhat accustomed to this dimness, and we perceived that there was no direct passage leading us further; but that it was possible to climb one side of the cavern to a low arch at top, which promised a more easy path, from whence we now discovered that this light proceeded. With considerable difficulty we scrambled up, and came

to another passage with still more of illumination, and this led to another ascent like the former.

After a succession of these, which our resolution alone permitted us to surmount, we arrived at a wide cavern with an arched dome-like roof. An aperture in the midst let in the light of heaven; but this was overgrown with brambles and underwood, which acted as a veil, obscuring the day, and giving a solemn religious hue to the apartment. It was spacious, and nearly circular, with a raised seat of stone, about the size of a Grecian couch, at one end. The only sign that life had been here, was the perfect snow-white skeleton of a goat, which had probably not perceived the opening as it grazed on the hill above, and had fallen headlong. Ages perhaps had elapsed since this catastrophe; and the ruin it had made above, had been repaired by the growth of vegetation during many hundred summers.

The rest of the furniture of the cavern consisted of piles of leaves, fragments of bark, and a white filmy substance, resembling the inner part of the green hood which shelters the grain of the unripe Indian corn. We were fatigued by our struggles to attain this point, and seated ourselves on the rocky couch, while the sounds of tinkling sheep-bells, and shout of shepherd-boy, reached us from above.

At length my friend, who had taken up some of the leaves strewed about, exclaimed, "This *is* the Sibyl's cave; these are Sibylline leaves." On examination, we found that all the leaves, bark, and other substances were traced with written characters. What appeared to us more astonishing, was that these writings were expressed in various languages: some unknown to my companion, ancient Chaldee,[1] and Egyptian hieroglyphics, old as the Pyramids. Stranger still, some were in modern dialects, English and Italian. We could make out little by the dim light, but they seemed to contain prophecies, detailed relations of events but lately passed; names, now well known, but of modern date; and often exclamations of exultation or woe, of victory or defeat, were traced on their thin scant pages. This was certainly the Sibyl's Cave; not indeed exactly

as Virgil describes it; but the whole of this land had been so convulsed by earthquake and volcano, that the change was not wonderful, though the traces of ruin were effaced by time; and we probably owed the preservation of these leaves, to the accident which had closed the mouth of the cavern, and the swift-growing vegetation which had rendered its sole opening impervious to the storm. We made a hasty selection of such of the leaves, whose writing one at least of us could understand; and then, laden with our treasure, we bade adieu to the dim hypaethric[2] cavern, and after much difficulty succeeded in rejoining our guides.

During our stay at Naples, we often returned to this cave, sometimes alone, skimming the sun-lit sea, and each time added to our store. Since that period, whenever the world's circumstance has not imperiously called me away, or the temper of my mind impeded such study, I have been employed in deciphering these sacred remains. Their meaning, wondrous and eloquent, has often repaid my toil, soothing me in sorrow, and exciting my imagination to daring flights, through the immensity of nature and the mind of man. For awhile my labours were not solitary; but that time is gone; and, with the selected and matchless companion of my toils, their dearest reward is also lost to me—

> Di mie tenere frondi altro lavoro
> Credea mostrarte; e qual fero pianeta
> Ne 'nvidiò insieme, o mio nobil tesoro?[3]

I present the public with my latest discoveries in the slight Sibylline pages. Scattered and unconnected as they were, I have been obliged to add links, and model the work into a consistent form. But the main substance rests on the truths contained in these poetic rhapsodies, and the divine intuition which the Cumaean damsel obtained from heaven.

I have often wondered at the subject of her verses, and at the English dress of the Latin poet. Sometimes I have thought that, obscure and chaotic as they are, they owe their present form to me, their decipherer. As if we should give to another artist, the painted

fragments which form the mosaic copy of Raphael's Transfiguration in St. Peter's; he would put them together in a form, whose mode would be fashioned by his own peculiar mind and talent.[4] Doubtless the leaves of the Cumaean Sibyl have suffered distortion and diminution of interest and excellence in my hands. My only excuse for thus transforming them, is that they were unintelligible in their pristine condition.

My labours have cheered long hours of solitude, and taken me out of a world, which has averted its once benignant face from me, to one glowing with imagination and power. Will my readers ask how I could find solace from the narration of misery and woeful change? This is one of the mysteries of our nature, which holds full sway over me, and from whose influence I cannot escape. I confess, that I have not been unmoved by the development of the tale; and that I have been depressed, nay, agonized, at some parts of the recital, which I have faithfully transcribed from my materials. Yet such is human nature, that the excitement of mind was dear to me, and that the imagination, painter of tempest and earthquake, or, worse, the stormy and ruin-fraught passions of man, softened my real sorrows and endless regrets, by clothing these fictitious ones in that ideality, which takes the mortal sting from pain.

I hardly know whether this apology is necessary. For the merits of my adaptation and translation must decide how far I have well bestowed my time and imperfect powers, in giving form and substance to the frail and attenuated Leaves of the Sibyl.

1824 1826

Endnotes

- Note 1: A contribution to Romantic-period investigations of the nature of creativity, Shelley's Introduction to *The Last Man* (composed 1824 and published at the start of 1826) enigmatically identifies the novel that follows as a strange blend of creative work, transcription, and translation, in which biography (Shelley's personal history of suffering) is subsumed by history and myth. Playing with the convention of Gothic

romances that involves the protagonist's discovery of a decaying, all but illegible, manuscript from the past, Shelley leaves it an open question whether she is the editor or author of her "sibylline leaves."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Shelley begins with an actual event—the visit she and Percy paid in December 1818 to the ancient Roman resort of Baiae near Naples. See "Ode to the West Wind," lines 32–34 (p. 803, above).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Name given to a sea nymph in Greek mythology.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's ship in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* 2.2.197–203.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sites near Naples named for places in mythology: the fields thought to be inhabited after death by those favored by the gods and the entrance to the underworld, by tradition located at Lake Avernus.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The prophetess, inspired by the god Apollo, whose mad frenzies and cryptic accounts of future history are most famously described in the *Aeneid*, book 6. Other accounts describe how the sibyl wrote her prophecies on leaves, which she placed at the entrance to her cave; when the wind dispersed them, they became unintelligible. Coleridge had titled his 1817 collection of poems *Sibylline Leaves* so as to allude, he said, "to the fragmentary and widely scattered state in which [the poems] have been long suffered to remain."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Generic term for the poor of Naples, here employed as guides.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Allusion to Genesis 8:9: the dove sent by Noah from the ark finds "no rest for the sole of her foot."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Definitely not! (Italian).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Language of ancient Babylon, famed for its astronomical and astrological knowledge.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Open to the sky.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Quoted from the Italian of a sonnet by Petrarch (1304–1374): "From my tender leaves, I thought to show you a different work, and what fierce planet ended our being together, oh, my noble treasure?"Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Italian Renaissance artist Raphael's painting of the transfiguration of Christ is copied in mosaic on the altarpiece of the Cappella Clementina of St. Peter's in Rome.Return to reference 4

The Mortal Immortal[1]

A Tale

JULY 16, 1833.—This is a memorable anniversary for me; on it I complete my three hundred and twenty-third year!

The Wandering Jew?[2]—certainly not. More than eighteen centuries have passed over his head. In comparison with him, I am a very young Immortal.

Am I, then, immortal? This is a question which I have asked myself, by day and night, for now three hundred and three years, and yet cannot answer it. I detected a gray hair amidst my brown locks this very day—that surely signifies decay. Yet it may have remained concealed there for three hundred years—for some persons have become entirely white-headed before twenty years of age.

I will tell my story, and my reader shall judge for me. I will tell my story, and so contrive to pass some few hours of a long eternity, become so wearisome to me. For ever! Can it be? to live for ever! I have heard of enchantments, in which the victims were plunged into a deep sleep, to wake, after a hundred years, as fresh as ever: I have heard of the Seven Sleepers[3]—thus to be immortal would not be so burthensome: but, oh! the weight of never-ending time—the tedious passage of the still-succeeding hours! How happy was the fabled Nourjahad![4]——But to my task.

All the world has heard of Cornelius Agrippa.[5] His memory is as immortal as his arts have made me. All the world has also heard of his scholar, who, unawares, raised the foul fiend during his master's absence, and was destroyed by him.[6] The report, true or false, of this accident, was attended with many inconveniences to the renowned philosopher. All his scholars at once deserted him—his servants disappeared. He had no one near him to put coals on his

ever-burning fires while he slept, or to attend to the changeful colours of his medicines while he studied. Experiment after experiment failed, because one pair of hands was insufficient to complete them: the dark spirits laughed at him for not being able to retain a single mortal in his service.

I was then very young—very poor—and very much in love. I had been for about a year the pupil of Cornelius, though I was absent when this accident took place. On my return, my friends implored me not to return to the alchymist's abode. I trembled as I listened to the dire tale they told; I required no second warning; and when Cornelius came and offered me a purse of gold if I would remain under his roof, I felt as if Satan himself tempted me. My teeth chattered—my hair stood on end:—I ran off as fast as my trembling knees would permit.

My failing steps were directed whither for two years they had every evening been attracted,—a gently bubbling spring of pure living waters, beside which lingered a dark-haired girl, whose beaming eyes were fixed on the path I was accustomed each night to tread. I cannot remember the hour when I did not love Bertha; we had been neighbours and playmates from infancy—her parents, like mine, were of humble life, yet respectable—our attachment had been a source of pleasure to them. In an evil hour, a malignant fever carried off both her father and mother, and Bertha became an orphan. She would have found a home beneath my paternal roof, but, unfortunately, the old lady of the near castle, rich, childless, and solitary, declared her intention to adopt her. Henceforth Bertha was clad in silk—inhabited a marble palace—and was looked on as being highly favoured by fortune. But in her new situation among her new associates, Bertha remained true to the friend of her humbler days; she often visited the cottage of my father, and when forbidden to go thither, she would stray towards the neighbouring wood, and meet me beside its shady fountain.

She often declared that she owed no duty to her new protectress equal in sanctity to that which bound us. Yet still I was too poor to marry, and she grew weary of being tormented on my account. She

had a haughty but an impatient spirit, and grew angry at the obstacles that prevented our union. We met now after an absence, and she had been sorely beset while I was away; she complained bitterly, and almost reproached me for being poor. I replied hastily,—

"I am honest, if I am poor!—were I not, I might soon become rich!" This exclamation produced a thousand questions. I feared to shock her by owning the truth, but she drew it from me; and then, casting a look of disdain on me, she said—

"You pretend to love, and you fear to face the Devil for my sake!"

I protested that I had only dreaded to offend her;—while she dwelt on the magnitude of the reward that I should receive. Thus encouraged—shamed by her—led on by love and hope, laughing at my late fears, with quick steps and a light heart, I returned to accept the offers of the alchymist, and was instantly installed in my office.

A year passed away. I became possessed of no insignificant sum of money. Custom had banished my fears. In spite of the most painful vigilance, I had never detected the trace of a cloven foot; nor was the studious silence of our abode ever disturbed by demoniac howls. I still continued my stolen interviews with Bertha, and Hope dawned on me—Hope—but not perfect joy; for Bertha fancied that love and security were enemies, and her pleasure was to divide them in my bosom. Though true of heart, she was somewhat of a coquette in manner; and I was jealous as a Turk. She slighted me in a thousand ways, yet would never acknowledge herself to be in the wrong. She would drive me mad with anger, and then force me to beg her pardon. Sometimes she fancied that I was not sufficiently submissive, and then she had some story of a rival, favoured by her protectress. She was surrounded by silk-clad youths—the rich and gay—What chance had the sad-robed scholar of Cornelius compared with these?

On one occasion, the philosopher made such large demands upon my time, that I was unable to meet her as I was wont. He was engaged in some mighty work, and I was forced to remain, day and night, feeding his furnaces and watching his chemical preparations. Bertha waited for me in vain at the fountain. Her haughty spirit fired

at this neglect; and when at last I stole out during the few short minutes allotted to me for slumber, and hoped to be consoled by her, she received me with disdain, dismissed me in scorn, and vowed that any man should possess her hand rather than he who could not be in two places at once for her sake. She would be revenged!—And truly she was. In my dingy retreat I heard that she had been hunting, attended by Albert Hoffer. Albert Hoffer was favoured by her protectress, and the three passed in cavalcade before my smoky window. Methought that they mentioned my name—it was followed by a laugh of derision, as her dark eyes glanced contemptuously towards my abode.

Jealousy, with all its venom, and all its misery, entered my breast. Now I shed a torrent of tears, to think that I should never call her mine; and, anon, I imprecated a thousand curses on her inconstancy. Yet, still I must stir the fires of the alchymist, still attend on the changes of his unintelligible medicines.

Cornelius had watched for three days and nights, nor closed his eyes. The progress of his alembics[7] was slower than he expected: in spite of his anxiety, sleep weighed upon his eyelids. Again and again he threw off drowsiness with more than human energy; again and again it stole away his senses. He eyed his crucibles wistfully. "Not ready yet," he murmured; "will another night pass before the work is accomplished? Winzy,[8] you are vigilant—you are faithful—you have slept, my boy—you slept last night. Look at that glass vessel. The liquid it contains is of a soft rose-colour: the moment it begins to change its hue, awaken me—till then I may close my eyes. First, it will turn white, and then emit golden flashes; but wait not till then; when the rose-colour fades, rouse me." I scarcely heard the last words, muttered, as they were, in sleep. Even then he did not quite yield to nature. "Winzy, my boy," he again said, "do not touch the vessel—do not put it to your lips; it is a philter[9]—a philter to cure love; you would not cease to love your Bertha—beware to drink!"

And he slept. His venerable head sunk on his breast, and I scarce heard his regular breathing. For a few minutes I watched the vessel—the rosy hue of the liquid remained unchanged. Then my thoughts

wandered—they visited the fountain, and dwelt on a thousand charming scenes never to be renewed—never! Serpents and adders were in my heart as the word "Never!" half formed itself on my lips. False girl!—false and cruel! Never more would she smile on me as that evening she smiled on Albert. Worthless, detested woman! I would not remain unrevenged—she should see Albert expire at her feet—she should die beneath my vengeance. She had smiled in disdain and triumph—she knew my wretchedness and her power. Yet what power had she?—the power of exciting my hate—my utter scorn—my—oh, all but indifference! Could I attain that—could I regard her with careless eyes, transferring my rejected love to one fairer and more true, that were indeed a victory!

A bright flash darted before my eyes. I had forgotten the medicine of the adept; I gazed on it with wonder: flashes of admirable beauty, more bright than those which the diamond emits when the sun's rays are on it, glanced from the surface of the liquid; an odour the most fragrant and grateful stole over my sense; the vessel seemed one globe of living radiance, lovely to the eye, and most inviting to the taste. The first thought, instinctively inspired by the grosser sense, was, I will—I must drink. I raised the vessel to my lips. "It will cure me of love—of torture!" Already I had quaffed half of the most delicious liquor ever tasted by the palate of man, when the philosopher stirred. I started—I dropped the glass—the fluid flamed and glanced along the floor, while I felt Cornelius's gripe at my throat, as he shrieked aloud, "Wretch! you have destroyed the labour of my life!"

The philosopher was totally unaware that I had drunk any portion of his drug. His idea was, and I gave a tacit assent to it, that I had raised the vessel from curiosity, and that, frighted at its brightness, and the flashes of intense light it gave forth, I had let it fall. I never undeceived him. The fire of the medicine was quenched—the fragrance died away—he grew calm, as a philosopher should under the heaviest trials, and dismissed me to rest.

I will not attempt to describe the sleep of glory and bliss which bathed my soul in paradise during the remaining hours of that

memorable night. Words would be faint and shallow types of my enjoyment, or of the gladness that possessed my bosom when I woke. I trod air—my thoughts were in heaven. Earth appeared heaven, and my inheritance upon it was to be one trance of delight. "This it is to be cured of love," I thought; "I will see Bertha this day, and she will find her lover cold and regardless; too happy to be disdainful, yet how utterly indifferent to her!"

The hours danced away. The philosopher, secure that he had once succeeded, and believing that he might again, began to concoct the same medicine once more. He was shut up with his books and drugs, and I had a holiday. I dressed myself with care; I looked in an old but polished shield, which served me for a mirror; methought my good looks had wonderfully improved. I hurried beyond the precincts of the town, joy in my soul, the beauty of heaven and earth around me. I turned my steps towards the castle —I could look on its lofty turrets with lightness of heart, for I was cured of love. My Bertha saw me afar off, as I came up the avenue. I know not what sudden impulse animated her bosom, but at the sight, she sprung with a light fawn-like bound down the marble steps, and was hastening towards me. But I had been perceived by another person. The old high-born hag, who called herself her protectress, and was her tyrant, had seen me, also; she hobbled, panting, up the terrace; a page, as ugly as herself, held up her train, and fanned her as she hurried along, and stopped my fair girl with a "How, now, my bold mistress? whither so fast? Back to your cage—hawks are abroad!"[1]

Bertha clasped her hands—her eyes were still bent on my approaching figure. I saw the contest. How I abhorred the old crone who checked the kind impulses of my Bertha's softening heart. Hitherto, respect for her rank had caused me to avoid the lady of the castle; now I disdained such trivial considerations. I was cured of love, and lifted above all human fears; I hastened forwards, and soon reached the terrace. How lovely Bertha looked! her eyes flashing fire, her cheeks glowing with impatience and anger, she was

a thousand times more graceful and charming than ever—I no longer loved—Oh! no, I adored—worshipped—idolized her!

She had that morning been persecuted, with more than usual vehemence, to consent to an immediate marriage with my rival. She was reproached with the encouragement that she had shown him—she was threatened with being turned out of doors with disgrace and shame. Her proud spirit rose in arms at the threat; but when she remembered the scorn that she had heaped upon me, and how, perhaps, she had thus lost one whom she now regarded as her only friend, she wept with remorse and rage. At that moment I appeared. "O, Winzy!" she exclaimed, "take me to your mother's cot; swiftly let me leave the detested luxuries and wretchedness of this noble dwelling—take me to poverty and happiness."

I clasped her in my arms with transport. The old lady was speechless with fury, and broke forth into invective only when we were far on our road to my natal cottage. My mother received the fair fugitive, escaped from a gilt cage to nature and liberty, with tenderness and joy; my father, who loved her, welcomed her heartily; it was a day of rejoicing, which did not need the addition of the celestial potion of the alchymist to steep me in delight.

Soon after this eventful day, I became the husband of Bertha. I ceased to be the scholar of Cornelius, but I continued his friend. I always felt grateful to him for having, unawares, procured me that delicious draught of a divine elixir, which, instead of curing me of love (sad cure! solitary and joyless remedy for evils which seem blessings to the memory), had inspired me with courage and resolution, thus winning for me an inestimable treasure in my Bertha.

I often called to mind that period of trance-like inebriation with wonder. The drink of Cornelius had not fulfilled the task for which he affirmed that it had been prepared, but its effects were more potent and blissful than words can express. They had faded by degrees, yet they lingered long—and painted life in hues of splendour. Bertha often wondered at my lightness of heart and unaccustomed gaiety; for, before, I had been rather serious, or even sad, in my disposition.

She loved me the better for my cheerful temper, and our days were winged by joy.

Five years afterwards I was suddenly summoned to the bedside of the dying Cornelius. He had sent for me in haste, conjuring my instant presence. I found him stretched on his pallet, enfeebled even to death; all of life that yet remained animated his piercing eyes, and they were fixed on a glass vessel, full of a roseate liquid.

"Behold," he said, in a broken and inward voice, "the vanity of human wishes! a second time my hopes are about to be crowned, a second time they are destroyed. Look at that liquor—you remember five years ago I had prepared the same, with the same success;—then, as now, my thirsting lips expected to taste the immortal elixir—you dashed it from me! and at present it is too late."

He spoke with difficulty, and fell back on his pillow. I could not help saying,—

"How, revered master, can a cure for love restore you to life?"

A faint smile gleamed across his face as I listened earnestly to his scarcely intelligible answer.

"A cure for love and for all things—the Elixir of Immortality. Ah! if now I might drink, I should live for ever!"

As he spoke, a golden flash gleamed from the fluid; a well-remembered fragrance stole over the air; he raised himself, all weak as he was—strength seemed miraculously to re-enter his frame—he stretched forth his hand—a loud explosion startled me—a ray of fire shot up from the elixir, and the glass vessel which contained it was shivered to atoms! I turned my eyes towards the philosopher; he had fallen back—his eyes were glassy—his features rigid—he was dead!

But I lived, and was to live for ever! So said the unfortunate alchymist, and for a few days I believed his words. I remembered the glorious drunkenness that had followed my stolen draught. I reflected on the change I had felt in my frame—in my soul. The bounding elasticity of the one—the buoyant lightness of the other. I surveyed myself in a mirror, and could perceive no change in my features during the space of the five years which had elapsed. I

remembered the radiant hues and grateful scent of that delicious beverage—worthy the gift it was capable of bestowing——I was, then, IMMORTAL!

A few days after I laughed at my credulity. The old proverb, that "a prophet is least regarded in his own country," was true with respect to me and my defunct master. I loved him as a man—I respected him as a sage—but I derided the notion that he could command the powers of darkness, and laughed at the superstitious fears with which he was regarded by the vulgar. He was a wise philosopher, but had no acquaintance with any spirits but those clad in flesh and blood. His science was simply human; and human science, I soon persuaded myself, could never conquer nature's laws so far as to imprison the soul for ever within its carnal habitation. Cornelius had brewed a soul-refreshing drink—more inebriating than wine—sweeter and more fragrant than any fruit: it possessed probably strong medicinal powers, imparting gladness to the heart and vigor to the limbs; but its effects would wear out; already were they diminished in my frame. I was a lucky fellow to have quaffed health and joyous spirits, and perhaps long life, at my master's hands; but my good fortune ended there: longevity was far different from immortality.

I continued to entertain this belief for many years. Sometimes a thought stole across me—Was the alchymist indeed deceived? But my habitual credence was, that I should meet the fate of all the children of Adam at my appointed time—a little late, but still at a natural age. Yet it was certain that I retained a wonderfully youthful look. I was laughed at for my vanity in consulting the mirror so often, but I consulted it in vain—my brow was untrenched—my cheeks—my eyes—my whole person continued as untarnished as in my twentieth year.

I was troubled. I looked at the faded beauty of Bertha—I seemed more like her son. By degrees our neighbours began to make similar observations, and I found at last that I went by the name of the Scholar bewitched. Bertha herself grew uneasy. She became jealous and peevish, and at length she began to question me. We had no

children; we were all in all to each other; and though, as she grew older, her vivacious spirit became a little allied to ill-temper, and her beauty sadly diminished, I cherished her in my heart as the mistress I had idolized, the wife I had sought and won with such perfect love.

At last our situation became intolerable: Bertha was fifty—I twenty years of age. I had, in very shame, in some measure adopted the habits of a more advanced age; I no longer mingled in the dance among the young and gay, but my heart bounded along with them while I restrained my feet; and a sorry figure I cut among the Nestors[2] of our village. But before the time I mention, things were altered—we were universally shunned; we were—at least, I was—reported to have kept up an iniquitous acquaintance with some of my former master's supposed friends. Poor Bertha was pitied, but deserted. I was regarded with horror and detestation.

What was to be done? we sat by our winter fire—poverty had made itself felt, for none would buy the produce of my farm; and often I had been forced to journey twenty miles, to some place where I was not known, to dispose of our property. It is true we had saved something for an evil day—that day was come.

We sat by our lone fireside—the old-hearted youth and his antiquated wife. Again Bertha insisted on knowing the truth; she recapitulated all she had ever heard said about me, and added her own observations. She conjured me to cast off the spell; she described how much more comely gray hairs were than my chestnut locks; she descanted on the reverence and respect due to age—how preferable to the slight regard paid to mere children: could I imagine that the despicable gifts of youth and good looks outweighed disgrace, hatred, and scorn? Nay, in the end I should be burnt as a dealer in the black art, while she, to whom I had not deigned to communicate any portion of my good fortune, might be stoned as my accomplice. At length she insinuated that I must share my secret with her, and bestow on her like benefits to those I myself enjoyed, or she would denounce me—and then she burst into tears.

Thus beset, methought it was the best way to tell the truth. I revealed it as tenderly as I could, and spoke only of a *very long life*,

not of immortality—which representation, indeed, coincided best with my own ideas. When I ended, I rose and said,

"And now, my Bertha, will you denounce the lover of your youth? —You will not, I know. But it is too hard, my poor wife, that you should suffer from my ill-luck and the accursed arts of Cornelius. I will leave you—you have wealth enough, and friends will return in my absence. I will go; young as I seem, and strong as I am, I can work and gain my bread among strangers, unsuspected and unknown. I loved you in youth; God is my witness that I would not desert you in age, but that your safety and happiness require it."

I took my cap and moved towards the door; in a moment Bertha's arms were round my neck, and her lips were pressed to mine. "No, my husband, my Winzy," she said, "you shall not go alone —take me with you; we will remove from this place, and, as you say, among strangers we shall be unsuspected and safe. I am not so very old as quite to shame you, my Winzy; and I dare say the charm will soon wear off, and, with the blessing of God, you will become more elderly-looking, as is fitting; you shall not leave me."

I returned the good soul's embrace heartily. "I will not, my Bertha; but for your sake I had not thought of such a thing. I will be your true, faithful husband while you are spared to me, and do my duty by you to the last."

The next day we prepared secretly for our emigration. We were obliged to make great pecuniary sacrifices—it could not be helped. We realised a sum sufficient, at least, to maintain us while Bertha lived; and, without saying adieu to anyone, quitted our native country to take refuge in a remote part of western France.

It was a cruel thing to transport poor Bertha from her native village, and the friends of her youth, to a new country, new language, new customs. The strange secret of my destiny rendered this removal immaterial to me; but I compassionated her deeply, and was glad to perceive that she found compensation for her misfortunes in a variety of little ridiculous circumstances. Away from all tell-tale chroniclers, she sought to decrease the apparent disparity of our ages by a thousand feminine arts—rouge, youthful dress, and

assumed juvenility of manner. I could not be angry—Did not I myself wear a mask? Why quarrel with hers, because it was less successful? I grieved deeply when I remembered that this was my Bertha, whom I had loved so fondly, and won with such transport—the dark-eyed, dark-haired girl, with smiles of enchanting archness and a step like a fawn—this mincing, simpering, jealous old woman. I should have revered her gray locks and withered cheeks; but thus!—It was my work, I knew; but I did not the less deplore this type of human weakness.

Her jealousy never slept. Her chief occupation was to discover that, in spite of outward appearances, I was myself growing old. I verily believe that the poor soul loved me truly in her heart, but never had woman so tormenting a mode of displaying fondness. She would discern wrinkles in my face and decrepitude in my walk, while I bounded along in youthful vigour, the youngest looking of twenty youths. I never dared address another woman: on one occasion, fancying that the belle of the village regarded me with favouring eyes, she bought me a gray wig. Her constant discourse among her acquaintances was, that though I looked so young, there was ruin at work within my frame; and she affirmed that the worst symptom about me was my apparent health. My youth was a disease, she said, and I ought at all times to prepare, if not for a sudden and awful death, at least to awake some morning white-headed, and bowed down with all the marks of advanced years. I let her talk—I often joined in her conjectures. Her warnings chimed in with my never-ceasing speculations concerning my state, and I took an earnest, though painful, interest in listening to all that her quick wit and excited imagination could say on the subject.

Why dwell on these minute circumstances? We lived on for many long years. Bertha became bed-rid and paralytic: I nursed her as a mother might a child. She grew peevish, and still harped upon one string—of how long I should survive her. It has ever been a source of consolation to me, that I performed my duty scrupulously towards her. She had been mine in youth, she was mine in age, and at last,

when I heaped the sod over her corpse, I wept to feel that I had lost all that really bound me to humanity.

Since then how many have been my cares and woes, how few and empty my enjoyments! I pause here in my history—I will pursue it no further. A sailor without rudder or compass, tossed on a stormy sea—a traveller lost on a widespread heath, without landmark or star to guide him—such have I been: more lost, more hopeless than either. A nearing ship, a gleam from some far cot, may save them; but I have no beacon except the hope of death.

Death! mysterious, ill-visaged friend of weak humanity! Why alone of all mortals have you cast me from your sheltering fold? O, for the peace of the grave! the deep silence of the iron-bound tomb! that thought would cease to work in my brain, and my heart beat no more with emotions varied only by new forms of sadness!

Am I immortal? I return to my first question. In the first place, is it not more probable that the beverage of the alchymist was fraught rather with longevity than eternal life? Such is my hope. And then be it remembered, that I only drank *half* of the potion prepared by him. Was not the whole necessary to complete the charm? To have drained half the Elixir of Immortality is but to be half immortal—my For-ever is thus truncated and null.

But again, who shall number the years of the half of eternity? I often try to imagine by what rule the infinite may be divided. Sometimes I fancy age advancing upon me. One gray hair I have found. Fool! do I lament? Yes, the fear of age and death often creeps coldly into my heart; and the more I live, the more I dread death, even while I abhor life. Such an enigma is man—born to perish—when he wars, as I do, against the established laws of his nature.

But for this anomaly of feeling surely I might die: the medicine of the alchymist would not be proof against fire—sword—and the strangling waters. I have gazed upon the blue depths of many a placid lake, and the tumultuous rushing of many a mighty river, and have said, peace inhabits those waters; yet I have turned my steps away, to live yet another day. I have asked myself, whether suicide

would be a crime in one to whom thus only the portals of the other world could be opened. I have done all, except presenting myself as a soldier or duellist, an object of destruction to my—no, *not* my fellow-mortals, and therefore I have shrunk away. They are not my fellows. The inextinguishable power of life in my frame, and their ephemeral existence, place us wide as the poles asunder. I could not raise a hand against the meanest or the most powerful among them.

Thus I have lived on for many a year—alone, and weary of myself—desirous of death, yet never dying—a mortal immortal. Neither ambition nor avarice can enter my mind, and the ardent love that gnaws at my heart, never to be returned—never to find an equal on which to expend itself—lives there only to torment me.

This very day I conceived a design by which I may end all—without self-slaughter, without making another man a Cain—an expedition, which mortal frame can never survive, even endued with the youth and strength that inhabits mine. Thus I shall put my immortality to the test, and rest for ever—or return, the wonder and benefactor of the human species.[3]

Before I go, a miserable vanity has caused me to pen these pages. I would not die, and leave no name behind. Three centuries have passed since I quaffed the fatal beverage: another year shall not elapse before, encountering gigantic dangers—warring with the powers of frost in their home—beset by famine, toil, and tempest—I yield this body, too tenacious a cage for a soul which thirsts for freedom, to the destructive elements of air and water—or, if I survive, my name shall be recorded as one of the most famous among the sons of men; and, my task achieved, I shall adopt more resolute means, and, by scattering and annihilating the atoms that compose my frame, set at liberty the life imprisoned within, and so cruelly prevented from soaring from this dim earth to a sphere more congenial to its immortal essence.

1833 1834

Endnotes

- Note 1: Compare Keats's *Endymion* 1.843–44: "if this earthly love has power to make / Men's being mortal, immortal." "The Mortal Immortal" is one of the sixteen stories Shelley during her career contributed to *The Keepsake*, a gift book published annually between 1828 and 1857. This tale shares its first-person narrative form and interest in the consequences of scientific ambition with Shelley's best-known novel. With a certain irony, given its original setting in a volume that its publisher marketed as a lasting memento of affection that might be purchased for a loved one, "The Mortal Immortal" also examines the question of whether love can survive time's ravages if beauty does not.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The man who, according to legend, taunted Christ on the road to the crucifixion and was therefore condemned to wander the Earth until Judgment Day.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Legendary Christian youths who took refuge in a cave in Ephesus to escape their pagan persecutors and slept for 187 years.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Title character of Frances Sheridan's Oriental tale of 1767, who is tricked into believing that he has become immortal and that, when he sleeps, he does so for several years at a time.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The 16th-century German researcher of the occult and the alchemical sciences. Agrippa's works are among the books that Victor Frankenstein reads when young and that prompt him to begin "the search of the philosopher's stone" (which had the power to transmute base metal into gold) and of "the elixir of life"; his "favourite authors" also promise to teach the "raising of ghosts or devils."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The story was told by Robert Southey in a 1798 poem titled "Cornelius Agrippa: A Ballad of a Young Man That Would Read Unlawful Books."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Distilling apparatuses that Agrippa uses in his alchemical investigations.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The narrator's name suggests the Scots *winze,* meaning "curse."Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Magic potion.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In the *Keepsake* volume this is the scene that the artist and engraver picture.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Village elders. In the *Iliad* Nestor is the old and battle-scarred advisor to the Greek army.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare Walton in *Frankenstein*, who describes his expedition to the North Pole as conferring "inestimable benefit . . . on all mankind to the last generation," or Frankenstein, who likewise anticipates the gratitude of posterity: "A new species would bless me as its creator and source."Return to reference 3

LETITIA ELIZABETH LANDON
1802–1838

Letitia Elizabeth Landon, whose initials became one of the most famous literary pseudonyms of nineteenth-century Britain, was born and educated in Chelsea, London. She published her first poem in the weekly *Literary Gazette* in March 1820, when she was seventeen, and soon thereafter became a principal writer and reviewer for the magazine. Her first important collection of poems, published in 1824, was *The Improvisatrice*—a work that suggests Landon's fascination with Germaine de Staël's *Corinne* and with the Italy that she never visited but encountered in the pages of Staël, the Shelleys, and Byron. It went through six editions in its first year and was followed by *The Troubadour, Catalogue of Pictures, and Historical Sketches* (1825), which went through four. She quickly followed these with *The Golden Violet* (1827), the first of many editions of her *Poetical Works* (1827), and *The Venetian Bracelet* (1829). Her fiction includes *Romance and Reality* (1831), a high-society novel with sharp observations on contemporary literature, manners, and fashion, as well as the historical novel *Ethel Churchill, or The Two Brides* (1837); she also wrote essays, short fiction, children's stories, and a play. On top of this, she edited—and contributed hundreds of poems to—the albums, gift books, and annual anthologies that became a staple of British literary production of the 1820s and 1830s. All this highly remunerative work appeared from the pen of "L. E. L.," the pseudonym that she first used in the

Literary Gazette and that attracted increasing numbers of readers and also poetic responses, as it was disclosed by stages that the author behind the initials was female, young, and a great beauty.

Landon and Felicia Hemans, as "L. E. L." and "Mrs. Hemans," were two of the bestselling poets of their time—the decade and a half following the deaths of Keats, Percy Shelley, and Byron in the early 1820s—and were major inspirations to subsequent writers such as Elizabeth Barrett and Christina Rossetti. Unlike Hemans, Landon attracted scandal, partly because of her casual social relations with men and partly because of her principal subject matter, the joys and especially the sorrows of female passion. Landon's position as a young, single female writer, busily socializing in London's literary scene, also attracted notice. Her father had for a time done well enough in business to rent a large country house, but was eventually bankrupted and abandoned the family in 1820 (he would die four years later); these straitened circumstances may have prompted Landon's first forays into publication. After a falling-out with her mother, whom she continued to support financially, Landon lived first with her grandmother, then, from 1826 on, on her own in an attic room that would become part of her legend. There were rumors of affairs with, among others, her promoter William Jerdan, who was editor of the *Literary Gazette*, the journalist William Maginn, and the artist Daniel Maclise. Landon's biographer Lucasta Miller, building on research by scholar Cynthia Lawford, has found evidence that Landon gave birth to three illegitimate children, with Jerdan the probable father; though there were gossipy hints in the press about these pregnancies, Landon and her defenders seem mostly to have succeeded in screening them from view, or at least to have kept matters ambiguous enough to maintain her reputation. (Miller also suggests that Jerdan's exploitative management of Landon's career, along with the financial support Landon gave relatives, goes some way toward explaining why Landon worked herself to the point of exhaustion despite the considerable earning power of her "brand.") An engagement to the editor John Forster, future biographer of Dickens, was broken off due to the rumors that followed her. In 1838

she married someone she had known for only a short time, George Maclean, governor of the British settlement at Cape Coast Castle, west Africa (in what is now Ghana). She arrived with Maclean at Cape Coast in August 1838 and two months later was dead, reportedly from an overdose of prussic acid. Wild rumors—of suicide or of murder (at the hands, some speculated, of Maclean's jealous African mistress or mistresses)—began circulating when news of Landon's death reached England. They appear now to have been unfounded. The nineteenth-century public insisted, however, on using Landon's poetic personas to interpret the circumstances of her death.

Landon perfected, and reviewers helped maintain, several of these personas: the pseudonymous, therefore anonymous, writer of passionate love lyrics; the Romantic "improvisatrice" jotting down verses in the interstices of an intense social life; the renowned beauty who constantly fails in love and, in lamenting her crushed feelings, becomes the female equivalent of the Byronic hero; and an early version of the Victorian "poetess" composing songs to appeal to a burgeoning cult of domesticity. As in Hemans's poetry, some of these personas are not wholly compatible with some of the others. But their variety and vitality captivated readers.

From The Improvisatrice

Sappho's Song[1]

Farewell, my lute!—and would that I
  Had never waked thy burning chords!
Poison has been upon thy sigh,
  And fever has breathed in thy words.

Yet wherefore, wherefore should I blame
  Thy power, thy spell, my gentlest lute?
I should have been the wretch I am,
  Had every chord of thine been mute.

It was my evil star above,
  Not my sweet lute, that wrought me wrong;
It was not song that taught me love,
  But it was love that taught me song.

If song be past, and hope undone,
  And pulse, and head, and heart, are flame;
It is thy work, thou faithless one!
  But, no!—I will not name thy name!

Sun-god, lute, wreath, are vowed to thee!
  Long be their light upon my grave—
My glorious grave—yon deep blue sea:
  I shall sleep calm beneath its wave!

1824

Endnotes

- Note 1: From Landon's long poem *The Improvisatrice*, which she described in a prefatory comment as "an attempt to illustrate that species of inspiration common in Italy, where the mind is warmed from earliest childhood by all that is beautiful in Nature and glorious in Art." In this song, however, Landon's heroine, an artist and a poet who performs her compositions, looks to Greece and to the legends that had grown up around Sappho (7th century B.C.E.), founder of the lyric tradition, whose poems have survived only in fragmentary form. Presented as a renunciation of song, and even as a suicide note of sorts, this poem draws particularly on the legend that tells of how Sappho drowned herself in the Aegean Sea, distraught over the handsome boatman Phaon's refusal to reciprocate her love.Return to reference 1

Lines

Written under a Picture of a Girl Burning a Love-Letter

The lines were filled with many a tender thing,
All the impassioned heart's fond communing.

I took the scroll: I could not brook
  An eye to gaze on it, save mine;
I could not bear another's look
  Should dwell upon one thought of thine.
My lamp was burning by my side,
  I held thy letter to the flame,
I marked the blaze swift o'er it glide,
  It did not even spare thy name.
Soon the light from the embers past,
  I felt so sad to see it die,
So bright at first, so dark at last,
  I feared it was love's history.

1824

Love’s Last Lesson

“Teach it me, if you can,—forgetfulness![1]
I surely shall forget, if you can bid me;
I who have worshipped thee, my god on earth,
I who have bow’d me at thy lightest word.
Your last command, ‘Forget me,’ will it not
Sink deeply down within my inmost soul?
Forget thee!—ay, forgetfulness will be
A mercy to me. By the many nights
When I have wept for that I dared not sleep,—
A dream had made me live my woes again,
Acting my wretchedness, without the hope
My foolish heart still clings to, though that hope
Is like the opiate which may lull a while,
Then wake to double torture; by the days
Pass’d in lone watching and in anxious fears,
When a breath sent the crimson to my cheek,
Like the red gushing of a sudden wound;
By all the careless looks and careless words
Which have to me been like the scorpion’s stinging;
By happiness blighted, and by thee, for ever;
By thy eternal work of wretchedness;
By all my wither’d feelings, ruin’d health,
Crush’d hopes, and rifled heart, I will forget thee!
Alas! my words are vanity. Forget thee!
Thy work of wasting is too surely done.
The April shower may pass and be forgotten,
The rose fall and one fresh spring in its place,
And thus it may be with light summer love.
It was not thus with mine: it did not spring,
Like the bright colour on an evening cloud,
Into a moment’s life, brief, beautiful;

Not amid lighted halls, when flatteries
Steal on the ear like dew upon the rose,
As soft, as soon dispersed, as quickly pass'd;
But you first call'd my woman's feelings forth,
And taught me love ere I had dream'd love's name.
I loved unconsciously: your name was all
That seem'd in language, and to me the world
Was only made for you; in solitude,
When passions hold their interchange together,
Your image was the shadow of my thought;
Never did slave, before his Eastern lord,
Tremble as I did when I met your eye,
And yet each look was counted as a prize;
I laid your words up in my heart like pearls
Hid in the ocean's treasure-cave. At last
I learn'd my heart's deep secret: for I hoped,
I dream'd you loved me; wonder, fear, delight,
Swept my heart like a storm; my soul, my life,
Seem'd all too little for your happiness;
Had I been mistress of the starry worlds
That light the midnight, they had all been yours,
And I had deem'd such boon but poverty.
As it was, I gave all I could—my love,
My deep, my true, my fervent, faithful love;
And now you bid me learn forgetfulness:
It is a lesson that I soon shall learn.
There is a home of quiet for the wretched,
A somewhat dark, and cold, and silent rest,
But still it is rest,—for it is the grave."

She flung aside the scroll, as it had part
In her great misery. Why should she write?
What could she write? Her woman's pride forbade
To let him look upon her heart, and see
It was an utter ruin;—and cold words,
And scorn and slight, that may repay his own,

Were as a foreign language, to whose sound
She might not frame her utterance. Down she bent
Her head upon an arm so white that tears
Seem'd but the natural melting of its snow,
Touch'd by the flush'd cheek's crimson; yet life-blood
Less wrings in shedding than such tears as those.

And this then is love's ending! It is like
The history of some fair southern clime.
Hot fires are in the bosom of the earth,
And the warm'd soil puts forth its thousand flowers,
Its fruits of gold, summer's regality,
And sleep and odours float upon the air:
At length the subterranean element
Breaks from its secret dwelling-place, and lays
All waste before it; the red lava stream
Sweeps like the pestilence; and that which was
A garden in its colours and its breath,
Fit for the princess of a fairy tale,
Is as a desert, in whose burning sands,
And ashy waters, who is there can trace
A sign, a memory of its former beauty?
It is thus with the heart; love lights it up
With hopes like young companions, and with joys
Dreaming deliciously of their sweet selves.

This is at first; but what is the result?
Hopes that lie mute in their own sullenness,
For they have quarrell'd even with themselves;
And joys indeed like birds of Paradise:[2]
And in their stead despair coils scorpion-like
Stinging itself;[3] and the heart, burnt and crush'd
With passion's earthquake, scorch'd and wither'd up,
Lies in its desolation,—this is love.

What is the tale that I would tell? Not one

Of strange adventure, but a common tale
Of woman's wretchedness; one to be read
Daily in many a young and blighted heart.
The lady whom I spake of rose again
From the red fever's couch, to careless eyes
Perchance the same as she had ever been.
But oh, how alter'd to herself! She felt
That bird-like pining for some gentle home
To which affection might attach itself,
That weariness which hath but outward part
In what the world calls pleasure, and that chill
Which makes life taste the bitterness of death.

And he she loved so well,—what opiate
Lull'd consciousness into its selfish sleep?—
He said he loved her not; that never vow
Or passionate pleading won her soul for him;
And that he guess'd not her deep tenderness.

Are words, then, only false? are there no looks,
Mute but most eloquent; no gentle cares
That win so much upon the fair weak things
They seem to guard? And had he not long read
Her heart's hush'd secret in the soft dark eye
Lighted at his approach, and on the cheek
Colouring all crimson at his lightest look?
This is the truth; his spirit wholly turn'd
To stern ambition's dream, to that fierce strife
Which leads to life's high places, and reck'd° not
What lovely flowers might perish in his path.

And here at length is somewhat of revenge:
For man's most golden dreams of pride and power
Are vain as any woman-dreams of love;
Both end in weary brow and wither'd heart,
And the grave closes over those whose hopes

Have lain there long before.

1827

Endnotes

- Note 1: An allusion to Byron's *Manfred* 1.1.135–36: "What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals—say?"—to which Manfred replies, "Forgetfulness." Other Byronic echoes in lines 14–15, 18–23, 85–86, and 95–98 further link Landon's speaker to the protagonists of *Childe Harold* and *Manfred.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Eastern tales, the bird of Paradise never rests on the earth [*Landon's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In *The Giaour: A Fragment of a Turkish Tale* (1813), Byron had written of how "The Mind, that broods o'er guilty woes, / Is like the Scorpion girt by fire" (lines 423–24).Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *cared*Return to reference °

Lines of Life

Orphan in my first years, I early learnt
To make my heart suffice itself, and seek
Support and sympathy in its own depths.[1]

Well, read my cheek, and watch my eye, —
  Too strictly school'd are they,
One secret of my soul to show,
  One hidden thought betray.

I never knew the time my heart
  Look'd freely from my brow;
It once was check'd by timidness,
  'Tis taught by caution now.

I live among the cold, the false,
  And I must seem like them;
And such I am, for I am false
  As those I most condemn.

I teach my lip its sweetest smile,
  My tongue its softest tone;
I borrow others' likeness, till
  Almost I lose my own.

I pass through flattery's gilded sieve,
  Whatever I would say;
In social life, all, like the blind,
  Must learn to feel their way.

I check my thoughts like curbed steeds
  That struggle with the rein;

I bid my feelings sleep, like wrecks
In the unfathom'd main.

I hear them speak of love, the deep,
The true, and mock the name;
Mock at all high and early truth,
And I too do the same.

I hear them tell some touching tale,
I swallow down the tear;
I hear them name some generous deed,
And I have learnt to sneer.

I hear the spiritual, the kind,
The pure, but named in mirth;
Till all of good, ay, even hope,
Seems exiled from our earth.

And one fear, withering ridicule,
Is all that I can dread;
A sword hung by a single hair
For ever o'er the head.

We bow to a most servile faith,
In a most servile fear;
While none among us dares to say
What none will choose to hear.

And if we dream of loftier thoughts,
In weakness they are gone;
And indolence and vanity
Rivet our fetters on.

Surely I was not born for this!
I feel a loftier mood
Of generous impulse, high resolve,
Steal o'er my solitude!

I gaze upon the thousand stars
That fill the midnight sky;
And wish, so passionately wish,
A light like theirs on high.

I have such eagerness of hope
To benefit my kind;
And feel as if immortal power
Were given to my mind.

I think on that eternal fame,
The sun of earthly gloom,
Which makes the gloriousness of death,
The future of the tomb —

That earthly future, the faint sign
Of a more heavenly one;
— A step, a word, a voice, a look, —
Alas! my dream is done.

And earth, and earth's debasing stain,
Again is on my soul;
And I am but a nameless part
Of a most worthless whole.

Why write I this? because my heart
Towards the future springs,
That future where it loves to soar
On more than eagle wings.

The present, it is but a speck
In that eternal time,
In which my lost hopes find a home,
My spirit knows its clime.

Oh! not myself, — for what am I? —

The worthless and the weak,
Whose every thought of self should raise
A blush to burn my cheek.

But song has touch'd my lips with fire,
And made my heart a shrine;
For what, although alloy'd, debased,
Is in itself divine.

I am myself but a vile link
Amid life's weary chain;
But I have spoken hallow'd words,
Oh do not say in vain!

My first, my last, my only wish,
Say will my charmed chords
Wake to the morning light of fame,
And breathe again my words?

Will the young maiden, when her tears
Alone in moonlight shine —
Tears for the absent and the loved —
Murmur some song of mine?

Will the pale youth by his dim lamp,
Himself a dying flame,
From many an antique scroll beside,
Choose that which bears my name?

Let music make less terrible
The silence of the dead;
I care not, so my spirit last
Long after life has fled.

1829

Endnotes

- Note 1: The epigraph is by Landon herself. Her title may reference Shakespeare's Sonnet 16, in which the speaker, questioning the power of art to bestow immortality, promotes the "lines of life" (line 9)—that is, the family lines engendered through the begetting of children, over the lines of poets and painters.Return to reference 1

The Factory

'Tis an accursed thing!—[1]

There rests a shade above yon town,
  A dark funereal shroud:
'Tis not the tempest hurrying down,
  'Tis not a summer cloud.

The smoke that rises on the air
  Is as a type and sign;
A shadow flung by the despair
  Within those streets of thine.

That smoke shuts out the cheerful day,
  The sunset's purple hues,
The moonlight's pure and tranquil ray,
  The morning's pearly dews.

Such is the moral atmosphere
  Around thy daily life;
Heavy with care, and pale with fear,
  With future tumult rife.

There rises on the morning wind
A low appealing cry,[2]
A thousand children are resigned
  To sicken and to die!

We read of Moloch's[3] sacrifice,
  We sicken at the name,
And seem to hear the infant cries—
  And yet we do the same;—

And worse—'twas but a moment's pain
The heathen altar gave,
But we give years,—our idol, Gain,
Demands a living grave!

How precious is the little one,
Before his mother's sight,
With bright hair dancing in the sun,
And eyes of azure light!

He sleeps as rosy as the south,
For summer days are long;
A prayer upon the little mouth,
Lull'd by his nurse's song.

Love is around him, and his hours
Are innocent and free;
His mind essays its early powers
Beside his mother's knee.

When after-years of trouble come,
Such as await man's prime,
How will he think of that dear home,
And childhood's lovely time!

And such should childhood ever be,
The fairy well; to bring
To life's worn, weary memory
The freshness of its spring.

But here the order is reversed,
And infancy, like age,
Knows of existence but its worst,
One dull and darkened page;—

Written with tears, and stamp'd with toil,

Crushed from the earliest hour,
Weeds darkening on the bitter soil
That never knew a flower.

Look on yon child, it droops the head,
Its knees are bow'd with pain;
It mutters from its wretched bed,
"Oh, let me sleep again!"

Alas! 'tis time, the mother's eyes
Turn mournfully away;
Alas! 'tis time, the child must rise,
And yet it is not day.

The lantern's lit—she hurries forth,
The spare cloak's scanty fold
Scarce screens her from the snowy north,
The child is pale and cold.

And wearily the little hands
Their task accustom'd ply;
While daily, some mid those pale bands,
Droop, sicken, pine, and die.

Good God! to think upon a child
That has no childish days,
No careless play, no frolics wild,
No words of prayer and praise!

Man from the cradle—'tis too soon
To earn their daily bread,
And heap the heat and toil of noon
Upon an infant's head.

To labour ere their strength be come,
Or starve,—is such the doom
That makes of many an English home

One long and living tomb?

Is there no pity from above,—
No mercy in those skies;
Hath then the heart of man no love,
To spare such sacrifice?

Oh, England! though thy tribute waves
Proclaim thee great and free,
While those small children pine like slaves,
There is a curse on thee![4]

1835

Endnotes

- Note 1: Something to be abhorred or shunned, perhaps alluding to Joshua 7:13: "There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Appealing for mercy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A pagan god, mentioned in the Bible (and *Paradise Lost*), typically pictured as a terrifying idol on whose "heathen altar" (line 26) children were sacrificed. In 1830s England child labor in factories was common, and conditions dangerous, sometimes deadly; the Factory Act of 1833, which began the regulation of child labor, still permitted children as young as nine to work as many as nine hours a day, and even then enforcement of regulations was inconsistent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Britain had abolished slavery in 1833.Return to reference 4

The Fairy of the Fountains[1]

The Legend, on which this story is founded, is immediately taken from Mr. Thoms's most interesting collection. I have allowed myself some licence, in my arrangement of the story: but fairy tales have an old-established privilege of change; at least, if we judge by the various shapes which they assume in the progress of time, and by process of translation.

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  From 1832 until her departure for Africa, Landon edited *Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrapbook*, a lavishly produced literary annual marketed, as its title suggests, as a stylish ornament for the homes of English people of taste. She wrote nearly all the verse that appeared in this annual, much of it on topics suggested by the books' pictures. "The Fairy of the Fountains" was first published in the *Drawing-Room Scrapbook*, but this poem, about forbidden sights, was not written to accompany a picture. Instead, Landon's source, as her headnote explains, was a book by the scholar who is now known mainly for being the coiner in 1846 of the term *folklore*, William J. Thoms. In
  Return to reference 1

Part I

Why did she love her mother so?
It hath wrought her wondrous woe

Once she saw an armed knight
In the pale sepulchral night;
When the sullen starbeams throw
Evil spells on earth below;
And the moon is cold and pale,
And a voice is on the gale,
Like a lost soul's heavenward cry,
Hopeless in its agony.

He stood beside the castle gate,
The hour was dark, the hour was late;
With the bearing of a king
Did he at the portal ring,
And the loud and hollow bell
Sounded like a Christian's knell.
That pale child stood on the wall,
Watching there, and saw it all.
Then she was a child as fair
As the opening blossoms are:
But with large black eyes, whose light
Spoke of mystery and might.

The stately stranger's head was bound
With a bright and golden round;
Curiously inlaid, each scale
Shone upon his glittering mail;
His high brow was cold and dim,
And she felt she hated him.
Then she heard her mother's voice,
Saying, " 'Tis not at my choice!

Woe for ever, woe the hour,
When you sought my secret bower,
Listening to the word of fear,
Never meant for human ear.
Thy suspicion's vain endeavour,
Woe! woe! parted us for ever."

Still the porter of the hall
Heeded not that crown'd knight's call,
When a glittering shape there came,
With a brow of starry flame;
And he led that knight again
O'er the bleak and barren plain.
He flung, with an appealing cry,
His dark and desperate arms on high;
And from Melusina's sight
Fled away through thickest night.
Who has not, when but a child,
Treasured up some vision wild;
Haunting them with nameless fear,
Filling all they see or hear,
In the midnight's lonely hour,
With a strange mysterious power?
So a terror undefined
Entered in that infant mind;—
A fear that haunted her alone,
For she told her thought to none.

Years passed on, and each one threw
O'er those walls a deeper hue;
Large and old the ivy leaves
Heavy hung around the caves,
Till the darksome rooms within,
Daylight never entered in.
And the spider's silvery line
Was the only thing to shine.

Years past on,—the fair child now
Wore maiden beauty on her brow—
Beauty such as rarely flowers
In a fallen world like ours.
She was tall;—a queen might wear
Such a proud imperial air;
She was tall, yet when unbound,
Swept her bright hair to the ground,
Glittering like the gold you see
On a young laburnum tree.
Yet her eyes were dark as night,
Melancholy as moonlight,
With the fierce and wilder ray
Of a meteor on its way.
Lonely was her childhood's time,
Lonelier was her maiden prime;
And she wearied of the hours
Wasted in those gloomy towers;
Sometimes through the sunny sky
She would watch the swallows fly,
Making of the air a bath,
In a thousand joyous rings;
She would ask of them their path,
She would ask of them their wings.
Once her stately mother came,
With her dark eye's funeral flame,
And her cheek as pale as death,
And her cold and whispering breath;
With her sable garments bound
By a mystic girdle° round,
Which, when to the east she turned.
With a sudden lustre burned.
Once that ladye, dark and tall,
Stood upon the castle wall;
And she marked her daughter's eyes
Fix'd upon the glad sunrise,

With a sad yet eager look,
Such as fixes on a book
Which describes some happy lot,
Lit with joys that we have not.
And the thought of what has been,
  And the thought of what might be,
Makes us crave the fancied scene,
  And despise reality.
'Twas a drear and desert° plain
Lay around their own domain;
But, far off, a world more fair
Outlined on the sunny air;
Hung amid the purple clouds,
With which early morning shrouds
All her blushes, brief and bright,
Waking up from sleep and night,
In a voice so low and dread,
As a voice that wakes the dead;
Then that stately lady said:
"Daughter of a kingly line,—
Daughter, too, of race like mine,—
Such a kingdom had been thine;
For thy father was a king,
Whom I wed with word and ring.
But in an unhappy hour,
Did he pass my secret bower,—
Did he listen to the word,
Mortal ear hath never heard;
From that hour of grief and pain
Might we never meet again.
  "Maiden, listen to my rede,°
Punished for thy father's deed;
Here, an exile, I must stay,
While he sees the light of day.
Child, his race is mixed in thee,
With mine own more high degree.

Hadst thou at Christ's altar stood,
Bathed in His redeeming flood;
Thou of my wild race had known
But its loveliness alone.
Now thou hast a mingled dower,
Human passion—fairy power.
But forefend thee from° the last:
Be its gifts behind thee cast.
Many tears will wash away
Mortal sin from mortal clay.
Keep thou then a timid eye
On the hopes that fill yon sky;
Bend thou with a suppliant knee,
And thy soul yet saved may be;—
Saved by Him who died to save
Man from death beyond the grave."

Easy 'tis advice to give,
  Hard it is advice to take.
Years that lived—and years to live,
  Wide and weary difference make.
To that elder ladye's mood,
Suited silent solitude:
For her lorn° heart's wasted soil
Now repaid not hope's sweet toil.
Never more could spring-flowers grow,
On the worn-out soil below;
But to the young Melusine,
Earth and heaven were yet divine.
Still illusion's purple light
  Was upon the morning tide,
And there rose before her sight
  The loveliness of life untried.
Three sweet genii,—Youth, Love, Hope,—
Drew her future horoscope.
Must such lights themselves consume?

Must she be her own dark tomb?
But far other thoughts than these—
Life's enchanted phantasies,
Were, with Melusina now,
Stern and dark, contracts her brow;
And her bitten lip is white,
As with passionate resolve.
Muttered she,—"It is my right;
On me let the task devolve:
Since such blood to me belongs;
It shall seek its own bright sphere;
I will well avenge the wrongs
Of my mother exiled here."

• • • • • • •

Two long years are come and past,
And the maiden's lot is cast;—
Cast in mystery and power,
Work'd out by the watching hour,
By the word that spirits tell,
By the sign and by the spell.
Two long years have come and gone,
And the maiden dwells alone.
For the deed which she hath done,
Is she now a banished one;—
Banished from her mother's arms,
Banished by her mother's charms,
With a curse of grief and pain,
Never more to meet again.
Great was the revenge she wrought,
Dearly that revenge was bought.

When the maiden felt her powers,
Straight she sought her father's towers.
With a sign, and with a word,

Passed she on unseen, unheard.
One, a pallid minstrel born
On Good Friday's mystic morn,[2]
Said he saw a lady there,
Tall and stately, strange and fair,
With a stern and glittering eye,
Like a shadow gliding by.
All was fear and awe next day,
For the king had passed away.
He had pledged his court at night,
In the red grape's flowing light.
All his pages saw him sleeping;
Next day there was wail and weeping.
Halls and lands were wandered o'er,
But they saw their king no more.
  Strange it is, and sad to tell,
What the royal knight befell.
Far upon a desert land,
Does a mighty mountain stand;
On its summit there is snow,
While the bleak pines moan below;
And within there is a cave
Opened for a monarch's grave.
Bound in an enchanted sleep
She hath laid him still and deep.
She, his only child, has made
That strange tomb where he is laid:
Nothing more of earth to know,
Till the final trumpet blow.
Mortal lip nor mortal ear,
Were not made to speak nor hear
That accursed word which sealed,—
All those gloomy depths concealed.
  With a look of joy and pride,
Then she sought her mother's side.

Whispering, on her bended knee,
"Oh! my mother, joyous be;
For the mountain torrents spring
O'er that faithless knight and king."
Not another word she spoke,
For her speech a wild shriek broke;
For the widowed queen upsprung,
Wild her pale thin hands she wrung.
With her black hair falling round,
Flung her desperate on the ground;
While young Melusine stood by,
With a fixed and fearful eye.
  When her agony was past,
Slowly rose the queen at last;
With her black hair, like a shroud,
And her bearing high and proud;
With the marble of her brow,
Colder than its custom now;
And her eye with a strange light,
Seemed to blast her daughter's sight.
And she felt her whole frame shrink,
And her young heart's pulses sink;
And the colour left her mouth,
  As she saw her mother signing,
One stern hand towards the south,
  Where a strange red star was shining.
With a muttered word and gaze,
Fixed upon its vivid rays;
Then she spoke, but in a tone,
Her's, yet all alike her own.—
"Spirit of our spirit-line,
Curse for me this child of mine.
Six days yield not to our powers,
But the seventh day is ours.
By yon star, and by our line,
Be thou cursed, maiden mine."

Then the maiden felt hot pain
Run through every burning vein.
Sudden, with a fearful cry,
Writhes she in her agony;
Burns her cheek as with a flame,
For the maiden knows her shame.

Endnotes

- Note 2: People born on Good Friday supposedly had the power to see spirits.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *belt*Return to reference °
- °: *lonely, barren*Return to reference °
- °: *advice*Return to reference °
- °: *keep away from*Return to reference °
- °: *forlorn*Return to reference °

Part II

By a lovely river's side,
Where the water-lilies glide,
Pale, as if with constant care
Of the treasures which they bear;
For those ivory vases hold
Each a sunny gift of gold.
And blue flowers on the banks,
Grow in wild and drooping ranks,
Bending mournfully above,
O'er the waters which they love;
But which bear off, day by day,
Their shadow and themselves away.
Willows by that river grow
With their leaves half green, half snow,
Summer never seems to be
Present all with that sad tree.
With its bending boughs are wrought
Tender and associate thought,
Of the wreaths that maidens wear
In their long-neglected hair.
Of the branches that are thrown
On the last, the funeral stone.
And of those torn wreaths that suit
Youthful minstrel's wasted lute.
    But the stream is gay to-night
With the full moon's golden light,
And the air is sweet with singing;
And the joyous horn is ringing,
While fair groups of dancers round
Circle the enchanted ground.
And a youthful warrior stands
Gazing not upon those bands,

Not upon the lovely scene,
But upon its lovelier queen,
Who with gentle word and smile
Courteous prays his stay awhile.
The fairy of the fountains, she
A strange and lovely mystery,
She of whom wild tales have birth,
When beside a winter hearth,
By some aged crone is told,
Marvel new or legend old.
But the ladye fronts° him there,
He but sees she is so fair,
He but hears that in her tone
Dwells a music yet unknown;
He but feels that he could die
For the sweetness of her sigh.
But how many dreams take flight
With the dim enamoured night;
Cold the morning light has shone,
And the fairy train are gone,
Melted in the dewy air,
Lonely stands young Raymond there.
Yet not all alone, his heart
Hath a dream that will not part
From that beating heart's recess;
What that dream that lovers guess.

Yet another year hath flown
In a stately hall alone,
Like an idol in a shrine,
Sits the radiant Melusine.
It is night, yet o'er the walls,
Light, but light unearthly, falls.
Not from lamp nor taper thrown,
But from many a precious stone,
With whose variegated shade

Is the azure roof inlaid,
And whose coloured radiance throws
Hues of violet, and rose.
Sixty pillars, each one shining
With a wreath of rubies twining,
Bear the roof—the snow-white floor
Is with small stars studded o'er.
Sixty vases stand between,
Filled with perfumes for a queen;
And a silvery cloud exhales
Odours like those fragrant gales,
Which at eve float o'er the sea
From the purple Araby.
Nothing stirs the golden gloom
Of that dim enchanted room.
Not a step is flitting round,
Not a noise, except the sound.
Of the distant fountains falling,
With a soft perpetual calling,
To the echoes which reply
Musical and mournfully.

Sits the fairy ladye there,
Like a statue, pale and fair;
From her cheek the rose has fled,
Leaving deeper charms instead.
On that marble brow are wrought
Traces of impassioned thought;
Such as without shade or line,
Leave their own mysterious sign.
While her eyes, they are so bright,
Dazzle with imperious light.
Wherefore doth the maiden bend?
Wherefore doth the blush ascend,
Crimson even to her brow,
Sight nor step are near her now?

Hidden by her sweeping robe,
Near her stands a crystal globe,
Gifted with strange power to show
All that she desires to know.
  First she sees her palace gate,
With its steps of marble state;
Where two kneeling forms seem weeping
O'er the watch which they are keeping.
While around the dusky boughs
Of a gloomy forest close,
Not for those that blush arose.
But she sees beside the gate,
A young and anxious palmer° wait;
Well she knows it is for her,
He has come a worshipper.
For a year and for a day,
Hath he worn his weary way;
Now a sign from that white hand,
And the portals open stand.
But a moment, and they meet,
Raymond kneels him at her feet;
Reading in her downcast eye,
All that woman can reply.
  Weary, weary had the hours
Passed within her fairy bowers;
She was haunted with a dream
Of the knight beside the stream.
Who hath never felt the sense
Of such charmed influence,
When the shapes of midnight sleep
One beloved object keep,
Which amid the cares of day
Never passes quite away?
Guarded for the sweetest mood
Of our happy solitude,
Linked with every thing we love,

Flower below or star above:
Sweet spell after sweet spell thrown
Till the wide world is its own.
  Turned the ladye deadly pale,
As she heard her lover's tale,
"Yes," she said, oh! low sweet word,
Only in a whisper heard.
"Yes, if my true heart may be
Worthy, Christian knight, of thee,
By the love that makes thee mine
I am deeply dearly thine.
But a spell is on me thrown,
Six days may each deed be shown,
But the seventh day must be
Mine, and only known to me.
Never must thy step intrude
On its silent solitude.
Hidden from each mortal eye
Until seven years pass by.
When these seven years are flown,
All my secret may be known.
But if, with suspicious eye,
Thou on those dark hours wilt pry,
Then farewell, beloved in vain,
Never might we meet again."
Gazing on one worshipped brow,
When hath lover spared a vow?
With an oath and with a prayer
Did he win the prize he sought,
Never was a bride so fair,
As the bride that Raymond brought
From the wood's enchanted bowers
To his old ancestral towers.
——Oh, sweet love, could thy first prime
Linger on the steps of time,
Man would dream the unkind skies

Sheltered still a Paradise.
But, alas, the serpent's skill
Is amid our gardens still.
  Soon a dark inquiring thought
On the baron's spirit wrought:
She, who seemed to love him so,
Had she aught he might not know?
Was it woe, how could she bear
Grief he did not soothe nor share?
Was it guilt? no—heaven's own grace
Lightened in that loveliest face.
Then his jealous fancies rose,
(Our Lady keep the mind from those!)
Like a fire within the brain,
Maddens that consuming pain.
Henceforth is no rest by night,
Henceforth day has no delight.
Life hath agonies that tell
Of their late left native hell.
But mid their despair is none
Like that of the jealous one.
  'Tis again the fatal day,
When the ladye must away,
To her lonely palace made
Far within the forest shade,
Where the mournful fountains sweep
With a voice that seems to weep.
On that morn Lord Raymond's bride
Ere the daybreak leaves his side.
Never does the ladye speak,
But her tears are on his cheek,
And he hears a stifled moan
As she leaves him thus alone.
Hath she then complaint to make,
Is there yet some spell to break?
Come what will, of weal or woe,

’Tis the best the worst to know.

He hath followed—woe, for both,
That the knight forgot his oath.
  Where the silvery fountains fall,
Stands no more the charmed hall;
But the dismal yew trees droop,
And the pines above them stoop,
While the gloomy branches spread,
As they would above the dead,
In some church-yard large and drear
Haunted with perpetual fear.
Dark and still like some vast grave,
Near there yawns a night-black cave.
O’er its mouth wild ivy twines
There the daylight never shines.
Beast of prey or dragon’s lair,
Yet the knight hath entered there.
  Dimly doth the distant day
Scatter an uncertain ray,
While strange shapes and ghastly eyes
Mid the spectral darkness rise.
But he hurries on, and near
He sees a sudden light appear,
Wan and cold like that strange lamp
Which amid the charnel’s damp
Shows but brightens not the gloom
Of the corpse and of the tomb.
With a cautious step he steals
To the cave that light reveals.
’Tis such grotto as might be,
Nereïd’s[3] home beneath the sea.
Crested with the small bright stars
Of a thousand rainbow spars.
And a fountain from the side
Pours beneath its crystal tide,

In a white and marble bath
Singing on its silvery path;
While a meteor's emerald rays
O'er the lucid water plays.—
Close beside, with wild flowers laid,
Is a couch of green moss made.
There he sees his lady lie;
Pain is in her languid eye,
And amid her hair the dew
Half obscures its golden hue;
Damp and heavy, and unbound,
Its wan clusters sweep around.
On her small hand leans her head,—
See the fevered cheek is red,
And the fiery colour rushes
To her brow in hectic blushes.—
What strange vigil is she keeping!
He can hear that she is weeping.—
He will fling him at her feet,
  He will kiss way her tears.
Ah, what doth his wild eyes meet,
  What below that form appears?
Downwards from that slender waist,
By a golden zone° embraced,
Do the many folds escape,
Of the subtle serpent's shape.—
Bright with many-coloured dyes
All the glittering scales arise,
With a red and purple glow
Colouring the waves below!
At the strange and fearful sight,
Stands in mute despair the knight,—
Soon to feel a worse despair,
Melusina sees him there!
And to see him is to part
With the idol of her heart,

Part as just the setting sun
Tells the fatal day is done.
Vanish all those serpent rings,
To her feet the lady springs,
And the shriek rings thro’ the cell,
Of despairing love’s farewell,—
Hope and happiness are o’er,
They can meet on earth no more.

• • • • • • •

Years have past since this wild tale—
Still is heard that lady’s wail,
Ever round that ancient tower,
Ere its lord’s appointed hour.
With a low and moaning breath
She must mark approaching death,
While remains Lord Raymond’s line
Doomed to wander and to pine.
Yet, before the stars are bright,
On the evening’s purple light,
She beside the fountain stands
Wringing sad her shadowy hands.
May our Lady, as long years
Pass with their atoning tears,
Pardon with her love divine
The fountain fairy—Melusine![4]

1835

Endnotes

- Note 3: In classical mythology, a sea nymph inhabiting an underwater cave.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Raymond, first Lord of Lusignan, died as a hermit, at Monserrat. Melusina’s was a yet harsher doom: fated to flit over

the earth, in pain and sorrow, as a spectre. Only when one of the race of Lusignan were about to die, does she become visible,—and wanders wailing around the Castle. Tradition also represents her shadow as hovering over the Fountain of Thirst. —*Thoms's Lays and Legends* [*Landon's note*].Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *faces*Return to reference °
- °: *pilgrim*Return to reference °
- °: *belt*Return to reference °

Felicia Hemans[1]

No more, no more—O, never more returning,[2]
Will thy beloved presence gladden earth;
No more wilt thou with sad, yet anxious, yearning
Cling to those hopes which have no mortal birth.
Thou art gone from us, and with thee departed,
How many lovely things have vanish'd too:
Deep thoughts that at thy will to being started,
And feelings, teaching us our own were true.
Thou hast been round us, like a viewless° spirit,
Known only by the music on the air;
The leaf or flowers which thou hast named inherit
A beauty known but from thy breathing there:
For thou didst on them fling thy strong emotion,
The likeness from itself the fond heart gave;
As planets from afar look down on ocean,
And give their own sweet image to the wave.

And thou didst bring from foreign lands their treasures,
As floats thy various melody along;
We know the softness of Italian measures,
And the grave cadence of Castilian song.[3]
A general bond of union is the poet,[4]
By its immortal verse is language known,
And for the sake of song do others know it—
One glorious poet makes the world his own.
And thou—how far thy gentle sway extended!
The heart's sweet empire over land and sea;
Many a stranger and far flower was blended
In the soft wreath that glory bound for thee.

The echoes of the Susquehanna's waters
  Paused in the pine woods words of thine to hear;
And to the wide Atlantic's younger daughters
  Thy name was lovely, and thy song was dear.[5]

Was not this purchased all too dearly?—never
  Can fame atone for all that fame hath cost.[6]
We see the goal, but know not the endeavour,
  Nor what fond hopes have on the way been lost.
What do we know of the unquiet pillow,
  By the worn cheek and tearful eyelid prest,
When thoughts chase thoughts, like the tumultuous billow,
  Whose very light and foam reveals unrest?
We say, the song is sorrowful, but know not
  What may have left that sorrow on the song;
However mournful words may be, they show not
  The whole extent of wretchedness and wrong.
They cannot paint the long sad hours, pass'd only
  In vain regrets o'er what we feel we are.
Alas! the kingdom of the lute is lonely—
  Cold is the worship coming from afar.

Yet what is mind in woman but revealing
  In sweet clear light the hidden world below,
By quicker fancies and a keener feeling
  Than those around, the cold and careless, know?
What is to feed such feeling, but to culture
  A soil whence pain will never more depart?
The fable of Prometheus and the vulture,[7]
  Reveals the poet's and the woman's heart.
Unkindly are they judged—unkindly treated—
  By careless tongues and by ungenerous words;
While cruel sneer, and hard reproach, repeated,
  Jar the fine music of the spirit's chords.
Wert thou not weary—thou whose soothing numbers

Gave other lips the joy thine own had not?
Didst thou not welcome thankfully the slumbers
Which closed around thy mourning human lot?

What on this earth could answer thy requiring,
For earnest faith—for love, the deep and true,
The beautiful, which was thy soul's desiring,
But only from thyself its being drew.
How is the warm and loving heart requited
In this harsh world, where it awhile must dwell!
Its best affections wrong'd, betray'd, and slighted—
Such is the doom of those who love too well.
Better the weary dove should close its pinion,
Fold up its golden wings and be at peace;
Enter, O ladye, that serene dominion,
Where earthly cares and earthly sorrows cease.
Fame's troubled hour has clear'd, and now replying,
A thousand hearts their music ask of thine.
Sleep with a light, the lovely and undying
Around thy grave—a grave which is a shrine.[8]

1837, 1839

Endnotes

- Note 1: Originally published in *Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrapbook* for 1838, this is the second of two elegies Landon wrote for her fellow poet; the earlier "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans" appeared in 1835, the year of Hemans's death.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare *Adonais*, Shelley's elegy for Keats, line 190 (p. 857, above), as well as Hemans's own "Properzia Rossi," line 91 (p. 907, above).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, from Spain. Hemans made extensive use of both Spain and Italy as romantic settings for her poetry, but Landon is likely thinking in particular of the "Songs of Spain"

and "Patriotic Lays of Italy" that Hemans published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1834.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Echoing Wordsworth's assertion that "the poet binds together . . . the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time" (Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 346, above).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Susquehanna River flows from New York through Pennsylvania to Maryland; Landon alludes to Hemans's great popularity among American readers.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Hemans repeatedly treats the theme of the woman artist torn between love and ambition, bitterly weighing the price of fame, as in "Properzia Rossi." The lonely "unquiet" imagined in this stanza is, however, much closer to Landon's typical self-representation than to Hemans's.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In Greek mythology, the Titan Prometheus stole fire from heaven and gave it to humanity; for this kindness, he suffered the punishment of being chained to a mountain where a vulture (or, in other versions of the story, an eagle) arrived each day to eat away at his liver, which constantly regrew itself.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Suggestive of Hemans's own elegy for the poet Mary Tighe (1772–1810), "The Grave of a Poetess" (1827).Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *invisible*Return to reference °

HENRY LOUIS VIVIAN DEROZIO
1809–1831

For almost the whole of his brief life, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio lived in Calcutta (modern Kolkata). This city, upriver from the Bay of Bengal, served as the headquarters for the East India Company, the British trading corporation that had been founded in the seventeenth century and which by the nineteenth controlled vast portions of the Indian subcontinent. Calcutta was a multicultural and multilingual environment, where Arabic, Hindustani, Bengali, Persian, Sanskrit, Portuguese, and English were all in common use. Derozio's family history registers the city's cosmopolitanism. His mother, Sophia Johnson, was born in England; her brother, Arthur Johnson, owned an indigo plantation near the city of Bhajalpur. His father, Francis Derozio, was the grandson of a Portuguese trader and of a woman whose burial record identifies her as a "native Christian." One of the pen names that Henry Derozio affixed to the several poems and essays he submitted pseudonymously to the English-language newspaper the *India Gazette* starting in 1822 was "East Indian." His choice of a term that served at that time to designate individuals who were "half-caste," that is, of mixed race, was purposeful and provocative, and he reused it as the title for a newspaper of his own that he founded in 1831.

Some other pieces that Derozio submitted to the papers while he was in his early teens were signed "Juvenis"—a signature that emphasized his precocity. (Like John Keats, Felicia Hemans, and the

Shelleys, Derozio took to authoring early, strategically exploiting the opportunities for juvenile publication created by the Romantic era's new periodical press.) At age seventeen, in recognition of his record of academic excellence and the talent evident in his publications, Derozio was appointed a teacher at the "Hindoo College," a new institution designed to impart a modern, rationalistic education to Indian boys and to offer an alternative both to traditional Brahmanic education and to the Baptist mission schools also being established in India at this time. Derozio's classes, however, saddled him with a reputation for being too modern—and perhaps too much of a Westernizer as well. His pupils held debates that reminded conservative critics of the free-thinking they blamed for the French Revolution. In 1831 those pupils' parents, considering the secular bent of his teaching a threat to both Hindu and Christian orthodoxies, forced Derozio to resign his post as teacher; the East Indian Company administration connived in their campaign against him. Derozio then turned to writing full time (the preface to his 1827 debut collection, *Poems*, insists, by contrast, that "only a few hours gained from laborious daily occupations have been devoted to these poetical efforts"). He founded the *East Indian* newspaper and joined in Bengali attempts to commit the British Parliament to legal and political reforms in India. But eight months after the loss of his teaching position, he died of cholera, aged only twenty-two.

With remarkable energy, Calcutta's English-speaking inhabitants from the 1770s on had set about establishing not just schools but also local newspapers, magazines, libraries, and amateur theaters, determined to assemble the institutional infrastructure for literature and so transform their city into a literary center within the British Empire. As a poet, the author of the first books of English-language poetry to be published in India, Derozio both benefited from and continued these efforts. He thus participated in what was, in complicated ways, a nationalist project—an attempt not just to address but also to bring into being an autonomous Indian public.

Derozio's poetry marks him as a keen student of British Romanticism and reveals how British Romanticism could be turned

to new ends in an Indian context. Both in *Poems* and then in *The Fakeer of Jungheera* (1828), Derozio drew liberally on the writings of such English poets as Letitia Landon, Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron —contemporaries who were based a world away and who nonetheless (as "The Romantic Imagination and the 'Oriental Nations' " suggests) were eager to treat Britain's Indian empire as a source of alluringly exotic and marketable poetic materials. He evidently took inspiration, too, from the translations of Sir William Jones, who had argued in 1772 that European poetry could be reinvigorated by sidelining the examples long provided by Greek and Latin texts and turning instead to "the poetry of the Eastern nations." And yet Derozio actually set several poems in Greece, sometimes reiterating the canonical Western narrative of Athenians' commitment to the preservation of liberty and sometimes referencing the efforts that nineteenth-century Greeks were then making to throw off the yoke of Ottoman rule. He gravitated, in addition, toward the subject matter and even the idioms of Irish and Scottish authors such as Thomas Moore, Robert Burns, and Walter Scott. One of his short lyrics is titled "Here's a Health to Thee, Lassie!"

Even in his sonnet "The Harp of India" or in the untitled patriotic sonnet given the name "To India—My Native Land" by a later editor —poems that were lauded by later generations of Indians as founding texts of a national canon and that became staples of modern Indian schoolrooms—Derozio made no secret of having assembled an idiom for national identity in large part from non-Indian sources. We have included in this section the Anglo-Irish poet Thomas Moore's "Dear Harp of My Country" (1815) from his collection *Irish Melodies*, a famous song about the retrieval of a once-silenced national music, so as to bring to view both Derozio's ways of reinventing British Romanticism's most charismatic symbols and his ways of evoking a transnational literary dialogue. The models provided by Romantic-period Irish and Scottish writers might have been attractive to Derozio precisely because those writers too had to negotiate between articulating ideals of cultural autonomy—

of creative distinctiveness—and acknowledging the realities of political domination they experienced as inhabitants of Britain's peripheries.

Reviewers at the time were slightly nonplussed by Derozio's cosmopolitanism and sometimes regretted that in his books authentic Indian materials felt hard to find, even while echoes of Western materials they already knew were spotted all too easily. Twenty-first-century critics are, on the contrary, inclined to applaud the allusiveness and the polyphony of those books. Those qualities, they propose, might be construed as evidence that Derozio both realized what was coercive about an imperial readership's demand for Indian authenticity and preemptively resisted it.

The Harp of India[1]

Why hang'st thou lonely on yon withered bough?
Unstrung, for ever, must thou there remain?
Thy music once was sweet—who hears it now?
Why doth the breeze sigh over thee in vain?—
Silence hath bound thee with her fatal chain;
Neglected, mute, and desolate art thou,
Like ruined monument on desert plain:—
O! many a hand more worthy far than mine
Once thy harmonious chords to sweetness gave,
And many a wreath for them did Fame entwine
Of flowers still blooming on the minstrel's grave:
Those hands are cold—but if thy notes divine
May be by mortal wakened once again,
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

1827

Endnotes

- Note 1: This sonnet opened *Poems,* Derozio's first book.Return to reference 1

Thomas Moore: Dear Harp of My Country[1]

I

Dear Harp of my Country! in darkness I found thee,
The cold chain of silence had hung o'er thee long,
When proudly, my own Island Harp! I unbound thee,
And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and song!
The warm lay of love and the light note of gladness
Have waken'd thy fondest, thy liveliest thrill;
But, so oft hast thou echoed the deep sigh of sadness,
That ev'n in thy mirth it will steal from thee still.

II

Dear Harp of my Country! farewell to thy numbers,
This sweet wreath of song is the last we shall twine;
Go, sleep, with the sunshine of Fame on thy slumbers,
Till touch'd by some hand less unworthy than mine.
If the pulse of the patriot, soldier, or lover,
Have throbb'd at our lay, 'tis thy glory alone;
I was *but* as the wind, passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I wak'd was thy own.

1815

Endnotes

- Note 1: Also titled "The Farewell to My Harp," Moore's song was included in the sixth number of *Irish Melodies*, a multivolume project for which Moore (1779–1852) wrote original poems—a mix of drinking songs, versified Gaelic legends, and elegies for fallen rebels and patriots from Ireland's past—that he matched to traditional tunes. This collection made Irish music palatable as polite drawing-room entertainment in England, and in the later, 20th-century literary history of Ireland was much criticized for doing so. The last four lines of "Dear Harp of My Country" appear as an epigraph on the title page of Derozio's *Poems.*Return to reference 1

Freedom to the Slave

"And as the slave departs, the man returns."

—CAMPBELL.[1]

How felt he when he first was told
A slave he ceased to be;
How proudly beat his heart, when first
He knew that he was free!—
The noblest feelings of the soul
To glow at once began;
He knelt no more; his thoughts were raised;
He felt himself a man.
He looked above—the breath of Heaven
Around him freshly blew;
He smiled exultingly to see
The wild birds as they flew.
He looked upon the running stream
That 'neath him rolled away;
Then thought on winds, and birds, and floods,
And cried, "I'm free as they!"
Oh Freedom! there is something dear
E'en in thy very name,
That lights the altar of the soul
With everlasting flame.
Success attend the patriot sword,
That is unsheathed for thee!
And glory to the breast that bleeds,
Bleeds nobly to be free!
Blest be the generous hand that breaks
The chain a tyrant gave,
And feeling for degraded man

Gives freedom to the slave.

1827

Endnotes

- Note 1: Derozio's epigraph is from the long philosophical poem *The Pleasures of Hope* (1799), by the Scottish poet Thomas Campbell (1777–1844), part 1, line 348. The hopes that Campbell's title references include those aroused by the beginnings of the French Revolution, and the poem denounces West Indian slavery and the British exploitation of India.Return to reference 1

Ode

from the Persian of Hafiz.[1]

FREELY TRANSLATED.

Say, what's the rose without the smile
  Of her I deem more fair,
And what are all the sweets of spring
  If wine be wanting there?
O! who will pause the choice to doubt
  Of walks where music rings,
Or bowers in richest bloom without
  The notes the Bulbul[2] sings?
In vain the cypress waves, in vain
  A thousand flowrets sigh,
Without the cheek whose tint excels
  The tulip's crimson dye!
Yet what are lips where sweetness clings,
  And cheeks where roses dwell.
Without the kiss, the joy, the bliss
  Of pleasure's potent spell?
The wine and garden both are sweet,
  But sweetest wine and grove
I lothe, if there I cannot meet
  The face and form I love.
The brightest, fairest works of art
  That skilful hands devise
Are nought, without the hand and heart
  Of her I fondest prize.
And what's my life?—perhaps a coin—
  A trifling coin at best—

Unheeded e’en by passer-by
Unfit for bridal guest.[3]

1826 1827

Endnotes

- Note 1: Hafiz was a lyric poet in 14th-century Persia. In his 1772 *Poems, Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatick Tongues*, Sir William Jones had included “A Persian Song of Hafiz,” which he compared to a sonnet of Petrarch’s.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hindi word for nightingale.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This alludes to a custom in the East, of throwing money away among the guests at a bridal [*Derozio’s note*].Return to reference 3

The Ruins of Rajmahal[1]

No serf has lighted yon Kiosk,[°]
There's no Muezzin[2] in the Mosque,
No vesper hymn, no morning prayer
Shall be put up, or answered there;
The sacred hall, the holy sod
By unbelievers' feet are trod,
And ruthless hands have reft away[3]
The marble that might mock decay!
No revel's held in yon Dulan,[4]
No priest from hallowed Al Koran
A verse in solemn strain shall read,
Nor faithful Moslem chaunt his creed,
Where many a sage enthusiast
Has worshipped—but that day is past!
The weed is on the sable wall,
That wild-dog's howling in the hall,
The broken column's scatter'd by;
And hark! the owlet's dismal cry
Is driven through the lattice high;—
A moonbeam's gleaming through the cleft
That Ruin half reluctant left;
Yet onward went he, and his march
Is shown by what was once an arch;
And many a shatter'd step, and stone
Where lights the foot with faltering tread,
But sadly speak of what is gone,
As relics whisper of the dead.
These are like some celestial tone
Of music that undying fled,
To which (though ne'er the hallow'd strain

May e’en in echo wake again)
  The memory is rivetted!

I would not have the day return
  That saw these wrecks in all their pride—
As he who weeps o’er Beauty’s urn
  Feels what he felt not by her side,
A gloom that gives to sorrow zest!
A pang that’s welcome to the breast!

  The wave has bleached the buttress’ base,
Where but few stones have lost their place,
Although the massive tenement
  Is parted from itself—it stands:
Majestic pile! Time never rent
  A nobler work of mortal hands!
The stranger, though no child of fame,
Upon thy walls hath writ his name[5]—
O! would that he had left to thee
A worthier, dearer legacy!
How eloquent is all around!
How all-surpassing mortal sound!
There’s music in the moonlit stream;
There’s beauty in the lunar beam;
There’s sacred stillness in each star
That shines in cloudless skies afar,
But most these very stones impart
A lesson to the human heart.
Perhaps they say to him whose gaze
Is fixed on them; “In after days,
Such e’en may be thy hapless fate,
Forlorn—neglected—desolate!”
Their lot unshared, and sad, and lone,
Perhaps reminds him of his own;
Or bids him turn with fond regret
To-times he never can forget,

When his was yet a tranquil mind,
Whose memory's all that's left behind!
These thoughts, like clouds, have gather'd o'er me—
Enough of them—a wreck's before me:
Three marble columns still are there,
That Desolation fail'd t'impair;
Save these, each baseless pillar hath
Well helped to pave the spoiler's path.

On, stranger! on, nor start at things
That mock the pride and power of kings—
But Shoojah[6] thought such hapless fate
Could ne'er the golden Mosque await,
Nor could the mighty monarch deem
Its wreck would be the Poet's theme.
Why should it not? My native land
Is that which he did once command—
And though her sons to fame are dead,
Her spirit is not wholly fled;
For while her rivers glisten sheen,
And roll their fertile hanks between,
And while her mist-clad mountains rear
Their peaks, as if to pierce the sky,
In memory's page shall live the year
Of glory that has long gone by—
And while her fields shall flourish green,
Some trace shall be of what has been,—
Its image, though in darkness cast,
A holy relic of the past;
A dazzling meteor fleeting by,
An Iris[7] in a cloudy sky;
A vesper breeze in summer shade,
A sunbeam in the gloomy glade—
A rose-bud in the wilderness!

Farewell, ye wrecks! alas! ye wear

The haggard wildness of despair,
A darkness that beseems you well,
A gloom that binds you like a spell;
Yet e'en in this your day of ill,
A halo circles round you still,
And wakes a passion all may feel,
That none can tell, nor yet conceal.
And there ye stand in mournful mood,
Like woman in her widowhood.
Farewell! how fallen in your crest!
How sunk your pride!—but let that rest—
Ye well the tears of grief beguile,
I fain would linger yet awhile
To gaze on you, but not unmoved—
As lovers look on what they loved!
This is my last, but it shall dwell
Within my heart through life—Farewell!

1826 1827

Endnotes

- Note 1: After the conquest of Bengal in the late 16th century made it a province of Akbar the Great's Mughal Empire, Rajmahal, on the bank of the Ganges, served briefly as the provincial capital. In the 19th century the remnants of its mosque and palace were often visited by British travelers and artists with a taste for picturesque ruins. The scenery might have functioned for some as a reminder that a past empire had collapsed into ruin and that, at some future moment, Britain's Indian empire might follow suit.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The person in Islamic religious communities who proclaims the call to prayer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  In a note at the end of his book, Derozio comments at length o this line. He begins as follows: "Lord Elgin robbed Greece of he ruins, and none but those of 'gentle blood' have had

opportunities of following his example." His reference is to how between 1801 and 1812 the Scottish aristocrat the Earl of Elgin removed about half the ancient sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens—supposedly with the permission of the Ottoman government of Greece—and had them shipped to London, where they were eventually exhibited by the British Museum. Derozio introduces the topic with a slightly altered quotation from a passage in Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, cant

Return to reference 3

- Note 4: A hall [*Derozio's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The walls of the Mosque and of the Hall are covered with the names of European and native travellers [*Derozio's note*, keyed to a long endnote first remarking on the neglect of the ancient buildings and then praising Augustus Cleveland, the East India Company administrator whose title was collector for the District of Bihar, who, fifty years earlier, had kept them in good order].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Shoojah Shah built the Singhee Dulan and Sona Musjid [*Derozio's note*, referencing buildings also known as the Marble Pavilion and the Golden Mosque]. Shah Shujah (1616–1671) was the governor of the Mughal provinces of Bengal and Odisha.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Goddess of the rainbow in Greek mythology.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *pavilion*Return to reference °

[To India][1]

My country! in thy day of glory past
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow,
And worshipped as a deity thou wast—
Where is that glory, where that reverence now?
Thy eagle pinion is chained down at last,
And grovelling in the lowly dust art thou:
Thy minstrel hath no wreath to weave for thee
Save the sad story of thy misery!—
Well—let me dive into the depths of time,
And bring from out the ages that have rolled
A few small fragments of those wrecks sublime,
Which human eye may never more behold;
And let the guerdon° of my labour be
My fallen country! one kind wish for thee!

1828

Endnotes

- Note 1: This sonnet was placed, untitled, at the start of Derozio's 1828 volume *The Fakeer of Jungheera, a Metrical Tale; and Other Poems*. It is often reprinted as "To India—My Native Land," a title invented by an early 20th-century editor.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *reward*Return to reference °

VOLUME E: The Victorian Age

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE VICTORIAN AGE

VOLUME E

ELEVENTH EDITION

The Victorian Age 1830–1901

The Secret of England's Greatness (Victoria Presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor) (detail), Thomas Barker Jones, ca. 1863. For more information about this painting, see p. 29, below.

1832: First Reform Act

1834–38: Abolition of slavery

1837: Victoria becomes queen

1845–48: Great Famine

1846: Corn Laws repealed

1853–56: Crimean War

1857: Indian Uprising

1859: Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* published

1877: Queen Victoria proclaimed empress of India

1901: Death of Victoria

PROLOGUE: SARAH FORBES BONETTA, EMINENT VICTORIAN

My dearest Mama,

I have been in a state of mental misery & indecision ever since your 2nd letter arrived yesterday. I should have sat down to write to you the moment it arrived, but remembered that you would have said "take time to consider." I shall now tell you truly what my thoughts & feelings are, with regard to Mr. Davies. . . . You remember perhaps when he proposed a year ago, I said I could never either love or marry him, and I thought it impossible for us to make each other happy. . . . I know that the generality of people would say he is rich & your marrying him would at once make you independent, and I say "Am I to barter my peace of mind for money?" No—never!

Yours affectionately,
Etta

This letter tells a story familiar from Victorian literature. A young woman is courted by an older man who offers her a home and financial stability. Her family wishes for the match, but the woman herself holds out hope for a marriage for love. This letter was not written by a fictional heroine, however; instead, it is the work of a woman named Sarah Forbes Bonetta who came to England from West Africa in 1850 as a "diplomatic gift" from King Gezo to Captain Frederick Forbes. Forbes had been sent to Dahomey (now Benin) to persuade the king to turn from the slave trade to palm oil production. The mission was a failure: the king had no interest in relinquishing his nation's position as the predominant source of enslaved people in the region. Further, as historian David Olusoga describes, the fact that the British had so recently "dominate[d] the slave trade" (slavery was only fully abolished in 1838) "added a

complicating tone of hypocrisy" to British demands for reform. The gift of an enslaved child—Sarah—only underscored this embarrassing state of affairs. Despite these complexities, when Forbes brought Bonetta back to England, the Queen "was so taken with the young child that she paid for her education and became her godmother." The portrait that appears on the cover of this volume was taken on the day of her wedding to the man she describes in her letter; despite her initial hesitation, it appears that prudence won out. The ceremony caused quite a sensation. "Months afterwards," Olusoga writes, "reports of the event were still appearing in the colonial press." Sarah and her husband had three children, the eldest of whom was named Victoria; the Queen was her godmother. Sarah died in 1880. Until recently, most of her descendants had no idea they were related to a friend of Queen Victoria.

Bonetta's story is extraordinary. Yet many British writers had extraordinary stories, and many originated in places other than the British Isles. By the end of the nineteenth century, over a quarter of the world's landmass, and slightly less than a quarter of its population, was governed by Great Britain. India, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the West Indies, the Middle East, East Asia: very few places remained wholly untouched by British imperial aggression. And that aggression took cultural as well as military and economic forms. British governance was almost always conducted in English, and the education and sometimes the conversion of Indigenous populations were often used to justify foreign incursions. As a result, over the course of the nineteenth century, British literature—that is, literature in English that was influenced by British literary texts and traditions—began to be written all over the world. In her status as both an insider and an outsider to Victorian literary culture, Bonetta has much in common with several of the writers who are new to this volume: Mary Seacole, the Jamaican-born daughter of a Scottish lieutenant in the British army and a Jamaican mother, who worked tirelessly as a nurse and businesswoman during the Crimean War; or Olive Schreiner, the South African child of a German father and an English mother, who was a vocal opponent of British imperial aggression as well as an advocate for women's

rights; or Toru Dutt, whose poetry brings together the Indian stories on which she was raised with the Romantic poetry which she read as a child in a highly educated Bengali family; or Rabindranath Tagore, Bengali poet, fiction writer, painter, activist—and the only Indian to date to win the Nobel Prize for Literature—who was a stalwart advocate of Indian independence, briefly studied law at University College London, and was influenced by English, Irish, and Scottish folk tunes; or Tekahionwake (also known as E. Pauline Johnson), the daughter of a Mohawk father and an English mother, who grew up in Canada writing patriotic poetry celebrating Queen Victoria alongside lamentations for the fate of her people. These writers came from very different ethnic and religious traditions and grew up in very different parts of the world. Yet even as they were Jamaican, African, Indian, or Mohawk, they can also be regarded as "Victorian writers" both in the sense that they lived in the mid- to late nineteenth century as subjects of the British Crown, and in the sense that they all helped shape—even as they were partially shaped by—British literature.

Marriage Portrait, 1862. Part of what is so striking about this wedding photograph of Sarah Forbes Bonetta with her husband, Captain James Pinson Labulo Davies, is its ordinariness: the poses of the two figures, their dress, and the furniture in the room are all standard for a wealthy British couple of the time. Yet, the fact that both these figures are Black at a moment when slavery was still a living memory in Great Britain, makes the image extraordinary. According to the article in *The Times* that covered their wedding, Queen Victoria, Bonetta's godmother, "provided the whole of the [wedding] outfit." The photographer, Camille Silvy, was the photographer for many members of the royal family.

In many accounts of Victorian literature, imperial ambitions seem to exist in a realm of geopolitics, international finance, and

government policy far afield from mid- to late nineteenth century literature's concern with the ordinary thoughts and feelings of ordinary Britons. Romantic love, the experiences of childhood, the pleasures of the natural world, the chronicling of the everyday: these staples of the novel and the poetry of the period seem to keep the horizon very close. Even prose writers' questions about morality, value, and the dangers of a rapidly industrializing society can seem attached only to a very limited and local understanding of Britishness. It is unlikely the world ever seemed so narrow to Victorian writers themselves. Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Tennyson, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and John Stuart Mill are all authors who have long been featured in anthologies, yet their writings on race and empire have not always been central to the literary-historical narrative of which they are a part. This omission has had the effect of seeming to confirm John Robert Seeley's frequently quoted 1883 claim that the British "seem, as it were, to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind." Yet British writers in Great Britain were both aware of, and concerned about, what was happening in the colonies. Meanwhile, the writing coming out of the colonies has sometimes been set aside as if connected only to its country of origin and not to the colonial culture that was shaping and being shaped by it.

Decisions about which works to include in anthologies, and which to omit, are no accident, but instead a product of the Victorian period—as is the notion of literary study as we know it today. Literary historian Gauri Viswanathan has shown that the English literary curriculum was originally designed as a product for export, the goal of which was "to help colonial subjects lose their foreignness." Thus, well before this curriculum was taught in Great Britain, it was being employed in India in order to create a class of citizens who, in Thomas Babington Macaulay's words from 1835, were "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." "English literature," Viswanathan concludes, "was made into an academic discipline in an effort to respond to Macaulay's call." From this perspective, it is less surprising that not only were non-White or non-English voices largely excised from the canon, but also

that some of the work engaged with questions of empire by writers who have long been seen as central to the period has tended to be "forgotten."

THE "VICTORIAN AGE"

The "Victorian Age" takes its name from Queen Victoria, who served as an important figurehead during the sixty-three years of her rule. Her symbolic role was especially significant for members of the middle class who (however ironically) saw the most powerful woman in the world as sharing their core values. Victoria herself encouraged her subjects to identify her with the qualities most often associated with the period in which she lived: earnestness, moral responsibility, domestic propriety. As a young wife, the mother of nine children, and the black-garbed Widow of Windsor in the forty years after her husband's death in 1861, Victoria represented the domestic fidelities many of her citizens embraced. After her death Henry James wrote, "I mourn the safe and motherly old middle-class queen, who held the nation warm under the fold of her big, hideous Scotch-plaid shawl." Changes in the reproduction of visual images aided in making her an icon. She is the first British monarch of whom we have photographs. These pictures, and the ease and cheapness with which they were reproduced, facilitated her representing her country's sense of itself during her reign.

Queen Victoria and Child, 1844. This, believed to be the earliest photograph of Queen Victoria, shows her with her daughter Victoria, the Princess Royal.

However central to the way we think about (and name) the "Victorian Age," Victoria's ascension to the throne in 1837 is only one of several events that can be understood to inaugurate the period considered in this volume. The 1832 Reform Act, for example, seemed to many to presage a new, more democratic, age. Before the Reform Act, only about two hundred thousand people in the

United Kingdom, nearly all of whom were male landowners, were empowered to vote. The Act extended the franchise to all males owning property worth £10 or more in annual rent in England and Wales; a similar Scottish Reform Act also passed in 1832. In effect, the voting public thereafter included lower-middle-class men, although not working-class men, women of any class, or colonized people living in the countries under British rule. Despite its limitations, the Reform Act constituted an important shift in the way political representation was conceived. It also reformed an electoral system in which vast new industrial districts had previously no representation in Parliament while depopulated rural communities dutifully elected the nominees of the local squire. The limitations of the Reform Act were recognized even before it was passed, but it did signal the possibility of democratic reform and the reconfiguration of political power along new, more inclusive, lines.

Another important event that is sometimes understood as the inception of the Victorian period is the final abolition of slavery in 1838. Although the slave trade was ended in 1807, enslaved people continued to be compelled to labor on the highly profitable sugar plantations of the West Indies until the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act began the slow move toward freedom. Due to pressure from plantation owners, the Act was followed by a four-year-long pause during which enslaved people continued to be held as "apprentices." Enslavers were paid £20m to compensate them for their loss of "property"; enslaved people received no compensation whatsoever. Nevertheless, the fact of abolition was the source of enormous pride during a period in which the southern states of the United States, Brazil, West Africa, and many other parts of the world persisted in promoting slavery and the slave trade. As John Stuart Mill wrote, the abolitionist cause "triumphed because it was the cause of justice; and, in the estimation of the great majority of its supporters, of religion. Its originators and leaders were persons of a stern sense of moral obligation, who, in the spirit of the religion of their time, seldom spoke much of benevolence and philanthropy, but often of duty, crime, and sin." Many contemporary observers agreed and took the passage of the Abolition Act as a badge of British moral

rectitude. It also served as an early instance of legislative reform enacted to benefit large swathes of the population whose interests were not directly represented in Parliament. As such, it can be placed in a line with many of the legislative reforms that followed, which sought to protect the poor, children, women, workers, consumers, and many others thought to require support, aid, or protection.

The final historical event we might identify as the starting point for the Victorian period is the opening in 1830 of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, the first steam-powered railway line in the world. The next decade witnessed Railway Mania: more than six thousand miles of railway line were built as a result of projects initiated between 1844 and 1846 alone. By 1897, the country as a whole had 21,429 miles of track and an underground railway system beneath London. The train transformed Britain's landscape, supported the growth of its commerce, and shrank the distance between its cities. The opening of the railway was significant in and of itself, but it also serves to indicate the massive technological and industrial changes that took place throughout the mid- and late nineteenth century. "It is a privilege to live in this age of rapid and brilliant events," Benjamin Disraeli wrote in 1862. "What an error to consider it a utilitarian age. It is one of infinite romance." By the end of the century—after the resources of steam power had been more fully exploited for fast railways and iron ships, looms, printing presses, and farmers' combines, and after the introduction of the telegraph, intercontinental cable, photography, anesthetics, and universal compulsory education—a late Victorian could look back with astonishment on these developments. Walter Besant, one of these late Victorians, observed that so completely transformed were "the mind and habits of the ordinary Englishman" by 1897, "that he would not, could he see him, recognize his own grandfather."

The 1830s and 1840s

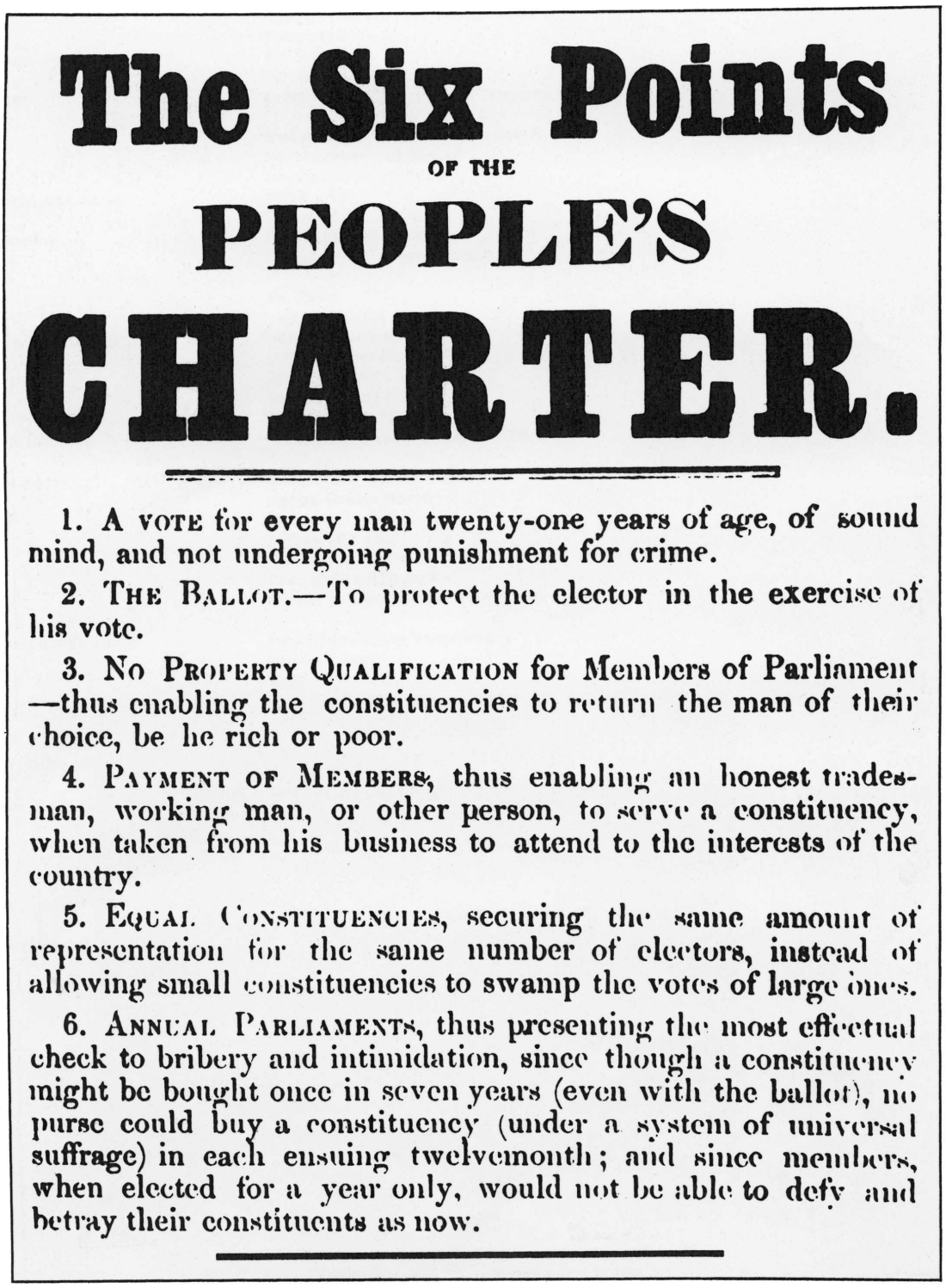
The early part of Victoria's reign was a period of hardship for many living in Great Britain. A time of prosperity from 1832 to 1836 was followed by a financial crash in 1837, and then a series of bad

harvests. The consequence was a period of unemployment and desperate poverty, often referred to as the "Time of Troubles," or the "Hungry Forties." Conditions in the new industrial and coal-mining areas were especially bad. Workers and their families in the slums of such cities as Manchester lived in horribly crowded, unsanitary housing, while the conditions under which men, women, and children toiled in mines and factories were appalling. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "The Cry of the Children" (1843) expresses her horrified response to an official report on child labor that described five-year-olds sitting alone in darkness to open and close ventilation doors, and twelve-year-olds dragging heavy tubs of coal through low-ceilinged mine passages for sixteen hours a day. For the most part, the owners of mines and factories regarded themselves as innocent of blame for such conditions, wedded as they were to the economic theory of laissez-faire capitalism, which held that any governmental intervention into market operations would necessarily be harmful.

One kind of solution was offered by the Chartists, a large organization of workers who were unsatisfied by the advances made by the 1832 Reform Act. In 1838 they drew up a "People's Charter" advocating the extension of the right to vote, the use of secret balloting, and other legislative reforms. Although the Chartist movement did not achieve its immediate political goals, it did help promote the principle of social and economic reform: the notion that the government has a responsibility to support and protect all its people, not just wealthy landowners. An especially important instance of such reform was the abolition of the high tariffs on imported grains that were known as the Corn Laws (the word "*corn*" referred to wheat and other grains). These tariffs had been established to protect British agriculture from foreign competition. In 1845 serious crop failures in Britain, and the outbreak of potato blight in Ireland, convinced Sir Robert Peel, the Tory prime minister, that traditional protectionism must be abandoned. In 1846 the Corn Laws were repealed by Parliament, and the way was paved for the introduction of a system of free trade whereby goods could be imported with the payment of only minimal tariff duties. Free trade

did not eradicate the slums of Manchester and other industrial cities, and it did little to mitigate the Great Famine in Ireland, which ultimately claimed approximately one million lives, but it did help the Victorian economy.

Literary responses to the crisis of the 1840s range from Barrett Browning's poetic exposé of the conditions of working children, to Carlyle's furious—although occasionally sympathetic—denunciations of working-class lawlessness in "Chartism." Perhaps the best-known responses can be found in the novels of such authors as Charles Kingsley, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Benjamin Disraeli, who sought to document contemporary reality and spur political and social reform. For his novel *Sybil* (1845), Disraeli (eventually prime minister) chose an appropriate subtitle: *The Two Nations*. As he has one of his characters explain, the title refers to "Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets, who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws . . . THE RICH AND THE POOR." The belief that industrialization was bringing both cheap goods and an intensification of income disparity was shared by many, as was concern regarding the political consequences of this state of affairs.



The Six Points
OF THE
PEOPLE'S
CHARTER.

1. A VOTE for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.

2. THE BALLOT.—To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.

3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament —thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.

4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.

5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.

6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

Chartism. This poster lays out the six main points that Chartists believed were necessary to reform the electoral system and make it more democratic.

The 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s

For many living in Great Britain as members of the middle and upper classes, the mid-Victorian period was characterized by relative calm. Even the badly bungled war against Russia in the Crimea (1854–56) did not seriously affect the growing sense of satisfaction that the challenges of the 1840s had been solved or would be solved by British wisdom and energy. The aristocracy was discovering that "free trade" (often combined with gunboat diplomacy abroad) was enriching rather than impoverishing their estates; agriculture flourished together with trade and industry. And through a succession of Factory Acts in Parliament, which restricted child labor and limited hours of employment, the condition of the working classes was gradually improving.

The 1851 Great Exhibition in Hyde Park served as an extraordinary display of Great Britain's prosperity and self-satisfaction: a gigantic glass greenhouse, the Crystal Palace, was erected to showcase the greatest achievements of industry, science, and empire. The Crystal Palace was one of the first buildings constructed according to modern architectural principles in which materials such as glass and iron were employed for purely functional ends. Displays included everything from Staffordshire pottery to Indian diamonds to Maori handicrafts. As such, on display were not just triumphant feats of Victorian innovation, but the enormous might of the British empire.

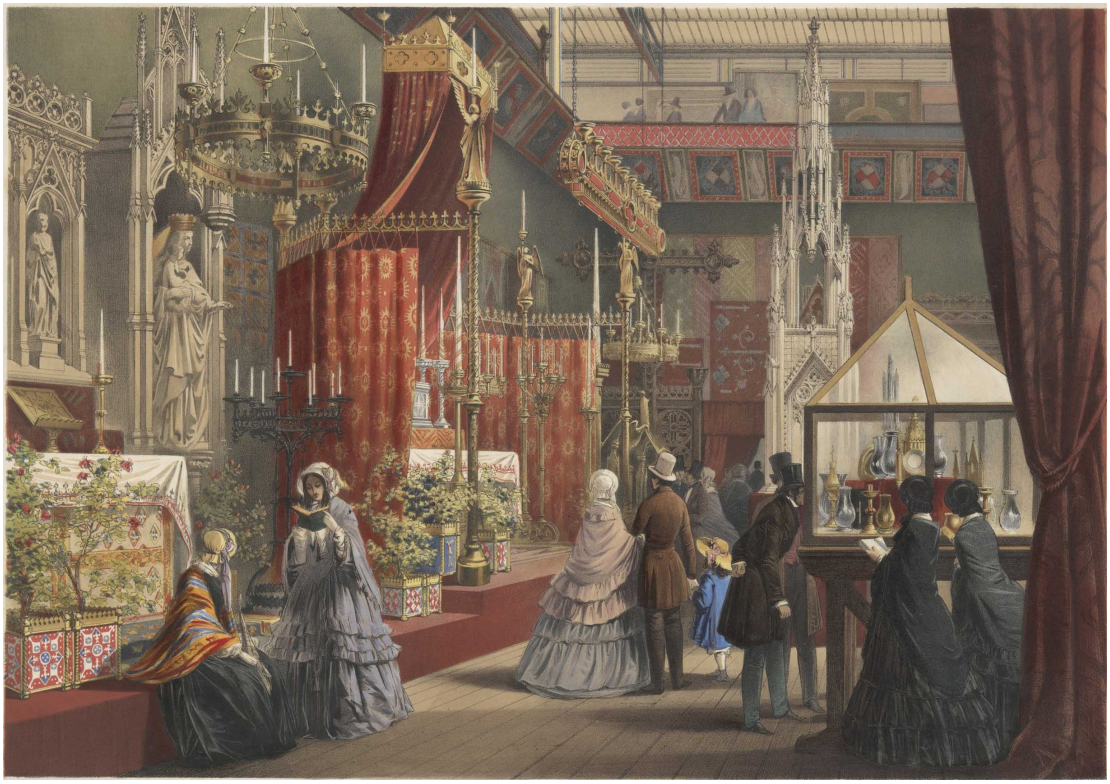
British prosperity was both fuelled by and served to fuel an enormous expansion of the country's operations around the globe. These activities had incalculably devastating effects on the territories Britain conquered and controlled, not least the destruction of many indigenous industries. The highly lucrative sugar trade was concentrated in the West Indies. At the beginning of the period, involvement in Africa was relatively limited, and focused on trade routes and markets; later in the century, its holdings and its commitment became much more extensive. Meanwhile, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada all functioned as "settler colonies," explicitly tasked with absorbing British transplants. Australia was

initially established as a penal colony, but by the 1850s, it along with Canada and New Zealand had become a popular destination for emigrants seeking cheap land and new opportunities. Between 1863 and 1880, 2,466,000 emigrants left Britain, many bound for British colonies. The consequences for Indigenous populations were devastating: military aggression, displacement, and new diseases brought from Europe, all worked together to decimate local populations. Nevertheless, many British people saw the expansion of empire as a moral responsibility. Queen Victoria stated that the imperial mission was "to protect the poor natives and advance civilization." Missionary societies flourished, spreading Christianity in India, Asia, and Africa.

While the British government was responsible for many forms of empire in the nineteenth century, the East India Company, which governed India until 1858, was a private corporation, formed in 1600 to trade in the East Indies and East Asia. By the time Victoria took the throne, the EIC had captured Java, Penang Island, Singapore, Malacca, and Burma. It never governed China, but it did force the Chinese to accept the opium trade (the cause of the First Opium War [1839–42]) and took over Hong Kong Island and Shanghai. Despite all these holdings, India was its greatest source of income: the EIC maintained a monopoly in the region through conquest and alliances with local rulers. It gained raw materials and a market for finished goods from this arrangement. But it also levied onerous taxes, and many EIC officials were notoriously corrupt. The "nabob" or British officer who makes his fortune in India under mysterious circumstances is a stock character in eighteenth- as well as nineteenth-century fiction.

The work of the EIC came to a halt after 1857, when Indian officers and local peasants violently rejected British rule. The event alerted at least some British citizens to the sheer brutality of empire in India, although others blamed the violence on Indian resistance and supposed ingratitude. The Indian Uprising encouraged Parliament to take over governance from the private corporation—British governmental rule began in 1858, and Queen Victoria was declared empress of India in 1876. But the Raj, as British

government rule was called, was not necessarily more humane or competent than the EIC. In certain respects, the situation worsened, since one consequence of the horrific violence of the Uprising was intense distrust on both sides. Nevertheless, throughout the nineteenth century, imperialism in India served as a critical engine for industrialization, providing capital, raw materials, and markets for finished goods.



The Medieval Court, Joseph Nash (1809–1878), from *Dickinson's Comprehensive Pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (1854).

The predominance of Great Britain abroad was never fully secure, as evidenced in ongoing uprisings, wars, and skirmishes. It is also the case that developments outside the empire challenged the stability and security of inhabitants of Great Britain. The sudden emergence of Bismarck's Germany after the defeat of France in 1871 confronted Britain with powerful threats to its naval and military position as well as to its preeminence in trade and industry.

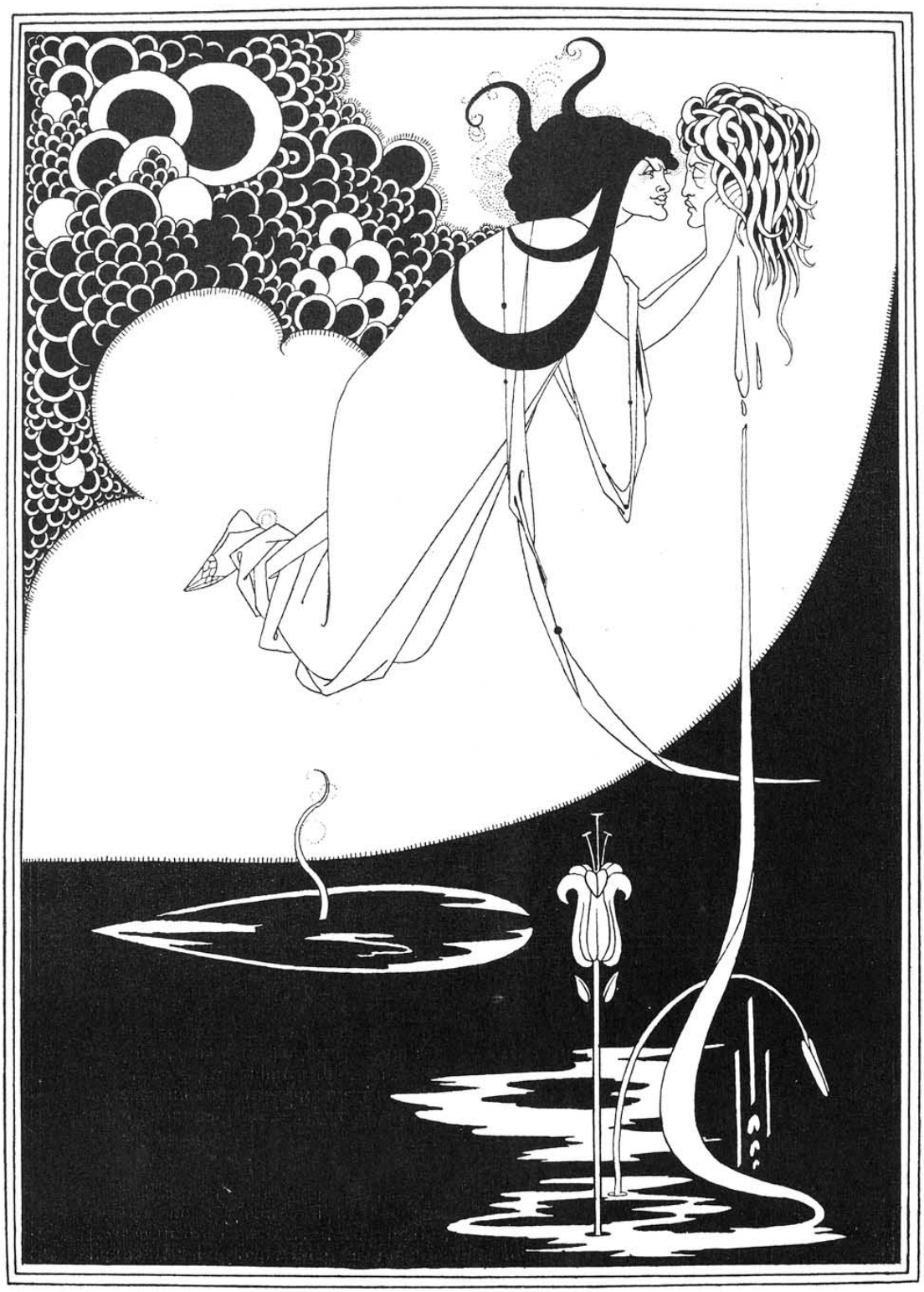
Meanwhile, the recovery of the United States after the Civil War provided new and serious competition in industry and agriculture. The status quo was also endangered by internal threats. In 1873 and 1874, severe economic depressions raised the rate of emigration to an alarming degree. Another change in the mid-Victorian balance of power was the growth of labor as a political and economic force. In 1867, under Disraeli's guidance, a second Reform Bill passed that extended the right to vote to sections of the working classes; the increasing educational opportunities that opened up for the poor over the course of the century also served to heighten political awareness and activity. These factors, together with the subsequent development of trade unions, made labor a powerful political force that included many forms of socialism. Some labor leaders were disciples of the Tory socialism of John Ruskin and shared his idealistic conviction that the middle-class economic and political system, with its distrust of state interference, was irresponsible and immoral. Other labor leaders had been influenced instead by the revolutionary theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as expounded in their *Communist Manifesto* of 1847 and in Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867, 1885, 1895). The first British author of note to embrace Marxism was the poet and painter William Morris, who shared with Marx a conviction that utopia could be achieved only after the working classes had, by revolution, taken control of government and industry.

The 1880s and 1890s

The end of the century saw an enormous increase in imperial efforts. Such heightening is particularly evident in Africa, where European conquest and partition took place at staggering speed. In 1870 only about 10 percent of Africa was under formal European control. By 1914, that number had gone up to 90 percent. From Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, and the Cape Colony (South Africa), Great Britain expanded into the interior of Africa. It also sought control over Egypt, which it ultimately made a British protectorate, and the Egyptian colony of Sudan. Kenya and Uganda were also brought under British control before the end of the century.

Meanwhile, the work of building empire in India continued with the construction of railways and the building out of governmental apparatus. The "settler colonies" of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada were largely self-governing by the last part of the century. Empire was never a peaceful affair, and resistance was ongoing. The Jamaica Rebellion in 1865; the massacre of General Gordon and his soldiers at Khartoum, in the Sudan, in 1885, where he had been sent to evacuate the British; and two Anglo-Boer wars at the end of the century, in which Britain engaged in a long, bloody, and unpopular struggle to annex two independent republics in the south of Africa: all these events and many more called into question the stability of British governance abroad.

Meanwhile, back in Great Britain, the spoils of empire funded an explosion of consumer culture—at least some of which shaded over into a self-consciously decadent celebration of sensory pleasure. Artists of the 1890s, representing the aesthetic movement, were very much aware of living at the end of a great century and often cultivated a deliberately fin de siècle ("end-of-century") pose. A studied languor, a weary sophistication, a search for new ways of titillating jaded palates can be found in both the poetry and the prose of the period. *The Yellow Book*, a periodical that ran from 1894 to 1897, is generally taken to represent the aestheticism of the nineties. The startling black-and-white drawings and designs of its art editor, Aubrey Beardsley, the prose of George Moore and Max Beerbohm, and the plays of Oscar Wilde illustrate different aspects of the movement. Writings of the era that embraced other values and attracted broader readerships nevertheless shared aestheticism's perspective that a distinctly new spirit was at large, at least in the metropolis. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's hugely popular Sherlock Holmes stories, for instance, present a hero who simultaneously embodies and polices the city's cosmopolitan decadence and his bluff sidekick Dr. Watson, to whom London is "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained." In 1893 the Jewish Austrian critic Max Nordau summed up what seemed to him to be happening, in a book that was as sensational as its title: *Degeneration.*



Salome. Oscar Wilde asked Aubrey Beardsley to illustrate the English translation of his play *Salome* (1894; the original version [1891] was in French); this image is titled *Climax*.

THE WANING OF BELIEF

One key issue throughout the nineteenth century had to do with challenges to orthodox religious belief. By the mid-Victorian period, the Church of England—the official state church of Great Britain—had evolved into three major divisions: Evangelical, or Low Church; Broad Church; and High Church. The Evangelicals were committed to the promotion of public welfare (they claimed much of the responsibility for the abolition of slavery in 1833), as well as a strict Puritan code of morality. They became a powerful and active minority in the early part of the nineteenth century, often joining forces with "Nonconformists" whose practices resembled their own: Baptists, Methodists, Congregationalists, and other Protestant denominations. The High Church, often regarded as the "Catholic" side of the Church, emphasized the importance of tradition, ritual, and authority. Finally, the Broad Church resisted the doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversies that separated the High Church and Evangelical divisions. Open to modern advances in thought, its adherents emphasized the broadly inclusive nature of the Church.

Some rationalist challenges to religious belief that developed before the Victorian period maintained their influence. The most significant was Utilitarianism, also known as Benthamism or Philosophical Radicalism. Utilitarianism derived from the thought of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and his disciple James Mill (1773–1836), the father of John Stuart Mill. Bentham believed that all human beings seek to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. The criterion by which we should judge a morally correct action, therefore, is the extent to which it provides the greatest pleasure to the greatest number. Utilitarian commitment to the importance of legislation as a way to increase happiness was responsible for many of the most important reforms of the nineteenth century: the Factory Act of 1833 that prohibited children aged nine to thirteen from working more than forty-eight hours a week; the 1848 Public Health Act that sought to improve the sewer system and ensure clean

water; the 1870 Education Act that established and maintained schools; the gradual reform of the legal system. Bentham was concerned with the material welfare of the people, but he was less concerned with their emotional and spiritual needs, and he was dismissive of religion as superstition. This stance aroused considerable opposition. In his *Autobiography* (1873), for example, John Stuart Mill describes his realization that his utilitarian upbringing had left him no power to feel. In *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34) Carlyle describes a similar spiritual crisis in which he struggles to rediscover the springs of religious feeling in the face of his despair at the spectre of a universe governed only by utilitarian principles.

In mid-Victorian Britain, the challenge to religious belief gradually shifted from the Utilitarians to some of the leaders of science. Although many British scientists were themselves individuals of strong religious convictions, the impact of their scientific discoveries seemed consistently damaging to established faiths. Complaining in 1851 about the "flimsiness" of his own religious faith, Ruskin exclaimed: "If only the Geologists would let me alone, I could do very well, but those dreadful hammers! I hear the clink of them at the end of every cadence of the Bible verses." Ruskin is lamenting two phenomena here: first, the "Higher Criticism," a reading practice developed in Germany that treated the Bible not as a sacred and infallible document, but instead as a historical text. A noteworthy example of such Higher Criticism studies was David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu*, which was translated by George Eliot in 1846 as *The Life of Jesus.* The second kind of damage Ruskin references here is the view of humanity implicit in the discoveries of geology and astronomy, the new and "Terrible Muses" of literature, as Tennyson called them in a late poem. Geology, by extending the history of the earth backward millions of years, reduced the stature of the human species in time. John Tyndall, an eminent physicist, said in an address at Belfast in 1874 that in the eighteenth century people had an "unwavering trust" in the "chronology of the Old Testament" but in Victorian times they had to become accustomed to

> the idea that not for six thousand, nor for sixty thousand, nor for six thousand thousand, but for aeons embracing untold millions of years, this earth has been the theatre of life and death. The riddle of the rocks has been read by the geologist and paleontologist, from sub-Cambrian depths to the deposits thickening over the sea bottoms of today. And upon the leaves of that stone book are . . . stamped the characters, plainer and surer than those formed by the ink of history, which carry the mind back into abysses of past time.

The discoveries of astronomers, by extending a knowledge of stellar distances to dizzying expanses, were similarly disconcerting. Carlyle's friend John Sterling remarked in a letter of 1837 how geology "gives one the same sort of bewildering view of the abysmal extent of Time that Astronomy does of Space." To Tennyson's speaker in *Maud* (1855) the stars are "innumerable" tyrants of "iron skies." They are "Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand / His nothingness into man."

In the mid-Victorian period, biology reduced humankind even further into "nothingness." Darwin's great treatise *The Origin of Species* (1859) offered a theory of "natural selection" that conflicted not only with the concept of creation derived from the Bible but also with long-established assumptions of the values attached to humanity's special role in the world. According to Darwin, there was no necessary conflict between his theory of "natural selection" and Christianity (although he was not a believer), but others disagreed. Darwin's later treatise *The Descent of Man* (1871) raised more explicitly the haunting question of our continuity with the animal kingdom, even as it offered a vigorous rebuttal of what came to be called "scientific racism," or the attempt to use science to make specious claims about biological differences between people of different races.

Disputes about evolutionary science, like the disputes about religion, are a reminder that beneath the placidly prosperous surface of the mid-Victorian age there were serious conflicts and anxieties. In the same year as the Great Exhibition, with its celebration of the

triumphs of trade and industry, Charles Kingsley wrote, "The young men and women of our day are fast parting from their parents and each other; the more thoughtful are wandering either towards Rome [that is, Roman Catholicism], towards sheer materialism, or towards an unchristian and unphilosophic spiritualism."

WOMEN AND THE POLITICS OF DOMESTICITY

Political and legal reforms in the course of the Victorian period had given citizens many rights, but women did not share in these freedoms. They could not vote or hold political office. (Although petitions to Parliament advocating women's suffrage were introduced as early as the 1840s, women did not get the vote until 1918.) Until the passage of the Married Women's Property Acts (1870–1908), married women could not own or handle their own property. While men could divorce their wives for adultery, wives could divorce their husbands only if adultery were combined with cruelty, bigamy, incest, or bestiality. Educational and employment opportunities for women were limited.

Legislative measures over the course of the nineteenth century gradually brought about changes in a number of areas. The Custody Act of 1839 gave a mother the right to petition the court for access to her minor children and custody of children under seven (raised to sixteen in 1878). The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 established a civil divorce court (divorce previously could be granted only by an ecclesiastical court) and provided a deserted wife the right to apply for a protection order that would allow her rights to her property. Although divorce remained so expensive as to be available only to the very wealthy, these changes in marriage and divorce laws, together with the Married Women's Property Acts, began to establish a basis for the rights of women in marriage.

In addition to pressuring Parliament for legal reform, feminists worked to enlarge female educational opportunities. In 1837 none of the country's universities was open to women. Tennyson's long poem *The Princess* (1847), with its fantasy of a women's college from whose precincts all males are excluded, was inspired by contemporary discussions of the need for women to obtain an education more advanced than that provided by the popular finishing schools ("Miss Pinkerton's Academy" in William Makepeace

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* [1847–48] is a good parody of one of these institutions). Although by the end of the poem Princess Ida has repented of her scheme, she and the prince look forward to a future in which man will be "more of woman, she of man." The poem reflects a climate of opinion that led in 1848 to the establishment of the first women's college in London. By the end of Victoria's reign, women could take degrees at twelve universities or university colleges and could study, although not earn a degree, at Oxford and Cambridge.

There was also agitation for improved employment opportunities for women. Writers as diverse as Charlotte Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Florence Nightingale complained that women from middle- and upper-class homes were taught trivial accomplishments to fill up days in which there was nothing important to do. Had they been aware of such complaints, women from the majority lower-class population might have found it hard to show sympathy: the working lives of poor British women had always been strenuous, but industrial society brought unprecedented pressures. Although the largest proportion of working women labored as servants in the homes of the more affluent, the explosive growth of mechanized industries, especially in the textile trade, created new and grueling forms of paid employment. Hundreds of thousands of lower-class women worked at factory jobs under appalling conditions, while the need for coal to fuel England's industrial development brought women into the mines for the first time. A series of Factory Acts (1802–78) gradually regulated the conditions of labor in mines and factories, eventually reducing the sixteen-hour day and banning women from mine work altogether; but even with such changes, the lot of the country's poorest women was undoubtedly hard. Bad working conditions and underemployment drove thousands of women into prostitution, which in the nineteenth century became increasingly professionalized—and the subject of an almost obsessive public concern, whose manifestations included frequent literary and artistic representation.

For the most part, prostitution was a trade for working-class women, but there was considerable anxiety about the possible fates of what contemporary journalists called the "surplus" or "redundant" women of the middle classes—that is, women who remained unmarried because of the imbalance in numbers between the sexes. Such women (of whom there were approximately half a million in mid-Victorian Britain) had few employment opportunities, none of them attractive or profitable. Emigration was frequently proposed as a solution to the problem, but the number of single female emigrants was never high enough to affect the population imbalance significantly. The only occupation at which an unmarried middle-class woman could earn a living and maintain some claim to gentility was that of a governess, but a governess could expect no security of employment, only minimal wages, and an ambiguous status, somewhere between servant and family member, that isolated her within the household. Perhaps because the governess so clearly indicated the precariousness of the unmarried middle-class woman's status in Victorian Britain, the governess novel, of which the most famous examples are *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Vanity Fair*, became a popular genre through which to explore women's roles in society.

As such novels indicate, Victorian society was preoccupied not only with legal and economic limitations on women's lives but also with the very nature of woman. In *The Subjection of Women,* John Stuart Mill argues that "what is now called the nature of women is eminently an artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others." In Tennyson's *The Princess*, the king voices a more traditional view of male and female roles, a view that has come to be known as the doctrine of "separate spheres":

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
> Man with the head and woman with the heart:
> Man to command and woman to obey.

The king's relegation of women to the hearth and heart reflects an ideology that claimed that woman had a special nature peculiarly fit for her domestic role. Most aptly epitomized by the title of Coventry Patmore's immensely popular poem *The Angel in the House* (1854–62), this concept of womanhood stressed woman's purity and selflessness. Protected and enshrined within the home, her role was to create a place of peace where man could take refuge from the difficulties of modern life. In "Of Queens' Gardens" (1865), John Ruskin writes:

> This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed either by husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in. But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods, . . . so far it vindicates the name, and fulfills the praise, of home.

However oppressive to individual women, the image of middle-class domestic virtue served important political ends. The middle class consistently charged the governing classes—which until the Reform Act of 1832 included only the aristocracy and the landed gentry—with superficiality and immorality, while grounding their own demands for political representation at least in part in values associated with domesticity. Victorian literature played a critical role in the dissemination of these ideas. William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charlotte Brontë, John Ruskin—the list goes on and on—all implicitly or explicitly argued for a redistribution of political power to the middle class on the basis of its supposed commitment to a highly gendered division of ethical labor. Thus, while this account identified middle-class men with high

standards of self-restraint, fortitude, integrity, and loyalty, those values found their natural counterpart in the deep feelings—particularly the sympathy, compassion, and generosity of their wives, daughters, and sisters. What brought the two together was the Victorian home.

Even as this middle-class ideal did important political work at home, it also served important functions in the empire. The supposed harmoniousness and moral rectitude of middle-class home life served as an important justification for British claims to moral superiority and hence to the virtuousness of their imperial ambitions. In addition, the superiority of Englishwomen—their independence, access to education, and supposedly desexualized natures—served as an enormous point of pride as well as a justification for the kinds of values they could be trusted to disseminate. Women abroad were often tasked with missionary work, or other kinds of educational projects. But simply by being abroad, British women were understood to serve as an example for colonized people to emulate.

LITERARY INNOVATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Realism and the Novel

Although its roots lie in literature of the eighteenth century, the realist novel was the predominant form of the nineteenth. Characterized by an interest in the ordinary lives of ordinary people, it tended to address experiences most readers might be expected to share: childhood, courtship and marriage, the discovery of a professional vocation, to name just a few. These novels often focus on members of the middle and occasionally the lower classes, rather than just the wealthy. And they tend to stay closely connected to the ordinary and the familiar, avoiding the fantastic, the lurid, the supernatural, or the remote. Certainly, many realist plots dip into the sensational: courtship might be complicated by an industrial riot, the discovery of a wicked plot, or an inheritance gone awry. But the starting point, and often the ending point, of these fictions tended to be in the familiar terrain of the home.

The realist novel was a popular form of entertainment, but it was also commonly understood to have a moral or even a social mission as well. As George Eliot wrote, famously, "The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment." The notion that art can encourage sympathy or care constituted a popular defense of the novel form. Particularly at a moment when the classes seemed to be drifting apart, the novel was commonly regarded as one way to bring them closer together. At least some writers and readers saw it as particularly well suited to capture the experience of living through the industrial revolution. By

contrast with the "knowable communities" of village life, the new urban slums of London, Birmingham, Manchester, and elsewhere seemed both teeming with life, and profoundly mysterious. Elizabeth Gaskell, Benjamin Disraeli, Charles Dickens, and others all took a turn describing the new urban landscape as a way to create greater sympathy between the classes.

Despite their shared commitment to the representation of "reality," the styles of these novelists varied extremely widely. So, for example, Dickens was known for exaggerated caricatures of known types—in this volume exemplified by Ebenezer Scrooge's "Bah Humbug," or Tiny Tim's infant piety. Meanwhile, Gaskell's industrial novel, *Mary Barton*, offers meticulous detail of her working-class characters' daily lives, and George Eliot was known for her depictions of complex states of mind. Stylistically, these writers might seem to have little in common, yet in their shared concern with the ordinary, the everyday, and the cultivation of sympathy they can all be said to have participated in the same project.

Realist fictions are often quite long—especially those that attempt to capture the experience of a community rather than an individual or even a family. Dickens's *Bleak House*, Eliot's *Middlemarch*, and Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* are good examples of this tendency, all weighing in at nine hundred pages or more. This tendency creates considerable difficulties for an anthology of this kind. Rather than portions of longer works, we have decided to include several shorter pieces in their entirety. The effect may be slightly distorting: realist writers often used their shorter works to experiment with nonrealist narrative forms. At the same time, the basic commitments and concerns of these shorter works are largely consistent with the novels. So, for example, the supernatural plot of Eliot's *The Lifted Veil* is highly unusual for this novelist, but its focus on sympathy is not. Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* works similarly: on the one hand, its supernatural plot clearly breaks with realist convention; on the other, its forms of characterization are ultimately typical of the author's art.

Publishing and Literacy

The sense of realism these writers describe—and specifically readers' sense of living with the characters they read about—can be at least partially attributed to changing modes of production, and specifically to the advent of serial publication. Increased literacy rates (largely thanks to new requirements for universal education) combined with technological changes—presses powered by steam, paper made from wood pulp rather than rags, and toward the end of the century, typesetting machines—to make publishing cheaper, which led to the number of newspapers, periodicals, and books increasing exponentially during the Victorian period. Books remained fairly expensive, and most readers borrowed them from commercial lending libraries. (There were few public libraries until the final decades of the century.) But after the repeal of the stamp tax and duties on advertisements just after mid-century, an extensive popular press developed, the most significant form of which was the periodical. In the first thirty years of the Victorian period, 170 new periodicals were started in London alone. There were magazines for every taste: cheap and popular magazines, like the "penny dreadfuls" that published sensational stories; religious monthlies; weekly newspapers; satiric periodicals noted for their political cartoons (the most famous of which was *Punch*); women's magazines; monthly miscellanies publishing fiction, poetry, and articles on current affairs; and literary and political reviews and quarterlies. The chief reviews and monthly magazines had a great deal of power and influence; they defined issues in public affairs, and they made and broke literary reputations. They also published the major writers of the period: the fiction of Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, Trollope, Gaskell, and Hardy; the essays of Carlyle, Mill, Arnold, and Ruskin; and the poetry of Tennyson and the Brownings all appeared in monthly magazines.

The circumstances of periodical publication exerted a shaping force on literature. Although serial publication of works began in the late eighteenth century, it was the issue of Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* (1836–37) in individual numbers that established the popularity of the serial form. All of Dickens's novels and many of those of his

contemporaries were published in this manner. Readers therefore read these works in relatively short, discrete installments over a period that could extend more than a year, with time for reflection and interpretation in between. Serial publication encouraged a certain kind of plotting and pacing and allowed writers to take account of their readers' reactions as they constructed subsequent installments. It also created a distinctive sense of a community of readers, a sense further encouraged by the practice of reading aloud in family gatherings, in some workplaces, and in public performances. Combined with the common adaptation of popular fiction for the theatre, the effect was to make certain novels seem to provide a common language, bringing together members of different classes around a set of characters, plots, and concerns.

The novel form was democratizing in terms of its audience, appealing to a wide variety of readers. But it was also unusually open to new writers. Women writers, in particular, were, for the first time, not figures on the margins but major authors. Jane Austen, the Brontës, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot all helped define the genre. The novel often revolved around aspects of domestic life over which women were commonly accorded authority—courtship, family relationships, marriage. It also did not carry the burden of an august tradition as poetry did, nor did it build on the learning of a university education.

The very diversity of the British empire in the nineteenth century makes it difficult to generalize about reading practices and patterns of authorship. That said, the scholar Priya Joshi has demonstrated the popularity of certain kinds of fictions in India—the sensational writings of G. W. M. Reynolds and Edward Bulwer-Lytton, for example, along with the historical novels of Sir Walter Scott. These fictions influenced a whole generation of Indian writings in English and continue to impact the postcolonial novel of today. Meanwhile, the settler colony of Canada served as an enthusiastic audience for much British fiction—and poetry and prose—as well as a source of real-life adventure tales and stories of frontier life. (See Tekahionwake's "Indian Girl in Modern Fiction" for a funny send-up

of contemporary stereotypes of Indigenous Canadian life.) The colonies were both avid consumers of Victorian literature and also the source of writing back from the supposed margins.

Poetry

Although today we generally consider the novel as the most important literary form of the Victorian era, for many nineteenth-century readers, poetry was an even greater source of national pride as well as pleasure. Poetry became part of the lives of more people than ever before in the Victorian period, inasmuch as poems were printed in the pages of every kind of newspaper and periodical, regularly heard in domestic and public settings alike, and, from the late 1870s onward, repeatedly recited in the nation's growing network of schools for the masses. Although sometimes overshadowed by the twin peaks of Romantic and modernist achievement (and often disparaged by the latter), Victorian poetry played a uniquely important role in the lives of many Victorian readers. Influenced by the vibrancy and formal advances of the novel in this period, poets devised new ways of telling stories in verse; examples include Tennyson's *Maud*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1857), Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1868–69), and Arthur Hugh Clough's *Amours de Voyage* (1857–58). Poets and critics debated what the appropriate subjects of such long narrative poems should be. Some, like Matthew Arnold, held that poets should use the heroic materials of the past; others, like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, felt that poets should represent "their age, not Charlemagne's." Poets also experimented with character and perspective. *Amours de Voyage* is a long epistolary poem that tells the story of a failed romance through letters written by its various characters; *The Ring and the Book* presents its plot—an old Italian murder story—through ten different perspectives.

Undeniably innovative, Victorian poetry was nevertheless deeply affected by the shadow of Romanticism. By 1837, when Victoria ascended the throne, all the major Romantic poets, save William Wordsworth, were dead, but they had died young, and many

readers consequently still regarded them as their contemporaries. Yet they do not generally demonstrate the confidence that the Romantics felt in the power of the imagination. Robert Browning took a different tack in turning away from the Romantics altogether and instead writing dramatic monologues—poems, he said, that are "Lyric in expression" but "Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine." Tennyson simultaneously developed a more lyric form of the dramatic monologue. The idea of creating a lyric poem in the voice of a speaker ironically distinct from the poet is the great achievement of Victorian poetry.

While Victorian poetry is often described as highly visual and aural, and as interested in heightened states of emotion and the representation of psychology in new ways—at least some poets leaned in to the political power of poetry. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, for example, wrote passionately about the plight of enslaved people and overworked children. Tekahionwake uses her poetry to lament the beauty of her Mohawk people as well as the violence being perpetrated against them. Meanwhile, the work of Bengali poet Toru Dutt bridges the divide between political and post-Romantic poetry by splicing together Indian themes and stories with British poetic forms in a way that makes implicit claims about the potential compatibility yet distinctness of these different cultures.

Prose and the Victorian Sage

Although some Victorian poets may have felt ambivalent about the didactic mission the public expected of literary figures, writers of "nonfictional prose" aimed specifically to instruct. Although the term *nonfictional prose* is clumsy and not quite exact (the Victorians themselves referred instead to history, biography, theology, criticism, political economy, and so forth), it helps indicate the centrality of argument and persuasion to Victorian intellectual life. The growth of the periodical press, described earlier, provided the vehicle and marketplace for nonfictional prose. It reflects a vigorous sense of shared intellectual life and the public urgency of social and moral

issues. On a wide range of controversial topics—religious, political, and aesthetic—writers sought to convince their readers to share their convictions and values. Such writers seem at times almost secular priests.

On behalf of nonfictional prose, Walter Pater argued in his essay "Style" (1889) that it was "the special and opportune art of the modern world." He believed not that it was superior to verse but that it more readily conveys the "chaotic variety and complexity" of modern life, the "incalculable" intellectual diversity of the "master currents of the present time." Pater's characterization of prose helps us understand what its writers were attempting to do. Despite the diversity of styles and subjects, Victorian prose writers were engaged in shaping belief in a bewilderingly complex and changing world. Their modes of persuasion differ. Mill and Huxley rely on clear reasoning, logical argument, and the kind of lucid style favored by essayists of the eighteenth century. Carlyle and Ruskin write a prose that is more Romantic in character, that seeks to move readers as well as convince them. Meanwhile, Mohandas Gandhi uses a skeptical interlocutor to help elucidate his claims. Yet whatever the differences in their rhetorical techniques, they share an urgency of exposition and a sense that literature constitutes a powerful means of shaping public opinion.

Drama and Theater

The plays written and performed in the Victorian age, apart from those in the final decade of the century, have until recently received relatively little scholarly attention. Yet the theater, throughout the period, was a flourishing and popular institution, which staged not merely conventional dramas, but a rich variety of theatrical entertainments, many with lavish spectacular effects—burlesques, extravaganzas, highly scenic and altered versions of Shakespeare's plays, melodramas, pantomimes, and musicals. Robert Corrigan gives figures that suggest the extent of the popularity of such entertainment: "In the decade between 1850 and 1860 the number of theaters built throughout the country was doubled, and in the

middle of the sixties, in London alone, 150,000 would be attending the theater on any given day." The popularity of theatrical entertainment made it a powerful influence on other genres. Dickens was devoted to the theater and composed many of the scenes of his novels with theatrical techniques. Thackeray represents himself as the puppet master of his characters in *Vanity Fair* and employs the stock gestures and expressions of melodramatic acting in his illustrations for the novel. Tennyson, Browning, and Henry James tried their hands at writing plays, though with no commercial success. More successful stage plays were written by such figures as Dion Boucicault (1820–1890) and Henry Arthur Jones (1851–1921), prolific dramatists of the period. The comic operas of W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900) were also hugely popular. Their satire of Victorian values and institutions, what Gilbert called their "topsyturvydom," and their grave and quasi-respectful treatment of the ridiculous not only make them delightful in themselves but anticipate the techniques of two great figures of British theater from this period, the Irishmen George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. Although they did not like each other's work, they both created a kind of comedy that took aim at Victorian pretense and hypocrisy.

Although no anthology can be comprehensive, this volume attempts to be more inclusive than its forebearers: more attentive to the political, economic, and social realities that underlay much British literature and culture in the nineteenth century, and more aware of the wide range of powerful and important voices that were writing in English beyond the British Isles. At the same time, any anthology is a product of its own historical moment as well as an attempt to capture another; as a result, it will always be partial or incomplete. The present is a moving target. Our goal has been to retain those texts and traditions that have been critical to the teaching of English literature for many decades, but also to include voices that will inspire new readers (and writers) coming to these texts with new concerns, questions, and needs. The Victorian period helped make

us what we are: its writers set many of the terms for our literature and culture; its thinkers on political and social issues continue to affect our assumptions and beliefs; its imperialists helped shaped the globe as we know it today. We hope to have captured some portion of this legacy in this volume.

The Victorian Age

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1807 Slave trade abolished
1830 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*	**1830** Opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway
	1832 First Reform Bill
1833 Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*	**1833** Slavery Abolition Act passed
1836 Charles Dickens, *Pickwick Papers*	
	1837 Victoria becomes queen
	1838 Slavery fully abolished in British colonies. "People's Charter" issued by Chartist Movement

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1839 Custody Act gives mothers the right to petition for custody of children under seven
	1840 Queen marries Prince Albert
1843 Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*	**1842** Chartist riots. Copyright Act; Mudie's Circulating Library
	1845–51 Potato famine in Ireland. Mass emigration to North America
	1846 Repeal of Corn Laws
1847 Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*. Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*. Tennyson, *The Princess*	**1847** Ten Hours Factory Act
1848 Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*. William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*	**1848** Revolution on the Continent

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1850 Tennyson, *In Memoriam*. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (posthumous pub.)	**1850** Tennyson succeeds Wordsworth as Poet Laureate
	1851 Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace
1852–53 Dickens, *Bleak House*	
	1854–56 Crimean War
1855 Robert Browning, *Men and Women*	
1857 Mary Seacole, *The Wonderful Adventures of Mary Seacole in Many Lands*. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*	**1857** Indian uprising. Matrimonial Causes Act
1859 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*. George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1860 Dickens, *Great Expectations*. Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*	**1860** Italian unification
	1861 Death of Prince Albert
	1861–65 American Civil War
1862 Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market*	
1864 Robert Browning, *Dramatis Personae*	
1865 Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*	**1865** Jamaica Rebellion
1867 Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1	**1867** Second Reform Bill
	1868 Opening of Suez Canal
1869 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy.* Mill, *The*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
Subjection of Women	
	1870 Married Women's Property Act. Victory in Franco-Prussian War makes Germany a world power. Elementary Education Act
1871 Darwin, *Descent of Man*	**1871** Newnham College (first women's Oxbridge college) founded at Cambridge
1872 Eliot, *Middlemarch*	
1873 Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*	**1873–74** Severe economic depression
1875 Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*	
	1876 Victoria declared empress of India
1882 Toru Dutt, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
Hindustan	
	1885 General Gordon killed at Khartoum
1886 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*	
1889 William Butler Yeats, *Crossways*	
1891 Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Arthur Conan Doyle, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*	**1891** Free elementary education
	1893 Independent Labour Party established
1895 Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*	**1895** Oscar Wilde arrested and imprisoned for homosexuality

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1899–1902 Anglo-Boer War
	1901 Death of Queen Victoria. Succession of Edward VII
1909 Mohandas Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*	
1913 English publication of Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, *The Crescent Moon*, *The Gardener*, *Chitra*	

Great Britain's Imperial Mission

By the end of the nineteenth century, Great Britain controlled nearly a quarter of the earth's land surface and governed approximately four hundred million people. It achieved this far-flung empire through many different means—including violence, economic exploitation, and political patronage—and it governed in a variety of ways. The British Empire included Crown Colonies such as Jamaica, ruled from Britain, as well as protectorates such as Uganda, which relinquished only partial sovereignty to Britain. Ireland was a kind of internal colony whose demands for home rule were alternately entertained and discounted. India started out under the control of a private entity, the East India Company, but after the 1857 Indian Uprising (also known as the First War of Indian Independence) was ruled directly from Britain. "Settler" colonies—that is, colonies populated largely by European settlers who had appropriated Indigenous lands—such as Canada and Australia, tended to be largely self-governing. By contrast, colonies and protectorates with large Indigenous populations, such as Sierra Leone, or else with large populations of formerly enslaved people and non-European laborers, such as Trinidad, did not gain autonomy until the twentieth century. This cluster provides a brief and very partial introduction to some of these forms of empire. Its goal is to trace the contours of a single imperial project that assumed the right, or even the obligation, of White British men and women to appropriate lands, resources, and labor inhabited by others. It also seeks to illustrate the wide range of political, economic, and ideological forms that project took.

To summarize Britain's attitude toward its imperial activities over the centuries is no easy task. Economic motives predominated: Britain claimed territories outside its national borders in order to tax local populations; to obtain sugar, spices, tea, tin, opium, and

rubber; to procure markets for its own goods; and to secure trade routes. At the same time, apologists for empire emphasized Great Britain's supposedly philanthropic agenda, or the notion that Britain had a responsibility to provide the world with European government, education, and technology. Many assumed that through colonization, Britain would bestow the benefits of a supposedly superior civilization upon lesser peoples. Evangelical Christianity played a role as well, and not just through the missionaries who worked in India beginning in the early nineteenth century. More broadly, many Britons believed that Protestantism was the one true faith, and that it was their religious duty to bring the potential for salvation to as many souls as possible. For them, the imposition of British rule was divinely sanctioned. But there was still no widespread popular or governmental enthusiasm for the idea of imperialism as Britain's special destiny, and various factors, not least England's long and troubled relationship with Ireland, ensured that many viewed the project of colonial rule with suspicion throughout the middle years of the century.

The period from 1870 to 1900 witnessed a significantly more aggressive mode of empire building that would continue until World War I (1914–18). Britain's rivalry with its European neighbors was a key factor: the balance of power in Europe shifted in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), leading to competition for new territories. Particularly fierce was "the scramble for Africa," as the brutal partitioning of that continent was called. Expansion did not go unchallenged—the British fought both with Indigenous peoples and with other European powers or settlers in numerous conflicts—but it progressed at an astonishing pace nonetheless. With the rise of the new imperialism, pre-existing ideas about Britain's superiority, now bolstered by supposedly "scientific" theories supporting the notion of its evolutionary advancement, were channelled into a romantic vision of the British Empire as a tremendous force for the good not only of the residents of Great Britain or those overseas of "British" (that is, supposedly "Anglo-Saxon," white) descent, but of the whole world. At the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, a large proportion of British people took pride in the global supremacy of

their empire and in what they perceived to be their generous and selfless willingness to pick up the thankless, but necessary, task of imperial rule ("the White Man's Burden," as Rudyard Kipling would call it in another context).

Victoria Presenting a Bible. *The Secret of England's Greatness (Queen Victoria Presenting a Bible in the Audience Chamber at Windsor)*, Thomas Jones Barker, ca. 1863. The decision to depict Queen Victoria presenting a Bible to an ambassador from East Africa reinforces the popular (and highly debatable) notion that British power derived from Christianity rather than from military might.

The British Empire took an incalculable toll on the individuals, communities, and cultures it colonized. Settler colonies such as Canada and Australia decimated indigenous populations through violence, displacement, and re-education. (The death toll at

Canadian "residential schools" for First Nations children is still not fully known.) The taxes levied on India caused mass impoverishment and famine. Millions of Africans were kidnapped and enslaved, forced to work on the plantations of the West Indies and elsewhere. The systems of apartheid imposed in South Africa continue to exert some force today. Hundreds of thousands died or were forced to flee as a result of the Great Famine in Ireland, during which grain continued to be exported to England. The legacies of empire are visible from Afghanistan to Zambia, from New Zealand to Hong Kong. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of the political conflicts we are experiencing today can be traced back to decisions made in the nineteenth century by a small group of White men living and working in London.

Empire brought the raw materials necessary for the industrial revolution to Great Britain; consequently, it also brought enormous wealth to the country, however inequitably distributed. The need to concentrate on the imperial mission also affected the consolidation of a specifically *British* identity: the conflicted relations and characteristic differences between people from the various parts of the British Isles (politically dominant England and long-conquered Wales, Scotland, and Ireland) appeared less significant when set against the much more obvious inequities of power and greater cultural, racial, religious, and linguistic differences across the globe. For instance, members of the working class in Great Britain only rarely connected their exploitation by the English ruling class to that suffered by colonized peoples. Intensified competition with the empire-building powers of continental Europe after the Franco-Prussian War also played an important role, as did the mounting stridency of other nationalist movements abroad. In the last quarter of the century, the patriotic fervor celebrating the achievements of the British nation increased dramatically—a phenomenon undoubtedly assisted by the growth both in the size of the reading public (thanks to the progressive extension of elementary education literacy was practically universal in Britain by 1900) and in the number of flag-waving newspapers, periodicals, and books available for it to consume.

The citizens of Great Britain were thus welded into a more cohesive whole. But few of them were ready to accept the peoples of the colonies (and especially Indigenous non-White populations) as truly "British," a state of affairs reflected in governmental structures. As J. A. Hobson, the author of the influential *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), pointed out, "not five per cent of the population of our Empire are possessed of any appreciable portion of the political and civil liberties which are the basis of British civilisation." Writing after Britain's imperial confidence had been severely damaged by the unanticipated length and difficulty of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 in South Africa, Hobson aimed not only to cast serious doubt on imperialism's putative financial benefit to Britain, but also to demonstrate the overall falsity of the empire's claim to support the extension of self-government in its territories. In exposing the repeated misrepresentations and self-serving justifications at the heart of the British Empire, Hobson joined voices with others around the globe, such as the West Indian intellectual J. J. Thomas, and entered a tradition of anti-imperial critique that was to grow exponentially in the twentieth century.

Following some general commentaries on empire from Richard Cobden (an unusually hostile observer of the spread of empire), John Stuart Mill, Sir Henry Newbolt, James Chamberlain, and J. A. Hobson, this cluster is broken down by type of colony: the plantation system; India (which is so large and complex as to require a category to itself); settler colonies; and the British Isles. It is worth noting that despite the enormous diversity represented in this list, it is by no means exhaustive: it does a disservice to the diversity of relations in Africa, South America, and East and Southeast Asia. And even within the types represented, many territories are excluded. Our goal is not to be exhaustive or comprehensive but instead to provide readers with a sense of some of the ideas about empire that were most influential for British literature.

RICHARD COBDEN

Liberal politician and advocate for free trade, Richard Cobden (1804–1865) here voices a critique of imperial aggression that was relatively unusual for the period. While some politicians and commentators expressed concern regarding the cost of empire, and others worried that young men sent abroad might be corrupted by the experience, relatively few objected to empire, *tout court*. In the pamphlet *How Wars Are Got Up in India* (1853), Cobden objects both to the circumstances leading up to the Second Burmese War—a territorial war that ultimately spanned sixty years—and to its exorbitant cost, which he points out was largely borne by India. "To the latter evil [that is, the financial burden on India]," he writes, "growing out of our insatiable love of territorial aggrandizement, we shall probably be willfully blind, until awakened from a great national illusion by some rude shock to the fabric of our Indian finance."

From How Wars Are Got Up in India

Public opinion in this country has not hitherto been opposed to an extension of our dominion in the East.[1] On the contrary, it is believed to be profitable to the nation, and all classes are ready to hail with approbation every fresh acquisition of territory, and to reward those conquerors who bring us home title-deeds, no matter I fear, how obtained, to new Colonial possessions. So long as they are believed to be profitable, this spirit will prevail.

But it is not consistent with the supremacy of that moral law, which mysteriously sways the fate of empires, as well as of individuals, that deeds of violence, fraud and injustice, should be committed with permanent profit and advantage. If wrongs are perpetrated in the name, and by the authority of this great country, by its proconsuls or naval commanders in distant quarters of the globe, it is not by throwing the flimsy veil of a "double government"[2] over such transactions, that we shall ultimately escape the penalty attaching to deeds for which we are really responsible. How, or when, the retribution will react upon us, I presume not to say. The rapine in Mexico and Peru[3] was retaliated upon Spain, in the ruin of her finances. In France, the *razzias* of Algeria were repaid by her own troops, in the massacres of the Boulevards,[4] and the savage combats in the streets of Paris. Let us hope that the national conscience, which has before averted from England, by timely atonement and reparation, the punishment due for imperial crimes,[5] will be roused ere it be too late from its lethargy, and put an end to the deeds of violence and injustice which have marked every step of our progress in India.

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: India as well as Burma.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The system by which stockholders in the East India Company shared responsibility with the British government for governing India.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821. Peru gained independence in 1826.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: One important cause of the French Revolution of 1848 involved an incident in which French soldiers fired on a crowd of protestors. "*Razzias*": hostile raids.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Reference to the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and of slavery in 1833.Return to reference 5

JOHN STUART MILL

Philosopher, politician, and long-time employee of the East India Company, John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) was one of the foremost theorists of liberty and liberalism of the nineteenth century. He was also a defender of "benevolent" empire, or the notion that imperialism was legitimate when it brought progress or improvement to "backward" peoples. In "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" (1859), Mill argues that although in general governments should refrain from encroaching on one another's concerns, different rules apply to what he terms "barbarians." The notion that the British, like the ancient Romans, had a responsibility to use imperialism to civilize the uncivilized was common at this time. For a more complete account of Mill's career, see his entry in this volume.

A Few Words on Non-Intervention

There is a great difference between the case in which the nations concerned are of the same, or something like the same, degree of civilization, and that in which one of the parties to the situation is of a high, and the other of a very low, grade of social improvement. To suppose that the same international customs, and the same rules of international morality, can obtain between one civilized nation and another, and between civilized nations and barbarians, is a grave error, and one which no statesman can fall into, however it may be with those who, from a safe and unresponsible position, criticise statesmen. Among many reasons why the same rules cannot be applicable to situations so different, the two following are among the most important. In the first place, the rules of ordinary international morality imply reciprocity. But barbarians will not reciprocate. They cannot be depended on for observing any rules. Their minds are not capable of so great an effort, nor their will sufficiently under the influence of distant motives. In the next place, nations which are still barbarous have not got beyond the period during which it is likely to be for their benefit that they should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners. Independence and nationality, so essential to the due growth and development of a people further advanced in improvement, are generally impediments to theirs. The sacred duties which civilized nations owe to the independence and nationality of each other, are not binding towards those to whom nationality and independence are either a certain evil, or at best a questionable good. The Romans were not the most clean-handed of conquerors, yet would it have been better for Gaul and Spain, Numidia and Dacia, never to have formed part of the Roman Empire? To characterize any conduct whatever towards a barbarous people as a violation of the law of nations, only shows that he who so speaks has never considered the subject. A violation of great principles of morality it may easily be; but barbarians have no rights as a *nation,*

except a right to such treatment as may, at the earliest possible period, fit them for becoming one. The only moral laws for the relation between a civilized and a barbarous government, are the universal rules of morality between man and man.

The criticisms, therefore, which are so often made upon the conduct of the French in Algeria, or of the English in India,[1] proceed, it would seem, mostly on a wrong principle. The true standard by which to judge their proceedings never having been laid down, they escape such comment and censure as might really have an improving effect, while they are tried by a standard which can have no influence on those practically engaged in such transactions, knowing as they do that it cannot, and if it could, ought not to be observed, because no human being would be the better, and many much the worse, for its observance.

1859

Endnotes

- Note 1: The privately held East India Company gradually expanded its rule over India until uprisings in 1857 led the British Crown to take over governance. “French in Algeria”: French rule in Algeria lasted from 1830 to 1962.Return to reference 1

SIR HENRY JOHN NEWBOLT

A practicing lawyer until 1899, Henry John Newbolt (1862–1938) composed novels, histories, and a play over the course of his writing career, but his literary reputation was secured by the stirring patriotic poems, often in ballad form and on naval themes, that he published in such volumes as *Admirals All* (1897), *The Island Race* (1898), and *Songs of the Sea* (1904). Newbolt was knighted in 1915; in 1921 he chaired a governmental investigation of the teaching of English in the schools of England and Wales.

Vitaï Lampada[1]

There's a breathless hush in the Close[2] to-night—
  Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
  An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
  Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote
  "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

The sand of the desert is sodden red,—
  Red with the wreck of a square[3] that broke;—
The Gatling's[4] jammed and the colonel dead
  And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
  And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks,
  "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

This is the word that year by year
  While in her place the School is set
Every one of her sons must hear,
  And none that hears it dare forget.
This they all with a joyful mind
  Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the host behind—
  "Play up! play up! and play the game!"

1897

Endnotes

- Note 1: The torch of life (Latin); see *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of the Universe*) II. 79, by the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius (ca. 99–ca. 55 B.C.E.). The words are taken from a description of a relay race in which a flaming torch is passed from runner to runner.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The name of the cricket ground at Clifton College, an elite boarding school for boys founded in Bristol in 1862. Newbolt won a scholarship to Clifton from his local grammar school and became head boy there in 1881.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A combat formation taken by an infantry unit when threatened with cavalry attack.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Forerunner of the modern machine gun, the Gatling gun was invented in the United States in 1861.Return to reference 4

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

Joseph Chamberlain (1836–1914) was a manufacturer who made his fortune at the age of thirty-eight; he spent the rest of his life in politics, generally allying himself with radical causes. An enthusiastic promoter of imperial expansion and consolidation, he was appointed colonial secretary in 1895. The following selection is taken from a speech Chamberlain delivered in 1897 at the Royal Colonial Institute's annual dinner; published later that year in his *Foreign and Colonial Speeches*, the text records the frequent "cheers" and "laughter" and expressions of agreement ("hear, hear") that greeted his performance.

From The True Conception of Empire

It seems to me that there are three distinct stages in our Imperial history. We began to be, and we ultimately became, a great Imperial Power in the eighteenth century, but, during the greater part of that time, the colonies were regarded, not only by us, but by every European Power that possessed them, as possessions valuable in proportion to the pecuniary advantage which they brought to the mother country which, under that order of ideas, was not truly a mother at all, but appeared rather in the light of a grasping and absentee landlord desiring to take from his tenants the utmost rents he could exact. The colonies were valued and maintained because it was thought that they would be a source of profit—of direct profit—to the mother country.

That was the first stage, and when we were rudely awakened by the War of Independence in America from this dream, that the colonies could be held for our profit alone, the second chapter was entered upon, and public opinion seems then to have drifted to the opposite extreme; and, because the colonies were no longer a source of revenue, it seems to have been believed and argued by many people that their separation from us was only a matter of time, and that that separation should be desired and encouraged lest haply they might prove an encumbrance and a source of weakness.

It was while those views were still entertained, while the little Englanders[1]—(laughter)—were in their full career, that this Institute was founded to protest against doctrines so injurious to our interests—(cheers)—and so derogatory to our honour; and I rejoice that what was then, as it were, "a voice crying in the wilderness"[2] is now the expressed and determined will of the overwhelming majority of the British people. (Loud cheers.) Partly by the efforts of this Institute and similar organisations, partly by the writings of such

men as Froude and Seeley[3]—(hear, hear)—but mainly by the instinctive good sense and patriotism of the people at large, we have now reached the third stage in our history, and the true conception of our Empire. (Cheers.)

What is that conception? As regards the self-governing colonies[4] we no longer talk of them as dependencies. The sense of possession has given place to the sentiment of kinship. We think and speak of them as part of ourselves—(cheers)—as part of the British Empire, united to us, although they may be dispersed throughout the world, by ties of kindred, of religion, of history, and of language, and joined to us by the seas that formerly seemed to divide us. (Cheers.)

But the British Empire is not confined to the self-governing colonies and the United Kingdom. It includes a much greater area, a much more numerous population in tropical climes, where no considerable European settlement is possible, and where the native population must always vastly outnumber the white inhabitants; and in these cases also the same change has come over the Imperial idea. Here also the sense of possession has given place to a different sentiment—the sense of obligation. We feel now that our rule over these territories can only be justified if we can show that it adds to the happiness and prosperity of the people—(cheers)—and I maintain that our rule does, and has, brought security and peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before. (Cheers.)

In carrying out this work of civilisation we are fulfilling what I believe to be our national mission, and we are finding scope for the exercise of those faculties and qualities which have made of us a great governing race. (Cheers.) I do not say that our success has been perfect in every case, I do not say that all our methods have been beyond reproach; but I do say that in almost every instance in which the rule of the Queen has been established and the great *Pax Britannica*[5] has been enforced, there has come with it greater security to life and property, and a material improvement in the condition of the bulk of the population. (Cheers.) No doubt, in the first instance, when these conquests have been made, there has

been bloodshed, there has been loss of life among the native populations, loss of still more precious lives among those who have been sent out to bring these countries into some kind of disciplined order, but it must be remembered that that is the condition of the mission we have to fulfil.

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You cannot have omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition, which for centuries have desolated the interior of Africa, without the use of force; but if you will fairly contrast the gain to humanity with the price which we are bound to pay for it, I think you may well rejoice in the result of such expeditions as those which have recently been conducted with such signal success—(cheers)—in Nyassaland, Ashanti, Benin, and Nupé[6]—expeditions which may have, and indeed have, cost valuable lives, but as to which we may rest assured that for one life lost a hundred will be gained, and the cause of civilisation and the prosperity of the people will in the long run be eminently advanced. (Cheers.) But no doubt such a state of things, such a mission as I have described, involve heavy responsibility. In the wide dominions of the Queen the doors of the temple of Janus[7] are never closed—(hear, hear)—and it is a gigantic task that we have undertaken when we have determined to wield the sceptre of empire. Great is the task, great is the responsibility, but great is the honour—(cheers); and I am convinced that the conscience and the spirit of the country will rise to the height of its obligations, and that we shall have the strength to fulfil the mission which our history and our national character have imposed upon us. (Cheers.)

1897

Endnotes

- Note 1: Critics of imperial expansion who advocated sharply limiting the scope and responsibilities of the British

Empire.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Allusion to the Gospels, especially Matthew 3:3; the phrase is usually interpreted as referring to John the Baptist's prophecies of the coming of Jesus.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sir John Robert Seeley (1834–1895), English historian, essayist, and author of *The Expansion of England* (1883), which portrays the growth of the British Empire as a natural process. James Anthony Froude (1818–1894), English author and historian.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: British peace (Latin), which the British Empire supposedly imposed on its colonial possessions (by analogy with the *pax Romana* of the Roman Empire).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: All areas of British exploration on the African continent during the last decades of the 19th century. Nyassaland (or Nyasaland), a region of southeastern Africa that constitutes modern-day Malawï. Ashanti (also Asante, Ashantee), a western African state located in the territory of present-day Ghana. Benin, a state in western Africa later incorporated into Nigeria. Nupé, an area of western Africa that is now part of Nigeria.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Twin-faced Roman god of doorways. The doors to his temple near the Roman Forum were kept open during wartime and closed during times of peace.Return to reference 7

J. A. HOBSON

J . A. (John Atkinson) Hobson (1858–1940), the distinguished Liberal economist and author, first taught classics and then worked as a lecturer in English literature and economics for the Oxford University Extension Delegacy and for the London Society for the Extension of University Teaching, before becoming a freelance writer. His many books include *Problems of Poverty* (1891), *The Evolution of Modern Capitalism* (1894), *The Problem of the Unemployed* (1896), and *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* (1898).

From Imperialism: A Study

[THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPERIALISM]

The curious ignorance which prevails regarding the political character and tendencies of Imperialism cannot be better illustrated than by the following passage from a learned work upon "The History of Colonisation":[1] "The extent of British dominion may perhaps be better imagined than described, when the fact is appreciated that, of the entire land surface of the globe, approximately one-fifth is actually or theoretically under that flag, while more than one-sixth of all the human beings living in this planet reside under one or the other type of English colonisation. The names by which authority is exerted are numerous, and processes are distinct, but the goals to which this manifold mechanism is working are very similar. According to the climate, the natural conditions and the inhabitants of the regions affected, procedure and practice differ. The means are adapted to the situation; there is not any irrevocable, immutable line of policy: from time to time, from decade to decade, English statesmen have applied different treatments to the same territory. Only one fixed rule of action seems to exist; it is to promote the interests of the colony to the utmost, to develop its scheme of government as rapidly as possible, and eventually to elevate it from the position of inferiority to that of association. Under the charm of this beneficent spirit the chief colonial establishments of Great Britain have already achieved substantial freedom, without dissolving nominal ties; the other subordinate possessions are aspiring to it, while, on the other hand, this privilege of local independence has enabled England to assimilate with ease many feudatory States[2] into the body politic of her system." Here then is the theory that Britons are a race endowed, like the Romans, with a genius for government, that our colonial and imperial policy is animated by a resolve to spread

throughout the world the arts of free self-government which we enjoy at home,[3] and that in truth we are accomplishing this work.

Now, without discussing here the excellencies or the defects of the British theory and practice of representative self-government, to assert that our "fixed rule of action" has been to educate our dependencies in this theory and practice is quite the largest misstatement of the facts of our colonial and imperial policy that is possible. Upon the vast majority of the populations throughout our Empire we have bestowed no real powers of self-government, nor have we any serious intention of doing so, or any serious belief that it is possible for us to do so.

Of the three hundred and sixty-seven millions of British subjects outside these isles, not more than ten millions, or one in thirty-seven, have any real self-government for purposes of legislation and administration.

Political freedom, and civil freedom, so far as it rests upon the other, are simply non-existent for the over-whelming majority of British subjects. In the self-governing colonies of Australasia and North America alone is responsible representative government a reality, and even there considerable populations of outlanders,[4] as in West Australia, or servile labour, as in Queensland, temper the genuineness of democracy. In Cape Colony and Natal recent events[5] testify how feebly the forms and even the spirit of the free British institutions have taken root in States where the great majority of the population were always excluded from political rights. The franchise and the rights it carries will remain virtually a white monopoly in so-called self-governing colonies, where the coloured population is to the white as four to one and ten to one respectively.

In certain of our older Crown colonies there exists a representative element in the government. While the administration is entirely vested in a governor appointed by the Crown, assisted by a council nominated by him, the colonists elect a portion of the legislative assembly. The following colonies belong to this order: Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Bahamas, British Guiana, Windward Islands, Bermudas, Malta, Mauritius, Ceylon.

The representative element differs considerably in size and influence in these colonies, but nowhere does it outnumber the non-elected element. It thus becomes an advisory rather than a really legislative factor. Not merely is the elected always dominated in numbers by the non-elected element, but in all cases the veto of the Colonial Office is freely exercised upon measures passed by the assemblies. To this it should be added that in nearly all cases a fairly high property qualification is attached to the franchise, precluding the coloured people from exercising an elective power proportionate to their numbers and their stake in the country.

The entire population of these modified Crown colonies amounted to 5,700,000 in 1898.[6]

The overwhelming majority of the subjects of the British Empire are under Crown colony government, or under protectorates. In neither case do they enjoy any of the important political rights of British citizens: in neither case are they being trained in the arts of free British institutions. In the Crown colony the population exercises no political privileges. The governor, appointed by the Colonial Office, is absolute, alike for legislation and administration; he is aided by a council of local residents usually chosen by himself or by home authority, but its function is merely advisory, and its advice can be and frequently is ignored. In the vast protectorates we have assumed in Africa and Asia there is no tincture of British representative government; the British factor consists in arbitrary acts of irregular interference with native government. Exceptions to this exist in the case of districts assigned to Chartered Companies, where business men, animated avowedly by business ends, are permitted to exercise arbitrary powers of government over native populations under the imperfect check of some British Imperial Commissioner.

Again, in certain native and feudatory States of India our Empire is virtually confined to government of foreign relations, military protection, and a veto upon grave internal disorder, the real administration of the countries being left in the hands of native princes or headmen. However excellent this arrangement may be, it

lends little support to the general theory of the British Empire as an educator of free political institutions.

Where British government is real, it does not carry freedom or self-government; where it does carry a certain amount of freedom and self-government, it is not real. Not five per cent of the population of our Empire are possessed of any appreciable portion of the political and civil liberties which are the basis of British civilisation. Outside the ten millions of British subjects in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, no considerable body is endowed with full self-government in the more vital matters, or is being "elevated from the position of inferiority to that of association."

This is the most important of all facts for students of the present and probable future of the British Empire. We have taken upon ourselves in these little islands the responsibility of governing huge aggregations of lower races in all parts of the world by methods which are antithetic to the methods of government which we most value for ourselves.

1902

Endnotes

- Note 1: H. C. Morris, *The History of Colonization* (1900), vol. 2, p. 80 [*Hobson's note*]. The work's full title is *The History of Colonization from the Earliest Times to the Present Day.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Feudally subject states.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "The British Empire is a galaxy of free States," said Sir W. Laurier in a speech, 8 July 1902 [***Hobson's note***]. Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1841–1919), Canadian political leader.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Foreigners denied full citizenship.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902, fought between the British and the Dutch Afrikaners, or Boers, who had settled in regions of South Africa. Cape Colony and Natal, former British

colonies now part of modern-day South Africa, were sites of long-standing friction between the British and the Boers.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: In all essential features, India and Egypt are to be classed as Crown colonies [*Hobson's note*].Return to reference 6

Slavery, Abolition, and the Plantation System

Although Great Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1834–38, the legacy of the enslavement of African men and women remained a charged topic for many British people throughout the nineteenth century. In part, this interest can be attributed to the continued existence of slavery in the United States and elsewhere. The end of slavery in Great Britain was also drawn out: in the West Indies, for example, abolition was followed by a period of forced "apprenticeships." There were also intense ongoing debates over the extent of British financial responsibility to "West Indians" (British plantation owners and enslavers)—although there was relatively little concern about the fate of the formerly enslaved. Thus, even as British liberals often pointed to the abolition of slavery as evidence of the nation's willingness to make sacrifices in order to fulfil their ideas of "duty, crime, and sin" (to quote John Stuart Mill), they also often failed to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

MARY PRINCE

Mary Prince (1788–ca. 1833) was born into slavery in the British colony of Bermuda. Her enslavers brought her to England in 1828. Shortly after her arrival, she appealed to the Anti-Slavery Society in London for help in achieving legal recognition of her right to return to Antigua (her and her husband's most recent home) as a free woman. Thomas Pringle, secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society, along with Susanna Strickland (later Moodie, whose writings on Canada appear in this cluster) transcribed, edited, and published her *History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* (1831) in an attempt to bring attention to her case. The *History* is the first narrative of a formerly enslaved woman published in Britain. Prince's descriptions of the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse to which she had been subjected had a considerable impact on public opinion.

From The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave

I am often much vexed, and I feel great sorrow when I hear some people in this country say, that the slaves do not need better usage, and do not want to be free.[1] They believe the foreign people,[2] who deceive them, and say slaves are happy. I say, Not so. How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts?—and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated? Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner? —women that have had children exposed in the open field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women, and children are exposed alike. Since I have been here I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things. They tie up slaves like hogs—moor[3] them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses never were flogged;—and yet they come home and say, and make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. It is not so. All slaves want to be free—to be free is very sweet. I will say the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend, Miss S——,[4] is now writing down for me. I have been a slave myself —I know what slaves feel—I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery—that they don't want to be free—that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave say so. I never heard a Buckra[5] man say so, till I heard tell of it in England.

Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves. They can't do without slaves, they say. What's the reason they can't do without slaves as well as in England? No slaves here—no whips—no stocks—no punishment, except for wicked people. They hire servants in England; and if they don't like them, they send them away: they can't lick them. Let them work ever so hard in England, they are far better off than slaves. If they get a bad master, they give warning and go hire to another. They have their liberty. That's just what *we* want. We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment, and proper wages like English servants, and proper time given in the week to keep us from breaking the Sabbath. But they won't give it: they will have work—work—work, night and day, sick or well, till we are quite done up; and we must not speak up nor look amiss, however much we be abused. And then when we are quite done up, who cares for us, more than for a lame horse? This is slavery. I tell it, to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore.

1831

Endnotes

- Note 1: The whole of this paragraph especially, is given as nearly as was possible in Mary's precise words [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: She means West Indians [*Pringle's note*]. By *West Indians*, Pringle means British owners of plantations in the West Indies.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A West Indian phrase: to fasten or tie up [*Pringle's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Susanna Strickland, later Moodie, who transcribed the *History*.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: West African term for a White man, especially a White enslaver.Return to reference 5

THOMAS CARLYLE and JOHN STUART MILL

In his "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," Carlyle (1795–1881) is responding to two sets of conditions: first, diminishing profits in the West Indies in the wake of the abolition of slavery, along with the largely fruitless attempts of the British government to shore them up; and second, the famine in Ireland that claimed approximately 1 million lives between 1845 and 1849. Carlyle toured Ireland in 1849 and was appalled by the hunger and the mismanagement he witnessed there. His text is far more than simply a response to this experience, however, for here he sounds many of the keynotes of his career: the importance of organic (and hierarchical) relations between "masters" and "men"; a disgust for philanthropy focused on far-distant abuses rather than those on Britain's doorstep—such as the famine in Ireland; the "gospel of work" that justifies forcing people to work if they will not do so voluntarily. For contemporary readers, it should be noted that this reading reproduces racist beliefs and uses racist terminology.

Although other selections in this volume reflect John Stuart Mill's commitment to "enlightened imperialism," or the notion that Great Britain has a responsibility to civilize barbaric peoples, in "The Negro Question" (1850), his response to Carlyle, Mill (1806–1873) defends formerly enslaved people in the West Indies against Carlyle's claim that they have the "right" to be forced to work. He rejects Carlyle's assertion that work is an end in and of itself, and rather than "noble," he describes the spices and sugar that Carlyle so prizes as foolish indulgences. He also recasts the abolition of slavery not as the product of sentimentality—as Carlyle claims—but instead as the consequence of a commitment to justice and morality. Both essays were originally published in *Fraser's Magazine*.

Carlyle: *From* Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question

The West Indies, it appears, are short of labour; as indeed is very conceivable in those circumstances: where a Black man by working about half an hour a-day (such is the calculation) can supply himself, by aid of sun and soil, with as much pumpkin as will suffice, he is likely to be a little stiff to raise into hard work! Supply and demand, which, science says, should be brought to bear on him, have an uphill task of it with such a man. Strong sun supplies itself gratis, rich soil in those unpeopled or half-peopled regions almost gratis; these are *his* 'supply;' and half an hour a-day, directed upon these, will produce pumpkin which is his 'demand.' The fortunate Black man, very swiftly does he settle *his* account with supply and demand:—not so swiftly the less fortunate White man of these tropical localities. He himself cannot work;[1] and his Black neighbour, rich in pumpkin, is in no haste to help him. Sunk to the ears in pumpkin, imbibing saccharine juices, and much at his ease in the Creation, he can listen to the less fortunate white man's 'demand,' and take his own time in supplying it. Higher wages, massa; higher, for your cane-crop cannot wait; still higher,—till no conceivable opulence of cane-crop will cover such wages! In Demerara, as I read in the blue book[2] of last year, the cane-crop, far and wide, stands rotting; the fortunate black gentlemen, strong in their pumpkins, having all struck till the 'demand' rise a little. Sweet blighted lilies,[3] now getting up their heads again!

Science, however, has a remedy still. Since the demand is so pressing, and the supply so inadequate (equal in fact to *nothing* in some places, as appears), increase the supply; bring more Blacks into the labour-market,[4] then will the rate fall, says science. Not the least surprising part of our West Indian policy is this recipe of 'immigration;' of keeping down the labour-market in those islands by

importing new Africans to labour and live there. If the Africans that are already there could be made to lay down their pumpkins and labour for their living, there are already Africans enough. If the new Africans, after labouring a little, take to pumpkins like the others, what remedy is there? To bring in new and ever new Africans, say you, till pumpkins themselves grow dear; till the country is crowded with Africans; and black men there, like white men here, are forced by hunger to labour for their living? That will be a consummation. To have 'emancipated' the West Indies into a *Black Ireland*;[5] 'free' indeed, but an Ireland, and black! The world may yet see prodigies; and reality be stranger than a nightmare dream.

Our own white or sallow Ireland, sluttishly starving from age to age on its act-of-parliament 'freedom,' was hitherto the flower of mismanagement among the nations: but what will this be to a Negro Ireland, with pumpkins themselves fallen scarce like potatoes! Imagination cannot fathom such an object; the belly of Chaos never held the like. The human mind, in its wide wanderings, has not dreamt yet of such a 'freedom' as that will be. Towards that, if Exeter Hall[6] and science of supply and demand are to continue our guides in the matter, we are daily travelling, and even struggling, with loans of half-a-million and such-like, to accelerate ourselves.

Truly, my philanthropic friends, Exeter Hall Philanthropy is wonderful; and the Social Science—not a 'gay science,'[7] but a rueful —which finds the secret of this universe in 'supply-and-demand,' and reduces the duty of human governors to that of letting men alone, is also wonderful. Not a 'gay science,' I should say, like some we have heard of; no, a dreary, desolate, and indeed quite abject and distressing one; what we might call, by way of eminence, the *dismal science*. These two, Exeter Hall Philanthropy and the Dismal Science, led by any sacred cause of Black Emancipation, or the like, to fall in love and make a wedding of it,—will give birth to progenies and prodigies; dark extensive mooncalves,[8] unnameable abortions, wide-coiled monstrosities, such as the world has not seen hitherto!

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And first, with regard to the West Indies, it may be laid down as a principle, which no eloquence in Exeter Hall, or Westminster Hall,[9] or elsewhere, can invalidate or hide, except for a short time only, that no Black man who will not work according to what ability the gods have given him for working, has the smallest right to eat pumpkin, or to any fraction of land that will grow pumpkin, however plentiful such land may be; but has an indisputable and perpetual *right* to be compelled, by the real proprietors of said land, to do competent work for his living. This is the everlasting duty of all men, black or white, who are born into this world. To do competent work, to labour honestly according to the ability given them; for that and for no other purpose was each one of us sent into this world; and woe is to every man who, by friend or by foe, is prevented from fulfilling this the end of his being. That is the 'unhappy' lot; lot equally unhappy cannot otherwise be provided for man. Whatsoever prohibits or prevents a man from this his sacred appointment to labour while he lives on earth,—that, I say, is the man's deadliest enemy; and all men are called upon to do what is in their power or opportunity towards delivering him from it. If it be his own indolence that prevents and prohibits him, then his own indolence is the enemy he must be delivered from: and the first 'right' he has,—poor indolent blockhead, black or white, is, That every *un*prohibited man, whatsoever wiser, more industrious person may be passing that way, shall endeavour to 'emancipate' him from his indolence, and by some wise means, as I said, compel him to do the work he is fit for. This is the eternal law of nature for a man, my beneficent Exeter Hall friends; this, that he shall be permitted, encouraged, and if need be compelled to do what work the Maker of him has intended by the making of him for this world! Not that he should eat pumpkin with never such felicity in the West India Islands is, or can be, the blessedness of our black friend; but that he should do useful work there, according as the gifts have been bestowed on him for that. And his own happiness, and that of others round him, will alone be possible by his and their getting into such a relation that this can be permitted him, and in case of need that this can be compelled him. I

beg you to understand this; for you seem to have a little forgotten it, and there lie a thousand inferences in it, not quite useless for Exeter Hall, at present. The idle black man in the West Indies had not long since the right, and will again under better form, if it please Heaven, have the right (actually the first 'right of man'[1] for an indolent person) to be *compelled* to work as he was fit, and to *do* the Maker's will who had constructed him with such and such prefigurements of capability. And I incessantly pray Heaven, all men, the whitest alike and the blackest, the richest and the poorest, in other regions of the world, had attained precisely the same right, the divine right of being compelled (if 'permitted' will not answer) to do what work they are appointed for, and not to go idle another minute, in a life so short! Alas, we had then a perfect world; and the Millennium, and true 'Organization of Labour,'[2] and reign of complete blessedness, for all workers and men, had then arrived,—which in these our own poor districts of the Planet, as we all lament to know, it is very far from having yet done.

Let me suggest another consideration withal. West India Islands, still full of waste fertility, produce abundant pumpkins; pumpkins, however, you will please to observe, are not the sole requisite for human wellbeing. No: for a pig they are the one thing needful; but for a man they are only the first of several things needful. And now, as to the right of chief management in cultivating those West India lands; as to the 'right of property' so-called, and of doing what you like with your own? The question is abstruse enough. Who it may be that has a right to raise pumpkins and other produce on those Islands, perhaps none can, except temporarily, decide. The Islands are good withal for pepper, for sugar, for sago, arrowroot, for coffee, perhaps for cinnamon and precious spices; things far nobler than pumpkins; and leading towards commerces, arts, polities, and social developments, which alone are the noble product, where men (and not pigs with pumpkins) are the parties concerned! Well, all this fruit too, fruit spicy and commercial, fruit spiritual and celestial, so far beyond the merely pumpkinish and grossly terrene, lies in the West India lands: and the ultimate 'proprietorship' of them,—why, I

suppose, it will vest in him who can the *best* educe from them whatever of noble produce they were created fit for yielding. He, I compute, is the real 'Vicegerent of the Maker'[3] there; in him, better and better chosen, and not in another, is the 'property' vested by decree of Heaven's chancery itself!

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Any poor idle Black man, any idle White man, rich or poor, is a mere eye-sorrow to the State; a perpetual blister on the skin of the State. The State is taking measures, some of them rather extensive in Europe at this very time, and already as in Paris, Berlin, and elsewhere, rather tremendous measures, to *get* its rich white men set to work;[4] for alas, they also have long sat Negro-like up to the ears in pumpkin, regardless of 'work,' and of a world all going to waste for their idleness! Extensive measures, I say; and already (as, in all European lands, this scandalous Year of street-barricades and fugitive sham-kings exhibits) *tremendous* measures; for the thing is instant to be done.

The thing must be done everywhere; *must* is the word. Only it is so terribly difficult to do; and will take generations yet, this of getting our rich European white men 'set to work!' But yours in the West Indies, my obscure Black friends, your work, and the getting of you set to it, is a simple affair; and by diligence, the West Indian legislatures, and Royal governors, setting their faces fairly to the problem, will get it done. You are not 'slaves' now; nor do I wish, if it can be avoided, to see you slaves again: but decidedly you will have to be servants to those that are born *wiser* than you, that are born lords of you,—servants to the whites, if they *are* (as what mortal can doubt they are?) born wiser than you. That, you may depend on it, my obseure Black friends, is and was always the Law of the World, for you and for all men: To *be* servants, the more foolish of us to the more wise; and only sorrow, futility and disappointment will betide both, till both in some approximate degree get to conform to the same. Heaven's laws are not repealable by Earth, however Earth may try,—and it has been trying hard, in some directions, of late! I

say, no well-being, and in the end no being at all, will be possible for you or us, if the law of Heaven is not complied with. And if 'slave' mean essentially 'servant hired for life,'—for life, or by a contract of long continuance and not easily dissoluble,—I ask, Whether, in in all human things, the 'contract of long continuance' is not precisely the contract to be desired, were the right terms once found for it? Servant hired for life, were the right terms once found, which I do not pretend they are, seems to me much preferable to servant hired for the month, or by contract dissoluble in a day. An ill-situated servant, that;—servant grown to be *nomadic*; between whom and his master a good relation *cannot* easily spring up!

1849

Endnotes

- Note 1: Carlyle here is repeating a common belief that White men are physically unsuited to labor in the tropics.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Official publication of the British government. "Demerara": colony in British Guiana.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Reference to Matthew 6:28: Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In 1847–48, Parliament approved a loan of £500,000 to encourage African labor to emigrate to the West Indies.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The famine in Ireland (1845–52) resulted in approximately 1 million deaths and approximately 2 million people emigrating.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The location of many meetings on progressive causes, including abolitionism.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The science of poetry, by contrast with what Carlyle calls the "dismal science" of economics.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Foolish people.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The location of Parliament.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Reference to Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* (1791), which posits the existence of certain inalienable human rights.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A term for trade unions. "Millennium": thousand-year reign of peace in the Bible.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Earthly representative of God.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Carlyle is referring to the Revolutions of 1848, which took place across Europe and sought to replace monarchical governmental structures with democratic ones.Return to reference 4

Mill: *From* The Negro Question

> [If all the meetings at Exeter Hall be not presided over by strictly impartial chairmen, they ought to be. We shall set an example to our pious brethren in this respect, by giving publicity to the following letter. Our readers have now both sides of the question before them, and can form their own opinions upon it. —Editor.]

To the Editor of Fraser's Magazine.

Sir,

Your last month's Number[1] contains a speech against the 'rights of Negroes,' the doctrines and spirit of which ought not to pass without remonstrance. The author issues his opinions, or rather ordinances, under imposing auspices; no less than those of the 'immortal gods.' 'The Powers,' 'the Destinies,' announce through him, not only what *will* be, but what *shall* be done; what they 'have decided upon, passed their eternal act of parliament for.' This is speaking 'as one having authority;' but authority from whom? If by the quality of the message we may judge of those who sent it, *not* from any powers to whom just or good men acknowledge allegiance. This so-called 'eternal Act of Parliament' is no new law, but the old law of the strongest,—a law against which the great teachers of mankind have in all ages protested:—it is the law of force and cunning; the law that whoever is more powerful than another, is 'born lord' of that other, the other being born his 'servant,' who must be 'compelled to work' for him by 'beneficent whip,' if 'other methods avail not.' I see nothing divine in this injunction. If 'the gods' will this, it is the first duty of human beings to resist such gods. Omnipotent these 'gods' are *not*, for powers which demand *human* tyranny and injustice cannot accomplish their purpose unless human beings cooperate. The history of human improvement is the record of a struggle by

which inch after inch of ground has been wrung from these maleficent powers, and more and more of human life rescued from the iniquitous dominion of the law of might. Much, very much of this work still remains to do; but the progress made in it is the best and greatest achievement yet performed by mankind, and it was hardly to be expected at this period of the world that we should be enjoined, by way of a great reform in human affairs, to begin *un*doing it.

The age, it appears, is ill with a most pernicious disease, which infects all its proceedings, and of which the conduct of this country in regard to the Negroes is a prominent symptom—the Disease of Philanthropy. 'Sunk in deep froth-oceans of Benevolence, Fraternity, Emancipation-principle, Christian Philanthropy, and other most amiable-looking, but most baseless, and, in the end, baleful and all-bewildering jargon,' the product of 'hearts left destitute of any earnest guidance, and disbelieving that there ever was any, Christian or heathen,' the 'human species' is 'reduced to believe in rose-pink sentimentalism alone.' On this alleged condition of the human species I shall have something to say presently. But I must first set my anti-philanthropic opponent right on a matter of fact. He entirely misunderstands the great national revolt of the conscience of this country against slavery and the slave-trade,[2] if he supposes it to have been an affair of sentiment. It depended no more on humane feelings than any cause which so irresistibly appealed to them must necessarily do. Its first victories were gained while the lash yet ruled uncontested in the barrack-yard and the rod in schools, and while men were still hanged by dozens for stealing to the value of forty shillings. It triumphed because it was the cause of justice; and, in the estimation of the great majority of its supporters, of religion. Its originators and leaders were persons of a stern sense of moral obligation, who, in the spirit of the religion of their time, seldom spoke much of benevolence and philanthropy, but often of duty, crime, and sin. For nearly two centuries had negroes, many thousands annually, been seized by force or treachery and carried off to the West Indies to be worked to death, literally to death; for it

was the received maxim, the acknowledged dictate of good economy, to wear them out quickly and import more. In this fact every other possible cruelty, tyranny, and wanton oppression was by implication included. And the motive on the part of the slave-owners was the love of gold; or, to speak more truly, of vulgar and puerile ostentation. I have yet to learn that anything more detestable than this has been done by human beings towards human beings in any part of the earth. It is a mockery to talk of comparing it with Ireland. And this went on, not, like Irish beggary, because England had not the skill to prevent it,—not merely by the sufferance, but by the laws of the English nation. At last, however, there were found men, in growing number, who determined not to rest until the iniquity was extirpated; who made the destruction of it as much the business and end of their lives, as ordinary men make their private interests; who would not be content with softening its hideous features, and making it less intolerable to the sight, but would stop at nothing short of its utter and irrevocable extinction. I am so far from seeing anything contemptible in this resolution, that, in my sober opinion, the persons who formed and executed it deserve to be numbered among those, not numerous in any age, who have led noble lives according to their lights, and laid on mankind a debt of permanent gratitude.

After fifty years of toil and sacrifice, the object was accomplished, and the negroes, freed from the despotism of their fellow-beings, were left to themselves, and to the chances which the arrangements of existing society provide for those who have no resource but their labour. These chances proved favourable to them, and, for the last ten years, they afford the unusual spectacle of a labouring class whose labour bears so high a price that they can exist in comfort on the wages of a comparatively small quantity of work. This, to the ex-slave-owners, is an inconvenience; but I have not yet heard that any of them has been reduced to beg his bread, or even to dig for it, as the negro, however scandalously he enjoys himself, still must: a carriage or some other luxury the less, is in most cases, I believe, the limit of their privations—no very hard

measure of retributive justice; those who have had tyrannical power taken away from them, may think themselves fortunate if they come so well off; at all events, it is an embarrassment out of which the nation is not called on to help them: if they cannot continue to realize their large incomes without more labourers, let them find them, and bring them from where they can best be procured, only not by force. Not so thinks your anti-philanthropic contributor. That negroes should exist, and enjoy existence, on so little work, is a scandal in his eyes, worse than their former slavery. It must be put a stop to at any price. He does not 'wish to see' them slaves again 'if it can be avoided;' but 'decidedly' they 'will have to be servants,' 'servants to the whites,' 'compelled to labour,' and 'not to go idle another minute. 'Black Quaabee'[3] up to the ears in pumpkins, and 'working about half an hour a day,' is to him the abomination of abominations. I have so serious a quarrel with him about principles, that I have no time to spare for his facts; but let me remark, how easily he takes for grauted those which fit his case. Because he reads in some blue-book of a strike for wages in Demerara,[4] such as he may read of any day in Manchester,[5] he draws a picture of negro inactivity, copied from the wildest prophecies of the slavery party before emancipation. If the negroes worked no more than 'half an hour a day,' would the sugar crops, in all except notoriously bad seasons, be so considerable, so little diminished from what they were in the time of slavery, as is proved by the Customhouse returns? But it is not the facts of the question, so much as the moralities of it, that I care to dispute with your contributor.

A black man working no more than your contributor affirms that they work, is, he says, 'an eye-sorrow,' a 'blister on the skin of the state,' and many other things equally disagreeable; to *work* being the grand duty of man. 'To do competent work, to labour honestly according to the ability given them; for that, and for no other purpose, was each one of us sent into this world.' Whoever prevents him from this his 'sacred appointment to labour while he lives on earth' is 'his deadliest enemy.' If it be 'his own indolence' that prevents him, 'the first *right* he has' is that all wiser and more

industrious persons shall, 'by some wise means, compel him to do the work he is fit for.' Why not at once say that, by 'some wise means,' every thing should be made right in the world? While we are about it, wisdom may as well be suggested as the remedy for all evils, as for one only. Your contributor incessantly prays Heaven that all persons, black and white, may be put in possession of this 'divine right of being compelled, if permitted will not serve, to do what work they are appointed for.' But as this cannot be conveniently managed just yet, he will begin with the blacks, and will make them work *for* certain whites, those whites *not* working at all; that so 'the eternal purpose and supreme will' may be fulfilled, and 'injustice,' which is 'for ever accursed,' may cease.

This pet theory of your contributor about work, we all know well enough,[6] though some persons might not be prepared for so bold an application of it. Let me say a few words on this 'gospel of work'—which, to my mind, as justly deserves the name of a cant as any of those which he has opposed, while the truth it contains is immeasurably farther from being the whole truth than that contained in the words Benevolence, Fraternity, or any other of his catalogue of contemptibilities. To give it a rational meaning, it must first be known what he means by work. Does work mean every thing which people *do*? No; or he would not reproach people with doing no work. Does it mean laborious exertion? No; for many a day spent in killing game, includes more muscular fatigue than a day's ploughing. Does it mean *useful* exertion? But your contributor always scoffs at the idea of utility. Does he mean that all persons ought to earn their living? But some earn their living by doing nothing, and some by doing mischief; and the negroes, whom he despises, still do earn by labour the 'pumpkins' they consume and the finery they wear.

Work, I imagine, is not a good in itself. There is nothing laudable in work for work's sake. To work voluntarily for a worthy object is laudable; but what constitutes a worthy object? On this matter, the oracle of which your contributor is the prophet has never yet been prevailed on to declare itself. He revolves in an eternal circle round

the idea of work, as if turning up the earth, or driving a shuttle or a quill, were ends in themselves, and the ends of human existence. Yet, even in the case of the most sublime service to humanity, it is not because it is work that it is worthy; the worth lies in the service itself, and in the will to render it—the noble feelings of which it is the fruit; and if the nobleness of will is proved by other evidence than work, as for instance by danger or sacrifice, there is the same worthiness. While we talk only of work, and not of its object, we are far from the root of the matter; or if it may be called the root, it is a root without flower or fruit.

In the present case, it seems, a noble object means 'spices.' 'The gods wish, besides pumpkins, that spices and valuable products be grown in their West Indies'—the 'noble elements of cinnamon, sugar, coffee, pepper black and grey,' 'things far nobler than pumpkins.' Why so? Is what supports life, inferior in dignity to what merely gratifies the sense of taste? Is it the verdict of the 'immortal gods' that pepper is noble, freedom (even freedom from the lash) contemptible? But spices lead 'towards commerces, arts, polities, and social developements.' Perhaps so; but of what sort? When they must be produced by slaves, the 'polities and social developements' they lead to are such as the world, I hope, will not choose to be cursed with much longer.

The worth of work does not surely consist in its leading to other work, and so on to work upon work without end. On the contrary, the multiplication of work, for purposes not worth caring about, is one of the evils of our present condition. When justice and reason shall be the rule of human affairs, one of the first things to which we may expect them to be applied is the question, How many of the so-called luxuries, conveniences, refinements, and ornaments of life, are *worth* the labour which must be undergone as the condition of producing them? The beautifying of existence is as worthy and useful an object as the sustaining of it; but only a vitiated taste can see any such result in those fopperies of so-called civilization, which myriads of hands are now occupied and lives wasted in providing. In opposition to the 'gospel of work,' I would assert the gospel of

leisure, and maintain that human beings *cannot* rise to the finer attributes of their nature compatibly with a life filled with labour. I do not include under the name labour such work, if work it be called, as is done by writers and afforders of 'guidance,' an occupation which, let alone the vanity of the thing, cannot be called by the same name with the real labour, the exhausting, stiffening, stupefying toil of many kinds of agricultural and manufacturing labourers. To reduce very greatly the quantity of work required to carry on existence, is as needful as to distribute it more equally; and the progress of science, and the increasing ascendancy of justice and good sense, tend to this result.

There is a portion of work rendered necessary by the fact of each person's existence: no one could exist unless work, to a certain amount, were done either by or for him. Of this each person is bound, in justice, to perform his share; and society has an incontestable right to declare to every one, that if he work not, at this work of necessity, neither shall he eat. Society has not enforced this right, having in so far postponed the rule of justice to other considerations. But there is an ever-growing demand that it be enforced, so soon as any endurable plan can be devised for the purpose. If this experiment is to be tried in the West Indies, let it be tried impartially; and let the whole produce belong to those who do the work which produces it. We would not have black labourers compelled to grow spices which they do not want, and white proprietors who do not work at all exchanging the spices for houses in Belgrave Square.[7] We would not withhold from the whites, any more than from the blacks, the 'divine right' of being compelled to labour. Let them have exactly the same share in the produce that they have in the work. If they do not like this, let them remain as they are, so long as they are permitted, and make the best of supply and demand.

1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Reference to Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," above.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The slave trade was abolished in 1807; slavery was abolished in 1833; and the "apprenticeship" system that replaced slavery in the West Indies was eliminated in 1838.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A sometimes although not invariably derogatory term for an Indigenous person of the West Indies.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A colony in British Guiana. "Blue-book": official publication of the British government.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Industrial center in England.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Carlyle introduced his gospel of work in *Past and Present* (1843).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Fashionable residential neighborhood in London.Return to reference 7

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

Although an American author writing about slavery in the United States, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) was one of the most popular and influential writers (1852) in England in the nineteenth century. Her most famous novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, sold two hundred thousand copies in England when it first appeared. Readers found Stowe's sentimental depictions of the consequences of slavery for enslaved women and children especially powerful. The scene below opens with a debate between Senator and Mrs. Bird over the morality of the Fugitive Slave Act (1850) that required the seizure and return of enslaved people who had escaped their enslavers. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Eliza, who has run away with her young son, Harry, to prevent him from being sold away from her.

From Uncle Tom's Cabin

"Now, John, I want to know if you think such a law as that[1] is right and Christian?"

"You won't shoot me, now, Mary, if I say I do!"

"I never could have thought it of you, John; you didn't vote for it?"

"Even so, my fair politician."

"You ought to be ashamed, John! Poor, homeless, houseless creatures! It's a shameful, wicked, abominable law, and I'll break it, for one, the first time I get a chance; and I hope I *shall* have a chance, I do! Things have got to a pretty pass, if a woman can't give a warm supper and a bed to poor, starving creatures, just because they are slaves, and have been abused and oppressed all their lives, poor things!"

"But, Mary, just listen to me. Your feelings are all quite right, dear, and interesting, and I love you for them; but, then, dear, we mustn't suffer our feelings to run away with our judgment; you must consider it's not a matter of private feeling,—there are great public interests involved,—there is such a state of public agitation rising, that we must put aside our private feelings."

"Now, John, I don't know anything about politics, but I can read my Bible; and there I see that I must feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and comfort the desolate; and that Bible I mean to follow."

"But in cases where your doing so would involve a great public evil—"

"Obeying God never brings on public evils. I know it can't. It's always safest, all round, to *do as He* bids us."

"Now, listen to me, Mary, and I can state to you a very clear argument, to show—"

"O, nonsense, John! you can talk all night, but you wouldn't do it. I put it to you, John,—would *you* now turn away a poor, shivering,

hungry creature from your door, because he was a runaway? *Would* you, now?"

Now, if the truth must be told, our senator had the misfortune to be a man who had a particularly humane and accessible nature, and turning away anybody that was in trouble never had been his forte; and what was worse for him in this particular pinch of the argument was, that his wife knew it, and, of course, was making an assault on rather an indefensible point. So he had recourse to the usual means of gaining time for such cases made and provided; he said "ahem," and coughed several times, took out his pocket-handkerchief, and began to wipe his glasses. Mrs. Bird, seeing the defenceless condition of the enemy's territory, had no more conscience than to push her advantage.

"I should like to see you doing that, John—I really should! Turning a woman out of doors in a snow-storm, for instance; or, may be you'd take her up and put her in jail, wouldn't you? You would make a great hand at that!"

"Of course, it would be a very painful duty," began Mr. Bird, in a moderate tone.

"Duty, John! don't use that word! You know it isn't a duty—it can't be a duty! If folks want to keep their slaves from running away, let 'em treat 'em well,—that's my doctrine. If I had slaves (as I hope I never shall have), I'd risk their wanting to run away from me, or you either, John. I tell you folks don't run away when they are happy: and when they do run, poor creatures! they suffer enough with cold and hunger and fear, without everybody's turning against them; and, law or no law, I never will, so help me God!"

"Mary! Mary! My dear, let me reason with you."

"I hate reasoning, John,—especially reasoning on such subjects. There's a way you political folks have of coming round and round a plain right thing; and you don't believe in it yourselves, when it comes to practice. I know *you* well enough, John. You don't believe it's right any more than I do; and you wouldn't do it any sooner than I."

At this critical juncture, old Cudjoe, the black man-of-all-work, put his head in at the door, and wished "Missis would come into the kitchen;" and our senator, tolerably relieved, looked after his little wife with a whimsical mixture of amusement and vexation, and, seating himself in the arm-chair, began to read the papers.

After a moment, his wife's voice was heard at the door, in a quick, earnest tone,—"John! John! I do wish you'd come here, a moment."

He laid down his paper, and went into the kitchen, and started, quite amazed at the sight that presented itself:—A young and slender woman, with garments torn and frozen, with one shoe gone, and the stocking torn away from the cut and bleeding foot, was laid back in a deadly swoon upon two chairs. There was the impress of the despised race on her face, yet none could help feeling its mournful and pathetic beauty, while its stony sharpness, its cold, fixed, deathly aspect, struck a solemn chill over him. He drew his breath short, and stood in silence. His wife, and their only colored domestic, old Aunt Dinah, were busily engaged in restorative measures; while old Cudjoe had got the boy on his knee, and was busy pulling off his shoes and stockings, and chafing his little cold feet.

"Sure, now, if she an't a sight to behold!" said old Dinah, compassionately; " 'pears like 'twas the heat that made her faint. She was tol'able peart when she cum in, and asked if she couldn't warm herself here a spell; and I was just a askin' her where she cum from, and she fainted right down. Never done much hard work, guess, by the looks of her hands."

"Poor creature!" said Mrs. Bird, compassionately, as the woman slowly unclosed her large, dark eyes, and looked vacantly at her. Suddenly an expression of agony crossed her face, and she sprang up, saying, "O, my Harry! Have they got him?"

The boy, at this, jumped from Cudjoe's knee, and, running to her side, put up his arms. "O, he's here! he's here!" she exclaimed.

"O, ma'am!" said she, wildly, to Mrs. Bird, "do protect us! don't let them get him!"

“Nobody shall hurt you here, poor woman,” said Mrs. Bird, encouragingly. “You are safe; don’t be afraid.”

1851–52

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, the Fugitive Slave Act (1850).Return to reference 1

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

The historian James Anthony Froude (1818–1894) came to fame as the author of a twelve-volume *History of England* (1856–70) and the biography of his mentor, Thomas Carlyle (1882–1884). Inspired by his visits to South Africa to explore other parts of the empire, he toured British possessions in the Caribbean in the winter of 1886–87 and there gathered information for *The English in the West Indies* (1888), in which he expressed his belief that the colonies populated by non-White people were not suited to self-rule. In the following selection he focuses on his travels in Trinidad, a Caribbean island that passed from Spanish to British control near the end of the eighteenth century.

From The English in the West Indies

Trinidad is not one of our oldest possessions, but we had held it long enough for the old planter civilisation to take root and grow, and our road led us through jungles of flowering shrubs which were running wild over what had been once cultivated estates. Stranger still (for one associates colonial life instinctively with what is new and modern), we came at one place on an avenue of vast trees, at the end of which stood the ruins of a mansion of some great man of the departed order. Great man he must have been, for there was a gateway half crumbled away on which were his crest and shield in stone, with supporters on either side, like the Baron of Bradwardine's Bears;[1] fallen now like them, but unlike them never, I fear, to be set up again. The Anglo-West Indians, like the English gentry in Ireland, were a fine race of men in their day, and perhaps the improving them off the earth has been a less beneficial process in either case than we are in the habit of supposing.

Entering among the hills we came on their successors. In Trinidad there are 18,000 freeholders, most of them negroes and representatives of the old slaves. Their cabins are spread along the road on either side, overhung with bread-fruit trees, tamarinds, calabash trees, out of which they make their cups and water jugs. The luscious granadilla climbs among the branches; plantains throw their cool shade over the doors; oranges and limes and citrons perfume the air, and droop their boughs under the weight of their golden burdens. There were yams in the gardens and cows in the paddocks, and cocoa bushes loaded with purple or yellow pods. Children played about in swarms, in happy idleness and abundance, with schools, too, at intervals, and an occasional Catholic chapel, for the old religion prevails in Trinidad, never having been disturbed. What form could human life assume more charming than that which we were now looking on? Once more, the earth does not contain any peasantry so well off, so well cared for, so happy, so sleek and

contented as the sons and daughters of the emancipated slaves in the English West Indian Islands. Sugar may fail the planter, but cocoa, which each peasant can grow with small effort for himself, does not fail and will not. He may 'better his condition,' if he has any such ambition, without stirring beyond his own ground, and so far, perhaps, his ambition may extend, if it is not turned off upon politics. Even the necessary evils of the tropics are not many or serious. His skin is proof against mosquitoes. There are snakes in Trinidad as there were snakes in Eden. 'Plenty snakes,' said one of them who was at work in his garden, 'plenty snakes, but no bitee.' As to costume, he would prefer the costume of innocence if he was allowed. Clothes in such a climate are superfluous for warmth, and to the minds of the negroes, unconscious as they are of shame, superfluous for decency.

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We made several similar small expeditions into the settled parts of the neighbourhood, seeing always (whatever else we saw) the boundless happiness of the black race. Under the rule of England in these islands the two million of these poor brothers-in-law of ours are the most perfectly contented specimens of the human race to be found upon the planet. Even Schopenhauer,[2] could he have known them, would have admitted that there were some of us who were not hopelessly wretched. If happiness be the satisfaction of every conscious desire, theirs is a condition which admits of no improvement: were they independent, they might quarrel among themselves, and the weaker become the bondmen[3] of the stronger; under the beneficent despotism of the English Government, which knows no difference of colour and permits no oppression, they can sleep, lounge, and laugh away their lives as they please, fearing no danger. If they want money, work and wages are waiting for them. No one can say what may be before them hereafter. The powers which envy human beings too perfect felicity may find ways one day of disturbing the West Indian negro; but so long as the English rule continues, he may be assured of the same tranquil existence.

As life goes he has been a lucky mortal. He was taken away from Dahomey and Ashantee[4]—to be a slave indeed, but a slave to a less cruel master than he would have found at home. He had a bad time of it occasionally, and the plantation whip and the branding irons are not all dreams, yet his owner cared for him at least as much as he cared for his cows and his horses. Kind usage to animals is more economical than barbarity, and Englishmen in the West Indies were rarely inhuman. Lord Rodney[5] says:

'I have been often in all the West India Islands, and I have often made my observations on the treatment of the negro slaves, and can aver that I never knew the least cruelty inflicted on them, but that in general they lived better than the honest day-labouring man in England, without doing a fourth part of his work in a day, and I am fully convinced that the negroes in our islands are better provided for and live better than when in Guinea.'[6]

Rodney, it is true, was a man of facts and was defective in sentiment. Let us suppose him wrong, let us believe the worst horrors of the slave trade or slave usage as fluent tongue of missionary or demagogue has described them, yet nevertheless, when we consider what the lot of common humanity has been and is, we shall be dishonest if we deny that the balance has been more than redressed; and the negroes who were taken away out of Africa, as compared with those who were left at home, were as the 'elect to salvation,'[7] who after a brief purgatory are secured an eternity of blessedness. The one condition is the maintenance of the authority of the English crown. The whites of the islands cannot equitably rule them. They have not shaken off the old traditions. If, for the sake of theory or to shirk responsibility, we force them to govern themselves, the state of Hayti[8] stands as a ghastly example of the condition into which they will then inevitably fall. If we persist, we shall be sinning against light—the clearest light that was ever given in such affairs. The most hardened believers in the regenerating effects of political liberty cannot be completely blind to the ruin which the infliction of it would necessarily bring upon the race for whose interests they pretend particularly to care.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A reference to Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814). The baron's battlements are adorned with carved stone bears that are torn down during the novel and restored to their original position by its end.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), German philosopher who emphasized the tragedy of life.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, bondsmen, slaves.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Also Asante, Ashanti (now part of Ghana), like Dahomey an area of western Africa that profited from the slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: George Brydges Rodney (1719–1792), British admiral who commanded several naval campaigns against Britain's rival colonial powers in the West Indies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Region of western Africa involved in the slave trade until the middle of the 19th century (the transatlantic slave trade had been outlawed by Britain and the United States in 1807 and 1808, respectively).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In Calvinist Protestantism, the "elect" are those people chosen by God to be saved from eternal damnation.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Haiti, which gained its independence following a slave revolt that began in 1791. Through much of the 19th century, it experienced rapid and sometimes violent changes of leadership.Return to reference 8

JOHN JACOB THOMAS

John Jacob Thomas (ca. 1840–1889), a descendant of enslaved people, was born into poverty on the Caribbean island of Trinidad. Primarily a self-educated intellectual, he became a linguist, folklorist, teacher, civil servant, editor, and author. His *Froudacity* (1889) is a book-length rebuttal of Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (1888), challenging its assumptions about the inferiority of non-White people and exposing its mistakes and its misrepresentations of his native land.

From Froudacity

From *Social Revolution*

Never was the Knight of La Mancha[1] more convinced of his imaginary mission to redress the wrongs of the world than Mr. James Anthony Froude seems to be of his ability to alter the course of events, especially those bearing on the destinies of the Negro in the British West Indies. The doctrinaire style of his utterances, his sublime indifference as to what Negro opinion and feelings may be, on account of his revelations, are uniquely charming. In that portion of his book headed "Social Revolution" our author, with that mixture of frankness and cynicism which is so dear to the soul of the British *esprit fort*[2] of today, has challenged a comparison between British Colonial policy on the one hand, and the Colonial policy of France and Spain on the other. This he does with an evident recklessness that his approval of Spain and France involves a definite condemnation of his own country. However, let us hear him:—

"The English West Indies, like other parts of the world, are going through a silent revolution. Elsewhere the revolution, as we hope, is a transition state, a new birth; a passing away of what is old and worn out, that a fresh and healthier order may rise in its place. In the West Indies the most sanguine of mortals will find it difficult to entertain any such *hope at all*."

As Mr. Froude is speaking dogmatically here of *his*, or rather *our*, West Indies, let us hear him as he proceeds:—

"We have been a ruling power there for two hundred and fifty years; the *whites whom we planted as our representatives* are drifting into ruin, and they regard England and England's policy as the principal cause of it. The *blacks whom, in a fit of virtuous benevolence*, we emancipated, do not feel *particularly obliged to us.*

They think, if they think at all, that they were ill-treated originally, and have received no more than was due to them."

Thus far. Now, as to "the *whites* whom we planted as our *representatives*," and who, Mr. Froude avers, are drifting into ruin, we confess to a total ignorance of their whereabouts in these islands in this jubilee year of Negro Emancipation.[3] Of the *representatives* of Britain immediately before and after Emancipation we happen to know something, which, on the testimony of Englishmen, Mr. Froude will be made quite welcome to before our task is ended. With respect to Mr. Froude's statement as to the ingratitude of the emancipated Blacks, if it is aimed at the slaves who were actually set free, it is utterly untrue; for no class of persons, in their humble and artless way, are more attached to the Queen's majesty, whom they regard as incarnating in her gracious person the benevolence which Mr. Froude so jauntily scoffs at. But if our censor's remark under this head is intended for the present generation of Blacks, it is a pure and simple absurdity. What are *we* Negroes of the present day to be grateful for to the "us," personified by Mr. Froude and the Colonial Office exportations? We really believe, from what we know of Englishmen, that very few indeed would regard Mr. Froude's reproach otherwise than as a palpable adding of insult to injury. Obliged to "us," indeed! Why, Mr. Froude, who speaks of us as dogs and horses, suggests that the same kindliness of treatment that secures the attachment of those noble brutes would have the same result in our case. With the same consistency that marks his utterances throughout his book, he tells his readers "that there is no original or congenital difference between the capacity of the White and the Negro races." He adds, too, significantly: "With the *same chances* and with the same *treatment*, I believe that distinguished men would be produced *equally* from *both* races." After this truthful testimony, which Pelion upon Ossa[4] of evidence has confirmed, does Mr. Froude, in the fatuity of his skin-pride, believe that educated men, worthy of the name, would be otherwise than resentful, if not disgusted, at being shunted out of bread in their own native land, which their parents' labours and taxes have made desirable, in order

to afford room to blockheads, vulgarians, or worse, imported from beyond the seas? Does Mr. Froude's scorn of the Negroes' skin extend, inconsistently on his part, to their intelligence and feelings also? And if so, what has the Negro to care—if let alone and not wantonly thwarted in his aspirations? It sounds queer, not to say unnatural and scandalous, that Englishmen should in these days of light be the champions of injustice towards their fellow-subjects, not for any intellectual or moral disqualification, but on the simple account of the darker skin of those who are to be assailed and thwarted in their life's career and aspirations. Really, are we to be grateful that the colour difference should be made the basis and justification of the dastardly denials of justice, social, intellectual, and moral, which have characterized the *régime* of those who Mr. Froude boasts were left to be the representatives of Britain's morality and fair play?

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: Don Quixote, the title character of Miguel de Cervantes' novel (1605, 1615); the name became synonymous with foolish, self-deluded idealism.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Freethinker (French).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The fifty-year anniversary of the freeing of enslaved people in the British West Indies. Slavery was abolished in British colonial possessions in 1833, but the formerly enslaved working on plantations were apprenticed to their past owners until 1838.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, mountains. The proverbial phrase "to heap Ossa upon Pelion" derives from Greek mythology and the unsuccessful attempt of the giants to scale Olympus and threaten the gods by stacking one mountain on top of the other.Return to reference 4

India: The "Jewel in the Crown"

Although we often tend to think of "empire" and "imperialism" as the work of governments, in the case of the British Empire, much of the groundwork was laid by the privately owned British East India Company. The EIC was incorporated in 1600 as a trading company operating around the Indian Ocean (the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia) for the purpose of exporting valuable commodities such as spices, tea, dyes, opium, and silk. However, "trade" quickly came to be bound up with politics and territorial control; by the mid-eighteenth century, the EIC had effectively seized control of much of India and parts of Southeast Asia. EIC rule facilitated trade, but it also enabled the levying of disabling taxes and created a fertile field for exploitation by its employees.

The company's trade monopoly with India was abolished by the Charter Act of 1813 (and with China in 1833), but its control over India did not end until the Indian Uprising of 1857 led the British government to take over its functions. The British Raj (or British governmental control of India) lasted from 1858 until 1947, when the country was partitioned into India and Pakistan with devastating consequences.

The motives for imperialism in India were always clearly defined in terms of profit. At the same time, as the work of Thomas Babington Macaulay makes clear in this section, and that of John Stuart Mill and Rudyard Kipling illuminate elsewhere in this volume, some agents of empire also saw their mission in terms one might call philanthropic: assuming their own always to be the superior culture, they took for granted the desirability of seeking to diffuse it as widely as possible.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

The historian, essayist, and parliamentarian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) served as a member of the Supreme Council of the East India Company from 1834 to 1838. In that capacity he oversaw major educational and legal reforms. His "Minute on Indian Education," or official memorandum, was written as a response to those council members who believed that Indian students should continue to be educated in Sanskrit and Persian as well as in English; Macaulay's party carried the argument.

Macaulay's dismissiveness regarding India's supposed lack of literature, history, or scientific knowledge may be difficult to read. At the same time, it is worth noting the differences between his arrogant assumption of the superiority of British culture and the "scientific" racism that became prevalent toward the end of the century. Macaulay does not question the desirability of making Indians into Englishmen in everything but "blood and color"; he also does not doubt the viability of doing so. Both the English language and English culture are available to all. Later racisms rejected any such notion: for them, race determines not just skin color but intellectual and even moral capacity.

From Minute on Indian Education

We now come to the gist of the matter. We have a fund to be employed as government shall direct for the intellectual improvement of the people of this country. The simple question is, what is the most useful way of employing it?

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can, at present, be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them.

What then shall that language be? One half of the committee maintain that it should be the English. The other half strongly recommend the Arabic and Sanscrit. The whole question seems to me to be, which language is the best worth knowing?

I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the Oriental learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the Oriental plan of education.

It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the Eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I

certainly never met with any Orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded, and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.

How, then, stands the case? We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language. The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stands pre-eminent even among the languages of the West. It abounds with works of imagination not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us; with models of every species of eloquence; with historical compositions which, considered merely as narratives, have seldom been surpassed, and which, considered as vehicles of ethical and political instruction, have never been equalled; with just and lively representations of human life and human nature; with the most profound speculations on metaphysics, morals, government, jurisprudence, and trade; with full and correct information respecting every experimental science which tends to preserve the health, to increase the comfort, or to expand the intellect of man. Whoever knows that language has ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations. It may safely be said, that the literature now extant in that language is of far greater value than all the literature which three hundred years ago was extant in all the languages of the world together. Nor is this all: In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East.

It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the South of Africa, the other in Australasia; communities which are every year becoming more important, and more closely connected with our Indian empire. Whether we look at the intrinsic value of our literature, or at the particular situation of this country, we shall see the strongest reason to think that, of all foreign tongues, the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.

The question now before us, is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach languages in which, by universal confession, there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which, by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse; and whether, when we can patronise sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines, which would disgrace an English farrier;—astronomy, which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding-school,—history, abounding with kings thirty feet high, and reigns thirty thousand years long,—and geography, made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.

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But there is yet another argument which seems even more untenable. It is said that the Sanscrit and Arabic are the languages in which the Sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly it is the duty of the British government in India to be not only tolerant, but neutral, on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcileable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are

to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men, out of the revenues of the state, to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat?

It is taken for granted by the advocates of Oriental learning, that no native of this country can possibly attain more than a mere smattering of English. They do not attempt to prove this; but they perpetually insinuate it. They designate the education which their opponents recommend as a mere spelling-book education. They assume it as undeniable, that the question is between a profound knowledge of Hindoo and Arabian literature and science on the one side, and a superficial knowledge of the rudiments of English on the other. This is not merely an assumption, but an assumption contrary to all reason and experience. We know that foreigners of all nations do learn our language sufficiently to have access to all the most abstruse knowledge which it contains, sufficiently to relish even the more delicate graces of our most idiomatic writers. There are in this very town natives who are quite competent to discuss political or scientific questions with fluency and precision in the English language. I have heard the very question on which I am now writing discussed by native gentlemen with a liberality and an intelligence which would do credit to any member of the Committee of Public Instruction. Indeed, it is unusual to find, even in the literary circles of the Continent, any foreigner who can express himself in English with so much facility and correctness as we find in many Hindoos. Nobody, I suppose, will contend, that English is so difficult to a Hindoo as Greek to an Englishman. Yet an intelligent English youth, in a much smaller number of years than our unfortunate pupils pass at the Sanscrit College, becomes able to read, to enjoy, and even to imitate, not unhappily, the compositions of the best Greek authors.

Less than half the time which enables an English youth to read Herodotus and Sophocles, ought to enable a Hindoo to read Hume and Milton.

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In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them, that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

1835

WILLIAM HOWARD RUSSELL

One of the first war correspondents, the Irish-born Russell (1820–1907) became famous for his dispatches to the London *Times* during the Crimean War (1854–56) and later reported on the American Civil War (1861–65). After the outbreak of the Indian Uprising (1857–59), a rebellion of native troops and peasantry, Russell traveled to northern India to report on the Uprising's suppression by British troops. More sympathetic toward the Indians than most Victorians, Russell debunked many of the most shocking rumors about the rape, torture, and killing of British people and criticized the cruelty of indiscriminate British reprisals. In the following selections he reflects on the fate of the British community at Cawnpore, which surrendered to the Indian rebels and was subsequently massacred.

From My Diary in India, in the Year 1858–59

[CAWNPORE]

February 12th.—* * * The scenes where great crimes have been perpetrated ever possess an interest, which I would not undertake to stigmatise as morbid; and surely among the sites rendered infamous for all time, Cawnpore will be pre-eminent as the magnitude of the atrocities with which it is connected. But, though pre-eminent among crimes, the massacre of Cawnpore is by no means singular or unprecedented in any of the circumstances which mark turpitude and profundity of guilt. We who suffered from it think that there never was such wickedness in the world, and the incessant efforts of a gang of forgers and utterers of lies have surrounded it with horrors needlessly invented in the hope of adding to the indignation and burning desire for vengeance which the naked facts aroused. Helpless garrisons, surrendering under capitulation, have been massacred ere now; men, women, and children have been ruthlessly butchered by the enemies of their race ere now; risings, such as that of the people of Pontus under Mithridates, of the Irish Roman Catholics against the Protestant settlers in 1641, of the actors in the Sicilian vespers, of the assassins who smote and spared none on the eve of St. Bartholomew,[1] have taken place before, and have been over and over again attended by inhuman cruelty, violation, and torture. The history of mediaeval Europe affords many instances of crimes as great as those of Cawnpore; the history of civilized nations could afford some parallel to them even in modern times. In fact, the peculiar[2] aggravation of the Cawnpore massacres was this, that the deed was done by a subject race—by black men who dared to shed the blood of their masters and mistresses, and to butcher poor helpless ladies and children, who were the women and offspring of

the dominant and conquering people. Here we had not only a servile war and a sort of Jacquerie[3] combined, but we had a war of religion, a war of race, a war of revenge, mingled together in a contest in which the insurgents were also actuated by some national promptings to shake off the yoke of a stranger, and to reestablish the full power of native chiefs, and the full sway of native religions. There is a kind of God's revenge against murder in the unsuccessful issue of all enterprises commenced in massacre, and carried on by cruelty and bloodshed. Whatever the causes of the mutiny and the revolt, it is clear enough that one of the modes by which the leaders, as if by common instinct, determined to effect their end was, the destruction of every white man, woman, or child who fell into their hands—a design which the kindliness of the people, or motives of policy, frustrated on many remarkable occasions. It must be remembered that the punishments of the Hindoo are cruel, and whether he be mild or not, he certainly is not, any more than the Mussulman,[4] distinguished for clemency towards his enemies. But philosophize and theorize as we may, Cawnpore will be a name ever heard by English ears with horror long after the present generation has passed away.

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February 13th.—* * * The difficulty, in my mind, was to believe that it [Cawnpore] could ever have been defended at all. Make every allowance for the effects of weather, for circumstances, it is still the most wretched defensive position that could be imagined. Honour to those who defended it! Pity for their fate! Above all, pity for the lot of those whom the strong arms and brave hearts failed to save from the unknown dangers of that foul treachery! It was a horrible spot! Inside the shattered rooms, which had been the scene of such devotion and suffering, are heaps of rubbish and filth. The intrenchment is used as a *cloaca maxima*[5] by the natives, camp-followers, coolies, and others who bivouac in the sandy plains around it. The smells are revolting. Rows of gorged vultures sit with

outspread wings on the mouldering parapets, or perch in clusters on the two or three leafless trees at the angle of the works by which we enter. I shot one with my revolver; and as the revolting creature disgorged its meal, twisting its bare black snake-like neck to and fro, I made a vow I would never incur the risk of beholding such a disgusting sight again.

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February 14th.—* * * All the country about Cawnpore is covered with the finest powdered dust, two or three inches deep, which rises into the air on the smallest provocation. It is composed of sand, pulverized earth, and the brick powder and mortar of the dilapidated houses; whatever, in fact, can turn into dust. As the natives shuffle along, their pointed slippers fling up suffocating clouds of this unpleasant compound, and when these slippers are multiplied by thousands, the air is filled with a floating stratum of it, fifteen or eighteen feet high, and extending over the whole of the station. Even in the old days, when the roads were watered, the station of Cawnpore had a bad notoriety for dust. What an earthquake to shake to pieces, what a volcano to smother with lava and ashes, has this mutiny been! Not alone cities, but confidence and trust have gone, never more to be restored!

Cawnpore. A contemporary engraving, entitled *Massacre at Cawnpore*.

Among those heaps of dust and ashes, those arid mounds of brick, those new-made trenches, I try in vain to realize what was once this station of Cawnpore. The solemn etiquette, the visits to the Brigadier and the General *en grande tenue*,[6] the invitations to dinner, the white kid-gloves, the balls, the liveries, the affectation of the *plus haut des hauts tons*,[7] the millinery anxieties of the ladies, the ices, and champagne, and supper, the golden-robed Nana Sahib,[8] moving about amid haughty stares and ill-concealed dislike. "What the deuce does the General ask that n***** here for?" The little and big flirtations, the drives on the road—a dull, ceremonious pleasure—the faded fun of the private theatricals, the exotic absurdities of the masonic revels, the marryings and givings in marriage, the little bills done by the rich bunneahs,[9] the small and great pecuniary relations between the station and the bazaar, the sense of security—and then on all this exaggerated relief of an English garrison-town and watering-place, the deep gloom of apprehension—at first "a shave of old Smith's,"[1] then a well-authenticated report, then a certainty of

disaffection—rolling like thunder-clouds, and darkening the glassy surface of the gay society till it burst on it in stormy and cruel reality. But I cannot.

"Ah! you should have seen Cawnpore in its palmy days, when there were two cavalry regiments here, a lot of artillery, and three regiments of infantry in the cantonments.[2] Chock full of pretty women! The private theatricals every week; balls, and picnics, and dinners every evening. By Jove! it's too horrible to look at it now!" And so, indeed, it was. But one is tempted to ask if there is not some lesson and some warning given to our race in reference to India by the tremendous catastrophe of Cawnpore? I am deeply impressed by the difficulty of ruling India, as it is now governed by force, exercised by a few who are obliged to employ natives as the instruments of coercion. That force is the base of our rule I have no doubt; for I see nothing else but force employed in our relations with the governed. The efforts to improve the condition of the people are made by bodies or individuals who have no connection with the Government. The action of the Government in matters of improvement is only excited by considerations of revenue. Does it—as the great instructor of the people, the exponent of our superior morality and civilization—does it observe treaties, keep faith, pursue a fixed and equitable policy, and follow the precepts of Christianity in its conduct towards states and peoples? Are not our courts of law condemned by ourselves? Are not our police admitted to be a curse and a blight upon the country? In effect, the grave, unhappy doubt which settles on my mind is, whether India is the better for our rule, so far as regards the social condition of the great mass of the people. We have put down widow-burning,[3] we have sought to check infanticide; but I have travelled hundreds of miles through a country peopled with beggars and covered with wigwam villages.

1858–59 1860

Endnotes

- Note 1: All incidents in which culturally or religiously distinct minorities were attacked by members of a dominant population.

Mithradates VI, the ruler of Pontus, a kingdom of northeast Asia Minor, led his armies to massacre Roman and Italian residents in Asia in 88 B.C.E. In 1641 in Ulster, a county in northern Ireland, dispossessed native Irish Catholics rose up against English and Scottish Protestant settlers. Sicilians rebelled in 1282 against Charles I, the French-born king of Naples (son of Louis VIII and brother of Louis IX of France). In 1572, on the evening before the feast day of St. Bartholomew (August 24), some Catholic nobles in the French royal court began a massacre of Huguenots (French Protestants), giving new impetus to a lengthy religious civil war.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Particular.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Peasant rebellion. The term derives from the 1358 uprising of peasants, known derisively as "Jacques," against nobles in northern France.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Muslim.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Largest sewer (Latin), after the main sewer draining northeast Rome (which even in the classical period was covered).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In full military dress (French).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The highest of high fashions (French).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A dispossessed Hindu ruler who took at least nominal charge of the rebel forces at Cawnpore and who was seen by many British as the mastermind behind the massacres.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The receipts written up by wealthy merchants.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An unconfirmed report (military slang) of an incident from Lieutenant Colonel George Acklom Smith at his post at Fatehgarh, sixty miles from Cawnpore.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Permanent military stations in British India. "Palmy": prosperous.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Suttee, the custom of a Hindu widow burning herself on her husband's funeral pyre; it was outlawed by the British in 1829. Some historians believe this ban may have increased the

visibility and possibly even the incidence of this practice.Return to reference 3

F. A. (FLORA ANNIE) STEEL and G. (GRACE) GARDINER

The marriage of Flora Annie Steel (1847–1929) to a member of the Indian Civil Service brought her to India in 1868. The English-born community in India represented less than 1 percent of the population. Nevertheless, members of this community played a critical role in the fate of the then colony. Women were especially central to claims about the "civilizing" mission of the British, as Steel's career reflects: in 1884, she was appointed Inspectress of Schools, responsible for girls' schools between Peshwar and Delhi; she also served on the Provincial Education Board, where she collaborated with Rudyard Kipling's father, John Lockwood Kipling, on the writing and illustrating of school primers. Less is known about Grace Gardiner, although she, too, was married to an officer in the Indian Civil Service. *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (1888, 1893) provides an insight into the daily lives and ordinary assumptions of the women and men responsible for the British Empire in India.

From The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook

Chapter I. The Duties of the Mistress

Housekeeping in India, when once the first strangeness has worn off, is a far easier task in many ways than it is in England, though it none the less requires time, and, in this present transitional period, an almost phenomenal patience; for, while one mistress enforces cleanliness according to European methods, the next may belong to the opposite faction, who, so long as the dinner is nicely served, thinks nothing of it being cooked in a kitchen which is also used as a latrine; the result being that the servants who serve one and then the other stamp of mistress, look on the desire for decency as a mere personal and distinctly disagreeable attribute of their employer, which, like a bad temper or stinginess, may be resented or evaded.

And, first, it must be distinctly understood that it is not necessary, or in the least degree desirable, that an educated woman should waste the best years of her life in scolding and petty supervision. Life holds higher duties, and it is indubitable that friction and over-zeal is a sure sign of a bad housekeeper. But there is an appreciable difference between the careworn Martha[1] vexed with many things, and the absolute indifference displayed by many Indian Mistresses, who put up with a degree of slovenliness and dirt which would disgrace a den in St Giles,[2] on the principle that it is no use attempting to teach the natives.

They never go into their kitchens, for the simple reason that their appetite for breakfast might be marred by seeing the *khitmutgûr*[3] using his toes as an efficient toast-rack (*fact*); or their desire for dinner weakened by seeing the soup strained through a greasy *pugri*.[4]

The ostrich, who, according to the showman, "*'ides 'is head in the sand and thinks as 'e can't see no one, as nobody can't see 'e*," has, fortunately, an exceptional faculty of digestion. With this remark we will leave a very unpleasant subject.

Easy, however, as the actual housekeeping is in India, the personal attention of the mistress is quite as much needed here as

at home. The Indian servant, it is true, learns more readily, and is guiltless of the sniffiness with which Mary Jane[5] receives suggestions, but a few days of absence or neglect on the part of the mistress, results in the servants falling into their old habits with the inherited conservatism of dirt. This is, of course, disheartening, but it has to be faced as a necessary condition of life, until a few generations of training shall have started the Indian servant on a new inheritance of habit. It must never be forgotten that at present those mistresses who aim at anything beyond keeping a good table are in the minority, and that pioneering is always arduous work.

The first duty of a mistress is, of course, to be able to give intelligible orders to her servants; therefore it is necessary she should learn to speak Hindustani.[6] No sane Englishwoman would dream of living, say, for twenty years, in Germany, Italy, or France, without making the *attempt*, at any rate, to learn the language. She would, in fact, feel that by neglecting to do so she would "*write herself down an ass*."[7] It would be well, therefore, if ladies in India were to ask themselves if a difference in longitude increases the latitude allowed in judging of a woman's intellect.

The next duty is obviously to insist on her orders being carried out. And here we come to the burning question, "How is this to be done?" Certainly, there is at present very little to which we can appeal in the average Indian servant, but then, until it is implanted by training, there is very little sense of duty in a child; yet in some well-regulated nurseries obedience is a foregone conclusion. The secret lies in making rules, and *keeping to them*. The Indian servant is a child in everything save age, and should be treated as a child; that is to say, kindly, but with the greatest firmness. The laws of the household should be those of the Medes and Persians,[8] and first faults should never go unpunished. By overlooking a first offence, we lose the only opportunity we have of preventing it becoming a habit.

1888

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Luke 10:38–41, Martha is the active sister to the contemplative Mary.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: London slum.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The object of this book being to enable a person who is absolutely unacquainted with India, its language and people, to begin housekeeping at once, the authors have decided on adhering throughout to purely phonetic spelling. The only accent used will be the circumflex [*Authors' note*]. A khitmutgûr is a male servant.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Turban.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: General term for a female servant in England.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Combination of Hindi and Urdu.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, the constable Dogberry tells his masters to "write me down an ass."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Reference to Daniel 6:15: "the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed."Return to reference 8

T. N. MUKHARJI

Trailokya Nath Mukharji, a government official and Brahman (a member of the highest Hindu caste), traveled to England with the Indian delegation for the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1886. On his return home his impressions of the trip were serialized in a weekly Indian newspaper, and then reprinted in a book published in London and Calcutta. In the following selection Mukharji describes his experiences with, and observations of, the British.

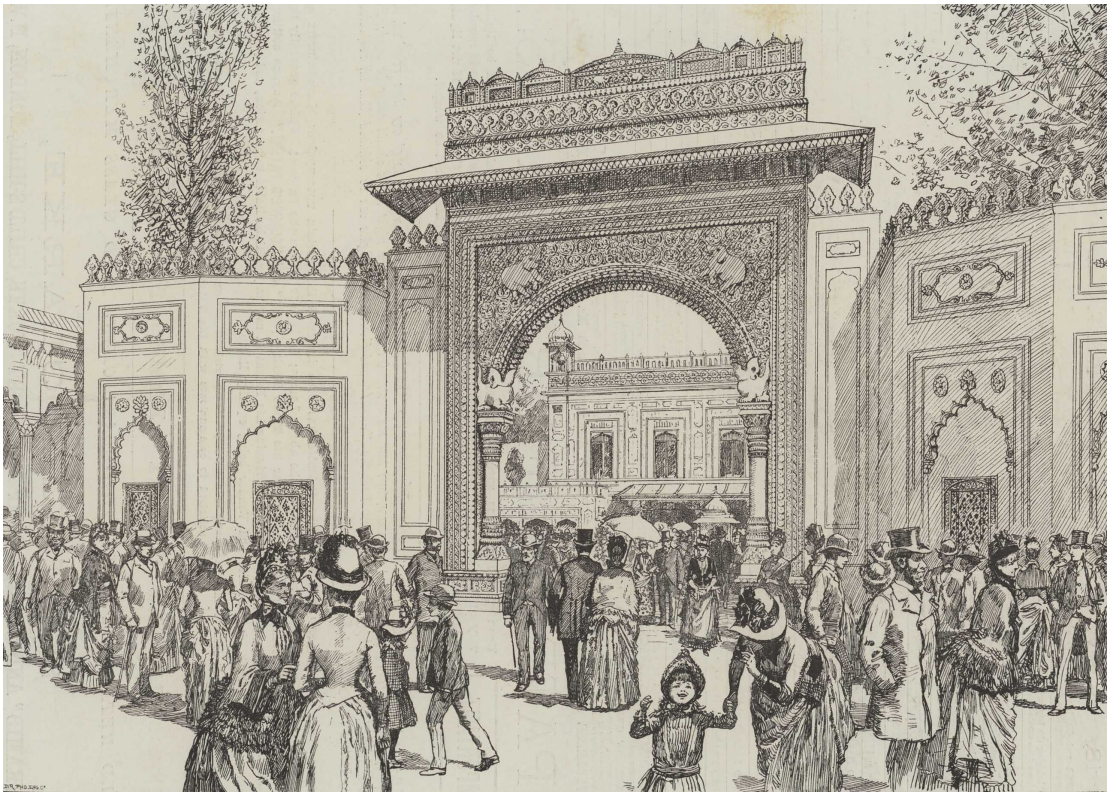
From A Visit to Europe

[THE INDIAN AND COLONIAL EXHIBITION]

Another place of considerable interest to the natives of England was the Indian Bazar where Hindu and Muhammadan artisans carried on their avocations, to witness which men, women and children flocked from all parts of the kingdom. A dense crowd always stood there, looking at our men as they wove the gold brocade, sang the patterns of the carpet[1] and printed the calico with the hand. They were as much astonished to see the Indians produce works of art with the aid of rude apparatus they themselves had discarded long ago, as a Hindu would be to see a chimpanzee officiating as a priest in a funeral ceremony and reading out Sanskrit texts from a palm leaf book spread before him. We were very interesting beings no doubt, so were the Zulus before us, and so is the Sioux chief at the present time (1887). Human nature everywhere thirsts for novelty, and measures out its favours in proportion to the rarity and oddity of a thing. It was from the ladies that we received the largest amount of patronage. We were pierced through and through by stares from eyes of all colours—green, gray, blue and black—and every movement and act of ours, walking, sitting, eating, reading, received its full share of "O, I, never!" The number of wives we left behind at home was also a constant theme of speculation among them, and shrewd guesses were sometimes made on this point, 250 being a favourite number. You could tell any amount of stories on this subject without exciting the slightest suspicion. Once, one of our number told a pretty waitress—"I am awfully pleased with you, and I want to marry you. Will you accept the fortieth wifeship in my household which became vacant just before I left my country?" She asked —"How many wives have you altogether?" "Two hundred and fifty, the usual number," was the ready answer. "What became of your wife, number 40?" "I killed her, because one morning she could not

cook my porridge well." The poor girl was horrified, and exclaimed —"O you monster, O you wretch!" Then she narrated the sad fate of a friend of hers. She was a sweet little child, when an African student studying in Edinburgh came and wooed her. They got married in England and fondly loved each other. Everything went well as long as the pair lived in England, but after a short time he took his fair wife to his desert home in Liberia. Not a single white man or woman could she see there, and she felt very lonely. But the sight of her mother-in-law, who dressed in feathers and skins came dancing into the house half-tipsy, was more than she could bear. She pined for a short time and died.

Of course, every nation in the world considers other nations as savages or at least much inferior to itself. It was so from the beginning and it will be so as long as human nature will retain its present character. We did not therefore wonder that the common people should take us for barbarians, awkward as we were in every respect. They have very strict notions of dress, manners and the general bearing of a man, any deviation from which is seriously noticed. Utmost indulgence was however shewn to us everywhere. Her Majesty was graciously pleased to lay aside the usual rules, and this favour was shewn us wherever we went. Gentlemen and ladies of high education and culture, however, honoured us as the representatives of the most ancient nation now existing on the face of the earth. They would frequently ask us home, get up private parties and arrange for all sorts of amusements. In other houses we grew more intimate and formed part of the family party. To these we were always welcome, and could go and come whenever we liked. We got some friends among them, and these gentlemen would often come and fetch us home if we absented ourselves for more than the ordinary length of time. I fondly remember the happy days I passed with them, and feel thankful for the kindness they shewed me during my sojourn in their country.



The Indian and Colonial Exhibition. This depiction of the Gawlior Gateway, entrance to the Indian Palace at the Indian and Colonial Exhibition, appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in July 1886.

In public matters non-official gentlemen were also very partial to us. “We want to hear the turbanned gentleman” was the wish often and often expressed. But we ceased not to be a prodigious wonder to strangers and to the common people. Would they discuss us so freely if they knew that we understood their language? It was very amusing to hear what they said about us. Often when fatigued with work, or when cares and anxieties cast a gloom upon our mind, we found such talks about us more refreshing than a glass of port wine. I wish I had the ability to do justice to the discussing power of these ladies and gentlemen exercised in their kind notice of us, for in that case I could produce one of the most interesting books ever published. Or if I had known that I would be required to write an account of my visit to Europe, I would have taken notes of at least some of the remarkable hits on truth unconsciously made by

ignorant people from the country, which are applicable to all nations and which set one to philosophise on the material difference that exists between our own estimate of ourselves and the estimate which others form of us.

If we were interesting beings in the eyes of the Londoners, who had oftener opportunities of seeing their fellow subjects from the far East, how much more would we be so to the simple villagers who came by thousands to see the wonders of the Exhibition. Their conduct towards us was always kind and respectful. They liked to talk to us, and whenever convenient we tried to satisfy their curiosity. Men, women and children, whose relations are in India serving as soldiers or in any other capacity, would come through the crowd, all panting, to shake hands with us and ask about their friends. Many queer incidents happened in this way. "Do you know Jim,—James Robinson you know of —— Regiment?" asked a fat elderly woman, who one day came bustling through the crowd and took me by storm, without any of those preliminary manœuvres usually adopted to open a conversation with a stranger. I expressed my regret in not having the honour of Jim's acquaintance. The good old lady then explained to me that she was Jim's aunt, and gave me a long history of her nephew, and the circumstances which led to his enlistment as a soldier. If the truant nephew lost the golden opportunity of sending through us his dutiful message to his aunt, she on her part was not wanting in her affectionate remembrances of him. Among other things, most of which I did not understand, for she did not speak the English we ordinarily hear nor was her language quite coherent at the time, she begged me to carry to Jim the important intelligence that Mrs. Jones' fat pig obtained a prize at the Smithfield Agricultural Show. I shewed my alacrity to carry the message right off to Jim in the wilds of Upper Burma by immediately taking leave of the lady, who joined her friends and explained to them that I was a bosom friend of her nephew.

Endnotes

- Note 1: When carpets are produced on handlooms, overseers sometimes sing out the number and color of each thread needed for the pattern; the weavers then repeat back the instructions in a chorus.Return to reference 1

Settler Colonialism: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa

If it is difficult to describe "the British Empire" as a single or uniform phenomenon, it is similarly impossible to describe "settler colonialism" in simple terms. What sets "settler" colonialism apart from other forms such as plantation colonialism, is that it is characterized by the immigration of large numbers of Britons with the intention of displacing the native population. From the perspective of the Indigenous people who experienced it, therefore, the consequences were consistent and appalling: death at the hands of the settlers, whether through war, disease, displacement, or environmental devastation. At the same time, the dynamics of colonization varied markedly according to different conditions on the ground.

The example of Canada is particularly interesting in this regard. Originally colonized by the French, who ceded nearly all their possessions to the United Kingdom at the end of the Seven Years' War (1763), Canadian history is also marked by the immigration of some Indigenous peoples from the United States, who had sided with the British in the Revolutionary War. Thus, E. Pauline Johnson, who wrote under the Mohawk name Tekahionwake, belonged to a tribe for whom loyalty to the Queen could serve as a way to appeal decisions made by the colonial government. However much this triangulation may have complicated the political landscape, it did not impede the genocide of Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous people in what is now South Africa had a different history with imperialism and so, too, a very different relationship to the British. Additional information about South Africa is available in the entry on Olive Schreiner, but briefly, when the Cape Colony officially became a British colony in 1814, local inhabitants included not just the Xhosa and the Zulu, but the Boers (Dutch farmers) who

had occupied the area since shortly after the Dutch East India Company established a trading post in Cape Town in 1652. The fortunes of the country were marked by this diverse and complicated history of conflict and exploitation—and then were complicated still further by the discovery of diamonds and gold in the nineteenth century.

Australia's first settlers in 1788 were British convicts (some of whom were originally African, American, or French) who had been "transported" rather than being executed for crimes ranging from petty theft to murder. Meanwhile, New Zealand was initially governed by Australia but became its own colony in 1840. Australia and New Zealand were both characterized by limited self-government, farming, and then mining—as well as massive devastation of the native populations.

SUSANNA MOODIE

Poet, novelist, memoirist, magazine editor, and Canadian settler, Susanna Strickland Moodie (1803–1885) was born in Suffolk, England. Her religious commitments as a Dissenter led her to abolitionism: as a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, she helped transcribe *The History of Mary Prince*, excerpted in this cluster. In 1832, Moodie emigrated with her husband and daughter to Canada. Their attempts to settle were largely unsuccessful, but her accounts of those experiences, *Roughing It in the Bush; or Life in Canada* (1852) and *Life in the Clearings* (1853), were extremely popular. In this passage, Moodie describes some of her encounters with Indigenous people, who were being displaced by the new settlers. Despite her obvious sympathy for their plight, she often uses stereotyped images and racist terminology.

From Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada

My husband had purchased a very light cedar canoe, to which he attached a keel and a sail; and most of our leisure hours, directly the snows melted, were spent upon the water.

These fishing and shooting excursions were delightful. The pure beauty of the Canadian water, the sombre but august grandeur of the vast forest that hemmed us in on every side and shut us out from the rest of the world, soon cast a magic spell upon our spirits, and we began to feel charmed with the freedom and solitude around us. Every object was new to us. We felt as if we were the first discoverers of every beautiful flower and stately tree that attracted our attention, and we gave names to fantastic rocks and fairy isles, and raised imaginary houses and bridges on every picturesque spot which we floated past during our aquatic excursions. I learned the use of the paddle, and became quite a proficient in the gentle craft.

It was not long before we received visits from the Indians, a people whose beauty, talents, and good qualities have been somewhat overrated, and invested with a poetical interest which they scarcely deserve. Their honesty and love of truth are the finest traits in characters otherwise dark and unlovely. But these are two God-like attributes, and from them spring all that is generous and ennobling about them.

There never was a people more sensible of kindness, or more grateful for any little act of benevolence exercised towards them. We met them with confidence; our dealings with them were conducted with the strictest integrity; and they became attached to our persons, and in no single instance ever destroyed the good opinion we entertained of them.

The tribes that occupy the shores of all these inland waters, back of the great lakes, belong to the Chippewa or Missasagua Indians,

perhaps the least attractive of all these wild people, both with regard to their physical and mental endowments.

The men of this tribe are generally small of stature, with very coarse and repulsive features. The forehead is low and retreating, the observing faculties large, the intellectual ones scarcely developed; the ears large, and standing off from the face; the eyes looking towards the temples, keen, snake-like, and far apart; the cheek-bones prominent; the nose long and flat, the nostrils very round; the jaw-bone projecting, massy, and brutal; the mouth expressing ferocity and sullen determination; the teeth large, even, and dazzlingly white. The mouth of the female differs widely in expression from that of the male; the lips are fuller, the jaw less projecting, and the smile is simple and agreeable. The women are a merry, light-hearted set, and their constant laugh and incessant prattle form a strange contrast to the iron taciturnity of their grim lords.

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The cunning which they display in their contests with their enemies, in their hunting, and in making bargains with the whites (who are too apt to impose on their ignorance), seems to spring more from a law of necessity, forced upon them by their isolated position and precarious mode of life, than from any innate wish to betray. The Indian’s face, after all, is a perfect index of his mind. The eye changes its expression with every impulse and passion, and shows what is passing within as clearly as the lightning in a dark night betrays the course of the stream. I cannot think that deceit forms any prominent trait in the Indian’s character. They invariably act with the strictest honour towards those who never attempt to impose upon them. It is natural for a deceitful person to take advantage of the credulity of others. The genuine Indian never utters a falsehood, and never employs flattery (that powerful weapon in the hands of the insidious), in his communications with the whites.

His worst traits are those which he has in common with the wild animals of the forest, and which his intercourse with the lowest order of civilised men (who, in point of moral worth, are greatly his inferiors), and the pernicious effects of strong drink, have greatly tended to inflame and debase.

It is a melancholy truth, and deeply to be lamented, that the vicinity of European settlers has always produced a very demoralising effect upon the Indians. As a proof of this, I will relate a simple anecdote.

Jah, of Rice Lake, a very sensible, middle-aged Indian, was conversing with me about their language, and the difficulty he found in understanding the books written in Indian for their use. Among other things, I asked him if his people ever swore, or used profane language towards the Deity.

The man regarded me with a sort of stern horror, as he replied, "Indian, till after he knew your people, never swore—no bad word in Indian. Indian must learn your words to swear and take God's name in vain."

Oh, what a reproof to Christian men! I felt abashed, and degraded in the eyes of this poor savage—who, ignorant as he was in many respects, yet possessed that first great attribute of the soul, a deep reverence for the Supreme Being. How inferior were thousands of my countrymen to him in this important point!

The affection of Indian parents to their children, and the deference which they pay to the aged, is another beautiful and touching trait in their character.

One extremely cold, wintry day, as I was huddled with my little ones over the stove, the door softly unclosed, and the moccasined foot of an Indian crossed the floor. I raised my head, for I was too much accustomed to their sudden appearance at any hour to feel alarmed, and perceived a tall woman standing silently and respectfully before me, wrapped in a large blanket. The moment she caught my eye she dropped the folds of her covering from around her, and laid at my feet the attenuated figure of a boy, about twelve years of age, who was in the last stage of consumption.

"Papouse die," she said, mournfully clasping her hands against her breast, and looking down upon the suffering lad with the most heartfelt expression of maternal love, while large tears trickled down her dark face. "Moodie's squaw save papouse—poor Indian woman much glad."

Her child was beyond all human aid. I looked anxiously upon him, and knew, by the pinched-up features and purple hue of his wasted check, that he had not many hours to live. I could only answer with tears her agonising appeal to my skill.

"Try and save him! All die but him." (She held up five of her fingers.) "Brought him all the way from Mutta Lake[1] upon my back, for white squaw to cure."

"I cannot cure him, my poor friend. He is in God's care; in a few hours he will be with Him."

The child was seized with a dreadful fit of coughing, which I expected every moment would terminate his frail existence. I gave him a teaspoonful of currant-jelly, which he took with avidity, but could not retain a moment on his stomach.

"Papouse die," murmured the poor woman; "alone—alone! No papouse; the mother all alone."

She began re-adjusting the poor sufferer in her blanket. I got her some food, and begged her to stay and rest herself; but she was too much distressed to eat, and too restless to remain. She said little, but her face expressed the keenest anguish; she took up her mournful load, pressed for a moment his wasted, burning hand in hers, and left the room.

My heart followed her a long way on her melancholy journey. Think what this woman's love must have been for that dying son, when she had carried a lad of his age six miles, through the deep snow, upon her back, on such a day, in the hope of my being able to do him some good. Poor heart-broken mother! I learned from Joe Muskrat's squaw some days after that the boy died a few minutes after Elizabeth Iron, his mother, got home.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Mud Lake, or Lake *Shemong*, in Indian [*Moodie's note*].Return to reference 1

E. PAULINE JOHNSON/TEKAHIONWAKE

"Tekahionwake" is the Mohawk name used by E. Pauline Johnson for her poetry and performances. (The Mohawk are the easternmost tribe of the Iroquois [Haudenosaunee] Confederacy.) Her mother was born in England; her father was a member of one the tribes that allied with the British in the American Revolutionary War and moved to Canada after its conclusion. Both the British and the Mohawk aspects of Johnson's identity played important roles in her writings and public life. For a more complete description of her work and significance, see her entry later in this volume. "The Corn Husker" (1896) is one of her most famous poems, and it reproduces one of the more common tropes of Indigenous representation: the "doomed Indian" who watches as native land is appropriated by colonizers.

The Corn Husker

Hard by the Indian lodges, where the bush
  Breaks in a clearing, through ill-fashioned fields,
She comes to labour, when the first still hush
  Of autumn follows large and recent yields.

Age in her fingers, hunger in her face,
  Her shoulders stooped with weight of work and years,
But rich in tawny colouring of her race,
  She comes a-field to strip the purple ears.

And all her thoughts are with the days gone by,
  Ere might's injustice banished from their lands
Her people, that to-day unheeded lie,
  Like the dead husks that rustle through her hands.

1896

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

A prolific chronicler of British social and political life, Anthony Trollope (1815–1882) wrote novels that were, and remain, extremely popular. He was also a civil servant, employed by the Postal Service as a postal inspector, and an enthusiastic and frequent traveler both as an agent of the Postal Service and on his own. In addition to his writings on Australia and New Zealand, he published volumes on the West Indies, North America, and South Africa.

From South Australia and Western Australia

The black men[1] in Western Australia were certainly not treated with exceptional harshness,—were perhaps treated with exceptional kindness,—but they were very troublesome to the new-comers. There was much of spearing on the one side, and much of shooting and hanging on the other. There seem to have been two pertinacious chiefs, or resolute leading natives, named Yagar and Midgegoroo, who gave a great amount of trouble. They carried on the war for four or five years, by no means without success. The records speak of them as horrible savages. They were probably brave patriots, defending their country and their rights. Midgegoroo was at last taken and shot. What was the end of Yagar, or whether he came to an end, no one seems to know.

And there were many other troubles in the young settlement which, as we read the record, make us feel that it was no easy thing to be an early colonist. Food for the newcomers was often wanted. The young crops of wheat, on which so much depended, were destroyed by moths and red rust. There was great lack of any circulating medium. The soil, though good in many places, was good only in patches very distant from each other; and there were no roads,—so that the settler who produced meat in one place could not exchange it for the corn and wheat produced elsewhere. And there was no labour. That of all evils was perhaps the one most difficult to be encountered and overcome. The black man would not work; and the white man who had his block of ground thickly covered with gumtrees and blackboys,[2]—a large resinous shrub common in the country is called by the latter name,—could not clear it and till it and sow it with sufficient rapidity to procure sustenance for himself and family.

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This struggle was very hard in the first infant days of Western Australia; and there seems often to have arisen the question whether upon the whole it would not be well that the settlement should be abandoned. In 1832 the troubles were so grievous that the governor, Captain Stirling, went home to represent matters. Could not something be done for the poor strugglers? At the end of this year there were only six hundred acres of land under grain, and the reason given for so slight an advance was the difficulty, or almost impossibility, of procuring seed. In 1834 the governor returned as Sir James Stirling, and the struggle went on. * * * At this time the system of transportation had already become odious to the other colonies,—especially to New South Wales.[3] The stain of the convict element had been felt to be disgraceful, and the very name was repulsive and injurious. But convicts could be made to labour, to open out roads and clear timber and build bridges, and do works without which it is impossible that a young colony should thrive. And the expense of convicts would be borne by the imperial revenue. Convict labour, bad as it might be, meant labour for nothing. The mother country, which would give but little else, in her desire to rid herself of her own ruffians, would no doubt give that. It was known that the mother country was hard pressed in that matter, not knowing what to do with her convicted ruffianism, and that she would be only too happy to send a few thousands to the Swan River.[4] But the colony rejected the petition which was originated at King George's Sound,[5] and would not as yet condescend so far.

But things went from bad to worse. In 1838 there was a sad wail. Ten thousand barrels of oil were taken off the coast, but not a barrel was taken by an English or colonial vessel. All this wealth had fallen into the hands of French or American whalers. And the murders went on, and the hangings. And in 1840 all the wheat was destroyed by a moth. There had indeed been glimpses of success. In 1832 a Legislative Council first sat,—nominated of course by the governor; and in the same year a newspaper was published,—in

manuscript. Soon afterwards a theatrical entertainment was given, and a printing-press was brought out, and a public clock was set up, and churches were opened. Struggles were made gallantly. Mr. Eyre,[6] who was not so successful afterwards when he went as governor to Jamaica, made his way across the country from South Australia to King George's Sound, through the most sterile region of the continent, performing one of those wonderfully gallant acts by which Australian explorers have made themselves famous. Fresh acres were brought under cultivation. In 1843 the white population had risen to nearly four thousand. But still things were very bad. We are told that in 1844, from scarcity of money and other causes, the colony was in a most depressed condition. In 1845 a second petition for convicts was circulated,—not only at King George's Sound, but throughout the colony. It did not, however, find much favour, and was signed by no more than one hundred and four settlers. The struggle still went on, and on the whole very bravely.

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From 1850 down to 1868,—and indeed to the present day and for many a day to come,—the history of Western Australia is and will be that of a convict colony.[7] Whether it is well that a young and struggling settlement should be assisted after such a fashion is a question on which they who have studied the subject in regard to Australia differ very much. As regards the colony now under review, I am inclined to think that it could not have been kept alive without extraneous aid; and I do not know what other sufficient extraneous aid could have been given to it. It may be well to explain here that the exportation of convicts to Western Australia was discontinued, not in deference to the wishes of the colony itself, nor because the mother country was tired of sending them,—but because the other colonies complained. The convicts when released got away to South Australia and Victoria,—or, at any rate, the Victorians and South Australians so reported; and thus the stain was still continued to the

young Eastern world. The other colonies remonstrated, and therefore convicts are no longer sent to the Swan River.

1874

Endnotes

- Note 1: Members of the Indigenous population.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Xanthorrhoea australis* or grass tree, native to Australia.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: State on the east coast of Australia; "transportation": refers to the common British practice of "transporting" or exiling convicts to Australia.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: River in Western Australia.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sound in Western Australia.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Edward John Eyre made his reputation as a skillful explorer of Australia. In 1854, he became governor of several island colonies in the Caribbean; in 1865, he ordered the violent suppression of the Morant Bay rebellion in the colony of Jamaica. (See entries by John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle in this section.)Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Britain sent its first convicts to Australia in 1787; penal transportation ended in 1868.Return to reference 7

OLIVE SCHREINER

The daughter of a German missionary and his British wife, Olive Schreiner (1855–1920) was born in the British Cape Colony in what is now South Africa. She is now best known for her novel, *Story of an African Farm* (1883), selections from which can be found later in this volume, but during her lifetime she was an energetic campaigner for women's rights and on African political issues. Schreiner was particularly active in her opposition to the expansionist violence of the Cape Colony's prime minister, Cecil Rhodes. In "Stray Thoughts on South Africa" (1891), she looks ahead toward the future of her country.

From Stray Thoughts on South Africa

It may be said that there are no states in South Africa whose boundaries represent deep-lying racial conditions, but rather mere fiscal and parochial divisions. All the conditions on which unity of national life depends cross and re-cross their boundaries in every direction. Race, language, religion, kinship, all militate against homogeneity. But not yet have we grasped the full complexity and difficulty of our South African question. Not only do the South Africans exist everywhere in superimposed layers of differing races, not only are our political states composed of a mingling of all our peoples, but in our households, our families, and very persons we are blended. There is probably not a civilised roof in South Africa which covers people of only one nationality:[1] as a rule they are of three or four. We take a typical Cape household before us at the moment: the father is English, the mother half Dutch and half French Huguenot, with a French name, the children sharing three nationalities; the governess is a Scotchwoman, the cook a Zulu, the housemaid half Hottentot and half Dutch, the kitchen girl half Dutch and half slave, the stable boy a Kafir, and the little girl who waits at table a Basuto.[2] This household is a type of thousands of others to be found everywhere throughout Africa. If a homely and crude illustration may be allowed, the peoples of South Africa resemble the ingredients of a pudding when they are in the process of being stirred together in a basin: plums, eggs, wine, flour, and water. To hope to re-sort them is vain; for good or for evil, the mixture is made; they have so permeated each other's substance that again to re-sort them is impossible, however much we may wish it. We can only go on further.

Looking, then, at South Africa as a whole, the thought forces itself on us: "Are the South Africans fated forever to remain an inchoate, shapeless mass of human particles, politically split up into artificial states, severed from each other by lines of racial scorn and

opposition, and devoid of that national existence which is the matrix in which alone the full development of the individual takes place?" We believe that no man can impartially study the social and political condition of the South Africa of to-day without coming to the conclusion that there is one, and only one, form of healthful national organization open to us. Across the face of the whole map of South Africa there is no line which can be drawn which would stand for a healthy, natural line of division; it would be a line dividing homogeneous substances, not uniting them. There is one form, and one only, of crystallization possible to us—we must form one large, united whole. This is at once simpler and easier than would be the organization of any division alone; and this alone can give us the power of dealing with our subtler internal difficulties. South African unity is not the dream of the visionary and the enthusiast; it is not even like that splendid vision of the first Napoleon[3] of a unified Europe, which failed because dreamed five hundred years before its time; it is a condition the necessity for which is daily and hourly forced upon us by the practical needs of life; it is the one possible course which offers any solution of our social and political difficulties; it is the one course open to us. It is for this unity that all great men born in South Africa will be compelled to labour during the next sixty years; it must precede the production of anything great and beautiful by our people as a whole. Neither art, nor science, nor literature, nor state-craft will flourish among us as long as we remain in our inchoate, divided form.

For the moment the most pressing and absorbing aspect of this union is the combination of our artificial and jarring political states into a harmonious political whole. It is a change many men now living will probably see accomplished; and so ripe is the time for it, and so obvious the necessity for it, that it may be with us before the decade is out. No man can study closely the conditions of the South Africa of to-day and the forces that are at work upon it without the conviction being forced upon him that within the next thirty years at least there will exist in South Africa a great central government, the embodiment of the united political aspirations and desires of the

people; that our State divisions will be relegated to the performance of their normal and valuable function of internal sub-government.

But there is another aspect of the question of union more subtle and more vital, though for the moment less obtrusive. A central government, political unity, customs union, a common treasury, are but the shell in which the vital unity must be contained if South Africa is ever to become not simply a large, but a great and progressive nation.

The question which surpasses all others in importance to us, is, "Can we make of our opposed and conflicting races a socially harmonious and united whole?" If we cannot so organize our conflicting elements, that should a foreign foe land on South African shores, and six men were left to defend them—two of English, two of Dutch, and two of Native extraction—if those six men would not stand shoulder to shoulder fighting for their land—then, however large, rich, populous South Africa may become, we shall never be able to look free, united peoples in the face.

***

A RETURNED SOUTH AFRICAN.

1896

THE RHODES COLOSSUS

STRIDING FROM CAPE TOWN TO CAIRO.

Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902) was an ardent imperialist and white supremacist who served as prime minister of the Cape Colony from 1890 to 1896. He was responsible for the theft of large tracts of land from Indigenous people of southern Africa

and for instituting laws that insured their disenfranchisement. The image above refers to his efforts to establish a railway that would extend from the Cape to Cairo through British territory.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Cape Colony officially became a British colony in 1815. This move partially displaced Dutch farmers (Boers) in the area. It also exacerbated long-standing tensions between the Boers, the Xhosa, and the Zulu.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Indigenous member of the Bantu nation in southern Africa; “Zulu”: a Nguni ethnic group in southern Africa; “half slave”: Slavery in South Africa began with the establishment of the Dutch Cape Colony in 1653 and lasted until the British abolition of slavery in all its colonies in 1834; “Kafir”: 19th-century term for Indigenous Africans, now a racial slur.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), French military and political leader, emperor of the French Empire from 1804 to 1814 and again in 1815.Return to reference 3

British Isles: Ireland, Scotland, Wales

By the beginning of Victoria's reign, the United Kingdom could be regarded either as extremely longstanding or as relatively recent. The 1707 Acts of Union brought together the kingdoms of England, Wales, and Scotland. Meanwhile, the king of England had also been king of Ireland since 1603. At the same time, however, Great Britain was not merged into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland until the Acts of Union of 1800, and the Catholic majority of Ireland was not allowed to vote, hold public office, or purchase or inherit property until 1829. What these restrictions meant in literary and political terms is that although they formed a single political entity, England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales all retained very distinct political, cultural, and religious identities. They also maintained differing relations to the central government. The example of Ireland is the most striking and the most tragic: the decimation of the potato harvest by blight caused a famine that ultimately claimed approximately 1 million lives and forced approximately two million to emigrate. Mismanagement on the part of Parliament was widely blamed for at least some of the misery.

As the selections in this section suggest, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales each possessed a distinct cultural identity. And for the Irish, in particular, this meant a distinct political identity as well.

SPERANZA [LADY JANE FRANCESCA WILDE]

Lady Jane Francesca Wilde (1821–1896) may be best known as Oscar Wilde's mother, but she was a poet, folklorist, and political activist in her own right. After her husband's death left her impoverished, she sought to support herself with her writings. Her pen name, Speranza, means "hope" in Italian. Wilde was a passionate Irish nationalist who participated in the "Young Ireland" movement, at one point going so far as to call for armed revolution against the British. She was also an advocate of women's rights. "The Famine Year" was written to condemn the failure of the British government to relieve the Irish famine. Wilde criticized the British not just for their inaction but for their continuing importation of Irish grain and other foodstuffs.

The Famine Year

I

Weary men, what reap ye?—Golden corn for the stranger.
What sow ye?—Human corses[1] that wait for the avenger.
Fainting forms, hunger-stricken, what see you in the offing?
Stately ships to bear our food away,[2] amid the stranger's scoffing.
There's a proud array of soldiers—what do they round your door?
They guard our masters' granaries from the thin hands of the poor.
Pale mothers, wherefore weeping?—Would to God that we were dead—
Our children swoon before us, and we cannot give them bread.

II

Little children, tears are strange upon your infant faces,
God meant you but to smile within your mother's soft embraces.
Oh! we know not what is smiling, and we know not what is dying;
But we're hungry, very hungry, and we cannot stop our crying.
And some of us grow cold and white—we know not what it means;
But, as they lie beside us, we tremble in our dreams.
There's a gaunt crowd on the highway—are ye come to pray to man,
With hollow eyes that cannot weep, and for words your faces wan?

III

No; the blood is dead within our veins—we care not now for life;
Let us die hid in the ditches, far from children and from wife;
We cannot stay and listen to their raving, famished cries—
Bread! Bread! Bread! and none to still their agonies.
We left our infants playing with their dead mother's hand:
We left our maidens maddened by the fever's scorching brand:
Better, maiden, thou were strangled in thy own dark-twisted tresses—
Better, infant, thou wert smothered in thy mother's first caresses.

IV

We are fainting in our misery, but God will hear our groan;

Yet, if fellow-men desert us, will He hearken from His Throne?
Accursed are we in our own land, yet toil we still and toil;
But the stranger reaps our harvest—the alien owns our soil.
O Christ! how have we sinned, that on our native plains
We perish houseless, naked, starved, with branded brow, like Cain's?[3]
Dying, dying wearily, with a torture sure and slow—
Dying, as a dog would die, by the wayside as we go.

V

One by one they're falling round us, their pale faces to the sky;
We've no strength left to dig them graves—there let them lie.
The wild bird, if he's stricken, is mourned by the others,
But we—we die in Christian land—we die amid our brothers,
In the land which God has given, like a wild beast in his cave,
Without a tear, a prayer, a shroud, a coffin, or a grave.
Ha! but think ye the contortions on each livid face ye see,
Will not be read on judgment-day by eyes of Deity?

VI

We are wretches, famished, scorned, human tools to build your pride,
But God will yet take vengeance for the souls for whom Christ died.
Now is your hour of pleasure—bask ye in the world's caress;
But our whitening bones against ye will arise as witnesses,
From the cabins and the ditches, in their charred, uncoffin'd masses,
For the Angel of the Trumpet[4] will know them as he passes.
A ghastly, spectral army, before the great God we'll stand,
And arraign ye as our murderers, the spoilers of our land.

1847

Endnotes

- Note 1: Corpses.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: One of the possible causes of the Irish famine was the exportation of Irish grain to England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: God marked Cain after he murdered his brother.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The angel who blows the trumpet to signal the Day of Judgment.Return to reference 4

ANONYMOUS

In 1845 potato blight severely damaged the crop in Ireland. Its return over the next several years caused widespread famine and disease. The British government's wholly inadequate response to the famine, which included exporting grain from Ireland while Irish people starved, contributed to the long-standing bitterness against British rule. Some Irish people came together in 1858 to advocate the use of force to liberate Ireland; taking their name from a group of legendary Irish warriors, they called themselves the Fenians, or Irish Republican Brotherhood, forerunners of the Irish Republican Army. Often thwarted by British infiltration of their ranks, the Fenians organized a rebellion in March 1867 that the British easily quelled. *The Nation*, a newspaper established in 1842 to promote Irish self-government, published the following statement around the time of that uprising.

Proclamation of an Irish Republic

The Irish People to the World

We have suffered centuries of outrage, enforced poverty, and bitter misery. Our rights and liberties have been trampled on by an alien aristocracy, who, treating us as foes, usurped our lands, and drew away from our unfortunate country all material riches. The real owners of the soil were removed to make room for cattle, and driven across the ocean to seek the means of living, and the political rights denied to them at home, while our men of thought and action were condemned to loss of life and liberty. But we never lost the memory and hope of a national existence. We appealed in vain to the reason and sense of justice of the dominant powers.

Our mildest remonstrances were met with sneers and contempt. Our appeals to arms were always unsuccessful.

To-day, having no honourable alternative left, we again appeal to force as our last resource. We accept the conditions of appeal, manfully deeming it better to die in the struggle for freedom than to continue an existence of utter serfdom.

All men are born with equal rights, and in associating to protect one another and share public burthens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintains equality instead of destroying it.

We therefore declare that, unable longer to endure the curse of Monarchical Government, we aim at founding a Republic based on universal suffrage, which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour.

The soil of Ireland, at present in the possession of an oligarchy, belongs to us, the Irish people, and to us it must be restored.

We declare, also, in favour of absolute liberty of conscience, and the complete separation of Church and State.

We appeal to the Highest Tribunal for evidence of the justness of our cause. History bears testimony to the intensity of our sufferings, and we declare, in the face of our brethren, that we intend no war against the people of England—our war is against the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields—against the aristocratic leeches who drain alike our fields and theirs.

Republicans of the entire world, our cause is your cause. Our enemy is your enemy. Let your hearts be with us. As for you, workmen of England, it is not only your hearts we wish, but your arms. Remember the starvation and degradation brought to your firesides by the oppression of labour. Remember the past, look well to the future, and avenge yourselves by giving liberty to your children in the coming struggle for human liberty.

Herewith we proclaim the Irish Republic,

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT.

1867

MATTHEW ARNOLD

The following selection comes from a series of lectures on Celtic literature delivered by Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) in his capacity as professor of poetry at Oxford University. From the eighteenth century onward, the word *Celtic* had been used as a descriptor of the family of languages that included Welsh, Cornish, Irish, and Gaelic. In a slippage from language to ethnicity or "race" that was common in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the term *Celt* was frequently applied to anyone who spoke (or was descended from those who spoke) a Celtic language. The following exposition on the distinctive features of "the Celt" connects to Arnold's broader interest in national identities. As the critic Lionel Trilling remarked in his 1949 study, "Arnold was at pains to show that the English are an amalgam of several 'bloods'—German, Norman, Celtic"; each of these distinctive "bloods," or races, in Arnold's opinion, required the balance of the others to constitute a truly successful national character. At the end of his lectures, Arnold called on Oxford to create a professorship of Celtic "to send . . . a message of peace to Ireland."

From On the Study of Celtic Literature

And as in material civilisation he has been ineffectual, so has the Celt been ineffectual in politics. This colossal, impetuous, adventurous wanderer, the Titan of the early world, who in primitive times fills so large a place on earth's scene, dwindles and dwindles as history goes on, and at last is shrunk to what we now see him. For ages and ages the world has been constantly slipping, ever more and more, out of the Celt's grasp. "They went forth to the war," Ossian says most truly, *"but they always fell."*[1]

And yet, if one sets about constituting an ideal genius, what a great deal of the Celt does one find oneself drawn to put into it! Of an ideal genius one does not want the elements, any of them, to be in a state of weakness; on the contrary, one wants all of them to be in the highest state of power; but with a law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole. So the sensibility[2] of the Celt, if everything else were not sacrificed to it, is a beautiful and admirable force. For sensibility, the power of quick and strong perception and emotion, is one of the very prime constituents of genius, perhaps its most positive constituent; it is to the soul what good senses are to the body, the grand natural condition of successful activity. Sensibility gives genius its materials; one cannot have too much of it, if one can but keep its master and not be its slave. Do not let us wish that the Celt had had less sensibility, but that he had been more master of it. Even as it is, if his sensibility has been a source of weakness to him, it has been a source of power too, and a source of happiness. Some people have found in the Celtic nature and its sensibility the main root out of which chivalry and romance and the glorification of a feminine ideal spring; this is a great question, with which I cannot deal here. Let me notice in passing, however, that there is, in truth, a Celtic air about the extravagance of chivalry, its reaction against the despotism of fact, its straining human nature

further than it will stand. But putting all this question of chivalry and its origin on one side, no doubt the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus peculiarly[3] disposed to feel the spell of the feminine idiosyncrasy; he has an affinity to it; he is not far from its secret. Again, his sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature; here, too, he seems in a special way attracted by the secret before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it. In the productions of the Celtic genius, nothing, perhaps, is so interesting as the evidences of this power: I shall have occasion to give specimens of them by-and-by. The same sensibility made the Celts full of reverence and enthusiasm for genius, learning, and the things of the mind; *to be a bard, freed a man,*—that is a characteristic stroke of this generous and ennobling ardour of theirs, which no race has ever shown more strongly. Even the extravagance and exaggeration of the sentimental Celtic nature has often something romantic and attractive about it, something which has a sort of smack of misdirected good. The Celt, undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature, but out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader, that is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and self-dependence; but it is a temperament for which one has a kind of sympathy notwithstanding. And very often, for the gay defiant reaction against fact of the lively Celtic nature one has more than sympathy; one feels, in spite of the extravagance, in spite of good sense disapproving, magnetised and exhilarated by it. The Gauls[4] had a rule inflicting a fine on every warrior who, when he appeared on parade, was found to stick out too much in front,—to be corpulent, in short. Such a rule is surely the maddest article of war ever framed, and to people to whom nature has assigned a large volume of intestines, must appear, no doubt, horrible; but yet has it

not an udacious, sparkling, immaterial manner with it, which lifts one out of routine, and sets one's spirits in a glow?

All tendencies of human nature are in themselves vital and profitable; when they are blamed, they are only to be blamed relatively, not absolutely. This holds true of the Saxon's phlegm as well as of the Celt's sentiment. Out of the steady humdrum habit of the creeping Saxon, as the Celt calls him,—out of his way of going near the ground,—has come, no doubt, Philistinism,[5] that plant of essentially Germanic growth, flourishing with its genuine marks only in the German fatherland, Great Britain and her colonies, and the United States of America; but what a soul of goodness there is in Philistinism itself! and this soul of goodness I, who am often supposed to be Philistinism's mortal enemy merely because I do not wish it to have things all its own way, cherish as much as anybody. This steady-going habit leads at last, as I have said, up to science, up to the comprehension and interpretation of the world. With us in Great Britain, it is true, it does not seem to lead so far as that; it is in Germany, where the habit is more unmixed, that it can lead to science. Here with us it seems at a certain point to meet with a conflicting force, which checks it and prevents its pushing on to science; but before reaching this point what conquests has it not won! and all the more, perhaps, for stopping short at this point, for spending its exertions within a bounded field, the field of plain sense, of direct practical utility. How it has augmented the comforts and conveniences of life for us! Doors that open, windows that shut, locks that turn, razors that shave, coats that wear, watches that go, and a thousand more such good things, are the invention of the Philistines.

1867

Endnotes

- Note 1: A quotation from the poem "Cath-Loda," one of the works that the Scottish poet James Macpherson (1736–1796)

claimed to have translated from the Gaelic writings of Ossian, a 3rd-century poet-warrior figure in traditional Irish folklore. A committee of scholars appointed in 1797 determined that the prose poems were largely composed by Macpherson.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Susceptibility to emotional influence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Especially.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The name given by the Romans to a Celtic people living in modern-day France.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A label Arnold repeatedly uses for the attitude of the unenlightened middle classes of his time, in whose opposition to the defenders of culture he sees a resemblance to the biblical tribe who fought against the people of Israel, "the children of light."Return to reference 5

JANET HAMILTON

Janet Hamilton (1795–1873) was a self-taught Scottish poet and essayist. She began work as a lacemaker at nine, married at thirteen, and gave birth to ten children, but nevertheless published four volumes of poetry and essays. At one point she was probably Scotland's most widely read working-class poet. Much of her poetry is unsparing in its criticism of political leaders' failure to address the needs of the common people. In "Rhymes for the Times" (1865) she focuses on the environmental degradation caused by mining. She also references debates over Sunday railway travel, a topic of great concern at the time.

Rhymes for the Times

IV.—*1865.*

Juist noo° there are mony wha rin° to an' fro,
An' knowledge increases, abune° an' below;
The yird's° like a riddle, pits, tunnels, an' bores,
Whaur bodies, like mowdies,° by hunners an'
scores°
Are houkin',° an' holin',° an' blastin' the rocks;
An' droonin's° an' burnin's, explosions an' shocks,
An' a' ither meagries,° amang us are rife;
Oh, mony's the slain in the battle o' life!
It's Mammon° we worship, wi' graspin' an' greed,
Wi' sailin' an' railin' at telegraph speed,
Get gowd° oot the ironstane,° an' siller° frae coal,
An' thoosan's on thoosan's draw oot o' ae hole.
Wi' oil shale[1] aneath us, an' fire-warks abune,
I think we'll tak' lowe,° an' bleeze up to the mune.°
The kintra's° contentit° an' hale at the heart;
That gleg birkie,° Gladstone,[2] has weel dune his part;
Exchequer's big pouches o' siller are fu',
An' mony's the taxes that's dune awa' noo;
An' labour's weel paid, an' the flour an' the meal
At a wanworth°—an' sae we micht fen° unco° weel.°
Oor Premier[3] has promised to stan' for reform;
The Fins an' the Yankees are brewin' a storm,
They're swallin'° an' frothin' wi' bunkum an' bosh,°
But they daurna come near oor bit islan' sae cosh.°
There's a bee in the bannet o' some o' the cloth,°
The Sabbath's the subject,[4] an' wow but I'm wroth°
To see the blin' leaders lead blin' men awa',
Till into the ditch they baith stummle an' fa'.°
"The soul is immortal," tak' that for a text,
"The body is perishin'," tak' for the next;
To whilk° o' the twa shou'd the Sabbath be given?

To the body?—then what for the soul an’ for heaven?

1865

Endnotes

- Note 1: Sedimentary rock containing kerogen, from which oil can be made.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898) was a British statesman, member of Parliament, and eventual prime minister in 1868. He became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1852; in this role he was responsible for collecting and managing taxes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lord Palmerston (1784–1865), prime minister of the United Kingdom from 1855 to 1858 and from 1859 to 1865.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Refers to debates over whether to allow train travel on Sundays.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *now* Return to reference °
- °: *wandering*Return to reference °
- °: *above*Return to reference °
- °: *earth or ground*Return to reference °
- °: *moles*Return to reference °
- °: *hundreds and twenties*Return to reference °
- °: *digging* Return to reference °
- °: *hauling*Return to reference °
- °: *drowning*Return to reference °
- °: *mishaps*Return to reference °
- °: *wealth*Return to reference °
- °: *gold* Return to reference °
- °: *stone rich in iron* Return to reference °
- °: *silver*Return to reference °
- °: *catch fire* Return to reference °
- °: *moon*Return to reference °
- °: *country is* Return to reference °

- °: *content* Return to reference °
- °: *smart man* Return to reference °
- °: *worthless* Return to reference °
- °: *feel* Return to reference °
- °: *strange* Return to reference °
- °: *well* Return to reference °
- °: *swelling* Return to reference °
- °: *nonsense* Return to reference °
- °: *snug, comfortable* Return to reference °
- °: *clergy* Return to reference °
- °: *angry* Return to reference °
- °: *faint* Return to reference °
- °: *which* Return to reference °

THOMAS CARLYLE
1795–1881

W . B. Yeats once asked William Morris which writers had inspired the socialist movement of the 1880s, and Morris replied: "Oh, Ruskin and Carlyle, but somebody should have been beside Carlyle and punched his head every five minutes." Morris's mixed feelings of admiration and fury are typical of both nineteenth-century and contemporary readers. Carlyle's prose is vivid and energetic, even as it occasionally borders on the incomprehensible. His rejection of the replacement of personal responsibility with what he termed "machinery" was prescient in certain ways. But at the same time, he believed that some men (and for him "men" refers only to male persons) are born to lead and others are born to follow. If followers fail to recognize their destiny, it is the responsibility of leaders to enforce it. Leaders have other responsibilities as well: for example, they have a moral duty to support and protect their dependents. Even for critics of Carlyle's authoritarianism, this emphasis on the importance of human relations could be very attractive. Less attractive is his insistence that it is not the place of those dependents to question the leaders' wisdom. Breakdowns will sometimes occur—hence, the tragedy of the French Revolution, when oppressed peasants overthrew a corrupt aristocracy. But true leaders will tolerate no opposition. (This view finds perhaps its fullest expression in "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," excerpted above.)

Carlyle was born in Ecclefechan, a village in Scotland, the eldest child of a large family. At the time of her marriage, his mother, Margaret Aitken Carlyle, was illiterate. His father, James Carlyle, a stonemason and later a farmer, was proudly described by his son as a peasant. Frugality, hard work, a tender but undemonstrative family loyalty, and a peculiar blend of self-denial and self-righteousness were characteristic features of Carlyle's childhood home. With his father's aid, Carlyle was educated at Annan Academy and the University of Edinburgh, with a focus on mathematics. He left school without taking a degree. His parents hoped their son would become a clergyman, but his exposure to such skeptical writers as David Hume, Voltaire, and Edward Gibbon undermined his faith.

During the period in which Carlyle was thinking through his religious position, he supported himself by teaching school in Scotland and, later, by tutoring private pupils; from 1824 to the end of his life he relied exclusively on his writings for his livelihood. His early writings consisted of translations, biographies, and critical studies of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and other German authors, to whose view of life he was deeply attracted. Aided by the writings of these German poets and philosophers, he arrived finally at a faith in life that served as a substitute for the Christian faith he had lost.

After many years of relative obscurity, the tide turned in 1837 when he published *The French Revolution.* "O it has been a great success, dear," his wife assured him, but Carlyle, embittered by the long struggle, was incredulous that recognition had at last come to him. It was in character for his wife, Jane Welsh Carlyle, to be less surprised by his success than he was. A witty, intelligent, and intellectually ambitious young woman who had hoped to become a writer herself, she wanted to marry a man of genius who would change the world. Despite the years of comparative poverty, poor health, and loneliness, she had the satisfaction of recognizing her husband's triumph when the peasant's son she had chosen returned to Scotland to deliver his inaugural address as lord rector of Edinburgh University in 1866.

During the first thirty years of his residence in London, Carlyle wrote extensive historical works and many pamphlets concerning contemporary issues. Following the sudden death of his wife in 1866, which happened while he was in Scotland, he wrote little. Instead, he confined himself to reading or to talking to the stream of visitors who called at his home in Cheyne Walk to listen to the "Sage of Chelsea," as he came to be called. In 1874 he accepted the Prussian Order of Merit from Bismarck, the German chancellor, but declined an English baronetcy offered by Prime Minister Disraeli. In 1881 he died and was buried near his family in Ecclefechan churchyard.

To understand Carlyle's role as historian, biographer, and social critic, it is essential to understand his attitude toward religion. While many of his contemporaries who experienced similar crises of religious belief adopted antispiritual ideas, Carlyle never lost his conviction of the importance of the divine. In his early work, *Sartor Resartus* (1836), he used the metaphor of the "Clothes Philosophy" to describe the evolution of religious belief. The naked individual seeks clothing—belief—for protection. In the current age, the traditional Christian coverings were worn out—"Hebrew Old Clothes," he called them. His solution, described in "The Everlasting Yea" section of *Sartor Resartus*, was to tailor a new suit of beliefs from German philosophy, shreds of the Scottish Calvinism with which he had been raised, and his own observations. Carlyle was thus in many ways the quintessential nineteenth-century mystic; yet at the same time, many critics note, his writings also gesture toward postmodernism. His self-aware, genre-defying, and often contradictory prose exposes the inherent difficulty of assuming that literature or philosophy can ever achieve a unified, foundational truth.

One of the more attractive aspects of Carlyle's writings is his "vitalism"—that is, his apparent conviction that the presence of energy in the world is, in itself, a sign of the godhead. Carlyle judges everything in terms of the presence or absence of some vital spark. The minds of people, books, societies, churches, or even landscapes

are rated as alive or dead, dynamic or merely mechanical. The government of Louis XVI, for example, was obviously declining, doomed to be swept away by the dynamic forces of the French Revolution. The government of Victorian England seemed likewise to be doomed unless infused with vital energies of leadership and an awareness of the real needs of humankind. When an editor complained that his essay "Characteristics" was "inscrutable," Carlyle remarked: "My own fear was that it might be too *scrutable*; for it indicates decisively enough that Society (in my view) is utterly condemned to destruction, and even now beginning its long travail-throes of Newbirth."

At a moment when many readers were seeking alternatives or supplements to orthodox religion, what have come to be known as "Sage Writers"—lay writers who asserted their authority to speak on important ethical and spiritual issues—provided guidance and reassurance to many readers. Sage Writing is often marked by the attempt to channel the rhetorical authority of religious texts, but even among writers such as George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, Carlyle's prose is especially idiosyncratic, dense with religious and cultural references and studded with neologisms (made-up words). Carlyle's prose style reflects the intensity of his views. Like a poet, he wanted to convey the sense of experience itself. Like a preacher or prophet, he wanted to exhort or inspire his readers rather than to develop a logical argument. To this end he developed his highly individual manner of writing, with its vivid imagery of fire and barnyard and zoo, its mixture of biblical rhythms and explosive talk, and its inverted and unorthodox syntax. As Eliot wrote in 1855, Carlyle was "more of an artist than a philosopher." As she said: "No novelist has made his creations live for us more thoroughly." Carlyle is best regarded, that is, as a man of letters, the inventor of a distinctive and extremely effective prose medium, and one who strove tirelessly to create a new spiritual and political philosophy adequate to the age.

In his inquiry into the principles of government and social order, Carlyle, like many of his contemporaries, sought to understand a

world of great social unrest and historical change. This preoccupation with revolution and the destruction of the old orders suggests that Carlyle's politics were radical, but his position is difficult to classify. During the Hungry Forties—a period of widespread famine caused by economic depression and poor harvests—he was one of the most outspoken critics of middle-class bungling and of the laissez-faire economics that he saw as responsible for that bungling. He worked strenuously on behalf of the millions of people suffering from the miseries that followed a major breakdown of industry and agriculture. At the same time, he rejected the democratic assumption that all people are equally capable of choice and that the masses value liberty more than they value order. Some of his highest praise is reserved for dictators, such as Oliver Cromwell, or perpetrators of racist violence, such as Governor Edward Eyre. (see p. 75, above).

Carlyle's work was extraordinarily influential during his lifetime, but that does not mean that readers followed him uncritically. At his best, he provided impassioned pleas for the sacredness of the bonds between persons and within communities; at his worst, his racism seems like an outgrowth of a broad commitment to the fundamental differences between "kinds" of people—those who should be allowed to determine their own lives, and those whose labor is more valuable than any right to self-determination.

From Signs of the Times

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Were we required to characterise this age of ours by any single epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical, or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical Age. It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word; the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches, and practises the great art of adapting means to ends. Nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance. For the simplest operation, some helps and accompaniments, some cunning, abbreviating process is in readiness. Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside. On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster. The sailor furls his sail, and lays down his oar, and bids a strong, unwearied servant, on vaporous wings, bear him through the waters. Men have crossed oceans by steam; the Birmingham Fire-king[1] has visited the fabulous East; and the genius of the Cape, were there any Camoens[2] now to sing it, has again been alarmed, and with far stranger thunders than Gama's.[3] There is no end to machinery. Even the horse is stripped of his harness, and finds a fleet fire-horse[4] yoked in his stead. Nay, we have an artist that hatches chickens by steam—the very brood-hen is to be superseded! For all earthly, and for some unearthly purposes, we have machines and mechanic furtherances; for mincing our cabbages; for casting us into magnetic sleep.[5] We remove mountains, and make seas our smooth highway; nothing can resist us. We war with rude nature; and, by our resistless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils.

What wonderful accessions have thus been made, and are still making, to the physical power of mankind; how much better fed, clothed, lodged, and, in all outward respects, accommodated, men now are, or might be, by a given quantity of labour, is a grateful reflection which forces itself on every one. What changes, too, this addition of power is introducing into the social system; how wealth has more and more increased, and at the same time gathered itself more and more into masses, strangely altering the old relations, and increasing the distance between the rich and the poor, will be a question for Political Economists—and a much more complex and important one than any they have yet engaged with. But leaving these matters for the present, let us observe how the mechanical genius of our time has diffused itself into quite other provinces. Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. Here, too, nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old, natural methods. Every thing has its cunningly devised implements, its pre-established apparatus; it is not done by hand, but by machinery. Thus we have machines for Education: Lancastrian machines;[6] Hamiltonian machines[7]—Monitors, maps, and emblems. Instruction, that mysterious communing of Wisdom with Ignorance, is no longer an indefinable tentative process, requiring a study of individual aptitudes, and a perpetual variation of means and methods, to attain the same end; but a secure, universal, straight-forward business, to be conducted in the gross, by proper mechanism, with such intellect as comes to hand. Then, we have Religious machines, of all imaginable varieties—the Bible Society,[8] professing a far higher and heavenly structure, is found, on enquiry, to be altogether an earthly contrivance, supported by collection of monies, by fomenting of vanities, by puffing, intrigue, and chicane—and yet, in effect, a very excellent machine for converting the heathen. It is the same in all other departments. Has any man, or any society of men, a truth to speak, a piece of spiritual work to do, they can nowise proceed at once, and with the mere natural organs, but must first call a public meeting, appoint committees, issue

prospectuses, eat a public dinner; in a word, construct or borrow machinery, wherewith to speak it and do it. Without machinery they were hopeless, helpless—a colony of Hindoo weavers squatting in the heart of Lancashire.[9] Then every machine must have its moving power, in some of the great currents of society: Every little sect among us, Unitarians, Utilitarians, Anabaptists, Phrenologists,[1] must each have its periodical, its monthly or quarterly magazine—hanging out, like its windmill, into the *popularis aura,*[2] to grind meal for the society.

With individuals, in like manner, natural strength avails little. No individual now hopes to accomplish the poorest enterprise single-handed, and without mechanical aids; he must make interest with some existing corporation, and till his field with their oxen. In these days, more emphatically than ever, 'to live, signifies to unite with a party, or to make one.' Philosophy, Science, Art, Literature, all depend on machinery. No Newton,[3] by silent meditation, now discovers the system of the world from the falling of an apple; but some quite other than Newton stands in his Museum, his Scientific Institution, and behind whole batteries of retorts, digesters, and galvanic piles,[4] imperatively 'interrogates Nature,'—who, however, shows no haste to answer. In defect of Raphaels, and Angelos, and Mozarts,[5] we have Royal Academies of Painting, Sculpture, Music;[6] whereby the languishing spirit of Art may be strengthened by the more generous diet of a Public Kitchen. Literature, too, has its Paternoster-row[7] mechanism, its Trade dinners, its Editorial conclaves, and huge subterranean, puffing bellows; so that books are not only printed, but, in a great measure, written and sold, by machinery. National culture, spiritual benefit of all sorts, is under the same management. No Queen Christina,[8] in these times, needs to send for her Descartes: no King Frederick[9] for his Voltaire, and painfully nourish him with pensions and flattery: But any sovereign of taste, who wishes to enlighten his people, has only to impose a new tax, and with the proceeds establish Philosophic Institutes. Hence the Royal and Imperial Societies, the Bibliothèques,

Glypcothèques, Sechnothèques,[1] which front us in all capital cities, like so many well-finished hives, to which it is expected the stray agencies of Wisdom will swarm of their own accord, and hive and make honey. In like manner, among ourselves, when it is thought that religion is declining, we have only to vote half a million's worth of bricks and mortar, and build new churches. In Ireland, it seems they have gone still farther—having actually established a 'Penny-a-week Purgatory Society!'[2] Thus does the Genius of Mechanism stand by to help us in all difficulties and emergencies; and, with his iron back, bears all our burdens.

These things, which we state lightly enough here, are yet of deep import, and indicate a mighty change in our whole manner of existence. For the same habit regulates, not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind. Not for internal perfection, but for external combinations and arrangements, for institutions, constitutions—for Mechanism of one sort or other, do they hope and struggle. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character.

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Or, to take an infinitely higher instance, that of the Christian Religion, which, under every theory of it, in the believing or the unbelieving mind, must ever be regarded as the crowning glory, or rather the life and soul, of our whole modern culture: How did Christianity arise and spread abroad among men? Was it by institutions and establishments, and well-arranged systems of mechanism? Not so; on the contrary, in all past and existing institutions for those ends, its divine spirit has invariably been found to languish and decay. It arose in the mystic deeps of man's soul; and was spread abroad by the 'preaching of the word,' by simple, altogether natural and individual efforts; and flew, like hallowed fire,

from heart to heart, till all were purified and illuminated by it; and its heavenly light shone, as it still shines, and as sun or star will ever shine, through the whole dark destinies of man. Here again was no Mechanism; man's highest attainment was accomplished, Dynamically, not Mechanically. Nay, we will venture to say that no high attainment, not even any far-extending movement among men, was ever accomplished otherwise. Strange as it may seem, if we read History with any degree of thoughtfulness, we shall find, that the checks and balances of Profit and Loss have never been the grand agents with men; that they have never been roused into deep, thorough, all-pervading efforts by any computable prospect of Profit and Loss, for any visible, finite object; but always for some invisible and infinite one. The Crusades[3] took their rise in Religion; their visible object was, commercially speaking, worth nothing. It was the boundless, Invisible world that was laid bare in the imaginations of those men; and in its burning light, the visible shrunk as a scroll. Not mechanical, nor produced by mechanical means, was this vast movement. No dining at Freemasons' Tavern,[4] with the other long train of modern machinery; no cunning reconciliation of 'vested interests,' was required here: only the passionate voice of one man, the rapt soul looking through the eyes of one man; and rugged, steel-clad Europe trembled beneath his words, and followed him whither he listed. In later ages, it was still the same. The Reformation had an invisible, mystic, and ideal aim: the result was indeed to be embodied in external things; but its spirit, its worth, was internal, invisible, infinite. Our English Revolution,[5] too, originated in Religion. Men did battle, even in those days, not for Purse sake, but for Conscience sake. Nay, in our own days, it is no way different. The French Revolution[6] itself had something higher in it than cheap bread and a Habeascorpus act.[7] Here, too, was an Idea; a Dynamic, not a Mechanic force. It was a struggle, though a blind and at last an insane one, for the infinite, divine nature of Right, of Freedom, of Country.

Thus does man, in every age, vindicate, consciously or unconsciously, his celestial birthright. Thus does nature hold on her

wondrous, unquestionable course; and all our systems and theories are but so many froth-eddies or sand-banks, which from time to time she casts up and washes away. When we can drain the Ocean into our mill-ponds, and bottle up the Force of Gravity, to be sold by retail, in our gas-jars; then may we hope to comprehend the infinitudes of man's soul under formulas of Profit and Loss; and rule over this too, as over a patent engine, by checks, and valves, and balances.

Nay, even with regard to Government itself, can it be necessary to remind any one that Freedom, without which indeed all spiritual life is impossible, depends on infinitely more complex influences than either the extension or the curtailment of the 'democratic interest?'[8] Who is there that 'taking the high '*priori*[9] road,' shall point out what these influences are; what deep, subtle, inextricably entangled influences they have been, and may be? For man is not the creature and product of Mechanism; but, in a far truer sense, its creator and producer: it is the noble people that makes the noble Government; rather than conversely. On the whole, Institutions are much; but they are not all. The freest and highest spirits of the world have often been found under strange outward circumstances; Saint Paul and his brother Apostles were politically slaves;[1] Epictetus was personally one. Again, forget the influences of Chivalry and Religion, and ask,—what countries produced Columbus and Las Casas?[2] Or, descending from virtue and heroism, to mere energy and spiritual talent; Cortes, Pizarro, Alba, Ximenes?[3] The Spaniards of the sixteenth century were indisputably the noblest nation of Europe; yet they had the Inquisition,[4] and Philip II. They have the same government at this day; and are the lowest nation. The Dutch, too, have retained their old constitution; but no Siege of Leyden, no William the Silent, not even an Egmont or De Witt,[5] any longer appear among them. With ourselves, also, where much has changed, effect has nowise followed cause, as it should have done: two centuries ago, the Commons' Speaker[6] addressed Queen Elizabeth on bended knees, happy that the virago's foot did not even smite him; yet the people were then governed, not by a Castlereagh

but by a Burghley;[7] they had their Shakspeare and Philip Sidney,[8] where we have our Sheridan Knowles and Beau Brummel.

These and the like facts are so familiar, the truths which they preach so obvious, and have in all past times been so universally believed and acted on, that we should almost feel ashamed for repeating them; were it not that, on every hand, the memory of them seems to have passed away, or at best died into a faint tradition, of no value as a practical principle. To judge by the loud clamour of our Constitution-builders, Statists, Economists, directors, creators, reformers of Public Societies; in a word, all manner of Mechanists, from the Cartwright up to the Code-maker;[9] and by the nearly total silence of all Preachers and Teachers who should give a voice to Poetry, Religion, and Morality, we might fancy either that man's Dynamical nature was, to all spiritual intents, extinct—or else so perfected, that nothing more was to be made of it by the old means; and henceforth only in his Mechanical contrivances did any hope exist for him.

To define the limits of these two departments of man's activity, which work into one another, and by means of one another, so intricately and inseparably, were by its nature an impossible attempt. Their relative importance, even to the wisest mind, will vary in different times, according to the special wants and dispositions of these times. Meanwhile, it seems clear enough that only in the right co-ordination of the two, and the vigorous forwarding of *both*, does our true line of action lie. Undue cultivation of the inward or Dynamical province leads to idle, visionary, impracticable courses, and especially in rude eras, to Superstition and Fanaticism, with their long train of baleful and well-known evils. Undue cultivation of the outward, again, though less immediately prejudicial, and even for the time productive of many palpable benefits, must, in the long run, by destroying Moral Force, which is the parent of all other Force, prove not less certainly, and perhaps still more hopelessly, pernicious. This, we take it, is the grand characteristic of our age. By our skill in Mechanism, it has come to pass that, in the management of external things, we excel all other ages; while in whatever

respects the pure moral nature, in true dignity of soul and character, we are perhaps inferior to most civilized ages.

In fact, if we look deeper, we shall find that this faith in Mechanism has now struck its roots deep into men's most intimate, primary sources of conviction; and is thence sending up, over his whole life and activity, innumerable stems—fruit-bearing and poison-bearing. The truth is, men have lost their belief in the Invisible, and believe, and hope, and work only in the Visible; or, to speak it in other words, This is not a Religious age. Only the material, the immediately practical, not the divine and spiritual, is important to us. The infinite, absolute character of Virtue has passed into a finite, conditional one; it is no longer a worship of the Beautiful and Good; but a calculation of the Profitable. Worship, indeed, in any sense, is not recognised among us, or is mechanically explained into Fear of pain, or Hope of pleasure.[1] Our true Deity is Mechanism. It has subdued external Nature for us, and, we think, it will do all other things. We are Giants in physical power: in a deeper than a metaphorical sense, we are Titans, that strive, by heaping mountain on mountain, to conquer Heaven also.

The strong mechanical character, so visible in the spiritual pursuits and methods of this age, may be traced much farther into the condition and prevailing disposition of our spiritual nature itself. Consider, for example, the general fashion of Intellect in this era. Intellect, the power man has of knowing and believing, is now nearly synonymous with Logic, or the mere power of arranging and communicating. Its implement is not Meditation, but Argument. 'Cause and effect' is almost the only category under which we look at, and work with, all Nature. Our first question with regard to any object is not, What is it? but, How is it? We are no longer instinctively driven to apprehend, and lay to heart, what is Good and Lovely, but rather to enquire, as onlookers, how it is produced, whence it comes, whither it goes? Our favourite Philosophers have no love and no hatred; they stand among us not to do, or to create any thing, but as a sort of Logic-mills to grind out the true causes and effects of all that is done and created. To the eye of a Smith, a

Hume, or a Constant, all is well that works quietly.[2] An Order of Ignatius Loyola, a Presbyterianism of John Knox, a Wickliffe, or a Henry the Eighth,[3] are simply so many mechanical phenomena, caused or causing.

The *Euphuist*[4] of our day differs much from his pleasant predecessors. An intellectual dapperling of these times boasts chiefly of his irresistible perspicacity, his 'dwelling in the daylight of truth,' and so forth; which, on examination, turns out to be a dwelling in the *rush*-light of 'closet-logic,' and a deep unconsciousness that there is any other light to dwell in; or any other objects to survey with it. Wonder, indeed, is, on all hands, dying out: it is the sign of uncultivation to wonder. Speak to any small man of a high, majestic Reformation, of a high, majestic Luther[5] to lead it, and forthwith he sets about 'accounting' for it! how the 'circumstances of the time' called for such a character, and found him, we suppose, standing girt and road-ready, to do its errand; how the 'circumstances of the time' created, fashioned, floated him quietly along into the result; how, in short, this small man, had he been there, could have performed the like himself! For it is the 'force of circumstances' that does every thing; the force of one man can do nothing. Now all this is grounded on little more than a metaphor. We figure Society as a 'Machine,' and that mind is opposed to mind, as body is to body; whereby two, or at most ten, little minds must be stronger than one great mind. Notable absurdity! For the plain truth, very plain, we think, is, that minds are opposed to minds in quite a different way; and *one* man that has a higher Wisdom, a hitherto unknown spiritual Truth in him, is stronger, not than ten men that have it not, or than ten thousand, but than *all* men, that have it not; and stands among them with a quite ethereal, angelic power, as with a sword out of Heaven's own armoury, sky-tempered, which no buckler, and no tower of brass, will finally withstand.

But to us, in these times, such considerations rarely occur. We enjoy, we see nothing by direct vision; but only by reflexion, and in anatomical dismemberment. Like Sir Hudibras,[6] for every Why we must have a Wherefore. We have our little *theory* on all human and

divine things. Poetry, the workings of genius itself, which in all times, with one or another meaning, has been called Inspiration, and held to be mysterious and inscrutable, is no longer without its scientific exposition. The building of the lofty rhyme is like any other masonry or brick-laying: we have theories of its rise, height, decline, and fall —which latter, it would seem, is now near, among all people. Of our 'Theories of Taste,' as they are called, wherein the deep, infinite, unspeakable Love of Wisdom and Beauty, which dwells in all men, is 'explained,' made mechanically visible, from 'Association,' and the like, why should we say any thing? Hume has written us a 'Natural History of Religion;'[7] in which one Natural History, all the rest are included. Strangely, too, does the general feeling coincide with Hume's in this wonderful problem; for whether his 'Natural History' be the right one or not, that Religion must have a Natural History, all of us, cleric and laic, seem to be agreed. He indeed regards it as a Disease, we again as Health; so far there is a difference; but in our first principle we are at one.

To what extent theological Unbelief, we mean intellectual dissent from the Church, in its view of Holy Writ, prevails at this day, would be a highly important, were it not, under any circumstances, an almost impossible enquiry. But the Unbelief, which is of a still more fundamental character, every man may see prevailing, with scarcely any but the faintest contradiction, all around him; even in the Pulpit itself. Religion, in most countries, more or less in every country, is no longer what it was, and should be—a thousand-voiced psalm from the heart of Man to his invisible Father, the fountain of all Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and revealed in every revelation of these; but for the most part, a wise prudential feeling grounded on mere calculation; a matter, as all others now are, of Expediency and Utility; whereby some smaller quantum of earthly enjoyment may be exchanged for a far larger quantum of celestial enjoyment. Thus Religion, too, is Profit; a working for wages; not Reverence, but vulgar Hope or Fear. Many, we know, very many, we hope, are still religious in a far different sense; were it not so, our case were too desperate: But to witness that such is the temper of the times, we take any calm

observant man, who agrees or disagrees in our feeling on the matter, and ask him whether our *view* of it is not in general well-founded.

Literature, too, if we consider it, gives similar testimony. At no former era has Literature, the printed communication of Thought, been of such importance as it is now. We often hear that the Church is in danger; and truly so it is—in a danger it seems not to know of: For, with its tithes in the most perfect safety,[8] its functions are becoming more and more superseded. The true Church of England, at this moment, lies in the Editors of its Newspapers. These preach to the people daily, weekly; admonishing kings themselves; advising peace or war, with an authority which only the first Reformers, and a long-past class of Popes,[9] were possessed of; inflicting moral censure; imparting moral encouragement, consolation, edification; in all ways, diligently 'administering the Discipline of the Church.' It may be said, too, that in private disposition, the new Preachers somewhat resemble the Mendicant Friars[1] of old times: outwardly full of holy zeal; inwardly not without stratagem, and hunger for terrestrial things. But omitting this class, and the boundless host of watery personages who pipe, as they are able, on so many scrannel[2] straws, let us look at the higher regions of Literature, where, if anywhere, the pure melodies of Poesy and Wisdom should be heard. Of natural talent there is no deficiency: one or two richly-endowed individuals even give us a superiority in this respect. But what is the song they sing? Is it a tone of the Memnon Statue,[3] breathing music as the *light* first touches it? a 'liquid wisdom,' disclosing to our sense the deep, infinite harmonies of Nature and man's soul? Alas, no! It is not a matin or vesper hymn to the Spirit of all Beauty, but a fierce clashing of cymbals, and shouting of multitudes, as children pass through the fire to Molech![4] Poetry itself has no stant the huzzaing languishes, he too stops short. In fact, what morality we have takes the shape of Ambition, of Honour; beyond money and money's worth, our only rational blessedness is Popularity. It were but a fool's trick to die for conscience. Only for 'character,' by duel, or, in case of extremity, by suicide, is the wise man bound to die. By arguing on

the ‘force of circumstances,’ we have argued away all force from ourselves; and stand leashed together, uniform in dress and movement, like the rowers of some boundless galley. This and that may be right and true; *but* we must not do it. Wonderful ‘Force of Public Opinion!’ We must act and walk in all points as it prescribes; follow the traffic it bids us, realize the sum of money, the degree of ‘influence’ it expects of us, *or* we shall be lightly esteemed; certain mouthfuls of articulate wind will be blown at us, and this what mortal courage can front? Thus, while civil Liberty is more and more secured to us, our moral Liberty is all but lost. Practically considered, our creed is Fatalism; and, free in hand and foot, we are shackled in heart and soul, with far straiter than feudal chains. Truly may we say, with the Philosopher, ‘the deep meaning of the Laws of Mechanism lies heavy on us;’ and in the closet, in the market-place, in the temple, by the social hearth, encumbers the whole movements of our mind, and over our noblest faculties is spreading a nightmare sleep.

1829

Endnotes

- Note 1: Birmingham is an industrial center approximately one hundred miles north of London; “Fire-king”: Carlyle’s name for the new steam-powered ships.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Luis Vaz de Camoens (ca. 1524–1580) was a Portuguese writer whose most famous work, *Os Lusadas* (1572), describes explorer and colonizer Vasco de Gama’s trip to India by way of Cape Verde.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Vasco de Gama (ca. 1460–1524), the explorer described in Camoens’s epic.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The railway.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An early form of hypnosis that used magnets to place patients in a sleeplike trance.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Refers to the educational system devised by Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838) to reduce the need for teachers by

placing students of varying abilities supervised by monitors in the same classroom.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: James Hamilton (1769–1829) devised a system of teaching language that reduced the need for instructors by allowing students to compare translations directly with original texts.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Associations that translated and distributed the Old and New Testament.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Center of the cotton industry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Unitarians adhered to a form of Christianity that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity; Utilitarians believed that the best action is that which benefits the greatest number; Anabaptists were adherents of "credobaptism," or baptism only after a profession of faith. Phrenologists espoused a theory of the brain as composed of multiple faculties and believed that the skull was shaped by the brain.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The popular breeze.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1727) was popularly believed to have developed his theory of gravity spontaneously as a result of having an apple fall on this head.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The earliest electric batteries.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Raphael (1483–1520) and Angelo (or Michelangelo, 1475–1564) were Italian artists of the Renaissance. Mozart (1756–1791) was an Austrian composer.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Royal Academy was founded in England in 1768 to train artists in the Classical style.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A London street that served as the center of publishing and bookselling.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Swedish queen (1626–1689) renowned for her commitment to learning and her intellectual relationship with philosopher Rene Descartes (1596–1650).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: King Fredrick of Prussia (1712–1786) maintained a long-standing relationship with the author and philosopher known as Voltaire (1694–1778).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Libraries. "Glypcothéques": museum containing a collection of statues.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Roman Catholic association that sought to help souls escape from purgatory to heaven through prayer and other acts.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A series of wars between Muslims and Christians that sought to secure control of sites considered sacred by both groups.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A venue for a diverse array of meetings including the Political Economy Club and the Foreign and British Anti-slavery Society.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The 1688 revolution that replaced James II with William III and Mary II; the revolution rejected the divine right of kings and instituted limits on monarchical power.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The French Revolution (1789–99) dissolved the government, abolished feudalism, and drafted the Declaration of Man and Citizen.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Act that limited the conditions under which subjects could be imprisoned by providing a legal remedy for unjust or arbitrary imprisonment.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Carlyle is referencing contemporary debates about the extension of the franchise beyond large property owners.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Knowledge derived from deductive reasoning, as opposed to from experience or observed facts.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Because they lived under the dictatorship of the Roman Empire, for Carlyle, Saint Paul and the Apostles lived under political slavery.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) and Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566) both traveled to the Americas as representatives of Spain in the 15th century.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hernán Cortés (1485–1547), Francisco Pizarro (1478–1541), Fernando Álvarez de Toledo y Pimentil, the Third Duke of Alba (1507–1582), and Xiemenes, or Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517) all advanced and protected Spain’s

colonial interests in the 15th and 16th centuries.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The Inquisition (1478–1834) sought to reform the Catholic church in Spain largely through the forced conversion, exile, torture, and sometimes massacre of non-Christians. Philip II (1527–1598) was king of Spain from 1556 until his death.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Siege of Leydon was a Spanish siege of the Dutch city of Leydon in 1574. William the Silent: another name for William of Orange (1533–1584). Egmont: the Second Earl of Egmont (1711–1770), a pamphleteer, close confidant of George III (1738–1820). Dewitt: Johan Dewitt (1625–1672), a political figure of 17th-century Holland who helped draft the Treaty of Westminster.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The highest official of the lower house of Parliament.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh (1769–1822), was an Anglo-Irish statesman and politician. Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley (1520–1598), was one of Queen Elizabeth's most trusted advisors.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and Philip Sidney (1554–1586) were the most important playrights and poets of their time. Sheridan Knowles (1784–1862) was a second-rate actor. Beau Brummel (1778–1840) was a leader of fashion.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Edmund Cartwright (1743–1823) invented the power loom. "Code-maker" is probably a reference to the invention of Charles Babbage's (1791–1871) mechanical computer, the Difference Engine.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) wrote that "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them along to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Adam Smith (1723–1790) and David Hume (1711–1776) were philosophers, political theorists, and key figures of

the Scottish Enlightenment. Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) was a Swiss-French political theorist.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) was a Spanish Catholic priest who founded the Society of Jesus, or the order of the Jesuits, who were important to the Counter-Reformation. John Knox (1514–1572) was a Scottish theologian. John Wickliffe (1331–1384) was a Catholic priest, theologian, and scholastic philosopher who is considered an important precursor to the Reformation. Henry VIII (1491–1547), king of England from 1509 to 1547, spearheaded the English Reformation in order to annul his marriage to his first wife, Catherine of Aragon.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A name for a writer in the style of John Lyly (~1553–1606) characterized by alliteration, antithesis, and balance.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Martin Luther (1483–1546) was a German Catholic priest who inaugurated the Reformation and Protestantism by nailing his criticisms of the Catholic Church, now known as the 95 Theses, to the door of a church in 1517.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Refers to a mock-heroic narrative poem by Samuel Butler (1613–1680). The poem lavishes absurd praise on Hudibras, an arrogant but unintelligent knight-errant, and satirizes different factions of the English Civil War from a Royalist perspective.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Hume published *Natural History of Religion* in 1757; he argues that religion and theology cannot be derived from the observation of natural phenomena.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Carlyle suggests that the Church is endangered by the expanding roles of other institutions in public life.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Carlyle again refers to the Reformation, arguing that papal authority, and thus necessarily that of early church reformers who challenged it, held much greater sway in public and social life than it did in his moment.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: “Mendicant” refers to specific Christian orders in which adherents take vows of poverty and travel from place to place to evangelize.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Skinny, thin.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A statue in Egypt that vibrated and emitted sound as the sun rose as a result of damage from an earthquake in 27 B.C.E.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Or Moloch, generally understood as a pagan deity associated with the underworld.Return to reference 4

From Past and Present[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: In 1843 there were reputedly one and a half million unemployed in England (out of a population of eighteen million). The closing of factories and the reduction of wages led to severe rioting in the manufacturing districts. Bread-hungry protesters (as well as the Chartist demonstrators who demanded political reforms) caused many observers to dread that a large-scale revolution was imminent. Carlyle was so appalled by the plight of the industrial workers that he postponed his research into the life and times of Cromwell to air his views on the contemporary crisis. *Past and Present,* a book written in seven weeks, was a call for heroic leadership. Cromwell and other historic leaders are cited, but the principal example from the past is Abbot Samson, a medieval monk who established order in the monasteries under his charge. Carlyle hoped that the "Captains of Industry" might provide a comparable leadership in 1843. He was aware that the spread of democracy was inevitable, but he had little confidence in it as a method of producing leaders. Nor did he have any confidence, at this time, in the landed aristocracy, who seemed to him preoccupied with foxhunting, preserving their game, and upholding the tariffs on grain (Corn Laws). In place of a "Do-nothing Aristocracy" there was need for a "Working Aristocracy." This first selection is from book 3, chap. 13.Return to reference 1

From *Democracy*

If the Serene Highnesses and Majesties do not take note of that,[2] then, as I perceive, *that* will take note of itself! The time for levity, insincerity, and idle babble and play-acting, in all kinds, is gone by; it is a serious, grave time. Old long-vexed questions, not yet solved in logical words or parliamentary laws, are fast solving themselves in facts, somewhat unblessed to behold! This largest of questions, this question of Work and Wages, which ought, had we heeded Heaven's voice, to have begun two generations ago or more, cannot be delayed longer without hearing Earth's voice. "Labour" will verily need to be somewhat "organized," as they say,—God knows with what difficulty. Man will actually need to have his debts and earnings a little better paid by man; which, let Parliaments speak of them, or be silent of them, are eternally his due from man, and cannot, without penalty and at length not without death-penalty,[3] be withheld. How much ought to cease among us straightway; how much ought to begin straightway, while the hours yet are!

Truly they are strange results to which this of leaving all to "Cash"; of quietly shutting up the God's Temple, and gradually opening wide-open the Mammon's Temple, with "Laissez-faire, and Every man for himself,"[4]—have led us in these days! We have Upper, speaking Classes, who indeed do "speak" as never man spake before;[5] the withered flimsiness, godless baseness and barrenness of whose Speech might of itself indicate what kind of Doing and practical Governing went on under it! For Speech is the gaseous element out of which most kinds of Practice and Performance, especially all kinds of moral Performance, condense themselves, and take shape; as the one is, so will the other be. Descending, accordingly, into the Dumb Class in its Stockport Cellars and Poor-Law Bastilles,[6] have we not to announce that they are hitherto unexampled in the History of Adam's Posterity?

Life was never a May-game for men: in all times the lot of the dumb millions born to toil was defaced with manifold sufferings,

injustices, heavy burdens, avoidable and unavoidable; not play at all, but hard work that made the sinews sore and the heart sore. As bond-slaves, *villani, bordarii, sochemanni,*[7] nay indeed as dukes, earls and kings, men were oftentimes made weary of their life; and had to say, in the sweat of their brow[8] and of their soul, Behold, it is not sport, it is grim earnest, and our back can bear no more! Who knows not what massacrings and harryings there have been; grinding, long-continuing, unbearable injustices,—till the heart had to rise in madness, and some "*Eu Sachsen, nimith euer sachses,* You Saxons, out with your gully-knives, then!" You Saxons, some "arrestment," partial "arrestment of the Knaves and Dastards" has become indispensable!—The page of Dryasdust[9] is heavy with such details.

And yet I well venture to believe that in no time, since the beginnings of Society, was the lot of those same dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is even in the days now passing over us. It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die,—the last exit of us all is in a Fire-Chariot of Pain.[1] But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing; to be heartworn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt-in with a cold universal Laissez-faire: it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead, Infinite Injustice, as in the accursed iron belly of a Phalaris' Bull![2] This is and remains for ever intolerable to all men whom God has made. Do we wonder at French Revolutions, Chartisms, Revolts of Three Days?[3] The times, if we will consider them, are really unexampled.

Never before did I hear of an Irish Widow reduced to "prove her sisterhood by dying of typhus-fever and infecting seventeen persons,"—saying in such undeniable way, "You *see,* I was your sister!"[4] Sisterhood, brotherhood, was often forgotten; but not till the rise of these ultimate Mammon and Shotbelt Gospels[5] did I ever see it so expressly denied. If no pious Lord or *Law-ward* would remember it, always some pious Lady *("Hlaf-dig,"* Benefactress, *"Loaf-giveress,"* they say she is,—blessings on her beautiful heart!)

was there, with mild mother-voice and hand, to remember it; some pious thoughtful *Elder,* what we now call "Prester," *Presbyter* or "Priest," was there to put all men in mind of it, in the name of the God who had made all.

Not even in Black Dahomey[6] was it ever, I think, forgotten to the typhus-fever length. Mungo Park,[7] resourceless, had sunk down to die under the Negro Village-Tree, a horrible White object in the eyes of all. But in the poor Black Woman, and her daughter who stood aghast at him, whose earthly wealth and funded capital consisted of one small calabash of rice, there lived a heart richer than *"Laissez-faire":* they, with a royal munificence, boiled their rice for him; they sang all night to him, spinning assiduous on their cotton distaffs, as he lay to sleep: "Let us pity the poor white man; no mother has he to fetch him milk, no sister to grind him corn!" Thou poor black Noble One,—thou *Lady* too: did not a God make thee too; was there not in thee too something of a God!—

Gurth,[8] born thrall of Cedric the Saxon, has been greatly pitied by Dryasdust and others. Gurth, with the brass collar round his neck, tending Cedric's pigs in the glades of the wood, is not what I call an exemplar of human felicity: but Gurth, with the sky above him, with the free air and tinted boscage and umbrage round him, and in him at least the certainty of supper and social lodging when he came home; Gurth to me seems happy, in comparison with many a Lancashire and Buckinghamshire man, of these days, not born thrall of anybody! Gurth's brass collar did not gall him: Cedric *deserved* to be his Master. The pigs were Cedric's, but Gurth too would get his parings of them. Gurth had the inexpressible satisfaction of feeling himself related indissolubly, though in a rude brass-collar way, to his fellow-mortals in this Earth. He had superiors, inferiors, equals.—Gurth is now "emancipated" long since; has what we call "Liberty." Liberty, I am told, is a Divine thing. Liberty when it becomes the "Liberty to die by starvation" is not so divine!

Liberty? The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out, the right path, and to walk thereon. To learn, or to be taught, what work he actually was able

for; and then by permission, persuasion, and even compulsion, to set about doing of the same! That is his true blessedness, honour, "liberty" and maximum of wellbeing: if liberty be not that, I for one have small care about liberty. You do not allow a palpable madman to leap over precipices; you violate his liberty, you that are wise; and keep him, were it in strait-waistcoats, away from the precipices! Every stupid, every cowardly and foolish man is but a less palpable madman: his true liberty were that a wiser man, that any and every wiser man, could, by brass collars, or in whatever milder or sharper way, lay hold of him when he was going wrong, and order and compel him to go a little righter. O, if thou really art my *Senior*, Seigneur, my *Elder,* Presbyter or Priest,—if thou art in very deed my *Wiser*, may a beneficent instinct lead and impel thee to "conquer" me, to command me! If thou do know better than I what is good and right, I conjure[9] thee in the name of God, force me to do it; were it by never such brass collars, whips and handcuffs, leave me not to walk over precipices! That I have been called, by all the Newspapers, a "free man" will avail me little, if my pilgrimage have ended in death and wreck. O that the Newspapers had called me slave, coward, fool, or what it pleased their sweet voices to name me, and I had attained not death, but life!—Liberty requires new definitions.

A conscious abhorrence and intolerance of Folly, of Baseness, Stupidity, Poltroonery and all that brood of things, dwells deep in some men: still deeper in others an *un*conscious abhorrence and intolerance, clothed moreover by the beneficent Supreme Powers in what stout appetites, energies, egoisms so-called, are suitable to it; —these latter are your Conquerors, Romans, Normans, Russians, Indo-English; Founders of what we call Aristocracies. Which indeed have they not the most "divine right" to found;—being themselves very truly *Aristoi*, BRAVEST, BEST; and conquering generally a confused rabble of WORST, or at lowest, clearly enough, of WORSE? I think their divine right, tried, with affirmatory verdict, in the greatest Law-Court known to me, was good! A class of men who are dreadfully

exclaimed against by Dryasdust; of whom nevertheless beneficent Nature has oftentimes had need; and may, alas, again have need.

When, across the hundredfold poor scepticisms, trivialisms, and constitutional cobwebberies of Dryasdust, you catch any glimpse of a William the Conqueror, a Tancred of Hauteville[1] or such like,—do you not discern veritably some rude outline of a true God-made King; whom not the Champion of England[2] cased in tin, but all Nature and the Universe were calling to the throne? It is absolutely necessary that he get thither. Nature does not mean her poor Saxon children to perish, of obesity, stupor or other malady, as yet: a stern Ruler and Line of Rulers therefore is called in,—a stern but most beneficent *perpetual House-Surgeon* is by Nature herself called in, and even the appropriate *fees* are provided for him! Dryasdust talks lamentably about Hereward and the Fen Counties; fate of earl Waltheof;[3] Yorkshire and the North reduced to ashes; all of which is undoubtedly lamentable. But even Dryasdust apprises me of one fact: "A child, in this William's reign, might have carried a purse of gold from end to end of England." My erudite friend, it is a fact which outweighs a thousand! Sweep away thy constitutional, sentimental, and other cobwebberies; look eye to eye, if thou still have any eye, in the face of this big burly William Bastard: thou wilt see a fellow of most flashing discernment, of most strong lion-heart; —in whom, as it were, within a frame of oak and iron, the gods have planted the soul of "a man of genius"! Dost thou call that nothing? I call it an immense thing!—Rage enough was in this Willelmus Conquaestor, rage enough for his occasions;—and yet the essential element of him, as of all such men, is not scorching *fire*, but shining illuminative *light.* Fire and light are strangely interchangeable; nay, at bottom, I have found them different forms of the same most godlike "elementary substance" in our world: a thing worth stating in these days. The essential element of this Conquaestor is, first of all, the most sun-eyed perception of what *is* really what on this God's-Earth;—which, thou wilt find, does mean at bottom "Justice," and "Virtues" not a few: *Conformity* to what the Maker has seen good to make; that, I suppose, will mean Justice and a Virtue or two?—

Dost thou think Willelmus Conquaestor would have tolerated ten years' jargon, one hour's jargon, on the propriety of killing Cotton-manufactures by partridge Corn-Laws?[4] I fancy, this was not the man to knock out of his night's rest with nothing but a noisy bedlamism in your mouth![5] "Assist us still better to bush the partridges; strangle Plugson who spins the shirts?"— *"Par la Splendeur de Dieu!"*[6]—Dostthink Willelmus Conquaestor, in this new time, with Steam-engine Captains of Industry on one hand of him, and Joe-Manton Captains of Idleness[7] on the other, would have doubted which *was* really the BEST; which did deserve strangling, and which not?

I have a certain indestructible regard for Willelmus Conquaestor. A resident House-Surgeon, provided by Nature for her beloved English People, and even furnished with the requisite fees, as I said; for he by no means felt himself doing Nature's work, this Willelmus, but his own work exclusively! And his own work withal it was; informed *"par la Splendeur de Dieu."*—I say, it is necessary to get the work out of such a man, however harsh that be! When a world, not yet doomed for death, is rushing down to ever-deeper Baseness and Confusion, it is a dire necessity of Nature's to bring in her ARISTOCRACIES, her BEST, even by forcible methods. When their descendants or representatives cease entirely to *be* the Best, Nature's poor world will very soon rush down again to Baseness; and it becomes a dire necessity of Nature's to cast them out. Hence French Revolutions, Five-point Charters,[8] Democracies, and a mournful list of *Etceteras*, in these our afflicted times.

***

Democracy, the chase of Liberty in that direction, shall go its full course; unrestrained by him of Pferdefuss-Quacksalber,[9] or any of *his* household. The Toiling Millions of Mankind, in most vital need and passionate instinctive desire of Guidance, shall cast away False-Guidance; and hope, for an hour, that No-Guidance will suffice them: but it can be for an hour only. The smallest item of human Slavery is

the oppression of man by his Mock-Superiors; the palpablest, but I say at bottom the smallest. Let him shake off such oppression, trample it indignantly under his feet; I blame him not, I pity and commend him. But oppression by your Mock-Superiors well shaken off, the grand problem yet remains to solve: That of finding government by your Real-Superiors! Alas, how shall we ever learn the solution of that, benighted, bewildered, sniffing, sneering, godforgetting unfortunates as we are? It is a work for centuries; to be taught us by tribulations, confusions, insurrections, obstructions; who knows if not by conflagration and despair! It is a lesson inclusive of all other lessons; the hardest of all lessons to learn.

Endnotes

- Note 2: The previous chapter, "Reward," had urged that English manufacturers needed the help of everyone and that Parliament should remove the tariffs (Corn Laws) restricting the growth of trade and industry.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, by the outbreak of a revolution, as in France.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The pursuit of wealth (Mammon is the devil of covetousness) under a noninterventionist economic policy. *Laissez-faire* literally means "let it be" (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: John 7:46.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, workhouses for the unemployed. "Stockport Cellars": in a cellar in the slum district of Stockport, an industrial town near Manchester, three children were poisoned by their starving parents, who wanted to collect insurance benefits from a burial society.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Three categories of feudal tenants, from lowest in status to highest (Latin).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Genesis 3:19.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: An imaginary author of dull histories.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: 2 Kings 2:11.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Phalaris was a Sicilian tyrant (6th century B.C.E.) whose victims were roasted alive by being confined inside the brass figure of a bull under which a fire was lit.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The 1830 revolution in France (July 27–29).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An incident referred to several times in *Past and Present.* Dickens in *Bleak House* (1851) also showed how indifference to the lack of sanitation in London slums led to the spread of disease to other parts of the city.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The attitudes of landowning aristocracy who were committed to preserving their exclusive right to shoot wild game.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A state in west Africa where human sacrifice and cannibalism persisted.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Explorer and author (1771–1806); he was killed by Africans.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A swineherd described in Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Solemnly charge.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Norman hero of the First Crusade (1095–99). King William I of England (ca. 1028–1087; reigned 1066–87), surnamed *the Conqueror* after the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Being an illegitimate son, he also bore the surname of William the Bastard. Although some historians condemn William as a ruthless ruler, he is ranked by Carlyle as a hero because of his strong and efficient government. William fulfilled the requirements of the kingly hero described by Carlyle in his lectures *On Heroes:* a man fittest "to *command* over us . . . to tell us what we are to *do.*"Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An official who goes through a formality, at coronation ceremonies, of demanding whether anyone challenges the right of the monarch to ascend the throne. He wears full armor ("cased in tin") and is a symbol of outworn feudal customs.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: His execution in 1075, on a supposedly trumped-up charge, is cited as a blot on William's record as king. Hereward the Wake was an outlaw whose exploits against William the Conqueror made him seem a romantic figure like Robin Hood.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See p. 97, notes 1–2.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, not the man to disturb with your mad ravings. Bedlam, the hospital of St. Mary in Bethlehem, was London's most famous lunatic asylum.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: By the splendor of God! (French): one of William's oaths. Plugson of Undershot was Carlyle's fictive representative of the new class of industrial leaders. This imaginary speech ("Assist us . . .") sums up the pleas of the High Tariff lobby in Parliament. "Keep the Corn Laws intact so that the aristocratic landlords may continue to enjoy shooting partridges on their estates; subdue the manufacturing leaders by preventing trade."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The idle aristocracy who wasted time shooting partridges with guns made by Joseph Manton, a London gunsmith.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Chartist movement for political reform called first for six, then for five major changes to the existing system of parliamentary democracy.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Horse foot quack doctor (a fake German name invented by Carlyle).Return to reference 9

Captains of Industry[1]

If I believed that Mammonism with its adjuncts was to continue henceforth the one serious principle of our existence, I should reckon it idle to solicit remedial measures from any Government, the disease being insusceptible of remedy. Government can do much, but it can in no wise do all. Government, as the most conspicuous object in Society, is called upon to give signal of what shall be done; and, in many ways, to preside over further, and command the doing of it. But the Government cannot do, by all its signalling and commanding, what the Society is radically indisposed to do. In the long-run every Government is the exact symbol of its People, with their wisdom and unwisdom; we have to say, Like People like Government.—The main substance of this immense Problem of Organizing Labour, and first of all of Managing the Working Classes, will, it is very clear, have to be solved by those who stand practically in the middle of it; by those who themselves work and preside over work. Of all that can be enacted by any Parliament in regard to it, the germs must already lie potentially extant in those two Classes, who are to obey such enactment. A Human Chaos *in* which there is no light, you vainly attempt to irradiate by light shed *on* it: order never can arise there.

But it is my firm conviction that the "Hell of England" will *cease* to be that of "not making money"; that we shall get a nobler Hell and a nobler Heaven! I anticipate light *in* the Human Chaos, glimmering, shining more and more; under manifold true signals from without That light shall shine. Our deity no longer being Mammon,—O Heavens, each man will then say to himself: "Why such deadly haste to make money? I shall not go to Hell, even if I do not make money! There is another Hell, I am told!" Competition, at railway-speed, in all branches of commerce and work will then abate:—good felt-hats for the head, in every sense, instead of seven-feet lath-and-plaster hats on wheels,[2] will then be discoverable! Bubble-periods,[3] with their panics and commercial crises, will again become infrequent; steady modest industry will

take the place of gambling speculation. To be a noble Master, among noble Workers, will again be the first ambition with some few; to be a rich Master only the second. How the Inventive Genius of England, with the whirr of its bobbins and billy-rollers[4] shoved somewhat into the backgrounds of the brain, will contrive and devise, not cheaper produce exclusively, but fairer distribution of the produce at its present cheapness! By degrees, we shall again have a Society with something of Heroism in it, something of Heaven's Blessing on it; we shall again have, as my German friend[5] asserts, "instead of Mammon-Feudalism with unsold cotton-shirts and Preservation of the Game, noble just Industrialism and Government by the Wisest!"

It is with the hope of awakening here and there a British man to know himself for a man and divine soul, that a few words of parting admonition, to all persons to whom the Heavenly Powers have lent power of any kind in this land, may now be addressed. And first to those same Master-Workers, Leaders of Industry; who stand nearest, and in fact powerfullest, though not most prominent, being as yet in too many senses a Virtuality rather than an Actuality.

The Leaders of Industry, if Industry is ever to be led, are virtually the Captains of the World; if there be no nobleness in them, there will never be an Aristocracy more. But let the Captains of Industry consider: once again, are they born of other clay than the old Captains of Slaughter; doomed for ever to be not Chivalry, but a mere gold-plated *Doggery;*—what the French well name *Canaille,* "Doggery" with more or less gold carrion at its disposal? Captains of Industry are the true Fighters, henceforth recognizable as the only true ones: Fighters against Chaos, Necessity and the Devils and Jötuns;[6] and lead on Mankind in that great, and alone true, and universal warfare; the stars in their courses fighting for them, and all Heaven and all Earth saying audibly, Well done! Let the Captains of Industry retire into their own hearts, and ask solemnly, If there is nothing but vulturous hunger for fine wines, valet reputation and gilt carriages, discoverable there? Of hearts made by the Almighty God I will not believe such a thing. Deep-hidden under wretchedest god-

forgetting Cants, Epicurisms, Dead-Sea Apisms;[7] forgotten as under foullest fat Lethe[8] mud and weeds, there is yet, in all hearts born into this God's-World, a spark of the Godlike slumbering. Awake, O nightmare sleepers; awake, arise, or be for ever fallen![9] This is not playhouse poetry; it is sober fact. Our England, our world cannot live as it is. It will connect itself with a God again, or go down with nameless throes and fire-consummation to the Devils. Thou who feelest aught of such a Godlike stirring in thee, any faintest intimation of it as through heavy-laden dreams, follow *it,* I conjure thee. Arise, save thyself, be one of those that save thy country.

Bucaniers,[1] Chactaw Indians, whose supreme aim in fighting is that they may get the scalps, the money, that they may amass scalps and money; out of such came no Chivalry, and never will! Out of such came only gore and wreck, infernal rage and misery; desperation quenched in annihilation. Behold it, I bid thee, behold there, and consider! What is it that thou have a hundred thousand-pound bills laid up in thy strong-room, a hundred scalps hung up in thy wigwam? I value not them or thee. Thy scalps and thy thousand-pound bills are as yet nothing, if no nobleness from within irradiate them; if no Chivalry, in action, or in embryo ever struggling towards birth and action, be there.

Love of men cannot be bought by cash-payment; and without love, men cannot endure to be together. You cannot lead a Fighting World without having it regimented, chivalried: the thing, in a day, becomes impossible; all men in it, the highest at first, the very lowest at last, discern consciously, or by a noble instinct, this necessity. And can you any more continue to lead a Working World unregimented, anarchic? I answer, and the Heavens and Earth are now answering, No! The thing becomes not "in a day" impossible; but in some two generations it does. Yes, when fathers and mothers, in Stockport hunger-cellars, begin to eat their children, and Irish widows have to prove their relationship by dying of typhus-fever; and amid Governing "Corporations of the Best and Bravest," busy to preserve their game by "bushing," dark millions of God's human creatures start up in mad Chartisms, impracticable Sacred-Months,

and Manchester Insurrections;[2]—and there is a virtual Industrial Aristocracy as yet only half-alive, spell-bound amid money-bags and ledgers; and an actual Idle Aristocracy seemingly near dead in somnolent delusions, in trespasses and double-barrels,[3] "sliding," as on inclined-planes, which every new year they *soap* with new Hansard's-jargon under God's sky, and so are "sliding" ever faster, towards a "scale"[4] and balance-scale whereon is written *Thou art found Wanting;*[5]—in such days, after a generation or two, I say, it does become, even to the low and simple, very palpably impossible! No Working World, any more than a Fighting World, can be led on without a noble Chivalry of Work, and laws and fixed rules which follow out of that,—far nobler than any Chivalry of Fighting was. As an anarchic multitude on mere Supply-and-demand, it is becoming inevitable that we dwindle in horrid suicidal convulsion, and self-abrasion, frightful to the imagination, into *Chactaw* Workers. With wigwams and scalps,—with palaces and thousand-pound bills; with savagery, depopulation, chaotic desolation! Good Heavens, will not one French Revolution and Reign of Terror suffice us, but must there be two? There will be two if needed; there will be twenty if needed; there will be precisely as many as needed. The Laws of Nature will have themselves fulfilled. That is a thing certain to me.

Your gallant battle-hosts and work-hosts, as the others did, will need to be made loyally yours; they must and will be regulated, methodically secured in their just share of conquest under you;—joined with you in veritable brotherhood, sonhood, by quite other and deeper ties than those of temporary day's wages! How would mere redcoated regiments, to say nothing of chivalries, fight for you, if you could discharge them on the evening of the battle, on payment of the stipulated shillings,—and they discharge you on the morning of it! Chelsea Hospitals,[6] pensions, promotions, rigorous lasting covenant on the one side and on the other, are indispensable even for a hired fighter. The Feudal Baron, much more,—how could he subsist with mere temporary mercenaries round him, at sixpence a day; ready to go over to the other side, if sevenpence were offered? He could not have subsisted;—and his noble instinct saved

him from the necessity of even trying! The Feudal Baron had a Man's Soul in him; to which anarchy, mutiny, and the other fruits of temporary mercenaries, were intolerable: he had never been a Baron otherwise, but had continued a Chactaw and Bucanier. He felt it precious, and at last it became habitual, and his fruitful enlarged existence included it as a necessity, to have men round him who in heart loved him; whose life he watched over with rigour yet with love; who were prepared to give their life for him, if need came. It was beautiful; it was human! Man lives not otherwise, nor can live contented, anywhere or anywhen. Isolation is the sum-total of wretchedness to man. To be cut off, to be left solitary: to have a world alien, not your world; all a hostile camp for you; not a home at all, of hearts and faces who are yours, whose you are! It is the frightfullest enchantment; too truly a work of the Evil One. To have neither superior, nor inferior, nor equal, united manlike to you. Without father, without child, without brother. Man knows no sadder destiny. "How is each of us," exclaims Jean Paul,[7] "so lonely in the wide bosom of the All!" Encased each as in his transparent "ice-palace"; our brother visible in his, making signals and gesticulations to us;—visible, but for ever unattainable: on his bosom we shall never rest, nor he on ours. It was not a God that did this; no!

Awake, ye noble Workers, warriors in the one true war: all this must be remedied. It is you who are already half-alive, whom I will welcome into life; whom I will conjure in God's name to shake off your enchanted sleep, and live wholly! Cease to count scalps, gold-purses; not in these lies your or our salvation. Even these, if you count only these, will not be left. Let bucaniering be put far from you; alter, speedily abrogate all laws of the bucaniers, if you would gain any victory that shall endure. Let God's justice, let pity, nobleness and manly valour, with more gold-purses or with fewer, testify themselves in this your brief Life-transit to all the Eternities, the Gods and Silences. It is to you I call; for ye are not dead, ye are already half-alive: there is in you a sleepless dauntless energy, the prime-matter of all nobleness in man. Honour to you in your kind. It is to you I call: ye know at least this, That the mandate of God to

His creature man is: Work! The future Epic of the World rests not with those that are near dead, but with those that are alive, and those that are coming into life.

Look around you. Your world-hosts are all in mutiny, in confusion, destitution; on the eve of fiery wreck and madness! They will not march farther for you, on the sixpence a day and supply-and-demand principle; they will not; nor ought they, nor can they. Ye shall reduce them to order, begin reducing them. To order, to just subordination; noble loyalty in return for noble guidance. Their souls are driven nigh mad; let yours be sane and ever saner. Not as a bewildered bewildering mob; but as a firm regimented mass, with real captains over them, will these men march any more. All human interests, combined human endeavours, and social growths in this world, have, at a certain stage of their development, required organizing: and Work, the grandest of human interests, does now require it.

God knows, the task will be hard: but no noble task was ever easy. This task will wear away your lives, and the lives of your sons and grandsons: but for what purpose, if not for tasks like this, were lives given to men? Ye shall cease to count your thousand-pound scalps, the noble of you shall cease! Nay, the very scalps, as I say, will not long be left if you count on these. Ye shall cease wholly to be barbarous vulturous Chactaws, and become noble European Nineteenth-Century Men. Ye shall know that Mammon, in never such gigs[8] and flunkey "respectabilities," is not the alone God; that of himself he is but a Devil, and even a Brute-god.

Difficult? Yes, it will be difficult. The short-fibre cotton; that too was difficult. The waste cotton-shrub, long useless, disobedient, as the thistle by the wayside,—have ye not conquered it; made it into beautiful bandana webs; white woven shirts for men; bright-tinted air-garments wherein flit goddesses? Ye have shivered mountains asunder, made the hard iron pliant to you as soft putty: the Forest-giants, Marsh-jötuns bear sheaves of golden grain; Aegir the Seademon[9] himself stretches his back for a sleek highway to you, and on Firehorses and Windhorses ye career. Ye are most strong.

Thor red-bearded, with his blue sun-eyes, with his cheery heart and strong thunder-hammer, he and you have prevailed. Ye are most strong, ye Sons of the icy North, of the far East,—far marching from your rugged Eastern Wildernesses, hitherward from the grey Dawn of Time! Ye are Sons of the *Jötun-land*; the land of Difficulties Conquered. Difficult? You must try this thing. Once try it with the understanding that it will and shall have to be done. Try it as ye try the paltrier thing, making of money! I will bet on you once more, against all Jötuns, Tailor-gods,[1] Double-barrelled Law-wards, and Denizens of Chaos whatsoever.

1843 1843

Endnotes

- Note 1: From book 4, chap. 4.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A London hatter's mode of advertising.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Periods of violent fluctuation in the stock market caused by unsound speculating.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Machines used to prepare cotton or wool for spinning.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Teufelsdröckh, the hero of *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Giants of Scandinavian mythology.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A reference to a Muslim story in which members of a tribe living near the Dead Sea were transformed into apes because they had ignored the prophecies of Moses.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The river of forgetfulness in the classical underworld.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Satan's appeal to the devils in Milton's *Paradise Lost* 1.330.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Buccaneers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In 1819 a large open-air labor meeting in Manchester was broken up by charging cavalry. Thirteen men and women were massacred, and many others were wounded. "Bushing":

protecting game from poachers who use nets, by positioning bushes or branches on the grounds.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: That is, the only concern of the landed aristocrats is to keep trespassers off their game preserves and reserve shooting rights to themselves.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The "sliding scale" refers to the system of variable tariffs within the Corn Laws that benefited the aristocratic landlords. "Hansard's-jargon": parliamentary oratory, as in Hansard's printed record of debates in the Houses of Parliament.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The message of the miraculous writing on the wall in Daniel 5.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Homes for disabled veterans.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Jean Paul Richter (1763–1825), German humorist.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Light carriages; to own one was a sign of respectability.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From Scandinavian mythology.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: False gods.Return to reference 1

MARY SEACOLE
1805–1881

Mary Seacole had an extraordinary life. Of African and European heritage, she was born Mary Jane Grant in Jamaica at a time when roughly 90 percent of the island's population was enslaved (the abolition of slavery in British colonies came in 1834, followed by four years of enforced apprenticeship). Never enslaved herself, Seacole did however work from an early age, gaining expertise in all aspects of domestic management at her mother's boardinghouse in Kingston. Close to Up Park, the headquarters of the British West India Regiments, the lodging attracted British officers and their wives, not least because Seacole's mother was a skilled "doctress," adept at treating tropical illnesses and other conditions. Here Seacole learned the nursing and healing arts, including the preparation and administering of medicines, that would later make her famous. She married in 1836 but became a widow just eight years later. After her mother's death in 1848, Seacole ran the boardinghouse alone, continuing to provide medical care that was especially needed during Jamaica's devastating cholera epidemic in 1850. With a marked entrepreneurial bent and a passion for travel, Seacole then spent much of the next decade in two charged geographical areas—initially in the tract of land between north and south America that is now Panama, and subsequently, from early 1855 to late 1856, in the regions around the Black Sea, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. These journeys placed her squarely

in two tumultuous theaters of world history: first, the frenzy of activities occasioned by gold-mining fever in California and central America, and second, the desperate fighting of the Crimean War.

The celebrity of Mary Seacole in the Victorian era and today rests primarily on her time in Crimea. Ultimately a battle over the balance of power in Europe, the Crimean War was sparked by a quarrel about the rights of Christian minorities in Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire. Angered by a perceived affront to the Eastern Orthodox Church, Tsar Nicholas I of Russia sent troops in 1853 into Ottoman-controlled territories in what is now Romania. The Ottomans declared war on Russia in October of that year; four months later the British and the French followed suit, fearing the collapse of the Ottomans and the spread of Russian control across the region and over the crucial land route to India. For the next two years the conflict, especially an eleven-month siege of the city of Sebastopol, was brutal and bloody, with heavy casualties on all sides. Disease, frostbite, and malnutrition also caused terrible suffering.

Thanks to the Irish journalist William H. Russell, considered the world's first modern war correspondent, readers of the London *Times* received regular reports of sick and wounded British soldiers and the shortage of medical staff to attend them. Seacole was in London in 1854, looking into her unprofitable gold investments; her longstanding allegiance to the British military, formed in those early days in Jamaica prompted her to volunteer for the nursing duties that Florence Nightingale, famously, had begun to organize. But, as her memoir piquantly relates, she was rejected. It is highly likely that the color of her skin was a factor; some have suggested that her candidacy was also discounted because she made no formal application, had no hospital experience, and was past the usual age for nursing. Undaunted, she decided to go anyway. Her business strategy, as it had been in Panama, was to set up an establishment selling food, drink, and other necessaries; the first aid she provided, free of charge if needed, ran alongside, and was to a degree financed by, her commercial concerns. News of her kindness and

skill as a nurse and healer soon spread, to soldiers of all ranks and members of the army service corps alike. Moreover her "British Hotel"—in actuality more of a restaurant-cum-canteen-cum-general store—had the signal advantage of being close to the fighting (although in time Nightingale set up two nursing establishments on the Crimean peninsula, the army's primary hospital was three to four days' travel away in Scutari, across the Black Sea in Turkey). Nightingale's pioneering reforms of nursing resulted in her transformation into an icon of feminine care, "The Lady With the Lamp" who visited the beds of the wounded at night, but the dedicated work of "Mother Seacole" also played an undeniable role in the amelioration of suffering.

The war sections of *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole* thus provide an important challenge to the British cultural myth that enshrined Nightingale as the Crimea's only Victorian heroine, but attention to the memoir's earlier depiction of Seacole's experiences in Panama is also rewarding. Her analysis of the complex social and racial structures in the chaotic settlements through which she passed is shrewd and searching; similarly forthright is Seacole's stout rejection of the racist attitudes held by the majority of White Americans (the "Yankees") she met on her travels. Startling in a different way is an account of a postmortem dissection she conducted on the corpse of a child who had died from cholera. Living at a time long before any medical school would have accepted a woman, much less a woman of color, as a student, Seacole took matters into her own hands, the better to understand the internal workings of disease.

The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole is a spirited and fast-paced read, written in 1857 to appeal to a British audience at a moment of financial need for its author (she had been left bankrupt, with large quantities of supplies she could not sell, when the defeated Russians sued for peace in March 1856 and the war came to a sudden end). Thanks to the success of the book, plus funds for her support contributed by high-profile friends she had gained during her time in Crimea, Seacole eventually received enough

money to live on. She continued to travel, returning to Panama and Jamaica, but resided mainly in London from 1865 onward. Seacole died there in lodgings at the age of seventy-six.

Although commemorated in Jamaica, Seacole's contribution to the British war effort was almost entirely overlooked in Britain for over a century until activists and scholars brought her back into public consciousness, notably via Ziggi Alexander and Audrey Dewjee's edition of *The Wonderful Adventures* in 1984. A painting of Seacole from 1869 was re-discovered in 2003 and is now on display in London's National Portrait Gallery. She is further honored in Britain's capital by a number of plaques, including one in Brixton, a district of south London that is home to many Britons of Jamaican or other West Indian heritage, and, since 2016, by a large statue directly facing the Houses of Parliament on the grounds of St. Thomas' Hospital, the former site of the Nightingale Training School for Nurses.

From The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands

Chapter I

MY BIRTH AND PARENTAGE—EARLY TASTES AND TRAVELS—MARRIAGE, AND WIDOWHOOD.

I was born in the town of Kingston, in the island of Jamaica, some time in the present century. As a female, and a widow, I may be well excused giving the precise date of this important event. But I do not mind confessing that the century and myself were both young together, and that we have grown side by side into age and consequence. I am a Creole,[1] and have good Scotch blood coursing in my veins. My father was a soldier, of an old Scotch family; and to him I often trace my affection for a camp-life, and my sympathy with what I have heard my friends call "the pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious war."[2] Many people have also traced to my Scotch blood that energy and activity which are not always found in the Creole race, and which have carried me to so many varied scenes: and perhaps they are right. I have often heard the term "lazy Creole" applied to my country people; but I am sure I do not know what it is to be indolent. All my life long I have followed the impulse which led me to be up and doing; and so far from resting idle anywhere, I have never wanted[3] inclination to rove, nor will powerful enough to find a way to carry out my wishes. That these qualities have led me into many countries, and brought me into some strange and amusing adventures, the reader, if he or she has the patience to get through this book, will see. Some people, indeed, have called me quite a female Ulysses.[4] I believe that they intended it as a compliment; but from my experience of the Greeks, I do not consider it a very flattering one.

It is not my intention to dwell at any length upon the recollections of my childhood. My mother kept a boarding-house in Kingston, and was, like very many of the Creole women, an admirable doctress; in high repute with the officers of both services, and their wives, who were from time to time stationed at Kingston.

It was very natural that I should inherit her tastes; and so I had from early youth a yearning for medical knowledge and practice which has never deserted me. When I was a very young child I was taken by an old lady, who brought me up in her household among her own grandchildren, and who could scarcely have shown me more kindness had I been one of them; indeed, I was so spoiled by my kind patroness that, but for being frequently with my mother, I might very likely have grown up idle and useless. But I saw so much of her, and of her patients, that the ambition to become a doctress early took firm root in my mind; and I was very young when I began to make use of the little knowledge I had acquired from watching my mother, upon a great sufferer—my doll. I have noticed always what actors children are. If you leave one alone in a room, how soon it clears a little stage; and, making an audience out of a few chairs and stools, proceeds to act its childish griefs and blandishments upon its doll. So I also made good use of my dumb companion and confidante; and whatever disease was most prevalent in Kingston, be sure my poor doll soon contracted it. I have had many medical triumphs in later days, and saved some valuable lives; but I really think that few have given me more real gratification than the rewarding glow of health which my fancy used to picture stealing over my patient's waxen face after long and precarious illness.

Before long it was very natural that I should seek to extend my practice; and so I found other patients in the dogs and cats around me. Many luckless brutes were made to simulate diseases which were raging among their owners, and had forced down their reluctant throats the remedies which I deemed most likely to suit their supposed complaints. And after a time I rose still higher in my ambition; and despairing of finding another human patient, I proceeded to try my simples[5] and essences upon—myself.

When I was about twelve years old I was more frequently at my mother's house, and used to assist her in her duties; very often sharing with her the task of attending upon invalid officers or their wives, who came to her house from the adjacent camp at Up-Park, or the military station at Newcastle.[6]

As I grew into womanhood, I began to indulge that longing to travel which will never leave me while I have health and vigour. I was never weary of tracing upon an old map the route to England; and never followed with my gaze the stately ships homeward bound without longing to be in them, and see the blue hills of Jamaica fade into the distance. At that time it seemed most improbable that these girlish wishes should be gratified; but circumstances, which I need not explain, enabled me to accompany some relatives to England while I was yet a very young woman.

I shall never forget my first impressions of London. Of course, I am not going to bore the reader with them; but they are as vivid now as though the year 18— (I had very nearly let my age slip then) had not been long ago numbered with the past. Strangely enough, some of the most vivid of my recollections are the efforts of the London street-boys to poke fun at my and my companion's complexion. I am only a little brown—a few shades duskier than the brunettes whom you all admire so much; but my companion was very dark, and a fair (if I can apply the term to her) subject for their rude wit. She was hot-tempered, poor thing! and as there were no policemen to awe the boys and turn our servants' heads in those days, our progress through the London streets was sometimes a rather chequered one.

I remained in England, upon the occasion of my first visit, about a year; and then returned to Kingston. Before long I again started for London, bringing with me this time a large stock of West Indian preserves and pickles for sale. After remaining two years here, I again started home; and on the way my life and adventures were very nearly brought to a premature conclusion. Christmas-day had been kept very merrily on board our ship the "Velusia;" and on the following day a fire broke out in the hold. I dare say it would have resisted all the crew's efforts to put it out, had not another ship appeared in sight; upon which the fire quietly allowed itself to be extinguished. Although considerably alarmed, I did not lose my senses; but during the time when the contest between fire and water was doubtful, I entered into an amicable arrangement with

the ship's cook, whereby, in consideration of two pounds—which I was not, however, to pay until the crisis arrived—he agreed to lash me on to a large hen-coop.

Before I had been long in Jamaica I started upon other trips, many of them undertaken with a view to gain. Thus I spent some time in New Providence,[7] bringing home with me a large collection of handsome shells and rare shell-work, which created quite a sensation in Kingston, and had a rapid sale; I visited also Hayti and Cuba. But I hasten onward in my narrative.

Returned to Kingston, I nursed my old indulgent patroness in her last long illness. After she died, in my arms, I went to my mother's house, where I stayed, making myself useful in a variety of ways, and learning a great deal of Creole medicinal art, until I couldn't find courage to say "no" to a certain arrangement timidly proposed by Mr. Seacole, but married him, and took him down to Black River,[8] where we established a store. Poor man! he was very delicate; and before I undertook the charge of him, several doctors had expressed most unfavourable opinions of his health. I kept him alive by kind nursing and attention as long as I could; but at last he grew so ill that we left Black River, and returned to my mother's house at Kingston. Within a month of our arrival there he died. This was my first great trouble, and I felt it bitterly. For days I never stirred—lost to all that passed around me in a dull stupor of despair. If you had told me that the time would soon come when I should remember this sorrow calmly, I should not have believed it possible: and yet it was so. I do not think that we hot-blooded Creoles sorrow less for showing it so impetuously; but I do think that the sharp edge of our grief wears down sooner than theirs who preserve an outward demeanour of calmness, and nurse their woe secretly in their hearts.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although "Creole" was used variously in the period to describe members of any non-Indigenous group born in the West Indies (regardless of whether they were of entirely

African, European, or mixed descent), here Seacole is using the term to describe a person of mixed African and European descent.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: See Shakespeare, *Othello* 3.3.354: "pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lacked.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Roman name for Odysseus, whose wanderings are recounted in Homer's *Odyssey.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Medicines made from herbs.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A military camp in Jamaica's Blue Mountains. "Up-Park": the headquarters, in Kingston, of the British West India Regiments.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: An island in the Bahamas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A Jamaican town about ninety miles east of Kingston. "Mr. Seacole": Mary Jane Grant married Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole in 1836; he died in 1844.Return to reference 8

From *Chapter II*

STRUGGLES FOR LIFE—THE CHOLERA IN JAMAICA—I LEAVE KINGSTON FOR THE ISTHMUS OF PANAMA—CHAGRES, NAVY BAY, AND GATUN—LIFE IN PANAMA—UP THE RIVER CHAGRES TO GORGONA AND CRUCES.

I had one other great grief to master—the loss of my mother, and then I was left alone to battle with the world as best I might. The struggles which it cost me to succeed in life were sometimes very trying; nor have they ended yet. But I have always turned a bold front to fortune, and taken, and shall continue to take, as my brave friends in the army and navy have shown me how, "my hurts before."[1] Although it was no easy thing for a widow to make ends meet, I never allowed myself to know what repining or depression was, and so succeeded in gaining not only my daily bread, but many comforts besides from the beginning. Indeed, my experience of the world—it is not finished yet, but I do not think it will give me reason to change my opinion—leads me to the conclusion that it is by no means the hard bad world which some selfish people would have us believe it. It may be as my editor says—

"That gently comes the world to those
That are cast in gentle mould";[2]

hinting at the same time, politely, that the rule may apply to me personally. And perhaps he is right, for although I was always a hearty, strong woman—plain-spoken people might say stout—I think my heart is soft enough.

How slowly and gradually I succeeded in life, need not be told at length. My fortunes underwent the variations which befall all. Sometimes I was rich one day, and poor the next. I never thought too exclusively of money, believing rather that we were born to be happy, and that the surest way to be wretched is to prize it overmuch. Had I done so, I should have mourned over many a promising speculation proving a failure, over many a pan of

preserves or guava jelly burnt in the making; and perhaps lost my mind when the great fire of 1843, which devastated Kingston, burnt down my poor home. As it was, I very nearly lost my life, for I would not leave my house until every chance of saving it had gone, and it was wrapped in flames. But, of course, I set to work again in a humbler way, and rebuilt my house by degrees, and restocked it, succeeding better than before; for I had gained a reputation as a skilful nurse and doctress, and my house was always full of invalid officers and their wives from Newcastle, or the adjacent Up-Park Camp. Sometimes I had a naval or military surgeon under my roof, from whom I never failed to glean instruction, given, when they learned my love for their profession, with a readiness and kindness I am never likely to forget. Many of these kind friends are alive now. I met with some when my adventures had carried me to the battle-fields of the Crimea; and to those whose eyes may rest upon these pages I again offer my acknowledgments for their past kindness, which helped me to be useful to my kind[3] in many lands.

And here I may take the opportunity of explaining that it was from a confidence in my own powers, and not at all from necessity, that I remained an unprotected female. Indeed, I do not mind confessing to my reader, in a friendly confidential way, that one of the hardest struggles of my life in Kingston was to resist the pressing candidates for the late Mr. Seacole's shoes.

Officers of high rank sometimes took up their abode in my house. Others of inferior rank were familiar with me, long before their bravery, and, alas! too often death, in the Crimea, made them world famous. There were few officers of the 97th[4] to whom Mother Seacole was not well known, before she joined them in front of Sebastopol; and among the best known was good-hearted, loveable, noble H—— V——,[5] whose death shocked me so terribly, and with whose useful heroic life the English public have become so familiar. I can hear the ring of his boyish laughter even now.

In the year 1850, the cholera swept over the island of Jamaica with terrible force. Our idea—perhaps an unfounded one—was, that a steamer from New Orleans was the means of introducing it into

the island. Anyhow, they sent some clothes on shore to be washed, and poor Dolly Johnson, the washerwoman, whom we all knew, sickened and died of the terrible disease. While the cholera raged, I had but too many opportunities of watching its nature, and from a Dr. B——, who was then lodging in my house, received many hints as to its treatment which I afterwards found invaluable.

Early in the same year my brother had left Kingston for the Isthmus of Panama, then the great high-road to and from golden California, where he had established a considerable store and hotel. Ever since he had done so, I had found some difficulty in checking my reviving disposition to roam, and at last persuading myself that I might be of use to him (he was far from strong), I resigned my house into the hands of a cousin, and made arrangements to journey to Chagres.[6] Having come to this conclusion, I allowed no grass to grow beneath my feet, but set to work busily, for I was not going to him empty-handed. My house was full for weeks, of tailors, making up rough coats, trousers, etc., and sempstresses cutting out and making shirts. In addition to these, my kitchen was filled with busy people, manufacturing preserves, guava jelly, and other delicacies, while a considerable sum was invested in the purchase of preserved meats, vegetables, and eggs. It will be as well, perhaps, if I explain, in as few words as possible, the then condition of the Isthmus of Panama.

All my readers must know—a glance at the map will show it to those who do not—that between North America and the envied shores of California stretches a little neck of land, insignificant-looking enough on the map, dividing the Atlantic from the Pacific. By crossing this, the travellers from America avoided a long, weary, and dangerous sea voyage round Cape Horn, or an almost impossible journey by land.

But that journey across the Isthmus, insignificant in distance as it was, was by no means an easy one. It seemed as if nature had determined to throw every conceivable obstacle in the way of those who should seek to join the two great oceans of the world. I have read and heard many accounts of old endeavours to effect this

important and gigantic work, and how miserably they failed. It was reserved for the men of our age to accomplish what so many had died in attempting, and iron and steam, twin giants, subdued to man's will, have put a girdle over rocks and rivers, so that travellers can glide as smoothly, if not as inexpensively, over the once terrible Isthmus of Darien, as they can from London to Brighton.[7] Not yet, however, does civilization rule at Panama. The weak sway of the New Granada Republic,[8] despised by lawless men, and respected by none, is powerless to control the refuse of every nation which meet together upon its soil. Whenever they feel inclined now they overpower the law easily; but seven years ago, when I visited the Isthmus of Panama, things were much worse, and a licence existed, compared to which the present lawless state of affairs is enviable.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Unidentified quotation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tennyson, "To J. S." (1832), lines 3–4.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, humankind.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Stationed in Gibraltar, the Ionian Islands, Jamaica, and North America from 1841 to 1853, the 97th (earl of Ulster's) Regiment of Foot was an infantry regiment of the British Army that fought in the Crimea from 1854 onward.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Hedley Vicars (1826–1855) died in action at Sebastopol. Catherine M. Marsh (1818–1912) immediately wrote a book about the short life of this deeply religious soldier; *The Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars* enjoyed large sales and was re-published in numerous languages.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: At this time, the chief Atlantic port on the Isthmus of Panama (also known as the Isthmus of Darien).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: The Panama Railroad was built between 1850 and 1855.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From 1831 to 1858, an independent country consisting primarily of present-day Colombia and Panama, plus small portions of present-day Costa Rica, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, and Brazil.Return to reference 8

From *Chapter IV*

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR IN CRUCES—THE CHOLERA—SUCCESS OF THE YELLOW DOCTRESS—FEARFUL SCENE AT THE MULE-OWNER'S—THE BURYING PARTIES—THE CHOLERA ATTACKS ME.

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But it was destined that I should not be long in Cruces before my medicinal skill and knowledge were put to the test.[1] Before the passengers for Panama had been many days gone, it was found that they had left one of their number behind them, and that one—the cholera. I believe that the faculty[2] have not yet come to the conclusion that the cholera is contagious, and I am not presumptuous enough to forestall them; but my people have always considered it to be so, and the poor Cruces folks did not hesitate to say that this new and terrible plague had been a fellow-traveller with the Americans from New Orleans or some other of its favoured haunts. I had the first intimation of its unwelcome presence in the following abrupt and unpleasant manner:—

A Spaniard, an old and intimate friend of my brother, had supped with him one evening, and upon returning home had been taken ill, and after a short period of intense suffering had died. So sudden and so mysterious a death gave rise to the rumour that he had been poisoned, and suspicion rested for a time, perhaps not unnaturally, upon my brother, in whose company the dead man had last been. Anxious for many reasons—the chief one, perhaps, the position of my brother—I went down to see the corpse. A single glance at the poor fellow showed me the terrible truth. The distressed face, sunken eyes, cramped limbs, and discoloured shrivelled skin were all symptoms which I had been familiar with very recently; and at once I pronounced the cause of death to be cholera. The Cruces people were mightily angry with me for expressing such an opinion; even my brother, although it relieved him of the odium of a great crime,

was as annoyed as the rest. But by twelve o'clock that morning one of the Spaniard's friends was attacked similarly, and the very people who had been most angry with me a few hours previously, came to me now eager for advice. There was no doctor in Cruces; the nearest approach to one was a little timid dentist, who was there by accident, and who refused to prescribe for the sufferer, and I was obliged to do my best. Selecting from my medicine chest—I never travel anywhere without it—what I deemed necessary, I went hastily to the patient, and at once adopted the remedies I considered fit. It was a very obstinate case, but by dint of mustard emetics, warm fomentations,[3] mustard plasters on the stomach and the back, and calomel,[4] at first in large then in gradually smaller doses, I succeeded in saving my first cholera patient in Cruces.

For a few days the terrible disease made such slow progress amongst us that we almost hoped it had passed on its way and spared us; but all at once it spread rapidly, and affrighted faces and cries of woe soon showed how fatally the destroyer was at work. And in so great request were my services, that for days and nights together I scarcely knew what it was to enjoy two successive hours' rest.

And here I must pause to set myself right with my kind reader. He or she will not, I hope, think that, in narrating these incidents, I am exalting my poor part in them unduly. I do not deny (it is the only thing indeed that I have to be proud of) that I *am* pleased and gratified when I look back upon my past life, and see times now and then, and places here and there, when and where I have been enabled to benefit my fellow-creatures suffering from ills my skill could often remedy. Nor do I think that the kind reader will consider this feeling an unworthy one. If it be so, and if, in the following pages, the account of what Providence has given me strength to do on larger fields of action be considered vain or egotistical, still I cannot help narrating them, for my share in them appears to be the one and only claim I have to interest the public ear. Moreover I shall be sadly disappointed, if those years of life which may be still in store for me are not permitted by Providence to be devoted to

similar usefulness. I am not ashamed to confess—for the gratification is, after all, a selfish one—that I love to be of service to those who need a woman's help. And wherever the need arises—on whatever distant shore—I ask no greater or higher privilege than to minister to it. After this explanation, I resume more freely the account of my labours in Cruces.

It was scarcely surprising that the cholera should spread rapidly, for fear is its powerful auxiliary, and the Cruces people bowed down before the plague in slavish despair. The Americans and other foreigners in the place showed a brave front, but the natives, constitutionally cowardly, made not the feeblest show of resistance. Beyond filling the poor church, and making the priests bring out into the streets figures of tawdry dirty saints, supposed to possess some miraculous influence which they never exerted, before which they prostrated themselves, invoking their aid with passionate prayers and cries, they did nothing. Very likely the saints would have got the credit of helping them if they had helped themselves; but the poor cowards never stirred a finger to clean out their close, reeking huts, or rid the damp streets of the rotting accumulation of months. I think their chief reliance was on "the yellow woman from Jamaica with the cholera medicine." Nor was this surprising; for the Spanish doctor, who was sent for from Panama, became nervous and frightened at the horrors around him, and the people soon saw that he was not familiar with the terrible disease he was called upon to do battle with, and preferred trusting to one who was.

It must be understood that many of those who could afford to pay for my services did so handsomely, but the great majority of my patients had nothing better to give their doctress than thanks. The best part of my practice lay amongst the American store and hotel keepers, the worst among the native boatmen and muleteers.[5] These latter died by scores, and among them I saw some scenes of horror I would fain forget, if it were possible. One terrible night, passed with some of them, has often haunted me. I will endeavour to narrate it, and should the reader be supposed to think it highly coloured and doubtful, I will only tell him that, terrible as it seems, I

saw almost as fearful scenes on the Crimean peninsula among British men, a few thousand miles only from comfort and plenty.

It was late in the evening when the largest mule-owner in Cruces came to me and implored me to accompany him to his kraal,[6] a short distance from the town, where he said some of his men were dying. One in particular, his head muleteer, a very valuable servant, he was most selfishly anxious for, and, on the way thither, promised me a large remuneration if I should succeed in saving him. Our journey was not a long one, but it rained hard, and the fields were flooded, so that it took us some time to reach the long, low hut which he called his home. I would rather not see such another scene as the interior of that hut presented. Its roof scarcely sheltered its wretched inmates from the searching rain; its floor was the damp, rank turf, trodden by the mules' hoofs and the muleteers' feet into thick mud. Around, in dirty hammocks, and on the damp floor, were the inmates of this wretched place, male and female, the strong and the sick together, breathing air that nearly choked me, accustomed as I had grown to live in impure atmosphere; for beneath the same roof the mules, more valuable to their master than his human servants, were stabled, their fore-feet locked, and beside them were heaps of saddles, packs, and harness. The groans of the sufferers and the anxiety and fear of their comrades were so painful to hear and witness, that for a few minutes I felt an almost uncontrollable impulse to run out into the stormy night, and flee from this plague-spot. But the weak feeling vanished, and I set about my duty. The mule-owner was so frightened that he did not hesitate to obey orders, and, by my directions, doors and shutters were thrown open, fires were lighted, and every effort made to ventilate the place; and then, with the aid of the frightened women, I applied myself to my poor patients. Two were beyond my skill. Death alone could give them relief. The others I could help. But no words of mine could induce them to bear their terrible sufferings like men. They screamed and groaned, not like women, for few would have been so craven-hearted, but like children; calling, in the intervals of violent pain, upon Jesu, the Madonna, and all the saints of heaven whom

their lives had scandalised. I stayed with them until midnight, and then got away for a little time. But I had not long been quiet, before the mule-master was after me again. The men were worse; would I return with him. The rain was drifting heavily on the thatched roof, as it only does in tropical climates, and I was tired to death; but I could not resist his appeal. He had brought with him a pair of tall, thick boots, in which I was to wade through the flooded fields; and with some difficulty I again reached the kraal. I found the worst cases sinking fast, one of the others had relapsed, while fear had paralysed the efforts of the rest. At last I restored some order; and, with the help of the bravest of the women, fixed up rude screens around the dying men. But no screens could shut out from the others their awful groans and cries for the aid that no mortal power could give them. So the long night passed away; first a deathlike stillness behind one screen, and then a sudden silence behind the other, showing that the fierce battle with death was over, and who had been the victor. And, meanwhile, I sat before the flickering fire, with my last patient in my lap—a poor, little, brown-faced orphan infant, scarce a year old, was dying in my arms, and I was powerless to save it. It may seem strange, but it is a fact, that I thought more of that little child than I did of the men who were struggling for their lives, and prayed very earnestly and solemnly to God to spare it. But it did not please Him to grant my prayer, and towards morning the wee spirit left this sinful world for the home above it had so lately left, and what was mortal of the little infant lay dead in my arms. Then it was that I began to think—how the idea first arose in my mind I can hardly say—that, if it were possible to take this little child and examine it, I should learn more of the terrible disease which was sparing neither young nor old, and should know better how to do battle with it. I was not afraid to use my baby patient thus. I knew its fled spirit would not reproach me, for I had done all I could for it in life—had shed tears over it, and prayed for it.

It was cold grey dawn, and the rain had ceased, when I followed the man who had taken the dead child away to bury it, and bribed him to carry it by an unfrequented path down to the river-side, and

accompany me to the thick retired bush on the opposite bank. Having persuaded him thus much, it was not difficult, with the help of silver arguments to convince him that it would be for the general benefit and his own, if I could learn from this poor little thing the secret inner workings of our common foe; and ultimately he stayed by me, and aided me in my first and last *post mortem* examination. It seems a strange deed to accomplish, and I am sure I could not wield the scalpel or the substitute I then used now, but at that time the excitement had strung my mind up to a high pitch of courage and determination; and perhaps the daily, almost hourly, scenes of death had made me somewhat callous. I need not linger on this scene, nor give the readers the results of my operation; although novel to me, and decidedly useful, they were what every medical man well knows.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Sections of chapter II and chapter III, omitted here, describe Seacole's difficult journey with her servant Mac and maid Mary through Panama to the town of Cruces, where her brother had established his hotel.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, medical science.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Poultice (archaic).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Mercurous chloride, used at this time as a purgative.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Mule drivers.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Enclosure for animals (colonial Dutch).Return to reference 6

From *Chapter VI*

MIGRATION TO GORGONA—FAREWELL DINNERS AND SPEECHES—A BUILDING SPECULATION—LIFE IN GORGONA—SYMPATHY WITH AMERICAN SLAVES—DR. CASEY IN TROUBLE—FLOODS AND FIRES—YANKEE INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM.

I remained at Cruces until the rainy months came to an end, and the river grew too shallow to be navigable by the boats higher up than Gorgona; and then we all made preparations for a flitting to that place. But before starting, it appeared to be the custom for the store and hotel keepers to exchange parting visits, and to many of these parties I, in virtue of my recent services to the community, received invitations. The most important social meeting took place on the anniversary of the declaration of American independence, at my brother's hotel, where a score of zealous Americans dined most heartily—as they never fail to do; and, as it was an especial occasion, drank champagne liberally at twelve shillings a bottle. And, after the usual patriotic toasts had been duly honoured, they proposed "the ladies," with an especial reference to myself, in a speech which I thought worth noting down at the time. The spokesman was a thin, sallow-looking American, with a pompous and yet rapid delivery, and a habit of turning over his words with his quid[1] before delivering them, and clearing his mouth after each sentence, perhaps to make room for the next. I shall beg the reader to consider that the blanks express the time expended on this operation. He dashed into his work at once, rolling up and getting rid of his sentences as he went on:—

"Well, gentlemen, I expect you'll all support me in a drinking of this toast that I du—. Aunty Seacole, gentlemen; I give you, Aunty Seacole—. We can't du less for her, after what she's done for us—, when the cholera was among us, gentlemen—, not many months ago—. So, I say, God bless the best yaller woman He ever made—, from Jamaica, gentlemen—, from the Isle of Springs[2]—Well, gentlemen, I expect there are only tu things we're vexed for—; and the first is, that she ain't one of us—, a citizen of the great United

States—; and the other thing is, gentlemen—, that Providence made her a yaller woman. I calculate, gentlemen, you're all as vexed as I am that she's not wholly white—, but I du reckon on your rejoicing with me that she's so many shades removed from being entirely black—; and I guess, if we could bleach her by any means we would —, and thus make her as acceptable in any company as she deserves to be—. Gentlemen, I give you Aunty Seacole!"

And so the orator sat down amidst much applause. It may be supposed that I did not need much persuasion to return thanks, burning, as I was, to tell them my mind on the subject of my colour. Indeed, if my brother had not checked me, I should have given them my thoughts somewhat too freely. As it was, I said:—

"Gentlemen,—I return you my best thanks for your kindness in drinking my health. As for what I have done in Cruces, Providence evidently made me to be useful, and I can't help it. But, I must say, that I don't altogether appreciate your friend's kind wishes with respect to my complexion. If it had been as dark as any n*****'s, I should have been just as happy and as useful, and as much respected by those whose respect I value; and as to his offer of bleaching me, I should, even if it were practicable, decline it without any thanks. As to the society which the process might gain me admission into, all I can say is, that, judging from the specimens I have met with here and elsewhere, I don't think that I shall lose much by being excluded from it. So, gentlemen, I drink to you and the general reformation of American manners."

I do not think that they altogether admired my speech, but I was a somewhat privileged person, and they laughed at it good-naturedly enough. Perhaps (for I was not in the best humour myself) I should have been better pleased if they had been angry.

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I may have before said that the citizens of the New Granada Republic had a strong prejudice against all Americans. It is not difficult to assign a cause for this. In the first place, many of the

negroes, fugitive from the Southern States, had sought refuge in this and the other States of Central America, where every profession was open to them; and as they were generally superior men—evinced perhaps by their hatred of their old condition and their successful flight—they soon rose to positions of eminence in New Granada. In the priesthood, in the army, in all municipal offices, the self-liberated negroes were invariably found in the foremost rank; and the people, for some reason—perhaps because they recognised in them superior talents for administration—always respected them more than, and preferred them to, their native rulers. So that, influenced naturally by these freed slaves, who bore themselves before their old masters bravely and like men, the New Granada people were strongly prejudiced against the Americans. And in the second and third places, they feared their quarrelsome, bullying habits—be it remembered that the crowds to California were of the lowest sorts, many of whom have since fertilised Cuban and Nicaraguan soil—and dreaded their schemes for annexation. To such an extent was this amusingly carried, that when the American Railway Company took possession of Navy Bay, and christened it Aspinwall,[3] after the name of their Chairman, the native authorities refused to recognise their right to name any portion of the Republic, and pertinaciously returned all letters directed to Aspinwall, with "no such place known" marked upon them in the very spot for which they were intended. And, in addition to this, the legal authorities refused to compel any defendant to appear who was described as of Aspinwall, and put every plaintiff out of court who described himself as residing in that unrecognised place.

Under these circumstances, my readers can easily understand that when any Americans crossed the Isthmus, accompanied by their slaves, the Cruces and Gorgona people were restlessly anxious to whisper into their ears offers of freedom and hints how easy escape would be. Nor were the authorities at all inclined to aid in the recapture of a runaway slave. So that, as it was necessary for the losers to go on with the crowd, the fugitive invariably escaped. It is one of the maxims of the New Granada constitution—as it is, I

believe, of the English—that on a slave touching its soil[4] his chains fall from him. Rather than irritate so dangerous a neighbour as America, this rule was rarely supported; but I remember the following instance of its successful application.

A young American woman, whose character can be best described by the word "vicious," fell ill at Gorgona, and was left behind by her companions under the charge of a young negro, her slave, whom she treated most inhumanly, as was evinced by the poor girl's frequent screams when under the lash. One night her cries were so distressing, that Gorgona could stand it no longer, but broke into the house and found the chattel bound hand and foot, naked, and being severely lashed. Despite the threats and astonishment of the mistress, they were both carried off on the following morning, before the alcalde,[5] himself a man of colour, and of a very humane disposition. When the particulars of the case were laid before him, he became strongly excited, and called upon the woman to offer an explanation of her cruelty. She treated it with the coolest unconcern—"The girl was her property, worth so many dollars, and a child at New Orleans; had misbehaved herself, and been properly corrected. The alcalde must be drunk or a fool, or both together, to interfere between an American and her property." Her coolness vanished, however, when the alcalde turned round to the girl and told her that she was free to leave her mistress when she liked; and when she heard the irrepressible cheering of the crowded court-hut at the alcalde's humanity and boldness, and saw the slave's face flush with delight at the judge's words, she became terribly enraged; made use of the most fearful threats, and would have wreaked summary vengeance on her late chattel had not the clumsy soldiery interfered. Then, with demoniac refinement of cruelty, she bethought herself of the girl's baby at New Orleans still in her power, and threatened most horrible torture to the child if its mother dared to accept the alcalde's offer.

The poor girl trembled and covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out some fearful sight, and, I think, had we not persuaded her to the contrary, that she would have sacrificed her

newly won freedom for the child's sake. But we knew very well that when the heat of passion had subsided, the threatener would be too 'cute[6] to injure her own property; and at once set afloat a subscription for the purchase of the child. The issue of the tale I do not know, as the woman was very properly removed into the interior of the country.

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Shortly after this, tired to death of life in Panama, I handed over my hotel to my brother, and returned to Kingston.[7] On the way thither I experienced another instance of American politeness, which I cannot help recording; first reminding my readers of what I have previously said of the character of the Californian travellers. Anxious to get home quickly, I took my passage in the first steamer that left Navy Bay—an American one; and late in the evening said farewell to the friends I had been staying with, and went on board. A very kind friend, an American merchant, doing a large business at Navy Bay, had tried hard to persuade me to delay my journey until the English company's steamer called; without, however, giving any good reasons for his wish. So, with Mac and my little maid, I passed through the crowd of female passengers on deck, and sought the privacy of the saloon. Before I had been long there, two ladies came to me, and in their cool, straightforward manner, questioned me.

"Where air you going?"

"To Kingston."

"And how air you going?"

"By sea."

"Don't be impertinent, yaller woman. By what conveyance air you going?"

"By this steamer, of course. I've paid for my passage."

They went away with this information; and in a short time eight or nine others came and surrounded me, asking the same questions. My answers—and I was very particular—raised quite a storm of uncomplimentary remarks.

"Guess a n***** woman don't go along with us in this saloon," said one. "I never travelled with a n***** yet, and I expect I shan't begin now," said another; while some children had taken my little servant Mary in hand, and were practising on her the politenesses which their parents were favouring me with—only, as is the wont of children, they were crueller. I cannot help it if I shock my readers; but the *truth* is, that one positively spat in poor little Mary's frightened yellow face.

At last an old American lady came to where I sat, and gave me some staid advice. "Well, now, I tell you for your good, you'd better quit this, and not drive my people to extremities. If you do, you'll be sorry for it, I expect." Thus harassed, I appealed to the stewardess—a tall sour-looking woman, flat and thin as a dressed-up broomstick. She asked me sundry questions as to how and when I had taken my passage; until, tired beyond all endurance, I said, "My good woman, put me anywhere—under a boat—in your store-room, so that I can get to Kingston somehow." But the stewardess was not to be moved.

"There's nowhere but the saloon, and you can't expect to stay with the white people, that's clear. Flesh and blood can stand a good deal of aggravation; but not that. If the Britishers is so took up with coloured people, that's their business; but it won't do here."

This last remark was in answer to an Englishman, whose advice to me was not to leave my seat for any of them. He made matters worse; until at last I lost my temper, and calling Mac, bade him get my things together, and went up to the captain—a good honest man. He and some of the black crew and the black cook, who showed his teeth most viciously, were much annoyed. Muttering about its being a custom of the country, the captain gave me an order upon the agent for the money I had paid; and so, at twelve o'clock at night, I was landed again upon the wharf of Navy Bay.

My American friends were vastly annoyed, but not much surprised; and two days later, the English steamer, the "Eagle," in charge of my old friend, Captain B——, touched at Navy Bay, and carried me to Kingston.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Portion of chewing tobacco (American).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Another name for Jamaica.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The “native authorities” called the town “Colón” (after Christopher Columbus); in time this name prevailed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Seacole refers to the Mansfield judgment of 1772, which declared slavery to be illegal in England. Persons who were enslaved in other jurisdictions (including British colonies, where slavery was not abolished until 1833) became free once on English ground.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The mayor, magistrate, or chief administrative officer of a town in a Spanish-speaking region or country.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Acute, quick-witted in her own interest.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In sections omitted here, Seacole describes how she established a makeshift hotel in Gorgona.Return to reference 7

Chapter VIII

I LONG TO JOIN THE BRITISH ARMY BEFORE SEBASTOPOL—MY WANDERINGS ABOUT LONDON FOR THAT PURPOSE—HOW I FAIL—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRM OF "DAY AND MARTIN"—I EMBARK FOR TURKEY.

Before I left Jamaica for Navy Bay, as narrated in the last chapter, war had been declared against Russia,[1] and we were all anxiously expecting news of a descent upon the Crimea. Now, no sooner had I heard of war somewhere, than I longed to witness it; and when I was told that many of the regiments I had known so well in Jamaica had left England for the scene of action, the desire to join them became stronger than ever. I used to stand for hours in silent thought before an old map of the world, in a little corner of which some one had chalked a red cross, to enable me to distinguish where the Crimea was; and as I traced the route thither, all difficulties would vanish. But when I came to talk over the project with my friends, the best scheme I could devise seemed so wild and improbable, that I was fain to resign my hopes for a time, and so started for Navy Bay.

But all the way to England, from Navy Bay, I was turning my old wish over and over in my mind; and when I found myself in London, in the autumn of 1854, just after the battle of Alma had been fought, and my old friends were fairly before the walls of Sebastopol, how to join them there took up far more of my thoughts than that visionary gold-mining speculation on the river Palmilla,[2] which seemed so feasible to us in New Granada, but was considered so wild and unprofitable a speculation in London. And, as time wore on, the inclination to join my old friends of the 97th, 48th, and other regiments, battling with worse foes than yellow fever or cholera, took such exclusive possession of my mind, that I threw over the gold speculation altogether, and devoted all my energies to my new scheme.

Heaven knows it was visionary enough! I had no friends who could help me in such a project—nay, who would understand why I

desired to go, and what I desired to do when I got there. My funds, although they might, carefully husbanded, carry me over the three thousand miles, and land me at Balaclava, would not support me there long; while to persuade the public that an unknown Creole woman would be useful to their army before Sebastopol was too improbable an achievement to be thought of for an instant. Circumstances, however, assisted me.

As the winter wore on, came hints from various quarters of mismanagement, want, and suffering in the Crimea; and after the battles of Balaclava and Inkermann, and the fearful storm of the 14th of November, the worst anticipations were realized. Then we knew that the hospitals were full to suffocation, that scarcity and exposure were the fate of all in the camp, and that the brave fellows for whom any of us at home would have split our last shilling, and shared our last meal, were dying thousands of miles away from the active sympathy of their fellow-countrymen. Fast and thick upon the news of Inkermann, fought by a handful of fasting and enfeebled men against eight times their number of picked Russians,[3] brought fresh and animated to the contest, and while all England was reeling beneath the shock of that fearful victory, came the sad news that hundreds were dying whom the Russian shot and sword had spared, and that the hospitals of Scutari were utterly unable to shelter, or their inadequate staff to attend to, the ship-loads of sick and wounded which were sent to them across the stormy Black Sea.

But directly England knew the worst, she set about repairing her past neglect. In every household busy fingers were working for the poor soldier—money flowed in golden streams wherever need was—and Christian ladies, mindful of the sublime example, "I was sick, and ye visited me,"[4] hastened to volunteer their services by those sick-beds which only women know how to soothe and bless.

Need I be ashamed to confess that I shared in the general enthusiasm, and longed more than ever to carry my busy (and the reader will not hesitate to add experienced) fingers where the sword or bullet had been busiest, and pestilence most rife. I had seen much of sorrow and death elsewhere, but they had never daunted

me; and if I could feel happy binding up the wounds of quarrelsome Americans and treacherous Spaniards, what delight should I not experience if I could be useful to my own "sons," suffering for a cause it was so glorious to fight and bleed for! I never stayed to discuss probabilities, or enter into conjectures as to my chances of reaching the scene of action. I made up my mind that if the army wanted nurses, they would be glad of me, and with all the ardour of my nature, which ever carried me where inclination prompted, I decided that I *would* go to the Crimea; and go I did, as all the world knows.

Of course, had it not been for my old strong-mindedness (which has nothing to do with obstinacy, and is in no way related to it—the best term I can think of to express it being "judicious decisiveness"), I should have given up the scheme a score of times in as many days; so regularly did each successive day give birth to a fresh set of rebuffs and disappointments. I shall make no excuse to my readers for giving them a pretty full history of my struggles to become a Crimean *heroine*!

My first idea (and knowing that I was well fitted for the work, and would be the right woman in the right place, the reader can fancy my audacity) was to apply to the War Office for the post of hospital nurse. Among the diseases which I understood were most prevalent in the Crimea were cholera, diarrhœa, and dysentery, all of them more or less known in tropical climates; and with which, as the reader will remember, my Panama experience had made me tolerably familiar. Now, no one will accuse me of presumption, if I say that I thought (and so it afterwards proved) that my knowledge of these human ills would not only render my services as a nurse more valuable, but would enable me to be of use to the overworked doctors. That others thought so too, I took with me ample testimony. I cannot resist the temptation of giving my readers one of the testimonials I had, it seems so eminently practical and to the point:—

"I became acquainted with Mrs. Seacole through the instrumentality of T. B. Cowan, Esq., H. B. M. Consul at Colon, on the

Isthmus of Panama, and have had many opportunities of witnessing her professional zeal and ability in the treatment of aggravated forms of tropical diseases.

"I am myself personally much indebted for her indefatigable kindness and skill at a time when I am apt to believe the advice of a practitioner qualified in the North would have little availed.

"Her peculiar fitness, in a constitutional point of view,[5] for the duties of a medical attendant, needs no comment.

(Signed) "A. G. M.,

"Late Medical Officer, West Granada Gold-mining Company."

So I made long and unwearied application at the War Office,[6] in blissful ignorance of the labour and time I was throwing away. I have reason to believe that I considerably interfered with the repose of sundry messengers, and disturbed, to an alarming degree, the official gravity of some nice gentlemanly young fellows, who were working out their salaries in an easy, off-hand way. But my ridiculous endeavours to gain an interview with the Secretary-at-War of course failed, and glad at last to oblige a distracted messenger, I transferred my attentions to the Quartermaster-General's department. Here I saw another gentleman, who listened to me with a great deal of polite enjoyment, and—his amusement ended—hinted, had I not better apply to the Medical Department; and accordingly I attached myself to their quarters with the same unwearying ardour. But, of course, I grew tired at last, and then I changed my plans.

Now, I am not for a single instant going to blame the authorities who would not listen to the offer of a motherly yellow woman to go to the Crimea and nurse her "sons" there, suffering from cholera, diarrhœa, and a host of lesser ills. In my country, where people know our use, it would have been different; but here it was natural enough—although I had references, and other voices spoke for me—that they should laugh, good-naturedly enough, at my offer. War, I know, is a serious game, but sometimes very humble actors are of great use in it, and if the reader, when he comes in time to peruse

the evidence of those who had to do with the Sebastopol drama, of my share in it, will turn back to this chapter, he will confess perhaps that, after all, the impulse which led me to the War Department was not unnatural.

My new scheme was, I candidly confess, worse devised than the one which had failed. Miss Nightingale had left England for the Crimea, but other nurses were still to follow, and my new plan was simply to offer myself to Mrs. H——[7] as a recruit. Feeling that I was one of the very women they most wanted, experienced and fond of the work, I jumped at once to the conclusion that they would gladly enrol me in their number. To go to Cox's, the army agents, who were most obliging to me, and obtain the Secretary-at-War's private address, did not take long; and that done, I laid the same pertinacious siege to his great house in —— Square, as I had previously done to his place of business.

Many a long hour did I wait in his great hall, while scores passed in and out; many of them looking curiously at me. The flunkeys,[8] noble creatures! marvelled exceedingly at the yellow woman whom no excuses could get rid of, nor impertinence dismay, and showed me very clearly that they resented my persisting in remaining there in mute appeal from their sovereign will. At last I gave that up, after a message from Mrs. H. that the full complement of nurses had been secured, and that my offer could not be entertained. Once again I tried, and had an interview this time with one of Miss Nightingale's companions. She gave me the same reply, and I read in her face the fact, that had there been a vacancy, I should not have been chosen to fill it.

As a last resort, I applied to the managers of the Crimean Fund to know whether they would give me a passage to the camp—once there I would trust to something turning up. But this failed also, and one cold evening I stood in the twilight, which was fast deepening into wintry night, and looked back upon the ruins of my last castle in the air. The disappointment seemed a cruel one. I was so conscious of the unselfishness of the motives which induced me to leave England—so certain of the service I could render among the sick

soldiery, and yet I found it so difficult to convince others of these facts. Doubts and suspicions arose in my heart for the first and last time, thank Heaven. Was it possible that American prejudices against colour had some root here? Did these ladies shrink from accepting my aid because my blood flowed beneath a somewhat duskier skin than theirs? Tears streamed down my foolish cheeks, as I stood in the fast thinning streets; tears of grief that any should doubt my motives—that Heaven should deny me the opportunity that I sought. Then I stood still, and looking upward through and through the dark clouds that shadowed London, prayed aloud for help. I dare say that I was a strange sight to the few passers-by, who hastened homeward through the gloom and mist of that wintry night. I dare say those who read these pages will wonder at me as much as they who saw me did; but you must all remember that I am one of an impulsive people, and find it hard to put that restraint upon my feelings which to you is so easy and natural.

The morrow, however, brought fresh hope. A good night's rest had served to strengthen my determination. Let what might happen, to the Crimea I would go. If in no other way, then would I upon my own responsibility and at my own cost. There were those there who had known me in Jamaica, who had been under my care; doctors who would vouch for my skill and willingness to aid them, and a general who had more than once helped me, and would do so still. Why not trust to their welcome and kindness, and start at once? If the authorities had allowed me, I would willingly have given them my services as a nurse; but as they declined them, should I not open an hotel for invalids in the Crimea in my own way? I had no more idea of what the Crimea was than the home authorities themselves perhaps, but having once made up my mind, it was not long before cards were printed and speeding across the Mediterranean to my friends before Sebastopol. Here is one of them:—

"BRITISH HOTEL.
MRS. MARY SEACOLE
(*Late of Kingston, Jamaica*),

Respectfully announces to her former kind friends, and to the Officers of the Army and Navy generally,

That she has taken her passage in the screw-steamer[9] "Hollander," to start from London on the 25th of January, intending on her arrival at Balaclava to establish a mess table[1] and comfortable quarters for sick and convalescent officers."

This bold programme would reach the Crimea in the end of January, at a time when any officer would have considered a stall in an English stable luxurious quarters compared to those he possessed, and had nearly forgotten the comforts of a mess-table. It must have read to them rather like a mockery, and yet, as the reader will see, I succeeded in redeeming my pledge.

While this new scheme was maturing, I again met Mr. Day[2] in England. He was bound to Balaclava upon some shipping business, and we came to the understanding that (if it were found desirable) we should together open a store as well as an hotel in the neighbourhood of the camp. So was originated the well-known firm of Seacole and Day (I am sorry to say, the camp wits dubbed it Day and Martin),[3] which, for so many months, did business upon the now deserted high-road from the then busy harbour of Balaclava to the front of the British army before Sebastopol.

These new arrangements were not allowed to interfere in any way with the main object of my journey. A great portion of my limited capital was, with the kind aid of a medical friend, invested in medicines which I had reason to believe would be useful; with the remainder I purchased those home comforts which I thought would be most difficult to obtain away from England.

I had scarcely set my foot on board the "Hollander," before I met a friend. The supercargo[4] was the brother of the Mr. S——, whose death in Jamaica the reader will not have forgotten, and he gave me a hearty welcome. I thought the meeting augured well, and when I told him my plans he gave me the most cheering encouragement. I

was glad, indeed, of any support, for, beyond all doubt, my project was a hazardous one.

So cheered at the outset, I watched without a pang the shores of England sink behind the smooth sea, and turned my gaze hopefully to the as yet landless horizon, beyond which lay that little peninsula to which the eyes and hearts of all England were so earnestly directed.

So, cheerily! the good ship ploughed its way eastward ho![5] for Turkey.

Endnotes

- Note 1: France and Britain declared war on Russia on March 27 and 28, 1854, respectively.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Chapter VII (not included here) provides details of Seacole's participation in gold-mining schemes in New Granada.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, handpicked, selected.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Matthew 25:36.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Arguing that Seacole is physically well-suited to the demands of nursing.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The head ("Secretary at War") of this ministry was at this time Sir Sidney Herbert (1810–1861).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Elizabeth Herbert (1822–1911), wife of Sir Sidney Herbert; she recruited nurses in London for Nightingale.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Male servants or footmen.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Steam-powered boat or ship with one or more propellers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Table where officers of a regiment take their meals together.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Thomas Day, a distant relation of Seacole's husband, is introduced in Chapter VII (not included here); Seacole first met him in New Granada, where he was superintendent of a gold mine.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A well-known British firm that produced shoe polish (then referred to as "blacking").Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Employee responsible for the cargo onboard a ship.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A play on the more familiar cry of "Westward ho!" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* 3.1.134).Return to reference 5

Chapter IX

VOYAGE TO CONSTANTINOPLE—MALTA—GIBRALTAR—CONSTANTINOPLE, AND WHAT I THOUGHT OF IT—VISIT TO SCUTARI HOSPITAL—MISS NIGHTINGALE.

I am not going to risk the danger of wearying the reader with a long account of the voyage to Constantinople,[1] already worn threadbare by book-making tourists. It was a very interesting one, and, as I am a good sailor, I had not even the temporary horrors of sea-sickness to mar it. The weather, although cold, was fine, and the sea good-humouredly calm, and I enjoyed the voyage amazingly. And as day by day we drew nearer to the scene of action, my doubts of success grew less and less, until I had a conviction of the rightness of the step I had taken, which would have carried me buoyantly through any difficulties.

On the way, of course, I was called up from my berth at an unreasonable hour to gaze upon the Cape of St. Vincent, and expected to feel duly impressed when the long bay where Trafalgar's fight[2] was won came in view, with the white convent walls on the cliffs above bathed in the early sunlight. I never failed to take an almost childish interest in the signals which passed between the "Hollander" and the fleet of vessels whose sails whitened the track to and from the Crimea, trying to puzzle out the language these children of the ocean spoke in their hurried course, and wondering whether any, or what sufficiently important thing *could* happen which would warrant their stopping on their busy way.

We spent a short time at Gibraltar, and you may imagine that I was soon on shore making the best use of the few hours' reprieve granted to the "Hollander's" weary engines. I had an idea that I should do better alone, so I declined all offers of companionship, and selecting a brisk young fellow from the mob of cicerones[3] who offered their services, saw more of the art of fortification in an hour or so than I could understand in as many years. The pleasure was rather fatiguing, and I was not sorry to return to the market-place, where I stood curiously watching its strange and motley population.

While so engaged, I heard for the first time an exclamation which became familiar enough to me afterwards.

"Why, bless my soul, old fellow, if this is not our good old Mother Seacole!" I turned round, and saw two officers, whose features, set in a broad frame of Crimean beard, I had some difficulty in recognising. But I soon remembered that they were two of the 48th, who had been often in my house at Kingston. Glad were the kind-hearted fellows, and not a little surprised withal, to meet their old hostess in the market-place of Gibraltar, bound for the scene of action which they had left invalided; and it was not long before we were talking old times over some wine—Spanish, I suppose—but it was very nasty.

"And you are going to the front, old lady—you, of all people in the world?"

"Why not, my sons?—won't they be glad to have me there?"

"By Jove! yes, mother," answered one, an Irishman.[4] "It isn't many women—God bless them!—we've had to spoil us out there. But it's not the place even for you, who know what hardship is. You'll never get a roof to cover you at Balaclava, nor on the road either." So they rattled on, telling me of the difficulties that were in store for me. But they could not shake my resolution.

"Do you think I shall be of any use to you when I get there?"

"Surely."

"Then I'll go, were the place a hundred times worse than you describe it. Can't I rig up a hut with the packing-cases, and sleep, if need be, on straw, like Margery Daw?"[5]

So they laughed, and drank success to me, and to our next meeting; for, although they were going home invalided, the brave fellows' hearts were with their companions, for all the hardships they had passed through.

We stopped at Malta also, where, of course, I landed, and stared about me, and submitted to be robbed by the lazy Maltese with all a traveller's resignation. Here, also, I met friends—some medical officers who had known me in Kingston; and one of them, Dr. F——, lately arrived from Scutari, gave me, when he heard my plans, a

letter of introduction to Miss Nightingale, then hard at work, evoking order out of confusion, and bravely resisting the despotism of death, at the hospital of Scutari.

So on, past beautiful islands and shores, until we are steaming against a swift current, and an adverse wind, between two tower-crested promontories of rock, which they tell me stand in Europe and in Asia, and are connected with some pretty tale of love[6] in days long gone by. Ah! travel where a woman may, in the New World, or the Old, she meets this old, old tale everywhere. It is the one bond of sympathy which I have found existing in three quarters of the world alike. So on, until the cable rattles over the windlass, as the good ship's anchor plunges down fathoms deep into the blue waters of the Bosphorus[7]—her voyage ended.

I do not think that Constantinople impressed me so much as I had expected; and I thought its streets would match those of Navy Bay not unfairly. The caicques,[8] also, of which I had ample experience—for I spent six days here, wandering about Pera and Stamboul[9] in the daytime, and returning to the "Hollander" at nightfall—might be made more safe and commodious for stout ladies, even if the process interfered a little with their ornament. Time and trouble combined have left me with a well-filled-out, portly form—the envy of many an angular Yankee female—and, more than once, it was in no slight danger of becoming too intimately acquainted with the temperature of the Bosphorus. But I will do the Turkish boatmen the justice to say that they were as politely careful of my safety as their astonishment and regard for the well-being of their caicques (which they appear to love as an Arab does his horse, or an Esquimaux his dogs, and for the same reason perhaps) would admit. Somewhat surprised, also, seemed the cunning-eyed Greeks, who throng the streets of Pera, at the unprotected Creole woman, who took Constantinople so coolly (it would require something more to surprise her); while the grave English raised their eyebrows wonderingly, and the more vivacious French shrugged their pliant shoulders into the strangest contortions. I accepted it all as a compliment to a stout female tourist, neatly dressed in a red or

yellow dress, a plain shawl of some other colour, and a simple straw wide-awake,[1] with bright red streamers. I flatter myself that I woke up sundry sleepy-eyed Turks, who seemed to think that the great object of life was to avoid showing surprise at anything; while the Turkish women gathered around me, and jabbered about me, in the most flattering manner.

How I ever succeeded in getting Mr. Day's letters from the Post-office, Constantinople, puzzles me now; but I did—and I shall ever regard my success as one of the great triumphs of my life. Their contents were not very cheering. He gave a very dreary account of Balaclava and of camp life, and almost dissuaded me from continuing my journey; but his last letter ended by giving me instructions as to the purchases I had best make, if I still determined upon making the adventure; so I forgot all the rest, and busied myself in laying in the stores he recommended.

But I found time, before I left the "Hollander," to charter a crazy caicque, to carry me to Scutari, intending to present Dr. F——'s letter to Miss Nightingale.

It was afternoon when the boatmen set me down in safety at the landing-place of Scutari, and I walked up the slight ascent, to the great dull-looking hospital. Thinking of the many noble fellows who had been borne, or had painfully crept along this path, only to die within that dreary building, I felt rather dull; and directly I entered the hospital, and came upon the long wards of sufferers, lying there so quiet and still, a rush of tears came to my eyes, and blotted out the sight for a few minutes. But I soon felt at home, and looked about me with great interest. The men were, many of them, very quiet. Some of the convalescent formed themselves into little groups around one who read a newspaper; others had books in their hands, or by their side, where they had fallen when slumber overtook the readers, while hospital orderlies moved to and fro, and now and then the female nurses, in their quiet uniform, passed noiselessly on some mission of kindness.

I was fortunate enough to find an old acquaintance, who accompanied me through the wards, and rendered it unnecessary

for me to trouble the busy nurses. This was an old 97th man—a Sergeant T——, whom I had known in Kingston, and who was slowly recovering from an attack of dysentery, and making himself of use here until the doctors should let him go back and have another "shy at the Rooshians."[2] He is very glad to meet me, and tells me his history very socially, and takes me to the bedsides of some comrades, who had also known me at Up-Park Camp. My poor fellows! how their eyes glisten when they light upon an old friend's face in these Turkish barracks—put to so sad a use, three thousand miles from home. Here is one of them—"hurt in the trenches," says the Sergeant, with shaven bandaged head, and bright, restless, Irish eyes, who hallooes out, "Mother Seacole! Mother Seacole!" in such an excited tone of voice; and when he has shaken hands a score of times, falls back upon his pillow very wearily. But I sit by his side, and try to cheer him with talk about the future, when he shall grow well, and see home, and hear them all thank him for what he has been helping to do, so that he grows all right in a few minutes; but, hearing that I am on the way to the front, gets excited again; for, you see, illness and weakness make these strong men as children, not least in the patient unmurmuring resignation with which they suffer. I think my Irish friend had an indistinct idea of a "muddle" somewhere, which had kept him for weeks on salt meat and biscuit, until it gave him the "scurvy,"[3] for he is very anxious that I should take over plenty of vegetables, of every sort. "And, oh! mother!"—and it is strange to hear his almost plaintive tone as he urges this—"take them plenty of eggs, mother; we never saw eggs over there."

At some slight risk of giving offence, I cannot resist the temptation of lending a helping hand here and there—replacing a slipped bandage, or easing a stiff one. But I do not think any one was offended; and one doctor, who had with some surprise and, at first, alarm on his face, watched me replace a bandage, which was giving pain, said, very kindly, when I had finished, "Thank you, ma'am."

One thought never left my mind as I walked through the fearful miles of suffering in that great hospital. If it is so here, what must it not be at the scene of war—on the spot where the poor fellows are stricken down by pestilence or Russian bullets, and days and nights of agony must be passed before a woman's hand can dress their wounds. And I felt happy in the conviction that *I must* be useful three or four days nearer to their pressing wants than this.

It was growing late before I felt tired, or thought of leaving Scutari, and Dr. S——, another Jamaica friend, who had kindly borne me company for the last half-hour agreed with me that the caicque was not the safest conveyance by night on the Bosphorus, and recommended me to present my letter to Miss Nightingale, and perhaps a lodging for the night could be found for me. So, still under the Sergeant's patient guidance, we thread our way through passages and corridors, all used as sick-wards, until we reach the corner tower of the building, in which are the nurses' quarters.

I think Mrs. B——,[4] who saw me, felt more surprise than she could politely show (I never found women so quick to understand me as the men) when I handed her Dr. F——'s kind letter respecting me, and apologized for troubling Miss Nightingale. There is that in the Doctor's letter (he had been much at Scutari) which prevents my request being refused, and I am asked to wait until Miss Nightingale, whose every moment is valuable, can see me. Meanwhile Mrs. B. questions me very kindly, but with the same look of curiosity and surprise.

What object has Mrs. Seacole in coming out? This is the purport of her questions. And I say, frankly, to be of use somewhere; for other considerations I had not, until necessity forced them upon me. Willingly, had they accepted me, I would have worked for the wounded, in return for bread and water. I fancy Mrs. B—— thought that I sought for employment at Scutari, for she said, very kindly—

"Miss Nightingale has the entire management of our hospital staff, but I do not think that any vacancy—"

"Excuse me, ma'am," I interrupt her with, "but I am bound for the front in a few days;" and my questioner leaves me, more

surprised than ever. The room I waited in was used as a kitchen. Upon the stoves were cans of soup, broth, and arrow-root,[5] while nurses passed in and out with noiseless tread and subdued manner. I thought many of them had that strange expression of the eyes which those who have gazed long on scenes of woe or horror seldom lose.

In half an hour's time I am admitted to Miss Nightingale's presence. A slight figure, in the nurses' dress; with a pale, gentle, and withal firm face, resting lightly in the palm of one white hand, while the other supports the elbow—a position which gives to her countenance a keen inquiring expression, which is rather marked. Standing thus in repose, and yet keenly observant—the greatest sign of impatience at any time a slight, perhaps unwitting motion of the firmly planted right foot—was Florence Nightingale—that Englishwoman whose name shall never die, but sound like music on the lips of British men until the hour of doom.[6]

She has read Dr. F——'s letter, which lies on the table by her side, and asks, in her gentle but eminently practical and business-like way, "What do you want, Mrs. Seacole—anything that we can do for you? If it lies in my power, I shall be very happy."

So I tell her of my dread of the night journey by caicque, and the improbability of my finding the "Hollander" in the dark; and, with some diffidence, threw myself upon the hospitality of Scutari, offering to nurse the sick for the night. Now unfortunately, for many reasons, room even for one in Scutari Hospital was at that time no easy matter to find; but at last a bed was discovered to be unoccupied at the hospital washerwomen's quarters.

My experience of washerwomen, all the world over, is the same—that they are kind soft-hearted folks. Possibly the soap-suds they almost live in find their way into their hearts and tempers, and soften them. This Scutari washerwoman is no exception to the rule, and welcomes me most heartily. With her, also, are some invalid nurses; and after they have gone to bed, we spend some hours of the night talking over our adventures, and giving one another scraps of our respective biographies. I hadn't long retired to my couch

before I wished most heartily that we had continued our chat; for unbidden and most unwelcome companions took the washerwoman's place, and persisted not only in dividing my bed, but my plump person also. Upon my word, I believe the fleas are the only industrious creatures in all Turkey. Some of their relatives would seem to have migrated into Russia; for I found them in the Crimea equally prosperous and ubiquitous.

In the morning, a breakfast is sent to my mangled remains, and a kind message from Mrs. B——, having reference to how I spent the night. And, after an interview with some other medical men, whose acquaintance I had made in Jamaica, I shake hands with the soft-hearted washerwoman, up to her shoulders in soap-suds already, and start for the "Hollander."

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Former name of Istanbul, Turkey.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The battle of Trafalgar, in which the British navy defeated the combined forces of the French and Spanish navies, took place on October 21, 1805.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Guides offering sightseeing tours.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: To Roman Catholics in Britain and Ireland who were willing to swear an oath of loyalty to the crown, the Papists Act of 1778 granted limited civil rights, including the right to join the British Army. Around 40 percent of the British armed forces in the 1850s were Irish-born.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Alluding to a traditional English nursery rhyme, "See Saw, Margery Daw." In one version Margery "[s]old her bed and lay on the straw."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A Greek myth tells the story of lovers who lived on either side of the Hellespont, a stretch of water now known as the Dardanelle Straits. Every night Leander would swim across

to join Hero until one night he drowned; Hero then drowned herself.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: The strait of water that runs through Istanbul, separating Europe from Asia and connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara. “Windlass”: a cranking device or winch used to raise a ship’s anchor.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Light rowboats.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Districts of Istanbul.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Hat with a low crown and a very wide brim.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, take a shot at the Russians.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Disease caused by vitamin C deficiency.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Probably Selina Bracebridge (1800–1874), who accompanied Nightingale to Istanbul and served as her assistant.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An easily digestible starch from a tropical plant, typically used in hard biscuits.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Subsequently I saw much of Miss Nightingale, at Balaclava [*Seacole’s note*].Return to reference 6

From *Chapter XIII*

MY WORK IN THE CRIMEA

I hope the reader will give me credit for the assertion that I am about to make, viz., that I enter upon the particulars of this chapter with great reluctance; but I cannot omit them, for the simple reason that they strengthen my one and only claim to interest the public, viz., my services to the brave British army in the Crimea. But, fortunately, I can follow a course which will not only render it unnecessary for me to sound my own trumpet, but will be more satisfactory to the reader. I can put on record the written opinions of those who had ample means of judging and ascertaining how I fulfilled the great object which I had in view in leaving England for the Crimea; and before I do so, I must solicit my readers' attention to the position I held in the camp as doctress, nurse, and "mother."

I have never been long in any place before I have found my practical experience in the science of medicine useful. Even in London I have found it of service to others. And in the Crimea, where the doctors were so overworked, and sickness was so prevalent, I could not be long idle; for I never forgot that my intention in seeking the army was to help the kind-hearted doctors, to be useful to whom I have ever looked upon and still regard as so high a privilege.

But before very long I found myself surrounded with patients of my own, and this for two simple reasons. In the first place, the men (I am speaking of the "ranks" now) had a very serious objection to going into hospital for any but urgent reasons, and the regimental doctors were rather fond of sending them there; and, in the second place, they could and did get at my store sick-comforts and nourishing food, which the heads of the medical staff would sometimes find it difficult to procure. These reasons, with the additional one that I was very familiar with the diseases which they suffered most from, and successful in their treatment (I say this in

no spirit of vanity), were quite sufficient to account for the numbers who came daily to the British Hotel for medical treatment.

That the officers were glad of me as a doctress and nurse may be easily understood. When a poor fellow lay sickening in his cheerless hut and sent down to me, he knew very well that I should not ride up in answer to his message empty-handed. And although I did not hesitate to charge him with the value of the necessaries I took him, still he was thankful enough to be able to *purchase* them. When we lie ill at home surrounded with comfort, we never think of feeling any special gratitude for the sick-room delicacies which we accept as a consequence of our illness; but the poor officer lying ill and weary in his crazy hut, dependent for the merest necessaries of existence upon a clumsy, ignorant soldier-cook, who would almost prefer eating his meat raw to having the trouble of cooking it (our English soldiers are bad campaigners), often finds his greatest troubles in the want of those little delicacies with which a weak stomach must be humoured into retaining nourishment. How often have I felt sad at the sight of poor lads, who in England thought attending early parade a hardship, and felt harassed if their neckcloths set awry, or the natty little boots would not retain their polish, bearing, and bearing so nobly and bravely, trials and hardships to which the veteran campaigner frequently succumbed. Don't you think, reader, if you were lying, with parched lips and fading appetite, thousands of miles from mother, wife, or sister, loathing the rough food by your side, and thinking regretfully of that English home where nothing that could minister to your great need would be left untried—don't you think that you would welcome the familiar figure of the stout lady whose bony horse has just pulled up at the door of your hut, and whose panniers contain some cooling drink, a little broth, some homely cake, or a dish of jelly or blanc-mange[1]—don't you think, under such circumstances, that you would heartily agree with my friend *Punch's* remark:—

"That berry-brown face, with a kind heart's trace
Impressed on each wrinkle sly,

Was a sight to behold, through the snow-clouds rolled
Across that iron sky."[2]

I tell you, reader, I have seen many a bold fellow's eyes moisten at such a season, when a woman's voice and a woman's care have brought to their minds recollections of those happy English homes which some of them never saw again; but many did, who will remember their woman-comrade upon the bleak and barren heights before Sebastopol.

Then their calling me "mother" was not, I think, altogether unmeaning. I used to fancy that there was something homely in the word; and, reader, you cannot think how dear to them was the smallest thing that reminded them of home.

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In the 2nd vol. of Russell's "Letters from the Seat of War,"[3] p. 187, is the following entry:—

"In the hour of their illness these men (Army Works Corps), in common with many others, have found a kind and successful physician. Close to the railway, half-way between the Col de Balaclava[4] and Kadikoi, Mrs. Seacole, formerly of Kingston and of several other parts of the world, such as Panama and Chagres, has pitched her abode—an iron storehouse with wooden sheds and outlying tributaries—and here she doctors and cures all manner of men with extraordinary success. She is always in attendance near the battle-field to aid the wounded, and has earned many a poor fellow's blessings."

Yes! I cannot—referring to that time—conscientiously charge myself with doing less for the men who had only thanks to give me, than for the officers whose gratitude gave me the necessaries of life. I think I was ever ready to turn from the latter to help the former, humble as they might be; and they were grateful in their way, and as far as they could be. They would buy me apples and other fruit at Balaclava, and leave them at my store. One made me promise, when

I returned home, to send word to his Irish mother, who was to send me a cow in token of her gratitude for the help I had been to her son. I have a book filled with hundreds of the names of those who came to me for medicines and other aids; and never a train of sick or wounded men from the front passed the British Hotel but its hostess was awaiting them to offer comforts to the poor fellows, for whose suffering her heart bled.

Punch, who allowed my poor name to appear in the pages which had welcomed Miss Nightingale home—*Punch*, that whimsical mouthpiece of some of the noblest hearts that ever beat beneath black coats—shall last of all raise its voice, that never yet pleaded an unworthy cause, for the Mother Seacole that takes shame to herself for speaking thus of the poor part she bore of the trials and hardships endured on that distant shore, where Britain's best and bravest wrung hardly Sebastopol from the grasp of Britain's foe:—

"No store she set by the epaulette,
Be it worsted or gold lace;
For K. C. B. or plain private Smith,[5]
She had still one pleasant face.

"And not alone was her kindness shown
To the hale and hungry lot
Who drank her grog and ate her prog,
And paid their honest shot.[6]

"The sick and sorry can tell the story
Of her nursing and dosing deeds;
Regimental M.D. never worked as she,
In helping sick men's needs.

"Of such work, God knows, was as much as she chose
That dreary winter-tide,
When Death hung o'er the damp and pestilent camp,
And his scythe swung far and wide.

"She gave her aid to all who prayed,
To hungry and sick and cold;
Open hand and heart, alike ready to part
Kind words and acts, and gold.

"And—be the right man in the right place who can—
The right woman was Dame Seacole."

Reader, now that we have come to the end of this chapter, I can say what I have been all anxiety to tell you from its beginning. Please look back to Chapter VIII., and see how hard the right woman had to struggle to convey herself to the right place.

***

Endnotes

- Note 1: A sweet dessert made from milk and flavored corn flour. "Homely": familiar, simple (British).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A quatrain from "A Stir for Seacole," a poem that appeared on December 6, 1856, in the popular British periodical *Punch*. Additional lines are quoted at the end of the chapter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Irish journalist William Howard Russell (1827–1907), considered the first modern war correspondent, covered the Crimean conflict for the London *Times*; his reports were also published in book form in 1856.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Balaclava Pass (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath, a high honor awarded by the British monarchy for exceptional service.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: To pay your shot or shout is to pay your bill (British slang). "Grog": spirits, usually rum, mixed with water. "Prog": food (British slang, archaic).Return to reference 6

Conclusion

I did not return to England by the most direct route, but took the opportunity of seeing more of men and manners in yet other lands. Arrived in England at last, we set to work bravely at Aldershott to retrieve our fallen fortunes,[1] and stem off the ruin originated in the Crimea, but all in vain; and at last defeated by fortune, but not I think disgraced, we were obliged to capitulate on very honourable conditions. In plain truth, the old Crimean firm of Seacole and Day was dissolved finally, and its partners had to recommence the world anew. And so ended *our* campaign. One of us started only the other day for the Antipodes, while the other is ready to take any journey to any place where a stout heart and two experienced hands may be of use.

Perhaps it would be right if I were to express more shame and annoyance than I really feel at the pecuniarily disastrous issue of my Crimean adventures, but I cannot—I really cannot. When I would try and feel ashamed of myself for being poor and helpless, I only experience a glow of pride at the other and more pleasing events of my career; when I think of the few whom I failed to pay in full (and so far from blaming me some of them are now my firmest friends), I cannot help remembering also the many who profess themselves indebted to me.

Let me, in as few words as possible, state the results of my Crimean campaign. To be sure, I returned from it shaken in health. I came home wounded, as many others did. Few constitutions, indeed, were the better for those winters before Sebastopol, and I was too hard worked not to feel their effects; for a little labour fatigues me now—I cannot watch by sick-beds as I could—a week's want of rest quite knocks me up now. Then I returned bankrupt in fortune. Whereas others in my position may have come back to England rich and prosperous, I found myself poor—beggared. So few words can tell what I have lost.

But what have I gained? I should need a volume to describe that fairly; so much is it, and so cheaply purchased by suffering ten times

worse than what I have experienced. I have more than once heard people say that they would gladly suffer illness to enjoy the delights of convalescence, and so, by enduring a few days' pain, gain the tender love of relatives and sympathy of friends. And on this principle I rejoice in the trials which have borne me such pleasures as those I now enjoy, for wherever I go I am sure to meet some smiling face; every step I take in the crowded London streets may bring me in contact with some friend, forgotten by me, perhaps, but who soon reminds me of our old life before Sebastopol; it seems very long ago now, when I was of use to him and he to me.

Where, indeed, do I not find friends. In omnibuses, in river steamboats, in places of public amusement, in quiet streets and courts, where taking short cuts I lose my way oft-times, spring up old familiar faces to remind me of the months spent on Spring Hill. The sentries at Whitehall relax from the discharge of their important duty of guarding nothing to give me a smile of recognition; the very newspaper offices look friendly as I pass them by; busy Printing-house Yard[2] puts on a cheering smile, and the *Punch* office in Fleet Street sometimes laughs outright. Now, would all this have happened if I had returned to England a rich woman? Surely not.

A few words more ere I bring these egotistical remarks to a close. It is naturally with feelings of pride and pleasure that I allude to the committee recently organized to aid me;[3] and if I indulge in the vanity of placing their names before my readers, it is simply because every one of the following noblemen and gentlemen knew me in the Crimea, and by consenting to assist me now record publicly their opinion of my services there. And yet I may reasonably on other grounds be proud of the fact, that it has been stated publicly that my present embarrassments originated in my charities and incessant labours among the army, by

Major-General Lord Rokeby, K.C.B.
H.S.H. Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, C.B.
His Grace the Duke of Wellington.

His Grace the Duke of Newcastle.
The Right Hon. Lord Ward.
General Sir John Burgoyne, K.C.B.
Major-General Sir Richard Airey, K.C.B.
Rear-Admiral Sir Stephen Lushington, K.C.B.
Colonel M'Murdo, C.B.
Colonel Chapman, C.B.
Lieutenant-Colonel Ridley, C.B.
Major the Hon. F. Keane.
W. H. Russell, Esq. (*Times* Correspondent).
W. T. Doyne, Esq.

1858

Endnotes

- Note 1: Aldershot, a town in Hampshire in southern England, known as the "Home of the British Army" after a permanent training camp was established there in 1854; Seacole's plan to set up a provision store here was not carried out.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Seacole refers to Printing House Square, the home of the London *Times* newspaper.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The fund, one of several in the years to come, was initiated in a letter to the *Times* from army officer Hussey Fane Keane (1822–1895).Return to reference 3

JOHN STUART MILL
1806–1873

A knowledge of the writings of J. S. Mill is essential to any understanding of the literature of the nineteenth century—as well as to any understanding of the American political landscape in the twentieth and twenty-first. He is one of the leading figures in the intellectual history of his century, a thinker whose honest grappling with the political and religious problems of his age had a profound influence on both his contemporaries and the thinkers who followed him. During his lifetime, his reputation was established by his *System of Logic* (1843), and then confirmed by his many writings on literature, society, and politics. Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, *On Liberty* (1859) has been regarded as a major touchstone for theories of liberalism.

Mill was educated at home in London under the direction of his father, James Mill (1773–1836). James Mill believed that ordinary schooling fails to develop our intellectual capacities early enough, and he demonstrated his point by the extraordinary results he achieved in training his son. As a child, John Stuart Mill read Greek and Latin; and as a boy he could carry on intelligent discussions of problems in mathematics, philosophy, and economics. By the time he was fourteen, as he reports in his *Autobiography* (1873), his intensive education enabled him to start his career "with an advantage of a quarter of a century" over his contemporaries.

Mill began as a disciple of the Utilitarian theories of his father and of Jeremy Bentham (1748–132) but gradually became dissatisfied with the narrowness of their conception of human motives. Working in the empiricist tradition, Utilitarians attempted to show that most traditional views of politics, ethics, and psychology are based on nothing more than long-standing superstition and habit. Most famously, they challenged the idea that human beings function according to God-given intuitions and feelings, arguing that the mind is instead the product of mechanical associations. According to the Utilitarians, then, individuals are ultimately motivated not by an innate sense of right and wrong but instead by the simple desire to find pleasure and avoid pain. Politically, the Utilitarians thus lobbied for measures that would bring the greatest pleasure (or happiness) to the greatest number. These reforms included the expansion of the franchise (that is, allowing more people to vote), the creation of factory laws and other worker protections, consumer protections, the expansion of educational opportunities, legal reform, prison reform, and sanitary reform. Though Mill believed in the value of such efforts —and during his brief time in Parliament attempted to promote them —he also came to appreciate the values of such writers as Coleridge and Carlyle who rejected Utilitarianism's attempts to establish systemic ways to guarantee happiness in favor of an emphasis on spirituality, emotion, and ethics. Whenever possible, he sought to incorporate some of these values into the Utilitarian system. In part this sympathy was gained by the lesson he learned as a result of experiencing a nervous breakdown during his early twenties. This painful event, described in a chapter of his *Autobiography,* taught him that the lack of concern for people's affections and emotions characteristic of the Utilitarian system of thought (and typified by his own education) was a fatal flaw in that system. He offers tribute to the therapeutic value of art because of its effect on human emotions, both in his *Autobiography* (1873) and in his early essay "What Is Poetry?" (1833).

Mill's most influential work, *On Liberty* (1859), is not a traditional liberal attack on tyrannical kings or dictators, but instead addresses

the negative effects of tyrannical majorities. Mill foresaw that in democracies such as the United States the pressure toward conformity might crush all individuals to the level of what he called a "collective mediocrity." Throughout all his writings, even in his discussions of the advantages of socialism, Mill is concerned with demonstrating that the individual is more important than institutions such as church or state. *On Liberty* provides a characteristic example of the process of his reasoning, but it also demonstrates that, when the theme of individualism is central, Mill's logic is charged with eloquence.

Mill's commitment to the value of individual self-determination was profound, but it was not without significant limitations. Although he wrote little about his experiences working in the office of the East India Company, he served the EIC for thirty-five years and played a significant role in its governance of India. More information about the EIC is available elsewhere in this volume (p. 12, above), but it is important to note that it was responsible for governing the subcontinent without significant input from the people so governed. This is a state of affairs that Mill implicitly defends in the opening chapter of *On Liberty*. Here he writes that the doctrine of personal liberty that he expounds

> is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage.

This notion that certain "backward states of society"—and the people who inhabit them—are not (yet) competent to determine their own interests constituted an important and quite common defense of empire. Despite this commitment to "humanitarian" or

"philanthropic" empire, Mill was also a loud and clear voice against slavery in the United States, and he actively rejected at least some of the violent tactics used by the British to maintain their imperial holdings—as evidenced, for example, in the role he played as chair of the Jamaica Committee, which was formed to prosecute Governor Edward John Eyre for his violent suppression of the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica.

Mill's emotional life was broadened by his love for Harriet Taylor, a married woman who shared his intellectual interests and, after the death of her husband, eventually became his wife. Little that Taylor wrote was published under her own name during her life, but her contribution to Mill's work should not be underestimated; Mill later described her as "the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings." They shared a commitment to the cause of female emancipation, one of several movements to which Mill was dedicated. Throughout human history, as he saw it, the role of a husband has always been legally that of a tyrant, and the object of his far-seeing book *The Subjection of Women* (1869) was to change law and public opinion so that half the human race might be regarded as equals. The subjection of women was, however, only one aspect of the tyranny against which he fought.

Mill died three days before his sixty-seventh birthday while at his home in France. His body was buried next to his wife's in Avignon.

What Is Poetry?

It has often been asked, What Is Poetry? And many and various are the answers which have been returned. The vulgarest of all—one with which no person possessed of the faculties to which poetry addresses itself can ever have been satisfied—is that which confounds poetry with metrical composition; yet to this wretched mockery of a definition many have been led back by the failure of all their attempts to find any other that would distinguish what they have been accustomed to call poetry from much which they have known only under other names.

That, however, the word "poetry" imports something quite peculiar in its nature; something which may exist in what is called prose as well as in verse; something which does not even require the instrument of words, but can speak through the other audible symbols called musical sounds, and even through the visible ones which are the language of sculpture, painting, and architecture—all this, we believe, is and must be felt, though perhaps indistinctly, by all upon whom poetry in any of its shapes produces any impression beyond that of tickling the ear. The distinction between poetry and what is not poetry, whether explained or not, is felt to be fundamental; and, where every one feels a difference, a difference there must be. All other appearances may be fallacious; but the appearance of a difference is a real difference. Appearances too, like other things, must have a cause; and that which can cause anything, even an illusion, must be a reality. And hence, while a half-philosophy disdains the classifications and distinctions indicated by popular language, philosophy carried to its highest point frames new ones, but rarely sets aside the old, content with correcting and regularizing them. It cuts fresh channels for thought, but does not fill up such as it finds ready-made: it traces, on the contrary, more deeply, broadly, and distinctly, those into which the current has spontaneously flowed.

Let us then attempt, in the way of modest inquiry, not to coerce and confine Nature within the bounds of an arbitrary definition, but rather to find the boundaries which she herself has set, and erect a barrier round them; not calling mankind to account for having misapplied the word "poetry," but attempting to clear up the conception which they already attach to it, and to bring forward as a distinct principle that which, as a vague feeling, has really guided them in their employment of the term.

The object of poetry is confessedly to act upon the emotions; and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from what Wordsworth affirms to be its logical opposite;[1] namely, not prose but matter of fact, or science. The one addresses itself to the belief; the other, to the feelings. The one does its work by convincing or persuading; the other, by moving. The one acts by presenting a proposition to the understanding; the other, by offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities.

This, however, leaves us very far from a definition of poetry. This distinguishes it from one thing; but we are bound to distinguish it from everything. To bring thoughts or images before the mind, for the purpose of acting upon the emotions, does not belong to poetry alone. It is equally the province (for example) of the novelist: and yet the faculty of the poet and that of the novelist are as distinct as any other two faculties; as the faculties of the novelist and of the orator, or of the poet and the metaphysician. The two characters may be united, as characters the most disparate may; but they have no natural connection.

Many of the greatest poems are in the form of fictitious narratives; and, in almost all good serious fictions, there is true poetry. But there is a radical distinction between the interest felt in a story as such, and the interest excited by poetry; for the one is derived from incident, the other from the representation of feeling. In one, the source of the emotion excited is the exhibition of a state or states of human sensibility; in the other, of a series of states of mere outward circumstances. Now, all minds are capable of being affected more or less by representations of the latter kind, and all, or

almost all, by those of the former; yet the two sources of interest correspond to two distinct and (as respects their greatest development) mutually exclusive characters of mind.

At what age is the passion for a story, for almost any kind of story, merely as a story, the most intense? In childhood. But that also is the age at which poetry, even of the simplest description, is least relished and least understood; because the feelings with which it is especially conversant are yet undeveloped, and, not having been even in the slightest degree experienced, cannot be sympathized with. In what stage of the progress of society, again, is storytelling most valued, and the storyteller in greatest request and honor? In a rude state like that of the Tartars and Arabs at this day, and of almost all nations in the earliest ages. But, in this state of society, there is little poetry except ballads, which are mostly narrative—that is, essentially stories—and derive their principal interest from the incidents. Considered as poetry, they are of the lowest and most elementary kind: the feelings depicted, or rather indicated, are the simplest our nature has; such joys and griefs as the immediate pressure of some outward event excites in rude minds, which live wholly immersed in outward things, and have never, either from choice or a force they could not resist, turned themselves to the contemplation of the world within. Passing now from childhood, and from the childhood of society, to the grown-up men and women of this most grown-up and unchildlike age, the minds and hearts of greatest depth and elevation are commonly those which take greatest delight in poetry: the shallowest and emptiest, on the contrary, are, at all events, not those least addicted to novel-reading. This accords, too, with all analogous experience of human nature. The sort of persons whom not merely in books, but in their lives, we find perpetually engaged in hunting for excitement from without, are invariably those who do not possess, either in the vigor of their intellectual powers or in the depth of their sensibilities, that which would enable them to find ample excitement nearer home. The most idle and frivolous persons take a natural delight in fictitious narrative: the excitement it affords is of the kind which comes from

without. Such persons are rarely lovers of poetry, though they may fancy themselves so because they relish novels in verse. But poetry, which is the delineation of the deeper and more secret workings of human emotion, is interesting only to those to whom it recalls what they have felt, or whose imagination it stirs up to conceive what they could feel, or what they might have been able to feel, had their outward circumstances been different.

Poetry, when it is really such, is truth; and fiction also, if it is good for anything, is truth: but they are different truths. The truth of poetry is to paint the human soul truly: the truth of fiction is to give a true picture of life. The two kinds of knowledge are different, and come by different ways, come mostly to different persons. Great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life. What they know has come by observation of themselves: they have found within them one highly delicate and sensitive specimen of human nature, on which the laws of emotion are written in large characters, such as can be read off without much study. Other knowledge of mankind, such as comes to men of the world by outward experience, is not indispensable to them as poets: but, to the novelist, such knowledge is all in all; he has to describe outward things, not the inward man; actions and events, not feelings; and it will not do for him to be numbered among those, who, as Madame Roland said of Brissot,[2] know man, but not *men.*

All this is no bar to the possibility of combining both elements, poetry and narrative or incident, in the same work, and calling it either a novel or a poem; but so may red and white combine on the same human features or on the same canvas. There is one order of composition which requires the union of poetry and incident, each in its highest kind—the dramatic. Even there, the two elements are perfectly distinguishable, and may exist of unequal quality and in the most various proportion. The incidents of a dramatic poem may be scanty and ineffective, though the delineation of passion and character may be of the highest order, as in Goethe's admirable "Torquato Tasso";[3] or, again, the story as a mere story may be well got up for effect, as is the case with some of the most trashy

productions of the Minerva Press:[4] it may even be, what those are not, a coherent and probable series of events, though there be scarcely a feeling exhibited which is not represented falsely, or in a manner absolutely commonplace. The combination of the two excellences is what renders Shakespeare so generally acceptable, each sort of readers finding in him what is suitable to their faculties. To the many, he is great as a storyteller; to the few, as a poet.

In limiting poetry to the delineation of states of feeling, and denying the name where nothing is delineated but outward objects, we may be thought to have done what we promised to avoid—to have not found, but made, a definition in opposition to the usage of language, since it is established by common consent that there is a poetry called descriptive. We deny the charge. Description is not poetry because there is descriptive poetry, no more than science is poetry because there is such a thing as a didactic poem. But an object which admits of being described, or a truth which may fill a place in a scientific treatise, may also furnish an occasion for the generation of poetry, which we thereupon choose to call descriptive or didactic. The poetry is not in the object itself, nor in the scientific truth itself, but in the state of mind in which the one and the other may be contemplated. The mere delineation of the dimensions and colors of external objects is not poetry, no more than a geometrical ground-plan of St. Peter's or Westminster Abbey is painting. Descriptive poetry consists, no doubt, in description, but in description of things as they appear, not as they are; and it paints them, not in their bare and natural lineaments, but seen through the medium and arrayed in the colors of the imagination set in action by the feelings. If a poet describes a lion, he does not describe him as a naturalist would, nor even as a traveler would, who was intent upon stating the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He describes him by imagery, that is, by suggesting the most striking likenesses and contrasts which might occur to a mind contemplating a lion, in the state of awe, wonder, or terror, which the spectacle naturally excites, or is, on the occasion, supposed to excite. Now, this is describing the lion professedly, but the state of excitement of

the spectator really. The lion may be described falsely or with exaggeration and the poetry be all the better: but, if the human emotion be not painted with scrupulous truth, the poetry is bad poetry, i.e., is not poetry at all, but a failure.

Thus far, our progress towards a clear view of the essentials of poetry has brought us very close to the last two attempts at a definition of poetry which we happen to have seen in print, both of them by poets, and men of genius. The one is by Ebenezer Elliott, the author of "Corn-law Rhymes," and other poems of still greater merit. "Poetry," says he, "is impassioned truth."[5] The other is by a writer in "Blackwood's Magazine," and comes, we think, still nearer the mark. He defines poetry, "man's thoughts tinged by his feelings." There is in either definition a near approximation to what we are in search of. Every truth which a human being can enunciate, every thought, even every outward impression, which can enter into his consciousness, may become poetry, when shown through any impassioned medium; when invested with the coloring of joy, or grief, or pity, or affection, or admiration, or reverence, or awe, or even hatred or terror; and, unless so colored, nothing, be it as interesting as it may, is poetry. But both these definitions fail to discriminate between poetry and eloquence. Eloquence, as well as poetry, is impassioned truth; eloquence, as well as poetry, is thoughts colored by the feelings. Yet common apprehension and philosophic criticism alike recognize a distinction between the two: there is much that everyone would call eloquence, which no one would think of classing as poetry. A question will sometimes arise, whether some particular author is a poet; and those who maintain the negative commonly allow, that, though not a poet, he is a highly eloquent writer. The distinction between poetry and eloquence appears to us to be equally fundamental with the distinction between poetry and narrative, or between poetry and description, while it is still farther from having been satisfactorily cleared up than either of the others.

Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or utterance of feeling: but, if we may be excused the antithesis, we should say

that eloquence is *heard;* poetry is *over*heard. Eloquence supposes an audience. The peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavoring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action.

All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy. It may be said that poetry which is printed on hot-pressed paper, and sold at a bookseller's shop, is a soliloquy in full dress and on the stage. It is so; but there is nothing absurd in the idea of such a mode of soliloquizing. What we have said to ourselves we may tell to others afterwards; what we have said or done in solitude we may voluntarily reproduce when we know that other eyes are upon us. But no trace of consciousness that any eyes are upon us must be visible in the work itself. The actor knows that there is an audience present: but, if he act as though he knew it, he acts ill. A poet may write poetry, not only with the intention of printing it, but for the express purpose of being paid for it. That it should *be* poetry, being written under such influences, is less probable, not, however, impossible; but no otherwise possible than if he can succeed in excluding from his work every vestige of such lookings-forth into the outward and every-day world, and can express his emotions exactly as he has felt them in solitude, or as he is conscious that he should feel them, though they were to remain for ever unuttered, or (at the lowest) as he knows that others feel them in similar circumstances of solitude. But when he turns round, and addresses himself to another person; when the act of utterance is not itself the end, but a means to an end—viz., by the feelings he himself expresses, to work upon the feelings, or upon the belief or the will of another; when the expression of his emotions, or of his thoughts tinged by his emotions, is tinged also by that purpose, by that desire of making an impression upon another mind—then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence.

Poetry, accordingly, is the natural fruit of solitude and meditation; eloquence, of intercourse with the world. The persons who have most feeling of their own, if intellectual culture has given them a language in which to express it, have the highest faculty of poetry: those who best understand the feelings of others are the most eloquent. The persons and the nations who commonly excel in poetry are those whose character and tastes render them least dependent upon the applause or sympathy or concurrence of the world in general. Those to whom that applause, that sympathy, that concurrence, are most necessary, generally excel most in eloquence. And hence, perhaps, the French, who are the least poetical of all great and intellectual nations, are among the most eloquent; the French also being the most sociable, the vainest, and the least self-dependent.

If the above be, as we believe, the true theory of the distinction commonly admitted between eloquence and poetry, or even though it be not so, yet if, as we cannot doubt, the distinction above stated be a real bona fide distinction, it will be found to hold, not merely in the language of words, but in all other language, and to intersect the whole domain of art.

Take, for example, music. We shall find in that art, so peculiarly the expression of passion, two perfectly distinct styles—one of which may be called the poetry, the other the oratory, of music. This difference, being seized, would put an end to much musical sectarianism. There has been much contention whether the music of the modern Italian school, that of Rossini,[6] and his successors, be impassioned or not. Without doubt, the passion it expresses is not the musing, meditative tenderness or pathos or grief of Mozart or Beethoven; yet it is passion, but garrulous passion, the passion which pours itself into other ears, and therein the better calculated for dramatic effect, having a natural adaptation for dialogue. Mozart also is great in musical oratory; but his most touching compositions are in the opposite style, that of soliloquy. Who can imagine "Dove sono"[7] *heard*? We imagine it *over*heard.

Purely pathetic music commonly partakes of soliloquy. The soul is absorbed in its distress and, though there may be bystanders, it is not thinking of them. When the mind is looking within, and not without, its state does not often or rapidly vary; and hence the even, uninterrupted flow, approaching almost to monotony, which a good reader or a good singer will give to words or music of a pensive or melancholy cast. But grief, taking the form of a prayer or of a complaint, becomes oratorical: no longer low and even and subdued, it assumes a more emphatic rhythm, a more rapidly returning accent; instead of a few slow, equal notes, following one after another at regular intervals, it crowds note upon note, and often assumes a hurry and bustle like joy. Those who are familiar with some of the best of Rossini's serious compositions, such as the air "Tu che i miseri conforti,"[8] in the opera of "Tancredi," or the duet "Ebben per mia memoria,"[9] in "La Gazza Ladra," will at once understand and feel our meaning. Both are highly tragic and passionate: the passion of both is that of oratory, not poetry. The like may be said of that most moving invocation in Beethoven's "Fidelio,"

"Komm, Hoffnung, lass das letzte Stern
Der Müde nicht erbleichen"—[1]

in which Madame Schröder Devrient exhibited such consummate powers of pathetic expression. How different from Winter's beautiful "Paga fui,"[2] the very soul of melancholy exhaling itself in solitude! fuller of meaning, and therefore more profoundly poetical, than the words for which it was composed; for it seems to express, not simple melancholy, but the melancholy of remorse.

If from vocal music we now pass to instrumental, we may have a specimen of musical oratory in any fine military symphony or march; while the poetry of music seems to have attained its consummation in Beethoven's "Overture to Egmont," so wonderful in its mixed expression of grandeur and melancholy.

In the arts which speak to the eye, the same distinctions will be found to hold, not only between poetry and oratory, but between poetry, oratory, narrative, and simple imitation or description.

Pure description is exemplified in a mere portrait or a mere landscape, productions of art, it is true, but of the mechanical rather than of the fine arts; being works of simple imitation, not creation. We say, a mere portrait or a mere landscape; because it is possible for a portrait or a landscape, without ceasing to be such, to be also a picture, like Turner's landscapes, and the great portraits by Titian or Vandyke.[3]

Whatever in painting or sculpture expresses human feeling—or character, which is only a certain state of feeling grown habitual—may be called, according to circumstances, the poetry or the eloquence of the painter's or the sculptor's art: the poetry, if the feeling declares itself by such signs as escape from us when we are unconscious of being seen; the oratory, if the signs are those we use for the purpose of voluntary communication.

The narrative style answers to what is called historical painting, which it is the fashion among connoisseurs to treat as the climax of the pictorial art. That it is the most difficult branch of the art, we do not doubt, because, in its perfection, it includes the perfection of all the other branches; as, in like manner, an epic poem, though, in so far as it is epic (i.e., narrative), it is not poetry at all, is yet esteemed the greatest effort of poetic genius, because there is no kind whatever of poetry which may not appropriately find a place in it. But an historical picture as such, that is, as the representation of an incident, must necessarily, as it seems to us, be poor and ineffective. The narrative powers of painting are extremely limited. Scarcely any picture, scarcely even any series of pictures, tells its own story without the aid of an interpreter. But it is the single figures, which, to us, are the great charm even of an historical picture. It is in these that the power of the art is really seen. In the attempt to narrate, visible and permanent signs are too far behind the fugitive audible ones, which follow so fast one after another; while the faces and figures in a narrative picture, even though they be Titian's, stand

still. Who would not prefer one "Virgin and Child" of Raphael to all the pictures which Rubens,[4] with his fat, frouzy Dutch Venuses, ever painted?—though Rubens, besides excelling almost everyone in his mastery over the mechanical parts of his art, often shows real genius in *grouping* his figures, the peculiar problem of historical painting. But then, who, except a mere student of drawing and coloring, ever cared to look twice at any of the figures themselves? The power of painting lies in poetry, of which Rubens had not the slightest tincture, not in narrative, wherein he might have excelled.

The single figures, however, in an historical picture, are rather the eloquence of painting than the poetry. They mostly (unless they are quite out of place in the picture) express the feelings of one person as modified by the presence of others. Accordingly, the minds whose bent leads them rather to eloquence than to poetry rush to historical painting. The French painters, for instance, seldom attempt, because they could make nothing of, single heads, like those glorious ones of the Italian masters with which they might feed themselves day after day in their own Louvre.[5] They must all be historical; and they are, almost to a man, attitudinizers. If we wished to give any young artist the most impressive warning our imagination could devise against that kind of vice in the pictorial which corresponds to rant in the histrionic art, we would advise him to walk once up and once down the gallery of the Luxembourg.[6] Every figure in French painting or statuary seems to be showing itself off before spectators. They are not poetical, but in the worst style of corrupted eloquence.

1833, 1859

Endnotes

- Note 1: In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Jacques-Pierre Brissot (1754–1793), a leading reformer during the French Revolution, is characterized in the *Mémoires*

of Jeanne-Manon Roland (1754–1793).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A play (1790) based on the life of this 16th-century Italian poet.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An early 19th-century publishing house that fostered the production of sentimental novels.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In the Preface to *Corn-Law Rhymes* (1828), by Elliott (1781–1849).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Gioacchino Rossini (1792–1868), composer of operas.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Where are fled [the lovely moments?] (Italian); soprano aria from act 3 of *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), by the Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: You, who give comfort to the wretched (Italian); soprano aria from Rossini's *Tancredi* (1813).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Indeed according to my memory (Italian); soprano aria from Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* (1817).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Come, Hope, let not the weary person's last star fade out (German); aria from *Fidelio* (1805), by the German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827). Mill seems to be quoting from memory. The passage should read: "Komm, Hoffnung, lass den letzten Stern / Der Müden nicht erbleichen."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: I have been contented (Italian); aria from the once-popular opera *Il Ratto di Proserpina,* by Peter Winter (1754–1825), first performed in London in 1804.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sir Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641), Flemish painter who produced more than five hundred portraits. J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), British landscape painter. Titian (Tiziano Vicelli, ca. 1488–1576), master painter of the Venetian school.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Flemish painter (and Van Dyck's teacher). Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483–1520), Italian painter of the high Renaissance.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A palace in Paris, opened as a public museum in 1793. The Italian Renaissance paintings originally owned by Francis I are the core of its collection.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A palace in Paris, where paintings of scenes from French history were exhibited.Return to reference 6

From On Liberty

From *Chapter 1. Introductory*

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The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle, as entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual in the way of compulsion and control, whether the means used be physical force in the form of legal penalties, or the moral coercion of public opinion. That principle is, that the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him, or visiting him with any evil in case he do otherwise. To justify that, the conduct from which it is desired to deter him, must be calculated to produce evil to some one else. The only part of the conduct of any one, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say that this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury. For the same reason, we may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered as in its nonage. The early difficulties in the way of spontaneous

progress are so great, that there is seldom any choice of means for overcoming them; and a ruler full of the spirit of improvement is warranted in the use of any expedients that will attain an end, perhaps otherwise unattainable. Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then, there is nothing for them but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne,[1] if they are so fortunate as to find one. But as soon as mankind have attained the capacity of being guided to their own improvement by conviction or persuasion (a period long since reached in all nations with whom we need here concern ourselves), compulsion, either in the direct form or in that of pains and penalties for non-compliance, is no longer admissible as a means to their own good, and justifiable only for the security of others.

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But there is a sphere of action in which society, as distinguished from the individual, has, if any, only an indirect interest; comprehending all that portion of a person's life and conduct which affects only himself, or if it also affects others, only with their free, voluntary, and undeceived consent and participation. When I say only himself, I mean directly, and in the first instance: for whatever affects himself, may affect others *through* himself; and the objection which may be grounded on this contingency, will receive consideration in the sequel. This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty. It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle,

since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people; but, being almost of as much importance as the liberty of thought itself, and resting in great part on the same reasons, is practically inseparable from it. Secondly, the principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow: without impediment from our fellow-creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong. Thirdly, from this liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals;[2] freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others: the persons combining being supposed to be of full age, and not forced or deceived.

No society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected, is free, whatever may be its form of government; and none is completely free in which they do not exist absolute and unqualified. The only freedom which deserves the name, is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental and spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest.

Though this doctrine is anything but new, and, to some persons, may have the air of a truism, there is no doctrine which stands more directly opposed to the general tendency of existing opinion and practice. Society has expended fully as much effort in the attempt (according to its lights) to compel people to conform to its notions of personal, as of social excellence. The ancient commonwealths thought themselves entitled to practise, and the ancient philosophers countenanced, the regulation of every part of private conduct by public authority, on the ground that the State had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental discipline of every one of its citizens; a mode of thinking which may have been admissible in small republics surrounded by powerful enemies, in constant peril of

being subverted by foreign attack or internal commotion, and to which even a short interval of relaxed energy and self-command might so easily be fatal, that they could not afford to wait for the salutary permanent effects of freedom. In the modern world, the greater size of political communities, and above all, the separation between spiritual and temporal authority (which placed the direction of men's consciences in other hands than those which controlled their worldly affairs), prevented so great an interference by law in the details of private life; but the engines of moral repression have been wielded more strenuously against divergence from the reigning opinion in self-regarding, than even in social matters; religion, the most powerful of the elements which have entered into the formation of moral feeling, having almost always been governed either by the ambition of a hierarchy, seeking control over every department of human conduct, or by the spirit of Puritanism. And some of those modern reformers who have placed themselves in strongest opposition to the religions of the past, have been noway behind either churches or sects in their assertion of the right of spiritual domination: M. Comte, in particular, whose social system, as unfolded in his *Traité de Politique Positive,*[3] aims at establishing (though by moral more than by legal appliances) a despotism of society over the individual, surpassing anything contemplated in the political ideal of the most rigid disciplinarian among the ancient philosophers.

Apart from the peculiar tenets of individual thinkers, there is also in the world at large an increasing inclination to stretch unduly the powers of society over the individual, both by the force of opinion and even by that of legislation and as the tendency of all the changes taking place in the world is to strengthen society, and diminish the power of the individual, this encroachment is not one of the evils which tend spontaneously to disappear, but, on the contrary, to grow more and more formidable. The disposition of mankind, whether as rulers or as fellow-citizens, to impose their own opinions and inclinations as a rule of conduct on others, is so energetically supported by some of the best and by some of the

worst feelings incident to human nature, that it is hardly ever kept under restraint by anything but want of power; and as the power is not declining, but growing, unless a strong barrier of moral conviction can be raised against the mischief, we must expect, in the present circumstances of the world, to see it increase.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Akbar I or Akbar the Great (1542–1605), the third Mughal emperor, reigned from 1556 to 1605; Charlemagne (747–814), the first Holy Roman Emperor, reigned from 800 to 828.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Combination" referred to what is now known as trade unionism: that is, collective bargaining of workers with an employer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *System of Positive Polity* (1852), by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1789–1857).Return to reference 3

From *Chapter 3. Of Individuality as One of the Elements of Well-Being*

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Few persons, out of Germany, even comprehend the meaning of the doctrine which Wilhelm von Humboldt, so eminent both as a savant and as a politician, made the text of a treatise—that "the end of man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal or immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole"; that, therefore, the object "towards which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts, and on which especially those who design to influence their fellow men must ever keep their eyes, is the individuality of power and development"; that for this there are two requisites, "freedom, and variety of situations"; and that from the union of these arise "individual vigor and manifold diversity," which combine themselves in "originality."[4]

Little, however, as people are accustomed to a doctrine like that of Von Humboldt, and surprising as it may be to them to find so high a value attached to individuality, the question, one must nevertheless think, can only be one of degree. No one's idea of excellence in conduct is that people should do absolutely nothing but copy one another. No one would assert that people ought not to put into their mode of life, and into the conduct of their concerns, any impress whatever of their own judgment, or of their own individual character. On the other hand, it would be absurd to pretend that people ought to live as if nothing whatever had been known in the world before they came into it; as if experience had as yet done nothing towards showing that one mode of existence, or conduct, is preferable to another. Nobody denies that people should be so taught and trained in youth, as to know and benefit by the ascertained results of human experience. But it is the privilege and

proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, to use and interpret experience in his own way. It is for him to find out what part of recorded experience is properly applicable to his own circumstances and character. The traditions and customs of other people are, to a certain extent, evidence of what their experience has taught *them;* presumptive evidence, and as such, have a claim to his deference: but, in the first place, their experience may be too narrow; or they may not have interpreted it rightly. Secondly, their interpretation of experience may be correct, but unsuitable to him. Customs are made for customary circumstances, and customary characters; and his circumstances or his character may be uncustomary. Thirdly, though the customs be both good as customs, and suitable to him, yet to conform to custom, merely *as* custom, does not educate or develop in him any of the qualities which are the distinctive endowment of a human being. The human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference are exercised only in making a choice. He who does anything because it is the custom makes no choice. He gains no practice either in discerning or in desiring what is best. The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used. The faculties are called into no exercise by doing a thing merely because others do it, no more than by believing a thing only because others believe it. If the grounds of an opinion are not conclusive to the person's own reason, his reason cannot be strengthened, but is likely to be weakened, by his adopting it: and if the inducements to an act are not such as are consentaneous[5] to his own feelings and character (where affection, or the rights of others, are not concerned) it is so much done towards rendering his feelings and character inert and torpid, instead of active and energetic.

He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him has no need of any other faculty than the apelike one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to

decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities he requires and exercises exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one. It is possible that he might be guided in some good path, and kept out of harm's way, without any of these things. But what will be his comparative worth as a human being? It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it. Among the works of man, which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself. Supposing it were possible to get houses built, corn grown, battles fought, causes tried, and even churches erected and prayers said, by machinery—by automatons in human form—it would be a considerable loss to exchange for these automatons even the men and women who at present inhabit the more civilized parts of the world, and who assuredly are but starved specimens of what nature can and will produce. Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.

It will probably be conceded that it is desirable people should exercise their understandings, and that an intelligent following of custom, or even occasionally an intelligent deviation from custom, is better than a blind and simply mechanical adhesion to it. To a certain extent it is admitted that our understanding should be our own: but there is not the same willingness to admit that our desires and impulses should be our own likewise; or that to possess impulses of our own, and of any strength, is anything but a peril and a snare. Yet desires and impulses are as much a part of a perfect human being, as beliefs and restraints: and strong impulses are only perilous when not properly balanced; when one set of aims and inclinations is developed into strength, while others, which ought to coexist with them, remain weak and inactive. It is not because men's desires are strong that they act ill; it is because their consciences are

weak. There is no natural connection between strong impulses and a weak conscience. The natural connection is the other way. To say that one person's desires and feelings are stronger and more various than those of another is merely to say that he has more of the raw material of human nature, and is therefore capable, perhaps of more evil, but certainly of more good. Strong impulses are but another name for energy. Energy may be turned to bad uses; but more good may always be made of an energetic nature than of an indolent and impassive one. Those who have most natural feeling are always those whose cultivated feelings may be made the strongest. The same strong susceptibilities which make the personal impulses vivid and powerful are also the source from whence are generated the most passionate love of virtue, and the sternest self-control. It is through the cultivation of these that society both does its duty and protects its interests: not by rejecting the stuff of which heroes are made, because it knows not how to make them. A person whose desires and impulses are his own—are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture—is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam engine has a character. If, in addition to being his own, his impulses are strong, and are under the government of a strong will, he has an energetic character. Whoever thinks that individuality of desires and impulses should not be encouraged to unfold itself must maintain that society has no need of strong natures—is not the better for containing many persons who have much character—and that a high general average of energy is not desirable.

In some early states of society, these forces might be, and were, too much ahead of the power which society then possessed of disciplining and controlling them. There has been a time when the element of spontaneity and individuality was in excess, and the social principle had a hard struggle with it. The difficulty then was to induce men of strong bodies or minds to pay obedience to any rules which require them to control their impulses. To overcome this difficulty, law and discipline, like the Popes struggling against the

Emperors, asserted a power over the whole man, claiming to control all his life in order to control his character—which society had not found any other sufficient means of binding. But society has now fairly got the better of individuality; and the danger which threatens human nature is not the excess, but the deficiency, of personal impulses and preferences. Things are vastly changed, since the passions of those who were strong by station or by personal endowment were in a state of habitual rebellion against laws and ordinances, and required to be rigorously chained up to enable the persons within their reach to enjoy any particle of security. In our times, from the highest class of society down to the lowest, everyone lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. Not only in what concerns others, but in what concerns only themselves, the individual or the family do not ask themselves—what do I prefer? or, what would suit my character and disposition? or, what would allow the best and highest in me to have fair play, and enable it to grow and thrive? They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position? what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances? or (worse still) what is usually done by persons of a station and circumstances superior to mine? I do not mean that they choose what is customary, in preference to what suits their own inclination. It does not occur to them to have any inclination, except for what is customary. Thus the mind itself is bowed to the yoke: even in what people do for pleasure, conformity is the first thing thought of; they like in crowds; they exercise choice only among things commonly done: peculiarity of taste, eccentricity of conduct, are shunned equally with crimes: until by dint of not following their own nature, they have no nature to follow: their human capacities are withered and starved: they become incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures, and are generally without either opinions or feelings of home growth, or properly their own. Now is this, or is it not, the desirable condition of human nature?

It is so, on the Calvinistic theory. According to that, the one great offense of man is self-will. All the good of which humanity is capable is comprised in obedience. You have no choice; thus you must do,

and no otherwise: "whatever is not a duty is a sin." Human nature being radically corrupt, there is no redemption for anyone until human nature is killed within him. To one holding this theory of life, crushing out any of the human faculties, capacities, and susceptibilities is no evil: man needs no capacity but that of surrendering himself to the will of God: and if he uses any of his faculties for any other purpose but to do that supposed will more effectually, he is better without them. This is the theory of Calvinism; and it is held, in a mitigated form, by many who do not consider themselves Calvinists; the mitigation consisting in giving a less ascetic interpretation to the alleged will of God; asserting it to be his will that mankind should gratify some of their inclinations; of course not in the manner they themselves prefer, but in the way of obedience, that is, in a way prescribed to them by authority; and, therefore, by the necessary conditions of the case, the same for all.

In some such insidious form there is at present a strong tendency to this narrow theory of life, and to the pinched and hidebound type of human character which it patronizes. Many persons, no doubt, sincerely think that human beings thus cramped and dwarfed are as their Maker designed them to be; just as many have thought that trees are a much finer thing when clipped into pollards,[6] or cut out into figures of animals, than as nature made them. But if it be any part of religion to believe that man was made by a good Being, it is more consistent with that faith to believe that this Being gave all human faculties that they might be cultivated and unfolded, not rooted out and consumed, and that he takes delight in every nearer approach made by his creatures to the ideal conception embodied in them, every increase in any of their capabilities of comprehension, of action, or of enjoyment. There is a different type of human excellence from the Calvinistic; a conception of humanity as having its nature bestowed on it for other purposes than merely to be abnegated. "Pagan self-assertion" is one of the elements of human worth, as well as "Christian self-denial."[7] There is a Greek ideal of self-development, which the Platonic and Christian ideal of self-government blends with, but does not supersede. It may be

better to be a John Knox than an Alcibiades, but it is better to be a Pericles[8] than either, nor would a Pericles, if we had one in these days, be without anything good which belonged to John Knox.

It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation; and as the works partake the character of those who do them, by the same process human life also becomes rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings, and strengthening the tie which binds every individual to the race, by making the race infinitely better worth belonging to. In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others. There is a greater fullness of life about his own existence, and when there is more life in the units there is more in the mass which is composed of them. As much compression as is necessary to prevent the stronger specimens of human nature from encroaching on the rights of others cannot be dispensed with; but for this there is ample compensation even in the point of view of human development. The means of development which the individual loses by being prevented from gratifying his inclinations to the injury of others are chiefly obtained at the expense of the development of other people. And even to himself there is a full equivalent in the better development of the social part of his nature, rendered possible by the restraint put upon the selfish part. To be held to rigid rules of justice for the sake of others develops the feelings and capacities which have the good of others for their object. But to be restrained in things not affecting their good, by their mere displeasure, develops nothing valuable, except such force of character as may unfold itself in resisting the restraint. If acquiesced in, it dulls and blunts the whole nature. To give any fair play to the nature of each, it is essential that different persons should be allowed to lead different lives. In proportion as this latitude has been exercised in any age, has that age been

noteworthy to posterity. Even despotism does not produce its worst effects, so long as individuality exists under it; and whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called, and whether it professes to be enforcing the will of God or the injunctions of men.

Having said that Individuality is the same thing with development, and that it is only the cultivation of individuality which produces, or can produce, well-developed human beings, I might here close the argument: for what more or better can be said of any condition of human affairs than that it brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing they can be? or what worse can be said of any obstruction to good than that it prevents this? Doubtless, however, these considerations will not suffice to convince those who most need convincing; and it is necessary further to show that these developed human beings are of some use to the undeveloped—to point out to those who do not desire liberty, and would not avail themselves of it, that they may be in some intelligible manner rewarded for allowing other people to make use of it without hindrance.

In the first place, then, I would suggest that they might possibly learn something from them. It will not be denied by anybody, that originality is a valuable element in human affairs. There is always need of persons not only to discover new truths, and point out when what were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices, and set the example of more enlightened conduct, and better taste and sense in human life. This cannot well be gainsaid by anybody who does not believe that the world has already attained perfection in all its ways and practices. It is true that this benefit is not capable of being rendered by everybody alike: there are but few persons, in comparison with the whole of mankind, whose experiments, if adopted by others, would be likely to be any improvement on established practice. But these few are the salt of the earth; without them, human life would become a stagnant pool. Not only is it they who introduce good things which did not before exist; it is they who keep the life in those which

already existed. If there were nothing new to be done, would human intellect cease to be necessary? Would it be a reason why those who do the old things should forget why they are done, and do them like cattle, not like human beings? There is only too great a tendency in the best beliefs and practices to degenerate into the mechanical; and unless there were a succession of persons whose ever-recurring originality prevents the grounds of those beliefs and practices from becoming merely traditional, such dead matter would not resist the smallest shock from anything really alive, and there would be no reason why civilization should not die out, as in the Byzantine Empire. Persons of genius, it is true, are, and are always likely to be, a small minority; but in order to have them, it is necessary to preserve the soil in which they grow. Genius can only breathe freely in an *atmosphere* of freedom. Persons of genius are, *ex vi termini;*[9] *more* individual than any other people—less capable, consequently, of fitting themselves, without hurtful compression, into any of the small number of molds which society provides in order to save its members the trouble of forming their own character. If from timidity they consent to be forced into one of these molds, and to let all that part of themselves which cannot expand under the pressure remain unexpanded, society will be little the better for their genius. If they are of a strong character, and break their fetters, they become a mark for the society which has not succeeded in reducing them to commonplace, to point at with solemn warning as "wild," "erratic," and the like; much as if one should complain of the Niagara River for not flowing smoothly between its banks like a Dutch canal.

I insist thus emphatically on the importance of genius, and the necessity of allowing it to unfold itself freely both in thought and in practice, being well aware that no one will deny the position in theory, but knowing also that almost everyone, in reality, is totally indifferent to it. People think genius a fine thing if it enables a man to write an exciting poem, or paint a picture. But in its true sense, that of originality in thought and action, though no one says that it is not a thing to be admired, nearly all, at heart, think that they can do very well without it. Unhappily this is too natural to be wondered at.

Originality is the one thing which unoriginal minds cannot feel the use of. They cannot see what it is to do for them: how should they? If they could see what it would do for them, it would not be originality. The first service which originality has to render them is that of opening their eyes: which being once fully done, they would have a chance of being themselves original. Meanwhile, recollecting that nothing was ever yet done which someone was not the first to do, and that all good things which exist are the fruits of originality, let them be modest enough to believe that there is something still left for it to accomplish, and assure themselves that they are more in need of originality, the less they are conscious of the want.

In sober truth, whatever homage may be professed, or even paid, to real or supposed mental superiority, the general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind. In ancient history, in the middle ages, and in a diminishing degree through the long transition from feudality to the present time, the individual was power in himself; and if he had either great talents or a high social position, he was a considerable power. At present individuals are lost in the crowd. In politics it is almost a triviality to say that public opinion now rules the world. The only power deserving the name is that of masses, and of governments while they make themselves the organ of the tendencies and instincts of masses. This is as true in the moral and social relations of private life as in public transactions. Those whose opinions go by the name of public opinion, are not always the same sort of public: in America they are the whole white population; in England, chiefly the middle class. But they are always a mass, that is to say, collective mediocrity. And what is a still greater novelty, the mass do not now take their opinions from dignitaries in Church or State, from ostensible leaders, or from books. Their thinking is done for them by men much like themselves, addressing them or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment, through the newspapers. I am not complaining of all this. I do not assert that anything better is compatible, as a general rule, with the present low state of the human mind. But that does not hinder the government of mediocrity

from being mediocre government. No government by a democracy or a numerous aristocracy, either in its political acts or in the opinions, qualities, and tone of mind which it fosters, ever did or could rise above mediocrity, except in so far as the sovereign Many have let themselves be guided (which in their best times they always have done) by the counsels and influence of a more highly gifted and instructed One or Few. The initiation of all wise or noble things, comes and must come from individuals; generally at first from some one individual. The honor and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following that initiative; that he can respond internally to wise and noble things, and be led to them with his eyes open. I am not countenancing the sort of "hero worship" which applauds the strong man of genius for forcibly seizing on the government of the world and making it do his bidding in spite of itself.[1] All he can claim is freedom to point out the way. The power of compelling others into it is not only inconsistent with the freedom and development of all the rest, but corrupting to the strong man himself. It does seem, however, that when the opinions of masses of merely average men are everywhere become or becoming the dominant power, the counterpoise and corrective to that tendency would be the more and more pronounced individuality of those who stand on the higher eminences of thought. It is in these circumstances most especially that exceptional individuals, instead of being deterred, should be encouraged in acting differently from the mass. In other times there was no advantage in their doing so, unless they acted not only differently, but better. In this age, the mere example of nonconformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric. Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage which it contained. That so few now dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the time.

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There is one characteristic of the present direction of public opinion, peculiarly calculated to make it intolerant of any marked demonstration of individuality. The general average of mankind are not only moderate in intellect, but also moderate in inclinations: they have no tastes or wishes strong enough to incline them to do anything unusual, and they consequently do not understand those who have, and class all such with the wild and intemperate whom they are accustomed to look down upon. Now, in addition to this fact which is general, we have only to suppose that a strong movement has set in towards the improvement of morals, and it is evident what we have to expect. In these days such a movement has set in; much has actually been effected in the way of increased regularity of conduct, and discouragement of excesses; and there is a philanthropic spirit abroad, for the exercise of which there is no more inviting field than the moral and prudential improvement of our fellow creatures. These tendencies of the times cause the public to be more disposed than at most former periods to prescribe general rules of conduct, and endeavor to make everyone conform to the approved standard. And that standard, express or tacit, is to desire nothing strongly. Its ideal of character is to be without any marked character; to maim by compression, like a Chinese lady's foot,[2] every part of human nature which stands out prominently, and tends to make the person markedly dissimilar in outline to commonplace humanity.

As is usually the case with ideals which exclude one half of what is desirable, the present standard of approbation produces only an inferior imitation of the other half. Instead of great energies guided by vigorous reason, and strong feelings strongly controlled by a conscientious will, its result is weak feelings and weak energies, which therefore can be kept in outward conformity to rule without any strength either of will or reason. Already energetic characters on any large scale are becoming merely traditional. There is now scarcely any outlet for energy in this country except business. The

energy expended in this may still be regarded as considerable. What little is left from that employment, is expended on some hobby; which may be a useful, even a philanthropic hobby, but is always some one thing, and generally a thing of small dimensions. The greatness of England is now all collective: individually small, we only appear capable of anything great by our habit of combining; and with this our moral and religious philanthropies are perfectly contented. But it was men of another stamp than this that made England what it has been; and men of another stamp will be needed to prevent its decline.

The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in unceasing antagonism to that disposition to aim at something better than customary, which is called, according to circumstances, the spirit of liberty, or that of progress or improvement. The spirit of improvement is not always a spirit of liberty, for it may aim at forcing improvements on an unwilling people; and the spirit of liberty, in so far as it resists such attempts, may ally itself locally and temporarily with the opponents of improvement; but the only unfailing and permanent source of improvement is liberty, since by it there are as many possible independent centers of improvement as there are individuals. The progressive principle, however, in either shape, whether as the love of liberty or of improvement, is antagonistic to the sway of Custom, involving at least emancipation from that yoke; and the contest between the two constitutes the chief interest of the history of mankind. The greater part of the world has, properly speaking, no history, because the despotism of Custom is complete. This is the case over the whole East. Custom is there, in all things, the final appeal; justice and right mean conformity to custom; the argument of custom no one, unless some tyrant intoxicated with power, thinks of resisting. And we see the result. Those nations must once have had originality; they did not start out of the ground populous, lettered, and versed in many of the arts of life; they made themselves all this, and were then the greatest and most powerful nations of the world. What are they now? The subjects or

dependants of tribes whose forefathers wandered in the forests when theirs had magnificent palaces and gorgeous temples, but over whom custom exercised only a divided rule with liberty and progress. A people, it appears, may be progressive for a certain length of time, and then stop: when does it stop? When it ceases to possess individuality. If a similar change should befall the nations of Europe, it will not be in exactly the same shape: the despotism of custom with which these nations are threatened is not precisely stationariness. It proscribes singularity, but it does not preclude change, provided all change together. We have discarded the fixed costumes of our forefathers; everyone must still dress like other people, but the fashion may change once or twice a year. We thus take care that when there is change it shall be for change's sake, and not from any idea of beauty or convenience; for the same idea of beauty or convenience would not strike all the world at the same moment, and be simultaneously thrown aside by all at another moment. But we are progressive as well as changeable: we continually make new inventions in mechanical things, and keep them until they are again superseded by better; we are eager for improvement in politics, in education, even in morals, though in this last our idea of improvement chiefly consists in persuading or forcing other people to be as good as ourselves. It is not progress that we object to; on the contrary, we flatter ourselves that we are the most progressive people who ever lived. It is individuality that we war against: we should think we had done wonders if we had made ourselves all alike; forgetting that the unlikeness of one person to another is generally the first thing which draws the attention of either to the imperfection of his own type, and the superiority of another, or the possibility, by combining the advantages of both, of producing something better than either. We have a warning example in China—a nation of much talent, and, in some respects, even wisdom, owing to the rare good fortune of having been provided at an early period with a particularly good set of customs, the work, in some measure, of men to whom even the most enlightened European must accord, under certain limitations, the title of sages and philosophers. They are remarkable, too, in the excellence of

their apparatus for impressing, as far as possible, the best wisdom they possess upon every mind in the community, and securing that those who have appropriated most of it shall occupy the posts of honor and power. Surely the people who did this have discovered the secret of human progressiveness, and must have kept themselves steadily at the head of the movement of the world. On the contrary, they have become stationary—have remained so for thousands of years; and if they are ever to be farther improved, it must be by foreigners. They have succeeded beyond all hope in what English philanthropists are so industriously working at—in making a people all alike, all governing their thoughts and conduct by the same maxims and rules; and these are the fruits. The modern regime of public opinion is, in an unorganized form, what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organized; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its noble antecedents and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China.

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1859

Endnotes

- Note 4: From *The Sphere and Duties of Government,* by Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), Prussian statesman and man of letters. Originally written in 1791, the treatise was first published in Germany in 1852 and was translated into English in 1854.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Agreeable.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Trees that acquire an artificial shape by being cut back to produce a mass of dense foliage.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From the *Essays* (1848) of John Sterling (1806–1844), a writer and friend of Carlyle's.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A model statesman in Athens (495–429 B.C.E.). Knox (1514–1572), a stern Scottish Calvinist reformer. Alcibiades (450–404 B.C.E.), a brilliant but dissolute Athenian commander.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: By force of the term (Latin); that is, by definition.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: As advocated by Thomas Carlyle in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The practice of foot-binding, which aimed to make women's feet only three inches long, was widespread in China from the 10th century until its formal prohibition in 1911.Return to reference 2

From The Subjection of Women[1]

From *Chapter 1*

The object of this Essay is to explain as clearly as I am able, the grounds of an opinion which I have held from the very earliest period when I had formed any opinions at all on social or political matters, and which, instead of being weakened or modified, has been constantly growing stronger by the progress of reflection and the experience of life: That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.

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Some will object, that a comparison cannot fairly be made between the government of the male sex and the forms of unjust power[2] which I have adduced in illustration of it, since these are arbitrary, and the effect of mere usurpation, while it on the contrary is natural. But was there ever any domination which did not appear natural to those who possessed it? There was a time when the division of mankind into two classes, a small one of masters and a numerous one of slaves, appeared, even to the most cultivated minds, to be a natural, and the only natural, condition of the human race. No less an intellect, and one which contributed no less to the progress of human thought, than Aristotle, held this opinion without doubt or misgiving; and rested it on the same premises on which the same assertion in regard to the dominion of men over women is usually based, namely that there are different natures among mankind, free natures, and slave natures; that the Greeks were of a free nature, the barbarian races of Thracians and Asiatics of a slave nature. But why need I go back to Aristotle? Did not the slaveowners of the Southern United States maintain the same doctrine, with all the fanaticism with which men cling to the theories that justify their

passions and legitimate their personal interests? Did they not call heaven and earth to witness that the dominion of the white man over the black is natural, that the black race is by nature incapable of freedom, and marked out for slavery? some even going so far as to say that the freedom of manual laborers is an unnatural order of things anywhere. Again, the theorists of absolute monarchy have always affirmed it to be the only natural form of government; issuing from the patriarchal, which was the primitive and spontaneous form of society, framed on the model of the paternal, which is anterior to society itself, and, as they contend, the most natural authority of all. Nay, for that matter, the law of force itself, to those who could not plead any other, has always seemed the most natural of all grounds for the exercise of authority. Conquering races hold it to be Nature's own dictate that the conquered should obey the conquerors, or, as they euphoniously paraphrase it, that the feebler and more unwarlike races should submit to the braver and manlier. The smallest acquaintance with human life in the middle ages, shows how supremely natural the dominion of the feudal nobility over men of low condition appeared to the nobility themselves, and how unnatural the conception seemed, of a person of the inferior class claiming equality with them, or exercising authority over them. It hardly seemed less so to the class held in subjection. The emancipated serfs and burgesses, even in their most vigorous struggles, never made any pretension to a share of authority; they only demanded more or less of limitation to the power of tyrannizing over them. So true is it that unnatural generally means only uncustomary, and that everything which is usual appears natural. The subjection of women to men being a universal custom, any departure from it quite naturally appears unnatural. But how entirely, even in this case, the feeling is dependent on custom, appears by ample experience. Nothing so much astonishes the people of distant parts of the world, when they first learn anything about England, as to be told that it is under a queen: the thing seems to them so unnatural as to be almost incredible. To Englishmen this does not seem in the least degree unnatural, because they are used to it; but they do feel it unnatural that women should be soldiers or members

of Parliament. In the feudal ages, on the contrary, war and politics were not thought unnatural to women, because not unusual; it seemed natural that women of the privileged classes should be of manly character, inferior in nothing but bodily strength to their husbands and fathers. The independence of women seemed rather less unnatural to the Greeks than to other ancients, on account of the fabulous Amazons[3] (whom they believed to be historical), and the partial example afforded by the Spartan women; who, though no less subordinate by law than in other Greek states, were more free in fact, and being trained to bodily exercises in the same manner with men, gave ample proof that they were not naturally disqualified for them. There can be little doubt that Spartan experience suggested to Plato, among many other of his doctrines, that of the social and political equality of the two sexes.[4]

But, it will be said, the rule of men over women differs from all these others in not being a rule of force: it is accepted voluntarily; women make no complaint, and are consenting parties to it. In the first place, a great number of women do not accept it. Ever since there have been women able to make their sentiments known by their writings (the only mode of publicity which society permits to them), an increasing number of them have recorded protests against their present social condition: and recently many thousands of them, headed by the most eminent women known to the public, have petitioned Parliament for their admission to the Parliamentary Suffrage.[5] The claim of women to be educated as solidly, and in the same branches of knowledge, as men, is urged with growing intensity, and with a great prospect of success; while the demand for their admission into professions and occupations hitherto closed against them, becomes every year more urgent. Though there are not in this country, as there are in the United States, periodical Conventions[6] and an organized party to agitate for the Rights of Women, there is a numerous and active Society organized and managed by women, for the more limited object of obtaining the political franchise. Nor is it only in our own country and in America that women are beginning to protest, more or less collectively,

against the disabilities under which they labor. France, and Italy, and Switzerland, and Russia now afford examples of the same thing. How many more women there are who silently cherish similar aspirations, no one can possibly know; but there are abundant tokens how many *would* cherish them, were they not so strenuously taught to repress them as contrary to the proprieties of their sex. It must be remembered, also, that no enslaved class ever asked for complete liberty at once. When Simon de Montfort[7] called the deputies of the commons to sit for the first time in Parliament, did any of them dream of demanding that an assembly, elected by their constituents, should make and destroy ministries, and dictate to the king in affairs of state? No such thought entered into the imagination of the most ambitious of them. The nobility had already these pretensions; the commons pretended to nothing but to be exempt from arbitrary taxation, and from the gross individual oppression of the king's officers. It is a political law of nature that those who are under any power of ancient origin, never begin by complaining of the power itself, but only of its oppressive exercise. There is never any want of women who complain of ill usage by their husbands. There would be infinitely more, if complaint were not the greatest of all provocatives to a repetition and increase of the ill usage. It is this which frustrates all attempts to maintain the power but protect the woman against its abuses. In no other case (except that of a child) is the person who has been proved judicially to have suffered an injury, replaced under the physical power of the culprit who inflicted it. Accordingly wives, even in the most extreme and protracted cases of bodily ill usage, hardly ever dare avail themselves of the laws made for their protection: and if, in a moment of irrepressible indignation, or by the interference of neighbors, they are induced to do so, their whole effort afterward is to disclose as little as they can, and to beg off their tyrant from his merited chastisement.

All causes, social and natural, combine to make it unlikely that women should be collectively rebellious to the power of men. They are so far in a position different from all other subject classes, that their masters require something more from them than actual service.

Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favorite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds. The masters of all other slaves rely, for maintaining obedience, on fear; either fear of themselves, or religious fears. The masters of women wanted more than simple obedience, and they turned the whole force of education to effect their purpose. All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections. And by their affections are meant the only ones they are allowed to have—those to the men with whom they are connected, or to the children who constitute an additional and indefeasible tie between them and a man. When we put together three things—first, the natural attraction between opposite sexes; secondly, the wife's entire dependence on the husband, every privilege or pleasure she has being either his gift, or depending entirely on his will; and lastly, that the principal object of human pursuit, consideration, and all objects of social ambition, can in general be sought or obtained by her only through him, it would be a miracle if the object of being attractive to men had not become the polar star of feminine education and formation of character. And, this great means of influence over the minds of women having been acquired, an instinct of selfishness made men avail themselves of it to the utmost as a means of holding women in subjection, by representing to them meekness, submissiveness, and resignation of all individual will into the hands of a man, as an essential part of sexual attractiveness. Can it be doubted that any of the other yokes which mankind have succeeded in breaking, would have subsisted till now if the same means had existed, and had been as sedulously used, to bow down their minds to it? If it had been made the object of the life of every

young plebeian to find personal favor in the eyes of some patrician, of every young serf with some seigneur; if domestication with him, and a share of his personal affections, had been held out as the prize which they all should look out for, the most gifted and aspiring being able to reckon on the most desirable prizes; and if, when this prize had been obtained, they had been shut out by a wall of brass from all interests not centering in him, all feelings and desires but those which he shared or inculcated; would not serfs and seigneurs, plebeians and patricians, have been as broadly distinguished at this day as men and women are? and would not all but a thinker here and there, have believed the distinction to be a fundamental and unalterable fact in human nature?

The preceding considerations are amply sufficient to show that custom, however universal it may be, affords in this case no presumption, and ought not to create any prejudice, in favor of the arrangements which place women in social and political subjection to men. But I may go farther, and maintain that the course of history, and the tendencies of progressive human society, afford not only no presumption in favor of this system of inequality of rights, but a strong one against it; and that, so far as the whole course of human improvement up to this time, the whole stream of modern tendencies, warrants any inference on the subject, it is, that this relic of the past is discordant with the future, and must necessarily disappear.

For, what is the peculiar character of the modern world—the difference which chiefly distinguishes modern institutions, modern social ideas, modern life itself, from those of times long past? It is, that human beings are no longer born to their place in life, and chained down by an inexorable bond to the place they are born to, but are free to employ their faculties, and such favourable chances as offer, to achieve the lot which may appear to them most desirable.

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The social subordination of women thus stands out an isolated fact in modern social institutions; a solitary breach of what has become their fundamental law; a single relic of an old world of thought and practice exploded in everything else, but retained in the one thing of most universal interest; as if a gigantic dolmen,[8] or a vast temple of Jupiter Olympius, occupied the site of St. Paul's[9] and received daily worship, while the surrounding Christian churches were only resorted to on fasts and festivals. This entire discrepancy between one social fact and all those which accompany it, and the radical opposition between its nature and the progressive movement which is the boast of the modern world, and which has successively swept away everything else of an analogous character, surely affords, to a conscientious observer of human tendencies, serious matter for reflection. It raises a *primâ facie* presumption on the unfavorable side, far outweighing any which custom and usage could in such circumstances create on the favorable; and should at least suffice to make this, like the choice between republicanism and royalty, a balanced question.

The least that can be demanded is, that the question should not be considered as prejudged by existing fact and existing opinion, but open to discussion on its merits, as a question of justice and expediency: the decision on this, as on any of the other social arrangements of mankind, depending on what an enlightened estimate of tendencies and consequences may show to be most advantageous to humanity in general, without distinction of sex. And the discussion must be a real discussion, descending to foundations, and not resting satisfied with vague and general assertions. It will not do, for instance, to assert in general terms, that the experience of mankind has pronounced in favor of the existing system. Experience cannot possibly have decided between two courses, so long as there has only been experience of one. If it be said that the doctrine of the equality of the sexes rests only on theory, it must be remembered that the contrary doctrine also has only theory to rest upon. All that is proved in its favor by direct experience, is that mankind have been able to exist under it, and to attain the degree

of improvement and prosperity which we now see; but whether that prosperity has been attained sooner, or is now greater, than it would have been under the other system, experience does not say. On the other hand, experience does say, that every step in improvement has been so invariably accompanied by a step made in raising the social position of women, that historians and philosophers have been led to adopt their elevation or debasement as on the whole the surest test and most correct measure of the civilization of a people or an age. Through all the progressive period of human history, the condition of women has been approaching nearer to equality with men. This does not of itself prove that the assimilation must go on to complete equality; but it assuredly affords some presumption that such is the case.

Neither does it avail anything to say that the *nature* of the two sexes adapts them to their present functions and position, and renders these appropriate to them. Standing on the ground of common sense and the constitution of the human mind, I deny that any one knows, or can know, the nature of the two sexes, as long as they have only been seen in their present relation to one another. If men had ever been found in society without women, or women without men, or if there had been a society of men and women in which the women were not under the control of the men, something might have been positively known about the mental and moral differences which may be inherent in the nature of each. What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing—the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others. It may be asserted without scruple, that no other class of dependents have had their character so entirely distorted from its natural proportions by their relation with their masters; for, if conquered and slave races have been, in some respects, more forcibly repressed, whatever in them has not been crushed down by an iron heel has generally been let alone, and if left with any liberty of development, it has developed itself according to its own laws; but in the case of women, a hot-house[1] and stove cultivation has always been carried on of some of the capabilities of their nature,

for the benefit and pleasure of their masters. Then, because certain products of the general vital force sprout luxuriantly and reach a great development in this heated atmosphere and under this active nurture and watering, while other shoots from the same root, which are left outside in the wintry air, with ice purposely heaped all round them, have a stunted growth, and some are burnt off with fire and disappear; men, with that inability to recognize their own work which distinguishes the unanalytic mind, indolently believe that the tree grows of itself in the way they have made it grow, and that it would die if one half of it were not kept in a vapour bath and the other half in the snow.

Of all difficulties which impede the progress of thought, and the formation of well-grounded opinions on life and social arrangements, the greatest is now the unspeakable ignorance and inattention of mankind in respect to the influences which form human character. Whatever any portion of the human species now are, or seem to be, such, it is supposed, they have a natural tendency to be: even when the most elementary knowledge of the circumstances in which they have been placed, clearly points out the causes that made them what they are. Because a cottier[2] deeply in arrears to his landlord is not industrious, there are people who think that the Irish are naturally idle. Because constitutions can be overthrown when the authorities appointed to execute them turn their arms against them, there are people who think the French incapable of free government. Because the Greeks cheated the Turks, and the Turks only plundered the Greeks, there are persons who think that the Turks are naturally more sincere: and because women, as is often said, care nothing about politics except their personalities, it is supposed that the general good is naturally less interesting to women than to men. History, which is now so much better understood than formerly, teaches another lesson: if only by showing the extraordinary susceptibility of human nature to external influences, and the extreme variableness of those of its manifestations which are supposed to be most universal and uniform. But in history, as in traveling, men usually see only what they already had in their own

minds; and few learn much from history, who do not bring much with them to its study.

Hence, in regard to that most difficult question, what are the natural differences between the two sexes—a subject on which it is impossible in the present state of society to obtain complete and correct knowledge—while almost everybody dogmatizes upon it, almost all neglect and make light of the only means by which any partial insight can be obtained into it. This is, an analytic study of the most important department of psychology, the laws of the influence of circumstances on character. For, however great and apparently ineradicable the moral and intellectual differences between men and women might be, the evidence of their being natural differences could only be negative. Those only could be inferred to be natural which could not possibly be artificial—the residuum, after deducting every characteristic of either sex which can admit of being explained from education or external circumstances. The profoundest knowledge of the laws of the formation of character is indispensable to entitle any one to affirm even that there is any difference, much more what the difference is, between the two sexes considered as moral and rational beings; and since no one, as yet, has that knowledge (for there is hardly any subject which, in proportion to its importance, has been so little studied), no one is thus far entitled to any positive opinion on the subject. Conjectures are all that can at present be made; conjectures more or less probable, according as more or less authorized by such knowledge as we yet have of the laws of psychology, as applied to the formation of character.

Even the preliminary knowledge, what the differences between the sexes now are, apart from all question as to how they are made what they are, is still in the crudest[3] and most incomplete state. Medical practitioners and physiologists have ascertained, to some extent, the differences in bodily constitution; and this is an important element to the psychologist: but hardly any medical practitioner is a psychologist. Respecting the mental characteristics of women; their observations are of no more worth than those of common men. It is

a subject on which nothing final can be known, so long as those who alone can really know it, women themselves, have given but little testimony, and that little, mostly suborned. It is easy to know stupid women. Stupidity is much the same all the world over. A stupid person's notions and feelings may confidently be inferred from those which prevail in the circle by which the person is surrounded. Not so with those whose opinions and feelings are an emanation from their own nature and faculties. It is only a man here and there who has any tolerable knowledge of the character even of the women of his own family. I do not mean, of their capabilities; these nobody knows, not even themselves, because most of them have never been called out. I mean their actually existing thoughts and feelings. Many a man thinks he perfectly understands women, because he has had amatory relations with several, perhaps with many of them. If he is a good observer, and his experience extends to quality as well as quantity, he may have learnt something of one narrow department of their nature—an important department, no doubt. But of all the rest of it, few persons are generally more ignorant, because there are few from whom it is so carefully hidden. The most favorable case which a man can generally have for studying the character of a woman, is that of his own wife: for the opportunities are greater, and the cases of complete sympathy not so unspeakably rare. And in fact, this is the source from which any knowledge worth having on the subject has, I believe, generally come. But most men have not had the opportunity of studying in this way more than a single case: accordingly one can, to an almost laughable degree, infer what a man's wife is like, from his opinions about women in general. To make even this one case yield any result, the woman must be worth knowing, and the man not only a competent judge, but of a character so sympathetic in itself, and so well adapted to hers, that he can either read her mind by sympathetic intuition, or has nothing in himself which makes her shy of disclosing it. Hardly anything, I believe, can be more rare than this conjunction. It often happens that there is the most complete unity of feeling and community of interests as to all external things, yet the one has as little admission into the internal life of the other as if they were

common acquaintance. Even with true affection, authority on the one side and subordination on the other prevent perfect confidence. Though nothing may be intentionally withheld, much is not shown. In the analogous relation of parent and child, the corresponding phenomenon must have been in the observation of every one. As between father and son, how many are the cases in which the father, in spite of real affection on both sides, obviously to all the world does not know, nor suspect, parts of the son's character familiar to his companions and equals. The truth is, that the position of looking up to another is extremely unpropitious to complete sincerity and openness with him. The fear of losing ground in his opinion or in his feelings is so strong, that even in an upright character, there is an unconscious tendency to show only the best side, or the side which, though not the best, is that which he most likes to see: and it may be confidently said that thorough knowledge of one another hardly ever exists, but between persons who, besides being intimates, are equals. How much more true, then, must all this be, when the one is not only under the authority of the other, but has it inculcated on her as a duty to reckon everything else subordinate to his comfort and pleasure, and to let him neither see nor feel anything coming from her, except what is agreeable to him. All these difficulties stand in the way of a man's obtaining any thorough knowledge even of the one woman whom alone, in general, he has sufficient opportunity of studying. When we further consider that to understand one woman is not necessarily to understand any other woman; that even if he could study many women of one rank, or of one country, he would not thereby understand women of other ranks or countries; and even if he did, they are still only the women of a single period of history; we may safely assert that the knowledge which men can acquire of women, even as they have been and are, without reference to what they might be, is wretchedly imperfect and superficial, and always will be so, until women themselves have told all that they have to tell.

And this time has not come; nor will it come otherwise than gradually. It is but of yesterday that women have either been

qualified by literary accomplishments, or permitted by society, to tell anything to the general public. As yet very few of them dare tell anything, which men, on whom their literary success depends, are unwilling to hear. Let us remember in what manner, up to a very recent time, the expression, even by a male author, of uncustomary opinions, or what are deemed eccentric feelings, usually was, and in some degree still is, received; and we may form some faint conception under what impediments a woman, who is brought up to think custom and opinion her sovereign rule, attempts to express in books anything drawn from the depths of her own nature. The greatest woman who has left writings behind her sufficient to give her an eminent rank in the literature of her country, thought it necessary to prefix as a motto to her boldest work, "Un homme peut braver l'opinion; une femme doit s'y soumettre."[4] The greater part of what women write about women is mere sycophancy to men. In the case of unmarried women, much of it seems only intended to increase their chance of a husband. Many, both married and unmarried, overstep the mark, and inculcate a servility beyond what is desired or relished by any man, except the very vulgarest. But this is not so often the case as, even at a quite late period, it still was. Literary women are becoming more freespoken, and more willing to express their real sentiments. Unfortunately, in this country especially, they are themselves such artificial products, that their sentiments are compounded of a small element of individual observation and consciousness, and a very large one of acquired associations. This will be less and less the case, but it will remain true to a great extent, as long as social institutions do not admit the same free development of originality in women which is possible to men. When that time comes, and not before, we shall see, and not merely hear, as much as it is necessary to know of the nature of women, and the adaptation of other things to it.

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One thing we may be certain of—that what is contrary to women's nature to do, they never will be made to do by simply giving their nature free play. The anxiety of mankind to interfere in behalf of nature, for fear lest nature should not succeed in effecting its purpose, is an altogether unnecessary solicitude. What women by nature cannot do, it is quite superfluous to forbid them from doing. What they can do, but not so well as the men who are their competitors, competition suffices to exclude them from; since nobody asks for protective duties and bounties in favor of women; it is only asked that the present bounties and protective duties in favor of men should be recalled. If women have a greater natural inclination for some things than for others, there is no need of laws or social inculcation to make the majority of them do the former in preference to the latter. Whatever women's services are most wanted for, the free play of competition will hold out the strongest inducements to them to undertake. And, as the words imply, they are most wanted for the things for which they are most fit; by the apportionment of which to them, the collective faculties of the two sexes can be applied on the whole with the greatest sum of valuable result.

The general opinion of men is supposed to be, that the natural vocation of a woman is that of a wife and mother. I say, is supposed to be, because, judging from acts—from the whole of the present constitution of society—one might infer that their opinion was the direct contrary. They might be supposed to think that the alleged natural vocation of women was of all things the most repugnant to their nature; insomuch that if they are free to do anything else—if any other means of living, or occupation of their time and faculties, is open, which has any chance of appearing desirable to them—there will not be enough of them who will be willing to accept the condition said to be natural to them. If this is the real opinion of men in general, it would be well that it should be spoken out. I should like to hear somebody openly enunciating the doctrine (it is already implied in much that is written on the subject)—"It is necessary to society that women should marry and produce children.

They will not do so unless they are compelled. Therefore it is necessary to compel them." The merits of the case would then be clearly defined. It would be exactly that of the slaveholders of South Carolina and Louisiana. "It is necessary that cotton and sugar should be grown. White men cannot produce them. Negroes will not, for any wages which we choose to give. *Ergo* they must be compelled." An illustration still closer to the point is that of impressment.[5] Sailors must absolutely be had to defend the country. It often happens that they will not voluntarily enlist. Therefore there must be the power of forcing them. How often has this logic been used! and, but for one flaw in it, without doubt it would have been successful up to this day. But it is open to the retort—First pay the sailors the honest value of their labor. When you have made it as well worth their while to serve you, as to work for other employers, you will have no more difficulty than others have in obtaining their services. To this there is no logical answer except "I will not:" and as people are now not only ashamed, but are not desirous, to rob the laborer of his hire, impressment is no longer advocated. Those who attempt to force women into marriage by closing all other doors against them, lay themselves open to a similar retort. If they mean what they say, their opinion must evidently be, that men do not render the married condition so desirable to women, as to induce them to accept it for its own recommendations. It is not a sign of one's thinking the boon one offers very attractive, when one allows only Hobson's choice,[6] "that or none." And here, I believe, is the clue to the feelings of those men, who have a real antipathy to the equal freedom of women. I believe they are afraid, not lest women should be unwilling to marry, for I do not think that any one in reality has that apprehension; but lest they should insist that marriage should be on equal conditions; lest all women of spirit and capacity should prefer doing almost anything else, not in their own eyes degrading, rather than marry, when marrying is giving themselves a master, and a master too of all their earthly possessions. And truly, if this consequence were necessarily incident to marriage, I think that the apprehension would be very well founded. I agree in thinking it

probable that few women, capable of anything else, would, unless under an irresistible *entrainement,*[7] rendering them for the time insensible to anything but itself, choose such a lot, when any other means were open to them of filling a conventionally honorable place in life: and if men are determined that the law of marriage shall be a law of despotism, they are quite right, in point of mere policy, in leaving to women only Hobson's choice. But, in that case, all that has been done in the modern world to relax the chain on the minds of women, has been a mistake. They never should have been allowed to receive a literary education. Women who read, much more women who write, are, in the existing constitution of things, a contradiction and a disturbing element: and it was wrong to bring women up with any acquirements but those of an odalisque, or of a domestic servant.

1860 1869

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  After its 1869 publication in England and America, Mill's *The Subjection of Women* was quickly adopted by feminist activists as the definitive analysis of the position of women in society. Throughout the nineteenth century, reform efforts focused on the conditions of women's work, particularly in mines and factories; access to better jobs and higher education; and married women's property rights. Women's suffrage started attracting support in the 1860s; Mill introduced the first parliamentary motion extending the franchise to women in 1866.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: As examples of unjust power Mill had cited the forceful control of people by enslavers or of nations by military despots.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A mythical race of woman warriors.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Plato's *Republic*, book 5. Plato was Athenian.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As a member of the House of Commons, Mill had introduced a petition for women's suffrage in 1866.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Such as the Women's Rights Convention held at Worcester, Massachusetts, in October 1850, which had occasioned an essay by Mill's wife titled "Enfranchisement of Women" (1851).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: English nobleman and statesman (ca. 1208–1265), who assembled a parliament in 1265 that has been called the basis of the modern House of Commons.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Prehistoric stone monument, here associated with pagan religious rites.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The cathedral in the city of London.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A heated greenhouse.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tenant cottager on a small Irish farm.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Roughest, least refined.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A man can defy what is thought; a woman must submit to it (French); the epigraph to *Delphine* (1802) by Mme de Staël (1766–1817).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The practice of seizing men and forcing them into service as sailors.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A choice without an alternative, so called in reference to the practice of Thomas Hobson (1544–1630), who rented out horses and required every customer to take the horse nearest the door.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Rapture (French).Return to reference 7

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING
1806–1861

During her lifetime, Elizabeth Barrett Browning was one of England's most famous and popular poets. Passionately admired by contemporaries as diverse as John Ruskin, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and Emily Dickinson for her moral and emotional ardor and her energetic engagement with the issues of her day, she was at the time of her death in 1861 better known than her husband, Robert Browning. Her work fell out of favor in the early twentieth century as a result of modernism's (often misogynist) reaction against what was seen as the excessive didacticism and emotionalism of her poetry. Recently, scholars have become interested in her exploration of what it means to be a woman poet, her response to social and political events, and her formal innovations.

Barrett Browning was born into a family that derived much of its considerable wealth, on both her mother's and her father's sides, from plantations in Jamaica. After the abolition of slavery in 1833 and numerous lawsuits, her father lost a great deal of money and was forced to sell Hope End, the opulent estate in the Malvern Hills in Herefordshire where Barrett Browning had grown up. Despite the financial blow, Barrett Browning supported emancipation: "That is settled," she wrote to a neighbor upon hearing the news: "The consternation here is very great. Nevertheless I am glad, and always shall be, that the negroes are—virtually—free!" Barrett Browning

maintained her commitment to social justice throughout her life, often writing in defence of the exploited, the oppressed, and the unfree.

The education that Barrett Browning received was unusual for a woman of her time. Availing herself of her brother's tutor, she studied Latin and Greek; she also learned to read Hebrew. She read voraciously in history, philosophy, and literature and began to write poetry at an early age. Her father privately published her 1,462-line epic on the Battle of Marathon when she was in her early teens; her "Stanzas, Excited by Some Reflections on the Present State of Greece," appeared anonymously in *The New Monthly Magazine* when she was fifteen. But as her intellectual and literary powers matured, her personal life became increasingly circumscribed both by ill health and by her father; tyrannically protective, he had forbidden any of his eleven children to marry. By the age of thirty-nine, Elizabeth Barrett was a prominent woman of letters who lived in semi-seclusion as an invalid in her father's house in Wimpole Street in the center of London; here she occasionally received visitors in her room. One of these visitors was Robert Browning, who, moved by his admiration of her poetry, wrote to tell her "I do as I say, love these books with all my heart—and I love you too." He thereby initiated a courtship that culminated in 1846 in their secret marriage and elopement to Italy, for which her father never forgave her. In Italy Barrett Browning regained much health and strength, bearing and raising a son, Pen, to whom she was devoted, and becoming deeply involved in Italian nationalist politics. She and her husband made their home in Florence, at the house called Casa Guidi, where she lived until her death.

Barrett Browning's poetry is characterized by great erudition and a fervent moral sensibility. The former was consistently condemned by critics, but the latter was often praised. For example, in 1843, when government investigations exposed the employment of children in coal mines and factories, she wrote "The Cry of the Children," a powerful indictment of the use of child labor. Like Harriet Beecher Stowe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1851–52), Barrett Browning

used literature as a tool of social protest and reform, lending her voice, for example, to the cause of American abolitionism in "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" and "A Curse for a Nation." In later poems she took up the cause of the *risorgimento,* the movement to unify Italy as a nation-state, in which Italy's struggle for freedom and identity resonated with her own.

For many years Barrett Browning was best-known for her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), a sequence of forty-four sonnets presented under the guise of a translation from the Portuguese language, in which she recorded the stages of her love for Robert Browning. This sequence both relies on and revises Petrarchan conventions. While Petrarchan sonnets are traditionally spoken by a male poet to an inaccessible female muse, in her *Sonnets*, Barrett Browning is herself the speaker, made ill by a love that is both spiritual and physical. The poetry is formally innovative as well, invoking yet varying Petrarchan rhythms and rhyme schemes. It is also the source of one of the best-known lines from any love poem in English: "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways" (sonnet 43).

Barrett Browning's verse novel *Aurora Leigh* (1856) was also very popular when first published. Critics have recently rediscovered it as a fascinating and extensive investigation of the trials facing a female artist. When Barrett Browning first envisioned the poem, she wrote, "My chief *intention* just now is the writing of a sort of novel-poem . . . running into the midst of our conventions, and rushing into drawing-rooms and the like 'where angels fear to tread'; and so, meeting face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age, and speaking the truth as I conceive of it out plainly." The poem is a portrait of the artist as a young woman committed to a socially inclusive realist art. It is daring both in its presentation of social issues concerning women and in its claims for Aurora's poetic vocation; on her twentieth birthday, Aurora refuses a proposal of marriage from her cousin Romney, who wants her to be his partner in the liberal causes he has embraced. She wishes to be an artist in her own right. Later in the poem, she rescues a fallen woman and

takes her to Italy, where they settle together and confront a chastened Romney.

Immensely popular in its own day, *Aurora Leigh* had both admirers (like Ruskin, who asserted that it was the greatest poem written in English) and critics who found fault with both its poetry and its morality. With its crowded canvas and melodramatic plot, it seems closer to the novel than to poetry, but it is important to view the poem in the context of the debate about appropriate poetic subject matter that engaged other Victorian poets. Unlike Matthew Arnold, who believed that the present age had not produced actions heroic enough to be the subject of great poetry, and unlike Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who used Arthurian legend to represent contemporary concerns, Barrett Browning felt that the present age contained the materials for an epic poetry. Virginia Woolf writes that "Elizabeth Barrett was inspired by a flash of true genius when she rushed into the drawing-room and said that here, where we live and work, is the true place for the poet." *Aurora Leigh* succeeds in giving us what Woolf describes as "a sense of life in general, of people who are unmistakably Victorian, wrestling with the problems of their own time, all brightened, intensified, and compacted by the fire of poetry. . . . Aurora Leigh, with her passionate interest in social questions, her conflict as artist and woman, her longing for knowledge and freedom, is the true daughter of her age."

The Cry of the Children[1]

"*Φεῦ, φεῦ, τί προσδέρκεσθέ μ' ὄμμασιν, τέκνα*;"

—*Medea*[2]

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore° before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,"
"Our young feet," they say, "are very weak;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old."

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.°
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk° chime.
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have:

They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a ceremen° from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?[3]
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)

‘Stop! be silent for to-day!’ ”

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other’s hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children’s souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children; O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, “Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight’s hour of harm,
‘Our Father,’ looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words except ‘Our Father.’
And we think that, in some pause of angels’ song,

God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But, no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone:
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,[4]
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:[5]
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed° heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple[6] shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath."

1843

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Barrett Browning wrote "The Cry of the Children" in response to the report of a parliamentary commission, to which her friend R. H. Horne contributed, on the labor of children in mines and factories. Many of the details of Barrett Browning's poem derive from the report. See "The Promise and Price of Industrialization" on p. 314.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Alas, my children, why do you look at me? (Greek), from Euripides' tragedy *Medea.* Medea speaks these lines before killing her children in vengeance against her husband, who has taken a new wife. (The poem's title is spoken by the chorus.)Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A commissioner mentions the fact of weeds being thus confounded with the idea of flowers [*Barrett Browning's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, we gain our sense of the possibilities of God's love from our experience of love in the world.Return to

reference 4
- Note 5: Palm branch, symbol of victory.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Color associated with royalty and (in poetry) with blood.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *bitterly*Return to reference °
- °: *frost*Return to reference °
- °: *church*Return to reference °
- °: *shroud*Return to reference °
- °: *armored*Return to reference °

To George Sand[1]

A Desire

Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can:
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus,[2] in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light! that thou to woman's claim
And man's, mightst join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

1844

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Pen name of the French Romantic novelist Amandine-Aurore-Lucile Dudevant (1804–1876), famous for her unconventional ideas and behavior. Barrett Browning discovered Sand's writing while an invalid, "a prisoner," and asserts that Sand, together with Balzac, "kept the colour in my life." A defender of Sand's genius to less-sympathetic friends critical of Sand's morality, Barrett Browning writes to her friend Mary Russell Mitford (a novelist and dramatist) that Sand "is eloquent as a fallen angel .

. . A true woman of genius!—but of a womanhood tired of itself, and scorned by *her,* while she bears it burning above her head." Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A Roman spectacle that might include such entertainment as fights between humans and lions.Return to reference 2

To George Sand

A Recognition

True genius, but true woman! dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds° and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name: and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
Where unincarnate° spirits purely aspire!

1844

Notes

- °: *ornaments* Return to reference °
- °: *disembodied* Return to reference °

From Sonnets from the Portuguese

21

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem "a cuckoo song,"[1] as thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!" Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance![°]—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The cuckoo has a repeating call.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *repetition*Return to reference °

22

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

32

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee.* For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and dote.

43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

1845–47 1850

The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point[1]

I

I stand on the mark beside the shore
  Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
  And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark:
  I look on the sky and the sea.

II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
  I see you come proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew
  And round me and round me ye go.
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
  Who in your names works sin and woe!

III

And thus I thought that I would come
  And kneel here where ye knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
  In undertone to the ocean's roar;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
  Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

IV

I am black, I am black,
And yet God made me, they say:
But if He did so, smiling back
He must have cast his work away
Under the feet of his white creatures,
With a look of scorn, that the dusky features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V

And yet He has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light:
There's a little dark bird sits and sings,
There's a dark stream ripples out of sight,
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,°
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI

But *we* who are dark, we are dark!
Ah God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark°
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars:
The poor souls crouch so far behind
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII

Indeed we live beneath the sky,
That great smooth Hand of God stretched out
On all His children fatherly,
To save them from the dread and doubt
Which would be if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
  They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost;
  And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men:
Could the whip-poor-will or the cat of the glen°
  Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX

I am black, I am black!
  But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,
For one of my colour stood in the track
  Where the drivers drove, and looked at me,
And tender and full was the look he gave—
Could a slave look *so* at another slave?—
  I look at the sky and the sea.

X

And from that hour our spirits grew
  As free as if unsold, unbought:
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
  To conquer the world, we thought.
The drivers drove us day by day;
We did not mind, we went one way,
  And no better a freedom sought.

XI

In the sunny ground between the canes,°
  He said "I love you" as he passed;
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
  I heard how he vowed it fast:
While others shook he smiled in the hut,

As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII

I sang his name instead of a song,
Over and over I sang his name,
Upward and downward I drew it along
My various notes,—the same, the same!
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess, from aught they could hear,
It was only a name—a name.

XIII

I look on the sky and the sea.
We were two to love, and two to pray:
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say!
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun:
And now I cry who am but one,
Thou wilt not speak to-day.

XIV

We were black, we were black,
We had no claim to love and bliss,
What marvel if each went to wrack?°
They wrung my cold hands out of his,
They dragged him—where? I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust . . . not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as *this!*

XV

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
Mere grief's too good for such as I:

So the white men brought the shame ere long
  To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes!—it was too merciful
  To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI

I am black, I am black!
  I wore a child upon my breast,
An amulet that hung too slack,
  And, in my unrest, could not rest:
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
One to another, one to another,
  Until all ended for the best.

XVII

For hark! I will tell you low, low,
  I am black, you see,—
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
  Was far too white, too white for me;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
  Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII

My own, own child! I could not bear
  To look in his face, it was so white;
I covered him up with a kerchief there,
  I covered his face in close and tight:
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty—
  Ha, ha! he wanted the master-right.

XIX

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
   His little feet that never grew;
He struck them out, as it was meet,
   Against my heart to break it through:
I might have sung and made him mild,
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
   The only song I knew.

XX

I pulled the kerchief very close:
   He could not see the sun, I swear,
More, then, alive, than now he does
   From between the roots of the mango . . . where?
I know where. Close! A child and mother
Do wrong to look at one another
   When one is black and one is fair.

XXI

Why, in that single glance I had
   Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad!
   The *master's* look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . . or worse!
And so, to save it from my curse,
   I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
   He shivered from head to foot;
Till after a time, he lay instead
   Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold:
I dared to lift up just a fold,
   As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha!—there, had been
(I laugh to think on 't at this hour!)
Your fine white angels (who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power)
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white!
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but day and night
I carried the body to and fro,
And it lay on my heart like a stone, as chill.
—The sun may shine out as much as he will:
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
I carried the little body on;
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run:
They asked no question as I went,
They stood too high for astonishment,
They could see God sit on His throne.

XXVI

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest, on;
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon:

Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
  Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII

Yet when it was all done aright,—
  Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,—
All, changed to black earth,—nothing white,—
  A dark child in the dark!—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young;
I sate down smiling there and sung
  The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII

And thus we two were reconciled,
  The white child and black mother, thus;
For as I sang it soft and wild,
  The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate:
It was the dead child singing that,
  To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX

I look on the sea and the sky.
  Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay
The free sun rideth gloriously,
  But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn:
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
  Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX

Ha!—in their stead, their hunter sons!

Ha, ha! they are on me—they hunt in a ring!
Keep off! I brave you all at once,
I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:
Did you ever stand still in your triumph, and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded wing?

XXXI

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)
I wish you who stand there five abreast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangoes! Yes, but *she*
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she likes the best.

XXXII

I am not mad: I am black.
I see you staring in my face—
I know you staring, shrinking back,
Ye are born of the Washington-race,[2]
And this land is the free America,
And this mark on my wrist—(I prove° what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun;
I only cursed them all around
As softly as I might have done
My very own child: from these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
For in this UNION you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each; and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,
While HE sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV

Our wounds are different. Your white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.
The clouds are breaking on my brain;
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain.
In the name of the white child waiting for me
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain!

1846 1848, 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, where the Pilgrims landed in November 1620.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, the White race (the race of George Washington, the first president of the United States).Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *marsh*Return to reference °
- °: *anxiety*Return to reference °
- °: *bobcat*Return to reference °
- °: *sugarcane*Return to reference °
- °: *ruin*Return to reference °
- °: *demonstrate*Return to reference °

Hiram Powers' Greek Slave[1]

They say Ideal Beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
This alien Image with the shackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave: as if the artist meant her
(The passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed, not darkened, where the sill expands)
To, so, confront man's crimes in different lands,
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long
The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone,
From God's pure heights of beauty, against man's wrong!
Catch up, in thy divine face, not alone
East griefs, but west, and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Hiram Powers (1805–1873) was an American sculptor. *Greek Slave* was his best-known piece, a life-size sculpture depicting a female nude.Return to reference 1

From Aurora Leigh

From *Book 1*

[THE EDUCATION OF AURORA LEIGH][1]

Then, land!—then, England! oh, the frosty cliffs[2]
Looked cold upon me. Could I find a home
Among those mean red houses through the fog?
And when I heard my father's language first
From alien lips which had no kiss for mine
I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept, then wept,
And some one near me said the child was mad
Through much sea-sickness. The train swept us on:
Was this my father's England? the great isle?
The ground seemed cut up from the fellowship
Of verdure, field from field,[3] as man from man;
The skies themselves looked low and positive,
As almost you could touch them with a hand,
And dared to do it they were so far off
From God's celestial crystals;[4] all things blurred
And dull and vague. Did Shakespeare and his mates
Absorb the light here?—not a hill or stone
With heart to strike a radiant colour up
Or active outline on the indifferent air.

I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-house
To give me welcome. She stood straight and calm,
Her somewhat narrow forehead braided tight
As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses;[5] brown hair pricked with gray
By frigid use of life (she was not old,
Although my father's elder by a year),
A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate lines;
A close mild mouth, a little soured about

The ends, through speaking unrequited loves
Or peradventure niggardly° half-truths;
Eyes of no colour,—once they might have smiled,
But never, never have forgot themselves
In smiling; cheeks, in which was yet a rose
Of perished summers, like a rose in a book,
Kept more for ruth° than pleasure,—if past bloom,
Past fading also.
She had lived, we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,
A quiet life, which was not life at all
(But that, she had not lived enough to know),
Between the vicar and the county squires,
The lord-lieutenant[6] looking down sometimes
From the empyrean° to assure their souls
Against chance vulgarisms, and, in the abyss,
The apothecary,[7] looked on once a year
To prove their soundness of humility.
The poor-club[8] exercised her Christian gifts
Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats,
Because we are of one flesh, after all,
And need one flannel[9] (with a proper sense
Of difference in the quality)—and still
The book-club, guarded from your modern trick
Of shaking dangerous questions from the crease,[1]
Preserved her intellectual.° She had lived
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to perch
Was act and joy enough for any bird.
Dear heaven, how silly are the things that live
In thickets, and eat berries!
I, alas,
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage,
And she was there to meet me. Very kind.

Bring the clean water, give out the fresh seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome me,
Calm, in black garb. I clung about her neck,—
Young babes, who catch at every shred of wool
To draw the new light closer, catch and cling
Less blindly. In my ears my father's word
Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells,
"Love, love, my child." She, black there with my grief,
Might feel my love—she was his sister once—
I clung to her. A moment she seemed moved,
Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me to cling,
And drew me feebly through the hall into
The room she sat in. There, with some strange spasm
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose my hands
Imperiously, and held me at arm's length,
And with two grey-steel naked-bladed eyes
Searched through my face,—ay, stabbed it through and through,
Through brows and cheeks and chin, as if to find
A wicked murderer in my innocent face,
If not here, there perhaps. Then, drawing breath,
She struggled for her ordinary calm—
And missed it rather,—told me not to shrink,
As if she had told me not to lie or swear,—
"She loved my father and would love me too
As long as I deserved it." Very kind.

I understood her meaning afterward;
She thought to find my mother in my face,
And questioned it for that. For she, my aunt,
Had loved my father truly, as she could,
And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,

My Tuscan[2] mother who had fooled away
A wise man from wise courses, a good man
From obvious duties, and, depriving her,
His sister, of the household precedence,
Had wronged his tenants, robbed his native land,
And made him mad, alike by life and death,
In love and sorrow. She had pored° for years
What sort of woman could be suitable
To her sort of hate, to entertain it with,
And so, her very curiosity
Became hate too, and all the idealism
She ever used in life was used for hate,
Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at last
The love from which it grew, in strength and heat,
And wrinkled her smooth conscience with a sense
Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)
When Christian doctrine was enforced at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me
My mother's hater. From that day she did
Her duty to me (I appreciate it
In her own word as spoken to herself),
Her duty, in large measure, well pressed out
But measured always. She was generous, bland,
More courteous than was tender, gave me still
The first place,—as if fearful that God's saints
Would look down suddenly and say "Herein
You missed a point, I think, through lack of love."
Alas, a mother never is afraid
Of speaking angerly to any child,
Since love, she knows, is justified of love.
And I, I was a good child on the whole,
A meek and manageable child. Why not?
I did not live, to have the faults of life:
There seemed more true life in my father's grave
Than in all England. Since *that* threw me off

Who fain would cleave (his latest will, they say,
Consigned me to his land), I only thought
Of lying quiet there where I was thrown
Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffering her
To prick me to a pattern with her pin,[3]
Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf,
And dry out from my drowned anatomy
The last sea-salt left in me.
So it was.
I broke the copious curls upon my head
In braids, because she liked smooth-ordered hair.
I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words
Which still at any stirring of the heart
Came up to float across the English phrase
As lilies (*Bene* or *Che che*[4]), because
She liked my father's child to speak his tongue.
I learnt the collects[5] and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,[6]
The Articles, the Tracts *against* the times[7]
(By no means Buonaventure's "Prick of Love"[8]),
And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,[9]
Because she liked instructed piety.
I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism[1])
And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education,—tongues,° not books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics,—brushed with extreme flounce[2]
The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivolous.
I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo,[3] the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire,—by how many feet

Mount Chimborazo outsoars Teneriffe,[4]
What navigable river joins itself
To Lara,[5] and what census of the year five
Was taken at Klagenfurt,[6]—because she liked
A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music,—such as would have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day[7]
As still it might be wished—fine sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of notes
To a noisy Tophet;° and I drew . . . costumes
From French engravings, nereids° neatly draped
(With smirks of simmering godship): I washed in[8]
Landscapes from nature (rather say, washed out).
I danced the polka and Cellarius,[9]
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modeled flowers in wax,
Because she liked accomplishments in girls.
I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking (to a maiden aunt
Or else the author),—books that boldly assert
Their right of comprehending husband's talk
When not too deep, and even of answering
With pretty "may it please you," or "so it is,"—
Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
Particular worth and general missionariness,
As long as they keep quiet by the fire
And never say "no" when the world says "ay,"
For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
And fatten household sinners,—their, in brief,
Potential faculty in everything
Of abdicating power in it: she owned
She liked a woman to be womanly,

And English women, she thanked God and sighed
(Some people always sigh in thanking God),
Were models to the universe. And last
I learnt cross-stitch,[1] because she did not like
To see me wear the night with empty hands
A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
Was something after all (the pastoral saints
Be praised for't), leaning lovelorn with pink eyes
To match her shoes, when I mistook the silks;
Her head uncrushed by that round weight of hat
So strangely similar to the tortoise shell
Which slew the tragic poet.[2]
By the way,
The works of women are symbolical.
We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,
Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,
To put on when you're weary—or a stool
To stumble over and vex you . . . "curse that stool!"
Or else at best, a cushion, where you lean
And sleep, and dream of something we are not
But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!
This hurts most, this—that, after all, we are paid
The worth of our work, perhaps.
In looking down
Those years of education (to return)
I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more
In the water-torture[3] . . . flood succeeding flood
To drench the incapable throat and split the veins . . .
Than I did. Certain of your feebler souls
Go out° in such a process; many pine
To a sick, inodorous light; my own endured:
I had relations in the Unseen, and drew
The elemental nutriment and heat
From nature, as earth feels the sun at nights,

Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark.
I kept the life thrust on me, on the outside
Of the inner life with all its ample room
For heart and lungs, for will and intellect,
Inviolable by conventions. God,
I thank thee for that grace of thine!
At first
I felt no life which was not patience,—did
The thing she bade me, without heed to a thing
Beyond it, sat in just the chair she placed,
With back against the window, to exclude
The sight of the great lime-tree on the lawn,[4]
Which seemed to have come on purpose from the woods
To bring the house a message,—ay, and walked
Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,
As if I should not, harkening my own steps,
Misdoubt° I was alive. I read her books,
Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,
Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors,
And heard them whisper, when I changed a cup
(I blushed for joy at that),—"The Italian child,
For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways,
Thrives ill in England: she is paler yet
Than when we came the last time; she will die."

Endnotes

- Note 1: Aurora Leigh, the only child of an Italian mother and an English father, is raised in Italy by her father after her mother's death when Aurora is four years old. When she is thirteen her father also dies, and the orphaned girl is sent to live in England with her father's sister, who is to be responsible for the girl's education.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The white chalk cliffs at Dover.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: English fields were separated from each other by hedgerows.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Perhaps a reference to the ancient notion that the sky was composed of several crystalline spheres orbiting the earth.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, pulsation in her temples from excitement.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Governor of the county.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Pharmacist, who in England at the time could prescribe as well as sell medicine.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Club devoted to making things for the poor.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, flannel petticoat.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The fold between two pages of a book, which had to be cut to open the pages. Presumably, modern books were more apt to reveal dangerous material when the crease was cut.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From Tuscany, a region in central Italy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: As in embroidery.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: No, no, indeed (Italian). "*Bene*"*:* it is well (Italian).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Seasonal opening prayers in the Anglican Church service.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Articles of Christian faith such as those proclaimed by Athanasius, an Egyptian theologian of the 4th century C.E., and at the early Church council held at Nicaea in the same era.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the 1830s leaders of the conservative High Church party had published *Tracts for the Times,* which argued against efforts by liberals to modernize the Anglican Church. Aurora's version of the title is hence ironic. "Articles": the thirty-nine articles are the principles of faith of the Church of England.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: St. Bonaventure's doctrine that the power of the heart to love leads to higher illumination than the power of the mind

to reason.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: That is, the author of the Gospel.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A new word or expression. Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), a French novelist whose realism made him improper reading for a young English lady of the 19th century.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An ornamental edge to a skirt. "Extreme": outermost.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Spanish historian (16th century), who wrote a book on the genealogies of Spanish noblemen.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A mountain in the Canary Islands. Mount Chimborazo is one of the highest peaks of the Andes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A town in Spain on the river Arlanza. Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A town in Austria.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Allusion to the story about Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), who, when informed of the difficulty of a piece of music a young lady was playing, replied, "I would it had been impossible."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: As in painting with watercolors.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A kind of waltz.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, embroidery.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: According to tradition, the Greek playwright Aeschylus was killed by an eagle who, mistaking his bald head for a stone, dropped a tortoise on it to break the shell.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Marie Marguerite, Marquise de Brinvilliers, a celebrated criminal who was beheaded in 1676, was tortured by having water forced down her throat.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1800), in which the lime tree becomes the vehicle of a realization that Nature never deserts the wise and pure even when they seem to be cut off from her most beautiful vistas.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *miserly* Return to reference °
- °: *remorse* Return to reference °
- °: *highest heaven* Return to reference °
- °: *intellectual gifts* Return to reference °
- °: *pored over* Return to reference °
- °: *languages* Return to reference °
- °: *hell* Return to reference °
- °: *sea nymphs* Return to reference °
- °: *die* Return to reference °
- °: *doubt* Return to reference °

From *Book 2*

[AURORA'S ASPIRATIONS][5]

Times followed one another. Came a morn
I stood upon the brink of twenty years,
And looked before and after, as I stood
Woman and artist,—either incomplete,
Both credulous of completion. There I held
The whole creation in my little cup,
And smiled with thirsty lips before I drank
"Good health to you and me, sweet neighbour mine,
And all these peoples."
I was glad, that day;
The June was in me, with its multitudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the calyx[6] split.
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God!
So glad, I could not choose be very wise!
And, old at twenty, was inclined to pull
My childhood backward in a childish jest
To see the face of't once more, and farewell!
In which fantastic mood I bounded forth
At early morning,—would not wait so long
As even to snatch my bonnet by the strings,
But, brushing a green trail across the lawn
With my gown in the dew, took will and away
Among the acacias of the shrubberies,
To fly my fancies in the open air
And keep° my birthday, till my aunt awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I murmured on
As honeyed bees keep humming to themselves,
"The worthiest poets have remained uncrowned
Till death has bleached their foreheads to the bone;
And so with me it must be unless I prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity,

And certainly I would not fail so much.
What, therefore, if I crown myself to-day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of it,
Before my brows be numbed as Dante's own
To all the tender pricking of such leaves?
Such leaves! what leaves?"
I pulled the branches down
To choose from.
"Not the bay![7] I choose no bay
(The fates deny us if we are overbold),
Nor myrtle—which means chiefly love; and love
Is something awful which one dares not touch
So early o' mornings. This verbena strains
The point of passionate fragrance; and hard by,
This guelder-rose,° at far too slight a beck
Of the wind, will toss about her flower-apples.
Ah—there's my choice,—that ivy on the wall,
That headlong ivy! not a leaf will grow
But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves, smooth leaves,
Serrated like my vines, and half as green.
I like such ivy, bold to leap a height
'Twas strong to climb; as good to grow on graves
As twist about a thyrsus;[8] pretty too
(And that's not ill) when twisted round a comb."
Thus speaking to myself, half singing it,
Because some thoughts are fashioned like a bell
To ring with once being touched, I drew a wreath
Drenched, blinding me with dew, across my brow,
And fastening it behind so, turning faced
. . . My public!—cousin Romney—with a mouth
Twice graver than his eyes.
I stood there fixed,—
My arms up, like the caryatid,[9] sole

Of some abolished temple, helplessly
Persistent in a gesture which derides
A former purpose. Yet my blush was flame,
As if from flax, not stone.
"Aurora Leigh,
The earliest of Auroras!"[1]
Hand stretched out
I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp a hand,
Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide
Had caught me at my pastime, writing down
My foolish name too near upon the sea
Which drowned me with a blush as foolish. "You,
My cousin!"
The smile died out in his eyes
And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead weight,
For just a moment, "Here's a book I found!
No name writ on it—poems, by the form;
Some Greek upon the margin,—lady's Greek
Without the accents.[2] Read it? Not a word.
I saw at once the thing had witchcraft in't,
Whereof the reading calls up dangerous spirits:
I rather bring it to the witch."
"My book.
You found it" . . .
"In the hollow by the stream
That beech leans down into—of which you said
The Oread in it has a Naiad's[3] heart
And pines for waters."
"Thank you."
"Thanks to *you*
My cousin! that I have seen you not too much
Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the rest,
To be a woman also."
With a glance
The smile rose in his eyes again and touched

The ivy on my forehead, light as air.
I answered gravely "Poets needs must be
Or° men or women—more's the pity."
"Ah,
But men, and still less women, happily,
Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath,
Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze
Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defiles
The clean white morning dresses."
"So you judge!
Because I love the beautiful I must
Love pleasure chiefly, and be overcharged
For ease and whiteness! well, you know the world,
And only miss your cousin, 'tis not much.
But learn this; I would rather take my part
With God's Dead, who afford to walk in white
Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet here
And gather up my feet from even a step
For fear to soil my gown in so much dust.
I choose to walk at all risks.—Here, if heads
That hold a rhythmic thought, must ache perforce,
For my part I choose headaches,—and to-day's
My birthday,"
"Dear Aurora, choose instead
To cure them. You have balsams."°
"I perceive.
The headache is too noble for my sex.
You think the heartache would sound decenter,
Since that's the woman's special, proper ache,
And altogether tolerable, except
To a woman."

Endnotes

- Note 5: Stifled by her aunt's oppressive conventionality, Aurora has found three sources of comfort and inspiration: poetic aspirations, fostered by the discovery of her father's library; the beauty of the natural world; and the intellectual companionship of her cousin Romney Leigh, an idealistic young man troubled by the misery of the poor and inspired by contemporary notions of social reform.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The protective outer leaves covering a flower or bud.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Laurel, associated with poetry and prophecy by the ancient Greeks, who also crowned the athletic victors in the Pythian games with a laurel wreath.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Staff twined with ivy that was carried, according to Greek myth, by Dionysus, god of wine and fertility.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Classical column in the form of a draped female figure.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Dawns; from Aurora, Roman goddess of the dawn.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Romney is gently mocking Aurora for her apparent ignorance of the complex rules of classical Greek accentuation.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Water nymph's. "Oread": tree nymph.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *observe*Return to reference °
- °: *cranberry bush*Return to reference °
- °: *either*Return to reference °
- °: *soothing cures*Return to reference °

[AURORA'S REJECTION OF ROMNEY][4]

There he glowed on me
With all his face and eyes. "No other help?"
Said he—"no more than so?"
"What help?" I asked.
"You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's self, you say,
Has scorned to put her music in my mouth
Because a woman's. Do you now turn round
And ask for what a woman cannot give?"

"For what she only can, I turn and ask,"
He answered, catching up my hands in his,
And dropping on me from his high-eaved brow
The full weight of his soul,—"I ask for love,
And that, she can; for life in fellowship
Through bitter duties—that, I know she can;
For wifehood—will she?"
"Now," I said, "may God
Be witness 'twixt us two!" and with the word,
Meseemed[5] I floated into a sudden light
Above his stature,—"am I proved too weak
To stand alone, yet strong enough to bear
Such leaners on my shoulder? poor to think,
Yet rich enough to sympathise with thought?
Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds can,
Yet competent to love, like HIM?"
I paused;
Perhaps I darkened, as the lighthouse will
That turns upon the sea. "It's always so.
Anything does for a wife."
"Aurora, dear,
And dearly honoured,"—he pressed in at once
With eager utterance,—"you translate me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of you
Which is most reverent, with another thought
Found less so. If your sex is weak for art
(And I, who said so, did but honour you
By using truth in courtship), it is strong
For life and duty. Place your fecund heart
In mine, and let us blossom for the world
That wants love's colour in the grey of time.
My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you, ay,
Since all my talk can only set you where
You look down coldly on the arena-heaps
Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct!
The Judgment-Angel scarce would find his way
Through such a heap of generalised distress
To the individual man with lips and eyes,
Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet, come down,
And hand in hand we'll go where yours shall touch
These victims, one by one! till, one by one,
The formless, nameless trunk of every man
Shall seem to wear a head with hair you know,
And every woman catch your mother's face
To melt you into passion."
"I am a girl,"
I answered slowly; "you do well to name
My mother's face. Though far too early, alas,
God's hand did interpose 'twixt it and me,
I know so much of love as used to shine
In that face and another. Just so much;
No more indeed at all. I have not seen
So much love since, I pray you pardon me,
As answers even to make a marriage with
In this cold land of England. What you love
Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir,
A wife to help your ends,—in her no end.
Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,

But I, being most unworthy of these and that,
Do otherwise conceive of love. Farewell."

"Farewell, Aurora? you reject me thus?"
He said.
"Sir, you were married long ago.
You have a wife already whom you love,
Your social theory. Bless you both, I say.
For my part, I am scarcely meek enough
To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse.
Do I look a Hagar,[6] think you?"
"So you jest."

"Nay, so, I speak in earnest," I replied.
"You treat of° marriage too much like, at least,
A chief apostle: you would bear with you
A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we speak it out?
A sister of charity."
"Then, must it be
Indeed farewell? And was I so far wrong
In hope and in illusion, when I took
The woman to be nobler than the man,
Yourself the noblest woman, in the use
And comprehension of what love is,—love,
That generates the likeness of itself
Through all heroic duties? so far wrong,
In saying bluntly, venturing truth on love,
'Come, human creature, love and work with me,'—
Instead of 'Lady, thou art wondrous fair,
'And, where the Graces[7] walk before, the Muse
'Will follow at the lightning of their eyes,
'And where the Muse walks, lovers need to creep:
'Turn round and love me, or I die of love.' "

With quiet indignation I broke in.
"You misconceive the question like a man,

Who sees a woman as the complement
Of his sex merely. You forget too much
That every creature, female as the male,
Stands single in responsible act and thought
As also in birth and death. Whoever says
To a loyal woman, 'Love and work with me,'
Will get fair answers if the work and love,
Being good themselves, are good for her—the best
She was born for. Women of a softer mood,
Surprised by men when scarcely awake to life,
Will sometimes only hear the first word, love,
And catch up with it any kind of work,
Indifferent, so that dear love go with it.
I do not blame such women, though, for love,
They pick much oakum;[8] earth's fanatics make
Too frequently heaven's saints. But *me* your work
Is not the best for,—nor your love the best,
Nor able to commend the kind of work
For love's sake merely. Ah, you force me, sir,
To be overbold in speaking of myself:
I too have my vocation,—work to do,
The heavens and earth have set me since I changed
My father's face for theirs, and, though your world
Were twice as wretched as you represent,
Most serious work, most necessary work
As any of the economists'. Reform,
Make trade a Christian possibility,
And individual right no general wrong;
Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine and Mine,
And leave one green for men to play at bowls,[9]
With innings for them all! . . . What then, indeed,
If mortals are not greater by the head
Than any of their prosperities? what then,
Unless the artist keep up open roads
Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting through

The best of your conventions with his best,
The speakable, imaginable best
God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond
Both speech and imagination? A starved man
Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter, sir,
The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,
I hold you will not compass your poor ends
Of barley-feeding and material ease,
Without a poet's individualism
To work your universal. It takes a soul,
To move a body: it takes a high-souled man,
To move the masses, even to a cleaner stye:
It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's-breadth off
The dust of the actual.—Ah, your Fouriers[1] failed,
Because not poets enough to understand
That life develops from within.——For me,
Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,
Of work like this: perhaps a woman's soul
Aspires, and not creates: yet we aspire,
And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir,
And if I fail . . . why, burn me up my straw[2]
Like other false works—I'll not ask for grace;
Your scorn is better, cousin Romney. I
Who love my art, would never wish it lower
To suit my stature. I may love my art.
You'll grant that even a woman may love art,
Seeing that to waste true love on anything
Is womanly, past question."

Endnotes

- Note 4:
  Romney and Aurora have been arguing about whether art, particularly a young woman's poetry, is useful in a world that, according to Romney, is full of human suffering. Romney claims

that women have no ability to generalize from their personal experiences and are, therefore, doomed to be trivial poets and ineffectual social reformers. Aurora is quick to agree that to be merely an inferior poet would be intolerable to her, but while she admires Romney's lofty concern for humanity, she remains untempted to join forces with him.
Return to reference 4

- Note 5: It seemed to me.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Genesis 16 Sarah's maidservant, who bore a child, Ishmael, by Sarah's husband, Abraham.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In classical mythology goddesses who personified beauty and charm.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Fiber derived by untwisting (picking) old rope, a task frequently assigned to workhouse inmates.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A game played on a smooth lawn with weighted wooden balls.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, Utopian thinkers. François-Marie-Charles Fourier (1772–1837) was a French political theorist who advocated communal property as a basis for social harmony.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, destroy my poetry. See 1 Corinthians 3:12–15.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *talk about*Return to reference °

From *Book 5*

[POETS AND THE PRESENT AGE]

The critics say that epics have died out
With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed gods;[3]
I'll not believe it. I could never deem,
As Payne Knight[4] did (the mythic mountaineer
Who travelled higher than he was born to live,
And showed sometimes the goitre[5] in his throat
Discoursing of an image seen through fog),
That Homer's heroes measured twelve feet high.
They were but men:—his Helen's hair turned grey
Like any plain Miss Smith's who wears a front;[6]
And Hector's infant whimpered at a plume[7]
As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock.
All actual heroes are essential men,
And all men possible heroes: every age,
Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
Looks backward and before, expects a morn
And claims an epos.°
Ay, but every age
Appears to souls who live in't (ask Carlyle)[8]
Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours:
The thinkers scout it,° and the poets abound
Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip:
A pewter age,[9]—mixed metal, silver-washed;
An age of scum, spooned off the richer past,
An age of patches for old gaberdines,°
An age of mere transition,[1] meaning nought
Except that what succeeds° must shame it quite
If God please. That's wrong thinking, to my mind,
And wrong thoughts make poor poems.
Every age,

Through being beheld too close, is ill-discerned
By those who have not lived past it. We'll suppose
Mount Athos carved, as Alexander schemed,
To some colossal statue of a man.[2]
The peasants, gathering brushwood in his ear,
Had guessed as little as the browsing goats
Of form or feature of humanity
Up there,—in fact, had travelled five miles off
Or ere the giant image broke on them,
Full human profile, nose and chin distinct,
Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence up the sky
And fed at evening with the blood of suns;
Grand torso,—hand, that flung perpetually
The largesse of a silver river down
To all the country pastures. 'Tis even thus
With times we live in,—evermore too great
To be apprehended near.
But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have eyes
To see near things as comprehensively
As if afar they took their point of sight,
And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them. Let us strive for this.
I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hundred years,
Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-court,
To sing—oh, not of lizard or of toad
Alive i' the ditch there,—'twere excusable,
But of some black chief, half knight, half sheep-lifter,
°
Some beauteous dame, half chattel and half queen,
As dead as must be, for the greater part,
The poems made on their chivalric bones;
And that's no wonder: death inherits death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this world
A little overgrown (I think there is),
Their sole work is to represent the age,
Their age, not Charlemagne's,[3]—this live, throbbing age,
That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates, aspires,
And spends more passion, more heroic heat,
Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-rooms,
Than Roland[4] with his knights at Roncesvalles.
To flinch from modern varnish, coat or flounce,
Cry out for togas and the picturesque,
Is fatal,—foolish too. King Arthur's self
Was commonplace to Lady Guenever;
And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat
As Fleet Street[5] to our poets.
Never flinch,
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song
The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age:
That, when the next shall come, the men of that
May touch the impress° with reverent hand, and say
"Behold,—behold the paps° we all have sucked!
This bosom seems to beat still, or at least
It sets ours beating: this is living art,
Which thus presents and thus records true life."

1853–56 1857

Endnotes

- Note 3: Zeus, the ruler of the ancient Greek gods, was nursed by a goat. Agamemnon was the commander of the Greeks in the Trojan War.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824), a classical philologist who claimed that Lord Elgin had wasted his labor taking the marble friezes from the Parthenon in Greece to

England because the marbles were not all Greek.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A disease often contracted in high mountain areas because of the low iodine content of the water.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A piece of false hair worn over the forehead by women.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the *Iliad,* book 6, the Trojan hero Hector reaches for his infant son, but the child clings to his nurse, frightened of his father's helmet and crest.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In *Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841), Carlyle argues that the present age needs a renewed perception of the heroic.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Allusion to the convention, which originates in Hesiod (Greek poet, ca. 8th century b.c.e), of describing civilization's decline through a succession of ages named for increasingly less precious materials: the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In *The Spirit of the Age* (1831), John Stuart Mill calls the present age "an age of transition."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Deinocrates, a Macedonian architect (4th century B.C.E.), is said to have suggested to Alexander the Great that Mount Athos be carved into the statue of a conqueror with a city in his left hand and a basin in his right, where all the waters of the region could be collected and used to water the pasturelands below.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Frankish conqueror (742–814), who created a European empire.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Legendary medieval hero, whose adventures are told in the epic poem *Chanson de Roland* (11th century); his last battle is fought at Roncesvalles, a Spanish village.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A center for bookshops and newspaper and publishing offices in London.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *epic poem*Return to reference °
- °: *dismiss it scornfully*Return to reference °
- °: *coats*Return to reference °
- °: *follows*Return to reference °
- °: *sheep stealer*Return to reference °
- °: *impression*Return to reference °
- °: *breasts*Return to reference °

A Curse for a Nation[1]

PROLOGUE

I heard an angel speak last night,
And he said, "Write!
Write a nation's curse for me,
And send it over the western sea."

I faltered, taking up the word—
"Not so, my lord!
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

"For I am bound by gratitude,
In love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who have stretched out kindly hands to me."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt thou write
My curse to-night!
From the summits of love a curse is driven,
As lightning from the tops of heaven."

"Not so!" I answered. "Evermore
My heart is sore
For my own land's sins! for the little feet
Of children bleeding along the street.

"For parked-up honours, that gainsay
The right of way!
For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to kiss.[2]

"For an oligarchic parliament,
And classes rent.[3]
What curse to another land assign,

When heavy-souled for the sins of mine?”

“Therefore,” the voice said, “shalt thou write
My curse to-night!
Because thou hast strength to see and hate
An ill thing done within thy gate.”[4]

“Not so!” I answered once again—
“To curse, choose men;
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears run down.”

“Therefore,” the voice said, “shalt thou write
My curse to-night!
There are women who weep and curse, I say,
(And no one marvels) night and day.

“And thou shalt take their part to-night—
Weep and write!
A curse from the depths of womanhood,
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.”

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,
What all may read;
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the western sea.

The Curse

I

Because ye have broken your own chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a nation’s height,
Yet thence bear down with chain and thong
On the souls of others,—for this wrong

This is the curse—write!

Because yourselves are standing straight
In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time
On writhing bondslaves,—for this crime
This is the curse—write!

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim
To honour in the whole world's sight,[5]
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
On babes and women—for this lie[6]
This is the curse—write!

II

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering fire,
And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame!
To utter the thought into flame
Which burns at your heart.
This is the curse—write!

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds—die or survive,—
Drop faint from their jaws,
Or throttle them backward to death,
And only under your breath
Shall ye bless the cause.[7]
This is the curse—write!

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
The nets of feudal law

To strangle the weak;
Ye shall count the sin for a sin,
But your soul shall be sadder within
Than the word which ye speak.
This is the curse—write!

Ye shall watch while rich men dine,[8]
And poor men hunger and pine
For one crust in seven;
But shall quail from the signs which present
God's judgment as imminent
To make it all even.
This is the curse—write!

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge his elect
And deliver the earth,
The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.
This is the curse—write!

When wise men give you their praise,
They shall pause in the heat of the phrase,
And sicken afar;[9]
When ye boast your own charters kept true,
Ye shall blush!—for the thing which ye do
Derides what ye are.
This is the curse—write!

When fools write taunts on your gate,
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall;
For your conscience, tradition, and name
Strike back with a deadlier blame[1]
Than the worst of them all.

This is the curse—write!

Go! while ill deeds shall be done,
Plant on your flag in the sun
  Beside the ill-doers;
And shrink from clenching the curse
Of the witnessing universe,
  With a curse of yours!
    This is the curse—write!

1854 1856

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  "Curse" was published in two forms during Barrett Browning's lifetime. It first appeared in 1856 in the American abolitionist magazine *The Liberty Bell*, as a response to the American "Ostend Manifesto" of 1854. (The Ostend Manifesto advocated U.S. seizure of Cuba from Spain in order to expand U.S. slave territory.) It was reprinted in 1860 in the poet's *Poems before Congress*, where it was widely understood—and Barrett Browning claimed, misunderstood—as a critique of British failure to support the cause of Italian unification. There are many relatively minor differences between the two versions; the major differences are noted below.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The 1860 version inserts an additional stanza:

  For love of freedom which abates
    Beyond the Straits:
  For patriot virtue starved to vice on
  Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion:

  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The 1860 version of this line: "And bribes well-meant."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The 1860 version of this line: “A foul thing done *within* thy gate.”Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The 1860 version of this line: “To honor in the old world’s sight,”Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The 1860 version of this line: “In strangling martyrs,—for this lie”Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The 1860 version of this line: “Shall favor the cause.”Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The 1860 version cuts this stanza as well as the following one.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The 1860 version of this line: “As if carried too far.”Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The 1860 version of this line: “Explode with a deadlier blame”Return to reference 1

Mother and Poet[1]

(Turin, After News from Gaeta, 1861)

1

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

2

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman, men said;
But *this* woman, *this,* who is agonised here,
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head
For ever instead.

3

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?
Ah boys, how you hurt! you were strong as you pressed,
And I proud, by that test.

4

What art's for a woman? To hold on her knees
Both darlings! to feel all their arms round her throat,
Cling, strangle a little! to sew by degrees
And 'broider the long-clothes° and neat little coat;
To dream and to doat.

5

To teach them . . . It stings there! *I* made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country. I* taught them, no doubt,
That a country's a thing men should die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

6

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my beautiful eyes! . . .
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But then the surprise
When one sits quite alone! Then one weeps, then one kneels!
God, how the house feels!

7

At first, happy news came, in gay letters moiled°
With my kisses,—of camp-life and glory, and how
They both loved me; and, soon coming home to be spoiled
In return would fan off every fly from my brow
With their green laurel-bough.[2]

8

Then was triumph at Turin: "Ancona was free!"
And some one came out of the cheers in the street,
With a face pale as stone, to say something to me.
My Guido was dead! I fell down at his feet,
While they cheered in the street.

9

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief looked sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time
When the first grew immortal, while both of us strained
To the height he had gained.

10

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more strong,
Writ now but in one hand, "I was not to faint,—
One loved me for two—would be with me ere long:
And *Viva l'Italia!—he* died for, our saint,
Who forbids our complaint."

11

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and aware
Of a presence that turned off the balls,° —was imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite dispossessed

To live on for the rest."[3]

12

On which, without pause, up the telegraph line
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah, "his," "their" mother,—not
"mine,"
No voice says "*My* mother" again to me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

13

Are souls straight° so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,
They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven
Through THAT Love and Sorrow which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

14

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'dst through
the dark
To the face of thy mother! consider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes
turned away
And no last word to say!

15

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house must always
keep one.
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall;

And, when Italy's made, for what end is it done
If we have not a son?

16

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?
When the fair wicked queen[4] sits no more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?
When the guns of Cavalli[5] with final retort
Have cut the game short?

17

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,[6]
When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and red,
When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,
(And *I* have my Dead)—

18

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly! *My* country is *there,*
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow:
My Italy's THERE, with my brave civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair!

19

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn;
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length
Into wail such as this—and we sit on forlorn

When the man-child is born.

20

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast
You want a great song for your Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

1861 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: The speaker is the Italian poet and patriot Laura Savio of Turin, both of whose sons were killed in the struggle for the unification of Italy—one in the attack on the fortress at Ancona, the other at the siege of Gaeta, the last stronghold of the Neapolitan government.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A laurel crown is the conventional mark of a poet's fame.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, that she could survive if both sons died.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Maria of Bavaria, wife of Francis II, the last ruler of the Neapolitan government, who retreated to Gaeta.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The general commanding the siege of Gaeta. Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The celebration when they too will have been united with the rest of Italy under King Victor Emmanuel II (1820–1878; reigned, 1861–78). In 1861, when the poem was written, they were the two cities that were still independent of the new state.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *infant's clothing*Return to reference °

- °: *moistened* Return to reference °
- °: *cannonballs* Return to reference °
- °: *immediately* Return to reference °

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON
1809–1892

In his own lifetime, Tennyson was the most popular of poets; after 1850, his works occupied a significant space on the bookshelves of almost every family of readers in England and the United States. This popularity came gradually: his first volume of poetry, *Poems by Two Brothers* (a collaboration with his brothers Frederick and Charles), was published in 1827, when he was only eighteen, and was received with virtually no notice. Volumes published in 1830 and 1832 were largely attacked by the few critics who reviewed them. But the two volumes of *Poems* (1842) were met with both popular and critical acclaim, and *In Memoriam* (1850) was hailed as a masterpiece. Largely on the weight of that last publication, Tennyson replaced William Wordsworth as Poet Laureate after the death of the elder poet. From then until the end of his life, Tennyson was consistently celebrated as the most important poet of his age.

Throughout his career, Tennyson showed a distinct capacity for linking scenery to states of mind. As early as 1835, J. S. Mill identified the special kind of scene painting to be found in poems such as "Mariana" (1830): "not the power of producing that rather vapid species of composition usually termed descriptive poetry . . . but the power of *creating* scenery, in keeping with some state of human feeling so fitted to it as to be the embodied symbol of it, and to summon up the state of feeling itself, with a force not to be surpassed by anything but reality." Tennyson's poetry is also

remarkable for its musical qualities, a gift he uses to particularly moving effect in poems such as "Tithonus" and "The Lotos-Eaters." It was, however, *In Memoriam* that marked Tennyson as the bard of his age. Dedicated to, and memorializing his university friend Arthur Henry Hallam, who died at twenty-two from a ruptured aneurysm while traveling in Europe, *In Memoriam* consists of 131 sections with a prologue and an epilogue, and was written in stages over the course of seventeen years. Despite Tennyson's insistence that it was a poem rather than a simple record of his own grief, at least some readers regarded it almost as a manual for the mourning process; it became a popular gift for the bereaved. In addition to a record of grief, however, Tennyson uses the experience of loss to address some of the most pressing philosophical and religious issues of his time: the problem of belief in an age of disbelief; the questions raised by the geologic record and evolutionary theory; the apparent cruelty of the natural world. The poem also grapples, tentatively, with an issue that few Victorian readers appear to have registered explicitly—the difficulty of love between men in a culture that has no acknowledged place for such feelings.

Alfred Tennyson was the fourth son in a family of twelve children. It was an unhappy and complicated household. Tennyson's father, the Reverend George Tennyson, was a man of considerable learning. The eldest son of a wealthy landowner, he had expected to be heir to his family's estates; instead, he was disinherited in favor of his younger brother and had to make his own livelihood by joining the clergy, a profession that he disliked. After George Tennyson settled in a small rectory in Somersby, his brooding sense of dissatisfaction led to increasingly violent bouts of drunkenness; he nevertheless tutored his sons in classical and modern languages to prepare them for entering the university. His children were marked by both his temperament and his temper: one of Tennyson's brothers had to be confined to an insane asylum for life; another was long addicted to opium; another had violent quarrels with his father.

Before leaving this difficult home for Cambridge, Tennyson had already demonstrated a flair for writing verse—precocious exercises

in the manner of Milton or Byron or the Elizabethan dramatists. Although unremarked by critics, *Poems by Two Brothers* drew the attention of a group of gifted undergraduates at Cambridge, "the Apostles," who encouraged him to devote his life to poetry. Up until that time the young man had known scarcely anyone outside his own family. He was painfully shy, and the friendships he found at Cambridge as well as the intellectual and political discussions in which he participated, gave him confidence and widened his horizons as a poet. This is the context in which Tennyson first met Hallam, whose friendship became so significant to him both personally and aesthetically. Hallam was a leader of the Apostles, and he later became engaged to Tennyson's sister Emily.

Tennyson's career at Cambridge was interrupted and finally broken off in 1831 by family turmoil and financial need, and he returned home to study and practice the craft of poetry. Then came many years of difficulty: Tennyson suffered acutely under the hostile criticism of his early volumes. His 1842 volumes demonstrated a remarkable leap forward, but it was not until 1850 and the publication of *In Memoriam* that he became sufficiently financially secure to marry Emily Sellwood (1813–1896), with whom he had corresponded since 1836.

His life thereafter was a comfortable one. He was as popular as Byron had been, and the earnings from his poetry (sometimes exceeding £10,000 a year) enabled him to purchase a house in the country and to enjoy the kind of seclusion he liked. His notoriety was enhanced, like that of George Bernard Shaw and Walt Whitman, by his colorful appearance. Huge and shaggy in cloak and broad-brimmed hat, gruff in manner, he impressed everyone as what is called a "character." The pioneering photographer Julia Cameron, who took magnificent portraits of him, called him "the most beautiful old man on earth." Tennyson had a booming voice that electrified listeners when he read his poetry, "mouthing out his hollow o's and a's, / Deep-chested music," as he would covertly describe himself in an early version of his Arthurian epic. Moreover, for many Victorian readers, he seemed not only a great poetical phrase maker and a

striking individual but also a wise man whose occasional pronouncements on politics or world affairs represented the national voice itself. In 1884 he accepted a peerage. In 1892 he died and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

While the most popular of Tennyson's earlier poems are meditative, even melancholy, after 1850, the poet wrote a series of engagements with events of the moment over which his thoughts and feelings had no time to brood. Several of these are what he himself called "newspaper verse." They are effectively letters to the editor, with the heat we expect of such productions. "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854), inspired by a report in the London *Times* of a cavalry charge at Balaclava during the Crimean War, is one of the most fascinating and difficult of his productions in this category, celebrating as it does the unquestioning obedience of young soldiers sent to their deaths in war as a result of administrative incompetence. Tennyson's position on the British Empire is even more enthusiastically jingoistic. In "The Defense of Lucknow," one of the new additions to this volume, the poet celebrates the supposed bravery of the British soldiers who came under attack during the 1857 uprising in India. This poem underscores Tennyson's sense of the importance of the imperial mission, and his conviction of the ingratitude of those native soldiers (sepoys) and peasants who sought to reject British rule.

Tennyson's poems of contemporary events were popular in his own day. So too were those poems in which, as in "Locksley Hall" (1842), he dipped into the future. The technological changes wrought by Victorian inventors and engineers fascinated him, sometimes giving him an exultant assurance of human progress. At other times the horrors of industrialism's by-products in the slums, the persistence of barbarity and bloodshed, and the greed of the newly rich destroyed his hopes that humanity was evolving upward. In the final book of *Idylls of the King* (1869), Arthur laments that his "realm / Reels back into the beast": Tennyson was similarly haunted by the possibility of retrogression.

Despite Tennyson's fascination with technological developments, he was essentially a poet of the countryside, a man whose whole being was conditioned by the traditions and rhythms of rural rather than urban life. Tennyson said that "the words 'far, far away' had always a strange charm" for him, even in his childhood; he was haunted by what he called "the passion of the past." The past became his great theme, whether it be his own past (such as the times he shared with Hallam), his country's past (as in *Idylls of the King*), or the past of the world itself, as expressed in these lines from *In Memoriam:*

> There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
> O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
> There where the long street roars hath been
> The stillness of the central sea.

Here Tennyson also shows his striking modernity: he is the first major writer to express an awareness of the vast extent of geological time that came to haunt human consciousness after Victorian scientists exposed the age of the earth.

Mariana[1]

"Mariana in the moated grange."
—Measure for Measure

With blackest moss the flower-plots
  Were thickly crusted, one and all;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
  That held the pear to the gable wall.
The broken sheds looked sad and strange:
  Unlifted was the clinking latch;
  Weeded° and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
    She only said, "My life is dreary,
      He cometh not," she said;
    She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
      I would that I were dead!"

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
  Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
  Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
  When thickest dark did trance° the sky,
  She drew her casement curtain by,
And glanced athwart° the glooming flats.[2]
    She only said, "The night is dreary,
      He cometh not," she said;
    She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
      I would that I were dead!"

Upon the middle of the night,

Waking she heard the nightfowl crow;
The cock sung out an hour ere light;
From the dark fen° the oxen's low
Came to her; without hope of change,
In sleep she seemed to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.
She only said, "The day is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

About a stonecast° from the wall
A sluice with blackened waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The clustered marish-mosses[3] crept.
Hard° by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarlèd bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,[4]
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!”

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creaked;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the moldering wainscot° shrieked,
Or from the crevice peered about.
Old faces glimmered through the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without.
She only said, “My life is dreary,
He cometh not,” she said;
She said, “I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!”

The sparrow’s chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
Which to the wooing wind aloof
The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then, said she, “I am very dreary,
He will not come,” she said;
She wept, “I am aweary, aweary,
Oh God, that I were dead!”

1830

Endnotes

- Note 1: Mariana, in Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure* 3.1.255, waits in a grange (an outlying farmhouse) for her lover, who has deserted her.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An area of low, level ground.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The little marsh-moss lumps that float on the surface of water [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: According to Virgil, Aeolus, god of winds, kept the winds imprisoned in a cave (*Aeneid* 1.50–59).Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *full of weeds*Return to reference °
- °: *cross*Return to reference °
- °: *across*Return to reference °
- °: *marshland*Return to reference °
- °: *stone's throw*Return to reference °
- °: *close*Return to reference °
- °: *wooden paneling*Return to reference °

The Lady of Shalott[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The story of the Lady of Shalott is a version of the tale of "Elaine the fair maid of Astolat," which appears in book 18 of *Morte Darthur* (1470) by Sir Thomas Malory (ca. 1405–1471). Tennyson, however, claimed he did not know Malory's version when he wrote his draft in 1832, identifying his source as a 14th-century tale about "la Damigella di Scalot": "I met the story first in some Italian *novelle:* but the web, mirror, island, etc., were my own. Indeed, I doubt whether I should ever have put it in that shape if I had been aware of the Maid of Astolat in *Morte d'Arthur."* Tennyson subjected this poem to numerous revisions over the years.
  Return to reference 1

Part 1

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold° and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow°
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs forever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop° flitteth silken-sailed
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly

From the river winding clearly,
Down to towered Camelot;
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers " 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

Notes

- °: *rolling plain*Return to reference °
- °: *bloom*Return to reference °
- °: *light open boat*Return to reference °

Part 2

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay°
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear[2]
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot;
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village churls,°
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,°
Sometimes a curly shepherd lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights

A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot;
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
70 "I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

Endnotes

- Note 2: Weavers used mirrors, placed facing their looms, to see the progress of their work.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *pause*Return to reference °
- °: *peasants*Return to reference °
- °: *easy-paced horse*Return to reference °

Part 3

A bowshot from her bower eaves,
He rode between the barley sheaves,
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves[3]
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight forever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot;
And from his blazoned baldric[4] slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jeweled shone the saddle leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot;
As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed

His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra,"[5] by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Endnotes

- Note 3: Armor protecting the leg below the knee.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A belt worn diagonally from one shoulder to the opposite hip, supporting a sword or bugle. "Blazoned": painted with a heraldic device.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare Autolycus's song in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* 4.3.9: "The lark, that tirra-lirra chants."Return to reference 5

Part 4

In the stormy east wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,

And her eyes were darkened wholly,[6]

The Lady of Shalott. This 1857 engraving, created by Dante Gabriel Rossetti for publisher Edward Moxon's illustrated collection of Tennyson's poetry, shows Lancelot musing "a little space" on the Lady in her boat.

Turned to towered Camelot.
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the waterside,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

1831–32 1832, 1842

Endnotes

- Note 6: In the 1832 version this line read: "And her smooth face sharpened slowly." George Eliot informed Tennyson that she preferred the earlier version.Return to reference 6

The Lotos-Eaters[1]

"Courage!" he[2] said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land[3]
In which it seemèd always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn,° did go;
And some through wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; far off, three mountaintops
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed; and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb° the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmèd sunset lingered low adown
In the red West; through mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down[4]
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;[5]
A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,

Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam,
Then some one said, "We will return no more";
And all at once they sang, "Our island home°
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

Choric Song[6]

1

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired[7] eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,

And through the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

2

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"—
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?[8]

3

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days
The flower ripens in its place,

Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

4

Hateful is the dark blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labor be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall, and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.[9]

5

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush[1] on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping° ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;

To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

6

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears; but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us,° our looks are strange,
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes[2] overbold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile;
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath,
Sore tasks to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

7

But, propped on beds of amaranth and moly,[3]
How sweet—while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly—
With half-dropped eyelid still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—

To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave through the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colored water falling
Through many a woven acanthus[4] wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

8

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak,
The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone;
Through every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts° are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking
ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of
wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning though the words are
strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring
toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered
—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys
dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.[5]
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the
shore
Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave
and oar;
O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander
more.

1832, 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Based on a short episode from the *Odyssey* (9.82–97) in which the weary Greek veterans of the Trojan War are tempted by a desire to abandon their long voyage homeward. As Odysseus later reported: "On the tenth day we set foot on the land of the lotos-eaters who eat a flowering food. . . . I sent forth certain of

my company [who] . . . mixed with the men of the lotos-eaters who gave . . . them of the lotos to taste. Now whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotos had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide . . . forgetful of his homeward way."

Tennyson expands Homer's brief account into an elaborate picture of weariness and the desire for rest and death. The descriptions in the first stanzas are similar to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590) 2.6 and employ the same stanza form. The final section derives, in part, from Lucretius's conception of the gods in *De Rerum Natura* (ca. 55 B.C.E.).
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Odysseus (or Ulysses).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The repetition of "land" from line 1 was deliberate; Tennyson said that this "no rhyme" was "lazier" in its effect. This technique of repeating words, phrases, and sounds continues; see "afternoon" (lines 3–4) and the rhyming of "adown" and "down" (lines 19 and 21).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An open plain on high ground.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A plant resembling tall coarse grass.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Sung by the mariners.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tennyson wanted the word to be pronounced as *tie-yerd* rather than *tier'd* or *tire-èd*, thus "making the word neither monosyllable or disyllabic, but a dreamy child of the two."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare *The Faerie Queene* 2.6.17: "Why then dost thou, O man, that of them all / Art Lord, and eke of nature Sovereaine, / Wilfully . . . wast thy joyous houres in needlesse paine?"Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Compare *The Faerie Queen* 1.9.40: "Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas, / Ease after warre, death after life does greatly please."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Myrrh, a resin used in perfume and incense, is associated with sweetness and comfort.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The suitors of Penelope, Odysseus's wife; during his long absence they have settled themselves as guests in his hall as they pressure her to remarry.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A flower with magical properties mentioned by Homer. "Amaranth": a legendary unfading flower.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A plant resembling a thistle. Its leaves were the model for ornaments on Corinthian columns.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A yellow lilylike flower supposed to grow in Elysium—in classical mythology a paradise for heroes favored by the gods.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *fine thin linen*Return to reference °
- °: *climbed up*Return to reference °
- °: *Ithaca*Return to reference °
- °: *curling*Return to reference °
- °: *succeed us as our heirs*Return to reference °
- °: *thunderbolts*Return to reference °

Ulysses[1]

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws[2] unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed,[3] and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades[4]
Vexed the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known—cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all—
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy,
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use![5]
As though to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains; but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet° adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine,[6] and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads°—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths[7]
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,[8]
And see the great Achilles,[9] whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are
—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

1833 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  According to Dante, after the fall of Troy, Ulysses never returned to his island home of Ithaca. Instead he persuaded some of his followers to seek new experiences by a voyage of exploration westward out beyond the Strait of Gibraltar. In his inspiring speech to his aging crew he said: "Consider your origin: you were not made to live as brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge" (*Inferno* 26). Tennyson modified Dante's 14th-century version by combining it with Homer's account (*Odyssey* 19–24). Thus Tennyson has Ulysses make his speech in Ithaca some time after he has returned home; reunited with his wife, Penelope, and his son, Telemachus; and, presumably, resumed his administrative responsibilities involved in governing his kingdom.
  Tennyson stated that this poem expressed his own "need of going forward and braving the struggle of life" after the death of Arthur Hallam.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Measure out rewards and punishments.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 4.4.9.23–25: "What is a man / If his chief good . . . Be but to sleep and feed?—a beast, no more."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: A group of stars (literally, “rainy ones”) in the constellation Taurus; their heliacal rising and setting generally coincided with the season of heavy rains. “Scudding drifts”: driving showers of spray and rain.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare Ulysses’ speech in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* 3.3.144–47: “Perseverance, dear my lord, / Keeps honour bright. To have done is to hang / Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail / In monumental mock’ry.”Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, varying fortunes.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The outer ocean or river that the Greeks believed surrounded the flat circle of the earth; the stars descended into it.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In Greek myth the Islands of the Blessed, a paradise of perpetual summer, located in the far-western ocean, where the virtuous and heroes dwell forever after death (often identified with Elysium).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The greatest of the Greek warriors at Troy, where he was killed.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *suitable, fitting*Return to reference °
- °: *confidence*Return to reference °

Tithonus[1]

The woods decay, the woods decay and fall,
The vapors weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.[2]
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes; I wither slowly in thine arms,[3]
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-haired shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.
Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seemed
To his great heart none other than a God!
I asked thee, "Give me immortality."
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant worked their wills,
And beat me down and marred and wasted me,
And though they could not end me, left me maimed
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,
And all I was in ashes. Can thy love,
Thy beauty, make amends, though even now,
Close over us, the silver star,[4] thy guide,
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
To hear me? Let me go; take back thy gift.
Why should a man desire in any way
To vary from the kindly race of men,
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance[5]

Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?
A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
And bosom beating with a heart renewed.
Thy cheek begins to redden through the gloom,
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team[6]
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise,
And shake the darkness from their loosened manes,
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.
Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
In silence, then before thine answer given
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.
Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
"The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts."
Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watched—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimsoned all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kissed
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.[7]
Yet hold me not forever in thine East;
How can my nature longer mix with thine?

Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows° of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground.
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave;
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn,
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

1833, 1859 1860

Endnotes

- Note 1: A Trojan prince loved by the goddess of the dawn, Eos or Aurora, who obtained for him the gift of living forever but neglected to ask for the gift of everlasting youth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Some species of swans live for at least fifty years.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Aurora's arms.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The morning star that precedes the dawn.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: What is decreed or ordained as human destiny.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The horses that draw Aurora's chariot into the sky at daybreak.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The walls of Troy ("Ilion") were supposed to have been built to the strains of the god Apollo's music.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *burial mounds*Return to reference °

Break, Break, Break

Break, break, break,
   On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
   The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
   That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
   That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
   To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,
   And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
   At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
   Will never come back to me.

1834 1842

Locksley Hall[1]

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet ’tis early morn;
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle horn.

’Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams[2] about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the west.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads,[3] rising through the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fireflies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed°

When I dipped into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be.—

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin’s breast;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;[4]
In the spring a young man’s fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, “My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee.”

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turned—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong";
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper thronged my pulses with the fullness of the spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be; thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is; thou art mated with a clown,°
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy; think not they are glazed with wine.

Go to him, it is thy duty; kiss him, take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought;
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, though I slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened° forehead of the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou less unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be at the root.

Never, though my mortal summers to such length of years should come
As the many-wintered crow[5] that leads the clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak and move;
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly; love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth the poet[6] sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widowed[7] marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whispered by the phantom years.
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow; get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine, a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down; my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his; it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.
"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffered"—Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?
Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is thronged with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy; what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are rolled in vapor, and the winds are laid with sound.[8]

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honor feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age![9]

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;
That which they have done but earnest° of the things that they
shall do.

For I dipped into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,[1]
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging through the thunderstorm;

Till the war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapped in[2] universal law.

So I triumphed ere my passion sweeping through me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint.
Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point;

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,
Though the deep heart of existence beat forever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn.

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moldered string?
I am shamed through all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain.

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, matched with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat.

Where in wild Mahratta-battle[3] fell my father evil-starred—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,

Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer° from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing space;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive, and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon![4]

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin forever down the ringing grooves[5] of change.

Through the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.[6]

Mother-Age—for mine I knew not—help me as when life begun;
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well through all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapor from the margin,° blackening over heath and holt,°
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

1837–38 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The situation in this poem—of a young man's being jilted by a woman who chose to marry a wealthy landowner—may have been suggested to Tennyson by the experience of his brother Frederick, a hot-tempered man who had fallen in love with his cousin Julia Tennyson and who was similarly unsuccessful. It may also have been inspired by Tennyson's own frustrated courtship of Rosa Baring, who rejected the young poet in favor of a wealthy suitor. Concerning the ranting tone of the speaker (a tone accentuated by the heavily marked trochaic meter), Tennyson said: "The whole poem represents young life, its good side, its deficiencies, and its yearnings."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tennyson stated that the noun "gleams" refers not to "curlews" flying but to streaks of light.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Or the Pleiades, seven stars in the constellation Taurus.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The rainbowlike colors of a dove's throat plumage are intensified in the mating season.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A rook, a long-lived bird.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Dante; see *Inferno* 5.121–23: "There is no greater sorrow / Than to be mindful of the happy time in misery" [*Longfellow's*

translation].Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Presumably figurative. Her marriage having become a mockery, she is widowed.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: It was once believed that the firing of artillery stilled the winds.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A happier past at life's beginning, which generated a more confident anticipation of the future (see also line 185).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Probably airships, such as balloons. "Argosies": merchant vessels.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Lapped in": encompassed by.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Reference to wars waged by a Hindu confederacy against the British East India Company (1803 and 1817).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: At Joshua's command the sun and moon stood still while the Israelites completed the slaughter of their enemies in the valley of Ajalon (Joshua 10:12–13).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Railroad tracks. Tennyson at one time had the impression that train wheels ran in grooved rails.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: China, regarded in the 19th century as a static, unprogressive country. See Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), pp. 155–57.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *enclosed*Return to reference °
- °: *boor*Return to reference °
- °: *narrowed*Return to reference °
- °: *pledge*Return to reference °
- °: *vine*Return to reference °
- °: *riverbank*Return to reference °
- °: *wood*Return to reference °

From The Princess[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: *The Princess* (1847), a long narrative poem, contains interludes in which occasional songs are sung. Several of these songs, two of which are printed here, have been set to music by various composers.Return to reference 1

Tears, Idle Tears[2]

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

1847

Endnotes

- Note 2:
  Tennyson commented: "This song came to me on the yellowing autumn-tide at Tintern Abbey, full for me of its bygone

memories.” This locale would be for him associated both with Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” (1798) and with memories of Arthur Hallam, who was buried across the Bristol Channel in this area. “It is what I have always felt even from a boy, and what as a boy I called the ‘passion of the past.’ And it is so always with me now; it is the distance that charms me in the landscape, the picture and the past, and not the immediate today in which I move.”
Return to reference 2

Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The firefly wakens; waken thou with me.

Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë[1] to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake.
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

1847

Endnotes

- Note 1: A Greek princess, whose father confined her in a brazen chamber after hearing the oracle that her son would kill him. But Zeus came to her in the form of a shower of gold, and she bore the hero Perseus.Return to reference 1

["The woman's cause is man's"][1]

"Blame not thyself too much," I said, "nor blame
Too much the sons of men and barbarous laws;
These were the rough ways of the world till now.
Henceforth thou hast a helper, me, that know
The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free:
For she that out of Lethe[2] scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,
Stays all the fair young planet in her hands—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow? but work no more alone!
Our place is much: as far as in us lies
We two will serve them both in aiding her—
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undevelopt man,
But diverse: could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;

Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music unto noble words;
And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summed in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other even as those who love.
Then comes the statelier Eden back to men:
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm:
Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
May these things be!"
Sighing she spoke "I fear
They will not."
"Dear, but let us type° them now
In our own lives, and this proud watchword rest
Of equal; seeing either sex alone
Is half itself, and in true marriage lies
Nor equal, nor unequal: each fulfils
Defect in each, and always thought in thought,
Purpose in purpose, will in will, they grow,
The single pure and perfect animal,
The two-celled heart beating, with one full stroke,
Life."
And again sighing she spoke: "A dream
That once was mine! what woman taught you this?"

1839–47 1847

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The Princess was Tennyson's attempt to address the contemporary debate over woman's proper role. It tells the story of a prince who courts the young and beautiful Princess Ida. She has vowed she will never marry and has established a

women’s university from which men are excluded. The prince and his two companions dress themselves up in women’s clothes to gain entrance to the university. When a battle ensues—in which King Gama, the prince’s father, invades the university to rescue his son and force Ida to marry him—the university is turned into a hospital and the princess is persuaded of the error of her ways. The prince’s final vision, from book 7 (reprinted here), in which he imagines a future of gradual change, by which men and women adopt the strengths of the other while maintaining their distinct natures, has been a key text in debates about Victorian constructions of masculinity and femininity. In the operetta *Princess Ida* (1884), W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan parody Tennyson’s poem and satirize feminism. Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the classical underworld, the river of forgetfulness.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *model*Return to reference °

In Memoriam A. H. H. When Arthur Hallam died suddenly at the age of twenty-two, probably of a brain aneurysm, Tennyson felt that his life had been shattered. Hallam was not only Tennyson's closest friend, and his sister's fiancé, but a critic and champion of his poetry. When Tennyson lost Hallam's love and support, he was overwhelmed with doubts about his own life and vocation and about the meaning of the universe and humankind's place in it. To express the variety of his feelings and reflections, he began to compose a series of lyrics. Tennyson later arranged these "short swallow-flights of song," as he called them, written at intervals over a period of seventeen years, into one long elegy. Although the resulting poem has many affinities with traditional elegies like Milton's "Lycidas" (1638) and Shelley's *Adonais* (1821), its structure is strikingly different from either. It is made up of individual lyric units that are seemingly self-contained but take their full meaning from their place in the whole. As T. S. Eliot has written, "It is unique: it is a long poem made by putting together lyrics, which have only the unity and continuity of a diary, the concentrated diary of a man confessing himself." Though intensely personal, the elegy expressed the religious doubts of his age. It is also a love poem. Like Shakespeare's sonnets, to which the poem alludes, *In Memoriam* vests its most intense emotion in relationships between men.

The sections of the poem record a progressive development from despair to some sort of hope, yet the pattern of progress in the poem is not a simple unimpeded movement upward. Dramatic conflicts recur throughout. Thus the most intense expression of doubt occurs not at the beginning of *In Memoriam* but as late as sections 54, 55, and 56.

The quatrain form in which the whole poem is written is usually called the "*In Memoriam* stanza," although it had been occasionally used by earlier poets. So rigid a form taxed Tennyson's ingenuity in achieving variety, but it is one of several means by which the diverse parts of the poem are knit together. The introductory section, consisting of eleven stanzas, is commonly referred to as the

“Prologue,” although Tennyson did not assign a title to it. It was written in 1849 after the rest of the poem was complete.

From In Memoriam A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII[1]

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
  Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
  By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;[2]

Thine are these orbs[3] of light and shade;
  Thou madest Life in man and brute;
  Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
  Thou madest man, he knows not why,
  He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
  The highest, holiest manhood, thou.
  Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems[4] have their day;
  They have their day and cease to be;
  They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know,
  For knowledge is of things we see;
  And yet we trust it comes from thee,

A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
  But more of reverence in us dwell;
  That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,[5]

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
  We mock thee when we do not fear:
  But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seemed my sin in me,
  What seemed my worth since I began;
  For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
  Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
  I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
  Confusions of a wasted° youth;
  Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

1849

1

I held it truth, with him who sings
  To one clear harp in divers tones,[6]
  That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
  And find in loss a gain to match?
  Or reach a hand through time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned,
  Let darkness keep her raven gloss.
  Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with Death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
  The long result of love, and boast,
  "Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn."

2

Old yew, which graspest at the stones
  That name the underlying dead,
  Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
Thy roots are wrapped about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
  And bring the firstling to the flock;
  And in the dusk of thee the clock
Beats out the little lives of men.

O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,
  Who changest not in any gale,
  Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom[7]

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
  Sick for° thy stubborn hardihood,

I seem to fail from out my blood
And grow incorporate into thee.

3

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
O sweet and bitter in a breath,
What whispers from thy lying lip?

"The stars," she whispers, "blindly run;
A web is woven across the sky;
From out waste places comes a cry,
And murmurs from the dying sun;

"And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
With all the music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own—
A hollow form with empty hands."

And shall I take a thing so blind,
Embrace her° as my natural good;
Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
Upon the threshold of the mind?

4

To Sleep I give my powers away;
My will is bondsman to the dark;
I sit within a helmless bark,
And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
That thou should fail from thy desire,

Who scarcely darest to inquire,
"What is it makes me beat so low?"

Something it is which thou hast lost,
Some pleasure from thine early years.
Break thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost![8]

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
All night below the darkened eyes;
With morning wakes the will, and cries,
"Thou shalt not be the fool of loss."

5

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds,° I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

6

One writes, that "Other friends remain,"

That "Loss is common to the race"—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff° well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more:
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
Who pledgest° now thy gallant son;
A shot, ere half thy draft be done,
Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor—while thy head is bowed,
His heavy-shotted° hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.[9]

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;[1]
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, "here today,"
Or "here tomorrow will he come."

O somewhere, meek, the unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging° golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;

And thinking "this will please him best,"
She takes a riband° or a rose;

For he will see them on tonight;
And with the thought her color burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turned, the curse
Had fallen, and her future Lord
Was drowned in passing through the ford,
Or killed in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me no second friend.

7

Dark house,[2] by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

8

A happy lover who has come
  To look on her that loves him well,
  Who ’lights° and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light
  Dies off at once from bower and hall,
  And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

So find I every pleasant spot
  In which we two were wont to meet,
  The field, the chamber, and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
  In those deserted walks, may find
  A flower beat with rain and wind,
Which once she fostered up with care;

So seems it in my deep regret,
  O my forsaken heart, with thee
  And this poor flower of poesy
Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanished eye,[3]
  I go to plant it on his tomb,
  That if it can it there may bloom,
Or dying, there at least may die.

9

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore[4]

Sailest the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favorable speed
Ruffle thy mirrored mast, and lead
Through prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor,° bright
As our pure love, through early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widowed race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

10

I hear the noise about thy keel;
I hear the bell struck in the night;
I see the cabin window bright;
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
And traveled men from foreign lands;
And letters unto trembling hands;
And, thy dark freight, a vanished life.

So bring him; we have idle dreams;
  This look of quiet flatters thus
  Our home-bred fancies. O, to us,
The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
  That takes the sunshine and the rains,
  Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God;[5]

Than if with thee the roaring wells
  Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine,
  And hands so often clasped in mine,
Should toss with tangle[°] and with shells.

11

Calm is the morn without a sound,
  Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
  And only through the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground;

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,[°]
  And on these dews that drench the furze,
  And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold;

Calm and still light on yon great plain
  That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
  And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main;[°]

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
  These leaves that redden to the fall,

And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair;

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

12

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
To bear through Heaven a tale of woe,
Some dolorous message knit below
The wild pulsation of her wings;

Like her I go; I cannot stay;
I leave this mortal ark behind,
A weight of nerves without a mind,
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
And reach the glow of southern skies,
And see the sails at distance rise,
And linger weeping on the marge,°

And saying; "Comes he thus, my friend?
Is this the end of all my care?"
And circle moaning in the air:
"Is this the end? Is this the end?"

And forward dart again, and play
About the prow, and back return
To where the body sits, and learn
That I have been an hour away.

13

Tears of the widower, when he sees
  A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
  And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
Her place is empty, fall like these;

Which weep a loss forever new,
  A void where heart on heart reposed;
  And, where warm hands have pressed and closed,
Silence, till I be silent too;

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
  An awful thought, a life removed,
  The human-hearted man I loved,
A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come, Time, and teach me, many years,
  I do not suffer in a dream;
  For now so strange do these things seem,
Mine eyes have leisure for their tears,

My fancies time to rise on wing,
  And glance about the approaching sails,
  As though they brought but merchants' bales,
And not the burthen that they bring.

14

If one should bring me this report,
  That thou° hadst touched the land today,
And I went down unto the quay;[6]
And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,

Should see thy passengers in rank
Come stepping lightly down the plank
And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
The man I held as half divine,
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,
And how my life had drooped of late,
And he should sorrow o'er my state
And marvel what possessed my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
No hint of death in all his frame,
But found him all in all the same,
I should not feel it to be strange.

15

Tonight the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day;
The last red leaf is whirled away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest cracked, the waters curled,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dashed on tower and tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver
That all thy motions gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,[7]
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
  And but for fear it is not so,
  The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
  And onward drags a laboring breast,
  And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

* * *

19

The Danube to the Severn[8] gave
  The darkened heart that beat no more;
  They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
  The salt sea water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,[9]
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hushed nor moved along,
  And hushed my deepest grief of all,
  When filled with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls;[1]
  My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

* * *

21

I sing to him that rests below
  And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,[2]
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveler hears me now and then,
  And sometimes harshly will he speak:
  "This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men."

Another answers: "Let him be,
  He loves to make parade of pain,
  That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy."

A third is wroth: "Is this an hour
  For private sorrow's barren song,
  When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

"A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms[3]
  To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?"[4]

Behold, ye speak an idle thing;
  Ye never knew the sacred dust.
  I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets° sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,

For now her little ones have ranged;
  And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stolen away.

22

The path by which we twain did go,
  Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
  Through four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow;

And we with singing cheered the way,
  And, crowned with all the season lent,
  From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May.

But where the path we walked began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,[5]
  As we descended following Hope,
There sat the Shadow feared of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
  And spread his mantle dark and cold,
  And wrapped thee formless in the fold,
And dulled the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
  Nor follow, though I walk in haste,
  And think that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

23

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
  Or breaking into song by fits,
  Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloaked from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
  I wander, often falling lame,
  And looking back to whence I came,
Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it ran
  Through lands where not a leaf was dumb,
  But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan;[6]

When each by turns was guide to each,
  And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
  And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
  And all was good that Time could bring,
  And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
On Argive[7] heights divinely sang,
  And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.[8]

24

And was the day of my delight
  As pure and perfect as I say?
  The very source and fount of day

Is dashed with wandering isles of night.[9]

If all was good and fair we met,
  This earth had been the Paradise
  It never looked to human eyes
Since our first sun arose and set.

And is it that the haze of grief
  Makes former gladness loom so great?
  The lowness of the present state,
That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win
  A glory from its being far,
  And orb into the perfect star
We saw not when we moved therein?[1]

25

I know that this was Life—the track
  Whereon with equal feet we fared;
  And then, as now, the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
  As light as carrier birds in air;
  I loved the weight I had to bear,
Because it needed help of Love;

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
  When mighty Love would cleave in twain
  The lading° of a single pain,
And part it, giving half to him.

26

Still onward winds the dreary way;
  I with it, for I long to prove
  No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
  And goodness, and hath power to see
  Within the green the mouldered tree,
And towers fallen as soon as built—

O, if indeed that eye foresee
  Or see—in Him is no before—
  In more of life true life no more
And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
  Breaks hither over Indian seas,
  That Shadow waiting with the keys,
To shroud me from my proper scorn.[2]

27

I envy not in any moods
  The captive void of noble rage,
  The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods;

I envy not the beast that takes
  His license in the field of time,
  Unfettered by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,

The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.[3]

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

28

The time draws near the birth of Christ.[4]
The moon is hid, the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.
Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound;

Each voice four changes[5] on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wished no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again;

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controlled me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touched with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

29

With such compelling cause to grieve
  As daily vexes household peace,
  And chains regret to his decease,
How dare we keep our Christmas eve;

Which brings no more a welcome guest
  To enrich the threshold of the night
  With showered largess of delight
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
  Entwine the cold baptismal font,
Make one wreath more for Use and Wont,[6]
That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
  Gray nurses, loving nothing new;
  Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They too will die.

30

With trembling fingers did we weave
  The holly round the Christmas hearth;
  A rainy cloud possessed the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
  We gamboled, making vain pretense
  Of gladness, with an awful sense

Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech;
  We heard them sweep the winter land;
  And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang;
  We sung, though every eye was dim,
  A merry song we sang with him
Last year; impetuously we sang.

We ceased; a gentler feeling crept
  Upon us: surely rest is meet.°
  "They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet,"
And silence followed, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
  Once more we sang: "They do not die
  Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;

"Rapt from[7] the fickle and the frail
  With gathered power, yet the same,
  Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil[8] to veil."

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
  Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
  O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

* * *

My own dim life should teach me this,
  That life shall live forevermore,
  Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
  Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
  In some wild poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
  'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
  Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent[9] draws,
  To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

35

Yet if some voice that man could trust
  Should murmur from the narrow house,
  "The cheeks drop in, the body bows;
Man dies, nor is there hope in dust";

Might I not say? "Yet even here,
  But for one hour, O Love, I strive
  To keep so sweet a thing alive."
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
  The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Aeonian[1] hills, and sow

The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
"The sound of that forgetful shore[2]
  Will change my sweetness more and more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die."

O me, what profits it to put
  An idle case? If Death were seen
  At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape[3]
  Had bruised the herb and crushed the grape,
And basked and battened° in the woods.[4]

* * *

39

Old warder of these buried bones,
  And answering now my random stroke
  With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,
  To thee too comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;[5]
But Sorrow—fixed upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men—
  What whispered from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,[6]

And passes into gloom again.

* * *

47

That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds,[7] and fusing all
The skirts[8] of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet.
  Eternal form shall still divide
  The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet;

And we shall sit at endless feast,
  Enjoying each the other's good.
  What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
  Before the spirits fade away,
  Some landing place, to clasp and say,
"Farewell! We lose ourselves in light."[9]

48

If these brief lays,[°] of Sorrow born,
  Were taken to be such as closed
  Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn.

Her° care is not to part and prove;
  She takes, when harsher moods remit,
  What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love;

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,
  But better serves a wholesome law,
  And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords;

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
  But rather loosens from the lip
  Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

* * *

50

Be near me when my light is low,
  When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
  And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
  Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;
  And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
  And men the flies of latter spring,
  That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
  To point the term of human strife,
  And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

* * *

54

O, yet we trust that somehow good
  Will be the final goal of ill,
  To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
  That not one life shall be destroyed,
  Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
  That not a moth with vain desire
  Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
Or but° subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
  I can but trust that good shall fall
  At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
  An infant crying in the night;
  An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

55

The wish, that of the living whole
  No life may fail beyond the grave,
  Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?[1]

Are God and Nature then at strife,
  That Nature lends such evil dreams?
  So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
  Her secret meaning in her deeds,
  And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
  And falling with my weight of cares
  Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
  And gather dust and chaff, and call
  To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.[2]

56

"So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarpèd[3] cliff and quarried stone
  She[°] cries, "A thousand types are gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
  I bring to life, I bring to death;
  The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
  Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
  Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes° of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
  And love Creation's final law—
  Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
  Who battled for the True, the Just,
  Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills?[4]

No more? A monster then, a dream,
  A discord. Dragons of the prime,°
  That tare° each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with° him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
  O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
  What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

57

Peace; come away: the song of woe
  Is after all an earthly song.

Peace; come away: we do him wrong
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale;
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
But half my life I leave behind.
But I shall pass, my work will fail.
Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
One set slow bell will seem to toll
The passing of the sweetest soul
That ever looked with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
Eternal greetings to the dead;
And "Ave,° Ave, Ave," said,
"Adieu, adieu," forevermore.

58

In those sad words I took farewell.
Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
As drop by drop the water falls
In vaults and catacombs, they fell;

And, falling, idly broke the peace
Of hearts that beat from day to day,
Half-conscious of their dying clay,
And those cold crypts where they shall cease.

The high Muse answered: "Wherefore grieve
Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?
Abide a little longer here,
And thou shalt take a nobler leave."

59

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
  No casual mistress, but a wife,
  My bosom friend and half of life;
As I confess it needs must be?

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
  Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
  And put thy harsher moods aside,
If thou wilt have me wise and good?

My centered passion cannot move,
  Nor will it lessen from today;
  But I'll have leave at times to play
As with the creature of my love;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
  With so much hope for years to come,
  That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
Could hardly tell what name were thine.

* * *

64

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
  As some divinely gifted man,
  Whose life in low estate began
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
  And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
  And breasts the blows of circumstance,

And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known
And lives to clutch the golden keys,[5]
    To mold a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
    Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
    The pillar of a people's hope,
The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
    When all his active powers are still,
    A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
    While yet beside its vocal springs
    He played at counselors and kings,
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who plows with pain his native lea
    And reaps the labour of his hands,
    Or in the furrow musing stands:
"Does my old friend remember me?"

* * *

67

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
    I know that in thy place of rest
By that broad water[6] of the west
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
  As slowly steals a silver flame
  Along the letters of thy name,
And o’er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away,
  From off my bed the moonlight dies;
  And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipped in gray;

And then I know the mist is drawn
  A lucid veil from coast to coast,
  And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

* * *

70

I cannot see the features right,
  When on the gloom I strive to paint
  The face I know; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
  A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
  A hand that points, and pallèd° shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
  And shoals of puckered faces drive;
  Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And through a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

71

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
And madness, thou has forged at last
A night-long present of the past
In which we went through summer France.[7]

Hadst thou such credit with the soul?
Then bring an opiate trebly strong,
Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong,
That so my pleasure may be whole;

While now we talk as once we talked
Of men and minds, the dust of change,
The days that grow to something strange,
In walking as of old we walked

Beside the river's wooded reach,
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
The cataract flashing from the bridge,
The breaker breaking on the beach.

72

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,[8]
And howlest, issuing out of night,
With blasts that blow the poplar white,

And lash with storm the streaming pane?

Day, when my crowned estate[9] begun
To pine in that reverse of doom,[1]
  Which sickened every living bloom,
And blurred the splendor of the sun;

Who usherest in the dolorous hour
  With thy quick tears that make the rose
  Pull sideways, and the daisy close
Her crimson fringes to the shower;

Who mightst have heaved a windless flame
  Up the deep East, or, whispering, played
  A checker-work of beam and shade
Along the hills, yet looked the same,

As wan, as chill, as wild as now;
  Day, marked as with some hideous crime,
  When the dark hand struck down through time,
And canceled nature's best: but thou,

Lift as thou mayst thy burthened brows
  Through clouds that drench the morning star,
  And whirl the ungarnered sheaf afar,
And sow the sky with flying boughs,

And up thy vault with roaring sound
  Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day;
  Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,
And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

* * *

I leave thy praises unexpressed
   In verse that brings myself relief,
   And by the measure of my grief
I leave thy greatness to be guessed.

What practice howsoe'er expert
   In fitting aptest words to things,
   Or voice the richest-toned that sings,
Hath power to give thee as thou wert?

I care not in these fading days
   To raise a cry that lasts not long,
   And round thee with the breeze of song
To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perished in the green,
   And, while we breathe beneath the sun,
   The world which credits what is done
Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame;
   But somewhere, out of human view,
   Whate'er thy hands are set to do
Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

* * *

78

Again at Christmas[2] did we weave
   The holly round the Christmas hearth;
   The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas eve.

The yule clog[°] sparkled keen with frost,

No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's[3] breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.[4]

Who showed a token of distress?
No single tear, no mark of pain—
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
No—mixed with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

* * *

82

I wage not any feud with Death
For changes wrought on form and face;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed with him can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shattered stalks,
Or ruined chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth;

I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit, otherwhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart:
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

83

Dip down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new-year° delaying long;
Thou doest expectant Nature wrong;
Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
Thy sweetness from its proper place?
Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's° darling blue,
Deep tulips dashed with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud
And flood a fresher throat with song.

84

When I contemplate all alone
The life that had been thine below,

And fix my thoughts on all the glow
To which thy crescent would have grown,

I see thee sitting crowned with good,
A central warmth diffusing bliss
In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,
On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
For now the day was drawing on,
When thou shouldst link thy life with one
Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled "Uncle" on my knee;
But that remorseless iron hour
Made cypress of her orange flower,[5]
Despair of hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.
I see their unborn faces shine
Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honored guest,
Thy partner in the flowery walk
Of letters, genial table talk,
Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labor fills
The lips of men with honest praise,
And sun by sun the happy days
Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;
And all the train of bounteous hours
Conduct, by paths of growing powers,
To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
  Her lavish mission richly wrought,
  Leaving great legacies of thought,
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
  As linked with thine in love and fate,
  And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
  And He that died in Holy Land
  Would reach us out the shining hand,
And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?
  Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
  The old bitterness again, and break
The low beginnings of content?

* * *

86

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
  That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
  Of evening over brake° and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space,[6] and rapt below
  Through all the dewy-tasseled wood,
And shadowing down the hornèd flood[7]
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh

The full new life that feeds thy breath
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odor streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

87

I passed beside the reverend walls[8]
In which of old I wore the gown;
I roved at random through the town,
And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes°
The storm their high-built organs make,
And thunder-music, rolling, shake
The prophet blazoned on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,
The measured pulse of racing oars
Among the willows; paced the shores
And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats[9] again, and felt
The same, but not the same; and last
Up that long walk of limes I passed
To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door.
I lingered; all within was noise
Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys
That crashed the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band
Of youthful friends,[1] on mind and art,
And labor, and the changing mart,
And all the framework of the land;

When one would aim an arrow fair,
But send it slackly from the string;
And one would pierce an outer ring,
And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master bowman, he,
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear
We lent him. Who but hung to hear
The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and grace
And music in the bounds of law,
To those conclusions when we saw
The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo?[2]

88

Wild bird,[3] whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden through the budded quicks,[°]
O tell me where the senses mix,
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,

And in the midmost heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy;

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

89

Witch elms that counterchange the floor
Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright;[4]
And thou, with all thy breadth and height
Of foliage, towering sycamore;

How often, hither wandering down,
My Arthur found your shadows fair,
And shook to all the liberal air
The dust and din and steam of town!

He brought an eye for all he saw;
He mixed in all our simple sports;
They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts
And dusty purlieus° of the law.[5]

O joy to him in this retreat,
Immantled in ambrosial dark,
To drink the cooler air, and mark
The landscape winking through the heat!

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,
The gust that round the garden flew,
And tumbled half the mellowing pears!

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets[6] on the lawn!

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon.

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
And break the livelong summer day
With banquet in the distant woods;

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme,
Discussed the books to love or hate,
Or touched the changes of the state,
Or threaded some Socratic dream;[7]

But if I praised the busy town,
He loved to rail against it still,
For "ground in yonder social mill
We rub each other's angles down,

"And merge," he said, "in form and gloss
The picturesque of man and man."
We talked: the stream beneath us ran,
The wine-flask lying couched in moss,

Or cooled within the glooming wave;
And last, returning from afar,
Before the crimson-circled star[8]
Had fallen into her father's[9] grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
  We heard behind the woodbine veil
  The milk that bubbled in° the pail,
And buzzings of the honeyed hours.

* * *

91

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
  And rarely° pipes the mounted thrush,
  Or underneath the barren bush
Flits by the sea-blue bird° of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know
  Thy spirit in time among thy peers;
  The hope of unaccomplished years
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
  May breathe, with many roses sweet,
  Upon the thousand waves of wheat
That ripple round the lowly grange,°

Come; not in watches of the night,
  But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,
  Come, beauteous in thine after form,
And like a finer light in light.

* * *

93

I shall not see thee. Dare I say
  No spirit ever brake the band
  That stays him from the native land
Where first he walked when clasped in clay?[1]

No visual shade of someone lost,
  But he, the Spirit himself, may come
  Where all the nerve of sense is numb,
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

Oh, therefore from thy sightless° range
  With gods in unconjectured bliss,
  Oh, from the distance of the abyss
Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
  The wish too strong for words to name,
  That in this blindness of the frame°
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

94

How pure at heart and sound in head,
  With what divine affections bold
  Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
  The spirits from their golden day,
  Except, like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
  Imaginations calm and fair,
  The memory like a cloudless air,

The conscience as a sea at rest;

But when the heart is full of din,
  And doubt beside the portal waits,
  They can but listen at the gates,
And hear the household jar° within.

95

By night we lingered on the lawn,
  For underfoot the herb was dry;
  And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
The silvery haze of summer drawn;

And calm that let the tapers burn
  Unwavering: not a cricket chirred;
  The brook alone far off was heard,
And on the board the fluttering urn.[2]

And, bats went round in fragrant skies,
  And wheeled or lit the filmy shapes[3]
  That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;

While now we sang old songs that pealed
  From knoll to knoll, where, couched at ease,
  The white kine° glimmered, and the trees
Laid their dark arms[4] about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
  Withdrew themselves from me and night,
  And in the house light after light
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart; I read

Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fallen leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead.

And strangely on the silence broke
The silent-speaking words, and strange
Was love's dumb cry defying change
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigor, bold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,
And keen through wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touched me from the past,
And all at once it seemed at last
The[5] living soul was flashed on mine.

And mine in this was wound, and whirled
About empyreal° heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

Aeonian music[6] measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—
The blows of Death. At length my trance
Was canceled, stricken through with doubt.[7]

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-molded forms of speech,
Or even for intellect to reach
Through memory that which I became.

Till now the doubtful dusk revealed
The knolls once more where, couched at ease,

The white kine glimmered, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field;

And sucked from out the distant gloom
A breeze began to tremble o'er
The large leaves of the sycamore,
And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,
Rocked the full-foliaged elms, and swung
The heavy-folded rose, and flung
The lilies to and fro, and said,

"The dawn, the dawn," and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mixed their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

96

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you,[8] whose light blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true;

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
  He would not make his judgment blind,
  He faced the specters of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
  And Power was with him in the night,
  Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
  As over Sinaï's peaks of old,
  While Israel made their gods of gold,
Although the trumpet blew so loud.[9]

* * *

99

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,[1]
  So loud with voices of the birds,
  So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest through thy darkling red
  On yon swollen brook that bubbles fast[2]
  By meadows breathing of the past,
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliage eaves
  A song that slights the coming care,[3]
  And Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
To myriads on the genial° earth,
Memories of bridal, or of birth,[4]
And unto myriads more, of death.

Oh, wheresoever those[5] may be,
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
Today they count as kindred souls;
They know me not, but mourn with me.

* * *

103

On that last night before we went
From out the doors where I was bred,[6]
I dreamed a vision of the dead,
Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
And maidens with me; distant hills
From hidden summits fed with rills
A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.
They sang of what is wise and good
And graceful. In the center stood
A statue veiled, to which they sang;

And which, though veiled, was known to me,
The shape of him I loved, and love
Forever. Then flew in a dove
And brought a summons from the sea;

And when they learnt that I must go,
  They wept and wailed, but led the way
  To where the little shallop° lay
At anchor in the flood below;

And on by many a level mead,°
  And shadowing bluff that made the banks,
  We glided winding under ranks
Of iris and the golden reed;

And still as vaster grew the shore
  And rolled the floods in grander space,
  The maidens gathered strength and grace
And presence, lordlier than before;

And I myself, who sat apart
  And watched them, waxed° in every limb;
  I felt the thews of Anakim,[7]
The pulses of a Titan's[8] heart;

As one would sing the death of war,
  And one would chant the history
  Of that great race which is to be,[9]
And one the shaping of a star;

Until the forward-creeping tides
  Began to foam, and we to draw
  From deep to deep, to where we saw
A great ship lift her shining sides.[1]

The man we loved was there on deck,
  But thrice as large as man he bent
  To greet us. Up the side I went,
And fell in silence on his neck;

Whereat those maidens with one mind
  Bewailed their lot; I did them wrong:
  "We served thee here," they said, "so long,
And wilt thou leave us now behind?"

So rapt° I was, they could not win
  An answer from my lips, but he
  Replying, "Enter likewise ye
And go with us:" they entered in.

And while the wind began to sweep
  A music out of sheet and shroud,
  We steered her toward a crimson cloud
That landlike slept along the deep.

104

The time draws near the birth of Christ;[2]
  The moon is hid, the night is still;
  A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
  That wakens at this hour of rest
  A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
  In lands where not a memory strays,
  Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallowed ground.

105

Tonight ungathered let us leave
  This laurel, let this holly stand:[3]
  We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
  And silent under other snows:
  There in due time the woodbine blows,°
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
  The genial hour with mask and mime;
  For change of place, like growth of time,
Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
  By which our lives are chiefly proved,
  A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
  Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;[4]
  For who would keep an ancient form
Through which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast;
  Nor harp be touched, nor flute be blown;
  No dance, no motion, save alone
What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds[5] by yonder wood.
  Long sleeps the summer in the seed;
  Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

106

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times:
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
  The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
  Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.[6]

107

It is the day when he was born.°
  A bitter day that early sank
  Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapor, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
  To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
  The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpened eaves,

And bristles all the brakes° and thorns
  To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
  Above the wood which grides[7] and clangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts[8] that pass
  To darken on the rolling brine
  That breaks the coast. But fetch the wine,
Arrange the board and brim the glass;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
  To make a solid core of heat;
  Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
Of all things even as he were by;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
  With books and music, surely we

Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
And sing the songs he loved to hear.

108

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, though with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.°

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies:
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.°

109

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye
That saw through all the Muses' walk;[9]

Seraphic intellect and force

To seize and throw the doubts of man;
Impassioned logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course;

High nature amorous of the good,
But touched with no ascetic gloom;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Through all the years of April blood;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England; not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt;[1]

And manhood fused with female grace
In such a sort, the child would twine
A trustful hand, unasked, in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
Have looked on: if they looked in vain,
My shame is greater who remain,
Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

* * *

115

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick°
About the flowering squares,° and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,

And drowned in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew° pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too, and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

* * *

118

Contèmplate all this work of Time,
The giant laboring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;[2]

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They° say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,

Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branched from clime to clime,
  The herald of a higher race,
  And of himself in higher place
If so he type[3] this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
  Or, crowned with attributes of woe
  Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
  And heated hot with burning fears,
  And dipped in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun,[4] the sensual feast;
  Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

119

Doors,[5] where my heart was used to beat
  So quickly, not as one that weeps
  I come once more; the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
  Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
  A light blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,°

And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand.

120

I trust I have not wasted breath:
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries;[6] not in vain,
Like Paul[7] with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning° casts in clay:
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men,
At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
Hereafter, up from childhood shape
His action like the greater ape,
But I was *born* to other things.

121

Sad Hesper° o'er the buried sun
And ready, thou, to die with him,
Thou watchest all things ever dim
And dimmer, and a glory done.

The team is loosened from the wain,°
The boat is drawn upon the shore;
Thou listenest to the closing door,
And life is darkened in the brain.

Bright Phosphor,° fresher for the night,
  By thee the world's great work is heard
  Beginning, and the wakeful bird;
Behind thee comes the greater light.[8]

The market boat is on the stream,
  And voices hail it from the brink;
  Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name[9]
  For what is one, the first, the last,
  Thou, like my present and my past,
Thy place is changed; thou art the same.

* * *

123

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
  O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
  There where the long street roars hath been
The stillness of the central sea.[1]

The hills are shadows, and they flow
  From form to form, and nothing stands;
  They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
  And dream my dream, and hold it true;
  For though my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

That which we dare invoke to bless;
  Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
  He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess—

I found Him not in world or sun,
  Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye,[2]
  Nor through the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun.

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
  I heard a voice, "believe no more,"
  And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep,

A warmth within the breast would melt
  The freezing reason's colder part,
  And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."[3]

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
  But that blind clamor made me wise;
  Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
  What is, and no man understands;
  And out of darkness came the hands
That reach through nature, molding men.

* * *

Love is and was my lord and king,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my king and lord,
And will be, though as yet I keep
Within the court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

127

And all is well, though faith and form[4]
Be sundered in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, even though thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine[5]
Should pile her barricades with dead.[6]

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar,[7] in his rags!
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
The fortress crashes from on high,

The brute earth lightens[8] to the sky,
And the great Aeon[9] sinks in blood,

And compassed by the fires of hell,
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
And smilest, knowing all is well.

* * *

129

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal,°
O loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown, human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, forever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeplier, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

130

Thy voice is on the rolling air
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
  But though I seem in star and flower
  To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less.

My love involves the love before;
  My love is vaster passion now;
  Tho’ mix’d with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
  I have thee still, and I rejoice;
  I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho’ I die.

131

O living will[1] that shalt endure
  When all that seems shall suffer shock,
  Rise in the spiritual rock,[2]
Flow through our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
  A voice as unto him that hears,
  A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
  The truths that never can be proved
  Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

From Epilogue[3]

* * *

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapor sail
And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths[4] that branch and spread
Their sleeping silver through the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;
And breaking let the splendor fall
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
And, star and system rolling past,
A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved through life of lower phase,
Result in man,[5] be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffered, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man that with me trod
This planet was a noble type°
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

1833–50 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: He died 1833 (Latin).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare John 20:24–29, in which Jesus rebukes Thomas for his doubts concerning the Resurrection: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The sun and moon (according to Tennyson's note).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Of religion and philosophy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As in the days of fixed religious faith.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Identified by Tennyson as the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The ancient yew tree, growing in the grounds near the clock tower and church where Hallam was to be buried, seems neither to blossom in spring nor to change from its dark mournful color in summer. "Thousand years": compare Book of Common Prayer, Psalm 90: "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Water can be brought below freezing-point and not turn into ice—if it be kept still; but if it be moved suddenly it turns

into ice and may break a vase [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Sailors buried at sea were often wrapped in their own hammocks.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to his son, Tennyson discovered that he had been writing a letter to Hallam during the very hour in which his friend died.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The house on Wimpole Street, in London, where Hallam had lived.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hallam expressed enthusiasm for Tennyson's early poetry in a review written in 1831.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Hallam's body was conveyed back to England by ship from Trieste, Italy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Reference to a burial inside a church building rather than in the churchyard.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: By 1850 the accepted pronunciation of "quay" would rhyme with *key*, but Tennyson reverts to an earlier pronunciation, *kay.*Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, a calm sea.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hallam died at Vienna on the river Danube. His burial place is on the banks of the Severn, a tidal river in the southwest of England.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A tributary of the Severn.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The water of the Wye River is dammed up as the tide flows in, and its sound is silenced until, with the turn of the tide, its "wave" once more becomes "vocal"; these stanzas were written at Tintern Abbey in the Wye valley.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The poet assumes that the burial was in the churchyard; in fact, on January 3, 1834, at St. Andrews in Clevedon, Somersetshire, Hallam's body was interred in a vault inside the church.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Astronomical instruments, such as telescopes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Probably alluding to the discovery in 1846 of the planet Neptune and one of its moons.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Hallam died just before the beginning of autumn (September 15, 1833) in the fifth year of the friendship.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Greek mythology the god of woods and pastures.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Of Argos, an ancient city-state in the northeastern Peloponnesus; more generally, Greek.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A sheep-raising region in Greece associated with pastoral poetry.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Moving spots on the sun.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The poet wonders whether Earth would have the deceptive appearance of being a perfect orb if viewed from afar, on another planet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Deity, being outside time, sees (rather than foresees) whether or not the rest of life ("more of life," line 11) will be pointless. If pointless, then the way for the speaker to deal with his self-scorn ("proper scorn") might be to seek death.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Complacency resulting from some deficiency ("want").Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The first Christmas after Hallam's death (1833); the setting is Tennyson's family home in Lincolnshire.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Different sequences in which church bells are pealed.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Personifying the spirits who expect customary observances of the Christmas season to be followed.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Carried away from.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An image representing the boundary between different worlds, especially that between Earth and heaven (see section 56, line 28). "From orb to orb": the angelic spirit ("flame") of the dead moves from star to star.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Some snakes are reputed to capture their prey by hypnotizing it.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Eons old, seemingly everlasting.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, of Lethe, the river in the classical underworld whose water caused forgetfulness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek mythology satyrs were half-man, half-beast (goat or horse) in appearance, desires, and behavior.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Lines 18–24 may be paraphrased: if we knew death to be final and that no afterlife were possible, love could not exist except on a primitive or bestial level.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The ancient yew tree in the graveyard was described in section 2 as never changing. Now the poet discovers that in the flowering season, if the tree is struck ("my random stroke"), it gives off a cloud of golden pollen.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Only the tips of the yew branches are in flower.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, go through the customary circuit of life.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Outer edges or fringes.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: These lines express the hope that, as Tennyson wrote, "individuality lasts after death, and we are not utterly absorbed into the Godhead. If we are to be finally merged into the Universal Soul, Love asks to have at least one more parting before we lose ourselves."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to Tennyson, the "inner conscience—the divine in man."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: As expressed in lines 1 and 2.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cut away so that the strata are exposed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Preserved like fossils in rock.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Badges of high public office.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Severn River.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In the summer of 1830 Hallam and Tennyson went through southern France en route to Spain.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: September 15, 1834, the first anniversary of Hallam's death.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: State of happiness.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The reversal or disaster that doom brought upon him when Hallam died.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The second Christmas (1834) after Hallam's death.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A game in which the participants pose in the manner of some famous statue or painting and the spectators try to guess what work of art is being portrayed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The player in the game of blindman's buff who wears a blindfold or hood.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Orange blossoms are associated with brides—here the poet's sister Emily Tennyson, to whom Hallam had been engaged. Cypress branches are associated with funerals.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The "ambrosial air" is slowly clearing the clouds from the sky.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Between two promontories [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of Trinity College, Cambridge University.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Areas of low, level ground.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Apostles, an undergraduate club to which Tennyson and Hallam had belonged.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hallam, like the Italian artist Michelangelo (1475–1564), had a prominent ridge of bone above his eyes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Probably a nightingale.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Shadows of the elm tree checker the lawn at Somersby, the Tennysons' country home.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Hallam became a law student in London after leaving Cambridge.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A group of 13th- and 14th-century poets in central Italy (Tuscany); the best-known of them are Dante and Petrarch.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, worked our way through some discourse of Socrates (as recorded by Plato).Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Venus, which will sink into the west as the Sun has done.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: According to the nebular hypothesis, planets condensed out of the Sun's atmosphere; in this sense the Sun is the "father" of planets.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, when he was alive and in fleshly form.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Vessel for boiling water for tea or coffee, heated by a fluttering flame.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The white-winged night moths called ermine moths.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Cast the shadows of their branches.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "His" in the 1st edition. Also in the 1st edition, line 37 read: "And mine in his was wound."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Music of the universe, which has pulsated for eons.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  In a letter of 1874, replying to an inquiry about his experience of mystical trances, Tennyson wrote: "A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction but the only true life. . . . This might . . . be the state which St. Paul describes, 'Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell.' . . . I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? But in a moment, when I come back to my normal state of 'sanity,' I am ready to fight for *mein*

liebes Ich [my dear self], and hold that it will last for aeons of aeons" *(Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir,* 1897, vol. 1, 320). Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A woman of simple faith.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: After veiling Mount Sinai in a "thick cloud" and signifying the divine presence by "the voice of the trumpet" (Exodus 19:16), God addresses Moses from the "thick darkness" (20:21). Meanwhile Aaron made, and the Israelites worshiped, a golden calf (32:1–6).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: September 15, 1835, the second anniversary of Hallam's death.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, reflections of the clouded red light of dawn quiver on the surface of the fast-moving water.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, that disregards future events such as death or the coming of autumn.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare with "Epilogue," lines 117–28 (p. 279).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, the many who remember death.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In 1837 Tennyson and his family moved away from their home in Lincolnshire, which had been closely associated with his friendship with Hallam. In section 104 the move seems to occur in 1835, the year of the third Christmas after Hallam's death.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Plural of *Anak;* a reference to the giant sons of Anak (see Numbers 13:33).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Giant of Greek mythology.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: See the account of the "crowning race" in "Epilogue," lines 128–44.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare *The Passing of Arthur*, lines 361–469, in which Bedivere is left behind as Arthur's barge, the ship of death, sails away. In the present dream vision the speaker is taken aboard, as are his companions, who represent the creative arts of this world—"all the human powers and talents that do not pass with

life but go along with it," as Tennyson said of this passage.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The third Christmas (1835) after Hallam's death.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare section 29, in which the family in their former home still continued to gather holly. In the new home the customary observances lapse.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, let no bowl of hot punch warm the mantelpiece.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The scintillating motion of the stars that rise [*Tennyson's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: These allusions to the second coming of Christ and to the millennium are derived from Revelation 20, but Tennyson has interpreted the biblical account in his own way. He once told his son of his conviction that "the forms of Christian religion would alter; but that the spirit of Christ would still grow from more to more."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Clashes with a strident noise.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Either cloud drifts or clouds of snow.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The realm of art and literature.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  From the 18th century onward, the word *Celtic* had been used as a descriptor of the family of languages that included Welsh, Cornish, Irish, and Gaelic. In the spurious slippage from language to ethnicity or "race" that was common in the 19th and 20th centuries, the term *Celt* was frequently applied to anyone who spoke (or was descended from those who spoke) a Celtic language. Tennyson here uses it as a synonym for "Irish." See Arnold's description of the Irish temperament as "Celtic" in *On the Study of Celtic Literature*.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Two of the perishable organic ingredients of the human body.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Emulate, prefigure as a type.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: In Roman mythology a half-human, half-beast deity of the woods and mountains.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The doors of Hallam's house on London's Wimpole Street. See section 7.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Mechanisms operated by responses to electrical forces.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: 1 Corinthians 15:32.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Compare Genesis 1:16: "the greater light to rule the day."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The planet Venus, named for the Roman goddess of love, is both the evening star and the morning star (visible at different times in different seasons).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In a passage from *The Principles of Geology* (1832), a book well known to Tennyson, Sir Charles Lyell discusses the "interchange of sea and land" that has occurred "on the surface of our globe": "In the Mediterranean alone, many flourishing inland towns and a still greater number of ports now stand where the sea rolled its waves since the era when civilized nations first grew in Europe."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: He does not discover satisfactory proof of God's existence in the 18th-century argument that because objects in nature are designed there must exist a designer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare the sentiment here with Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34), "The Everlasting No."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Traditional institutions through which faith was formerly expressed, such as the Church.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The river that runs through Paris.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Reference to revolutionary uprisings in France, in each of which a king lost his throne (line 9): in 1789 against Louis XVI, in 1830 against Charles X, and in 1848 against Louis-Philippe. If, as Tennyson recollected, section 127 was finished at a date earlier than 1848, the reference to three revolutions (line 6) was prophetic.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Pauper suffering from disease.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Is lit up by fire.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: A vast tract of time, here perhaps modern Western civilization.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Tennyson later commented that he meant here the moral will of humankind.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Christ. Compare 1 Corinthians 10:4: "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Epilogue describes the wedding day of Tennyson's sister Cecilia to Edmund Lushington. At the conclusion (printed here) the speaker reflects on the moonlit wedding night and the kind of offspring that will result from their union.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Inlets of the sea.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A child will be conceived and will develop in embryo through various stages. This development is similar to human evolution from the animal to the human level and perhaps to a future higher stage of development.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *desolated*Return to reference °
- °: *envying*Return to reference °
- °: *Sorrow*Return to reference °
- °: *mourning garments*Return to reference °
- °: *husks*Return to reference °
- °: *toasts*Return to reference °
- °: *heavily weighted*Return to reference °
- °: *arranging*Return to reference °
- °: *ribbon*Return to reference °
- °: *alights*Return to reference °
- °: *morning star*Return to reference °
- °: *seaweed*Return to reference °
- °: *open countryside*Return to reference °
- °: *open sea*Return to reference °

- °: *shore*Return to reference °
- °: *the ship*Return to reference °
- °: *small birds*Return to reference °
- °: *burden*Return to reference °
- °: *proper, appropriate*Return to reference °
- °: *grown fat*Return to reference °
- °: *songs*Return to reference °
- °: *Sorrow's*Return to reference °
- °: *only*Return to reference °
- °: *nature*Return to reference °
- °: *temples*Return to reference °
- °: *primeval age*Return to reference °
- °: *tore (archaic)*Return to reference °
- °: *compared to*Return to reference °
- °: *Hail (Latin)*Return to reference °
- °: *shadowy*Return to reference °
- °: *log*Return to reference °
- °: *spring 1835*Return to reference °
- °: *spring flower*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °
- °: *chapels*Return to reference °
- °: *hawthorn hedges*Return to reference °
- °: *regions*Return to reference °
- °: *into*Return to reference °
- °: *exquisitely*Return to reference °
- °: *kingfisher*Return to reference °
- °: *outlying farmhouse*Return to reference °
- °: *invisible*Return to reference °
- °: *human body*Return to reference °
- °: *noise*Return to reference °
- °: *cows*Return to reference °
- °: *heavenly*Return to reference °
- °: *generative*Return to reference °
- °: *light open boat*Return to reference °
- °: *meadow*Return to reference °
- °: *grown*Return to reference °

- °: *entranced* Return to reference °
- °: *blooms* Return to reference °
- °: *February 1* Return to reference °
- °: *thickets* Return to reference °
- °: *his own face* Return to reference °
- °: *Hallam* Return to reference °
- °: *hawthorn hedge* Return to reference °
- °: *fields* Return to reference °
- °: *seabird* Return to reference °
- °: *scientists* Return to reference °
- °: *gentle* Return to reference °
- °: *skillful* Return to reference °
- °: *evening star* Return to reference °
- °: *hay wagon* Return to reference °
- °: *morning star* Return to reference °
- °: *happiness* Return to reference °
- °: *model, example* Return to reference °

The Charge of the Light Brigade[1]

1

Half a league,[2] half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.[3]
"Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said.
Into the valley of Death[4]
Rode the six hundred.

2

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldier knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

3

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,

Into the mouth of hell
Rode the six hundred.

4

Flashed all their sabers bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sab'ring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the saber stroke
Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not,
Not the six hundred.

5

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

6

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

1854 1854

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  During the Crimean War (1854–56), owing to confusion of orders, a brigade of British cavalry charged some entrenched batteries of Russian artillery. This blunder cost the lives of three-quarters of the six hundred horsemen engaged (see Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Reason Why*, 1954). Tennyson rapidly composed his "ballad" (as he called the poem) after reading an account of the battle in a newspaper.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: About a mile and a half.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the recording Tennyson made of this poem, *hundred* sounds like "hunderd"—a Lincolnshire pronunciation that reinforces the rhyme with *thundered*, etc.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Psalms 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."Return to reference 4

The Defence of Lucknow[1]

I

Banner of England, not for a season, O banner of Britain, hast thou
Floated in conquering battle or flapt to the battle-cry!
Never with mightier glory than when we had rear'd thee on high
Flying at top of the roofs in the ghastly siege of Lucknow—
Shot thro' the staff or the halyard,[2] but ever we raised thee anew,
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

II

Frail were the works that defended the hold that we held with our lives—
Women and children among us, God help them, our children and wives!
Hold it we might—and for fifteen days or for twenty at most.[3]
'Never surrender, I charge you, but every man die at his post!'
Voice of the dead whom we loved, our Lawrence[4] the best of the brave:
Cold were his brows when we kiss'd him—we laid him that night in his grave.
'Every man die at his post!' and there hail'd on our houses and halls
Death from their rifle-bullets, and death from their cannon-balls,
Death in our innermost chamber, and death at our slight barricade,
Death while we stood with the musket, and death while we stoopt to the spade,
Death to the dying, and wounds to the wounded, for often there fell
Striking the hospital wall, crashing thro' it, their shot and their shell,
Death—for their spies were among us, their marksmen were told of our best,
So that the brute bullet broke thro' the brain that could think for the rest;
Bullets would sing by our foreheads, and bullets would rain at our feet—
Fire from ten thousand at once of the rebels that girdled us round—
Death at the glimpse of a finger from over the breadth of a street,
Death from the heights of the mosque and the palace, and death in the ground!
Mine? yes, a mine! Countermine![5] down, down! and creep thro' the hole!

Keep the revolver in hand! You can hear him—the murderous mole.
Quiet, ah! quiet—wait till the point of the pickaxe be thro'!
Click with the pick, coming nearer and nearer again than before—
Now let it speak, and you fire, and the dark pioneer is no more;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

III

Ay, but the foe sprung his mine many times, and it chanced on a day
Soon as the blast of that underground thunderclap echo'd away,
Dark thro' the smoke and the sulphur like so many fiends in their hell—
Cannon-shot, musket-shot, volley on volley, and yell upon yell—
Fiercely on all the defences our myriad enemy fell.
What have they done? where is it? Out yonder. Guard the Redan![6]
Storm at the Water-gate! storm at the Bailey-gate! storm, and it ran
Surging and swaying all round us, as ocean on every side
Plunges and heaves at a bank that is daily drown'd by the tide—
So many thousands that if they be bold enough, who shall escape?
Kill or be kill'd, live or die, they shall know we are soldiers and men!
Ready! take aim at their leaders—their masses are gapp'd with our grape°
—
Backward they reel like the wave, like the wave flinging forward again,
Flying and foil'd at the last by the handful they could not subdue;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

IV

Handful of men as we were, we were English in heart and in limb,
Strong with the strength of the race to command, to obey, to endure,
Each of us fought as if hope for the garrison hung but on him;
Still—could we watch at all points? we were every day fewer and fewer.
There was a whisper among us, but only a whisper that past:
'Children and wives—if the tigers leap into the fold unawares—
Every man die at his post—and the foe may outlive us at last—
Better to fall by the hands that they love, than to fall into theirs!'
Roar upon roar in a moment two mines by the enemy sprung
Clove into perilous chasms our walls and our poor palisades.
Rifleman, true is your heart, but be sure that your hand be as true!
Sharp is the fire of assault, better aim'd are your flank fusillades—
Twice do we hurl them to earth from the ladders to which they had clung,

Twice from the ditch where they shelter we drive them with hand-
grenades;
And ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

V

Then on another wild morning another wild earthquake out-tore
Clean from our lines of defence ten or twelve good paces or more.
Rifleman, high on the roof, hidden there from the light of the sun—
One has leapt up on the breach, crying out: 'Follow me, follow me!'—
Mark him—he falls! then another, and *him* too, and down goes he.
Had they been bold enough then, who can tell but the traitors had won?
Boardings and rafters and doors—an embrasure! make way for the gun!
Now double-charge it with grape! It is charged and we fire, and they run.
Praise to our Indian brothers,[7] and let the dark face have his due!
Thanks to the kindly dark faces who fought with us, faithful and few,
Fought with the bravest among us, and drove them, and smote them, and
slew,
That ever upon the topmost roof our banner in India blew.

VI

Men will forget what we suffer and not what we do. We can fight;
But to be soldier all day and be sentinel all thro' the night—
Ever the mine and assault, our sallies, their lying alarms.
Bugles and drums in the darkness, and shoutings and soundings to arms,
Ever the labour of fifty that had to be done by five,
Ever the marvel among us that one should be left alive,
Ever the day with its traitorous death from the loopholes around,
Ever the night with its coffinless corpse to be laid in the ground,
Heat like the mouth of a hell, or a deluge of cataract skies,
Stench of old offal decaying, and infinite torment of flies,
Thoughts of the breezes of May blowing over an English field,
Cholera, scurvy, and fever, the wound that *would* not be heal'd,
Lopping away of the limb by the pitiful-pitiless knife,—
Torture and trouble in vain,—for it never could save us a life,
Valour of delicate women who tended the hospital bed,
Horror of women in travail among the dying and dead,
Grief for our perishing children, and never a moment for grief,
Toil and ineffable weariness, faltering hopes of relief,

Havelock[8] baffled, or beaten, or butcher'd for all that we knew—
Then day and night, day and night, coming down on the still-shatter'd walls
Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands of cannonballs—
But ever upon the topmost roof our banner of England blew.

VII

Hark cannonade, fusillade! is it true what was told by the scout?
Outram[9] and Havelock breaking their way thro' the fell mutineers!
Surely the pibroch[1] of Europe is ringing again in our ears!
All on a sudden the garrison utter a jubilant shout,
Havelock's glorious Highlanders[2] answer with conquering cheers,
Forth from their holes and their hidings our women and children come out,
Blessing the wholesome white faces of Havelock's good fusileers,
Kissing the war-harden'd hand of the Highlander wet with their tears!
Dance to the pibroch!—saved! we are saved!—is it you? is it you?
Saved by the valour of Havelock, saved by the blessing of Heaven!
'Hold it for fifteen days!' we have held it for eighty-seven!
And ever aloft on the palace roof the old banner of England blew.

1879

Endnotes

- Note 1: The siege of Lucknow took place when Indian soldiers attacked the British governmental headquarters in the city of Lucknow as part of the Indian uprising against British rule in 1857.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A rope used for raising or lowering a flag.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The siege went on for nearly six months, from May 30 to November 27, 1857.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Henry Lawrence, who took over the command at Lucknow six weeks before the siege began. He was wounded by a shell and died on July 4.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The rebelling forces dug mines, or tunnels, under the residency; the defenders dug countermines in order to attack underground.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: An arrow-shaped embankment.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Indian soldiers serving in the British army who defended the British.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Major General Sir Henry Havelock recaptured Cawnpore and sought to recapture Lucknow as well. He died of dysentery inside the blockade shortly after the siege was lifted.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Major General Sir James Outram worked with Havelock to retake Lucknow.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A form of music played on bagpipes.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The 78th (Highlanders) Regiment was a Scottish regiment that helped defend the residency.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *cannon fire*Return to reference °

Crossing the Bar[1]

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,[2]
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne° of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

1889 1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although not the last poem written by Tennyson, "Crossing the Bar" appears, at his request, as the final poem in all collections of his work.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mournful sound of the ocean beating on a sandbar at the mouth of a harbor.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *boundary*Return to reference °

CHARLES DARWIN
1809–1882

Of all the many works in this volume, those of Charles Darwin have had the greatest impact not just on the development of literature, but on the science, politics, and worldview of our current times. We are still working through the full consequences of his understanding of the mutability of species and their competition for survival. It is true that terrible crimes have been committed as a result of misapplying Darwin's ideas—in the form of eugenics, for example, or what been (mis)named "social Darwinism." But at the same time, Darwin helped reveal a natural world dazzling in its beauty, complexity, and interconnectedness. Other natural historians working in the mid-nineteenth century developed related accounts of the variation of species, and even their mutability. But no one else had the breadth of vision to see the interconnections between the mutability of the environment and the mutability of species.

The fifth child of Robert Waring Darwin and Susanna Wedgwood (whose father, Josiah Wedgwood, designed the antislavery medallion referenced on p. 345, below), Darwin grew up in affluent circumstances. His father was the principal physician for the market town of Shrewsbury, in western England. A sizable inheritance combined with advantageous investments resulted in a substantial fortune. Darwin's independent income enabled him to follow his passions: he developed an interest in geology and biology at Cambridge, where he was studying to become a clergyman.

Recognizing his own lack of religious vocation—and ultimately his inability to believe in orthodox Christianity—he chose instead to follow his passion for natural history. He had the good fortune to be invited on what was supposed to be a two-year trip to Terra del Fuego as the H.M.S. *Beagle*'s naturalist and collector. The voyage ultimately lasted five years and, according to his *Autobiography* (1887), "determined my whole career." Not only did Darwin visit some of the most isolated—and so most scientifically significant—places on the globe but he also had experiences that affected his ability to imagine the mutability of the natural world. The consequences of an earthquake in Concepción, for example, showed him both the powerlessness of people in the face of horrible catastrophe, and the extent to which the land itself is constantly shifting and changing. Meanwhile, witnessing the horrors of slavery close at hand confirmed him in his lifelong opposition to the practice.

Although Darwin began speculating about transmutation during his travels and continued his research upon his return, it was not until he read Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that he began to understand the role of overpopulation in natural selection. According to Malthus, because human fecundity is always in excess of possible increases in food production, overpopulation is inevitable—hence the recurring cycles of famine, plague, and war. Darwin took this insight and applied it to the entirety of the natural world: as he wrote in *The Origin of Species*, "We behold the face of nature bright with gladness, we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey." The overabundance of nature—the ability of a single tree to produce thousands of seeds, or a single bird to lay dozens of eggs—is simply the necessary consequence of the fact that nearly all those seeds and all those eggs will die before they have the opportunity to reproduce.

On the one hand, this insight begins to suggest the extraordinary interdependence of all life: in one famous passage Darwin relates the number of cats in a given district to the number of mice to the number of humble-bees (bumblebees) to the number of red clover. "[I]t is quite credible that the presence of a feline animal in large numbers in a district might determine, through the intervention first of mice and then of bees, the frequency of certain flowers in that district!" On the other hand, understanding the "struggle for existence" begins to suggest how species might change over time, since any advantage due to chance variations might be sufficient to ensure the survival of that organism's offspring over another's.

Despite constant experimentation and a long list of publications, Darwin did not publish his theories about the transmutation of species until 1859, over twenty years after his return from his trip on the *Beagle*. *The Origin of Species* made Darwin both famous and controversial. The opposition aroused by Darwin's treatise came from two different quarters. The first consisted of some of his fellow scientists, who considered his theory to be unsound. The second consisted of religious leaders who attacked his theory because it seemed to contradict a literal interpretation of the Bible. Sometimes the two kinds of opposition combined forces, as in 1860 when his scientific opponents selected Bishop Wilberforce to be their spokesman in spearheading their attack on *The Origin of Species.* In replying to such attacks, Darwin was supported by two of the ablest popularizers of science in his day, T. H. Huxley and John Tyndall. Moreover, although shy by temperament, Darwin was himself an exceptionally effective expositor of his own theories.

After he published *The Origin of Species,* Darwin wrote several treatises, some of which develop and clarify the theory of natural selection. One of these works, *The Descent of Man* (1871), was especially provocative in its stress on the similarities between humans and animals and in its naturalistic explanations of the beautiful colorings of birds, insects, and flowers. While many religious authorities pointed to the tail feathers of the peacock, for example, as evidence of God's goodness, Darwin saw evidence only

of "sexual selection," or the advantage decoration would give to males of the species in finding a mate.

Darwin rightly saw himself as a scientist and for the most part restricted his attention to observations about the natural world. At the same time, his work clearly refuted so-called "scientific racism," which claimed (erroneously) that the races are biologically distinct. This false notion was used as a justification for the enslavement of people of African descent. Darwin, however, proved that all people have a single origin. The notion that "the survival of the fittest" could be used to explain activities within and between human societies and cultures—what came to be known in the late nineteenth century as "social Darwinism"—was primarily the product of other writers, most notably Herbert Spencer (1820–1903).

Darwin was by all accounts a genial father and husband as well as a devoted recluse—partly as a result of ongoing ill health. His home was constructed around his experiments, with greenhouses, experimental garden beds, and breeding pens for birds and animals. His children often helped with his experiments, and one of the pleasures of his *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) is reading his observations of his children's facial expressions. So entwined were Darwin's home life and his scientific projects that his children appear to have regarded the one as a natural extension of the other: upon being given a tour of a neighbor's house one of the children asked, "where does he do his barnacles?"

Darwin died at home at the age of seventy-three. He was buried in Westminster Abbey close to the monument to Sir Isaac Newton.

From On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection

From *Chapter 3. Struggle for Existence*

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It may be asked, how is it that varieties, which I have called incipient species, become ultimately converted into good and distinct species, which in most cases obviously differ from each other far more than do the varieties of the same species? How do those groups of species, which constitute what are called distinct genera, and which differ from each other more than do the species of the same genus, arise? All these results, as we shall more fully see in the next chapter, follow inevitably from the struggle for life. Owing to this struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring. The offspring, also, will thus have a better chance of surviving, for, of the many individuals of any species which are periodically born, but a small number can survive. I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term of Natural Selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. We have seen that man by selection can certainly produce great results, and can adapt organic beings to his own uses, through the accumulation of slight but useful variations, given to him by the hand of Nature. But Natural Selection, as we shall hereafter see, is a power incessantly ready for action, and is as immeasurably superior to man's feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art.

* * * Nothing is easier than to admit in words the truth of the universal struggle for life, or more difficult—at least I have found it so—than constantly to bear this conclusion in mind. Yet unless it be thoroughly engrained in the mind, I am convinced that the whole economy of nature, with every fact on distribution, rarity, abundance, extinction, and variation, will be dimly seen or quite misunderstood. We behold the face of nature bright with gladness,

we often see superabundance of food; we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songsters, or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey; we do not always bear in mind, that though food may be now superabundant, it is not so at all seasons of each recurring year.

I should premise that I use the term Struggle for Existence in a large and metaphorical sense, including dependence of one being on another, and including (which is more important) not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny. Two canine animals in a time of dearth, may be truly said to struggle with each other which shall get food and live. But a plant on the edge of a desert is said to struggle for life against the drought, though more properly it should be said to be dependent on the moisture. A plant which annually produces a thousand seeds, of which on an average only one comes to maturity, may be more truly said to struggle with the plants of the same and other kinds which already clothe the ground. The missletoe is dependent on the apple and a few other trees, but can only in a far-fetched sense be said to struggle with these trees, for if too many of these parasites grow on the same tree, it will languish and die. But several seedling missletoes, growing close together on the same branch, may more truly be said to struggle with each other. As the missletoe is disseminated by birds, its existence depends on birds; and it may metaphorically be said to struggle with other fruit-bearing plants, in order to tempt birds to devour and thus disseminate its seeds rather than those of other plants. In these several senses, which pass into each other, I use for convenience sake the general term of struggle for existence.

A struggle for existence inevitably follows from the high rate at which all organic beings tend to increase. Every being, which during its natural lifetime produces several eggs or seeds, must suffer destruction during some period of its life, and during some season or occasional year, otherwise, on the principle of geometrical increase, its numbers would quickly become so inordinately great that no

country could support the product. Hence, as more individuals are produced than can possibly survive, there must in every case be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of distinct species, or with the physical conditions of life. It is the doctrine of Malthus[1] applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms; for in this case there can be no artificial increase of food, and no prudential restraint from marriage. Although some species may be now increasing, more or less rapidly, in numbers, all cannot do so, for the world would not hold them.

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I am tempted to give one more instance showing how plants and animals, most remote in the scale of nature, are bound together by a web of complex relations. I shall hereafter have occasion to show that the exotic Lobelia fulgens, in this part of England, is never visited by insects, and consequently, from its peculiar structure, never can set a seed. Many of our orchidaceous plants absolutely require the visits of moths to remove their pollen-masses and thus to fertilise them. I have, also, reason to believe that humble-bees are indispensable to the fertilisation of the heartsease (Viola tricolor), for other bees do not visit this flower. From experiments which I have tried, I have found that the visits of bees, if not indispensable, are at least highly beneficial to the fertilisation of our clovers; but humble-bees alone visit the common red clover (Trifolium pratense), as other bees cannot reach the nectar. Hence I have very little doubt, that if the whole genus of humble-bees became extinct or very rare in England, the heartsease and red clover would become very rare, or wholly disappear. The number of humble-bees in any district depends in a great degree on the number of field-mice, which destroy their combs and nests; and Mr. H. Newman, who has long attended to the habits of humble-bees, believes that "more than two-thirds of them are thus destroyed all over England." Now the number of mice is largely dependent, as every one knows, on the

number of cats; and Mr. Newman says, "Near villages and small towns I have found the nests of humble-bees more numerous than elsewhere, which I attribute to the number of cats that destroy the mice." Hence it is quite credible that the presence of a feline animal in large numbers in a district might determine, through the intervention first of mice and then of bees, the frequency of certain flowers in that district!

In the case of every species, many different checks, acting at different periods of life, and during different seasons or years, probably come into play; some one check or some few being generally the most potent, but all concurring in determining the average number or even the existence of the species. In some cases it can be shown that widely-different checks act on the same species in different districts. When we look at the plants and bushes clothing an entangled bank, we are tempted to attribute their proportional numbers and kinds to what we call chance. But how false a view is this! Every one has heard that when an American forest is cut down, a very different vegetation springs up; but it has been observed that the trees now growing on the ancient Indian mounds, in the Southern United States, display the same beautiful diversity and proportion of kinds as in the surrounding virgin forests. What a struggle between the several kinds of trees must here have gone on during long centuries, each annually scattering its seeds by the thousand; what war between insect and insect—between insects, snails, and other animals with birds and beasts of prey—all striving to increase, and all feeding on each other or on the trees or their seeds and seedlings, or on the other plants which first clothed the ground and thus checked the growth of the trees! Throw up a handful of feathers, and all must fall to the ground according to definite laws; but how simple is this problem compared to the action and reaction of the innumerable plants and animals which have determined, in the course of centuries, the proportional numbers and kinds of trees now growing on the old Indian ruins!

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We can see that when a plant or animal is placed in a new country amongst new competitors, though the climate may be exactly the same as in its former home, yet the conditions of its life will generally be changed in an essential manner. If we wished to increase its average numbers in its new home, we should have to modify it in a different way to what we should have done in its native country; for we should have to give it some advantage over a different set of competitors or enemies.

It is good thus to try in our imagination to give any form some advantage over another. Probably in no single instance should we know what to do, so as to succeed. It will convince us of our ignorance on the mutual relations of all organic beings; a conviction as necessary, as it seems to be difficult to acquire. All that we can do, is to keep steadily in mind that each organic being is striving to increase at a geometrical ratio; that each at some period of its life, during some season of the year, during each generation or at intervals, has to struggle for life, and to suffer great destruction. When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply.

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) formulated a highly influential theory of population growth that states that while human population grows at a geometric rate, the food supply can only ever increase at an arithmetic rate. The consequence, Malthus argues, is that overpopulation is inevitable, as are the famine, disease, war, and vice that accompany it. One of Darwin's signal achievements was to see the relevance of this theory for all organic beings.
  Return to reference 1

From *Chapter 14. Conclusion*

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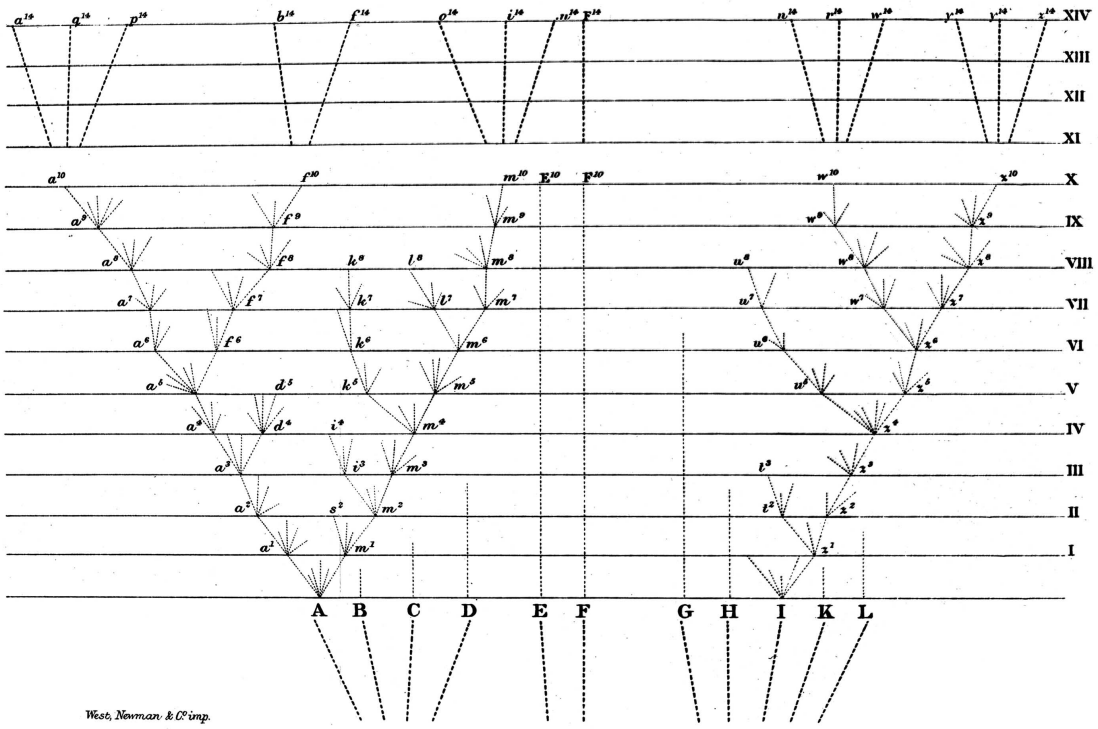
I have now recapitulated the chief facts and considerations which have thoroughly convinced me that species have changed, and are still slowly changing by the preservation and accumulation of successive slight favourable variations. Why, it may be asked, have all the most eminent living naturalists and geologists rejected this view of the mutability of species? It cannot be asserted that organic beings in a state of nature are subject to no variation; it cannot be proved that the amount of variation in the course of long ages is a limited quantity; no clear distinction has been, or can be, drawn between species and well-marked varieties. It cannot be maintained that species when intercrossed are invariably sterile, and varieties invariably fertile; or that sterility is a special endowment and sign of creation. The belief that species were immutable productions was almost unavoidable as long as the history of the world was thought to be of short duration; and now that we have acquired some idea of the lapse of time, we are too apt to assume, without proof, that the geological record is so perfect that it would have afforded us plain evidence of the mutation of species, if they had undergone mutation.

But the chief cause of our natural unwillingness to admit that one species has given birth to other and distinct species, is that we are always slow in admitting any great change of which we do not see the intermediate steps. The difficulty is the same as that felt by so many geologists, when Lyell[2] first insisted that long lines of inland cliffs had been formed, and great valleys excavated, by the slow action of the coast-waves. The mind cannot possibly grasp the full meaning of the term of a hundred million years; it cannot add up and perceive the full effects of many slight variations, accumulated during an almost infinite number of generations.



This diagram from *On the Origin of Species* was drawn by William West to show how similarities between species can be explained by Darwin's theory of descent.

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In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation. Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history.

Authors of the highest eminence seem to be fully satisfied with the view that each species has been independently created. To my mind it accords better with what we know of the laws impressed on matter by the Creator, that the production and extinction of the past and present inhabitants of the world should have been due to secondary causes, like those determining the birth and death of the individual. When I view all beings not as special creations, but as the lineal descendants of some few beings which lived long before the first bed of the Silurian system[3] was deposited, they seem to me to

become ennobled. Judging from the past, we may safely infer that not one living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity. And of the species now living very few will transmit progeny of any kind to a far distant futurity; for the manner in which all organic beings are grouped, shows that the greater number of species of each genus, and all the species of many genera, have left no descendants, but have become utterly extinct. We can so far take a prophetic glance into futurity as to foretel that it will be the common and widely-spread species, belonging to the larger and dominant groups, which will ultimately prevail and procreate new and dominant species. As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Silurian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection.

It is interesting to contemplate an entangled bank, clothed with many plants of many kinds, with birds singing on the bushes, with various insects flitting about, and with worms crawling through the damp earth, and to reflect that these elaborately constructed forms, so different from each other, and dependent on each other in so complex a manner, have all been produced by laws acting around us. These laws, taken in the largest sense, being Growth with Reproduction; Inheritance which is almost implied by reproduction; Variability from the indirect and direct action of the external conditions of life, and from use and disuse; a Ratio of Increase so high as to lead to a Struggle for Life, and as a consequence to Natural Selection, entailing Divergence of Character and the Extinction of less-improved forms. Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the

fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.

1859

Endnotes

- Note 2: Sir Charles Lyell (1797–1875), Scottish naturalist who developed and disseminated the theory that the earth's visible characteristics are the products of geologic processes that took place over extremely long periods of time.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A geologic period of the Paleozoic Era spanning from 443.8 million years ago to 419.2 million years ago. Terrestrial life came into existence during this period.Return to reference 3

From The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex

From *Chapter 4. Comparison of the Mental Powers of Man and the Lower Animals*

I fully subscribe to the judgment of those writers who maintain that of all the differences between man and the lower animals, the moral sense or conscience is by far the most important. This sense, as Mackintosh remarks, "has a rightful supremacy over every other principle of human action;"[1] it is summed up in that short but imperious word *ought*, so full of high significance. It is the most noble of all the attributes of man, leading him without a moment's hesitation to risk his life for that of a fellow-creature; or after due deliberation, impelled simply by the deep feeling of right or duty, to sacrifice it in some great cause. Immanuel Kant exclaims, "Duty! Wondrous thought, that workest neither by fond insinuation, flattery, nor by any threat, but merely by holding up thy naked law in the soul, and so extorting for thyself always reverence, if not always obedience; before whom all appetites are dumb, however secretly they rebel; whence thy original?"

This great question has been discussed by many writers of consummate ability; and my sole excuse for touching on it, is the impossibility of here passing it over; and because, as far as I know, no one has approached it exclusively from the side of natural history. The investigation possesses, also, some independent interest, as an attempt to see how far the study of the lower animals throws light on one of the highest psychical faculties of man.

The following proposition seems to me in a high degree probable —namely, that any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, the parental and filial affections being here included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well, or nearly as well developed, as in man. For, *firstly*, the social instincts lead an animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to feel a certain amount of sympathy with them, and to perform various services for them. The services may be of a definite and evidently instinctive nature; or there may be only a wish and readiness, as with most of the higher

social animals, to aid their fellows in certain general ways. But these feelings and services are by no means extended to all the individuals of the same species, only to those of the same association. *Secondly*, as soon as the mental faculties had become highly developed, images of all past actions and motives would be incessantly passing through the brain of each individual; and that feeling of dissatisfaction, or even misery, which invariably results, as we shall hereafter see, from any unsatisfied instinct, would arise, as often as it was perceived that the enduring and always present social instinct had yielded to some other instinct, at the time stronger, but neither enduring in its nature, nor leaving behind it a very vivid impression. It is clear that many instinctive desires, such as that of hunger, are in their nature of short duration; and after being satisfied, are not readily or vividly recalled. *Thirdly*, after the power of language had been acquired, and the wishes of the community could be expressed, the common opinion how each member ought to act for the public good, would naturally become in a paramount degree the guide to action. But it should be borne in mind that however great weight we may attribute to public opinion, our regard for the approbation and disapprobation of our fellows depends on sympathy, which, as we shall see, forms an essential part of the social instinct, and is indeed its foundation-stone. *Lastly*, habit in the individual would ultimately play a very important part in guiding the conduct of each member; for the social instinct, together with sympathy, is, like any other instinct, greatly strengthened by habit, and so consequently would be obedience to the wishes and judgment of the community. Those several subordinate propositions must now be discussed, and some of them at considerable length.

It may be well first to premise that I do not wish to maintain that any strictly social animal, if its intellectual faculties were to become as active and as highly developed as in man, would acquire exactly the same moral sense as ours. In the same manner as various animals have some sense of beauty, though they admire widely different objects, so they might have a sense of right and wrong, though led by it to follow widely different lines of conduct. If, for

instance, to take an extreme case, men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering. Nevertheless, the bee, or any other social animal, would gain in our supposed case, as it appears to me, some feeling of right or wrong, or a conscience. For each individual would have an inward sense of possessing certain stronger or more enduring instincts, and others less strong or enduring; so that there would often be a struggle as to which impulse should be followed; and satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or even misery would be felt, as past impressions were compared during their incessant passage through the mind. In this case an inward monitor would tell the animal that it would have been better to have followed the one impulse rather than the other. The one course ought to have been followed, and the other ought not; the one would have been right and the other wrong; but to these terms I shall recur.

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It has often been assumed that animals were in the first place rendered social, and that they feel as a consequence uncomfortable when separated from each other, and comfortable whilst together; but it is a more probable view that these sensations were first developed, in order that those animals which would profit by living in society, should be induced to live together, in the same manner as the sense of hunger and the pleasure of eating were, no doubt, first acquired in order to induce animals to eat. The feeling of pleasure from society is probably an extension of the parental or filial affections, since the social instinct seems to be developed by the young remaining for a long time with their parents; and this extension may be attributed in part to habit, but chiefly to natural selection. With those animals which were benefited by living in close association, the individuals which took the greatest pleasure in

society would best escape various dangers; whilst those that cared least for their comrades, and lived solitary, would perish in greater numbers. With respect to the origin of the parental and filial affections, which apparently lie at the base of the social instincts, we know not the steps by which they have been gained; but we may infer that it has been to a large extent through natural selection. So it has almost certainly been with the unusual and opposite feeling of hatred between the nearest relations, as with the worker-bees which kill their brother-drones, and with the queen-bees which kill their daughter-queens; the desire to destroy their nearest relations having been in this case of service to the community. Parental affection, or some feeling which replaces it, has been developed in certain animals extremely low in the scale, for example, in star-fishes and spiders. It is also occasionally present in a few members alone in a whole group of animals, as in the genus Forficula, or earwigs.

The all-important emotion of sympathy is distinct from that of love. A mother may passionately love her sleeping and passive infant, but she can hardly at such times be said to feel sympathy for it. The love of a man for his dog is distinct from sympathy, and so is that of a dog for his master. Adam Smith formerly argued, as has Mr. Bain[2] recently, that the basis of sympathy lies in our strong retentiveness of former states of pain or pleasure. Hence, "the sight of another person enduring hunger, cold, fatigue, revives in us some recollection of these states, which are painful even in idea." We are thus impelled to relieve the sufferings of another, in order that our own painful feelings may be at the same time relieved. In like manner we are led to participate in the pleasures of others. But I cannot see how this view explains the fact that sympathy is excited, in an immeasurably stronger degree, by a beloved, than by an indifferent person. The mere sight of suffering, independently of love, would suffice to call up in us vivid recollections and associations. The explanation may lie in the fact that, with all animals, sympathy is directed solely towards the members of the same community, and therefore towards known, and more or less beloved members, but not to all the individuals of the same species.

This fact is not more surprising than that the fears of many animals should be directed against special enemies. Species which are not social, such as lions and tigers, no doubt feel sympathy for the suffering of their own young, but not for that of any other animal. With mankind, selfishness, experience, and imitation, probably add, as Mr. Bain has shewn, to the power of sympathy; for we are led by the hope of receiving good in return to perform acts of sympathetic kindness to others; and sympathy is much strengthened by habit. In however complex a manner this feeling may have originated, as it is one of high importance to all those animals which aid and defend one another, it will have been increased through natural selection; for those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring.

It is, however, impossible to decide in many cases whether certain social instincts have been acquired through natural selection, or are the indirect result of other instincts and faculties, such as sympathy, reason, experience, and a tendency to imitation; or again, whether they are simply the result of long-continued habit. So remarkable an instinct as the placing sentinels to warn the community of danger, can hardly have been the indirect result of any of these faculties; it must, therefore, have been directly acquired. On the other hand, the habit followed by the males of some social animals of defending the community, and of attacking their enemies or their prey in concert, may perhaps have originated from mutual sympathy; but courage, and in most cases strength, must have been previously acquired, probably through natural selection.

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Man a social animal.—Every one will admit that man is a social being. We see this in his dislike of solitude, and in his wish for society beyond that of his own family. Solitary confinement is one of the severest punishments which can be inflicted. Some authors suppose that man primevally lived in single families; but at the

present day, though single families, or only two or three together, roam the solitudes of some savage lands, they always, as far as I can discover, hold friendly relations with other families inhabiting the same district. Such families occasionally meet in council, and unite for their common defence. It is no argument against savage man being a social animal, that the tribes inhabiting adjacent districts are almost always at war with each other; for the social instincts never extend to all the individuals of the same species. Judging from the analogy of the majority of the Quadrumans, it is probable that the early ape-like progenitors of man were likewise social; but this is not of much importance for us. Although man, as he now exists, has few special instincts, having lost any which his early progenitors may have possessed, this is no reason why he should not have retained from an extremely remote period some degree of instinctive love and sympathy for his fellows. We are indeed all conscious that we do possess such sympathetic feelings; but our consciousness does not tell us whether they are instinctive, having originated long ago in the same manner as with the lower animals, or whether they have been acquired by each of us during our early years. As man is a social animal, it is almost certain that he would inherit a tendency to be faithful to his comrades, and obedient to the leader of his tribe; for these qualities are common to most social animals. He would consequently possess some capacity for self-command. He would from an inherited tendency be willing to defend, in concert with others, his fellow-men; and would be ready to aid them in any way, which did not too greatly interfere with his own welfare or his own strong desires.

The social animals which stand at the bottom of the scale are guided almost exclusively, and those which stand higher in the scale are largely guided, by special instincts in the aid which they give to the members of the same community; but they are likewise in part impelled by mutual love and sympathy, assisted apparently by some amount of reason. Although man, as just remarked, has no special instincts to tell him how to aid his fellow-men, he still has the impulse, and with his improved intellectual faculties would naturally

be much guided in this respect by reason and experience. Instinctive sympathy would also cause him to value highly the approbation of his fellows; for, as Mr. Bain has clearly shewn, the love of praise and the strong feeling of glory, and the still stronger horror of scorn and infamy, "are due to the workings of sympathy." Consequently man would be influenced in the highest degree by the wishes, approbation, and blame of his fellow-men, as expressed by their gestures and language. Thus the social instincts, which must have been acquired by man in a very rude state, and probably even by his early ape-like progenitors, still give the impulse to some of his best actions; but his actions are in a higher degree determined by the expressed wishes and judgment of his fellow-men, and unfortunately very often by his own strong selfish desires. But as love, sympathy and self-command become strengthened by habit, and as the power of reasoning becomes clearer, so that man can value justly the judgments of his fellows, he will feel himself impelled, apart from any transitory pleasure or pain, to certain lines of conduct. He might then declare—not that any barbarian or uncultivated man could thus think—I am the supreme judge of my own conduct, and in the words of Kant, I will not in my own person violate the dignity of humanity.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: This quotation is from Sir James Mackintosh's *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy* (1830). Mackintosh (1765–1832) was a politician, historian, jurist, and philosopher.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Alexander Bain (1818–1903) was a "mental philosopher" (or psychologist). Adam Smith (1723–1790) was an influential political economist and philosopher. Both were concerned with sympathy as a natural counter to human beings' innate selfishness.Return to reference 2

From *Chapter 7. Of the Races of Man*

It is not my intention here to describe the several so-called races of men; but I am about to enquire what is the value of the differences between them under a classificatory point of view, and how they have originated. In determining whether two or more allied forms ought to be ranked as species or varieties, naturalists are practically guided by the following considerations; namely, the amount of difference between them, and whether such differences relate to few or many points of structure, and whether they are of physiological importance; but more especially whether they are constant. Constancy of character is what is chiefly valued and sought for by naturalists. Whenever it can be shewn, or rendered probable, that the forms in question have remained distinct for a long period, this becomes an argument of much weight in favour of treating them as species. Even a slight degree of sterility between any two forms when first crossed, or in their offspring, is generally considered as a decisive test of their specific distinctness; and their continued persistence without blending within the same area, is usually accepted as sufficient evidence, either of some degree of mutual sterility, or in the case of animals of some mutual repugnance to pairing.

Independently of fusion from intercrossing, the complete absence, in a well-investigated region, of varieties linking together any two closely-allied forms, is probably the most important of all the criterions of their specific distinctness; and this is a somewhat different consideration from mere constancy of character, for two forms may be highly variable and yet not yield intermediate varieties. Geographical distribution is often brought into play unconsciously and sometimes consciously; so that forms living in two widely separated areas, in which most of the other inhabitants are specifically distinct, are themselves usually looked at as distinct; but in truth this affords no aid in distinguishing geographical races from so-called good or true species.

Now let us apply these generally-admitted principles to the races of man, viewing him in the same spirit as a naturalist would any other animal. In regard to the amount of difference between the races, we must make some allowance for our nice powers of discrimination gained by the long habit of observing ourselves. In India, as Elphinstone remarks, although a newly-arrived European cannot at first distinguish the various native races, yet they soon appear to him extremely dissimilar; and the Hindoo cannot at first perceive any difference between the several European nations. Even the most distinct races of man are much more like each other in form than would at first be supposed; certain negro tribes must be excepted, whilst others, as Dr. Rohlfs writes to me, and as I have myself seen, have Caucasian features. This general similarity is well shewn by the French photographs in the Collection Anthropologique du Muséum de Paris of the men belonging to various races, the greater number of which might pass for Europeans, as many persons to whom I have shewn them have remarked. Nevertheless, these men, if seen alive, would undoubtedly appear very distinct, so that we are clearly much influenced in our judgment by the mere colour of the skin and hair, by slight differences in the features, and by expression.

There is, however, no doubt that the various races, when carefully compared and measured, differ much from each other,—as in the texture of the hair, the relative proportions of all parts of the body, the capacity of the lungs, the form and capacity of the skull, and even in the convolutions of the brain. But it would be an endless task to specify the numerous points of difference. The races differ also in constitution, in acclimatisation and in liability to certain diseases. Their mental characteristics are likewise very distinct; chiefly as it would appear in their emotional, but partly in their intellectual faculties. Every one who has had the opportunity of comparison, must have been struck with the contrast between the taciturn, even morose, aborigines of S. America and the light-hearted, talkative negroes. There is a nearly similar contrast between the Malays and the Papuans, who live under the same

physical conditions, and are separated from each other only by a narrow space of sea.

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Our supposed naturalist having proceeded thus far in his investigation, would next enquire whether the races of men, when crossed, were in any degree sterile. He might consult the work of Professor Broca, a cautious and philosophical observer, and in this he would find good evidence that some races were quite fertile together, but evidence of an opposite nature in regard to other races. Thus it has been asserted that the native women of Australia and Tasmania rarely produce children to European men; the evidence, however, on this head has now been shewn to be almost valueless. The half-castes are killed by the pure blacks; and an account has lately been published of eleven half-caste youths murdered and burnt at the same time, whose remains were found by the police. Again, it has often been said that when mulattoes[3] intermarry they produce few children; on the other hand, Dr. Bachman of Charleston positively asserts that he has known mulatto families which have intermarried for several generations, and have continued on an average as fertile as either pure whites or pure blacks. Enquiries formerly made by Sir C. Lyell on this subject led him, as he informs me, to the same conclusion. In the United States the census for the year 1854 included, according to Dr. Bachman, 405,751 mulattoes; and this number, considering all the circumstances of the case, seems small; but it may partly be accounted for by the degraded and anomalous position of the class, and by the profligacy of the women. A certain amount of absorption of mulattoes into negroes must always be in progress; and this would lead to an apparent diminution of the former. The inferior vitality of mulattoes is spoken of in a trustworthy work as a well-known phenomenon; and this, although a different consideration from their lossened fertility, may perhaps be advanced as a proof of the specific distinctness of the parent races. No doubt both animal

and vegetable hybrids, when produced from extremely distinct species, are liable to premature death; but the parents of mulattoes cannot be put under the category of extremely distinct species. The common Mule[4] so notorious for long life and vigour, and yet so sterile, shews how little necessary connection there is in hybrids between lessened fertility and vitality; other analogous cases could be cited.

Even if it should hereafter be proved that all the races of men were perfectly fertile together, he who was inclined from other reasons to rank them as distinct species, might with justice argue that fertility and sterility are not safe criterions of specific distinctness. We know that these qualities are easily affected by changed conditions of life, or by close inter-breeding, and that they are governed by highly complex laws, for instance, that of the unequal fertility of converse crosses between the same two species. With forms which must be ranked as undoubted species, a perfect series exists from those which are absolutely sterile when crossed, to those which are almost or completely fertile. The degrees of sterility do not coincide strictly with the degrees of difference between the parents in external structure or habits of life. Man in many respects may be compared with those animals which have long been domesticated, and a large body of evidence can be advanced in favour of the Pallasian doctrine, that domestication tends to eliminate the sterility which is so general a result of the crossing of species in a state of nature. From these several considerations, it may be justly urged that the perfect fertility of the intercrossed races of man, if established, would not absolutely preclude us from ranking them as distinct species.

Independently of fertility, the characters presented by the offspring from a cross have been thought to indicate whether or not the parent-forms ought to be ranked as species or varieties; but after carefully studying the evidence, I have come to the conclusion that no general rules of this kind can be trusted. The ordinary result of a cross is the production of a blended or intermediate form; but in certain cases some of the offspring take closely after one parent-

form, and some after the other. This is especially apt to occur when the parents differ in characters which first appeared as sudden variations or monstrosities. I refer to this point, because Dr. Rohlfs informs me that he has frequently seen in Africa the offspring of negroes crossed with members of other races, either completely black or completely white, or rarely piebald. On the other hand, it is notorious that in America mulattoes commonly present an intermediate appearance.

We have now seen that a naturalist might feel himself fully justified in ranking the races of man as distinct species; for he has found that they are distinguished by many differences in structure and constitution, some being of importance. These differences have, also, remained nearly constant for very long periods of time. Our naturalist will have been in some degree influenced by the enormous range of man, which is a great anomaly in the class of mammals, if mankind be viewed as a single species. He will have been struck with the distribution of the several so-called races, which accords with that of other undoubtedly distinct species of mammals. Finally, he might urge that the mutual fertility of all the races has not as yet been fully proved, and even if proved would not be an absolute proof of their specific identity.

On the other side of the question, if our supposed naturalist were to enquire whether the forms of man keep distinct like ordinary species, when mingled together in large numbers in the same country, he would immediately discover that this was by no means the case. In Brazil he would behold an immense mongrel population of Negroes and Portuguese; in Chiloe, and other parts of South America, he would behold the whole population consisting of Indians and Spaniards blended in various degrees. In many parts of the same continent he would meet with the most complex crosses between Negroes, Indians, and Europeans; and judging from the vegetable kingdom, such triple crosses afford the severest test of the mutual fertility of the parent-forms. In one island of the Pacific he would find a small population of mingled Polynesian and English blood; and in the Fiji Archipelago a population of Polynesian and

Negritos crossed in all degrees. Many analogous cases could be be added; for instance, in Africa. Hence the races of man are not sufficiently distinct to inhabit the same country without fusion; and the absence of fusion affords the usual and best test of specific distinctness.

Our naturalist would likewise be much disturbed as soon as he perceived that the distinctive characters of all the races were highly variable. This fact strikes every one on first beholding the negro slaves in Brazil, who have been imported from all parts of Africa. The same remark holds good with the Polynesians, and with many other races. It may be doubted whether any character can be named which is distinctive of a race and is constant. Savages, even within the limits of the same tribe, are not nearly so uniform in character, as has been often asserted. Hottentot women offer certain peculiarities, more strongly marked than those occurring in any other race, but those are known not to be of constant occurrence. In the several American tribes, colour and hairiness differ considerably; as does colour to a certain degree, and the shape of the features greatly, in the Negroes of Africa. The shape of the skull varies much in some races; and so it is with every other character. Now all naturalists have learnt by dearly-bought experience, how rash it is to attempt to define species by the aid of inconstant characters.

But the most weighty of all the arguments against treating the races of man as distinct species, is that they graduate into each other, independently in many cases, as far as we can judge, of their having intercrossed. Man has been studied more carefully than any other animal, and yet there is the greatest possible diversity amongst capable judges whether he should be classed as a single species or race, or as two (Virey), as three (Jacquinot), as four (Kant), five (Blumenbach), six (Buffon), seven (Hunter), eight (Agassiz), eleven (Pickering), fifteen (Bory St. Vincent), sixteen (Desmoulins), twenty-two (Morton), sixty (Crawfurd), or as sixty-three, according to Burke.[5] This diversity of judgment does not prove that the races ought not to be ranked as species, but it shows

that they graduate into each other, and that it is hardly possible to discover clear distinctive characters between them.

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Endnotes

- Note 3: Term for people of mixed White and Black descent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The offspring of a horse and a donkey; mules are unable to reproduce.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: All the figures listed in this paragraph were important philosophers and natural historians of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.Return to reference 5

From *Chapter 19. Secondary Sexual Characters of Man*

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There can be little doubt that the greater size and strength of man, in comparison with woman, together with his broader shoulders, more developed muscles, rugged outline of body, his greater courage and pugnacity, are all due in chief part to inheritance from his half-human male ancestors. These characters would, however, have been preserved or even augmented during the long ages of man's savagery, by the success of the strongest and boldest men, both in the general struggle for life and in their contests for wives; a success which would have ensured their leaving a more numerous progeny than their less favoured brethren. It is not probable that the greater strength of man was primarily acquired through the inherited effects of his having worked harder than woman for his own subsistence and that of his family; for the women in all barbarous nations are compelled to work at least as hard as the men. With civilised people the arbitrament of battle for the possession of the women has long ceased; on the other hand, the men, as a general rule, have to work harder than the women for their joint subsistence, and thus their greater strength will have been kept up.

Difference in the Mental Powers of the two Sexes.—With respect to differences of this nature between man and woman, it is probable that sexual selection has played a highly important part. I am aware that some writers doubt whether there is any such inherent difference; but this is at least probable from the analogy of the lower animals which present other secondary sexual characters. No one disputes that the bull differs in disposition from the cow, the wild-boar from the sow, the stallion from the mare, and, as is well known to the keepers of menageries, the males of the larger apes from the females. Woman seems to differ from man in mental disposition, chiefly in her greater tenderness and less selfishness; and this holds good even with savages, as shown by a well-known passage in

Mungo Park's Travels,[6] and by statements made by many other travellers. Woman, owing to her maternal instincts, displays those qualities towards her infants in an eminent degree; therefore it is likely that she would often extend them towards her fellow-creatures. Man is the rival of other men; he delights in competition, and this leads to ambition which passes too easily into selfishness. These latter qualities seem to be his natural and unfortunate birthright. It is generally admitted that with woman the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation, are more strongly marked than in man; but some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilisation.

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man's attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands. If two lists were made of the most eminent men and women in poetry, painting, sculpture, music (inclusive both of composition and performance), history, science, and philosophy, with half-a-dozen names under each subject, the two lists would not bear comparison. We may also infer, from the law of the deviation from averages, so well illustrated by Mr. Galton,[7] in his work on 'Hereditary Genius,' that if men are capable of a decided pre-eminence over women in many subjects, the average of mental power in man must be above that of woman.

Amongst the half-human progenitors of man, and amongst savages, there have been struggles between the males during many generations for the possession of the females. But mere bodily strength and size would do little for victory, unless associated with courage, perseverance, and determined energy. With social animals, the young males have to pass through many a contest before they win a female, and the older males have to retain their females by renewed battles. They have, also, in the case of mankind, to defend their females, as well as their young, from enemies of all kinds, and to hunt for their joint subsistence. But to avoid enemies or to attack

them with success, to capture wild animals, and to fashion weapons, requires the aid of the higher mental faculties, namely, observation, reason, invention, or imagination. These various faculties will thus have been continually put to the test and selected during manhood; they will, moreover, have been strengthened by use during this same period of life. Consequently, in accordance with the principle often alluded to, we might expect that they would at least tend to be transmitted chiefly to the male offspring at the corresponding period of manhood.

Now, when two men are put into competition, or a man with a woman, both possessed of every mental quality in equal perfection, save that one has higher energy, perseverance, and courage, the latter will generally become more eminent in every pursuit, and will gain the ascendancy. He may be said to possess genius—for genius has been declared by a great authority to be patience; and patience, in this sense, means unflinching, undaunted perseverance. But this view of genius is perhaps deficient; for without the higher powers of the imagination and reason, no eminent success can be gained in many subjects. Those latter faculties, as well as the former, will have been developed in man, partly through sexual selection,—that is, through the contest of rival males, and partly through natural selection,—that is, from success in the general struggle for life; and as in both cases the struggle will have been during maturity, the characters gained will have been transmitted more fully to the male than to the female offspring. It accords in a striking manner with this view of the modification and re-inforcement of many of our mental faculties by sexual selection, that, firstly, they notoriously undergo a considerable change at puberty, and, secondly, that eunuchs remain throughout life inferior in these same qualities. Thus man has ultimately become superior to woman. It is, indeed, fortunate that the law of the equal transmission of characters to both sexes prevails with mammals; otherwise it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman, as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen.

It must be borne in mind that the tendency in characters acquired by either sex late in life, to be transmitted to the same sex at the same age, and of early acquired characters to be transmitted to both sexes, are rules which, though general, do not always hold. If they always held good, we might conclude (but I here exceed my proper bounds) that the inherited effects of the early education of boys and girls would be transmitted equally to both sexes; so that the present inequality in mental power between the sexes would not be effaced by a similar course of early training; nor can it have been caused by their dissimilar early training. In order that woman should reach the same standard as man, she ought, when nearly adult, to be trained to energy and perseverance, and to have her reason and imagination exercised to the highest point; and then she would probably transmit these qualities chiefly to her adult daughters. All women, however, could not be thus raised, unless during many generations those who excelled in the above robust virtues were married, and produced offspring in larger numbers than other women. As before remarked of bodily strength, although men do not now fight for their wives, and this form of selection has passed away, yet during manhood, they generally undergo a severe struggle in order to maintain themselves and their families; and this will tend to keep up or even increase their mental powers, and, as a consequence, the present inequality between the sexes.

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Endnotes

- Note 6: Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799) was a popular account of the author's trip to Africa in search of the Niger River.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sir Francis Galton was an important natural historian whose later work attempted to use Darwin's theories to argue for what came to be known as "social Darwinism," or the notion

that some races are inherently more intelligent, industrious, and so on than others.Return to reference 7

From *Chapter 21. General Summary and Conclusion*

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Man scans with scrupulous care the character and pedigree of his horses, cattle, and dogs before he matches them; but when he comes to his own marriage he rarely, or never, takes any such care. He is impelled by nearly the same motives as the lower animals, when they are left to their own free choice, though he is in so far superior to them that he highly values mental charms and virtues. On the other hand he is strongly attracted by more wealth or rank. Yet he might by selection do something not only for the bodily constitution and frame of his offspring, but for their intellectual and moral qualities. Both sexes ought to refrain from marriage if they are in any marked degree inferior in body or mind; but such hopes are Utopian and will never be even partially realised until the laws of inheritance are thoroughly known. Everyone does good service, who aids towards this end. When the principles of breeding and inheritance are better understood, we shall not hear ignorant members of our legislature rejecting with scorn a plan for ascertaining whether or not consanguineous marriages are injurious to man.

The advancement of the welfare of mankind is a most intricate problem: all ought to refrain from marriage who cannot avoid abject poverty for their children; for poverty is not only a great evil, but tends to its own increase by leading to recklessness in marriage. On the other hand, as Mr. Galton has remarked, if the prudent avoid marriage, whilst the reckless marry, the inferior members tend to supplant the better members of society. Man, like every other animal, has no doubt advanced to his present high condition through a struggle for existence consequent on his rapid multiplication; and if he is to advance still higher, it is to be feared that he must remain subject to a severe struggle. Otherwise he would sink into indolence, and the more gifted men would not be more successful in the battle of life than the less gifted. Hence our natural rate of increase,

though leading to many and obvious evils, must not be greatly diminished by any means. There should be open competition for all men; and the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring. Important as the struggle for existence has been and even still is, yet as far as the highest part of man's nature is concerned there are other agencies more important. For the moral quantities are advanced, either directly or indirectly, much more through the effects of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, &c., than through natural selection; though to this latter agency may be safely attributed the social instincts, which afforded the basis for the development of the moral sense.

The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely that man is descended from some lowly organised form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians[8] on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors. These men were absolutely naked and bedaubed with paint, their long hair was tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, and their expression was wild, startled, and distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and like wild animals lived on what they could catch; they had no government, and were merciless to every one not of their own small tribe. He who has seen a savage in his native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practises infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.

Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future. But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system —with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.

1871

Endnotes

- Note 8: The Indigenous inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego. Many died as a result of diseases such as smallpox and measles that were carried by westerners, and to which the Fuegians had no immunity.Return to reference 8

LEONARD HUXLEY

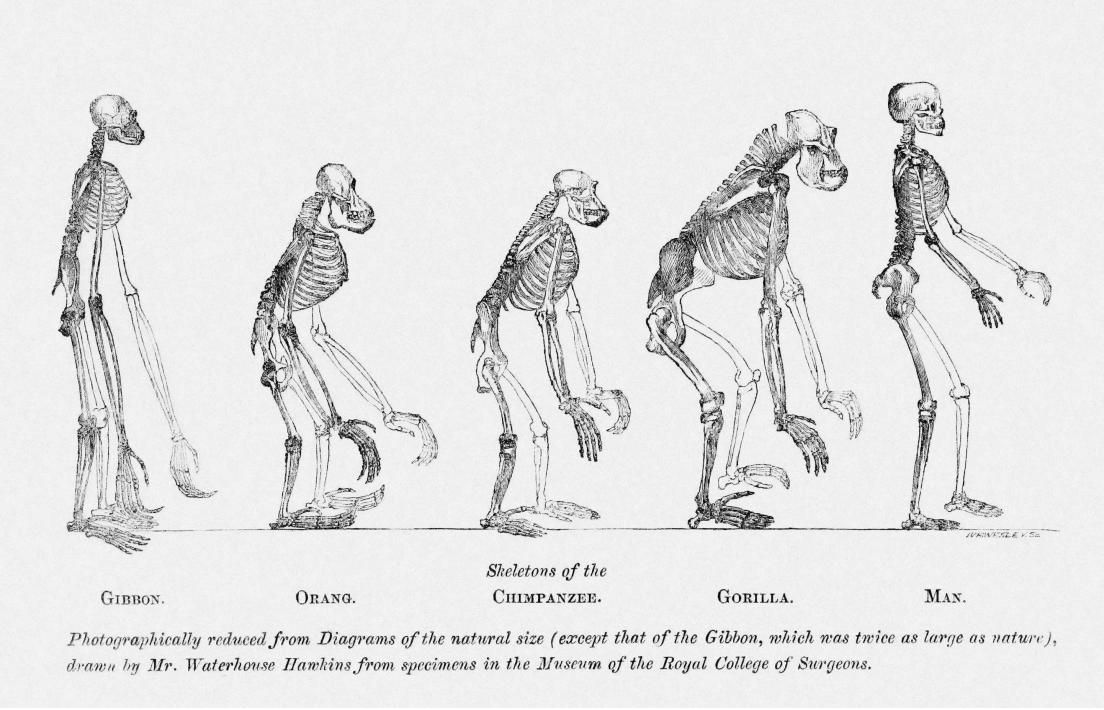
At meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the reading of a paper is followed by a discussion. In 1860, at Oxford, this discussion developed into a debate between Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), a defender of Charles Darwin's theories, and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (1805–1873). Although not a scientist himself, Wilberforce spoke on behalf of those scientists who disagreed with the claims made in *The Origin of Species* (1859), and he reportedly came to the meeting ready to "smash Darwin." If this was his intention, he cannot be said to have succeeded.

Because no complete transcript of this celebrated debate was made at the time, Huxley's son Leonard (1860–1933) reconstructed the scene by combining quotations from reports made by magazine writers and other witnesses. The account given here is from chapter 14 of Leonard Huxley's biography of his father.

From The Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley

[THE HUXLEY–WILBERFORCE DEBATE AT OXFORD]

The famous Oxford Meeting of 1860 was of no small importance in Huxley's career. It was not merely that he helped to save a great cause from being stifled under misrepresentation and ridicule—that he helped to extort for it a fair hearing; it was now that he first made himself known in popular estimation as a dangerous adversary in debate—a personal force in the world of science which could not be neglected. From this moment he entered the front fighting line in the most exposed quarter of the field. * * *



Man's Place in Nature. This drawing appeared as the frontispiece to T. H. Huxley's book *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863).

It was the merest chance, as I have already said, that Huxley attended the meeting of the section that morning. Dr. Draper[1] of New York was to read a paper on the *Intellectual Development of Europe considered with reference to the views of Mr. Darwin.* "I can still hear," writes one who was present, "the American accents of Dr. Draper's opening address when he asked 'Air we a fortuitous concourse of atoms?' " However, it was not to hear him, but the eloquence of the Bishop, that the members of the Association crowded in such numbers into the Lecture Room of the Museum, that this, the appointed meeting place of the section, had to be abandoned for the long west room, since cut in two by a partition for the purposes of the library. It was not term time, nor were the general public admitted; nevertheless the room was crowded to suffocation long before the protagonists appeared on the scene, 700 persons or more managing to find places. The very windows by which the room was lighted down the length of its west side were packed with ladies, whose white handkerchiefs, waving and fluttering in the air at the end of the Bishop's speech, were an unforgettable factor in the acclamation of the crowd.

On the east side between the two doors was the platform. Professor Henslow, the President of the section, took his seat in the center; upon his right was the Bishop, and beyond him again Dr. Draper; on his extreme left was Mr. Dingle, a clergyman from Lanchester, near Durham, with Sir J. Hooker and Sir J. Lubbock in front of him, and nearer the center, Professor Beale of King's College, London, and Huxley.[2]

The clergy, who shouted lustily for the Bishop, were massed in the middle of the room; behind them in the northwest corner a knot of undergraduates (one of these was T. H. Green,[3] who listened but took no part in the cheering) had gathered together beside Professor Brodie,[4] ready to lift their voices, poor minority though they were, for the opposite party. Close to them stood one of the few men among the audience already in Holy orders, who joined in—and indeed led—the cheers for the Darwinians.

So "Dr. Draper droned out his paper, turning first to the right hand and then to the left, of course bringing in a reference to the *Origin of Species* which set the ball rolling."

An hour or more that paper lasted, and then discussion began. The President "wisely announced *in limine*[5] that none who had not valid arguments to bring forward on one side or the other would be allowed to address the meeting; a caution that proved necessary, for no fewer than four combatants had their utterances burked[6] by him, because of their indulgence in vague declamation."

> First spoke (writes Professor Farrar[7]) a layman from Brompton, who gave his name as being one of the Committee of the (newly formed) Economic section of the Association. He, in a stentorian voice, let off his theological venom. Then jumped up Richard Greswell[8] with a thin voice, saying much the same, but speaking as a scholar; but we did not merely want any theological discussion, so we shouted them down. Then a Mr. Dingle got up and tried to show that Darwin would have done much better if he had taken him into consultation. He used the blackboard and began a mathematical demonstration on the question—"Let this point A be man, and let that point B be the mawnkey." He got no further; he was shouted down with cries of "mawnkey." None of these had spoken more than three minutes. It was when these were shouted down that Henslow said he must demand that the discussion should rest on *scientific* grounds only.
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> Then there were calls for the Bishop, but he rose and said he understood his friend Professor Beale had something to say first. Beale, who was an excellent histologist,[9] spoke to the effect that the new theory ought to meet with fair discussion, but added, with great modesty, that he himself had not sufficient knowledge to discuss the subject adequately. Then the Bishop spoke the speech that you know, and the question about his mother being an ape, or his grandmother.

From the scientific point of view, the speech was of small value. It was evident from his mode of handling the subject that he had been "crammed up to the throat," and knew nothing at first hand; he used no argument beyond those to be found in his *Quarterly* article, which appeared a few days later, and is now admitted to have been inspired by Owen.[1] "He ridiculed Darwin badly and Huxley savagely; but," confesses one of his strongest opponents, "all in such dulcet tones, so persuasive a manner, and in such well turned periods, that I who had been inclined to blame the President for allowing a discussion that could serve no scientific purpose, now forgave him from the bottom of my heart."

The Bishop spoke thus "for full half an hour with inimitable spirit, emptiness and unfairness." "In a light, scoffing tone, florid and fluent, he assured us there was nothing in the idea of evolution; rock pigeons were what rock pigeons had always been. Then, turning to his antagonist with a smiling insolence, he begged to know, was it through his grandfather or his grandmother that he claimed his descent from a monkey?"

This was the fatal mistake of his speech. Huxley instantly grasped the tactical advantage which the descent to personalities gave him. He turned to Sir Benjamin Brodie, who was sitting beside him, and emphatically striking his hand upon his knee, exclaimed, "The Lord hath delivered him into mine hands."[2] The bearing of the exclamation did not dawn upon Sir Benjamin until after Huxley had completed his "forcible and eloquent" answer to the scientific part of the Bishop's argument, and proceeded to make his famous retort.

> On this (continues the writer in *Macmillan's Magazine*) Mr. Huxley slowly and deliberately arose. A slight tall figure, stern and pale, very quiet and very grave, he stood before us and spoke those tremendous words—words which no one seems sure of now, nor, I think, could remember just after they were spoken, for their meaning took away our breath, though it left us in no doubt as to what it was. He was not ashamed to have a monkey for his ancestor; but he would be ashamed to be

> connected with a man who used great gifts to obscure the truth. No one doubted his meaning, and the effect was tremendous. One lady fainted and had to be carried out; I, for one, jumped out of my seat.

The fullest and probably most accurate account of these concluding words is the following, from a letter of the late John Richard Green, then an undergraduate, to his friend, afterwards Professor Boyd Dawkins:[3]

> I asserted—and I repeat—that a man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for his grandfather. If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling it would rather be a man—a man of restless and versatile intellect—who, not content with an equivocal success in his own sphere of activity, plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious prejudice.

The result of this encounter, though a check to the other side, cannot, of course, be represented as an immediate and complete triumph for evolutionary doctrine. This was precluded by the character and temper of the audience, most of whom were less capable of being convinced by the arguments than shocked by the boldness of the retort, although, being gentlefolk, as Professor Farrar remarks, they were disposed to admit on reflection that the Bishop had erred on the score of taste and good manners. Nevertheless, it was a noticeable feature of the occasion, Sir M. Foster[4] tells me, that when Huxley rose he was received coldly, just a cheer of encouragement from his friends, the audience as a whole not joining in it. But as he made his points the applause grew and widened, until, when he sat down, the cheering was not very much less than that given to the Bishop. To that extent he carried an unwilling audience with him by the force of his speech. The debate on the ape

question, however, was continued elsewhere during the next two years, and the evidence was completed by the unanswerable demonstrations of Sir W. H. Flower[5] at the Cambridge meeting of the Association in 1862.

THE DESCENT OF MAN.

Figurative Party. "So long as *I* am a Man, Sorr, what does it matther to me whether me *Great-grandfather* was an Anthropoid Ape or not, Sorr!"

Literal Party. "Haw! wather disagweeable for your *Gwate Gwand-mother*, wasn't it?"

***The Descent of Man*.** This cartoon by George du Maurier (1834–1896) appeared in the popular satirical magazine *Punch* in 1873. The phonetic rendering of the speech of the "Figurative Party" (sitting on the table) marks him as Irish; that of the "Literal Party" (and his clothing), a member of the upper classes.

The importance of the Oxford meeting lay in the open resistance that was made to authority, at a moment when even a drawn battle was hardly less effectual than acknowledged victory. Instead of being crushed under ridicule, the new theories secured a hearing, all the wider, indeed, for the startling nature of their defense.

1901

Endnotes

- Note 1: John W. Draper (1811–1882), British-born chemist, photographer, and historian who was a professor at the University of the City of New York.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Except for the clergyman Dingle, all those named are scientists of some repute. John Stevens Henslow (1796–1861), professor of botany at Cambridge. Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911), botanist (and Henslow's son-in-law). Sir John Lubbock (1834–1913), banker, statesman, naturalist, and Darwin's neighbor. Lionel Smith Beale (1828–1905), professor of medicine.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Later a prominent British philosopher (1836–1882).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Benjamin Brodie (1783–1862), physiologist and surgeon.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: As a starting point (Latin).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Suppressed, hushed.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Adam Storey Farrar (1826–1905), canon of Durham and professor of divinity at Durham University.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A clergyman who was a tutor of Worcester College, Oxford.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A biologist specializing in the study of the minute structure of the tissues of plants and animals.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Sir Richard Owen (1804–1892), a leading zoologist and paleontologist who was opposed to Darwin's theories. Wilberforce's review of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) appeared in the July 1860 issue of the *Quarterly Review.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with 2 Samuel 5:19 (where the Lord promises to deliver the Philistines into David's hands).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: William Boyd Dawkins (1838–1929), British geologist and archaeologist. Green (1837–1883), British historian.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Michael Foster (1836–1907), British physiologist and educator.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sir William Henry Flower (1831–1899), British zoologist.Return to reference 5

The Promise and Price of Industrialization

In 1835, the French statesman and author Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of Manchester: "From this foul drain, the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish, here civilization works its miracles and civilized man is turned almost into a savage." De Tocqueville's graphic sense of the wealth and the wretchedness created by the Industrial Revolution epitomizes contemporary responses. Victorians debated whether the machine age was a blessing or a curse, whether the economic system was making humanity happier or more miserable. Did the Industrial Revolution represent progress, and how, in fact, was progress to be defined?

The Industrial Revolution was the result of a complex set of causes, none of which, by itself, could have given rise to the phenomenon: crucial technological innovations would have meant little without notable population growth, an increase in agricultural efficiency that released much of the workforce from field labor, and key economic changes, such as greater mobility of capital and the wealth and raw materials brought in by imperial expansion. Transformations in the production of textiles led to the first and most dramatic break with age-old practices. First powered by hand, or sometimes by water, machinery to speed up spinning and weaving processes was developed in England in the eighteenth century; by the 1780s manufacturers were installing steam engines, newly improved by James Watt (1736–1819), in large buildings called mills or factories. Mill towns, producing cotton or woollen cloth for the world's markets, grew quickly in northern England; the population of the city of Manchester, for example, increased tenfold in the years between 1760 and 1830. The development of the railways in the

1830s initiated a new phase in the industrial age, marked by an enormous expansion in the production of iron and coal. By the beginning of the Victorian period, the Industrial Revolution had already created profound economic and social changes. Hundreds of thousands of workers had migrated to the industrial towns, where they lived in horribly crowded, unsanitary housing, and labored long hours—fourteen a day or more—at very low wages. Employers often preferred to hire women and children, who worked for even lower wages than men.

Moved by the terrible suffering of the workers, which was intensified by a severe depression in the early 1840s, writers and legislators drew increasingly urgent attention to the condition of the working class. Parliamentary committees and commissions in the 1830s and 1840s introduced testimony about working conditions in mines and factories that led to the beginning of government regulation and inspection, particularly of the working conditions of women and children.

The terrible living and working conditions of industrial laborers led a number of writers to see the Industrial Revolution as an appalling retrogression. Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin both lamented the changed conditions of labor, the loss of craftsmanship and individual creativity, and the disappearance of what Karl Marx called the "feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations" between employer and employee that they believed had existed in earlier economies. They criticized industrial manufacture not only for the misery of the conditions it created but also for its regimentation of minds and hearts as well as bodies and resources. In works such as *Past and Present* (1843) and *Unto This Last* (1860), Carlyle and Ruskin, respectively, advocated a nostalgic and conservative ideal, in which employers and workers returned to a medieval relationship to craft and to authority and responsibility. Other writers drew more radical conclusions. William Morris's perception of the workers' plight led him to socialism, though a socialism with a medieval ideal; and Marx, in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, based *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848 in part on Engels's observation of Manchester in

The Condition of the Working Class in England (1845). The outrage expressed by these authors is very different from the satisfaction evident in the writings of the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), who congratulated England on the progress that industrialism had enabled.

This cluster is divided into two sections: the first addresses the political and social implications of industrialization. Thomas Hood and Ernest Jones are only two of the many activists, organizers, poets, and essayists who sought to call attention to the way the new factory system concentrated power and capital in the hands of a few. The Children's Employment Commission (1842) addresses the consequences for children of a factory system that could rely on their unskilled, inexpensive, and unregulated labor. Ada Nield Chew attends to the plight of "factory girls." Adelaide Procter and Elizabeth Gaskell describe the experiences of intense poverty that accompanied the mass movement of populations into the cities.

The second section of this cluster focuses on the environmental consequences of rapid industrialization. Nineteenth-century industrialization is sometimes referred to as the initiating event of the "Anthropocene," or the period during which human activity began to reshape the climate and the environment. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, Great Britain was the most "advanced"—as in the most industrialized—nation on earth. Its coal production was massive, and it resulted in a fundamentally altered landscape and atmosphere. The first selection in this section, from de Tocqueville, gives some sense of what a new factory town looked like to a traveler unaccustomed to such sights. Both de Tocqueville's horror and his amazement are apparent in the passage. The second selection, from Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, recounts the fog for which the city was famous. John Ruskin's "Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" is one of the first descriptions of environmental degradation. And finally, the passage from Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, provides a vivid account of the impact of industrialization on the British countryside, a place that might seem immune to its pressures.

Poverty and Politics

THOMAS HOOD

Despite his middle-class background as the son of a bookseller, and his comfortable position as an author of light verse, Thomas Hood (1799–1845) was known for his compassionate representations of the plight of the working poor. “The Song of the Shirt” was first published anonymously in the Christmas issue of the humor magazine *Punch* in 1843; it was quickly reprinted in newspapers throughout Europe.

The Song of the Shirt

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt!"

"Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's O! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"O! Men, with Sisters dear!
O! Men! with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!

Stitch—stitch—stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep,
Oh! God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread—and rags.
That shatter'd roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work—
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—

While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel.
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"Oh but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A Woman sate in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

1843

ERNEST JONES

Ernest Jones (1819–1869) was born into the landed gentry yet became one of the leaders of the working-class Chartist movement for political reform. In 1848 he was convicted of sedition and sentenced to two years in prison. Karl Marx described Jones as "the most talented, consistent and energetic representative of Chartism," the political movement that sought voting rights for most adult men.

The Song of the Low

(*To a Popular Melody.*)

We're low—we're low—we're very very low,
  As low as low can be;
The rich are high—for we make them so—
  And a miserable lot are we!
  And a miserable lot are we! are we!
  A miserable lot are we!

We plough and sow—we're so very very low,
  That we delve in the dirty clay,
Till we bless the plain with the golden grain,
  And the vale with the fragrant hay.
Our place we know—we're so very low,
  'Tis down at the landlords' feet:
We're not too low—the bread to grow,
  But too low the bread to eat.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

Down, down we go—we're so very very low,
  To the hell of the deep sunk mines.
But we gather the proudest gems that glow,
  When the crown of a despot shines;
And whenever he lacks—upon our backs
  Fresh loads he deigns to lay,
We're far too low to vote the tax.[1]
  But not too low to pay.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

We're low, we're low—mere rabble, we know,
  But at our plastic power,

The mould at the lordling's feet will grow
  Into palace and church and tower—
Then prostrate fall—in the rich man's hall,
  And cringe at the rich man's door,
We're not too low to build the wall,
  But too low to tread the floor.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

We're low, we're low—we're very very low,
  Yet from our fingers glide
The silken flow—and the robes that glow,
  Round the limbs of the sons of pride.
And what we get—and what we give,
  We know—and we know our share.
We're not too low the cloth to weave—
  But too low the cloth to wear.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

We're low, we're low—we're very very low,
  And yet when the trumpets ring,
The thrust of a poor man's arm will go
  Through the heart of the proudest king!
We're low, we're low—our place we know,
  We're only the rank and file,
We're not too low—to kill the foe,
  But too low to touch the spoil.
    We're low, we're low, etc.

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of Chartism's principal demands was the expansion of the franchise to most men over the age of eighteen.Return to reference 1

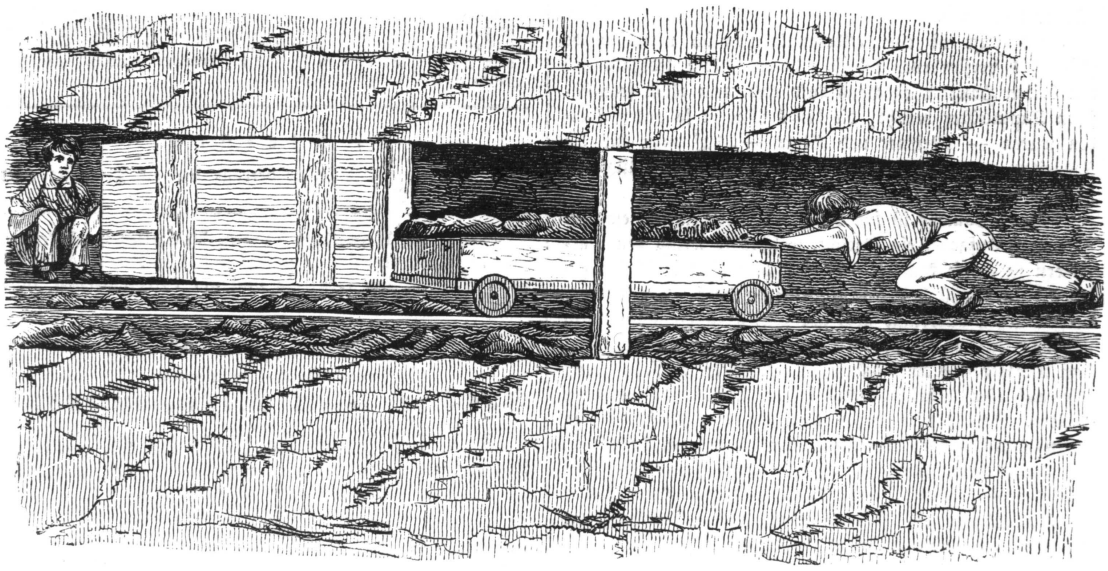
THE CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION

Although official attempts to regulate child labor began in 1788, when Parliament passed the Chimney Sweepers Act, the more general problem was not addressed until well into the nineteenth century. Government investigations (Select Committees and Royal Commissions) took place in 1816 and the early 1830s and led to numerous legislative measures, but most of their provisions were meaningless because they were not enforced. The Factories Regulation Act of 1833 marks the first significant point of successful intervention: the act both established a minimum age for all workers in textile mills (nine years old) and set limits to the hours per week that children in different age groups and women could work. More broadly, a Royal Commission was convened in 1842–43 to examine "the mines and collieries of the United Kingdom and all trades and manufactures whatever in which children work together in numbers." The reports of the commission, from which the following excerpt and two illustrations are taken, caused dismay and disbelief when they were made generally available; Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "The Cry of the Children" (1843) was one of the many public responses to the scandal. In the legislation that followed, girls and women were banned from mine work; although the authors of the bill had also hoped to prohibit the employment of boys under thirteen years of age, parliamentary debate reduced the age to ten.

The first illustration shows a hurrier, a worker who dragged a loaded corve, or wagon; these weighed between two hundred and five hundred pounds and were attached to the hurrier by a chain. The passageways in the mine (or pit) were sometimes only sixteen inches high. The second illustration presents a thruster, who pushed a corve. The child on the left is a trapper: the youngest workers of all, these five- or six-year-olds sat alone in darkness to open and

close the doors that controlled the mine's ventilation system. The extract comes from the evidence collected by Commissioner S. S. Scriven, who visited the mines in the West Riding of Yorkshire in the company of a local doctor and lawyer and interviewed the child laborers there.

***Hurrier*.** An illustration of a "hurrier" in a Yorkshire coal mine, from the 1842–43 Children's Employment Commission report.



***Trapper and Thruster*.** An illustration of a "trapper" and a "thruster" in a Lancashire coalmine, from the 1842–43 Children's Employment Commission report.

From First Report of the Commissioners, Mines

[CHILD MINE-WORKER IN YORKSHIRE]

Margaret Gomley, Living at Lindley Moor, aged 9. May 7

They call me Peggy for my nick-name down here, but my right name is Margaret; I am about nine years, or going nine; I have been at work in the pit thrusting corves above a year; come in the morning sometimes at seven o'clock, sometimes half-past seven, and I go sometimes home at six o'clock, sometimes at seven when I do over-work. I get my breakfast of porridge before I come, and bring a piece of muffin, which I eat on coming to pit; I get my dinner at 12 o'clock, which is a dry muffin, and sometimes butter on, but have no time allowed to stop to eat it, I eat it while I am thrusting the load; I get no tea, but get some supper when I get home, and then go to bed when I have washed me; and am very tired. I worked in pit last winter; I don't know at what hour I went down, as we have no clock, but it was day-light; it was six o'clock when we came up, but not always. They flog us down in the pit, sometimes with their hand upon my bottom, which hurts me very much; Thomas Copeland flogs me more than once in a day, which makes me cry. There are two other girls working with me, and there was four, but one left because she had the bellyache; I am poorly myself sometimes with bellyache, and sometimes headache. I had rather lake than go into the pit; I get 5*d.* a-day, but I had rather set cards[1] for 5*d.* a-day than go into the pit. The men often swear at me; many times they say Damn thee, and other times God damn thee (and such like), Peggy.

[Commissioner Scriven's commentary]

I descended this pit accompanied by one of the banksmen,[2] and, on alighting at the bottom, found the entrance to the mainway 2 feet 10 inches, and, which extended 500 yards. The bottom was deep in mire, and, as I had no corves low enough to convey me to the workings, waited some time under the dripping shaft the arrival of the hurriers, as I had reason to suspect there were some very young children labouring there. At length three girls arrived, with as many boys. It was impossible in the dark to distinguish the sexes. They were all naked excepting their shifts or shirts. Having placed one into the corve, I gave the signal, and ascended. On alighting on the pit's bank I discovered that it was a girl. I could not have believed that I should have found human nature so degraded. There is nothing that I can conceive amidst all the misery and wretchedness in the worst of factories equal to this. Mr. Holroyd, solicitor, and Mr. Brook, surgeon, practising in Stainland, were present, who confessed that, although living within a few miles, they could not have believed that such a system of unchristian cruelty could have existed.

1842–43

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, work in a textile factory, where workers programmed looms to weave patterns with a series of punched cards. "Lake": play truant, or hookey (Yorkshire dialect). "5*d*.": five pence (*d*. abbreviates *denarius*, "penny" in Latin).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Colliery supervisors who worked above ground.Return to reference 2

ADA NIELD CHEW

Born on a farm in North Staffordshire, Ada Nield Chew (1870–1945) left school at the age of eleven to help her mother with taking care of house and family. In her early twenties she worked as a tailor in a factory in Crewe. She wrote a series of letters to the *Crewe Chronicle* about working conditions in the factory. When her identity was discovered, an uproar ensued, and she was fired. She became active in politics and continued to write for political causes.

A Living Wage for Factory Girls at Crewe, 5 May 1894

Sir,
—Will you grant me space in your sensible and widely read paper to complain of a great grievance of the class—that of tailoresses in some of the Crewe factories—to which I belong? I have hoped against hope that some influential man (or woman) would take up our cause and put us in the right way to remedy—for of course there is a remedy—for the evils we are suffering from. But although one cannot open a newspaper without seeing what all sorts and conditions of men are constantly agitating for and slowly but surely obtaining—as in the miners' eight hour bill[1]—only very vague mention is ever made of the under-paid, over-worked "Factory Girl." And I have come to the conclusion, sir, that as long as we are silent ourselves and apparently content with our lot, so long shall we be left in the enjoyment [?] of that lot.

The rates paid for the work done by us are so fearfully low as to be totally inadequate to—I had almost said keep body and soul together. Well, sir, it is a fact which I could prove, if necessary, that we are compelled, not by our employers, but by stern necessity, in order to keep ourselves in independence, which self-respecting girls even in our class of life like to do, to work so many hours—I would rather not say how many—that life loses its savour, and our toil, which in moderation and at a fair rate of remuneration would be pleasurable, becomes drudgery of the most wearisome kind.

To take what may be considered a good week's wage the work has to be so close and unremitting that we cannot be said to "live"—we merely exist. We eat, we sleep, we work, endlessly, ceaselessly work, from Monday morning till Saturday night, without remission. Cultivation of the mind? How is it possible? Reading? Those of us who are determined to live like human beings and require food for

mind as well as body are obliged to take time which is necessary for sleep to gratify this desire. As for recreation and enjoying the beauties of nature, the seasons come and go, and we have barely time to notice whether it is spring or summer.

Certainly we have Sundays: but Sunday is to many of us, after our week of slavery, a day of exhaustion. It has frequently been so in my case, and I am not delicate. This, you will understand, sir, is when work is plentiful. Of course we have slack times, of which the present is one (otherwise I should not have time to write to you). It may be said that we should utilise these slack times for recruiting our bodies and cultivating our minds. Many of us do so, as far as is possible in the anxious state we are necessarily in, knowing that we are not earning our "keep," for it is not possible, absolutely not possible, for the average ordinary "hand" to earn enough in busy seasons, even with the overtime I have mentioned, to make up for slack ones.

"A living wage!" Ours is a lingering, dying wage. Who reaps the benefit of our toil? I read sometimes of a different state of things in other factories, and if in others, why not those in Crewe? I have just read the report of the Royal Commission on Labour. Very good, but while Royal Commissions are enquiring and reporting and making suggestions, some of the workers are being hurried to their graves.

I am afraid I am trespassing a great deal on your space, sir, but my subject has such serious interest for me—I sometimes wax very warm as I sit stitching and thinking over our wrongs—that they, and the knowledge that your columns are always open to the needy, however humble, must be my excuse.

I am, sir, yours sincerely,
A CREWE FACTORY GIRL
Crewe, 1 May 1894

Editor's note: Our correspondent writes a most intelligent letter; and if she is a specimen of the factory girl, then Crewe factory proprietors should be proud of their "hands." We shall be glad to hear further from our correspondent as to the wages paid, the

numbers of hours worked, and the conditions of their employment. *Crewe Chronicle*, 5 May 1894

1894

Endnotes

- Note 1: Bill limiting miners' work shifts to eight hours.Return to reference 1

ADELAIDE A. PROCTER

Adelaide Procter (1825–1864) was a popular poet who wrote frequently on the issues of poverty and homelessness, particularly as they affect women and children. She also did extensive philanthropic work with "fallen" women—female sex workers and mothers of illegitimate children. She was one of Queen Victoria's favorite poets.

Homeless

It is cold dark midnight, yet listen
To that patter of tiny feet!
Is it one of your dogs, fair lady,
Who whines in the bleak cold street?—
Is it one of your silken spaniels
Shut out in the snow and the sleet?

My dogs sleep warm in their baskets,
Safe from the darkness and snow;
All the beasts in our Christian England,
Find pity wherever they go—
(Those are only the homeless children
Who are wandering to and fro.)

Look out in the gusty darkness—
I have seen it again and again,
That shadow, that flits so slowly
Up and down past the window pane:—
It is surely some criminal lurking
Out there in the frozen rain?

Nay, our Criminals all are sheltered,
They are pitied and taught and fed:
That is only a sister-woman
Who has got neither food nor bed—
And the Night cries ‘sin to be living,’
And the River cries ‘sin to be dead.’

Look out at that farthest corner
Where the wall stands blank and bare:—
Can that be a pack which a Pedlar

Has left and forgotten there?
His goods lying out unsheltered
Will be spoilt by the damp night air.

Nay;—goods in our thrifty England
Are not left to lie and grow rotten,
For each man knows the market value
Of silk or woollen or cotton . . .
But in counting the riches of England
I think our Poor are forgotten.

Our Beasts and our Thieves and our Chattels
Have weight for good or for ill;
But the Poor are only His image,
His presence, His word, His will—
And so Lazarus[1] lies at our doorstep
And Dives neglects him still.

1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: Luke 16:19–31 offers the parable of the rich man (or Dives) who neglects Lazarus, the beggar. Both men die at the same time: Lazarus goes to heaven and the rich man goes to hell.Return to reference 1

ELIZABETH GASKELL

In the preface to *Mary Barton*, Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) wrote that she was inspired to write the novel by thinking "how deep might be the romance in the lives of some of those who elbowed me daily in the busy streets of the town in which I resided. I had always felt a deep sympathy with the careworn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want." This was Gaskell's first novel; she went on to write five more and at least thirty stories.

From Mary Barton

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One evening, when the clear light at six o'clock contrasted strangely with the Christmas cold, and when the bitter wind piped down every entry, and through every cranny, Barton sat brooding over his stinted fire, and listening for Mary's step, in unacknowledged trust that her presence would cheer him. The door was opened, and Wilson came breathless in.

"You've not got a bit o' money by you, Barton?" asked he.

"Not I; who has now, I'd like to know. Whatten you want it for?"

"I donnot[1] want it for mysel', tho' we've none to spare. But don ye know Ben Davenport as worked at Carsons'? He's down wi' the fever, and ne'er a stick o' fire nor a cowd[2] potato in the house."

"I han got no money, I tell ye," said Barton. Wilson looked disappointed. Barton tried not to be interested, but he could not help it in spite of his gruffness. He rose, and went to the cupboard (his wife's pride long ago). There lay the remains of his dinner, hastily put by ready for supper. Bread, and a slice of cold fat boiled bacon. He wrapped them in his handkerchief, put them in the crown of his hat, and said—"Come, let us be going."

"Going—art thou going to work this time o' day?"

"No stupid, to be sure not. Going to see the chap thou spoke on." So they put on their hats and set out. On the way Wilson said Davenport was a good fellow, though too much of the Methodee;[3] that his children were too young to work, but not too young to be cold and hungry; that they had sunk lower and lower, and pawned thing after thing, and that they now lived in a cellar in Berry Street, off Store Street. Barton growled inarticulate words of no benevolent import to a large class of mankind, and so they went along till they arrived in Berry Street. It was unpaved: and down the middle a

gutter forced its way, every now and then forming pools in the holes with which the street abounded. Never was the old Edinburgh cry of "Gardez l'eau,"[4] more necessary than in this street. As they passed, women from their doors tossed household slops of *every* description into the gutter; they ran into the next pool, which overflowed and stagnated. Heaps of ashes were the stepping-stones, on which the passer-by, who cared in the least for cleanliness, took care not to put his foot. Our friends were not dainty, but even they picked their way, till they got to some steps leading down to a small area, where a person standing would have his head about one foot below the level of the street, and might at the same time, without the least motion of his body, touch the window of the cellar and the damp muddy wall right opposite. You went down one step even from the foul area into the cellar in which a family of human beings lived. It was very dark inside. The window-panes many of them were broken and stuffed with rags, which was reason enough for the dusky light that pervaded the place even at mid-day. After the account I have given of the state of the street, no one can be surprised that on going into the cellar inhabited by Davenport, the smell was so fœtid as almost to knock the two men down. Quickly recovering themselves, as those inured to such things do, they began to penetrate the thick darkness of the place, and to see three or four little children rolling on the damp, nay wet, brick floor, through which the stagnant, filthy moisture of the street oozed up; the fire-place was empty and black; the wife sat on her husband's lair, and cried in the dank loneliness.

"See, missis, I'm back again.—Hold your noise, children, and don't mither[5] your mammy for bread; here's a chap as has got some for you."

In that dim light, which was darkness to strangers, they clustered round Barton, and tore from him the food he had brought with him. It was a large hunch of bread, but it had vanished in an instant.

"We mun do summut for 'em," said he to Wilson. "Yo stop here, and I'll be back in half-an-hour."

So he strode, and ran, and hurried home. He emptied into the ever-useful pocket handkerchief the little meal remaining in the mug. Mary would have her tea at Miss Simmonds'; her food for the day was safe. Then he went up-stairs for his better coat, and his one, gay, red-and-yellow silk pocket-handkerchief—his jewels, his plate, his valuables, these were. He went to the pawn-shop; he pawned them for five shillings; he stopped not, nor stayed, till he was once more in London Road, within five minutes' walk of Berry Street—then he loitered in his gait, in order to discover the shops he wanted. He bought meat, and a loaf of bread, candles, chips, and from a little retail yard he purchased a couple of hundredweights of coal. Some money still remained—all destined for them, but he did not yet know how best to spend it. Food, light, and warmth, he had instantly seen were necessary; for luxuries he would wait. Wilson's eyes filled with tears when he saw Barton enter with his purchases. He understood it all, and longed to be once more in work that he might help in some of these material ways, without feeling that he was using his son's money. But though "silver and gold he had none," he gave heart-service, and love-works of far more value. Nor was John Barton behind in these. "The fever" was (as it usually is in Manchester) of a low, putrid, typhoid kind; brought on by miserable living, filthy neighbourhood, and great depression of mind and body. It is virulent, malignant, and highly infectious. But the poor are fatalists with regard to infection; and well for them it is so, for in their crowded dwellings no invalid can be isolated. Wilson asked Barton if he thought he should catch it, and was laughed at for his idea.

The two men, rough, tender nurses as they were, lighted the fire, which smoked and puffed into the room as if it did not know the way up the damp, unused chimney. The very smoke seemed purifying and healthy in the thick clammy air. The children clamoured again for bread; but this time Barton took a piece first to the poor, helpless, hopeless woman, who still sat by the side of her husband, listening to his anxious miserable mutterings. She took the bread, when it was put into her hand, and broke a bit, but could not eat.

She was past hunger. She fell down on the floor with a heavy unresisting bang. The men looked puzzled. "She's well-nigh clemmed,"[6] said Barton. "Folk do say one mustn't give clemmed people much to eat; but, bless us, she'll eat nought."

"I'll tell yo what I'll do," said Wilson. "I'll take these two big lads, as does nought but fight, home to my missis for to-night, and I'll get a jug o' tea. Them women always does best with tea, and such-like slop."

So Barton was now left alone with a little child, crying (when it had done eating) for mammy; with a fainting, dead-like woman; and with the sick man, whose mutterings were rising up to screams and shrieks of agonized anxiety. He carried the woman to the fire, and chafed her hands. He looked around for something to raise her head. There was literally nothing but some loose bricks. However, those he got; and taking off his coat he covered them with it as well as he could. He pulled her feet to the fire, which now began to emit some faint heat. He looked round for water, but the poor woman had been too weak to drag herself out to the distant pump, and water there was none. He snatched the child, and ran up the area-steps to the room above, and borrowed their only saucepan with some water in it. Then he began, with the useful skill of a working-man, to make some gruel; and when it was hastily made, he seized a battered iron table-spoon (kept when many other little things had been sold in a lot), in order to feed baby, and with it he forced one or two drops between her clenched teeth. The mouth opened mechanically to receive more, and gradually she revived. She sat up and looked round; and recollecting all, fell down again in weak and passive despair. Her little child crawled to her, and wiped with its fingers the thick-coming tears which she now had strength to weep. It was now high time to attend to the man. He lay on straw, so damp and mouldy, no dog would have chosen it in preference to flags: over it was a piece of sacking, coming next to his worn skeleton of a body; above him was mustered every article of clothing that could be spared by mother or children this bitter weather; and in addition to his own, these might have given as much warmth as one blanket,

could they have been kept on him; but as he restlessly tossed to and fro, they fell off and left him shivering in spite of the burning heat of his skin. Every now and then he started up in his naked madness, looking like the prophet of woe in the fearful plague-picture, but he soon fell again in exhaustion, and Barton found he must be closely watched, lest in these falls he should injure himself against the hard brick floor.

***

1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Don" is constantly used in Lancashire for "do"; as it was by our older writers. "And that may non Hors *don*."—Sir J. Mandeville
  "but for th' entent to *don* this sinne."—Chaucer [*Gaskell's note*].
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Cold. Teut. *haud*. Dutch, *koud* [*Gaskell's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Methodist.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "Watch out for the water" (French); a warning issued when chamber pots containing human waste were emptied into the street.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "Mither," to trouble and perplex. "I'm well mithered"—I'm well nigh crazed [*Gaskell's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Starved.Return to reference 6

Environmental Degradation

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859) was a French diplomat and writer. His *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840) uses his travels through America to consider the possibilities and limitations of democracy. In the text reproduced here, de Tocqueville provides a clear-eyed view of the human and environmental degradation caused by industrialization in England. Commonly regarded as the greatest industrial city in the most highly industrialized nation in the world, Manchester also displayed some of the worst consequences of unplanned urban development.

From Journeys to England and Ireland

Exterior Appearance of Manchester (*2nd July*)

An undulating plain, or rather a collection of little hills Below the hills a narrow river (the Irwell), which flows slowly to the Irish sea. Two streams (the Meddlock and the Irk) wind through the uneven ground and after a thousand bends, flow into the river. Three canals made by man unite their tranquil, lazy waters at the same point. On this watery land, which nature and art have contributed to keep damp, are scattered palaces and hovels. Everything in the exterior appearance of the city attests the individual powers of man; nothing the directing power of society. At every turn human liberty shows its capricious creative force. There is no trace of the slow continuous action of government.

Thirty or forty factories rise on the tops of the hills I have just described. Their six stories tower up; their huge enclosures give notice from afar of the centralisation of industry. The wretched dwellings of the poor are scattered haphazard around them. Round them stretches land uncultivated but without the charm of rustic nature, and still without the amenities of a town. The soil has been taken away, scratched and torn up in a thousand places, but it is not yet covered with the habitations of men. The land is given over to industry's use. The roads which connect the still-disjointed limbs of the great city, show, like the rest, every sign of hurried and unfinished work; the incidental activity of a population bent on gain, which seeks to amass gold so as to have everything else all at once, and, in the interval, mistrusts the niceties of life. Some of these roads are paved, but most of them are full of ruts and puddles into which foot or carriage wheel sinks deep. Heaps of dung, rubble from buildings, putrid, stagnant pools are found here and there among the houses and over the bumpy, pitted surfaces of the public places. No trace of surveyor's rod or spirit-level. Amid this noisome

labyrinth, this great, sombre stretch of brickwork, from time to time one is astonished at the sight of fine stone buildings with Corinthian columns. It might be a medieval town with the marvels of the nineteenth century in the middle of it. But who could describe the interiors of these quarters set apart, home of vice and poverty, which surround the huge palaces of industry and clasp them in their hideous folds. On ground below the level of the river and overshadowed on every side by immense workshops, stretches marshy land which widely spaced muddy ditches can neither drain nor cleanse. Narrow, twisting roads lead down to it. They are lined with one-story houses whose ill-fitting planks and broken windows show them up, even from a distance, as the last refuge a man might find between poverty and death. None-the-less the wretched people reduced to living in them can still inspire jealousy of their fellow beings. Below some of their miserable dwellings is a row of cellars to which a sunken corridor leads. Twelve to fifteen human beings are crowded pell-mell into each of these damp, repulsive holes.[1]

The fetid, muddy waters, stained with a thousand colours by the factories they pass, of one of the streams I mentioned before, wander slowly round this refuge of poverty. They are nowhere kept in place by quays; houses are built haphazard on their banks. Often from the top of their steep banks one sees an attempt at a road opening out through the debris of earth, and the foundations of some houses or the recent ruins of others. It is the Styx of this new Hades.[2]

Look up and all around this place you will see the huge palaces of industry. You will hear the noise of furnaces, the whistle of steam. These vast structures keep air and light out of the human habitations which they dominate; they envelop them in perpetual fog; here is the slave, there the master; there the wealth of some, here the poverty of most; there the organised effort of thousands produce, to the profit of one man, what society has not yet learnt to give. Here the weakness of the individual seems more feeble and helpless even than in the middle of a wilderness; here the effects, there the causes.

A sort of black smoke covers the city. The sun seen through it is a disc without rays. Under this half daylight 300,000 human beings are ceaselessly at work. A thousand noises disturb this damp, dark labyrinth, but they are not at all the ordinary sounds one hears in great cities.

The footsteps of a *busy* crowd, the crunching wheels of machinery, the shriek of steam from boilers, the regular beat of the looms, the heavy rumble of carts, those are the noises from which you can never escape in the sombre half-light of these streets. You will never hear the clatter of hoofs as the rich man drives back home or out on expeditions of pleasure. Never the gay shouts of people amusing themselves, or music heralding a holiday. You will never see smart folk strolling at leisure in the streets, or going out on innocent pleasure parties in the surrounding country. Crowds are ever hurrying this way and that in the Manchester streets, but their footsteps are brisk, their looks preoccupied, and their appearance sombre and harsh. Day and night the city echoes with street noises. But it is heavily loaded wagons lumbering slowly. . . .

From this foul drain the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish; here civilisation works its miracles, and civilised man is turned back almost into a savage.

1835

Endnotes

- Note 1: Lines of washing block the roads. A coal fire lights the hovel and fills it with a damp and stuffy heat. No chairs [*Tocqueville's note in margin*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Greek mythology, the River Styx forms the boundary between the land of the living and Hades, the land of the dead.Return to reference 2

CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was one of the most popular novelists of the day. (See his headnote later in the volume for more information.) The fog he describes in this passage was a by-product of burning coal, used for both heating homes and powering the new steam engines; it was first noted in the thirteenth century, but intensified greatly with industrialization in the nineteenth. In 1952, the Great Smog of London caused thousands of deaths and ultimately led to the creation of the Clean Air Act.

From Bleak House

Chapter I. In Chancery

LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall.[1] Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Hollborn-hill.[2] Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights.[3] Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich[4] pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongey fields, be seen to loom by

husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time—as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of the four Inns of Court in London. “Michaelmas Term”: first term of the academic year. “Lord Chancellor”: member of the cabinet responsible for overseeing courts’ efficiency and independence.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Dickens’s time, a street in central London. “Megalosaurus”: a therapod dinosaur of the Jurassic period.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A county in southeast England. “Essex marshes”: Essex is a county in the east of England.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A district in southeast London.Return to reference 4

JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin (1819–1900) was a highly influential critic of art, culture, and politics. His social commentary, his aesthetics, and his conviction that art reflects social and political arrangements were influential for figures as diverse as William Morris, Oscar Wilde, and Mohandas Gandhi.

From The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century

Let me first assure my audience that I have no *arrière pensée*[1] in the title chosen for this lecture. I might, indeed, have meant, and it would have been only too like me to mean, any number of things by such a title;—but, to-night, I mean simply what I have said, and propose to bring to your notice a series of cloud phenomena, which, so far as I can weigh existing evidence, are peculiar to our own times; yet which have not hitherto received any special notice or description from meteorologists.

So far as the existing evidence, I say, of former literature can be interpreted, the storm-cloud—or more accurately plague-cloud, for it is not always stormy—which I am about to describe to you, never was seen but by now living, or *lately* living eyes. It is not yet twenty years that this—I may well call it, wonderful, cloud has been, in its essence, recognizable. There is no description of it, so far as I have read, by any ancient observer. Neither Homer nor Virgil, neither Aristophanes nor Horace, acknowledges any such clouds among those compelled by Jove.[2] Chaucer has no word of them, nor Dante; Milton none, nor Thomson.[3] In modern times, Scott, Wordsworth and Byron[4] are alike unconscious of them; and the most observant and descriptive of scientific men, De Saussure,[5] is utterly silent concerning them. Taking up the traditions of air from the year before Scott's death, I am able, by my own constant and close observation, to certify you that in the forty following years (1831 to 1871 approximately—for the phenomena in question came on gradually)—no such clouds as these are, and are now often for months without intermission, were ever seen in the skies of England, France, or Italy.

In those old days, when weather was fine, it was luxuriously fine; when it was bad—it was often abominably bad, but it had its fit of temper and was done with it—it didn't sulk for three months without

letting you see the sun,—nor send you one cyclone inside out, every Saturday afternoon, and another outside in, every Monday morning.

In fine weather the sky was either blue or clear in its light; the clouds, either white or golden, adding to, not abating, the lustre of the sky. In wet weather, there were two different species of clouds, —those of beneficent rain, which for distinction's sake I will call the non-electric rain-cloud, and those of storm, usually charged highly with electricity. The beneficent rain-cloud was indeed often extremely dull and grey for days together, but gracious nevertheless, felt to be doing good, and often to be delightful after drought; capable also of the most exquisite colouring, under certain conditions; and continually traversed in clearing by the rainbow:— and, secondly, the storm-cloud, always majestic, often dazzlingly beautiful, and felt also to be beneficent in its own way, affecting the mass of the air with vital agitation, and purging it from the impurity of all morbific elements.

In the entire system of the Firmament, thus seen and understood, there appeared to be, to all the thinkers of those ages, the incontrovertable and unmistakeable evidence of a Divine Power in creation, which had fitted, as the air for human breath, so the clouds for human sight and nourishment;—the Father who was in heaven feeding day by day the souls of His children with marvels, and satisfying them with bread, and so filling their hearts with food and gladness.

Their *hearts,* you will observe, it is said, not merely their bellies, —or indeed not at all, in this sense, their bellies—but the heart itself, with its blood for this life, and its faith for the next.

***

The first time I recognised the clouds brought by the plague-wind as distinct in character was in walking back from Oxford, after a hard day's work, to Abingdon, in the early spring of 1871: it would take too long to give you any account this evening of the particulars which drew my attention to them; but during the following months I

had too frequent opportunities of verifying my first thoughts of them, and on the first of July in that year wrote the description of them which begins the 'Fors Clavigera'[6] of August, thus:—

"It is the first of July, and I sit down to write by the dismallest light that ever yet I wrote by; namely, the light of this mid-summer morning, in mid-England (Matlock, Derbyshire), in the year 1871.

For the sky is covered with grey cloud;—not rain-cloud, but a dry black veil, which no ray of sunshine can pierce; partly diffused in mist, feeble mist, enough to make distant objects unintelligible, yet without any substance, or wreathing, or colour of its own. And everywhere the leaves of the trees are shaking fitfully, as they do before a thunderstorm; only not violently, but enough to show the passing to and fro of a strange, bitter, blighting wind. Dismal enough, had it been the first morning of its kind that summer had sent. But during all this spring, in London, and at Oxford, through meagre March, through changelessly sullen April, through despondent May, and darkened June, morning after morning has come grey-shrouded thus.

And it is a new thing to me, and a very dreadful one. I am fifty years old, and more; and since I was five, have gleaned the best hours of my life in the sun of spring and summer mornings; and I never saw such as these, till now.

And the scientific men are busy as ants, examining the sun, and the moon, and the seven stars, and can tell me all about *them*, I believe, by this time; and how they move, and what they are made of.

And I do not care, for my part, two copper spangles how they move, nor what they are made of. I can't move them any other way than they go, nor make them of anything else, better than they are made. But I would care much and give much, if I could be told where this bitter wind comes from, and what *it* is made of.

For, perhaps, with forethought, and fine laboratory science, one might make it of something else.

It looks partly as if it were made of poisonous smoke; very possibly it may be: there are at least two hundred furnace chimneys

in a square of two miles on every side of me. But mere smoke would not blow to and fro in that wild way. It looks more to me as if it were made of dead men's souls—such of them as are not gone yet where they have to go, and may be flitting hither and thither, doubting, themselves, of the fittest place for them.

You know, if there *are* such things as souls, and if ever any of them haunt places where they have been hurt, there must be many about us, just now, displeased enough!"

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Blanched Sun,—blighted grass,—blinded man.—If, in conclusion, you ask me for any conceivable cause or meaning of these things—I can tell you none, according to your modern beliefs; but I can tell you what meaning it would have borne to the men of old time. Remember, for the last twenty years, England, and all foreign nations, either tempting her, or following her, have blasphemed the name of God deliberately and openly; and have done iniquity by proclamation, every man doing as much injustice to his brother as it is in his power to do. Of states in such moral gloom every seer of old predicted the physical gloom, saying, "The light shall be darkened in the heavens thereof, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." All Greek, all Christian, all Jewish prophecy insists on the same truth through a thousand myths; but of all the chief, to former thought, was the fable of the Jewish warrior and prophet, for whom the sun hasted not to go down, with which I leave you to compare at leisure the physical result of your own wars and prophecies, as declared by your own elect journal not fourteen days ago,—that the Empire of England, on which formerly the sun never set, has become one on which he never rises.

What is best to be done, do you ask me? The answer is plain. Whether you can affect the signs of the sky or not, you *can* the signs of the times. Whether you can bring the *sun* back or not, you can assuredly bring back your own cheerfulness, and your own honesty. You may not be able to say to the winds, "Peace; be still,"

but you can cease from the insolence of your own lips, and the troubling of your own passions. And all *that* it would be extremely well to do, even though the day *were* coming when the sun should be as darkness, and the moon as blood. But, the paths of rectitude and piety once regained, who shall say that the promise of old time would not be found to hold for us also?—"Bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord God, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

1884

Endnotes

- Note 1: A mental reservation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Another name for Jupiter, Roman god of the sky. Homer (8th c. B.C.E.), author of *The Odyssey*; Virgil (ca. 70–19 B.C.E), author of *The Aeneid*; Aristophanes (ca. 446–386 B.C.E.), author of *Lysistrata* among others; Horace (ca. 65–8 B.C.E.), author of *Ars Poetica*.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: James Thomson (1700–1748), author of *The Seasons*; Geoffrey Chaucer (1340s–1400), author of *The Canterbury Tales*; Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), author of *The Divine Comedy*; John Milton (1608–1674), author of *Paradise Lost*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824), Romantic poet; Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832), author of *Waverly* and other popular novels; William Wordsworth (1770–1850), Romantic poet and Poet Laureate (1843–50).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Horace Bénédict de Saussure (1740–1799), considered the founder of mountaineering and modern meteorology.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ruskin's series of published letters (1871) addressed to the workingmen of Britain.Return to reference 6

THOMAS HARDY

Hardy (1840–1928) was one of the most innovative and popular writers of the late nineteenth century. His descriptions of the British countryside were often rhapsodic, though rarely sentimental. He was particularly interested in tracing the historical transformations that were taking place in the countryside as a result of industrialization.

From Tess of the d'Urbervilles

It is the threshing of the last wheat-rick at Flintcomb-Ash Farm. The dawn of the March morning is singularly inexpressive, and there is nothing to show where the eastern horizon lies. Against the twilight rises the trapezoidal top of the stack, which has stood forlornly here through the washing and bleaching of the wintry weather.

When Izz Huett and Tess arrived at the scene of operations only a rustling denoted that others had preceded them; to which, as the light increased, there were presently added the silhouettes of two men on the summit. They were busily 'unhaling' the rick, that is, stripping off the thatch before beginning to throw down the sheaves; and while this was in progress Izz and Tess, with the other women-workers in their whitey-brown pinners, stood waiting and shivering, Farmer Groby having insisted upon their being upon the spot thus early to get the job over if possible by the end of the day. Close under the eaves of the stack, and as yet barely visible, was the red tyrant that the women had come to serve—a timber-framed construction, with straps and wheels appertaining—the threshing-machine which, whilst it was going, kept up a despotic demand upon the endurance of their muscles and nerves.

A little way off there was another indistinct figure; this one black, with a sustained hiss that spoke of strength very much in reserve. The long chimney running up beside an ash-tree, and the warmth which radiated from the spot, explained without the necessity of much daylight that here was the engine which was to act as the *primum mobile*[1] of this little world. By the engine stood a dark motionless being, a sooty and grimy embodiment of tallness, in a sort of trance, with a heap of coals by his side: it was the engineman. The isolation of his manner and color lent him the appearance of a creature from Tophet,[2] who had strayed into the pellucid smokelessness of this region of yellow grain and pale soil,

with which he had nothing in common, to amaze and to discompose its aborigines.

What he looked he felt. He was in the agricultural world, but not of it. He served fire and smoke; these denizens of the fields served vegetation, weather, frost, and sun. He travelled with his engine from farm to farm, from county to county, for as yet the steam-threshing machine was itinerant in this part of Wessex. He spoke in a strange northern accent, his thoughts being turned inwards upon himself, his eye on his iron charge; hardly perceiving the scenes around him, and caring for them not at all; holding only strictly necessary intercourse with the natives, as if some ancient doom compelled him to wander here against his will in the service of his Plutonic master.[3] The long strap which ran from the driving-wheel of his engine to the red thresher under the rick was the sole tie-line between agriculture and him.

While they uncovered the sheaves he stood apathetic beside his portable repository of force, round whose hot blackness the morning air quivered. He had nothing to do with preparatory labour. His fire was waiting incandescent, his steam was at high pressure, in a few seconds he could make the long strap move at an invisible velocity. Beyond its extent the environment might be corn, straw, or chaos; it was all the same to him. If any of the autochthonous idlers asked him what he called himself, he replied shortly 'an engineer.'

The rick was unhaled by full daylight; the men then took their places, the women mounted, and the work began. Farmer Groby—or, as they called him, 'he'—had arrived ere this, and by his orders Tess was placed on the platform of the machine, close to the man who fed it; her business being to untie every sheaf of corn handed on to her by Izz Huett, who stood next, but on the rick, so that the feeder could seize it and spread it over the revolving drum, which whisked out every grain in one moment.

They were soon in full progress, after a preparatory hitch or two, which rejoiced the hearts of those who hated machinery. The work sped on till break fast-time, when the thresher was stopped for half an hour; and on starting again after the meal the whole

supplementary strength of the farm was thrown into the labour of constructing the straw-rick, which began to grow beside the stack of corn. A hasty lunch was eaten as they stood, without leaving their positions, and then another couple of hours brought them near to dinner-time; the inexorable wheels continuing to spin, and the penetrating hum of the thresher to thrill to the very marrow all who were near the revolving wire-cage.

The old men on the rising straw-rick talked of the past days when they had been accustomed to thresh with flails on the oaken barn-floor; when everything, even to the winnowing, was effected by hand-labour, which, to their thinking, though slow, produced better results. Those, too, on the corn-rick talked a little; but the perspiring ones at the machine, including Tess, could not lighten their duties by the exchange of many words. It was the ceaselessness of the work which tried her so severely, and began to make her wish that she had never come to Flintcomb-Ash. The women on the corn-rick—Marian, who was one of them, in particular—could stop to drink ale or cold tea from the flagon now and then, or to exchange a few gossiping remarks while they wiped their faces or cleared the fragments of straw and husk from their clothing; but for Tess there was no respite; for, as the drum never stopped, the man who fed it could not stop, and she, who had to supply the man with untied sheaves, could not stop either.

1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: Central source of motion or action.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hell.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Pluto was god of the underworld; this is also a reference to coal.Return to reference 3

HENRY MAYHEW
1812–1887

Henry Mayhew was a journalist, playwright, editor, and observer of urban life. Born in London, and educated at the Westminster School, Mayhew ran away to sea at the age of twelve. He served with the East India Company as a midshipman for several years. Upon his return to England, he began training for the law only to turn to journalism. In 1835, Mayhew left England again—this time to escape debts—and went to Paris; there he found a community of expatriate authors, including novelist William Makepeace Thackeray and playwright Douglas Jerrold. In 1841, he co-founded the satirical magazine, *Punch*, which became a surprise success.

Mayhew was best known for the extensive series of articles he wrote for the *Morning Chronicle* that were later collected as the three volumes of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851, with a fourth volume in 1861). Mayhew's work, opinionated, often racist, and unsystematic as it is, has nevertheless been identified as early sociology. Regardless of how it is categorized, there is no question that his detailed descriptions of the daily lives of London's poorest inhabitants had a significant impact on middle-class readers. At a moment when industrialization was leading to an explosion of urban populations—and the development of massive urban slums—many city dwellers felt alienated from and mystified by their neighbors. Mayhew's work (along with that of Friedrich Engels, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Charles Dickens, all included in this volume) sought to

overcome that division. Interestingly, at least some London street traders were so insulted by Mayhew's assessment of their lives and characters that they established a Street Traders' Protection Association to defend themselves against it.

London Labor and the London Poor

From *Volume 1. The Street-Folk*

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OF THE LONDON STREET-FOLK

Those who obtain their living in the streets of the metropolis are a very large and varied class; indeed, the means resorted to in order "to pick up a crust," as the people call it, in the public thoroughfares (and such in many instances it *literally* is), are so multifarious that the mind is long baffled in its attempts to reduce them to scientific order or classification.

It would appear, however, that the street-people may be all arranged under six distinct genera or kinds.

These are severally:

I. STREET-SELLERS.
II. STREET-BUYERS.
III. STREET-FINDERS.
IV. STREET-PERFORMERS, ARTISTS, AND SHOWMEN.
V. STREET-ARTISANS, or WORKING PEDLERS: and
VI. STREET-LABORERS.

The first of these divisions—the STREET-SELLERS—includes many varieties; viz.—

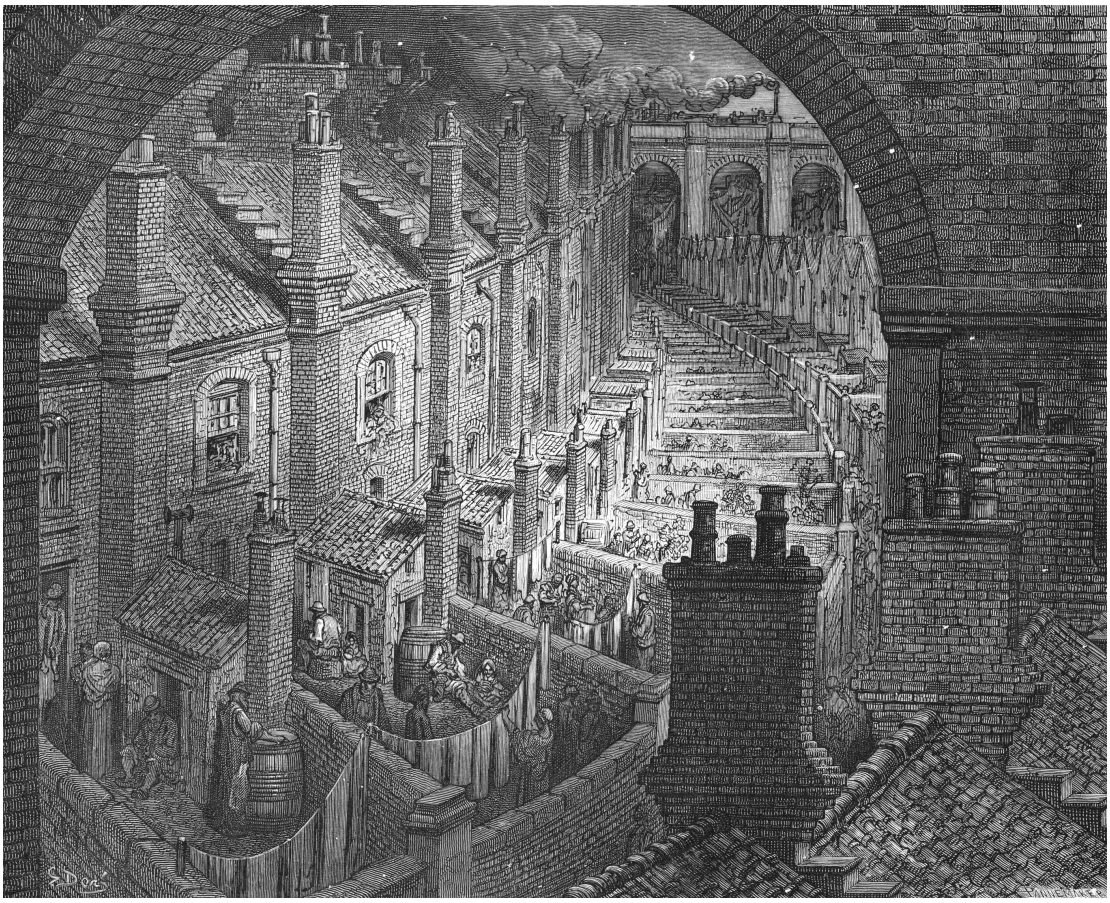
1. *The Street-sellers of Fish,* &c.—"wet," "dry," and shell-fish—and poultry, game, and cheese.

2. *The Street-sellers of Vegetables,* fruit (both "green" and "dry"), flowers, trees, shrubs, seeds, and roots, and "green stuff" (as watercresses, chickwood and grun'sel, and turf).

3. *The Street-sellers of Eatables and Drinkables,*—Including the venders of fried fish, hot eels, pickled whelks, sheep's trotters, ham sandwiches, peas'-soup, hot green peas, penny pies, plum "duff," meat-puddings, baked potatoes, spice-cakes, muffins and crumpets, Chelsea buns, sweetments, brandy-balls, cough-drops, and cat and dog's meat—such constituting the principal eatables sold in the street; while under the head of street-drinkables may be specified tea and coffee, ginger-beer, lemonade, hot wine, new milk from the cow, asses' milk, curds and whey, and occasionally water.

4. *The Street-sellers of Stationery, Literature, and the Fine Arts*—among whom are comprised the flying stationers, or standing and running patterers; the long-song-sellers; the wall-song-sellers (or "pinners-up," as they are technically termed); the ballad sellers; the venders of playbills, second editions of newspapers, back numbers of periodicals and old books, almanacs, pocket-books, memorandum books, note paper, sealing-wax, pens, pencils, stenographic cards, valentines, engravings, manuscript music, images, and gelatine poetry cards.

5. *The Street-sellers of Manufactured Articles,* which class comprises a large number of individuals, as, (a) the venders of chemical articles of manufacture—viz., blacking, lucifers, cornsalves, grease-removing compositions, plating-balls, poison for rats, crackers, detonating-balls, and cigar-lights. (*b*) The venders of metal articles of manufacture—razors and pen-knives, tea-trays, dog-collars, and key-rings, hardware, bird-cages, small coins, medals, jewelry, tinware, tools, card-counters, red-herring-toasters, trivets, gridirons, and Dutch ovens. (*c*) The vendors of china and stone articles of manufacture—as cups and saucers, jugs, vases, chimney ornaments, and stone fruit. (*d*) The venders of linen, cotton, and silken articles of manufacture—as sheeting, table-covers, cotton, tapes and thread, boot and stay-laces, haberdashery, pretended smuggled goods, shirt-buttons, etc., etc.; and (*e*) the venders of miscellaneous articles of manufacture—as cigars, pipes, and snuff-boxes, spectacles, combs, "lots," rhubarb, sponges, wash-leather, paper-hangings, dolls, Bristol toys, sawdust, and pin-cushions.



London. "Over the city by the railway" was one of the 180 drawings by French artist Gustave Doré (1832–1883) that appeared in his book *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872).

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6. *The Street-sellers of Second-hand Articles,* of whom there are again four separate classes; as (*a*) those who sell old metal articles—viz. old knives and forks, keys, tin-ware, tools, and marine stores generally; (*b*) those who sell old linen articles—as old sheeting for towels; (*c*) those who sell old glass and crockery—including bottles, old pans and pitchers, old looking-glasses, &c.; and (*d*) those who sell old miscellaneous articles—as old shoes, old clothes, old saucepan lids, &c., &c.

7. *The Street-sellers of Live Animals*—including the dealers in dogs, squirrels, birds, gold and silver fish, and tortoises.

8. *The Street-sellers of Mineral Productions and Curiosities*—as red and white sand, silver sand, coals, coke, salt, spar ornaments,

and shells.

These, so far as my experience goes, exhaust the whole class of street-sellers, and they appear to constitute nearly three fourths of the entire number of individuals obtaining a subsistence in the streets of London.

The next class are the STREET-BUYERS, under which denomination come the purchasers of hare-skins, old clothes, old umbrellas, bottles, glass, broken metal, rags, waste paper, and dripping.

After these we have the STREET-FINDERS, or those who, as I said before, literally "pick up" their living in the public thoroughfares. They are the "pure" pickers, or those who live by gathering dogs'-dung: the cigar-end finders, or "hard-ups," as they are called, who collect the refuse pieces of smoked cigars from the gutters, and having dried them, sell them as tobacco to the very poor; the dredgermen or coal-finders; the mud-larks, the bone-grubbers; and the sewer-hunters.

Under the fourth division, or that of the STREET-PERFORMERS, ARTISTS, AND SHOWMEN, are likewise many distinct callings.

1. *The Street-Performers,* who admit of being classified into (*a*) mountebanks—or those who enact puppet-shows, as Punch and Judy, the fantoccini, and the Chinese shades. (*b*) The street-performers of feats of strength and dexterity—as "acrobats" or posturers, "equilibrists" or balancers, stiff and bending tumblers, jugglers, conjurers, sword-swallowers, "salamanders" or fire-eaters, swordsmen, etc. (*c*) The street-performers with trained animals—as dancing dogs, performing monkeys, trained birds and mice, cats and hares, sapient pigs, dancing boars, and tame camels. (*d*) The street-actors—as clowns, "Billy Barlows," "Jim Crows," and others.

2. *The Street Showmen*, including shows of (a) extraordinary persons—as giants, dwarfs, Albinoes, spotted boys, and pig-faced ladies. (*b*) Extraordinary animals—as alligators, calves, horses and pigs with six legs or two heads, industrious fleas, and happy families. (*c*) Philosophic instruments—as the microscope, telescope, thaumascope.[1] (*d*) Measuring-machines—as weighing, lifting, measuring, and striking machines; and (*e*) miscellaneous shows—

such as peep-shows, glass ships, mechanical figures, wax-work shows, pugilistic shows, and fortune-telling apparatus.

8. *The Street-Artists*—as black profile-cutters, blind paper-cutters, "screevers" or draughtsmen in colored chalks on the pavement, writers without hands, and readers without eyes.

4. *The Street Dancers*—as street Scotch girls, sailors, slack and tight rope dancers, dancers on stilts, and comic dancers.

5. *The Street Musicians*—as the street bands (English and German), players of the guitar, harp, bagpipes, hurdy-gurdy, dulcimer, musical bells, cornet, tom-tom, &c.

6. *The Street Singers,* as the singers of glees, ballads, comic songs, n***** melodies, psalms, serenaders, reciters, and improvisatori.

7. *The Proprietors of Street Games,* as swings, highflyers, roundabouts, puff-and-darts, rifle shooting, down the dolly, spin-'em-rounds, prick the garter, thimble-rig, etc.

Then comes the Fifth Division of the Street-Folk, viz., the STREET-ARTISANS, or WORKING PEDLERS;

These may be severally arranged into three distinct groups—(1) Those who *make* things in the streets; (2) Those who *mend* things in the streets; and (8) Those who *make* things *at home* and *sell* them in the *streets.*

1. Of *those who make things in the streets* there are the following varieties: (*a*) the metal workers—such as toasting-fork makers, pin makers, engravers, tobacco-stopper makers. (*b*) The textile-workers —stocking-weavers, cabbage-net makers, night-cap knitters, doll-dress knitters. (*c*) The miscellaneous workers,—the wooden spoon makers, the leather brace and garter makers, the printers, and the glass-blowers.

2. *Those who mend things in the streets,* consist of broken china and glass menders, clock menders, umbrella menders, kettle menders, chair menders, grease removers, hat cleaners, razor and knife grinders, glaziers, traveling bell-hangers, and knife cleaners.

3. *Those who make things at home and sell them in the streets,* are (*a*) the wood workers—as the makers of clothes-pegs, clothes-

props, skewers, needle-cases, foot-stools and clothes-horses, chairs and tables, tea-caddies, writing-desks, drawers, work-boxes, dressing-cases, pails and tubs. (*b*) The trunk, hat, and bonnet-box makers, and the cane and rush basket makers. (*c*) The toy makers—such as Chinese roarers, children's windmills, flying birds and fishes, feathered cocks, black velvet cats and sweeps, paper houses, cardboard carriages, little copper pans and kettles, tiny tin fireplaces, children's watches, Dutch dolls, buy-a-brooms, and guttapercha[2] heads. (*d*) The apparel makers—viz., the makers of women's caps, boys and men's cloth caps, night-caps, straw bonnets, children's dresses, watch-pockets, bonnet shapes, silk bonnets, and gaiters. (*e*) The metal workers,—as the makers of fire-guards, bird-cages, the wire workers. (*f*) The miscellaneous workers—or makers of ornaments for stoves, chimney ornaments, artificial flowers in pots and in nosegays, plaster-of-Paris night-shades, brooms, brushes, mats, rugs, hearthstones, firewood, rush matting, and hassocks.

Of the last division, or STREET-LABORERS, there are four classes:

1. *The Cleaners*—such as scavengers, nightmen, flushermen, chimney-sweeps, dustmen, crossing-sweepers, "street-orderlies," laborers to sweeping-machines and to watering-carts.

2. *The Lighters and Waterers*—or the turn cocks and the lamplighters.

3. *The Street-Advertisers*—viz., the bill-stickers, bill-deliverers, boardmen, men to advertising vans, and wall and pavement stencilers.

4. *The Street-Servants*—as horse holders, linkmen, coach-hirers, street-porters, shoe-blacks.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: A popular toy that spins two images on disks very quickly to make them look like one.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Guttapercha (or gutta-percha) is a type of solidified latex, made from trees; it resembles rubber.Return to reference 2

OF THE COSTER-GIRLS

THE costermongers,[3] taken as a body, entertain the most imperfect idea of the sanctity of marriage. To their undeveloped minds it merely consists in the fact of a man and woman living together, and sharing the gains they may each earn by selling in the street. The father and mother of the girl look upon it as a convenient means of shifting the support of their child over to another's exertions; and so thoroughly do they believe this to be the end and aim of matrimony, that the expense of a church ceremony is considered as a useless waste of money, and the new pair are received by their companions as cordially as if every form of law and religion had been complied with.

The notions of morality among these people agree strangely, as I have said, with those of many savage tribes—indeed, it would be curious if it were otherwise. They are a part of the Nomads of England, neither knowing nor caring for the enjoyments of home. The hearth, which is so sacred a symbol to all civilized races as being the spot where the virtues of each succeeding generation are taught and encouraged, has no charms to them. The tap-room is the father's chief abiding-place; while to the mother the house is only a better kind of *tent.* She is away at the stall, or hawking her goods from morning till night, while the children are left to play away the day in the court or alley, and pick their morals out of the gutter. So long as the limbs gain strength the parent cares for nothing else. As the young ones grow up, their only notions of wrong are formed by what the policeman will permit them to do. If we, who have known from babyhood the kindly influences of a home, require, before we are thrust out into the world to get a living for ourselves, that our perceptions of good and evil should be quickened and brightened (the same as our perceptions of truth and falsity) by the experience and counsel of those who are wiser and better than ourselves,—if, indeed, it needed a special creation and example to teach the best and strongest of us the law of right, how bitterly must the children of the street-folk require tuition, training, and advice, when from

their very cradles (if, indeed, they ever knew such luxuries) they are doomed to witness in their parents, whom they naturally believe to be their superiors, habits of life in which passion is the sole rule of action, and where every appetite of our animal nature is indulged in without the least restraint.

I say thus much because I am anxious to make others feel, as I do myself, that *we* are the culpable parties in these matters. That they, poor things, should do as they do is but human nature—but that *we* should allow them to remain thus destitute of every blessing vouchsafed to ourselves—that we should willingly share what we enjoy with our brethren at the Antipodes, and yet leave those who are nearer and who, therefore, should be dearer to us, to want even the commonest moral necessaries, is a paradox that gives to the zeal of our Christianity a strong savor of the chicanery of Cant.

The costermongers strongly resemble the North American Indians in their conduct to their wives. They can understand that it is the duty of the women to contribute to the happiness of the man, but can not feel that there is a reciprocal duty from the man to the woman. The wife is considered as an inexpensive servant, and the disobedience of a wish is punished with blows. She must work early and late, and to the husband must be given the proceeds of her labor. Often when the man is in one of his drunken fits—which sometimes last two or three days continuously—she must by her sole exertions find food for herself and him too. To live in peace with him, there must be no murmuring, no tiring under-work, no fancied cause for jealousy—for if there be, she is either beaten into submission or cast adrift to begin life again—as another's leavings.

The story of one coster girl's life may be taken as a type of the many. When quite young she is placed out to nurse with some neighbor, the mother—if a fond one—visiting the child at certain periods of the day, for the purpose of feeding it, or sometimes, knowing the round she has to make, having the infant brought to her at certain places, to be "suckled." As soon as it is old enough to go alone, the court is its play-ground, the gutter its school-room, and under the care of an elder sister the little one passes the day,

among children whose mothers like her own are too busy out in the streets helping to get the food, to be able to mind the family at home. When the girl is strong enough, she in her turn is made to assist the mother by keeping guard over the younger children, or, if there be none, she is lent out to carry about a baby, and so made to add to the family income by gaining her sixpence weekly. Her time is from the earliest years fully occupied; indeed, her parents can not afford to keep her without doing and getting *something.* Very few of the children receive the least education. "The parents," I am told, "never give their minds to learning, for they say, 'What's the use of it? *that* won't yarn a gal a living.' " Every thing is sacrificed—as, indeed, under the circumstances it must be—in the struggle to live—ay! and to live *merely.* Mind, heart, soul, are all absorbed in the belly. The rudest form of animal life, physiologists tell us, is simply a locomotive stomach. Verily, it would appear as if our social state had a tendency to make the highest animal sink into the lowest.

At about seven years of age the girls first go into the streets to sell. A shallow-basket is given to them, with about two shillings for stock-money, and they hawk, according to the time of year, either oranges, apples, or violets; some begin their street education with the sale of water-cresses. The money earned by this means is strictly given to the parents. Sometimes—though rarely—a girl who has been unfortunate during the day will not dare to return home at night, and then she will sleep under some dry arch or about some market, until the morrow's gains shall insure her a safe reception and shelter in her father's room.

The life of the coster-girls is as severe as that of the boys. Between four and five in the morning they have to leave home for the markets, and sell in the streets until about nine. Those that have more kindly parents, return then to breakfast, but many are obliged to earn the morning's meal for themselves. After breakfast, they generally remain in the streets until about ten o'clock at night; many having nothing during all that time but one meal of bread and butter and coffee, to enable them to support the fatigue of walking from street to street with the heavy basket on their heads. In the course

of a day, some girls eat as much as a pound of bread, and very seldom get any meat, unless it be on a Sunday.

There are many poor families that, without the aid of these girls, would be forced into the workhouse. They are generally of an affectionate disposition, and some will perform acts of marvelous heroism to keep together the little home. It is not at all unusual for mere children of fifteen to walk their eight or ten miles a day, carrying a basket of nearly two hundred weight on their heads. A journey to Woolwich and back, or to the towns near London, is often undertaken to earn the 1*s*. 6*d*. their parents are anxiously waiting for at home.

Very few of these girls are married to the men they afterward live with. Their courtship is usually a very short one; for, as one told me, "the life is such a hard one, that a girl is ready to get rid of a *little* of the labor at any price." The coster-lads see the girls at market, and if one of them be pretty, and a boy take a fancy to her, he will make her bargains for her, and carry her basket home. Sometimes a coster working his rounds will feel a liking for a wench selling her goods in the street, and will leave his burrow to go and talk with her. A girl seldom takes up with a lad before she is sixteen, though some of them, when barely fifteen or even fourteen, will pair off. They court for a time, going to raffles and "gaffs" together, and then the affair is arranged. The girl tells her parents, "she's going to keep company with so-and-so," packs up what things she has, and goes at once, without a word of remonstrance from either father or mother. A furnished room, at 4*s*. a week, is taken, and the young couple begin life. The lad goes out as usual with his barrow, and the girl goes out with her basket, often working harder for her lover than she had done for her parents. They go to market together, and at about nine o'clock her day's selling begins. Very often she will take out with her in the morning what food she requires during the day, and never return home until eleven o'clock at night.

The men generally behave very cruelly to the girls they live with. They are as faithful to them as if they were married, but they are jealous in the extreme. To see a man talking to their girl is sufficient

to insure the poor thing a beating. They sometimes ill-treat them horribly—most unmercifully indeed—nevertheless the girls say they can not help loving them still, and continue working for them, as if they experienced only kindness at their hands. Some of them are gentler and more considerate in their treatment of them, but by far the larger portion are harsh and merciless. Often when the Saturday night's earnings of the two have been large, the man will take the entire money, and as soon as the Sunday's dinner is over, commence drinking hard, and continue drunk for two or three days together, until the funds are entirely exhausted. The women never gamble; they say, "it gives them no excitement." They prefer, if they have a spare moment in the evening, sitting near the fire, making up and patching their clothes. "Ah, sir," said a girl to me, "a neat gown does a deal with a man; he always likes a girl best when every body else likes her too." On a Sunday they clean their room for the week and go for a treat, if they can persuade their young men to take them out in the afternoon, either to Chalk Farm or Battersea Fields—[4] "where there's plenty of life."

After a girl has once grown accustomed to a street-life, it is almost impossible to wean her from it. The muscular irritability begotten by continued wandering makes her unable to rest for any time in one place, and she soon, if put to any *settled* occupation, gets to crave for the severe exercise she formerly enjoyed. The least restraint will make her sigh after the perfect liberty of the coster's "roving life." As an instance of this I may relate a fact that has occurred within the last six months. A gentleman of high literary repute, struck with the heroic strugglings of a coster Irish girl to maintain her mother, took her to his house with the view of teaching her the duties of a servant. At first the transition was a painful one to the poor thing. Having traveled barefoot through the streets since a mere child, the pressure of shoes was intolerable to her, and in the evening or whenever a few minutes' rest could be obtained, the boots were taken off, for with them on she could enjoy no ease. The perfect change of life, and the novelty of being in a new place, reconciled her for some time to the loss of her liberty. But no sooner

did she hear from her friends, that sprats were again in the market,[5] than, as if there were some magical influence in the fish, she at once requested to be freed from the confinement, and permitted to return to her old calling.

Such is the history of the lower class of girls, though this lower class, I regret to say, constitutes by far the greater portion of the whole. Still I would not for a moment have it inferred that *all* are bad. There are many young girls getting their living, or rather helping to get the living of others in the streets, whose goodness, considering the temptations and hardships besetting such an occupation, approximates to the marvelous. As a type of the more prudent class of coster-girls, I would also the following narrative received from the lips of a young woman in answer to a series of questions.

Endnotes

- Note 3: Costermongers are street sellers of fruits, vegetables, and other goods.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Open spaces for strolling, in North and South London, respectively.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The season for catching sprats (a type of small fish) began on November 9 and ended at Christmas.Return to reference 5

THE LIFE OF A COSTER-GIRL

I wished to have obtained a statement from the girl whose portrait is here given, but she was afraid to give the slightest information about the habits of her companions, lest they should recognize her by the engraving and persecute her for the revelations she might make. After disappointing me some dozen times, I was forced to seek out some other coster girl.

The one I fixed upon was a fine-grown young woman of eighteen. She had a habit of courtesying to every question that was put to her. Her plaid shawl was tied over the breast, and her cotton-velvet bonnet was crushed in with carrying her basket. She seemed dreadfully puzzled where to put her hands, at one time tucking them under her shawl, warming them at the fire, or measuring the length of her apron, and when she answered a question she invariably addressed the fireplace. Her voice was husky from shouting apples.

"My mother has been in the streets selling all her lifetime. Her uncle learnt her the markets and she learnt me. When business grew bad she said to me, 'Now you shall take care on the stall, and I'll go and work out charing.' The way she learnt me the markets was to judge of the weight of the baskets of apples, and then said she, 'Always bate 'em down, a'most a half.' I always liked the street-life very well, that was if I was selling. I have mostly kept a stall myself, but I've known gals as walk about with apples, as have told me that the weight of the baskets is sich that the neck cricks, and when the load is took off, it's just as if you'd a stiff neck, and the head feels as light as a feather. The gals begins working very early at our work; the parents makes them go out when a'most babies. There's a little gal, I'm sure she an't more than half-past seven, that stands selling water-cresses next my stall, and mother was saying, 'Only look there, how that little one has to get her living afore she a'most known what a penn'orth means.'

"There's six on us in family, and father and mother makes eight. Father used to do odd jobs with the gas-pipes in the streets, and when work was slack we had very hard times of it. Mother always

liked being with us at home, and used to manage to keep us employed out of mischief—she'd give us an old gown to make into pinafores for the children and such like! She's been very good to us, has mother, and so's father. She always liked to hear us read to her while she was washing or such like! and then we big ones had to learn the little ones. But when father's work got slack, if she had no employment charing, she'd say, 'Now I'll go and buy a bushel of apples,' and then she'd turn out and get a penny that way. I suppose by sitting at the stall from nine in the morning till the shops shuts up —say ten o'clock at night, I can earn about 1*s*. 6*d.* a day. It's all according to the apples—whether they're good or not—what we makes. If I'm unlucky, mother will say, 'Well, I'll go out to-morrow and see what *I* can do;' and if I've done well, she'll say, 'Come you're a good hand at it; you've done famous.' Yes, mother's very fair that way. Ah! there's many a gal I knows whose back has to suffer if she don't sell her stock well; but, thank God! I never get more than a blowing up. My parents is very fair to me.

"I dare say there aint ten out of a hundred gals what's living with men, what's been married Church of England fashion. I know plenty myself, but I don't, indeed, think it right. It seems to me that the gals is fools to be 'ticed away, but, in coorse, they needn't go without they likes. This is why I don't think it's right. Perhaps a man will have a few words with his gal, and he'll say, 'Oh! I aint obligated to keep her!' and he'll turn her out: and then where's that poor gal to go! Now, there's a gal I knows as came to me no later than this here week, and she had a dreadful swole face and a awful black eye; and I says, 'Who's done that!' and she says, says she, 'Why, Jack'—just in that way; and then she says, says she, 'I'm going to take a warrant out to-morrow.' Well, he gets the warrant that same night, but she never appears again him, for fear of getting more beating. That don't seem to me to be like married people ought to be. Besides, if parties is married, they ought to bond to each other; and they won't, for sartain, if they're only living together. A man as is married is obligated to deep his wife if they quarrels or not; and he says to himself, says he, 'Well, I may as well live happy, like.' But if he can turn a poor gal off, as soon as he tires of her, he begins to have

noises with her, and then gets quit of her altogether. Again, the men takes the money of the gals, and in coorse ought to treat 'em well—which they don't. This is another reason: when the gal is in the family way, the lads mostly sends them to the workhouse to lay in,[6] and only goes sometimes to take them a bit of tea and shuggar; but, in coorse, married men wouldn't behave in such likes to their poor wives. After a quarrel, too, a lad goes and takes up with another young gal, and that isn't pleasant for the first one. The first step to ruin is them places of 'penny gaffs,' for they heers things there as oughtn't to be said to young gals. Besides, the lads is very insinivating, and after leaving them places will give a gal a drop of beer, and make her half tipsy, and then they makes their arrangements. I've often heard the boys boasting of having ruined gals, for all the world as if they was the first noblemen in the land.

"It would be a good thing if these sort of goings on could be stopped. It's half the parents' fault; for if a gal can't get a living, they turns her out into the streets, and then what's to become of her? I'm sure the gals, if they was married, would be happier, because they couldn't be beat worse. And if they was married, they'd get a nice home about 'em; whereas, if they's only living together, they takes a furnished room. I'm sure, too, that it's a bad plan; for I've heerd the gals themselves say, 'Ah! I wish I'd never seed Jack' (or Tom, or whatever it is); 'I'm sure I'd never be half so bad but for him.'

"Only last night father was talking about religion. We often talks about religion. Father has told me that God made the world, and I've heerd him talk about the first man and woman as was made and lived—it must be more than a hundred years ago—but I don't like to speak on what I don't know. Father, too, has told me about our Savior what was nailed on a cross to suffer for such poor people as we is. Father has told us, too, about his giving a great many poor people a penny loaf and a bit of fish each, which proves him to have been a very kind gentleman. The Ten Commandments was made by him, I've heerd say, and he performed them too among other miracles. Yes! this is part of what our Savior tells us. We are to forgive every body, and do nobody no injury. I don't think I could

forgive an enemy if she injured me very much; I'm sure I don't know why I couldn't, unless it is that I'm poor, and never learnt to do it. If a gal stole my shawl and didn't return it back or give me the value on it, I couldn't forgive her; but if she told me she lost it off her back, I shouldn't be so hard on her. We poor gals aint very religious, but we are better than the men. We all of us thanks God for every thing—even for a fine day; as for sprats, we always says they're God's blessing for the poor, and thinks it hard of the Lord Mayor not to let 'em come in afore the ninth of November, just because he wants to dine off them—which he always do. Yes, we knows for certain that they eats plenty of sprats at the Lord Mayor's 'blanket.' They say in the Bible that the world was made in six days: the beasts, the birds, the fish, and all—and sprats was among them in coorse. There was only one house at that time as was made, and that was the Ark for Adam and Eve and their family. It seems very wonderful indeed how all this world was done so quick. I should have thought that England alone would have took double the time; shouldn't you, sir? But then it says in the Bible, God Almighty's a just and true God, and in coorse time would be nothing to him. When a good person is dying, we says, 'The Lord has called upon him, and he must go,' but I can't think what it means, unless it is that an angel comes—like when we're a-dreaming—and tells the party he's wanted in heaven. I know where heaven is; it's above the clouds, and they're placed there to prevent us seeing into it. That's where all the good people go, but I'm afeerd, "—she continued solemnly—" there's very few costers among the angels—'specially those as deceives poor gals.

The Wallflower Girl. This is one of the many engravings included in Mayhew's volume.

"No, I don't think this world could well go on forever. There's a great deal of ground in it, certainly, and it seems very strong at

present; but they say there's to be a flood on the earth, and earthquakes, and that will destroy it. The earthquake ought to have took place some time ago, as people tells me, but I never heard any more about it. If we cheats in the streets, I know we shan't go to heaven; but it's very hard upon us, for if we didn't cheat we couldn't live, profits is so bad. It's the same with the shops, and I suppose the young men there won't go to heaven neither; but if people won't give the money, both costers and tradesmen must cheat, and that's very hard. Why, look at apples! Customers want them for less than they cost us, and so we are forced to shove in bad ones as well as good ones: and if we're to suffer for that, it does seem to me dreadful cruel."

Curious and extravagant as this statement may perhaps appear to the uninitiated, nevertheless it is here given as it was spoken; and it was spoken with an earnestness that proved the poor girl looked upon it as a subject, the solemnity of which forced her to be truthful.

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Endnotes

- Note 6: To give birth.Return to reference 6

From *Volume 4. Those That Will Not Work*

Are those spare, snake-eyed Asiatics who walk the streets, coolly dressed in Manchester cottons, or chintz of a pattern commonly used for bed-furniture, to which the resemblance is carried out by the dark, polished colour of the thin limbs which it envelopes. They very often affect to be converts to the Christian religion, and give away tracts;[1] with the intention of entrapping the sympathy of elderly ladies. They assert that they have been high-caste Brahmins,[2] but as untruth, even when not acting professionally, is habitual to them, there is not the slightest dependence to be placed on what they say. Sometimes, in the winter, they "do shallow," that is, stand on the kerb-stone of the pavement, in their thin, ragged clothes, and shiver as with cold and hunger, or crouch against a wall and whine like a whipped animal; at others they turn out with a small, barrel-shaped drum, on which they make a monotonous noise with their fingers, to which music they sing and dance. Or they will "stand pad with a fakement," *i.e.* wear a placard upon their breasts, that describes them as natives of Madagascar, in distress, converts to Christianity, anxious to get to a seaport where they can work their passage back. This is a favourite artifice with Lascars—or they will sell lucifers,[3] or sweep a crossing, or do anything where their picturesque appearance, of which they are proud and conscious, can be effectively displayed. They are as cunning as they look, and can detect a sympathetic face among a crowd. They never beg of soldiers, or sailors, to whom they always give a wide berth as they pass them in the streets.

From the extraordinary mendacity of this race of beggars—a mendacity that never falters, hesitates, or stumbles, but flows on in an unbroken stream of falsehood,—it is difficult to obtain any reliable information respecting them. I have, however, many reasons for believing that the following statement, which was made to me by a very dirty and distressed Indian, is moderately true. The man spoke English like a cockney[4] of the lowest order. I shall not attempt to

describe the peculiar accent or construction which he occasionally gave to it.

"My name is Joaleeka. I do not know where I was born. I never knew my father. I remember my mother very well. From the first of my remembrance I was at Dumdum,[5] where I was servant to a European officer—a great man—a prince—who had more than a hundred servants beside me. When he went away to fight, I followed among others—I was with the baggage. I never fought myself, but I have heard the men (Sepoys)[6] say that the prince, or general, or colonel, liked nothing so well as fighting, except tiger-hunting. He was a wonderful man, and his soldiers liked him very much. I travelled over a great part of India with Europeans. I went up country as far as Secunderabad,[7] and learned to speak English very well—so well that, when I was quite a young man, I was often employed as interpreter, for I caught up different Indian languages quickly. At last I got to interpret so well that I was recommended to ——, a great native prince who was coming over to England. I was not his interpreter, but interpreter to his servants. We came to London. We stopped in an hotel in Vere-street,[8] Oxford-street. We stayed here some time. Then my chief went over to Paris, but he did not take all his servants with him. I stopped at the hotel to interpret for those who remained. It was during this time that I formed a connexion with a white woman. She was a servant in the hotel. I broke my caste,[9] and from that moment I knew that it would not do for me to go back to India. The girl fell in the family-way, and was sent out of the house. My fellow-servants knew of it, and as many of them hated me, I knew that they would tell my master on his return. I also knew that by the English laws in England I was a free man, and that my master could not take me back against my will. If I had gone back, I should have been put to death for breaking my caste. When my master returned from France, he sent for me. He told me that he had heard of my breaking my caste, and of the girl, but that he should take no notice of it; that I was to return to Calcutta with him, where he would get me employment with some European officer; that I need not fear, as he would order his servants to keep

silent on the subject. I salaamed and thanked him, and said I was his slave for ever; but at the same time I knew that he would break his word, and that when he had me in his power, he would put me to death. He was a very severe man about caste. I attended to all my duties as before, and all believed that I was going back to India —but the very morning that my master started for the coast, I ran away. I changed my clothes at the house of a girl I knew—not the same one as I had known at the hotel, but another. This one lived at Seven Dials.[1] I stopped in-doors for many days, till this girl, who could read newspapers, told me that my master had sailed away. I felt very glad, for though I knew my master could not force me to go back with him, yet I was afraid for all that, for he knew the King and the Queen, and had been invited by the Lord Mayor to the City. I liked England better than India, and English women have been very kind to me. I think English women are the handsomest in the world. The girl in whose house I hid, showed me how to beg. She persuaded me to turn Christian, because she thought that it would do me good—so I turned Christian. I do not know what it means, but I am a Christian, and have been for many years. I married that girl for some time. I have been married several times. I do not mean to say that I have ever been to church as rich folks do; but I have been married without that. Sometimes I do well, and sometimes badly. I often get a pound or two by interpreting. I am not at all afraid of meeting any Indian who knew me, for if they said anything I did not like, I should call out "Police!" I know the law better than I did. Every thing is free in England. You can do what you like, if you can pay, or are not found out. I do not like policemen. After the mutiny in 1857[2] I did very badly. No one would look at a poor Indian then—much less give to him. I knew that the English would put it down soon, because I know what those rascals over there are like. I am living now in Charles Street, Drury Lane.[3] I have been married to my present wife six years. We have three children and one dead. My eldest is now in the hospital with a bad arm. I swept a crossing for two years; that was just before the mutiny. All that knew me used to chaff me about it, and call me Johnny Sepoy. My present wife is

Irish, and fought two women about it. They were taken to Bowstreet[4] by a policeman, but the judge would not hear them. My wife is a very good wife to me, but she gets drunk too often. If it were not for that, I should like her better. I ran away from her once, but she came after me with all the children. Sometimes I make twelve shillings a week. I could make much more by interpreting, but I do not like to go among the nasty natives of my country. I believe I am more than fifty years of age."

Endnotes

- Note 1: Pamphlets on religious topics.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The highest caste in Hinduism.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Matches.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Strictly, person born within the sound of the bells of St. Mary-le-Bow Church in the city of London; more generally, a working-class Londoner.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A city in West Bengal.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Indian soldiers in the British army.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A city in the Indian state of Telangana.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: London streets known for prostitution and illegal trade.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Each caste was bound by a certain code of conduct; breaking those rules involved a loss of caste status.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A slum in London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Indian uprising against the rule of the British East India Company.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Another slum.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Police headquarters.Return to reference 4

The negro beggar so nearly resembles the Hindoo that what I have said of one, I could almost say of the other. There are, however, these points of difference. The negro mendicant, who is usually an American negro, never studies the picturesque in his attire. He relies on the abject misery and down-trodden despair of his appearance, and generally represents himself as a fugitive slave—with this exception, his methods of levying contributions are precisely the same as his lighter-skinned brother's.

Some years ago it was a common thing to see a negro with tracts in his hand, and a placard upon his breast, upon which was a wood-cut of a black man, kneeling, his wrists heavily chained, his arms held high in supplication, and round the picture, forming a sort of proscenium or frame, the words: "Am I not a man and a brother?"[5] At the time that the suppression of the slave trade created so much excitement, this was so excellent a "dodge" that many white beggars, fortunate enough to possess a flattish or turned-up nose, *dyed themselves black* and "stood pad" as real Africans. The imposture, however, was soon detected and punished.

There are but few negro beggars to be seen now. It is only common fairness to say that negroes seldom, if ever, shirk work. Their only trouble is to obtain it. Those who have seen the many negroes employed in Liverpool, will know that they are hard-working, patient, and, too often, underpaid. A negro will sweep a crossing, run errands, black boots, clean knives and forks, or dig, for a crust and a few pence. The few impostors among them are to be found among those who go about giving lectures on the horrors of slavery, and singing variations on the "escapes" in that famous book 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'[6] Negro servants are seldom read of in police reports, and are generally found to give satisfaction to their employers. In the east end of London negro beggars are to be met with, but they are seldom beggars by profession. Whenever they are

out of work they have no scruples, but go into the streets, take off their hats, and beg directly.

I was accosted by one in Whitechapel,[7] from whom I obtained the following statement:—

"My father was a slave, so was my mother. I have heard my father say so. I have heard them tell how they got away, but I forget all about it. It was before I was born. I am the eldest son. I had only one brother. Three years after his birth my mother died. My father was a shoe-black in New York. He very often had not enough to eat. My brother got a place as a servant, but I went out in the streets to do what I could. About the same time that my father, who was an old man, died, my brother lost his place. We agreed to come to England together. My brother had been living with some Britishers, and he had heard them say that over here n*****s were as good as whites; and that the whites did not look down on them and illtreat them, as they do in New York. We went about and got odd jobs on the quay, and at last we hid ourselves in the hold of a vessel, bound for Liverpool. I do not know how long we were hid, but I remember we were terribly frightened lest we should be found out before the ship got under weigh. At last hunger forced us out, and we rapped at the hatches; at first we were not heard, but when we shouted out, they opened the hatches, and took us on deck. They flogged us very severely, and treated us shamefully all the voyage. When we got to Liverpool, we begged and got odd jobs. At last we got engaged in a travelling circus, where we were servants, and used to ride about with the band in beautiful dresses, but the grooms treated us so cruelly that we were forced to run away from that. I forget the name of the place that we were performing at, but it was not a day's walk from London. We begged about for some time. At last, my brother—his name is Aaron—got to clean the knives and forks at a slap-bang (an eating-house) in the city. He was very fortunate, and used to save some bits for me. He never takes any notice of me now. He is doing very well. He lives with a great gentleman in Harewood-square,[8] and has a coat with silver buttons, and a gold-laced hat. He is very proud, and I do not think would

speak to me if he saw me. I don't know how I live, or how much I get a week. I do porter's work mostly, but I do anything I can get. I beg more than half the year. I have no regular lodging. I sleep where I can. When I am in luck, I have a bed. It costs me threepence. At some places they don't care to take a man of colour in. I sometimes get work in Newgate-market,[9] carrying meat, but not often. Ladies give me halfpence oftener than men. The butchers call me 'Othello,'[1] and ask me why I killed my wife. I have tried to get aboard a ship, but they won't have me. I don't know how old I am, but I know that when we got to London, it was the time the Great Exhibition[2] was about. I can lift almost any weight when I have had a bit of something to eat. I don't care for beer. I like rum best. I have often got drunk, but never when I paid for it myself."

1851, 1861–62

Endnotes

- Note 5: The motto emblazoned on a medallion made in 1787 by Josiah Wedgwood to raise money for the abolition of slavery; the medallion features an image of a Black man in chains on his knees and became one of the most famous images of the abolitionist cause.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1851–52 novel; a short excerpt from the novel is reprinted in this volume on pp. 50–52.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A slum largely populated by Irish and Jewish immigrants.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A wealthy part of London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A market specializing in meat.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Othello: tragic hero of Shakespeare's play of that name.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: International exhibition of 1851 that displayed industrial works from all over the world.Return to reference 2

CHARLES DICKENS
1812–1870

Charles Dickens was Victorian England's most beloved and distinctive novelist. In the words of the eulogy that the classicist Benjamin Jowett spoke at his funeral service, Dickens "occupied a greater space than any other writer during the last thirty-five years. We read him, talked about him, acted him; we laughed with him, we were roused by him to a consciousness of the misery of others, and to a pathetic [that is, emotional] interest in human life."

Dickens was born the second of eight children in the coastal town of Portsmouth in southern England. His father, a clerk in the Naval Pay Office, found it difficult to keep his family out of debt. Plagued by financial insecurity, the family moved from place to place, to increasingly poorer lodgings, finally ending up in London. In an effort to help the family, a friend of his father's offered Charles a job at a blacking warehouse, an enterprise that produced shoe polish. Two days before his twelfth birthday, Charles began work, labeling bottles for six shillings a week. Two weeks later his father was arrested and sent to the Marshalsea Prison for debt. His family went to live in prison with him, as was the custom; they decided that Charles should remain outside, continuing to work and living with a woman who took in young lodgers.

Some thirty-five years after this period, Dickens told his friend and eventual biographer John Forster that the recollection of these times "haunted him and made him miserable, even to that hour." He

began to compose an autobiographical account for Forster but soon abandoned it to write instead his most personal novel, *David Copperfield*, in which the titular character undergoes a similar class fall into menial employment at the age of twelve. It has long been a scholarly and popular commonplace that this early experience constituted a trauma that accounts for the emotional concerns of Dickens's fiction, particularly its pronounced sympathy for the figure of the abused or abandoned child.

Dickens's father was able to leave debtors' prison after three months, upon receipt of a legacy from his mother. He removed Charles from the factory and sent him to school. At fifteen Dickens began work as a junior clerk at a law office; eighteen months later he became a freelance journalist, reporting court proceedings and then debates in the House of Commons. Reporting led him to other kinds of writing. He began publishing literary sketches, at first anonymously and then under the pseudonym "Boz." In 1836, on his twenty-fourth birthday, he published the collection *Sketches by Boz*. The success of the volume led to a commission from the publishers Chapman & Hall to provide amusing text to accompany serial installments of a set of illustrations of hunting, shooting, and sporting scenes. The result, *Pickwick Papers* (1836–37), brought Dickens fame and prosperity. This picaresque novel, relating the adventures of Mr. Pickwick and his friends as they travel around England, set the pattern of illustrated serial publication that was to define Dickens's writing career and to shape the reading habits of his generation. Families would wait in suspense for the next installment of a novel to be issued, which they would read aloud as an evening's entertainment. Successes followed quickly: *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39), and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41).

Through the 1840s and 1850s Dickens continued to write novels at an intense pace, producing *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44), *Dombey and Son* (1846–48), *David Copperfield* (1849–50), *Bleak House* (1852–53), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859). He also became deeply involved in a number of other activities, including

traveling, working for charities, and acting. During this time, he founded and edited the weekly magazine *Household Words* (incorporated in 1859 into *All the Year Round*), which published fiction by Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Dickens himself, and other novelists as well as opinion pieces about political and social issues. He also began a series of Christmas books, the first of which was the phenomenally successful tale, *A Christmas Carol* (1843). Almost as beloved as the text are its illustrations: *A Christmas Carol* featured four hand-colored etchings and four black-and-white engravings by the artist John Leech. All eight are included in the text below.

By the time of *Pickwick*'s completion, Dickens had married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of a fellow journalist, and had begun a family; they eventually had ten children. Dickens left his wife in 1858, claiming frustration with the chaos of domestic life. In truth Dickens was secretly involved with Ellen Ternan, an actress some twenty-seven years his junior. Ostensibly alone, he took up residence at Gad's Hill, a gentleman's house in Kent. Dickens now abandoned amateur theatricals to embark on a series of lucrative professional readings, which were so emotionally and physically exhausting his doctor finally instructed him to stop. He slowed the pace of his writing, publishing only two novels in the 1860s: *Great Expectations* (1860–61) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65). He died suddenly in 1870, leaving his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), unfinished.

The popularity of Dickens's writings with general readers coupled with their many film and television adaptations has given his work a broad and continuous cultural afterlife. Back in 1870, fellow novelist Anthony Trollope observed that no other writer except Shakespeare has left so many "characters which are known by their names familiarly as household words, and which bring to our minds vividly and at once, a certain well-understood set of ideas, habits, phrases and costumes, making together a man, or woman, or child, whom we know at a glance and recognize at a sound, as we do our own intimate friends." But the scale of Dickens's achievement is by no means limited to his ability to construct memorably distinctive

human beings. A master-plotter, a writer of extraordinarily evocative prose, and a keen observer of his developing country, he also created fictions shot through with fierce social criticism; as the playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote in 1937, "Dickens never regarded himself as a revolutionist, though he certainly was one." Dickens's early novels often concern specific abuses—the workhouses in which pauper children were confined in *Oliver Twist*, abusive and fraudulent schools in *Nicholas Nickleby*—but, as his career progressed, he felt an increasing urgency to mount a broader attack, demonstrating how the acts of powerful institutions and individuals alike belied the tenets of the compassionate religion they claimed to embrace.

Dickens regarded fiction as a way to develop sympathy and so counteract the uncaring tendencies of an inequitable era. While other reformers sought institutional change—legislative and policy changes intended to protect workers, children, married women, consumers, the destitute—Dickens believed that any such changes would be meaningless in the absence of a widespread change of heart. In a famous passage from *Dombey and Son*, the narrator laments:

> Oh for a good spirit who would take the house-tops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their homes, to swell the retinue of the Destroying Angel as he moves forth among them! For only one night's view of the pale phantoms rising from the scenes of our too-long neglect; and, from the thick and sullen air where Vice and Fever propagate together, raining the tremendous social retributions which are ever pouring down, and ever coming thicker! Bright and blest the morning that should rise on such a night: for men, delayed no more by stumbling-blocks of their own making, which are but specks of dust upon the path between them and eternity, would then apply themselves, like creatures of one common origin,

owning one duty to the Father of one family, and tending to one common end, to make the world a better place!

As many critics have noted, the novelist's is the hand that takes the house-tops off and allows his readers to understand people different from themselves. Dickens saw such understanding as a necessary prerequisite for social change.

A Christmas Carol It seems likely that no work in this volume has been read, adapted, performed, and parodied more than *A Christmas Carol*. Even aside from the story itself with its instantly recognizable taglines ("Bah, Humbug!"), memorable characters (Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit, and the three spirits), and conversion narrative, *A Christmas Carol* has been credited with effectively creating Christmas as we now know it. Many historians claim that prior to the mid-nineteenth century, Christmas was just one holiday among many. After Dickens was done with it, it had been transformed into a focus of national pride, massive consumerism, and an occasion for good works. The rituals around turkey, plum pudding, crackers, games, and large quantities of presents were all nineteenth-century innovations. It is also worth noting how much certain deeply British traditions were bound up with Empire: after all, without imported brandy, dried fruit, spices, and sugar, all that is left of plum pudding is the flour, eggs, and suet.

Mr. Fezziwig's Ball

A Christmas Carol

Stave[1] *One*

MARLEY'S GHOST

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change,[2] for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentleman rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot—say Saint

Paul's Churchyard for instance—literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days;[3] and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, nor wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty. Foul weather didn't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet, could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? when will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle, no children asked him what it was o'clock, no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blindmen's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts; and then would wag their tails as though they said, "no eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human

sympathy to keep its distance, was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.[4]

Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement-stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already: it had not been light all day: and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"[5]

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and frost, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! what right have you to be merry? what reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? what reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said, "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug."

"Don't be cross, uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be" returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, and not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge, indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas,' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it."

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

"There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say," returned the nephew: "Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of

creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded: becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

"Let me hear another sound from *you*" said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow."

Scrooge said that he would see him—yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.[6]

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. "Good afternoon!"

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep my Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And A Happy New Year!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge; for he returned them cordially.

"There's another fellow," muttered Scrooge; who overheard him: "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a-week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam."[7]

This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two other people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago, this very night."

"We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner," said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word "liberality," Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the Poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "Are they still in operation?"

"They are. Still," returned the gentleman, "I wish I could say they were not."

"The Treadmill and the Poor Law[8] are in full vigour, then?" said Scrooge.

"Both very busy, sir."

"Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course," said Scrooge. "I'm very glad to hear it."

"Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude," returned the gentleman, "a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the Poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied.

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population.[9] Besides—excuse me—I don't know that."

"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links,[1] proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a

church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slily down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards, as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the main street, at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug[2] being left in solitude, its overflowing sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp-heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' and grocers' trades became a splendid joke: a glorious pageant, with which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull principles as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord Mayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House,[3] gave orders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord Mayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he had fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and blood-thirsty in the streets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his garret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If the good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with a touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar weapons,[4] then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. The owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the hungry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at Scrooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at the first sound of

> "God bless you merry gentleman!
> May nothing you dismay!"

Scrooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the singer fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more congenial frost.

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. With an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly admitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly snuffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?' said Scrooge.

"If quite convenient, Sir."

"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I was to stop half-a-crown for it,[5] you'd think yourself ill used, I'll be bound?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think *me* ill-used, when I pay a day's wages for no work."

The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fifth of December!" said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chin. "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all the earlier next morning!"

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked out with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the clerk, with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below his waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cornhill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of its being Christmas-eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as hard as he could pelt, to play at blindman's-buff.[6]

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancholy tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest of the evening with his banker's-book, went home to bed. He lived in chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. They were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up a yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarcely help fancying it must have run there when it was a young house, playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten the way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, for nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let out as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew its every stone, was fain to grope with his hands. The fog and frost so hung

about the black old gateway of the house, that it seemed as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on the threshold.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it night and morning during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the City of London, even including—which is a bold word—the corporation, aldermen, and livery.[7] Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention of his seven-years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar.[8] It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up upon its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot-air; and though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be, in spite of the face and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half-expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on; so he said "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs: slowly too: trimming his candle[9] as he went.

You may talk vaguely about driving a coach-and-six up a good old flight of stairs, or through a bad young Act of Parliament;[1] but I mean to say you might have got a hearse up that staircase, and taken it broadwise, with the splinter-bar[2] towards the wall, and the door towards the balustrades: and done it easy. There was plenty of width for that, and room to spare; which is perhaps the reason why Scrooge thought he saw a locomotive hearse going on before him in the gloom. Half a dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that: darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bed-room, lumber-room.[3] All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his night-cap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could

extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel. The fire-place was an old one, built by some Dutch merchant long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels; Pharaoh's daughters, Queens of Sheba, Angelic messengers descending through the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apostles putting off to sea in butter-boats, hundreds of figures, to attract his thoughts; and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead, came like the ancient Prophet's rod,[4] and swallowed up the whole. If each smooth tile had been a blank at first, with power to shape some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a copy of old Marley's head on every one.

"Humbug!" said Scrooge; and walked across the room.

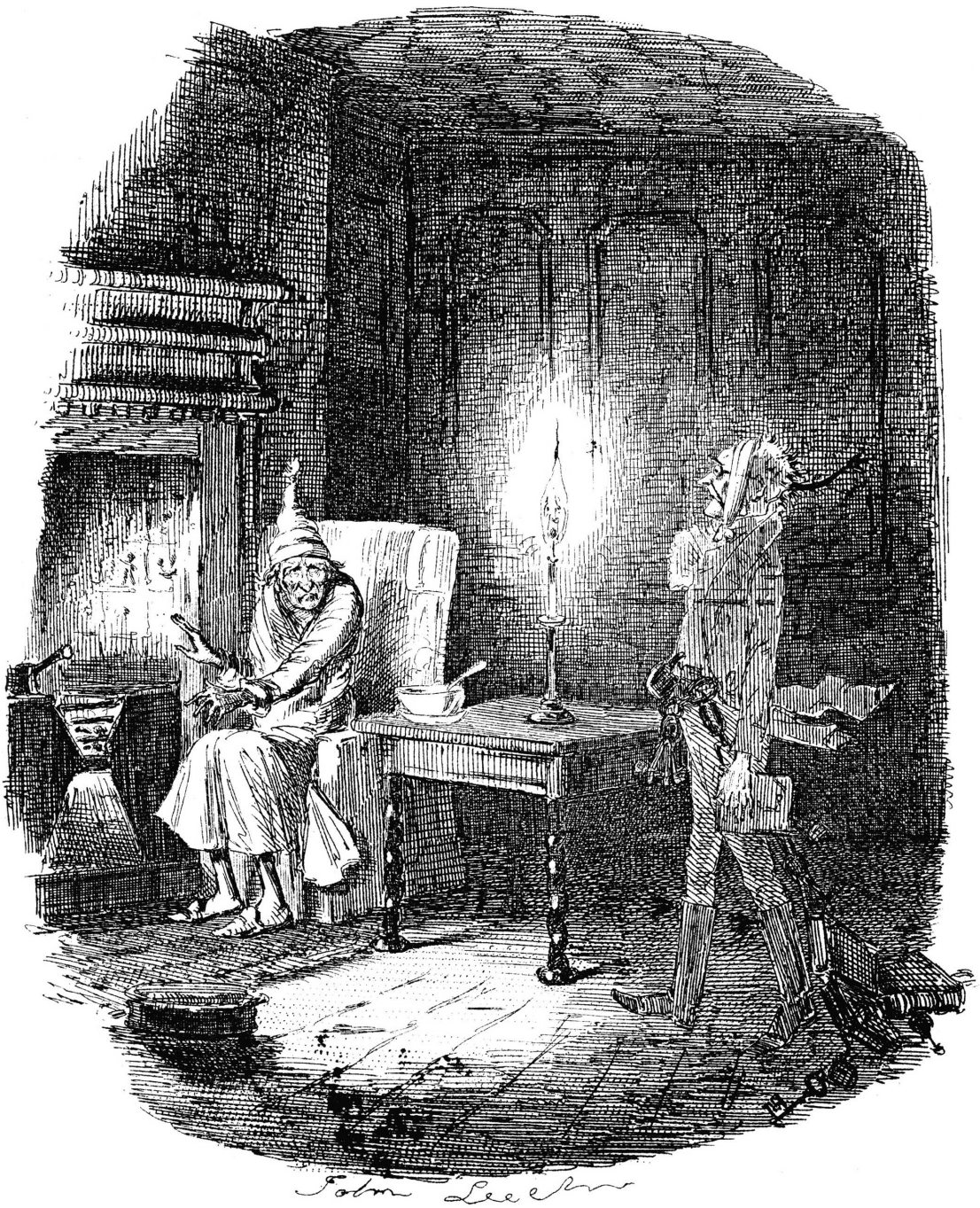
After several turns, he sat down again. As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came on through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it cried "I know him! Marley's Ghost!" and fell again.



Marley's Ghost

The same face: the very same. Marley in his pig-tail, usual waistcoat, tights,[5] and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like

his pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent: so that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat, could see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but he had never believed it until now.[6]

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phantom through and through, and saw it standing before him; though he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and marked the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head and chin, which wrapper he had not observed before; he was still incredulous, and fought against his senses.

"How now!" said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. "What do you want with me?"

"Much!"—Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I *was*."

"Who *were* you then?" said Scrooge, raising his voice. "You're particular—for a shade." He was going to say "*to* a shade,"[7] but substituted this, as more appropriate.

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"Can you—can you sit down?" asked Scrooge, looking doubtfully at him.

"I can."

"Do it then."

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whether a ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take a chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it might involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But the ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he were quite used to it.

"You don't believe in me," observed the Ghost.

"I don't," said Scrooge.

"What evidence would you have of my reality, beyond that of your senses?"

"I don't know," said Scrooge.

"Why do you doubt your senses?"

"Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing affects them. A slight disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!"

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor did he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth is, that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own attention, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice disturbed the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, staring at those fixed, glazed eyes, in silence for a moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with him. There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being provided with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not feel it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost sat perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still agitated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

"You see this toothpick?" said Scrooge, returning quickly to the charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it were only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from himself.

"I do," replied the Ghost.

"You are not looking at it," said Scrooge.

"But I see it," said the Ghost, "notwithstanding."

"Well!" returned Scrooge. "I have but to swallow this, and be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, all of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you; humbug!"

At this, the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain with such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight to his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how much greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the bandage round its

head, as if it were too warm to wear in-doors, its lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his face.

"Mercy!" he said. "Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble me?"

"Man of the worldly mind!" replied the Ghost, "do you believe in me or not?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "I must. But why do spirits walk the earth, and why do they come to me?"

"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world—oh, woe is me!—and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!"

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain, and wrung its shadowy hands.

"You are fettered," said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why?"

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I made it link by link, and yard by yard, I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to *you?*"

Scrooge trembled more and more.

"Or would you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and length of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have laboured on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!"

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation of finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of iron cable: but he could see nothing.

"Jacob," he said, imploringly. "Old Jacob Marley, tell me more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob."

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "It comes from other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministers, to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. A very little more, is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cannot stay, I cannot

linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyond our counting-house —mark me!—in life my spirit never loved beyond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and weary journeys lie before me!”

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtful, to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what the Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, or getting off his knees.

“You must have been very slow about it, Jacob,” Scrooge observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility and deference.

“Slow!” the Ghost repeated.

“Seven years dead,” mused Scrooge. “And travelling all the time?”

“The whole time,” said the Ghost. “No rest, no peace. Incessant torture of remorse.”

“You travel fast?” said Scrooge.

“On the wings of the wind,” replied the Ghost.

“You might have got over a great quantity of ground in seven years,” said Scrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked its chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night, that the Ward[8] would have been justified in indicting it for a nuisance.

“Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed,” cried the phantom, “not to know, that ages of incessant labour by immortal creatures, for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which it is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christian spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, will find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. Not to know that no space of regret can make amends for one life’s opportunities misused! Yet such was I! Oh! Such was I!”

“But you were always a good man of business, Jacob,” faultered Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

“Business!” cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. “Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, my business. The

dealings of my trade were but a drop of water in the comprehensive ocean of my business!"

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground again.

"At this time of the rolling year," the spectre said, "I suffer most. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my eyes turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which led the Wise Men to a poor abode?[9] Were there no poor homes to which its light would have conducted *me!*"

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on at this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

"Hear me!" cried the Ghost. "My time is nearly gone."

"I will," said Scrooge. "But don't be hard upon me! Don't be flowery, Jacob! Pray!"

"How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can see, I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and many a day."

It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"That is no light part of my penance," pursued the Ghost. "I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and hope of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, Ebenezer."

"You were always a good friend to me," said Scrooge. "Thank'ee!"

"You will be haunted," resumed the Ghost, "by Three Spirits."

Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had done.

"Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?" he demanded, in a faultering voice.

"It is."

"I—I think I'd rather not," said Scrooge.

"Without their visits," said the Ghost, "you cannot hope to shun the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell tolls One."

"Couldn't I take'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?" hinted Scrooge.

"Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third upon the next night when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, for your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!"

When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrapper from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scrooge knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaws were brought together by the bandage. He ventured to raise his eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him in an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every step it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectre reached it, it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach, which he did. When they were within two paces of each other, Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer. Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ancle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose; went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Staff (archaic); a stanza of a song or poem. This term extends the idea that the story is a Christmas carol in prose. The illustration on page 349, of Mr. Fezziwig's Ball, appeared as the volume's frontispiece when the story was first published.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, Scrooge had good credit at the Royal Exchange, the center of London's financial world.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: From July 3 to August 11, often the hottest days of the year, when the Dog Star, Sirius, rises and sets with the sun.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Agreeable or pleasing to Scrooge (slang).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Deceptive, or hypocritical, talk or behavior (slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, Scrooge said he would see him damned or in hell.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, Bethlehem; Bedlam is the shortened name of the country's most famous asylum for the insane, London's Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem. The term became a synonym for *madhouse*.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  Funded by local taxation and intended to give financial and material help to those unable to provide for themselves, first instituted in the 16th century. A supposedly rationalizing and cost-cutting Poor Law Amendment Act (known as the "New Poor Law") had been passed in 1834; Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* (1837) in part as a protest against the severity of some of its measures. Foremost among these was the replacement of parish "outrelief" (assistance from the local administrative district that had allowed the needy to continue living in their own homes) by "Union workhouses": applicants for help now had to move into large centralized institutions run by newly created unions of parishes. "Treadmill": a method of criminal punishment, first

introduced in London's Brixton Prison in 1821, in which prisoners were forced to walk on the steps of a large revolving wheel to power a grain mill.
Return to reference 8

- Note 9: A reference to the famous *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1803) by the political economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834), which predicts that population, if left unchecked, increases more rapidly than the supply of food.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Torches made of cloth dipped in tar. The fog described here was a by-product of burning coal for heat and industry.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Fire hydrant.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The official residence of the Lord Mayor in the City, London's commercial and financial district.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: According to legend, the devil once leaned through Dunstan's workshop window to try to tempt him away from his labor. Dunstan, patron saint of armor makers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, locksmiths, and musicians, responded by seizing the devil's nose with red-hot pincers.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Two shillings and sixpence, one sixth of Cratchit's weekly salary.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A popular parlor game, in which one person is blindfolded and then must catch another player and guess whom he or she has caught. Cornhill is a major street in the City. Camden Town is a district in inner northeast London.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The administrative body ("corporation") of the City of London consisted at that time of the mayor; twenty-six "aldermen," each representing a ward or district; and 206 councilmen; all of whom were required to belong to one of London's professional guilds or companies, many of which had special clothing ("livery") that members were entitled to wear.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Some rotting seafood is known to glow in the dark thanks to a phenomenon called "bacterial

bioluminescence."Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Scrooge is carrying a dip, a length of wick dipped several times in melted animal fat. Cheaper than wax candles, they had to be repeatedly "trimmed" to stop the burned section from dropping to the ground.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Irish political leader Daniel O'Connell (1775–1847) apparently used to boast that he could drive a coach and six horses through English laws because they were so loosely worded.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The crossbar at the front of a coach, supporting the springs.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Storage room for unused furniture.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Aaron's staff, transformed into a snake by God, swallows up all of the Egyptians' rods, which have been turned into snakes by magicians (Exodus 7:8–12).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Tight-fitting breeches.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A joke, playing on the alignment of the figurative and literal conditions of having no bowels. Bowels were traditionally believed to be the seat of compassion in the human body; corpses are disemboweled before burial to slow down the process of decomposition.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Scrooge resists a pun. "For a shade": for a ghost. "To a shade": to a degree.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The night watchman of the ward, or district.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The three wise men, or kings, were led by a star to Jesus's birthplace in a stable (Matthew 2:1–12).Return to reference 9

Stave Two

THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

To his great astonishment the heavy bell went on from six to seven, and from seven to eight, and regularly up to twelve; then stopped. Twelve! It was past two when he went to bed. The clock was wrong. An icicle must have got into the works. Twelve!

He touched the spring of his repeater,[1] to correct this most preposterous clock. Its rapid little pulse beat twelve; and stopped.

"Why, it isn't possible," said Scrooge, "that I can have slept through a whole day and far into another night. It isn't possible that anything has happened to the sun, and this is twelve at noon!"

The idea being an alarming one, he scrambled out of bed, and groped his way to the window. He was obliged to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his dressing-gown before he could see anything; and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of people running to and fro, and making a great stir, as there unquestionably would have been if night had beaten off bright day, and taken possession of the world. This was a great relief, because "three days after sight of this First of Exchange pay to Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge or his order,"[2] and so forth, would have become a mere United States' security[3] if there were no days to count by.

Scrooge went to bed again, and thought, and thought, and thought it over and over and over, and could make nothing of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was; and the more he endeavoured not to think, the more he thought. Marley's Ghost bothered him exceedingly. Every time he resolved within himself,

after mature inquiry, that it was all a dream, his mind flew back again, like a strong spring released, to its first position, and presented the same problem to be worked all through, "Was it a dream or not?"

Scrooge lay in this state until the chimes had gone three quarters more, when he remembered, on a sudden, that the Ghost had warned him of a visitation when the bell tolled one. He resolved to lie awake until the hour was past; and, considering that he could no more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was perhaps the wisest resolution in his power.

The quarter was so long, that he was more than once convinced he must have sunk into a doze unconsciously, and missed the clock. At length it broke upon his listening ear.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter past," said Scrooge, counting.

"Ding, dong!"

"Half past!" said Scrooge.

"Ding, dong!"

"A quarter to it," said Scrooge.

"Ding dong!"

"The hour itself," said Scrooge, triumphantly, "and nothing else!"

He spoke before the hour bell sounded, which it now did with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy ONE. Light flashed up in the room upon the instant, and the curtains of his bed were drawn.

The curtains of his bed were drawn aside, I tell you, by a hand. Not the curtains at his feet, nor the curtains at his back, but those to which his face was addressed. The curtains of his bed were drawn aside; and Scrooge, starting up into a half-recumbent attitude, found himself face to face with the unearthly visitor who drew them: as close to it as I am now to you, and I am standing in the spirit at your elbow.

It was a strange figure—like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man, viewed through some supernatural medium, which gave him the appearance of having receded from the view, and being

diminished to a child's proportions. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was white as if with age; and yet the face had not a wrinkle in it, and the tenderest bloom was on the skin. The arms were very long and muscular; the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. Its legs and feet, most delicately formed, were, like those upper members, bare. It wore a tunic of the purest white; and round its waist was bound a lustrous belt, the sheen of which was beautiful. It held a branch of fresh green holly in its hand; and, in singular contradiction of that wintry emblem, had its dress trimmed with summer flowers. But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all this was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap,[4] which it now held under its arm.

Even this, though, when Scrooge looked at it with increasing steadiness, was *not* its strangest quality. For as its belt sparkled and glittered now in one part and now in another, and what was light one instant, at another time was dark, so the figure itself fluctuated in its distinctness: being now a thing with one arm, now with one leg, now with twenty legs, now a pair of legs without a head, now a head without a body: of which dissolving parts, no outline would be visible in the dense gloom wherein they melted away. And in the very wonder of this, it would be itself again; distinct and clear as ever.

"Are you the Spirit, sir, whose coming was foretold to me?" asked Scrooge.

"I am!"

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

"Who, and what are you?" Scrooge demanded.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long past?" inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

"No. Your past."

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in

his cap; and begged him to be covered.

"What!" exclaimed the Ghost, "would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!"

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend, or any knowledge of having wilfully "bonneted" the Spirit at any period of his life.[5] He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

"Your welfare!" said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

"Your reclamation, then. Take heed!"

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

"Rise! And walk with me!"

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped its robe in supplication.

"I am a mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand *there*," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this!"

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen. The darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, cold, winter day, with snow upon the ground.

"Good Heaven!" said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as he looked about him. "I was bred in this place. I was a boy here!"

The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand odours floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten!

"Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost. "And what is that upon your cheek?"

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it was a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

"You recollect the way?" inquired the Spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Scrooge with fervour. "I could walk it blindfold."

"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!" observed the Ghost. "Let us go on."

They walked along the road; Scrooge recognizing every gate, and post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the distance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some shaggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon their backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, driven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and shouted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry music, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us."

The jocund travelers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew and named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all bounds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart leap up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when he heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at cross-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was merry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What good had it ever done to him?

"The school is not quite deserted," said the Ghost. "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still."

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well remembered lane, and soon approached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-surmounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was a large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windows broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted in the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were over-run with grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within; for entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors of many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and vast. There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in the place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting up by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a door at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms[6] and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice behind the panneling, not a drip from the half-thawed water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leafless boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of an empty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell upon the heart of Scrooge with softening influence, and gave a freer passage to his tears.

The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his younger self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in foreign garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: stood outside the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading an ass laden with wood by the bridle.

"Why, it's Ali Baba!"[7] Scrooge exclaimed in ecstacy. "It's dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christmas time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he *did* come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! And Valentine," said Scrooge, "and his wild brother, Orson;[8] there they go! And what's his name, who was put down in his drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus;[9] don't you see him! And the Sultan's Groom turned upside-down by the Genii; there he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. What business had *he* to be married to the Princess!"

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature on such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing and crying; and to see his heightened and excited face; would have been a surprise to his business friends in the city, indeed.

"There's the Parrot!" cried Scrooge. "Green body and yellow tail, with a thing like a lettuce growing out of the top of his head; there he is! Poor Robin Crusoe,[1] he called him, when he came home again after sailing round the island. 'Poor Robin Crusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?' The man thought he was dreaming, but he wasn't. It was the Parrot, you know. There goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloa! Hoop! Halloo!"

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual character, he said, in pity for his former self, "Poor boy!" and cried again.

"I wish," Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: "but it's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing," said Scrooge. "Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all."

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as it did so, "Let us see another Christmas!"

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room became a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrunk, the

windows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and the naked laths were shown instead; but how all this was brought about, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it was quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there he was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for the jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. Scrooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his head, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came darting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing him, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

"I have come to bring you home, dear brother!" said the child, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. "To bring you home, home, home!"

"Home, little Fan?" returned the boy.

"Yes!" said the child, brimful of glee. "Home, for good and all. Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than he used to be, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to me one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid to ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, you should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to be a man!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to come back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas long, and have the merriest time in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch his head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe to embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childish eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, accompanied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring down Master Scrooge's box, there!" and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himself, who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious condescension, and threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands with him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the veriest old well of a shivering best-parlour that ever was seen, where the maps upon the

wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windows, were waxy with cold. Here he produced a decanter of curiously light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake, and administered instalments of those dainties to the young people: at the same time, sending out a meagre servant to offer a glass of "something" to the postboy, who answered that he thanked the gentleman, but if it was the same tap as he had tasted before, he had rather not. Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the top of the chaise, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye right willingly; and getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-sweep: the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and snow from off the dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

"Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might have withered," said the Ghost. "But she had a large heart!"

"So she had," cried Scrooge. "You're right. I will not gainsay it, Spirit. God forbid!"

"She died a woman," said the Ghost, "and had, as I think, children."

"One child," Scrooge returned.

"True," said the Ghost. "Your nephew!"

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered briefly, "Yes."

Although they had but that moment left the school behind them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, where shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy carts and coaches battled for the way, and all the strife and tumult of a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing of the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again; but it was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

"Know it!" said Scrooge. "Was I apprenticed here!"

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welch wig,[2] sitting behind such a high desk, that if he had been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

"Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence;[3] and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

"Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up," cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, "before a man can say, Jack Robinson!"[4]

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters—one, two, three—had 'em up in their places—four, five, six—barred 'em and pinned 'em—seven, eight, nine—and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

"Hilli-ho!" cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!"

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and loveable. In came the six

young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business. In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master;[5] trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her Mistress. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couple at once, hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them. When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter,[6] especially provided for that purpose. But scorning rest upon his reappearance, he instantly began again, though there were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter; and he were a bran-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits,[7] and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled,[8] and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley."[9] Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many: ah, four times: old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As

to *her*, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would become of 'em next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, hold hands with your partner; bow and curtsey; corkscrew; thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.[1]

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

"Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

"Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?

"It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. "It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked the Ghost.

"Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

"Something, I think?" the Ghost insisted.

"No," said Scrooge, "No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That's all."

His former self turned down the lamps as he gave utterance to the wish; and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

"My time grows short," observed the Spirit. "Quick!"

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

"It matters little," she said, softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."

"What Idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.

"A golden one."

"This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it

professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!”

“You fear the world too much,” she answered, gently. “All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?”

“What then?” he retorted. “Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you.”

She shook her head.

“Am I?”

“Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made, you were another man.”

“I was a boy,” he said impatiently.

“Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are,” she returned. “I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you.”

“Have I ever sought release?”

“In words. No. Never.”

“In what, then?”

“In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us,” said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him; “tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!”

He seemed to yield to the justice of this supposition, in spite of himself. But he said, with a struggle, “You think not.”

“I would gladly think otherwise if I could,” she answered, “Heaven knows! When *I* have learned a Truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free to-day, to-

morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl—you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain: or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were."

He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

"You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

She left him; and they parted.

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, "show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?"

"One shadow more!" exclaimed the Ghost.

"No more!" cried Scrooge. "No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!"

But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next.

They were in another scene and place: a room, not very large or handsome, but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like the last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw *her*, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there, than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; and, unlike the celebrated herd in the poem,[2] they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; but no one seemed to care; on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much; and the latter, soon beginning to mingle in the sports, got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly. What would I not have given to be one of them! Though I never could have been so

rude, no, no! I wouldn't for the wealth of all the world have crushed that braided hair, and torn it down; and for the precious little shoe, I wouldn't have plucked it off, God bless my soul ! to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sport, as they did, bold young brood, I couldn't have done it; I should have expected my arm to have grown round it for a punishment, and never come straight again. And yet I should have dearly liked, I own, to have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that she might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of her downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let loose waves of hair, an inch of which would be a keepsake beyond price: in short, I should have liked, I do confess, to have had the lightest licence of a child, and yet been man enough to know its value.

But now a knocking at the door was heard, and such a rush immediately ensued that she with laughing face and plundered dress was borne towards it the centre of a flushed and boisterous group, just in time to greet the father, who, came home attended by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. Then the shouting and the struggling, and the onslaught that was made on the defenceless porter! The scaling him, with chairs for ladders, to dive into his pockets, despoil him of brown-paper parcels, hold on tight by his cravat, hug him round the neck, pommel his back, and kick his legs in irrepressible affection! The shouts of wonder and delight with which the development of every package was received! The terrible announcement that the baby had been taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, and was more than suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turkey, glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding this a false alarm! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstacy! They are all indescribable alike. It is enough that by degrees the children and their emotions got out of the parlour and by one stair at a time, up to the top of the house; where they went to bed, and so subsided.

And now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, when the master of the house, having his daughter leaning fondly on him, sat down with her and her mother at his own fireside; and when he

thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and as full of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-time in the haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indeed.

"Belle," said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile, "I saw an old friend of yours this afternoon."

"Who was it?"

"Guess!"

"How can I? Tut, don't I know," she added in the same breath, laughing as he laughed. "Mr. Scrooge."

"Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it was not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help seeing him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and there he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe."

"Spirit!" said Scrooge in a broken voice, "remove me from this place."

"I told you these were shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "That they are what they are, do not blame me!"

"Remove me!" Scrooge exclaimed. "I cannot bear it!"

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

"Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!"

In the struggle, if that can be called a struggle in which the Ghost with no visible resistance on its own part was undisturbed by any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that its light was burning high and bright; and dimly connecting that with its influence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden action pressed it down upon its head.

The Spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher covered its whole form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all his force, he could not hide the light: which streamed from under it, in an unbroken flood upon the ground.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroom. He

gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; and had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy sleep.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A kind of watch that chimes the time when a button is pressed.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The technical wording of a bill of exchange for a debt or credit.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: After the financial crisis of 1837, a number of U.S. states that had borrowed money from European sources to finance public works were unable to pay their debts.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A candle snuffer.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Put a bonnet on.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Long unpainted school benches made of pine ("deal").Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A reference to "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," from the *Arabian Nights*, a popular children's book in Britain.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A reference to *The History of Two Valyannte Brethren, Valentyne and Orson,* a 15th-century French romance, which had become a popular children's story in Britain.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A reference to "Noureddin Ali of Cairo and His Son Bedreddin Hassan," from the *Arabian Nights*.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Scrooge recounts episodes from Daniel Defoe's *Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (1719).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A woolen or worsted cap, originally made in Montgomery, Wales.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: According to phrenology, the 19th-century science of the shape of the skull determines character, and the area at the top of the forehead reveals the degree to which an individual

possesses, or lacks, feelings of benevolence.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: That is, in an instant; from a comic song of the late 17th century.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Food.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A dark, bitter, beer.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A popular parlor game. One player (the judge) leaves the room; the others each place a small personal item in a bag or box. The judge returns, picks out an item, and describes it; its owner must do something amusing or embarrassing (pay a forfeit) to win it back.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, boiled beef and roast beef, both served cold. "Negus": a mixture of fortified wine, such as port or sherry, with hot water, sugar, lemon juice, and nutmeg and other spices.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A popular, if complex, country dance or reel.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, executed a dance step that involves a rapid crossing of the feet in midair.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From William Wordsworth's "Written in March" (1802): "The cattle are grazing, / Their heads never raising; / There are forty feeding like one!"Return to reference 2

Stave Three

THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS

Awaking in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, and sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had no occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of One. He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick of time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with the second messenger dispatched to him through Jacob Marley's intervention. But finding that he turned uncomfortably cold when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spectre would draw back, he put them every one aside with his own hands; and lying down again, established a sharp look-out all round the bed. For he wished to challenge the Spirit on the moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken by surprise and made nervous.

Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, who plume themselves on being acquainted with a move or two, and being usually equal to the time-of-day, express the wide range of their capacity for adventure by observing that they are good for anything from pitch-and-toss[3] to manslaughter; between which opposite extremes, no doubt, there

lies a tolerably wide and comprehensive range of subjects. Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as this, I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready for a good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing between a baby and a rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by any means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the Bell struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a violent fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour went by, yet nothing came. All this time, he lay upon his bed, the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which streamed upon it when the clock proclaimed the hour; and which being only light, was more alarming than a dozen ghosts, as he was powerless to make out what it meant, or would be at; and was sometimes apprehensive that he might be at that very moment an interesting case of spontaneous combustion, without having the consolation of knowing it. At last, however, he began to think—as you or I would have thought at first; for it is always the person not in the predicament who knows what ought to have been done in it, and would unquestionably have done it too—at last, I say, he began to think that the source and secret of this ghostly light might be in the adjoining room: from whence, on further tracing it, it seemed to shine. This idea taking full possession of his mind, he got up softly and shuffled in his slippers to the door.

The moment Scrooge's hand was on the lock, a strange voice called him by his name, and bade him enter. He obeyed.

It was his own room. There was no doubt about that. But it had undergone a surprising transformation. The walls and ceiling were so hung with living green, that it looked a perfect grove, from every part of which, bright gleaming berries glistened. The crisp leaves of holly, mistletoe, and ivy reflected back the light, as if so many little mirrors had been scattered there; and such a mighty blaze went roaring up the chimney, as that dull petrifaction of a hearth had never known in Scrooge's time, or Marley's, or for many and many a winter season gone. Heaped up upon the floor, to form a kind of

throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes,[4] and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam. In easy state upon this couch, there sat a jolly Giant, glorious to see; who bore a glowing torch, in shape not unlike Plenty's horn,[5] and held it up, high up, to shed its light on Scrooge, as he came peeping round the door.

"Come in!" exclaimed the Ghost. "Come in! and know me better, man!"

Scrooge entered timidly, and hung his head before this Spirit. He was not the dogged Scrooge he had been; and though its eyes were clear and kind, he did not like to meet them.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple deep green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur. This garment hung so loosely on the figure, that its capacious breast was bare, as if disdaining to be warded or concealed by any artifice. Its feet, observable beneath the ample folds of the garment, were also bare; and on its head it wore no other covering than a holly wreath set here and there with shining icicles. Its dark brown curls were long and free: free as its genial face, its sparkling eye, its open hand, its cheery voice, its unconstrained demeanour, and its joyful air. Girded round its middle was an antique scabbard; but no sword was in it, and the ancient sheath was eaten up with rust.

"You have never seen the like of me before!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Never," Scrooge made answer to it.

Scrooge's third Visitor.

"Have never walked forth with the younger members of my family; meaning (for I am very young) my elder brothers born in these later years?" pursued the Phantom.

"I don't think I have," said Scrooge. "I am afraid I have not. Have you had many brothers, Spirit?"

"More than eighteen hundred," said the Ghost.

"A tremendous family to provide for!" muttered Scrooge.

The Ghost of Christmas Present rose.

"Spirit," said Scrooge submissively, "conduct me where you will. I went forth last night on compulsion, and I learnt a lesson which is working now. To-night, if you have aught to teach me, let me profit by it."

"Touch my robe!"

Scrooge did as he was told, and held it fast.

Holly, mistletoe, red berries, ivy, turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, meat, pigs, sausages, oysters, pies, puddings, fruit, and punch, all vanished instantly. So did the room, the fire, the ruddy glow, the hour of night, and they stood in the city streets on Christmas morning, where (for the weather was severe) the people made a rough, but brisk and not unpleasant kind of music, in scraping the snow from the pavement in front of their dwellings, and from the tops of their houses: whence it was mad delight to the boys to see it come plumping down into the road below, and splitting into artificial little snowstorms.

The house fronts looked black enough, and the windows blacker, contrasting with the smooth white sheet of snow upon the roofs, and with the dirtier snow upon the ground; which last deposit had been ploughed up in deep furrows by the heavy wheels of carts and wagons; furrows that crossed and recrossed each other hundreds of times where the great streets branched off; and made intricate channels, hard to trace, in the thick yellow mud and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest streets were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed half frozen, whose heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if all the chimneys in

Great Britain had, by one consent, caught fire, and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There was nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet was there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summer air and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffuse in vain.

For the people who were shovelling away on the house-tops were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from the parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowball—better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest—laughing heartily if it went right, and not less heartily if it went wrong. The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' were radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bellied baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gentlemen, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in their apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced, broad-girthed Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spanish Friars; and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at the girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung-up mistletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered high in blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in the shopkeepers' benevolence, to dangle from conspicuous hooks, that people's mouths might water gratis as they passed; there were piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragrance, ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings ankle deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins,[6] squab and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lemons, and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgently entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags and eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish,[7] set forth among these choice fruits in a bowl, though members of a dull and stagnant-blooded race, appeared to know that there was something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and round their little world in slow and passionless excitement.

The Grocers'! oh the Grocers'! nearly closed, with perhaps two shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimpses! It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter made a merry

sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so briskly, or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tricks, or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grateful to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, the almonds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and straight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked and spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on feel faint and subsequently bilious. Nor was it that the figs were moist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tartness from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was good to eat and in its Christmas dress: but the customers were all so hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they tumbled up against each other at the door, crashing their wicker baskets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came running back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like mistakes in the best humour possible; while the Grocer and his people were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which they fastened their aprons behind might have been their own, worn outside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws[8] to peck at if they chose.

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and chapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their best clothes, and with their gayest faces. And at the same time there emerged from scores of bye streets, lanes, and nameless turnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' shops.[9] The sight of these poor revelers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's doorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled incense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very uncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled with each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. For they said, it was a shame to quarrel upon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers' were shut up; and yet there was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the

progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

"Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

"To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

"Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

"Because it needs it most."

"Spirit," said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, "I wonder you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desire to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment."

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You would deprive them of their means of dining every seventh day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all," said Scrooge. "Wouldn't you?"

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day?"[1] said Scrooge. "And it comes to the same thing."

"*I* seek?" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name, or at least in that of your family," said Scrooge.

"There are some upon this earth of yours," returned the Spirit, "who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name; who are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us."

Scrooge promised that he would; and they went on, invisible, as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town. It was a remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed at the baker's) that notwithstanding his gigantic size, he could accommodate himself to any place with ease; and that he stood

beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatural creature, as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall.

And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fifteen "Bob"[2] a-week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fifteen copies of his Christian name;[3] and yet the Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt-collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks.[4] And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage-and-onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then," said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's *such* a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her, with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No no! There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his thread-bare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse[5] all the way from church, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.[6]

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see."[7]

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; and while Bob, turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of being made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug with gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on the hob to simmer; Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course: and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by the apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest

Cratchits in particular, were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose: a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house, and a pastry cook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding. In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered: flushed, but smiling proudly: with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel-full of chesnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass; two tumblers, and a custard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks,

while the chesnuts on the fire sputtered and crackled noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side, upon his little stool. Bob held his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and wished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be taken from him.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest he had never felt before, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

"I see a vacant seat," replied the Ghost, "in the poor chimney corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will die."

"No, no," said Scrooge. "Oh no, kind Spirit! say he will be spared."

"If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none other of my race," returned the Ghost, "will find him here. What then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease the surplus population."

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by the Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

"Man," said the Ghost, "if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surplus is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man's child. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!"

Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast his eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on hearing his own name.

"Mr. Scrooge!" said Bob; "I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, the Founder of the Feast!"

"The Founder of the Feast indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratchit, reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of my mind to feast

upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children; Christmas Day."

"It should be Christmas Day, I am sure," said she, "on which one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeling man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody knows it better than you do, poor fellow!"

"My dear," was Bob's mild answer, "Christmas Day."

"I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's," said Mrs. Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him! A merry Christmas and a happy new year! He'll be very merry and very happy, I have no doubt!"

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first of their proceedings which had no heartiness in it. Tiny Tim drank it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was the Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadow on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier than before, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. Bob Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for Master Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-sixpence weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at the idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself looked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he were deliberating what particular investments he should favour when he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. Martha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told them what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she worked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie a-bed to-morrow morning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she passed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord some days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as Peter;" at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you couldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time the chesnuts and the jug went round and round; and bye and bye they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow,

from Tiny Tim; who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very well indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a handsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were far from being waterproof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter might have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawnbroker's. But they were happy, grateful, pleased with one another, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and looked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at parting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny Tim, until the last.

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; and as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the brightness of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms, was wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed preparations for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through before the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn, to shut out cold and darkness. There, all the children of the house were running out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, cousins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, were shadows on the window-blind of guests assembling; and there a group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-booted, and all chattering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbour's house; where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter—artful witches: well they knew it—in a glow!

But if you had judged from the numbers of people on their way to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was at home to give them welcome when they got there, instead of every house expecting company, and piling up its fires half-chimney high. Blessings on it, how the Ghost exulted! How it bared its breadth of breast, and opened its capacious palm, and floated on, outpouring, with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everything within its reach! The very lamplighter, who ran on before, dotting the dusky street with specks of light, and who was dressed to spend the evening somewhere, laughed out loudly as the Spirit passed: though

little kenned the lamp-lighter that he had any company but Christmas!

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, they stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses of rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place of giants;[8] and water spread itself wheresoever it listed; or would have done so, but for the frost that held it prisoner; and nothing grew but moss and furze, and coarse, rank grass. Down in the west the setting sun had left a streak of fiery red, which glared upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frowning lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom of darkest night.

"What place is this?" asked Scrooge.

"A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of the earth," returned the Spirit. "But they know me. See!"

A light shone from the window of a hut, and swiftly they advanced towards it. Passing through the wall of mud and stone, they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing fire. An old, old man and woman, with their children and their children's children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out gaily in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom rose above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste, was singing them a Christmas song; it had been a very old song when he was a boy; and from time to time they all joined in the chorus. So surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe and loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his robe, and passing on above the moor, sped whither? Not to sea? To sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of the land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears were deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled, and roared, and raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely tried to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league or so from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild year through, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-weed

clung to its base, and storm-birds—born of the wind one might suppose, as sea-weed of the water—rose and fell about it, like the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a fire, that through the loophole in the thick stone wall shed out a ray of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands over the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other Merry Christmas in their can of grog; and one of them: the elder, too, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as the figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song that was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea—on, on—until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore, they lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the wheel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch; dark, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man among them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas thought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some bygone Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year; and had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remembered those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they delighted to remember him.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moaning of the wind, and thinking what a solemn thing it was to move on through the lonely darkness over an unknown abyss, whose depths were secrets as profound as Death: it was a great surprise to Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a much greater surprise to Scrooge to recognize it as his own nephew's, and to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with approving affability!

"Ha, ha!" laughed Scrooge's nephew. "Ha, ha, ha!"

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man more blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I

should like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll cultivate his acquaintance.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour. When Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way: holding his sides, rolling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant contortions: Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand, roared out, lustily.

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignantly. Bless those women; they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest.

She was very pretty: exceedingly pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed—as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory!

"He's a comical old fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him."

"I'm sure he is very rich, Fred," hinted Scrooge's niece. "At least you always tell *me* so."

"What of that, my dear!" said Scrooge's nephew. "His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking—ha, ha, ha!—that he is ever going to benefit Us with it."

"I have no patience with him," observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

"Oh, I have!" said Scrooge's nephew. "I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner."

"Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner," interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

"Well! I am very glad to hear it," said Scrooge's nephew, "because I haven't any great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?"

Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the subject. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister—the plump one with the lace tucker:[9] not the one with the roses—blushed.

"Do go on, Fred," said Scrooge's niece, clapping her hands. "He never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!"

Scrooge's nephew reveled in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off; though the plump sister tried hard to do it with aromatic vinegar; his example was unanimously followed.

"I was only going to say," said Scrooge's nephew, "that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it—I defy him—if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying Uncle Scrooge, how are you? If it only puts him in the vein to leave his

poor clerk fifty pounds, *that's* something; and I think I shook him, yesterday."

It was their turn to laugh now, at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they laughed at any rate, he encouraged them in their merriment, and passed the bottle, joyously.

After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sung a Glee or Catch,[1] I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp; and played among other tunes a simple little air (a mere nothing: you might learn to whistle it in two minutes), which had been familiar to the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been reminded by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindnesses of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley.

But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After a while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty Founder was a child himself. Stop! There was first a game at blind-man's buff. Of course there was. And I no more believe Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boots. My opinion is, that it was a done thing between him and Scrooge's nephew; and that the Ghost of Christmas Present knew it. The way he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker, was an outrage on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down the fire-irons, tumbling over the chairs, bumping up against the piano, smothering himself among the curtains, wherever she went, there went he. He always knew where the plump sister was. He wouldn't catch anybody else. If you had fallen up against him, as some of them did, and stood there; he would have made a

feint of endeavouring to seize you, which would have been an affront to your understanding; and would instantly have sidled off in the direction of the plump sister. She often cried out that it wasn't fair; and it really was not. But when at last, he caught her; when, in spite of all her silken rustlings, and her rapid fluttering past him, he got her into a corner whence there was no escape; then his conduct was the most execrable. For his pretending not to know her; his pretending that it was necessary to touch her head-dress, and further to assure himself of her identity by pressing a certain ring upon her finger, and a certain chain about her neck; was vile, monstrous! No doubt she told him her opinion of it, when, another blind-man being in office, they were so very confidential together, behind the curtains.

Scrooge's niece was not one of the blind-man's buff party, but was made comfortable with a large chair and a footstool, in a snug corner, where the Ghost and Scrooge were close behind her. But she joined in the forfeits, and loved her love to admiration with all the letters of the alphabet.[2] Likewise at the game of How, When, and Where,[3] she was very great, and to the secret joy of Scrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hollow: though they were sharp girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have been twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and so did Scrooge; for, wholly forgetting in the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he sometimes came out with his guess quite loud, and very often guessed right, too; for the sharpest needle, best Whitechapel, warranted not to cut in the eye,[4] was not sharper than Scrooge: blunt as he took it in his head to be.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, and looked upon him with such favour that he begged like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit said could not be done.

"Here is a new game," said Scrooge. "One half hour, Spirit, only one!"

It was a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had to think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only

answering to their questions yes or no as the case was. The brisk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from him that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into a fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump sister, falling into a similar state, cried out:

"I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know what it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!"

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal sentiment, though some objected that the reply to "Is it a bear?" ought to have been "Yes;" inasmuch as an answer in the negative was sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, supposing they had ever had any tendency that way.

"He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure," said Fred, "and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a glass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say 'Uncle Scrooge!' "

"Well! Uncle Scrooge!" they cried.

"A Merry Christmas and a happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is!" said Scrooge's nephew. "He wouldn't take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!"

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of the last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were again upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse, hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority[5] had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was gray.

"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked Scrooge.

"My life upon this globe, is very brief," replied the Ghost. "It ends to-night."

"To-night!" cried Scrooge.

"To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near."

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at that moment.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw!"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the folding of its robe, it brought two children; wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity, in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the words choked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such enormous magnitude.

"Spirit! are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but

most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. "Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious purposes, and make it worse! And bide the end!"

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction of old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a solemn Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along the ground, towards him.

Endnotes

- Note 3: A street gambling game, in which coins are thrown at a target; the player whose coin is closest tosses the other coins in the air, and keeps all those that land heads-up.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Large pastries, traditionally served on Twelfth Night (January 6).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The horn of plenty (or cornucopia), overflowing with produce, flowers, or nuts, is an ancient classical symbol of abundance and nourishment.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A variety of cooking apple.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Members of the carp family, sold in glass bowls by London street traders at that time.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Jackdaws, a type of crow. Compare with Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.1.64–65: "For I will wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In that period, most cooking in the homes of the poor was done over an open fire; bakers, prohibited from baking on

Sundays and Christmas Day, allowed people to use their ovens for a small charge on those days.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The Sabbatarianism movement sought to close bakeries and limit entertainment and travel on Sundays.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A shilling (slang).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This would have been an extraordinarily low salary for someone in this position. Fifteen bob per week translates to 39 pounds per year, whereas most menial clerks could expect to earn 50–150 pounds per year.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, one of the Royal Parks in central London, such as St. James's Park, Green Park, and Hyde Park.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A thoroughbred, particularly a racehorse.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A large vessel, made of copper or cast iron, used primarily for boiling laundry.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See John 5:1–9 for the account of Jesus's healing of the lame man, and Mark 8:22–25 for the restoration of the blind man's vision.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Cornwall, in the far southwest of Great Britain, is the traditional setting of the children's story "Jack the Giant Killer." In the vision that follows, Dickens is drawing on a visit he made to the county in 1842 to see the appalling conditions experienced by child laborers in the Cornish tin and copper mines.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A piece of lace or linen worn at the top of a bodice or as an insert at the front of a low-cut dress.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A comic song for numerous voices, in which, after the first singer has finished a line, the second begins, or "catches" the words just sung, and so on. "Glee": a song for multiple voices, with distinct harmonizing parts for each.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A word game, in which each player must complete a series of statements with words beginning with A, and then B, and so forth.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A word game, in which players ask one of their number "How do you like it?" "When do you like it?" and "Where do you like it?" to try to establish the mystery entity of which he or she is thinking.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The eye of a well-made needle has smooth edges so it will not cut the cotton threaded through it. Whitechapel, a poor district east of the City of London, was then the site of needle-making workshops.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare with Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* 2.2.120–22: "But man, proud man, / Dressed in a little brief authority, / Most ignorant of what he's most assured."Return to reference 5

Stave Four

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS

The Phantom slowly, gravely, silently, approached. When it came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the very air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter gloom and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed its head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save one outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult to detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside him, and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dread. He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come?" said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed onward with its hand.

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scrooge pursued. "Is that so, Spirit?"

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was the only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scrooge feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneath him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepared to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing his condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.

"Ghost of the Future!" he exclaimed, "I fear you more than any Spectre I have seen. But, as I know your purpose is to do me good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I was, I am prepared to bear you company, and do it with a thankful heart. Will you not speak to me?"

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before them.

"Lead on!" said Scrooge. "Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!"

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. Scrooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, he thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own act. But there they were, in the heart of it; on 'Change, amongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked the money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked at their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold seals;[6] and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. Observing that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced to listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, "I don't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die?" inquired another.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with him?" asked a third, taking a vast quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box. "I thought he'd never die."

"God knows," said the first, with a yawn.

"What has he done with his money?" asked a red-faced gentleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose, that shook like the gills of a turkey-cock.

"I haven't heard," said the man with the large chin, yawning again. "Left it to his Company, perhaps. He hasn't left it to *me*. That's all I know."

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

"It's likely to be a very cheap funeral," said the same speaker; "for upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose we make up a party and volunteer?"

"I don't mind going if a lunch is provided," observed the gentleman with the excrescence on his nose. "But I must be fed, if I make one."

Another laugh.

"Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all," said the first speaker, "for I never wear black gloves,[7] and I never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go, if anybody else will. When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I wasn't his most particular friend; for we used to stop and speak whenever we met. Bye, bye!"

Speakers and listeners strolled away, and mixed with other groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spirit for an explanation.

The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed to two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that the explanation might lie here.

He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men of business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He had made a point always of standing well in their esteem: in a business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point of view.

"How are you?" said one.

"How are you?" returned the other.

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch[8] has got his own at last, hey?"

"So I am told," returned the second. "Cold, isn't it?"

"Seasonable for Christmas time. You're not a skater, I suppose?"

"No. No. Something else to think of. Good morning!"

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conversation, and their parting.

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spirit should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivial; but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he set himself to

consider what it was likely to be. They could scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jacob, his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province was the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately connected with himself, to whom he could apply them. But nothing doubting that to whomsoever they applied they had some latent moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up every word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially to observe the shadow of himself when it appeared. For he had an expectation that the conduct of his future self would give him the clue he missed, and would render the solution of these riddles easy.

He looked about in that very place for his own image; but another man stood in his accustomed corner, and though the clock pointed to his usual time of day for being there, he saw no likeness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through the Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had been revolving in his mind a change of life, and thought and hoped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its outstretched hand. When he roused himself from his thoughtful quest, he fancied from the turn of the hand, and its situation in reference to himself, that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him keenly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of the town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although he recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were foul and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people half-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like so many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt, and life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter reeked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed, beetling[9] shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags, bottles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor within, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges, files, scales,

weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that few would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains of unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones. Sitting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal-stove, made of old bricks, was a gray-haired rascal, nearly seventy years of age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by a frousy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line; and smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this man, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop. But she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly laden, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in faded black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than they had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short period of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the pipe had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

"Let the charwoman alone to be the first!" cried she who had entered first. "Let the laundress alone to be the second; and let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here, old Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here without meaning it!"

"You couldn't have met in a better place," said old Joe, removing his pipe from his mouth. "Come into the parlour. You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the other two an't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Ah! How it skreeks! There an't such a rusty bit of metal in the place as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no such old bones here, as mine. Ha, ha! We're all suitable to our calling, we're all suitable to our calling, we're well matched. Come into the parlour. Come into the parlour."

The parlour was the space behind the screen of rags. The old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, and having trimmed his smoky lamp (for it was night), with the stem of his pipe, put it in his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had already spoken threw her bundle on the floor and sat down in a flaunting manner on a stool;

crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with a bold defiance at the other two.

"What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?" said the woman. "Every person has a right to take care of themselves. *He* always did!"

"That's true, indeed!" said the laundress. "No man more so."

"Why, then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woman; who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each other's coats, I suppose?"

"No, indeed!" said Mrs. Dilber and the man together. "We should hope not."

"Very well, then!" cried the woman. "That's enough. Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? Not a dead man, I suppose."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

"If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked old screw," pursued the woman, "why wasn't he natural in his lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look after him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping out his last there, alone by himself."

"It's the truest word that ever was spoke," said Mrs. Dilber. "It's a judgment on him."

"I wish it was a little heavier judgment," replied the woman; "and it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have laid my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and let me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to be the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty well that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I believe. It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe."

But the gallantry of her friends would not allow of this; and the man in faded black, mounting the breach first, produced *his* plunder. It was not extensive. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value, were all. They were severally examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each, upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found that there was nothing more to come.

"That's your account," said Joe, "and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?"

Mrs. Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

"I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself," said old Joe. "That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal, and knock off half-a-crown."

"And now undo *my* bundle, Joe," said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

"What do you call this?" said Joe. "Bed-curtains!"

"Ah!" returned the woman, laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms. "Bed-curtains!"

"You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?" said Joe.

"Yes I do," replied the woman. "Why not?"

"You were born to make your fortune," said Joe, "and you'll certainly do it."

"I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as He was, I promise you, Joe," returned the woman coolly. "Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

"His blankets?" asked Joe.

"Whose else's do you think?" replied the woman. "He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say."

"I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?" said old Joe, stopping in his work, and looking up.

"Don't you be afraid of that," returned the woman. "I an't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! You may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a thread-bare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me."

"What do you call wasting of it?" asked old Joe.

"Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure," replied the woman with a laugh. "Somebody was fool enough to do it, but I took it off again. If calico an't good enough for such a purpose, it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to the body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one."

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sat grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the old man's lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust, which could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the same woman, when old Joe, producing a flannel bag with money in it, told out their several gains upon the ground. "This is the end of it, you see! He frightened every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when he was dead! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. "I see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my own. My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!"

He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now he almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneath a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, though it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with any accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale light, rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was the body of this man.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand was pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge's part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt how easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no more power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at his side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar here, and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: for this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous, and true; the heart brave, warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow, strike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal!

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he heard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this man could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? Avarice, hard dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to a rich end, truly!

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or a child, to say he was kind to me in this or that, and for the memory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was tearing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath the hearth-stone. What *they* wanted in the room of death, and why they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to think.

"Spirit!" he said, "this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I shall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!"

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge returned, "and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power."

Again it seemed to look upon him.

"If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death," said Scrooge quite agonized, "show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!"

The phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for she walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked out from the window; glanced at the clock; tried, but in vain, to work

with her needle; and could hardly bear the voices of the children in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to the door, and met her husband; a man whose face was care-worn and depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable expression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt ashamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been hoarding for him by the fire; and when she asked him faintly what news (which was not until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to answer.

"Is it good," she said, "or bad?"—to help him.

"Bad," he answered.

"We are quite ruined?"

"No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

"If *he* relents," she said, amazed, "there is! Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened."

"He is past relenting," said her husband. "He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands. She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

"What the half-drunken woman whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me; turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then."

"To whom will our debt be transferred?"

"I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!"

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

"Let me see some tenderness connected with a death," said Scrooge; "or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me."

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

"'And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'"[1]

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

"The colour hurts my eyes," she said.

The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

"They're better now again," said Cratchit's wife. "It makes them weak by candle-light; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your father when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his time."

"Past it rather," Peter answered, shutting up his book. "But I think he has walked a little slower than he used, these few last evenings, mother."

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady cheerful voice, that only faultered once:

"I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with Tiny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed."

"And so have I," cried Peter. "Often."

"And so have I!" exclaimed another. So had all.

"But he was very light to carry," she resumed, intent upon her work, "and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble: no

trouble. And there is your father at the door!"

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter—he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for him on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most. Then the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each child a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, "Don't mind it, father. Don't be grieved!"

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all the family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised the industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would be done long before Sunday he said.

"Sunday! You went to-day then, Robert?" said his wife.

"Yes, my dear," returned Bob. "I wish you could have gone. It would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But you'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a Sunday. My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could have helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart perhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went up stairs into the room above, which was lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a chair set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one having been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he had thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face. He was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again quite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls and mother working still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of Mr. Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and who, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked a little —"just a little down you know" said Bob, enquired what had happened to distress him. "On which," said Bob, "for he is the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. 'I am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily sorry for your good wife.' By the bye, how he ever knew *that*, I don't know."

"Knew what, my dear?"

"Why, that you were a good wife," replied Bob.

"Everybody knows that!" said Peter.

"Very well observed, my boy!" cried Bob. "I hope they do. 'Heartily sorry,' he said, 'for your good wife. If I can be of service to you in any way,' he said, giving me his card, 'that's where I live. Pray come to me.' Now, it wasn't," cried Bob, "for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so much as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It really seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us."

"I'm sure he's a good soul!" said Mrs. Cratchit.

"You would be surer of it, my dear," returned Bob, "if you saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised, mark what I say, if he got Peter a better situation."

"Only hear that, Peter," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"And then," cried one of the girls, "Peter will be keeping company with some one, and setting up for himself."

"Get along with you!" retorted Peter, grinning.

"It's just as likely as not," said Bob, "one of these days; though there's plenty of time for that, my dear. But however and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall none of us forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we—or this first parting that there was among us?"

"Never, father!" cried they all.

"And I know," said Bob, "I know, my dears, that when we recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he was a little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, and forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it."

"No, never, father!" they all cried again.

"I am very happy," said little Bob, "I am very happy!"

Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the two young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook hands. Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!

"Spectre," said Scrooge, "something informs me that our parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not how. Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?"

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as before—though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seemed no order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Future—into the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now desired, until besought by Scrooge to tarry for a moment.

"This court," said Scrooge, "through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come."

The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

"The house is yonder," Scrooge exclaimed.

"Why do you point away?"

The inexorable finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of the things that May be, only?"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!"

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

The last of the Spirits.

"Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, Spirit! Oh no, no!"

The finger still was there.

"Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at its robe, "hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have been but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past all hope?"

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

"Good Spirit," he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: "Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assure me that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by an altered life!"

The kind hand trembled.

"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him.

Holding up his hands in one last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrunk, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Endnotes

- Note 6: Men of business carried seals, in the form of medallions or rings, so that they could impress their own distinctive marks into the wax used to close or authenticate documents.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: It was customary to present mourners at a funeral with a pair of black gloves.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The devil (slang).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Projecting, overhanging.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Matthew 18:2 and Mark 9:36.Return to reference 1

Stave Five

THE END OF IT

Yes! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob; on my knees!"

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, "they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here: I am here: the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!"

His hands were busy with his garments all this time: turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, mislaying them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön[2] of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standing there: perfectly winded.

"There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!" cried Scrooge, starting off again, and going round the fire-place. "There's the door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's the corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present, sat! There's the window

where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's all true, it all happened. Ha ha ha!"

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so many years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. The father of a long, long, line of brilliant laughs!

"I don't know what day of the month it is!" said Scrooge. "I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I don't know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't care. I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!"

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing out the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer, ding, dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding, hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorious, glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his head. No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, piping for the blood to dance to; Golden sunlight; Heavenly sky; sweet fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

"What's to-day?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a boy in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about him.

"Eh?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?" said Scrooge.

"To-day!" replied the boy. "Why, Christmas Day."

"It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge to himself. "I haven't missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can. Hallo, my fine fellow!"

"Hallo!" returned the boy.

"Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one, at the corner?" Scrooge inquired.

"I should hope I did," replied the lad.

"An intelligent boy!" said Scrooge. "A remarkable boy! Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that was hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?"

"What, the one as big as me?" returned the boy.

"What a delightful boy!" said Scrooge. "It's a pleasure to talk to him. Yes, my buck!"

"It's hanging there now," replied the boy.

"Is it?" said Scrooge. "Go and buy it."

"Walk-ER!"[3] exclaimed the boy.

"No, no," said Scrooge, "I am in earnest. Go and buy it, and tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction where to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a shilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll give you half-a-crown!"

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand at a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing his hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He sha'n't know who sends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never made such a joke[4] as sending it to Bob's will be!"

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, but write it he did, somehow, and went down stairs to open the street door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he stood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

"I shall love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it with his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an honest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker!—Here's the Turkey. Hallo! Whoop! How are you! Merry Christmas!"

It *was* a Turkey! He never could have stood upon his legs, that bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like sticks of sealing-wax.

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said Scrooge. "You must have a cab."

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with which he paid for the Turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid for the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, were only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down breathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake very much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't dance while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose off,

he would have put a piece of sticking-plaister over it, and been quite satisfied.

He dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into the streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he had seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking with his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded every one with a delighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that three or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning, sir! A merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwards, that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were the blithest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beheld the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house the day before and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?" It sent a pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would look upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straight before him, and he took it.

"My dear sir," said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taking the old gentleman by both his hands. "How do you do? I hope you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A merry Christmas to you, sir!"

"Mr. Scrooge?"

"Yes," said Scrooge. "That is my name, and I fear it may not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. And will you have the goodness"—here Scrooge whispered in his ear.

"Lord bless me!" cried the gentleman, as if his breath were gone. "My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?"

"If you please," said Scrooge. "Not a farthing less. A great many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will you do me that favour?"

"My dear sir," said the other, shaking hands with him. "I don't know what to say to such munifi—"

"Don't say anything, please," retorted Scrooge. "Come and see me. Will you come and see me?"

"I will!" cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he meant to do it.

"Thank 'ee," said Scrooge. "I am much obliged to you. I thank you fifty times. Bless you!"

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watched the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the head, and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens of houses, and up to the windows; and found that everything could yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk—that anything—could give him so much happiness. In the afternoon, he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage to go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

"Is your master at home, my dear?" said Scrooge to the girl. Nice girl! Very.

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he, my love?" said Scrooge.

"He's in the dining-room, sir, along with mistress. I'll show you up stairs, if you please."

"Thank 'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already on the dining-room lock. "I'll go in here, my dear."

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. They were looking at the table (which was spread out in great array); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such points, and like to see that everything is right.

"Fred!" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge had forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with the footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

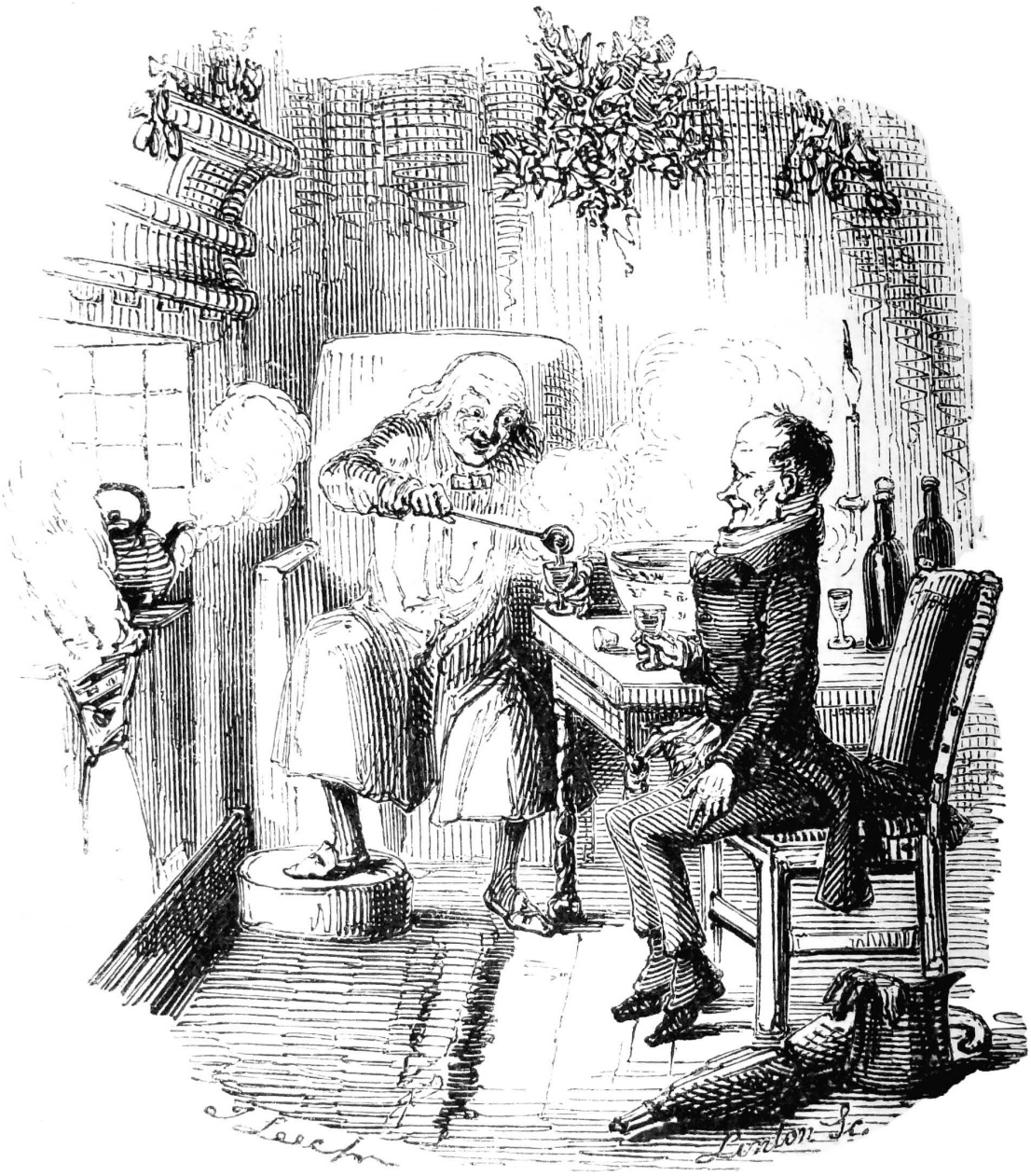
"Why bless my soul!" cried Fred, "who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will you let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He was at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His niece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did the plump sister, when *she* came. So did every one when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ful happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh he was early there. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit coming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a half, behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that he might see him come into the Tank.



His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he were trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice as near as he could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this time of day?"

"I am very sorry, sir," said Bob. "I *am* behind my time."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes. I think you are. Step this way, if you please."

"It's only once a year, sir," pleaded Bob, appearing from the Tank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry yesterday, sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not going to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he continued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again: "and therefore I am about to raise your salary!"

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had a momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it; holding him; and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat.[5]

"A merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestness that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you, for many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist your struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afternoon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop,[6] Bob! Make up the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another i, Bob Cratchit!"

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father. He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the alteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; for he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on this globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill of laughter in the outset;

and knowing that such as these would be blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should wrinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive forms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for him.

He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the Total Abstinence Principle,[7] ever afterwards; and it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!

THE END.

1843

Endnotes

- Note 2: A Trojan priest who, according to Virgil (*Aeneid* 2.130), so offended the goddess Athena by warning his people about the Greeks' wooden horse trick that she sent two giant sea serpents to strangle him and his two sons. His struggle with the snakes is the subject of a famous classical sculpture.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An expression of surprise, ridicule, or incredulity (London slang, of uncertain origin).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The supposed jokes of Joe Miller (1684–1738), a comic actor, were collected in the popular *Jest-Book*, first published in 1739.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Used, like a straitjacket, to subdue violent prisoners or patients by binding their arms to their bodies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A popular Christmas drink, made by combining red wine or port with sugar, spices, and oranges and called "bishop" because of its purple color.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: That is, teetotalism; the watchword of an extreme temperance movement of the 1830s, which encouraged individuals to pledge never to drink intoxicating beverages again. Dickens here puns on *spirits*, which can indicate "alcohol" or "ghosts."Return to reference 7

ROBERT BROWNING
1812–1889

Gerard Manley Hopkins once described Robert Browning as "a man bouncing up from table with his mouth full of bread and cheese and saying that he meant to stand no blasted nonsense." This kind of vitality is apparent in nearly all of Browning's writings. Like the poetry of John Donne (1572–1631), the soliloquies of William Shakespeare (1564–1616), and certain passages of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340s–1400), Browning's poetry often uses a discordant style and unexpected juxtapositions to startle the reader into an awareness of a world of everyday realities and trivialities. His characteristic form was the dramatic monologue, a poem that presents itself as a speech delivered by a created character. Some take the form of soliloquies, uttered by the speaker to himself or herself; others are addressed to another character or characters who remain silent. As Browning uses it, the dramatic monologue separates the speaker from the poet in such a way that the reader must work through the words of the speaker to discover the meaning of the poet. For example, in the well-known early monologue "My Last Duchess" (1842), we listen to the duke as he speaks of his dead wife. From his one-sided conversation we piece together the situation, both past and present, and we infer what sort of woman the duchess really was and what sort of man the duke is. Ultimately, we may also infer what the poet himself thinks of the speaker he has created. In the instance of the duke, it may be fairly

easy to reach such a judgment; however, many of Browning's poems are far less stable, and it is difficult to discern the relationship of the poet to his speaker. In " 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' " (1855), for example, is the speaker describing a phantasmagoric landscape of his own paranoid imagining, or is the poem a fable of courage and defiance in a modern wasteland?

Robert Browning was born in Camberwell, a London suburb. His father, a bank clerk, was a learned man with an extensive library. His mother was a kind and religious woman, interested in music, whose love for her brilliant son was warmly reciprocated. Until the time of his marriage at the age of thirty-four, Browning was rarely absent from his parents' home. He attended a boarding school near Camberwell, traveled to Russia and Italy, and was a student at the University College London for a short period, but he preferred to pursue his education at home, where he was tutored in foreign languages, music, boxing, and horsemanship and where he read omnivorously.

An intensely private man in many ways, after some early ventures into Romantic self-expression in the style of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), Browning sought to reduce the personal element in his work. One way to do this was to write plays instead of soul-searching narratives or lyrics. In 1836, encouraged by the actor W. C. Macready (1793–1873), Browning began work on his first play, *Strafford*, a historical tragedy that lasted only four nights when it was produced in London in 1837. For ten years the young writer struggled to write for the theater, but all his stage productions were failures. Nevertheless, writing dialogue for actors led him to explore another form more congenial to his genius. His first collection of dramatic monologues, *Dramatic Lyrics*, appeared in 1842, but it received no more critical enthusiasm than did his plays. In 1840, he published a long poem in heroic couplets, *Sordello*, which cemented his reputation for obscurity. Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) wrote to a friend that his wife Jane had read through the poem "without being able to make out whether 'Sordello' was a man, or a city, or a book."

For many of his middle years, Browning was best known as the lover, husband, and helpmeet of his wife Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861). Few would have forecast the outcome when Browning met Elizabeth Barrett in 1845. She was six years older than he was, and a semi-invalid, jealously guarded by her possessively tyrannical father. Nevertheless, they eloped to Italy together, and both parties thrived in the new environment. Elizabeth Barrett Browning became one of the period's most popular and important poets. Meanwhile, Robert Browning became fascinated with the literature, culture, and politics of Italy. He was particularly interested in the art and culture of the Renaissance: to him it represented an intriguing combination of deeply held religious faith, hedonism—or an excessive enjoyment of sensual pleasure—and extraordinary artistic creativity. Many of his poems are engaged with questions raised by the relationship between great art and great culture in this period. The happy fifteen-year sojourn in Italy ended in 1861 with Elizabeth's death. After this time, the widower returned to London with his son.

Many of the poems that are reproduced here and for which Browning is best known appeared first in his two-volume *Men and Women* in 1855; however, it was really only after the publication of the long blank-verse poem *The Ring and the Book* in 1868 that his reputation as an important and serious poet was established. This poem was inspired by his discovery of an old book of legal records concerning a murder trial in seventeenth-century Rome. It tells the story of a brutally sadistic husband, Count Guido Franceschini, who grew dissatisfied with his young wife, Pompilia, and accused her of having adulterous relations with the priest who tried to rescue her. Eventually Guido stabbed his wife to death and was himself executed. In a series of twelve books, Browning retells this tale of violence, presenting it from the contrasting points of view of participants and spectators. This work was both a commercial and a critical success.

During the London years Browning became extremely fond of social life; however, Browning's character seemed, in Thomas Hardy's words, "*the* literary puzzle of the nineteenth century." Just as

Browning's character is hard to identify so are his poems sometimes difficult to relate to the age in which they were written. Bishops and painters of the Renaissance, an inmate of a Spanish monastery, Shakespeare's "man-monster" on a distant isle—as we explore this gallery of talking portraits we seem to be in remote times or places, far from the world of steam engines and disputes about human beings' descent from the ape. Yet many of these portraits explore problems that confronted Browning's contemporaries, especially problems of faith and doubt, of good and evil, and of the function of the artist in modern life. "Caliban upon Setebos," for example, is a highly topical critique of Darwinism and of natural (as opposed to supernatural) religions. Browning's own attitude toward these topics is partially concealed because of his use of speakers and settings from earlier ages, yet we do encounter certain recurrent religious assumptions that we can safely assign to the poet himself. The most recurrent is that God has created an imperfect world as a kind of testing ground, a "vale of soul-making," as John Keats had said.

When Browning died, in 1889, he was buried in Westminster Abbey close to Alfred Tennyson.

Porphyria's Lover[1]

The rain set early in tonight,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavor,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me forever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could tonight's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes

Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshiped me: surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

1834 1836, 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of a pair of monologues originally published as "Madhouse Cells," a title that emphasized the speaker's abnormal state of mind.Return to reference 1

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

1

Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flowerpots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood,[1] would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

2

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi![2] I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls,[3] I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?[4]

3

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps°

Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

4

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
—Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?[5]
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

5

When he finishes refection,°
Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange pulp—
In three sips the Arian[6] frustrate;
While he drains his at one gulp.

6

Oh, those melons? If he's able
We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

7

There's a great text in Galatians,[7]
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?[8]

8

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On gray paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
Hand and foot in Belial's° gripe:
If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

9

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia[9]
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine*[1]
'St, there's Vespers![2] *Plena gratiâ*
Ave, Virgo![3] Gr-r-r—you swine!

ca. 1839 1842

Endnotes

- Note 1: An oath (archaic).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hail to thee! (Latin); that is, "your health!" This and other speeches in italics in this stanza are the words of Brother Lawrence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Abnormal outgrowths on oak trees, used for tanning.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dandelion (19th-century use).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pirate of the Barbary Coast of northern Africa, renowned for fierceness and lechery.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Heretical follower of Arius (256–336 C.E.), who denied the doctrine of the Trinity.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The speaker hopes to obtain Lawrence's damnation by luring him into a heresy when he may prove unable to interpret Galatians in an unswervingly orthodox way. In Galatians 5:15–23 St. Paul specifies an assortment of "works of the flesh" that lead to damnation, which could make up a total of "twenty-nine" (line 51).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A heretic, a follower of Mani (3rd century), Persian religious leader.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The speaker would pledge his own soul to Satan in return for blasting Lawrence and his "rose-acacia," but the pledge would be so cleverly worded that the speaker would not have to pay his debt to Satan. There would be an escape clause ("flaw in the indenture") for himself.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Perhaps the opening of a mysterious curse against Lawrence.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Evening prayers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Full of grace, Hail, Virgin! (Latin). The speaker's state of mind may be reflected in his mixed-up version of the prayer to Mary: "*Ave, Maria, gratia plena*."Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *jaws*Return to reference °
- °: *dinner*Return to reference °

- °: *the devil's*Return to reference °

My Last Duchess[1]

Ferrara

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's[2] hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule

She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck[3] cast in bronze for me!

1842

Endnotes

- Note 1: The poem is based on incidents in the life of Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara in Italy, whose first wife, Lucrezia, a young woman, died in 1561 after three years of marriage. Following her death, the duke negotiated through an agent to marry a niece of the Count of Tyrol. Browning represents the duke as addressing this agent.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Friar Pandolf, an imaginary painter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An unidentified or imaginary sculptor. The Count of Tyrol had his capital at Innsbruck.Return to reference 3

How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix[1]

(16—)

1

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern,° the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

2

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique° right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

3

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;

And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, “Yet there is time!”

4

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

5

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
And one eye’s black intelligence—ever that glance
O’er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which ay and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

6

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, “Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault’s not in her,
We’ll remember at Aix”—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

7

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

8

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup° over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

9

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

10

And all I remember is—friends flocking round

As I sat with his head ’twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

ca. 1844 1845

Endnotes

- Note 1: The distance between Ghent, in Flanders, and Aix-la-Chapelle (now Aachen, in Germany) is about one hundred miles. Browning said that the incident, occurring during the wars between Flanders and Spain, was an imaginary one. In 1889 Thomas Edison prepared a cylinder recording of Browning’s recitation of the opening lines of this poem.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *side door*Return to reference °
- °: *spur or pommel*Return to reference °
- °: *rump*Return to reference °

The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church[1]

***Rome,* 15—**

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity![2]
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened° me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner south
He graced his carrion with,[3] God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle side,[4]
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt[5] there,
And 'neath my tabernacle[6] take my rest,

With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.[7]
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,[8]
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,[9]
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli,*[1]
Big as a jew's head cut off at the nape,[2]
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati[3] villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church[4] so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:[5]
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black°—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze[6] to come beneath?
The bas-relief[7] in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot° of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,

Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables[8] . . . but I know
Ye mark° me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's moldy travertine°
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's[9] every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian[1] serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,[2]
And feel the steady candle flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,°
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth,[3] drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals, and priests,

Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,[4]
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT[5] quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.[6]
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,[7]
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx[8]
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature[9]
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone,° a crumble! Clammy squares
which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Aye, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

1844 1845

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In "Fra Lippo Lippi" (p. 428), Browning represents the dawn of the Renaissance in Italy, with its fresh zest for human experiences in this world. In this monologue he portrays a later stage of the Renaissance when such worldliness, full-blown, had infected some of the leading clergy of Italy. Browning's portrait of the dying bishop is, however, not primarily a satire against corruption in the church. It is a brilliant exposition of the workings of a mind, a mind that has been conditioned by special historical circumstances. The Victorian historian of art John Ruskin said of this poem:

  > I know of no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I have said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice*, put into as many lines, Browning's also being the antecedent work.

  St. Praxed's Church was named in honor of St. Praxedes, a Roman virgin of the 2nd century who gave her riches to poor Christians. Both the bishop and his predecessor, Gandolf, are imaginary persons.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Ecclesiastes 1:2: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bishop Gandolf shrewdly chose a prize spot in the southern corner of the church for his burial place. The tomb that the speaker is ordering will also be inside the church, as was common for important people in this era.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Epistles of the New Testament are read from the right-hand side of the altar (as one faces it).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Dark-colored igneous rock.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Stone canopy or tentlike roof, presumably supported by the "nine columns" under which the sculptured effigy of the bishop would lie on the "slab of basalt."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A pulpy mash of fermented grapes from which a strong wine might be poured off.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An inferior marble that peels in layers.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Basket for holding olives.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Valuable bright blue stone.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Perhaps a reference to the head of John the Baptist, cut off at Salomé's request (Matthew 14:6–11).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Suburb of Rome, used as a resort by wealthy Italians.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Il Gesù, a Jesuit church in Rome. In a chapel in this church the figure of an angel (rather than God) holds a huge lump of lapis lazuli in his hands.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare Job 7:6: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Continuous band of sculpture.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sculpture in which the figures do not project far from the background surface.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  The sculpture would consist of a mixture of pagan and Christian iconography. "Tripod": seat on which the Oracle of Delphi made prophecies. "Thyrsus": a staff twined with ivy that was carried, according to Greek mythology, by Dionysus, god of wine and fertility. "Glory": halo. "Tables": the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written. Such intermingling of pagan and Christian traditions, characteristic of the Renaissance, had been attacked in 1841 in *Contrasts*, a book on architecture by A. W. Pugin, a Roman Catholic.
  Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.), orator and statesman who was one of the great stylists of classical Latin

prose.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Late Latin author of legal commentaries (d. 228 C.E.); not a model of good style.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Reference to the doctrine of transubstantiation.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Rich cloth spread over a dead body or coffin.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The bishop is confusing St. Praxed (a woman) with Jesus—an indication that his mind is wandering.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: He was illustrious (Latin); word from Gandolf's epitaph. The bishop considers the form of the verb to be in "gaudy" bad taste (line 78). If the epitaph had been copied from Cicero instead of from Ulpian, the word would have been *elucebat.*Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Compare with Genesis 47:9: "few and evil have the days of the years of my life been."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Statue of Terminus, the Roman god of boundaries, usually represented without arms. "Vizor": part of a helmet, often represented in sculpture.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An animal that traditionally accompanied Bacchus.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Horizontal platform supporting a statue or an effigy.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *cheated*Return to reference °
- °: *black marble*Return to reference °
- °: *know*Return to reference °
- °: *heed*Return to reference °
- °: *Italian limestone*Return to reference °
- °: *bishop's staff*Return to reference °
- °: *coarse sandstone* Return to reference °

Love among the Ruins

1

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles,
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay
(So they say),
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

2

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to (else they run
Into one),
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

3

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summertime, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

4

Now—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's[1] head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—
Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

5

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave

To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

6

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'
Colonnades,
All the causeys,[2] bridges, aqueducts—and then,
All the men!
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

7

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and north,
And they built their gods a brazen° pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—

Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth’s returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

1853 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1: Common European plant with petals clustered in the shape of rosettes.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Causeways or roads raised above low ground.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *brass*Return to reference °

"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came"[1]

(*See Edgar's Song in "Lear"*)

1

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
Askance° to watch the working of his lie
On mine, arid mouth scarce able to afford
Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored
Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

2

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
All travelers who might find him posted there,
And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh
Would break, what crutch 'gin° write my epitaph
For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

3

If at his counsel I should turn aside
Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly
I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
So much as gladness that some end might be.

4

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
What with my search drawn out through years, my hope
Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
With that obstreperous joy success would bring,
I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

5

As when a sick man very near to death
Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
Freelier outside ("since all is o'er," he saith,
"And the blow fallen no grieving can amend"),

6

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves:[2]
And still the man hears all, and only craves
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

7

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

8

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.[3]

9

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 'twas gone; gray plain all round:
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on; naught else remained to do.

10

So, on I went. I think I never saw
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing throve:
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove!
But, cockle, spurge,[4] according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think; a burr had been a treasure trove.

11

No! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion.
"See
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills:[5] I cannot help my case;
Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place,

Calcine[6] its clods and set my prisoners free."

12

If there pushed any ragged thistle stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped; the bents[7]
Were jealous else. What made those holes and rents
In the dock's° harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to balk
All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing° their life out, with a brute's intents.

13

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood.
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there:
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud!

14

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped° neck a-strain,
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe;
I never saw a brute I hated so;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

15

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart.
As a man calls for wine before he fights,
I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art:
One taste of the old time sets all to rights.

16

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!
Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

17

Giles then, the soul of honor—there he stands
Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands
Pin to his breast a parchment? His own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and cursed!

18

Better this present than a past like that;
Back therefore to my darkening path again!
No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.
Will the night send a howlet° or a bat?
I asked: when something on the dismal flat

Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

19

A sudden little river crossed my path
As unexpected as a serpent comes.
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;
This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
Of its black eddy bespate° with flakes and spumes.

20

So petty yet so spiteful! All along,
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
The river which had done them all the wrong,
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit.

21

Which, while I forded—good saints, how I feared
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
—It may have been a water rat I speared,
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

22

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
Now for a better country. Vain presage!

Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank
Soil to a plash?° Toads in a poisoned tank,
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

23

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.°
What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
No footprint leading to that horrid mews,[8]
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
Their brains, no doubt, like galley slaves the Turk
Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

24

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there!
What bad use was that engine for, that wheel,
Or brake,[9] not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air
Of Tophet's° tool, on earth left unaware,
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

25

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood,
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
Desperate and done with; (so a fool finds mirth,
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood[1]
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth.

26

Now blotches rankling, colored gay and grim,
Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
Broke into moss or substances like boils;
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

27

And just as far as ever from the end!
Naught in the distance but the evening, naught
To point my footstep further! At the thought,
A great black bird, Apollyon's[2] bosom friend,
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned[3]
That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

28

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
All round to mountains—with such name to grace
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
How thus they had surprised me—solve it, you!
How to get from them was no clearer case.

29

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick
Of mischief happened to me, God knows when —
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,

Progress this way. When, in the very nick
Of giving up, one time more, came a click
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

30

Burningly it came on me all at once,
This was the place! those two hills on the right,
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,°
After a life spent training for the sight!

31

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,[4]
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf
He strikes on, only when the timbers start.°

32

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
Came back again for that! before it left,
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay—
"Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!"[5]

33

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
Of all the lost adventurers my peers—
How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
And such was fortunate, yet each of old
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years.

34

There they stood, ranged along the hillsides, met
To view the last of me, a living frame
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
Dauntless the slug-horn[6] to my lips I set,
And blew. *"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came."*

1852 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Browning stated that this poem "came upon me as a kind of dream," and that it was written in one day. Although the poem was among those of his own writings that pleased him most, he was reluctant to explain what the dream (or nightmare) signified. He once agreed with a friend's suggestion that the meaning might be expressed in the statement: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (compare with Matthew 24:13). Most readers have responded to the poem in this way, finding in the story of Roland's quest an inspiring expression of defiance and courage. Other readers find that the poem expresses despair more than enduring hope, and it is at least true that the landscape is as grim and nightmarelike as in 20th-century writings such as T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (1925) or Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" (1919).

The lines from Shakespeare's *King Lear* 3.4 (lines 158–60), from which the title is taken, are spoken when Lear is about to enter a hovel on the heath, and Edgar, feigning madness, chants the fragment of a song reminiscent of quests and challenges in fairy tales: "Child Roland to the dark tower come, / His word was still, 'Fie, fo, and fum; / I smell the blood of a British man." "Childe": a youth of noble birth, usually a candidate for knighthood.
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The trappings of an imagined funeral.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Literally, a domestic animal that has strayed away from its home.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A bitter-juiced weed. "Cockle": a weed that bears burrs.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, it is no use.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Turn to powder by heat.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Coarse stiff grasses.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Enclosed stable yard.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A toothed machine used for separating the fibers of flax or hemp; here an instrument of torture.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, a short distance (6–8 yards).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Revelation 9:11 Apollyon is "the angel of the bottomless pit." In *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) by John Bunyan (1628–1688) he is a hideous "monster"; "he had wings like a dragon."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: With wings or pinions like those of a dragon.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Compare with Psalms 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Handle of dagger or sword.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The war cry or slogan of a clan about to engage in battle (Scottish). In 1770, however, the poet Thomas Chatterton was misled into using it to mean a kind of trumpet or horn.

Browning followed Chatterton's example, although the original meaning would also be relevant here.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *squinting sideways*Return to reference °
- °: *would begin to*Return to reference °
- °: *coarse plant*Return to reference °
- °: *smashing*Return to reference °
- °: *ridged*Return to reference °
- °: *owl*Return to reference °
- °: *bespattered*Return to reference °
- °: *puddle*Return to reference °
- °: *dreadful arena*Return to reference °
- °: *hell's*Return to reference °
- °: *moment*Return to reference °
- °: *separate; come loose*Return to reference °

Fra Lippo Lippi[1]

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks,[2] what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's[3] my cloister: hunt it up,
Do—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,[4]
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's gripe![5]
But you,[6] sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards,° that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into this net?
He's Judas to a tittle,° that man is![7]
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin[8] to the health

Of the munificent House that harbors me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal° or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,[9]
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,°
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?[1]
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight—three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and blood,

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by° Saint Laurence,[2] hail fellow, well met—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows!
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up tomorrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,[3]
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig skins, melon parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand
(Its fellow° was a stinger as I knew),
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father

Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection time°—
"To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?"
thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope[4] that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is "amo," I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight° and have him whipped—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,

Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copybooks,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,[5]
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior,[6] "turn him out, d' ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,°
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars,[7] to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs° of barrel droppings, candle ends—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe[8] and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion° of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head
(Which the intense eyes looked through), came at eve

On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried " 'Tis ask and have;
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies—"That's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;[9]
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
It's vapor done up like a newborn babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!
Here's Giotto,[1] with his Saint a-praising God,
That sets us praising—why not stop with him?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colors, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.

Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just° my niece . . . Herodias,[2] I would say—
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks naught.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house![3]
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—

Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old;
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
Brother Lorenzo[4] stands his single peer:
Fag on° at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(Flower o' the peach,
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.°
What would men have? Do they like grass or no[5]—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled forever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:

You don’t like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden[6] and God there
A-making man’s wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can’t unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I’m a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning star’s about to shine,
What will hap some day. We’ve a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi[7]—he’ll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he’ll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what’s sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you’re my man, you’ve seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, aye or no,
For this fair town’s face, yonder river’s line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What’s it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God’s works—paint any one, and count it crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage! You must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark?° we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's° hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Aye, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folk—remember matins,
Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence[8] six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco[9] in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz° of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,

But it's scratched and prodded to our heart's
content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,°
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
. . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go,
see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's![1] Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office.[2] I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery flowery angel brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root[3]
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job,[4] I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come

Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed,° motionless and moonstruck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
He made you and devised you, after all,
Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw—
His camel-hair[5] make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!"[6] So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles° when you're gay
And play hot cockles,[7] all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-by: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks!

ca. 1853 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1: This monologue portrays the dawn of the Renaissance in Italy at a point when the medieval attitude toward life and art was about to be displaced by a fresh appreciation of earthly pleasures. It was from Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* (1550) that Browning derived most of his information about the life of the Florentine painter and friar Lippo Lippi (1406–1469), but the theory of art propounded by Lippi in the poem was developed by the poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A shortened version of *Gadzooks,* a mild oath now obscure in meaning but perhaps resembling a phrase still in use: "God's truth."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Santa Maria del Carmine, a church and cloister of the Carmelite order of friars to which Lippi belonged.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Lippi's patron, a banker and virtual ruler of Florence (1389–1464).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, how you had the arrogance to choke the gullet of someone with my connections.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The officer in charge of the patrol of policemen or watchmen.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, one of the watchmen has a face that would serve as a model for a painting of Judas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, buy a drink worth a quarter of a florin (the florin was a gold coin first minted in Florence).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Season of revelry before the commencement of Lent.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: This and other interspersed flower songs are called *stornelli* in Italy.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: San Lorenzo, a church in Florence. Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A picture of Saint Jerome (ca. 340–420), whose ascetic observances were hardly a congenial subject for a painter such as Lippi.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The material ("serge") and belt ("rope") of a monk's clothing.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Margin of a music book used for choral singing.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Head of a Carmelite convent.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Benedictine and Dominican religious orders, respectively.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Having claimed sanctuary in the church.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Went up in smoke.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Great Florentine painter (1276–1337) whose stylized pictures of religious subjects were admired as models of pre-Renaissance art.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, Salomé (her mother was Herodias, the sister-in-law of King Herod). Because John the Baptist had aroused her mother's displeasure, Salomé asked for his head on a platter after she danced (Matthew 14:6–11).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Medici palace.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Fra Angelico (1387–1455) and Lorenzo Monaco (1370–1425), whose paintings were in the approved traditional manner.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, while horses are allowed to enjoy playing in the grass, human beings are taught by the Church that physical experience is valuable only in its relation to their future condition in the afterlife. The biblical text "all flesh is as grass" (1 Peter 1:24) lurks within Lippi's question.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, Eden.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Guidi or Masaccio (1401–1428), a painter who may have been Lippi's master rather than his pupil, although Browning, in a letter to the press in 1870, argued that Lippi had been born earlier. Like Lippi, Masaccio was in revolt against the medieval theory of art. His frescoes in the chapel of Santa Maria del Carmine are considered his masterpiece.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A scene representing the fiery martyrdom of St. Laurence (or Lawrence).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Painted on a freshly plastered surface. It must be painted quickly before the plaster dries. Prato is a town near

Florence.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: A convent church in Florence.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sample of my work. The completed painting, which Browning saw in Florence, is Lippi's *Coronation of the Virgin* (1441).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A powder (like talcum) made from sweet-smelling roots of a flower.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The prosperous man who endured immense suffering without once questioning God's will (see the book of Job).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare with Mark 1:6: "And John was clothed with camel's hair."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: This man made the work! (Latin). In this painting, as later completed, these words appear beside a figure that Browning took to be Lippi's self-portrait.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A game in which a player wears a blindfold.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *small fish*Return to reference °
- °: *to a tee*Return to reference °
- °: *piece of charcoal*Return to reference °
- °: *private den*Return to reference °
- °: *next to*Return to reference °
- °: *her other hand*Return to reference °
- °: *mealtime*Return to reference °
- °: *Florentine magistrates*Return to reference °
- °: *skill, genius*Return to reference °
- °: *petty thefts*Return to reference °
- °: *sufferings*Return to reference °
- °: *exactly like*Return to reference °
- °: *work hard*Return to reference °
- °: *straw*Return to reference °
- °: *observe*Return to reference °

- °: *rascal's* Return to reference °
- °: *face* Return to reference °
- °: *knows* Return to reference °
- °: *confused* Return to reference °
- °: *skirts* Return to reference °

Andrea del Sarto[1]

(*called "The Faultless Painter"*)

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him—but tomorrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,[2]
Both of one mind, as married people use,°
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up tomorrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
Tomorrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves° a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds![3]
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—

My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.[4]
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common grayness silvers everything[5]—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know)—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel top;
That length of convent wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon,° the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,

I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's[6] talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
I do what many dream of, all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone[7] says
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's[8] outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate[9] who died five years ago.
('Tis copied,[1] George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe,[2] and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo![°]
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"

I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat°—somewhat, too, the power
—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here.
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis,[3] that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?

And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange° whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Aye, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost—

Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls[4] speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay?[5] you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? Tomorrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,

And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak.° Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi° for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! What does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age tonight.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.[6]
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have labored somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems tonight.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance
—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,[7]
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,°
For Leonard,[8] Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

ca. 1853 1855

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This portrait of Andrea del Sarto (1486–1531) was derived from a biography written by his pupil Giorgio Vasari, author of *The Lives of the Painters* (1550). Vasari's account seeks to explain why his Florentine master, one of the most skillful painters of the Renaissance, never altogether fulfilled the promise he had shown early in his career and why he had never arrived (in Vasari's opinion) at the level of such artists as Raphael. Vasari noted that Andrea suffered from "a certain timidity of mind . . . which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardor and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character, should ever appear in him."

  Browning also follows Vasari's account of Andrea's marriage to a beautiful widow, Lucrezia, "an artful woman who made him do as she pleased in all things." Vasari reports that Andrea's "immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art" and that this infatuation had "more influence over him than the glory and honor towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A suburb on the hills overlooking Florence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Coils of hair like the coils of a serpent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Her affections are centered on no one person, not even on her husband, yet she is nevertheless dear to him.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The predominant color in many of Andrea's paintings is silver gray.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A deputy of the pope.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Probably the artist Michelangelo (1475–1564).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A mountain peak outside Florence.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Raphael (1483–1520), or Raffaello Sanzio, born at Urbino.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In saying that the painting is a copy, Andrea may perhaps be concerned to prevent Lucrezia from selling it.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Whistle or call used by hunters to lure wild fowl into range.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King Francis I of France (1494–1547; reigned 1515–47) had invited Andrea to his court at Fontainebleau and warmly encouraged him in his painting. On returning to Florence, however, Andrea is reputed to have stolen some funds entrusted to him by Francis; and to please Lucrezia he built a house with the money. Now he is afraid of being insulted by "Paris lords" on the streets.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Scops owls; the term is Browning's coinage from the Italian *chiù* or *ciù*, a name that imitates their cry.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Lucrezia's "Cousin" (or lover or friend) owes gambling debts to a creditor. Andrea has already contracted (lines 5–10) to pay off these debts by painting some pictures according to the creditor's specifications. Now he agrees to pay off further debts.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: According to Vasari, Andrea's infatuation with Lucrezia prompted him to stop supporting his poverty-stricken parents.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See Revelation 21:10–21, which gives a description of "that great city, the holy Jerusalem."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519).Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *usually are*Return to reference °
- °: *saves the expense of*Return to reference °
- °: *drawing*Return to reference °
- °: *Michelangelo*Return to reference °

- °: *of some importance* Return to reference °
- °: *farmhouse* Return to reference °
- °: *whim* Return to reference °
- °: *Italian coins* Return to reference °
- °: *measuring rod* Return to reference °

Caliban upon Setebos Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1610–11) provided Browning with the idea for his speaker (Caliban is a half-man, half-beast, enslaved by Prospero) and the subject of his musings (Setebos is briefly referred to in the play as the god of Caliban's mother, the witch Sycorax). From these beginnings Browning wrote a poem that reflects on two closely related controversies of the Victorian period. The first concerned the nature of God and God's responsibility for the existence of pain in the world. The second debate, stimulated by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), focused on humanity's origins and our relation to other beings.

Caliban upon Setebos is a particularly challenging poem by a sometimes difficult writer, who often employs racist depictions of Caliban. In terms of grammar, it is worth noting that Caliban uses the third-person pronoun to refer to himself. Thus " 'Will sprawl" means "Caliban will sprawl" (an apostrophe before the verb usually indicates that Caliban is the implied subject). Setebos is also referred to in the third person but with an initial capital letter ("He").

Caliban upon Setebos

Or Natural Theology in the Island

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."[1]

['Will sprawl, now that the heat of day is best,
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his chin.
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool slush,
And feels about his spine small eft-things°
Run in and out each arm, and make him laugh:
And while above his head a pompion° plant,
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and beard,
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and crunch—
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams cross
And recross till they weave a spider web
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at times)
And talks to his own self, howe'er he please,
Touching that other, whom his dam° called God.
Because to talk about Him, vexes—ha,
Could He but know! and time to vex is now,
When talk is safer than in wintertime.
Moreover Prosper and Miranda[2] sleep
In confidence he drudges at their task,
And it is good to cheat the pair, and gibe,°
Letting the rank tongue blossom into speech.]

Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!
'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the moon.

'Thinketh He made it, with the sun to match,
But not the stars; the stars came otherwise;
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as that:
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:
He hated that He cannot change His cold,
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
And thaw herself within the lukewarm brine
O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of wave;[3]
Only, she ever sickened, found repulse
At the other kind of water, not her life,
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the sun)
Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
And in her old bounds buried her despair,
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this isle,
Trees and the fowls here, beast and creeping thing.
Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;
Yon auk,° one fire-eye in a ball of foam,
That floats and feeds; a certain badger brown
He hath watched hunt with that slant white-wedge eye
By moonlight; and the pie° with the long tongue
That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,
And says a plain word when she finds her prize,
But will not eat the ants; the ants themselves
That build a wall of seeds and settled stalks
About their hole—He made all these and more,

Made all we see, and us, in spite: how else?
He could not, Himself, make a second self
To be His mate; as well have made Himself:
He would not make what he mislikes or slights,
An eyesore to Him, or not worth His pains:
But did, in envy, listlessness, or sport,
Make what Himself would fain,° in a manner, be—
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,
Things He admires and mocks too—that is it.
Because, so brave, so better though they be,
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.[4]
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss—
Then, when froth rises bladdery,° drink up all,
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;
Last, throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.
Put case, unable to be what I wish,
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban
Able to fly?—for, there, see, he hath wings,
And great comb like the hoopoe's[5] to admire,
And there, a sting to do his foes offense,
There, and I will that he begin to live,
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns
Of griggs° high up that make the merry din,
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,
And he lay stupid-like—why, I should laugh;
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again—
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else

Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,
And give the mankin° three sound legs for one,
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,
And lessoned° he was mine and merely clay.
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,
Making and marring clay at will? So He.
'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs
That march now from the mountain to the sea;
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,
Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?
That they, unless through Him, do naught at all,
And must submit: what other use in things?
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth,
"I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,
I make the cry my maker cannot make

With his great round mouth; he must blow through mine!”
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.

But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that,
What knows—the something over Setebos
That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing,[6] perchance.
There may be something quiet o’er His head,
Out of His reach, that feels nor° joy nor grief,
Since both derive from weakness in some way.
I joy because the quails come; would not joy
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.
’Esteemeth° stars the outposts of its couch,
But never spends much thought nor care that way.
It may look up, work up—the worse for those
It works on! ’Careth but for Setebos[7]
The many-handed as a cuttlefish,
Who, making Himself feared through what He does,
Looks up, first, and perceives he cannot soar
To what is quiet and hath happy life;
Next looks down here, and out of very spite
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,
These good things to match those as hips[8] do grapes.
’Tis solace making baubles, aye, and sport.
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his books
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:
Vexed, ’stitched a book of broad leaves, arrow-shaped,
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious words;
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter’s robe

The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;[9]
And hath an ounce[1] sleeker than youngling mole,
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and couch,
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind his eye,
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:
'Keeps for his Ariel[2] a tall pouch-bill crane
He bids go wade for fish and straight° disgorge;
Also a sea beast, lumpish, which he snared,
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat tame,
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the drudge
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;
A bitter heart that bides its time and bites.
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,
Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so He.
His dam held that the Quiet made all things
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.
Who made them weak, meant weakness He might vex.
Had He meant other, while His hand was in,
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could prick,
Or plate my scalp with bone against the snow,
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and joint,
Like an orc's° armor? Aye—so spoil His sport!
He is the One now: only He doth all.

'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits Him.
Aye, himself loves what does him good; but why?
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded beast
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but hate
Or love, just as it liked him: He hath eyes.
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,
Use all His hands, and exercise much craft,
By no means for the love of what is worked.
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the world

When all goes right, in this safe summertime,
And he wants little, hungers, aches not much,
Than trying what to do with wit and strength.
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile of turfs,
And squared and stuck there squares of soft white chalk,
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon on each,
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,
And crowned the whole with a sloth's skull a-top,
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one to kill.
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole sake;
'Shall some day knock it down again: so He.

'Saith He is terrible: watch His feats in proof!
One hurricane will spoil six good months' hope.
He hath a spite against me, that I know,
Just as He favors Prosper, who knows why?
So it is, all the same, as well I find.
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them firm
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one wave,
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large tongue,
And licked the whole labor flat; so much for spite.
'Saw a ball° flame down late (yonder it lies)
Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:
Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!
'Dug up a newt He may have envied once
And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.
Please Him and hinder this?—What Prosper does?[3]
Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!
There is the sport: discover how or die!
All need not die, for of the things o' the isle
Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;
Those at His mercy—why, they please Him most

When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice!
Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.
You must not know His ways, and play Him off,
Sure of the issue.° ’Doth the like himself:
’Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears
But steals[4] the nut from underneath my thumb,
And when I threat, bites stoutly in defense:
’Spareth an urchin° that contrariwise
Curls up into a ball, pretending death
For fright at my approach: the two ways please.
But what would move my choler more than this,
That either creature counted on its life
Tomorrow and next day and all days to come,
Saying, forsooth, in the inmost of its heart,
“Because he did so yesterday with me,
And otherwise with such another brute,
So must he do henceforth and always.”—Aye?
Would teach the reasoning couple what “must” means!
’Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.

’Conceiveth all things will continue thus,
And we shall have to live in fear of Him
So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,
If He have done His best, make no new world
To please Him more, so leave off watching this—
If He surprise not even the Quiet’s self
Some strange day—or, suppose, grow into it
As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,
And there is He, and nowhere help at all.
’Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.
His dam held different, that after death
He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:
Idly![5] He doth His worst in this our life,

Giving just respite lest we die through pain,
Saving last pain for worst—with which, an end.
Meanwhile, the best way to escape His ire
Is, not to seem too happy. 'Sees, himself,
Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,
Bask on the pompion° -bell above: kills both.
'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball
On head and tail as if to save their lives:
Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.

Even so, 'would have Him misconceive, suppose
This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,
And always, above all else, envies Him;
Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,
Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,
And never speaks his mind save housed as now:
Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,
O'erheard this speech, and asked "What chucklest at?"
'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,
Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,
Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,
Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:
While myself lit a fire, and made a song
And sung it, *"What I hate, be consecrate*
To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate
For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?"
Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,
Warts rub away and sores are cured with slime,
That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch
And conquer Setebos, or likelier He
Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,

There scuds His raven[6] that has told Him all!
It was fool's play this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,[7]
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there,
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks,° so he may 'scape!]

ca. 1860 1864

Endnotes

- Note 1: Psalms 50:21. The speaker is God.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Prospero's daughter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, the thin stream of cold water that is driven into the warm ocean like a spike between walls.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the superior virtues of Setebos's creatures are no help to them if he decides to torture them.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Bird with bright plumage.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: "Did to nothing": completely overcame.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Caliban's concern is to appease only Setebos, not the other deity—the Quiet.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hard fruits produced by some roses.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Browning may have invented this term from the Spanish *oncela* or from the French *ocelot* (that is, a leopard or spotted wildcat).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A lynx or other wild feline of moderate size or a snow leopard.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: In *The Tempest* a spirit who serves Prospero.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, shall I please Setebos, as Prospero does, and thus prevent my being punished as the newt was punished? Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the squirrel that is fearless enough to steal.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, Caliban thinks his mother's opinion was wrong or idle. Setebos's sport with his creatures is confined to this world: there is no afterlife.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Norse mythology ravens brought the daily news to Odin, the most powerful god.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The whirlwind stirs up a column of dust that Caliban associates with a house of death.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *water lizards*Return to reference °
- °: *pumpkin*Return to reference °
- °: *mother*Return to reference °
- °: *insult them*Return to reference °
- °: *seabird*Return to reference °
- °: *magpie*Return to reference °
- °: *gladly*Return to reference °
- °: *bubbly*Return to reference °
- °: *grasshoppers*Return to reference °
- °: *little man*Return to reference °
- °: *thus taught*Return to reference °
- °: *neither*Return to reference °
- °: *he believes*Return to reference °
- °: *immediately*Return to reference °
- °: *sea monster's*Return to reference °
- °: *meteorite*Return to reference °
- °: *outcome*Return to reference °
- °: *hedgehog*Return to reference °

- °: *pumpkin*Return to reference °
- °: *shellfish*Return to reference °

Rabbi Ben Ezra[1]

1

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!"

2

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

3

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

4

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?[2]

5

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

6

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe![°]

7

For thence—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:

A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

8

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

9

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once, "How good to live and learn"?

10

Not once beat, "Praise be Thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete—I trust what Thou shalt do!"

11

For pleasant is this flesh;

Our soul, in its rose-mesh[3]
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute—gain most, as we did best!

12

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh today
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

13

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

14

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new;[4]
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armor to indue.°

15

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes,[5] what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

16

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

17

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

18

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act tomorrow what he learns today:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

19

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt°
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor° be afraid!

20

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

21

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,[6]
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

22

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;

Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul
believe?

23

Not on the vulgar° mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

24

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,[7]
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's
amount:

25

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.[8]

26

Aye, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay—
Thou, to whom fools propound,[9]
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize today!"

27

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

28

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic° circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:[1]
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

29

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves[2]
Around thy base,[3] no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

30

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

31

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

32

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

ca. 1862 1864

Endnotes

- Note 1: The speaker, Abraham Ibn Ezra (ca. 1092–1167), was an eminent biblical scholar of Spain, but Browning makes little attempt to present him as a distinct individual or to relate him to the age in which he lived. Unlike the more characteristic

monologues, “Rabbi Ben Ezra” presents a meditation on a theme, not an individual in the grip of a dramatic situation.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, does care disturb a bird whose gullet (“crop”) is full of food? Does doubt trouble an animal whose stomach (“maw”) is full?Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The body, which holds the soul in its net.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the next life.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: If the fire leaves ashes.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, was I, whom the world arraigned.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Allusion to a merchant or buyer feeling fabric to determine its price or value.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The speaker’s highest qualities of soul were shaped on a potting wheel into an enduring “pitcher” or vessel by God. Compare with Isaiah 64:8: “Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.”Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Perhaps addressed to the Persian philosopher Omar Khayyám (1048–1131), whose poem, *The Rubáiyát,* urged men to eat, drink, and be merry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, you would be glad to stop (“arrest”) time at this present point of your life.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: May refer to figures of cherublike boys, often featured in Renaissance art.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Of the clay pitcher.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *anguish*Return to reference °
- °: *put on*Return to reference °
- °: *attempt*Return to reference °
- °: *and do not*Return to reference °
- °: *common*Return to reference °

- °: *molded*Return to reference °

EMILY BRONTË
1818–1848

Emily Brontë spent most of her life in a stone parsonage in the small village of Haworth on the wild and bleak Yorkshire moors. She was the fifth of Patrick and Maria Brontë's six children. Her father was a clergyman; her mother died when she was three. At the age of six, she was sent away to a school for the daughters of poor clergy with her three elder sisters; within a year, the two oldest girls had died, in part the result of the school's harsh and unhealthy conditions, which Charlotte Brontë was later to portray in *Jane Eyre* (1847). Mr. Brontë brought Charlotte and Emily home and, together with their brother Branwell and younger sister Anne, educated them himself. Emily was the most reclusive and private of the children; she shunned the company of those outside her family and suffered acutely from homesickness in her few short stays away from the parsonage.

Despite the isolation of Haworth, the Brontë family shared a rich literary life. Mr. Brontë discussed poetry, history, and politics with his children, and the children themselves created an extraordinary fantasy world together. When Mr. Brontë gave Branwell a box of wooden soldiers, each child excitedly seized one and named it. The soldiers became for them the center of an increasingly elaborate set of stories that they first acted out in plays and later recorded in a series of book-length manuscripts, composed for the most part by Charlotte and Branwell. The two younger children, Emily and Anne,

later started a separate series, a chronicle about an imaginary island called Gondal.

In 1850 Charlotte Brontë told the story of how she and her sisters came to write for publication. One day when she accidentally came upon a manuscript volume of verse in Emily's handwriting, she was struck by the conviction "that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write." With some difficulty, Charlotte persuaded her intensely private sister to publish some of her poems in a selection of poetry by all three Brontë sisters. Averse to personal publicity and afraid that "authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice," Charlotte, Emily, and Anne adopted the pseudonyms of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. Although the 1846 book sold only two copies, its publication inspired each of the Brontë sisters to begin work on a novel; Emily's was *Wuthering Heights* (1847). The initial critical reception of the novel was extremely negative. As one reviewer wrote, "the only consolation which we have . . . is that it will never be generally read." *Wuthering Heights* has gone on to be one of the most famous and influential novels of the period. Brontë began work on a second novel, but a year after the publication of *Wuthering Heights*, she died of tuberculosis.

Many of Brontë's poems—"Remembrance" and "The Prisoner," for example—were written for the Gondal saga and express its preoccupation with political intrigue, passionate love, rebellion, war, imprisonment, and exile. Brontë also wrote personal lyrics unconnected with the Gondal stories; but both groups of poems share a drive to break through the constrictions of ordinary life, whether by the transfigurative power of the imagination, by union with another, or by death itself. Like Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights,* the speakers of Brontë's poems yearn for a fuller, freer world of spirit, transcending the forms and limits of mortal life. Her concern with a visionary world links her to the Romantic poets, particularly to Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley; but her hymnlike stanzas have a haunting quality that distinguishes her individual voice.

I’m happiest when most away

I’m happiest when most away
I can bear my soul from its home of clay
On a windy night when the moon is bright
And the eye can wander through worlds of light—
When I am not and none beside—
Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky—
But only spirit wandering wide
Through infinite immensity.

1838 1910

The Night-Wind

In summer's mellow midnight,
A cloudless moon shone through
Our open parlour window
And rosetrees wet with dew.

I sat in silent musing,
The soft wind waved my hair:
It told me Heaven was glorious.
And sleeping Earth was fair.

I needed not its breathing
To bring such thoughts to me,
But still it whispered lowly,
"How dark the woods will be!

"The thick leaves in my murmur
Are rustling like a dream,
And all their myriad voices
Instinct° with spirit seem."

I said, "Go, gentle singer,
Thy wooing voice is kind,
But do not think its music
Has power to reach my mind.

"Play with the scented flower,
The young tree's supple bough,
And leave my human feelings
In their own course to flow."

The wanderer would not leave me;
Its kiss grew warmer still—

"O come," it sighed so sweetly,
"I'll win thee 'gainst thy will.

"Have we not been from childhood friends?
Have I not loved thee long?
As long as thou hast loved the night
Whose silence wakes my song.

"And when thy heart is laid at rest
Beneath the church-yard stone
I shall have time enough to mourn
And thou to be alone."

Notes

- °: *imbued*Return to reference °

Remembrance[1]

Cold in the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee!
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my Only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-wearing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore;
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth, and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills have melted into spring—
Faithful indeed is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive if I forget thee
While the World's tide is bearing me along:
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure but cannot do thee wrong.

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me:
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given—
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But when the days of golden dreams had perished
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened and fed without the aid of joy;

Then did I check the tears of useless passion,
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine!

And even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in Memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

1845 1846

Endnotes

- Note 1: Titled in manuscript "R. Alcona to J. Breznaida," this poem was originally composed as a lament by the heroine of the Gondal saga for the hero's death.Return to reference 1

Stars

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun
Restored our earth to joy
Have you departed, every one,
And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
Were gazing down in mine,
And with a full heart's thankful sighs
I blessed that watch divine!

I was at peace, and drank your beams
As they were life to me
And revelled in my changeful dreams
Like petrel° on the sea.

Thought followed thought—star followed star
Through boundless regions on,
While one sweet influence, near and far,
Thrilled through and proved us one.

Why did the morning dawn to break
So great, so pure a spell,
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek
Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red he rose, and arrow-straight
His fierce beams struck my brow:
The soul of Nature sprang elate,
But mine sank sad and low!

My lids closed down—yet through their veil
I saw him blazing still;

And steep in gold the misty dale
And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow then
To call back Night, and see
Your worlds of solemn light, again
Throb with my heart and me!

It would not do—the pillow glowed
And glowed both roof and floor,
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
And fresh winds shook the door.

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise
And give them leave to roam.

O Stars and Dreams and Gentle Night;
O Night and Stars return!
And hide me from the hostile light
That does not warm, but burn—

That drains the blood of suffering men;
Drinks tears, instead of dew:
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
And only wake with you!

1845 1846

Notes

- °: *small dark seabirds* Return to reference °

The Prisoner. A Fragment[1]

In the dungeon crypts idly did I stray,
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;
"Draw the ponderous bars; open, Warder stern!"
He dare not say me nay—the hinges harshly turn.

"Our guests are darkly lodged," I whispered, gazing through
The vault whose grated eye showed heaven more grey than blue.
(This was when glad spring laughed in awaking pride.)
"Aye, darkly lodged enough!" returned my sullen guide.

Then, God forgive my youth, forgive my careless tongue!
I scoffed, as the chill chains on the damp flagstones rung;
"Confined in triple walls, art thou so much to fear,
That we must bind thee down and clench thy fetters here?"

The captive raised her face; it was as soft and mild
As sculptured marble saint or slumbering, unweaned child;
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair,
Pain could not trace a line nor grief a shadow there!

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow:
"I have been struck," she said, "and I am suffering now;
Yet these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong;
And were they forged in steel they could not hold me long."

Hoarse laughed the jailor grim: "Shall I be won to hear;
Dost think, fond° dreaming wretch, that *I* shall grant thy prayer?
Or, better still, wilt melt my master's heart with groans?
Ah, sooner might the sun thaw down these granite stones!

"My master's voice is low, his aspect bland and kind,
But hard as hardest flint the soul that lurks behind;
And I am rough and rude, yet not more rough to see
Than is the hidden ghost which has its home in me!"

About her lips there played a smile of almost scorn:
"My friend," she gently said, "you have not heard me mourn;
When you my kindred's lives—*my* lost life, can restore
Then may I weep and sue—but *never*, Friend, before!

"Still, let my tyrants know, I am not doomed to wear
Year after year in gloom and desolate despair;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me,
And offers, for short life, eternal liberty.

"He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars;
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise and change that kill me with desire—

"Desire for nothing known in my maturer years
When joy grew mad with awe at counting future tears;
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm;

"But first a hush of peace, a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony
That I could never dream till earth was lost to me.

"Then dawns the Invisible, the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels—
Its wings are almost free, its home, its harbour found;
Measuring the gulf it stoops and dares the final bound!

"Oh, dreadful is the check—intense the agony
When the ear begins to hear and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again,
The soul to feel the flesh and the flesh to feel the chain!

"Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks the earlier it will bless;
And robed in fires of Hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald Death, the vision is divine."[2]

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering turned to go—
We had no further power to work the captive woe;
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence unapproved, and overruled by Heaven.

1845 1846

Endnotes

- Note 1: An excerpt from a poem in the Gondal manuscript, "Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle," describing an event unplaced in the story, this poem was printed as "The Prisoner. A Fragment" in *Poems* (1846) by the Brontë sisters. The speaker, a man, is visiting a dungeon in his father's castle.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with the words of the dying Catherine in *Wuthering Heights* (1847), chap. 15: "The thing that irks me most is this shattered prison [my body]. . . . I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world, and to be always there. . . . I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all."Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *foolish*Return to reference °

No coward soul is mine[1]

No coward soul is mine
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere
I see Heaven's glories shine
And Faith shines equal arming me from Fear

O God within my breast
Almighty ever-present Deity
Life, that in me hast rest
As I Undying Life, have power in Thee

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thy infinity
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of Immortality

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears

Though Earth and moon were gone
And suns and universes ceased to be
And thou wert left alone
Every Existence would exist in thee

There is not room for Death
Nor atom that his might could render void

Since thou art Being and Breath
And what thou art may never be destroyed.

1846 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: According to Charlotte Brontë, these are the last lines her sister wrote.Return to reference 1

JOHN RUSKIN
1819–1900

John Ruskin was both the leading critic of art in the mid- to late nineteenth century and an important critic of society. These two roles can be traced back to two major influences of his childhood. His father, a wealthy wine merchant, enjoyed travel, and on tours of the Continent he introduced his son to landscapes, architecture, and art. From this exposure Ruskin acquired a zest for beauty that animates even the most theoretical of his discussions of aesthetics. From his daily Bible readings under the direction of his mother, a devout Evangelical Christian, Ruskin derived some elements of his lush and highly rhythmical prose style as well as his sense of prophecy and mission as a critic of modern society.

Ruskin's life was spent in traveling, lecturing, and writing. His prodigious literary output can be roughly divided into three phases. At first he was preoccupied with problems of art. *Modern Painters* (1843–60), which he began writing at the age of twenty-three after his graduation from Oxford, was a defense of the English landscape painter J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851). This defense (which was to extend to five volumes) involved Ruskin in problems of truth in art (as in his chapter "Pathetic Fallacy") and in the ultimate importance of imagination (as in his discussion of Turner's painting *The Slave Ship*).

During the 1850s Ruskin's principal interest shifted from art to architecture, especially to the problem of determining what kind of

society is capable of producing great buildings. His enthusiasm for Gothic architecture was infectious, and he has sometimes been blamed for the prevalence of Gothic buildings on college campuses in America. A study of *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), however (especially the chapter printed here), will show that merely to revive the Gothic style was not his concern. What he wanted to revive was the kind of society that had produced such architecture, a society in which the individual workers could express themselves and enjoy what Ruskin's disciple William Morris called "work-pleasure." A mechanized production-line society, such as Ruskin's or our own, could produce not Gothic architecture but only imitations of its mannerisms. Ruskin's concern was to change industrial society, not to decorate concrete towers with gargoyles.

This interest in the stultifying effects of industrialism led Ruskin gradually into economics. After 1860 the critic of art became (like the writer he most greatly admired, Thomas Carlyle [1795–1881]) an outspoken critic of laissez-faire, or noninterventionist, economics. In *Unto This Last* (1860), for example, he sought to show that self-seeking business relationships could be reconfigured on the principle of dedicated service, taking as a model the learned professions and the military. The soldier, however unrefined, is more highly regarded by society than the capitalist, Ruskin said, "for the soldier's trade . . . is not slaying, but being slain." Although he styled himself "a violent Tory of the old school;—Walter Scott's school," he was regarded by many of his contemporaries as a radical eccentric. Yet, in time his social criticism gained a following among writers as diverse as William Morris, George Bernard Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, and the founders of the British Labour Party (1900).

Ruskin's realization, after 1860, that despite his fame he was becoming isolated and that the world was continuing to move in directions opposite from those to which he pointed may have contributed to the recurrent mental breakdowns from which he suffered between 1870 and 1900. As he reports in his memoir, *Fors Clavigera* (1880): "The doctors said I went mad, this time two years ago, from overwork," but he had not then been working harder than

usual. "I went mad because nothing came of my work . . . because after I got [my manuscripts] published, nobody believed a word of them." Also contributing to his breakdowns may have been his unhappiness in his relations with women. His marriage to Effie Gray (1828–1897) in 1848 was a disaster. After six years of living together, an annulment was arranged on the grounds that the marriage had not been consummated. One of Gray's admirers was the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Millais, who fell in love with her at a time when he was painting her husband's portrait; shortly after the annulment he married her. (Given the failure of Ruskin's marriage and subsequent romantic relationships, it is ironic that he was to produce a highly influential, and frequently reprinted, description of the ideal characters of man and woman, husband and wife, in an 1864 lecture, "Of Queens' Gardens." See the excerpt in "Women, Gender, and Sexuality" in this volume.) In later years Ruskin fell in love with a young Irish girl, Rose La Touche, whom he met when he was nearly forty and she was a child of ten. They were divided not only by the gap of age but by religious differences. She was an intensely pious believer, and for several years after Ruskin proposed marriage to her, when she was eighteen, she tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to return to the Evangelical faith that he had abandoned. In 1875, after herself experiencing bouts of mental illness, La Touche died at the age of twenty-seven.

Despite both the despair that he suffered following La Touche's death and the recurring attacks of mental illness that blighted the last thirty-five years of his life, Ruskin remained active and productive up until his final silent decade of the 1890s. His publications during his active period included six volumes of his lectures on art that he had delivered as Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Oxford and his letters to laborers, *Fors Clavigera* (1871–84). One topic that becomes especially prominent in these later writings is pollution of air and water, an ideal subject for Ruskin's eloquence. In discussing it he combines his lifelong love for beautiful landscape and landscape painting with his later acquired conviction that modern industrial leadership was woefully irresponsible. A short

section of his published lecture, “The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century” is reprinted in “The Promise and Price of Industrialization” in this volume; it captures his (prescient) sense that modern industry stood to do irreparable harm to the natural world.

From Modern Painters

[A DEFINITION OF GREATNESS IN ART][1]

Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing. He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. He has done just as much towards being that which we ought to respect as a great painter, as a man who has learnt how to express himself grammatically and melodiously has towards being a great poet. The language is, indeed, more difficult of acquirement in the one case than in the other, and possesses more power of delighting the sense, while it speaks to the intellect; but it is, nevertheless, nothing more than language, and all those excellences which are peculiar to the painter as such, are merely what rhythm, melody, precision, and force are in the words of the orator and the poet, necessary to their greatness, but not the tests of their greatness. It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is to be finally determined.

***

So that, if I say that the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas, I have a definition which will include as subjects of comparison every pleasure which art is capable of conveying. If I were to say, on the contrary, that the best picture was that which most closely imitated nature, I should assume that art could only please by imitating nature; and I should cast out of the pale[2] of criticism those parts of works of art which are not imitative, that is to say, intrinsic beauties of color and form, and those works of art wholly, which, like the

Arabesques of Raffaelle in the Loggias,[3] are not imitative at all. Now, I want a definition of art wide enough to include all its varieties of aim. I do not say, therefore, that the art is greatest which gives most pleasure, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to teach, and not to please. I do not say that the art is greatest which teaches us most, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to please, and not to teach. I do not say that the art is greatest which imitates best, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to create and not to imitate. But I say that the art is greatest which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas; and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received.

If this, then, be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas.

Endnotes

- Note 1: From vol. 1, part 1, section 1, chap. 2.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Beyond the notice or attention.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The arabesques in the Loggia of the Vatican, designed by the Italian painter Raphael (1483–1520), were decorative wall paintings that featured a complex pattern of leaves, animals, and human figures.Return to reference 3

["THE SLAVE SHIP"][4]

But I think the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of "The Slave Ship," the chief Academy[5] picture of the exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendor which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under-strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamplike fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully shed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery being. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight, and, cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.[6]

I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. Its daring conception—ideal in the highest sense of the word—is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life; its color is absolutely perfect, not one false or morbid hue in any part or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvas is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as fearless; the ship buoyant, bending, and full of motion; its tones as true as they are wonderful; and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions—completing thus the perfect system of all truth which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable Sea.

1843

Endnotes

- Note 4: From vol. 1, part 2, section 5, chap. 3.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  The Royal Academy of Arts, founded in London in 1768. The painting (included in this volume's color insert) is by the great British landscapist J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) and was originally titled "Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhoon Coming On." Turner was inspired to paint it after reading about the slave ship *Zong* in Thomas Clarkson's *History and Abolition of the Slave Trade* (1808). In 1781, the *Zong*'s captain ordered 133 sick and dying slaves thrown overboard so that insurance money available only for slaves "lost at sea" could be collected. The painting was given to Ruskin by his father as a New Year's present in 1844 and hung in the Ruskin household for a number of years until Ruskin decided to sell it because he found its subject "too painful to live with." It now hangs in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.
  Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Compare with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 2.2.60: "this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine." "Incarnadines": reddens.Return to reference 6

From *Of the Pathetic Fallacy*[7]

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Now therefore, putting these tiresome and absurd words[8] quite out of our way, we may go on at our ease to examine the point in question—namely, the difference between the ordinary, proper, and true appearances of things to us; and the extraordinary, or false appearances, when we are under the influence of emotion, or contemplative fancy; false appearances, I say, as being entirely unconnected with any real power of character in the object, and only imputed to it by us.

For instance—

> The spendthrift crocus, bursting through the mold
> Naked and shivering, with his cup of gold.[9]

This is very beautiful, and yet very untrue. The crocus is not a spendthrift, but a hardy plant; its yellow is not gold, but saffron. How is it that we enjoy so much the having it put into our heads that it is anything else than a plain crocus?

It is an important question. For, throughout our past reasonings about art, we have always found that nothing could be good or useful, or ultimately pleasurable, which was untrue. But here is something pleasurable in written poetry, which is nevertheless *un*true. And what is more, if we think over our favorite poetry, we shall find it full of this kind of fallacy, and that we like it all the more for being so.

It will appear also, on consideration of the matter, that this fallacy is of two principal kinds. Either, as in this case of the crocus, it is the fallacy of willful fancy, which involves no real expectation that it will be believed; or else it is a fallacy caused by an excited state of the feelings, making us, for the time, more or less irrational. Of the cheating of the fancy we shall have to speak presently; but,

in this chapter, I want to examine the nature of the other error, that which the mind admits when affected strongly by emotion. Thus, for instance, in *Alton Locke*—

> They rowed her in across the rolling foam—
> The cruel, crawling foam.[1]

The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief. All violent feelings have the same effect. They produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things, which I would generally characterize as the "pathetic fallacy."

Now we are in the habit of considering this fallacy as eminently a character of poetical description, and the temper of mind in which we allow it, as one eminently poetical, because passionate. But, I believe, if we look well into the matter, that we shall find the greatest poets do not often admit this kind of falseness—that it is only the second order of poets who much delight in it.

Thus, when Dante describes the spirits falling from the bank of Acheron "as dead leaves flutter from a bough,"[2] he gives the most perfect image possible of their utter lightness, feebleness, passiveness, and scattering agony of despair, without, however, for an instant losing his own clear perception that *these* are souls, and *those* are leaves: he makes no confusion of one with the other. But when Coleridge speaks of

> The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
> That dances as often as dance it can,[3]

he has a morbid, that is to say, a so far false, idea about the leaf: he fancies a life in it, and will, which there are not; confuses its powerlessness with choice, its fading death with merriment, and the wind that shakes it with music. Here, however, there is some beauty, even in the morbid passage; but take an instance in Homer and Pope. Without the knowledge of Ulysses, Elpenor, his youngest

follower, has fallen from an upper chamber in the Circean palace, and has been left dead, unmissed by his leader or companions, in the haste of their departure. They cross the sea to the Cimmerian land; and Ulysses summons the shades from Tartarus.[4] The first which appears is that of the lost Elpenor. Ulysses, amazed, and in exactly the spirit of bitter and terrified lightness which is seen in Hamlet, addresses the spirit with the simple, startled words: "Elpenor! How earnest thou under the shadowy darkness? Hast thou come faster on foot than I in my black ship?"[5] Which Pope renders thus:

> O, say, what angry power Elpenor led
> To glide in shades, and wander with the dead?
> How could thy soul, by realms and seas disjoined,
> Outfly the nimble sail, and leave the lagging wind?

I sincerely hope the reader finds no pleasure here, either in the nimbleness of the sail, or the laziness of the wind! And yet how is it that these conceits[6] are so painful now, when they have been pleasant to us in the other instances?

For a very simple reason. They are not a *pathetic* fallacy at all, for they are put into the mouth of the wrong passion—a passion which never could possibly have spoken them—agonized curiosity. Ulysses wants to know the facts of the matter; and the very last thing his mind could do at the moment would be to pause, or suggest in anywise what was *not* a fact. The delay in the first three lines, and conceit in the last, jar upon us instantly, like the most frightful discord in music. No poet of true imaginative power would possibly have written the passage.

Therefore, we see that the spirit of truth must guide us in some sort, even in our enjoyment of fallacy. Coleridge's fallacy has no discord in it, but Pope's has set our teeth on edge. * * *

1856

Endnotes

- Note 7:
  From vol. 3, part 4, chap. 12. In this celebrated chapter Ruskin shifts from discussing problems of truth and realism in art to the same problems in literature. The term *pathetic* refers not to something feebly ineffective but to the emotion (pathos) with which a writer invests highlighting of objects and to the distortion (fallacy) that may result. Poets such as Tennyson protested that Ruskin was being unfairly rigorous in highlighting the fallacy, and Ruskin himself falls into it often. See, for example, his reference to "the guilty ship" in his discussion of Turner's *The Slave Ship* (p. 466).
  Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The metaphysical terms *objective* and *subjective* as applied to kinds of truth.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From "Astraea" (1850), a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: From chap. 26 of the novel *Alton Locke* (1850) by Charles Kingsley (1819–1875).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Inferno* 3.112, by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321). Acheron is a river of the classical underworld.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *Christabel* (1816), lines 49–50, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In classical mythology the lowest region of the underworld.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Odyssey* (8th century B.C.E.) 11.51. The translation by Alexander Pope (1688–1744) was published in 1715–20.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Extended poetic devices.Return to reference 6

From The Stones of Venice

[THE SAVAGENESS OF GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE][1]

I am not sure when the word "Gothic" was first generically applied to the architecture of the North; but I presume that, whatever the date of its original usage, it was intended to imply reproach, and express the barbaric character of the nations among whom that architecture arose. It never implied that they were literally of Gothic lineage, far less that their architecture had been originally invented by the Goths themselves; but it did imply that they and their buildings together exhibited a degree of sternness and rudeness,[2] which, in contradistinction to the character of Southern and Eastern nations, appeared like a perpetual reflection of the contrast between the Goth and the Roman in their first encounter. And when that fallen Roman, in the utmost impotence of his luxury, and insolence of his guilt, became the model for the imitation of civilized Europe,[3] at the close of the so-called Dark Ages, the word Gothic became a term of unmitigated contempt, not unmixed with aversion. From that contempt, by the exertion of the antiquaries and architects of this century, Gothic architecture has been sufficiently vindicated; and perhaps some among us, in our admiration of the magnificent science of its structure, and sacredness of its expression, might desire that the term of ancient reproach should be withdrawn, and some other, of more apparent honorableness, adopted in its place. There is no chance, as there is no need, of such a substitution. As far as the epithet was used scornfully, it was used falsely; but there is no reproach in the word, rightly understood; on the contrary, there is a profound truth, which the instinct of mankind almost unconsciously recognizes. It is true, greatly and deeply true, that the architecture of the North is rude and wild; but it is not true that, for this reason, we are to condemn it, or despise. Far otherwise: I

believe it is in this very character that it deserves our profoundest reverence.

The charts of the world which have been drawn up by modern science have thrown into a narrow space the expression of a vast amount of knowledge, but I have never yet seen any one pictorial enough to enable the spectator to imagine the kind of contrast in physical character which exists between Northern and Southern countries. We know the differences in detail, but we have not that broad glance and grasp which would enable us to feel them in their fullness. We know that gentians grow on the Alps, and olives on the Apennines; but we do not enough conceive for ourselves that variegated mosaic of the world's surface which a bird sees in its migration, that difference between the district of the gentian and of the olive which the stork and the swallow see far off, as they lean upon the sirocco wind.[4] Let us, for a moment, try to raise ourselves even above the level of their flight, and imagine the Mediterranean lying beneath us like an irregular lake, and all its ancient promontories sleeping in the sun: here and there an angry spot of thunder, a gray stain of storm, moving upon the burning field; and here and there a fixed wreath of white volcano smoke, surrounded by its circle of ashes; but for the most part a great peacefulness of light, Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of a golden pavement into the sea-blue, chased, as we stoop nearer to them, with bossy[5] beaten work of mountain chains, and glowing softly with terraced gardens, and flowers heavy with frankincense, mixed among masses of laurel, and orange, and plumy palm, that abate with their gray-green shadows the burning of the marble rocks, and of the ledges of porphyry sloping under lucent sand. Then let us pass farther towards the north, until we see the orient colors change gradually into a vast belt of rainy green, where the pastures of Switzerland, and poplar valleys of France, and dark forests of the Danube and Carpathians stretch from the mouths of the Loire to those of the Volga, seen through clefts in gray swirls of rain cloud and flaky veils of the mist of the brooks, spreading low along the pasture lands: and then, farther north still, to see the earth heave

into mighty masses of leaden rock and heathy moor, bordering with a broad waste of gloomy purple that belt of field and wood, and splintering into irregular and grisly islands amidst the northern seas, beaten by storm, and chilled by ice drift, and tormented by furious pulses of contending tide, until the roots of the last forests fail from among the hill ravines, and the hunger of the north wind bites their peaks into barrenness; and, at last, the wall of ice, durable like iron, sets, deathlike, its white teeth against us out of the polar twilight. And, having once traversed in thought this gradation of the zoned iris of the earth in all its material vastness, let us go down nearer to it, and watch the parallel change in the belt of animal life: the multitudes of swift and brilliant creatures that glance in the air and sea, or tread the sands of the southern zone; striped zebras and spotted leopards, glistening serpents, and birds arrayed in purple and scarlet. Let us contrast their delicacy and brilliancy of color, and swiftness of motion, with the frost-cramped strength, and shaggy covering, and dusky plumage of the northern tribes; contrast the Arabian horse with the Shetland,[6] the tiger and leopard with the wolf and bear, the antelope with the elk, the bird of paradise with the osprey: and then, submissively acknowledging the great laws by which the earth and all that it bears are ruled throughout their being, let us not condemn, but rejoice in the expression by man of his own rest in the statutes of the lands that gave him birth. Let us watch him with reverence as he sets side by side the burning gems, and smooths with soft sculpture the jasper pillars, that are to reflect a ceaseless sunshine, and rise into a cloudless sky: but not with less reverence let us stand by him, when, with rough strength and hurried stroke, he smites an uncouth animation out of the rocks which he has torn from among the moss of the moorland, and heaves into the darkened air the pile of iron buttress and rugged wall, instinct with[7] work of an imagination as wild and wayward as the northern sea; creations of ungainly shape and rigid limb, but full of wolfish life; fierce as the winds that beat, and changeful as the clouds that shade them.

There is, I repeat, no degradation, no reproach in this, but all dignity and honorableness: and we should err grievously in refusing either to recognize as an essential character of the existing architecture of the North, or to admit as a desirable character in that which it yet may be, this wildness of thought, and roughness of work; this look of mountain brotherhood between the cathedral and the Alp; this magnificence of sturdy power, put forth only the more energetically because the fine finger-touch was chilled away by the frosty wind, and the eye dimmed by the moor mist, or blinded by the hail; this outspeaking of the strong spirit of men who may not gather redundant fruitage from the earth, nor bask in dreamy benignity of sunshine, but must break the rock for bread, and cleave the forest for fire, and show, even in what they did for their delight, some of the hard habits of the arm and heart that grew on them as they swung the ax or pressed the plow.

If, however, the savageness of Gothic architecture, merely as an expression of its origin among Northern nations, may be considered, in some sort, a noble character, it possesses a higher nobility still, when considered as an index, not of climate, but of religious principle.

In the 13th and 14th paragraphs of Chapter XXI of the first volume of this work, it was noticed that the systems of architectural ornament, properly so called, might be divided into three: (1) Servile ornament, in which the execution or power of the inferior workman is entirely subjected to the intellect of the higher; (2) Constitutional ornament, in which the executive inferior power is, to a certain point, emancipated and independent, having a will of its own, yet confessing its inferiority and rendering obedience to higher powers; and (3) Revolutionary ornament, in which no executive inferiority is admitted at all. I must here explain the nature of these divisions at somewhat greater length.

Of Servile ornament, the principal schools are the Greek, Ninevite, and Egyptian; but their servility is of different kinds. The Greek master-workman was far advanced in knowledge and power above the Assyrian or Egyptian. Neither he nor those for whom he

worked could endure the appearance of imperfection in anything; and, therefore, what ornament he appointed to be done by those beneath him was composed of mere geometrical forms—balls, ridges, and perfectly symmetrical foliage—which could be executed with absolute precision by line and rule, and were as perfect in their way, when completed, as his own figure sculpture. The Assyrian and Egyptian, on the contrary, less cognizant of accurate form in anything, were content to allow their figure sculpture to be executed by inferior workmen, but lowered the method of its treatment to a standard which every workman could reach, and then trained him by discipline so rigid that there was no chance of his falling beneath the standard appointed. The Greek gave to the lower workman no subject which he could not perfectly execute. The Assyrian gave him subjects which he could only execute imperfectly, but fixed a legal standard for his imperfection. The workman was, in both systems, a slave.

But in the medieval, or especially Christian, system of ornament, this slavery is done away with altogether; Christianity having recognized, in small things as well as great, the individual value of every soul. But it not only recognizes its value; it confesses its imperfection, in only bestowing dignity upon the acknowledgment of unworthiness. That admission of lost power and fallen nature, which the Greek or Ninevite felt to be intensely painful, and, as far as might be, altogether refused, the Christian makes daily and hourly, contemplating the fact of it without fear, as tending, in the end, to God's greater glory. Therefore, to every spirit which Christianity summons to her service, her exhortation is: Do what you can, and confess frankly what you are unable to do; neither let your effort be shortened for fear of failure, nor your confession silenced for fear of shame. And it is, perhaps, the principal admirableness of the Gothic schools of architecture, that they thus receive the results of the labor of inferior minds; and out of fragments full of imperfection, and betraying that imperfection in every touch, indulgently raise up a stately and unaccusable whole.

But the modern English mind has this much in common with that of the Greek, that it intensely desires, in all things, the utmost completion or perfection compatible with their nature. This is a noble character in the abstract, but becomes ignoble when it causes us to forget the relative dignities of that nature itself, and to prefer the perfectness of the lower nature to the imperfection of the higher; not considering that as, judged by such a rule, all the brute animals would be preferable to man, because more perfect in their functions and kind, and yet are always held inferior to him, so also in the works of man, those which are more perfect in their kind are always inferior to those which are, in their nature, liable to more faults and shortcomings. For the finer the nature, the more flaws it will show through the clearness of it; and it is a law of this universe that the best things shall be seldomest seen in their best form. The wild grass grows well and strongly, one year with another; but the wheat is, according to the greater nobleness of its nature, liable to the bitterer blight. And therefore, while in all things that we see, or do, we are to desire perfection, and strive for it, we are nevertheless not to set the meaner[8] thing, in its narrow accomplishment, above the nobler thing, in its mighty progress; not to esteem smooth minuteness above shattered majesty; not to prefer mean victory to honorable defeat; not to lower the level of our aim, that we may the more surely enjoy the complacency of success. But above all, in our dealings with the souls of other men, we are to take care how we check, by severe requirement or narrow caution, efforts which might otherwise lead to a noble issue; and, still more, how we withhold our admiration from great excellencies, because they are mingled with rough faults. Now, in the make and nature of every man, however rude or simple, whom we employ in manual labor, there are some powers for better things: some tardy imagination, torpid capacity of emotion, tottering steps of thought, there are, even at the worst; and in most cases it is all our own fault that they *are* tardy or torpid. But they cannot be strengthened, unless we are content to take them in their feebleness, and unless we prize and honor them in their imperfection above the best and most perfect manual skill. And

this is what we have to do with all our laborers; to look for the *thoughtful* part of them, and get that out of them, whatever we lose for it, whatever faults and errors we are obliged to take with it. For the best that is in them cannot manifest itself, but in company with much error. Understand this clearly: You can teach a man to draw a straight line, and to cut one; to strike a curved line, and to carve it; and to copy and carve any number of given lines or forms, with admirable speed and perfect precision; and you find his work perfect of its kind: but if you ask him to think about any of those forms, to consider if he cannot find any better in his own head, he stops; his execution becomes hesitating; he thinks, and ten to one he thinks wrong; ten to one he makes a mistake in the first touch he gives to his work as a thinking being. But you have made a man of him for all that. He was only a machine before, an animated tool.

And observe, you are put to stern choice in this matter. You must either make a tool of the creature, or a man of him. You cannot make both. Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cogwheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves. All their attention and strength must go to the accomplishment of the mean act. The eye of the soul must be bent upon the finger point, and the soul's force must fill all the invisible nerves that guide it, ten hours a day, that it may not err from its steely precision, and so soul and sight be worn away, and the whole human being be lost at last—a heap of sawdust, so far as its intellectual work in this world is concerned; saved only by its Heart, which cannot go into the form of cogs and compasses, but expands, after the ten hours are over, into fireside humanity. On the other hand, if you will make a man of the working creature, you cannot make a tool. Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing; and the engine-turned precision is lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dullness, all his incapability; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause

after pause: but out comes the whole majesty of him also; and we know the height of it only, when we see the clouds settling upon him. And, whether the clouds be bright or dark, there will be transfiguration behind and within them.

And now, reader, look around this English room of yours, about which you have been proud so often, because the work of it was so good and strong, and the ornaments of it so finished. Examine again all those accurate moldings, and perfect polishings, and unerring adjustments of the seasoned wood and tempered steel. Many a time you have exulted over them, and thought how great England was, because her slightest work was done so thoroughly. Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot[9] Greek. Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls within them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards[1] the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God,[2] into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with—this it is to be slave-masters indeed; and there might be more freedom in England, though her feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields, than there is while the animation of her multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line.

And, on the other hand, go forth again to gaze upon the old cathedral front, where you have smiled so often at the fantastic[3] ignorance of the old sculptors: examine once more those ugly goblins, and formless monsters, and stern statues, anatomiless[4] and rigid; but do not mock at them, for they are signs of the life and liberty of every workman who struck the stone; a freedom of thought, and rank in scale of being, such as no laws, no charters, no

charities can secure; but which it must be the first aim of all Europe at this day to regain for her children.

Let me not be thought to speak wildly or extravagantly. It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than any other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves. Their universal outcry against wealth, and against nobility, is not forced from them either by the pressure of famine, or the sting of mortified pride. These do much, and have done much in all ages; but the foundations of society were never yet shaken as they are at this day. It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread, and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labor to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men. Never had the upper classes so much sympathy with the lower, or charity for them, as they have at this day, and yet never were they so much hated by them: for, of old, the separation between the noble and the poor was merely a wall built by law; now it is a veritable difference in level of standing, a precipice between upper and lower grounds in the field of humanity, and there is pestilential air at the bottom of it. I know not if a day is ever to come when the nature of right freedom will be understood, and when men will see that to obey another man, to labor for him, yield reverence to him or to his place, is not slavery. It is often the best kind of liberty—liberty from care. The man who says to one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh,[5] has, in most cases, more sense of restraint and difficulty than the man who obeys him. The movements of the one are hindered by the burden on his shoulder; of the other, by the bridle on his lips: there is no way by which the burden may be lightened; but we need not suffer from the bridle if we do not champ at it. To yield reverence to another, to hold ourselves and our lives at his disposal, is not slavery; often, it is the noblest state in which a

man can live in this world. There is, indeed, a reverence which is servile, that is to say irrational or selfish: but there is also noble reverence, that is to say, reasonable and loving; and a man is never so noble as when he is reverent in this kind; nay, even if the feeling pass the bounds of mere reason, so that it be loving, a man is raised by it. Which had, in reality, most of the serf nature in him—the Irish peasant who was lying in wait yesterday for his landlord, with his musket muzzle thrust through the ragged hedge; or that old mountain servant, who, 200 years ago, at Inverkeithing, gave up his own life and the lives of his seven sons for his chief?[6]—as each fell, calling forth his brother to the death, "Another for Hector!" And therefore, in all ages and all countries, reverence has been paid and sacrifice made by men to each other, not only without complaint, but rejoicingly; and famine, and peril, and sword, and all evil, and all shame, have been borne willingly in the causes of masters and kings; for all these gifts of the heart ennobled the men who gave not less than the men who received them, and nature prompted, and God rewarded the sacrifice. But to feel their souls withering within them, unthanked, to find their whole being sunk into an unrecognized abyss, to be counted off into a heap of mechanism, numbered with its wheels, and weighed with its hammer strokes—this nature bade not—this God blesses not—this humanity for no long time is able to endure.

We have much studied and much perfected, of late, the great civilized invention of the division of labour; only we give it a false name. It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided; but the men: Divided into mere segments of men—broken into small fragments and crumbs of life; so that all the little piece of intelligence that is left in a man is not enough to make a pin, or a nail, but exhausts itself in making the point of a pin, or the head of a nail. Now it is a good and desirable thing, truly, to make many pins in a day; but if we could only see with what crystal sand their points were polished—sand of human soul, much to be magnified before it can be discerned for what it is—we should think there might be some loss in it also. And the great cry that rises from all our

manufacturing cities, louder than their furnace blast, is all in very deed for this—that we manufacture everything there except men; we blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit, never enters into our estimate of advantages. And all the evil to which that cry is urging our myriads can be met only in one way: not by teaching nor preaching, for to teach them is but to show them their misery, and to preach to them, if we do nothing more than preach, is to mock at it. It can be met only by a right understanding, on the part of all classes, of what kinds of labour are good for men, raising them, and making them happy; by a determined sacrifice of such convenience, or beauty, or cheapness as is to be got only by the degradation of the workman; and by equally determined demand for the products and results of healthy and ennobling labour.

And how, it will be asked, are these products to be recognized, and this demand to be regulated? Easily: by the observance of three broad and simple rules:

1. Never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which *Invention* has no share.

2. Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end.

3. Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving record of great works.

The second of these principles is the only one which directly rises out of the consideration of our immediate subject; but I shall briefly explain the meaning and extent of the first also, reserving the enforcement of the third for another place.

1. Never encourage the manufacture of anything not necessary, in the production of which invention has no share.

For instance. Glass beads are utterly unnecessary, and there is no design or thought employed in their manufacture. They are formed by first drawing out the glass into rods; these rods are chopped up into fragments of the size of beads by the human hand, and the fragments are then rounded in the furnace. The men who chop up

the rods sit at their work all day, their hands vibrating with a perpetual and exquisitely timed palsy, and the beads dropping beneath their vibration like hail. Neither they, nor the men who draw out the rods or fuse the fragments, have the smallest occasion for the use of any single human faculty; and every young lady, therefore, who buys glass beads is engaged in the slave trade, and in a much more cruel one than that which we have so long been endeavouring to put down.[7]

But glass cups and vessels may become the subjects of exquisite invention; and if in buying these we pay for the invention, that is to say for the beautiful form, or color, or engraving, and not for mere finish of execution, we are doing good to humanity.

So, again, the cutting of precious stones, in all ordinary cases, requires little exertion of any mental faculty; some tact and judgment in avoiding flaws, and so on, but nothing to bring out the whole mind. Every person who wears cut jewels merely for the sake of their value is, therefore, a slave driver.

But the working of the goldsmith, and the various designing of grouped jewelry and enamel-work, may become the subject of the most noble human intelligence. Therefore, money spent in the purchase of well-designed plate, of precious engraved vases, cameos, or enamels, does good to humanity; and, in work of this kind, jewels may be employed to heighten its splendor; and their cutting is then a price paid for the attainment of a noble end, and thus perfectly allowable.

I shall perhaps press this law farther elsewhere, but our immediate concern is chiefly with the second, namely, never to demand an exact finish, when it does not lead to a noble end. For observe, I have only dwelt upon the rudeness of Gothic, or any other kind of imperfectness, as admirable, where it was impossible to get design or thought without it. If you are to have the thought of a rough and untaught man, you must have it in a rough and untaught way; but from an educated man, who can without effort express his thoughts in an educated way, take the graceful expression, and be thankful. Only *get* the thought, and do not silence the peasant

because he cannot speak good grammar, or until you have taught him his grammar. Grammar and refinement are good things, both, only be sure of the better thing first. And thus in art, delicate finish is desirable from the greatest masters, and is always given by them. In some places Michael Angelo, Leonardo, Phidias, Perugino, Turner[8] all finished with the most exquisite care; and the finish they give always leads to the fuller accomplishment of their noble purposes. But lower men than these cannot finish, for it requires consummate knowledge to finish consummately, and then we must take their thoughts as they are able to give them. So the rule is simple: Always look for invention first, and after that, for such execution as will help the invention, and as the inventor is capable of without painful effort, and *no more.* Above all, demand no refinement of execution where there is no thought, for that is slaves' work, unredeemed. Rather choose rough work than smooth work, so only that the practical purpose be answered, and never imagine there is reason to be proud of anything that may be accomplished by patience and sandpaper.

I shall only give one example, which however will show the reader what I mean, from the manufacture already alluded to, that of glass. Our modern glass is exquisitely clear in its substance, true in its form, accurate in its cutting. We are proud of this. We ought to be ashamed of it. The old Venice glass was muddy, inaccurate in all its forms, and clumsily cut, if at all. And the old Venetian was justly proud of it. For there is this difference between the English and Venetian workman, that the former thinks only of accurately matching his patterns, and getting his curves perfectly true and his edges perfectly sharp, and becomes a mere machine for rounding curves and sharpening edges, while the old Venetian cared not a whit whether his edges were sharp or not, but he invented a new design for every glass that he made, and never molded a handle or a lip without a new fancy in it. And therefore, though some Venetian glass is ugly and clumsy enough, when made by clumsy and uninventive workmen, other Venetian glass is so lovely in its forms that no price is too great for it; and we never see the same form in it

twice. Now you cannot have the finish and the varied form too. If the workman is thinking about his edges, he cannot be thinking of his design; if of his design, he cannot think of his edges. Choose whether you will pay for the lovely form or the perfect finish, and choose at the same moment whether you will make the worker a man or a grindstone.

Nay, but the reader interrupts me—"If the workman can design beautifully, I would not have him kept at the furnace. Let him be taken away and made a gentleman, and have a studio, and design his glass there, and I will have it blown and cut for him by common workmen, and so I will have my design and my finish too."

All ideas of this kind are founded upon two mistaken suppositions: the first, that one man's thoughts can be, or ought to be, executed by another man's hands; the second, that manual labor is a degradation, when it is governed by intellect.

On a large scale, and in work determinable by line and rule, it is indeed both possible and necessary that the thoughts of one man should be carried out by the labor of others; in this sense I have already defined the best architecture to be the expression of the mind of manhood by the hands of childhood. But on a smaller scale, and in a design which cannot be mathematically defined, one man's thoughts can never be expressed by another: and the difference between the spirit of touch of the man who is inventing, and of the man who is obeying directions, is often all the difference between a great and a common work of art. How wide the separation is between original and secondhand execution, I shall endeavor to show elsewhere; it is not so much to our purpose here as to mark the other and more fatal error of despising manual labor when governed by intellect; for it is no less fatal an error to despise it when thus regulated by intellect, than to value it for its own sake. We are always in these days endeavoring to separate the two; we want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman, and the other an operative; whereas the workman ought often to be thinking, and the thinker often to be working, and both should be gentlemen, in the best

sense. As it is, we make both ungentle, the one envying, the other despising, his brother; and the mass of society is made up of morbid thinkers, and miserable workers. Now it is only by labor that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labor can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity. It would be well if all of us were good handicraftsmen in some kind, and the dishonor of manual labor done away with altogether; so that though there should still be a trenchant distinction of race between nobles and commoners, there should not, among the latter, be a trenchant distinction of employment, as between idle and working men, or between men of liberal and illiberal professions. All professions should be liberal, and there should be less pride felt in peculiarity of employment, and more in excellence of achievement. And yet more, in each several[9] profession, no master should be too proud to do its hardest work. The painter should grind his own colours; the architect work in the mason's yard with his men; the master manufacturer be himself a more skillful operative than any man in his mills; and the distinction between one man and another be only in experience and skill, and the authority and wealth which these must naturally and justly obtain.

I should be led far from the matter in hand, if I were to pursue this interesting subject. Enough, I trust, has been said to show the reader that the rudeness or imperfection which at first rendered the term "Gothic" one of reproach is indeed, when rightly understood, one of the most noble characters of Christian architecture, and not only a noble but an *essential* one. It seems a fantastic paradox, but it is nevertheless a most important truth, that no architecture can be truly noble which is *not* imperfect. And this is easily demonstrable. For since the architect, whom we will suppose capable of doing all in perfection, cannot execute the whole with his own hands, he must either make slaves of his workmen in the old Greek, and present English fashion, and level his work to a slave's capacities, which is to degrade it; or else he must take his workmen as he finds them, and let them show their weaknesses together with their strength, which

will involve the Gothic imperfection, but render the whole work as noble as the the intellect of the age can make it.

But the principle may be stated more broadly still. I have confined the illustration of it to architecture, but I must not leave it as if true of architecture only. Hitherto I have used the words imperfect and perfect merely to distinguish between work grossly unskillful, and work executed with average precision and science; and I have been pleading that any degree of unskillfulness should be admitted, so only that the laborer's mind had room for expression. But, accurately speaking, no good work whatever can be perfect, and *the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art.*

This for two reasons, both based on everlasting laws. The first, that no great man ever stops working till he has reached his point of failure; that is to say, his mind is always far in advance of his powers of execution, and the latter will now and then give way in trying to follow it; besides that he will always give to the inferior portions of his work only such inferior attention as they require; and according to his greatness he becomes so accustomed to the feeling of dissatisfaction with the best he can do, that in moments of lassitude or anger with himself he will not care though the beholder be dissatisfied also. I believe there has only been one man who would not acknowledge this necessity, and strove always to reach perfection, Leonardo; the end of his vain effort being merely that he would take ten years to a picture, and leave it unfinished. And therefore, if we are to have great men working at all, or less men doing their best, the work will be imperfect, however beautiful. Of human work none but what is bad can be perfect, in its own bad way.[1]

The second reason is that imperfection is in some sort essential to all that we know of life. It is the sign of life in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress and change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, rigidly perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent. The foxglove blossom—a third part bud, a third part past, a third part in full bloom—is a type of the life of this world. And in all things that

live there are certain irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life, but sources of beauty. No human face is exactly the same in its lines on each side, no leaf perfect in its lobes, no branch in its symmetry. All admit irregularity as they imply change; and to banish imperfection is to destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyze vitality. All things are literally better, lovelier, and more beloved for the imperfections which have been divinely appointed, that the law of human life may be Effort, and the law of human judgment, Mercy.

Accept this then for a universal law, that neither architecture nor any other noble work of man can be good unless it be imperfect; and let us be prepared for the otherwise strange fact, which we shall discern clearly as we approach the period of the Renaissance, that the first cause of the fall of the arts of Europe was a relentless requirement of perfection, incapable alike either of being silenced by veneration for greatness, or softened into forgiveness of simplicity.

Thus far then of the Rudeness or Savageness, which is the first mental element of Gothic architecture. It is an element in many other healthy architectures also, as in Byzantine and Romanesque; but true Gothic cannot exist without it.

1851–53

Endnotes

- Note 1: From vol. 2, chap. 6.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lack of refinement, roughness. "Goths": a Germanic people who by the 3rd century C.E. had settled north of the Black Sea.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Renaissance architecture, based on imitating classical buildings, was distasteful to Ruskin. He later stated that his aim in *The Stones of Venice* had been "to show that the Gothic architecture of Venice had risen out of . . . a state of pure national faith and domestic virtue; and that its Renaissance

architecture had arisen out of . . . a state of concealed national infidelity and domestic corruption."Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Hot wind from the southern Mediterranean.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ornamental, or embossed. "Chased": decorated.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A breed of pony from the Shetland Isles.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Imbued with as an animating force.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Lesser.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A class of serfs in ancient Sparta.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Trees with top branches cut back to the trunk.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Job 19:26: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Fanciful, imaginative.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Devoid of anatomy (Ruskin's coinage).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Matthew 8:9.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An incident described in the preface to the novel *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828) by Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). Inverkeithing is a town in Fife, Scotland.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Although the Atlantic slave trade had been outlawed early in the 19th century, transatlantic trafficking in enslaved African people continued until slavery was made illegal everywhere in the Americas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  All notable artists. Michelangelo (1475–1564), Italian sculptor, painter, and architect. Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Italian painter, sculptor, and scientist. Phidias (born ca. 490 B.C.E.), an Athenian often called the greatest Greek sculptor. Perugino (Pietro di Cristoforo Vannucci, ca. 1450–1523). J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), British painter.
  Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Different.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  The Elgin marbles are supposed by many persons to be "perfect." In the most important portions they indeed approach perfection, but only there. The draperies are unfinished, the hair and wool of the animals are unfinished, and the entire bas-reliefs of the frieze are roughly cut [*Ruskin's note*]. Ruskin is referring to the collection of statues and friezes brought from Athens to England by Lord Elgin, works that were considered models of perfect realism.
  Return to reference 1

GEORGE ELIOT
1819–1880

In an era of great novelists, George Eliot stands out for her commitment to the novel both as a work of art and as a way to consider pressing philosophical, social, and psychological questions. Her particular version of realism, with its minute attention to the sometimes-conflicting effects of desire, circumstance, character, and impulse, had an enormous impact on the development of the novel form, and it reflects her sense of the moral seriousness of novel-writing and novel-reading: its power to facilitate but also call attention to the difficulties inherent in mutual understanding.

Mary Anne Evans (Eliot's birth name) spent her first two decades in a rural area in the middle of England. Here, living at Arbury Farm, where her father, Robert Evans, was supervisor and land agent, Evans read widely in and out of school, and was also strongly affected by Evangelicalism. Her mother's death led to her leaving school at sixteen, and in the next four or five years she seems to have experienced bouts of depression and self-doubt. At the age of twenty-one Evans moved with her father to the town of Coventry, and in this new setting her intellectual horizons were extensively widened. As the result of her association with a group of freethinking intellectuals, and her own studies of theology, she reluctantly decided that she could no longer believe in orthodox Christianity. She maintained a commitment to what she regarded as Christian values, but she rejected the supernatural elements of the

Bible. Her position created a painful break with her father, finally resolved when she agreed to continue to attend church with him, and he agreed, tacitly at least, that while there she could think what she liked.

These preoccupations with theological issues led to her translation in 1846 of *The Life of Jesus* by D. F. Strauss, and in 1854 of Ludwig Feuerbach's E*ssence of Christianity.* Both are examples of "Higher Criticism"—an approach to Biblical study that originated in Germany and that sought to demystify Christianity while preserving the "essence" or kernel of Christian belief. Eliot also translated Spinoza's *Ethics* (1856), a philosophical treatise on the nature of mind, God, and society. The concerns reflected in this early work—of how to maintain social order and human values in the absence of a strong belief in a Christian God—recur throughout her career. For the rest of her life, Evans continued to read extensively in English and continental philosophy; and when she moved to London in 1851, after her father's death, her impressive intellectual credentials led to her appointment as an assistant editor of the *Westminster Review,* a learned journal formerly edited by John Stuart Mill.

Her work at the *Review* brought her into contact with many important writers and thinkers. Among them was George Henry Lewes, a brilliant critic of literature and philosophy, with whom she fell in love. Lewes, a married man and father of three children, could not obtain a divorce. Evans elected to live with him as a common-law wife, and their relationship lasted happily until his death in 1878. In the last year of her life, she married an admirer and friend, J. W. Cross, who became her biographer.

Eliot's decision to live with Lewes was difficult: "Light and easily broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do *not* act as I have done—they obtain what they desire and are still invited to dinner." As she predicted, Eliot was *not* invited to dinner, and she had to sacrifice a number of social and family ties as a result of her choice. Among these was her relationship with her brother, Isaac, to whom she had been deeply attached since childhood. Isaac never

spoke to her again after her elopement with Lewes. It is reasonable to conjecture that this experience is one of the sources of the emphasis, in all her novels, on incidents involving choice. All her characters are tested by situations in which they must choose, and the choices, as in *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), are often agonizingly painful.

Although she had occasionally tried her hand at fiction earlier in life, it was only after her relationship with Lewes became established that she turned her full attention to this form. *Scenes from Clerical Life* appeared in magazine installments in 1857 under the pen name that misled most of her readers (Dickens excepted) into believing the author to be a man—a "university man," it was commonly said, to Eliot's amusement and satisfaction. This work was followed by seven full-length novels in the 1860s and 1870s, most of which repeated the success of *Adam Bede* (1859) with the Victorian reading public. Virginia Woolf praised *Middlemarch* (1871–72) as "one of the few English novels written for grownup people," and later readers have found a similar maturity combined with a powerful creative energy in other novels by Eliot such as *The Mill on the Floss* and *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

When Eliot began writing fiction, she and Lewes were reading to each other the novels of Jane Austen. Eliot's fiction owes much to Austen's with its concern with provincial society, its satire of human motives, its focus on courtship. But Eliot's fiction typically combines expansive philosophic meditation with an acute dissection of her characters' motives and feelings. As she wrote in an early essay entitled "The Natural History of German Life" (1856),

> The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment. . . . Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a

> mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.

This understanding of the social and ethical work of realism permeates all her work: Eliot strives to present her fiction as a mirror that reflects our experience of life without distortion. At the same time, however, her insistence on art's transparency is often troubled both by her consciousness of its fictions and by her sense of the way in which the egoism we all share distorts our perceptions. Hence she portrays this egoism with a combination of acuity and compassion.

Like Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, William Thackeray, and other contemporary novelists, Eliot poses considerable difficulties for the anthologist due to the sheer length of most of her fictions. The goal of many of her novels is to capture the dynamics of an entire community. As a result, editions of *Middlemarch* typically run six or seven hundred pages, and *Daniel Deronda* is closer to eight. For the purposes of this anthology, therefore, we have chosen to reprint Eliot's novella *The Lifted Veil*. While it may not be typical of her work in its supernaturalism, its concerns with the unpredictable relationship between knowledge or sympathy and compassion is characteristic of concerns that recur throughout her career.

The Lifted Veil

CHAPTER I

The time of my end approaches. I have lately been subject to attacks of *angina pectoris*;[1] and in the ordinary course of things, my physician tells me, I may fairly hope that my life will not be protracted many months. Unless, then, I am cursed with an exceptional physical constitution, as I am cursed with an exceptional mental character, I shall not much longer groan under the wearisome burthen of this earthly existence. If it were to be otherwise—if I were to live on to the age most men desire and provide for—I should for once have known whether the miseries of delusive expectation can outweigh the miseries of true prevision. For I foresee when I shall die, and everything that will happen in my last moments.

Just a month from this day, on the 20th of September 1850, I shall be sitting in this chair, in this study, at ten o'clock at night, longing to die, weary of incessant insight and foresight, without delusions and without hope. Just as I am watching a tongue of blue flame rising in the fire, and my lamp is burning low, the horrible contraction will begin at my chest. I shall only have time to reach the bell, and pull it violently, before the sense of suffocation will come. No one answers my bell. I know why. My two servants are lovers, and will have quarrelled. My housekeeper will have rushed out of the house in a fury, two hours before, hoping that Perry will believe she has gone to drown herself. Perry is alarmed at last, and is gone out after her. The little scullery-maid is asleep on a bench: she never answers the bell; it does not wake her. The sense of suffocation increases: my lamp goes out with a horrible stench: I make a great effort, and snatch at the bell again. I long for life, and there is no help. I thirsted for the unknown: the thirst is gone. O God, let me stay with the known, and be weary of it: I am content. Agony of pain and suffocation—and all the while the earth, the fields, the pebbly brook at the bottom of the rookery, the fresh scent after the rain, the light of the morning through my chamber window,

the warmth of the hearth after the frosty air—will darkness close over them for ever?

Darkness—darkness—no pain—nothing but darkness: but I am passing on and on through the darkness: my thought stays in the darkness, but always with a sense of moving onward. . . .

Before that time comes, I wish to use my last hours of ease and strength in telling the strange story of my experience. I have never fully un-bosomed myself to any human being; I have never been encouraged to trust much in the sympathy of my fellow-men. But we have all a chance of meeting with some pity, some tenderness, some charity, when we are dead: it is the living only who cannot be forgiven—the living only from whom men's indulgence and reverence are held off, like the rain by the hard east wind. While the heart beats, bruise it—it is your only opportunity; while the eye can still turn towards you with moist timid entreaty, freeze it with an icy un-answering gaze; while the ear, that delicate messenger to the inmost sanctuary of the soul, can still take in the tones of kindness, put it off with hard civility, or sneering compliment, or envious affectation of indifference; while the creative brain can still throb with the sense of injustice, with the yearning for brotherly recognition—make haste—oppress it with your ill-considered judgments, your trivial comparisons, your careless misrepresentations. The heart will by-and-by be still—*ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit*;[2] the eye will cease to entreat; the ear will be deaf; the brain will have ceased from all wants as well as from all work. Then your charitable speeches may find vent; then you may remember and pity the toil and the struggle and the failure; then you may give due honour to the work achieved; then you may find extenuation for errors, and consent to bury them.

That is a trivial schoolboy text; why do I dwell on it? It has little reference to me, for I shall leave no works behind me for men to honour. I have no near relatives who will make up, by weeping over my grave, for the wounds they inflicted on me when I was among them. It is only the story of my life that will perhaps win a little more

sympathy from strangers when I am dead, than I ever believed it would obtain from my friends while I was living.

My childhood perhaps seems happier to me than it really was, by contrast with all the after years. For then the curtain of the future was as impenetrable to me as to other children: I had all their delight in the present hour, their sweet indefinite hopes for the morrow; and I had a tender mother: even now, after the dreary lapse of long years, a slight trace of sensation accompanies the remembrance of her caress as she held me on her knee—her arms round my little body, her cheek pressed on mine. I had a complaint of the eyes that made me blind for a little while, and she kept me on her knee from morning till night. That unequalled love soon vanished out of my life, and even to my childish consciousness it was as if that life had become more chill. I rode my little white pony with the groom by my side as before, but there were no loving eyes looking at me as I mounted, no glad arms opened to me when I came back. Perhaps I missed my mother's love more than most children of seven or eight would have done, to whom the other pleasures of life remained as before; for I was certainly a very sensitive child. I remember still the mingled trepidation and delicious excitement with which I was affected by the tramping of the horses on the pavement in the echoing stables, by the loud resonance of the grooms' voices, by the booming bark of the dogs as my father's carriage thundered under the archway of the courtyard, by the din of the gong as it gave notice of luncheon and dinner. The measured tramp of soldiery which I sometimes heard—for my father's house lay near a county town where there were large barracks—made me sob and tremble; and yet when they were gone past, I longed for them to come back again.

I fancy my father thought me an odd child, and had little fondness for me; though he was very careful in fulfilling what he regarded as a parent's duties. But he was already past the middle of life, and I was not his only son. My mother had been his second wife, and he was five-and-forty when he married her. He was a firm, unbending, intensely orderly man, in root and stem a banker, but

with a flourishing graft of the active landholder, aspiring to county influence: one of those people who are always like themselves from day to day, who are uninfluenced by the weather, and neither know melancholy nor high spirits. I held him in great awe, and appeared more timid and sensitive in his presence than at other times; a circumstance which, perhaps, helped to confirm him in the intention to educate me on a different plan from the prescriptive one with which he had complied in the case of my elder brother, already a tall youth at Eton.[3] My brother was to be his representative and successor; he must go to Eton and Oxford, for the sake of making connections, of course; my father was not a man to underrate the bearing of Latin satirists or Greek dramatists[4] on the attainment of an aristocratic position. But, intrinsically, he had slight esteem for "those dead but aceptred spirits;" having qualified himself for forming an independent opinion by reading Potter's *Æschylus,* and dipping into Francis's *Horace*.[5] To this negative view he added a positive one, derived from a recent connection with mining speculations; namely, that a scientific education was the really useful training for a younger son. Moreover, it was clear that a shy, sensitive boy like me was not fit to encounter the rough experience of a public school.[6] Mr Letherall had said so very decidedly. Mr Letherall was a large man in spectacles, who one day took my small head between his large hands, and pressed it here and there in an exploratory, suspicious manner—then placed each of his great thumbs on my temples, and pushed me a little way from him, and stared at me with glittering spectacles. The contemplation appeared to displease him, for he frowned sternly, and said to my father, drawing his thumbs across my eyebrows,

"The deficiency is there, sir—there; and here," he added, touching the upper sides of my head, "here is the excess. That must be brought out, sir, and this must be laid to sleep."[7]

I was in a state of tremor, partly at the vague idea that I was the object of reprobation, partly in the agitation of my first hatred—hatred of this big, spectacled man, who pulled my head about as if he wanted to buy and cheapen it.

I am not aware how much Mr Letherall had to do with the system afterwards adopted towards me, but it was presently clear that private tutors, natural history, science, and the modern languages, were the appliances by which the defects of my organisation were to be remedied. I was very stupid about machines, so I was to be greatly occupied with them; I had no memory for classification, so it was particularly necessary that I should study systematic zoology and botany; I was hungry for human deeds and human emotions, so I was to be plentifully crammed with the mechanical powers, the elementary bodies, and the phenomena of electricity and magnetism. A better-constituted boy would certainly have profited under my intelligent tutors, with their scientific apparatus; and would, doubtless, have found the phenomena of electricity and magnetism as fascinating as I was, every Thursday, assured they were. As it was, I could have paired off, for ignorance of whatever was taught me, with the worst Latin scholar that was ever turned out of a classical academy; whence I have been led to conclude that the only universal rule with regard to education is, that no rule should be held universal, a good education being that which adapts itself to individual wants and faculties. I read Plutarch, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixote[8] by the sly, and supplied myself in that way with wandering thoughts, while my tutor was assuring me that "an improved man, as distinguished from an ignorant one, was a man who knew the reason why water ran down-hill." I had no desire to be this improved man; I was glad of the running water; I could watch it and listen to it gurgling among the pebbles, and bathing the bright green water-plants, by the hour together. I did not want to know *why* it ran; I had perfect confidence that there were good reasons for what was so very beautiful.

There is no need to dwell on this part of my life. I have said enough to indicate that my nature was of the sensitive, unpractical order, and that it grew up in an uncongenial medium, which could never foster it into happy, healthy development. When I was sixteen I was sent to Geneva to complete my course of education; and the change was a very happy one to me, for the first sight of the Alps,

with the setting sun on them, as we descended the Jura, seemed to me like an entrance into heaven; and the three years of my life there were spent in a perpetual sense of exaltation, as if from a draught of delicious wine, at the presence of Nature in all her awful loveliness. You will think, perhaps, that I must have been a poet, from this early sensibility to Nature. But my lot was not so happy as that. A poet pours forth his song and *believes* in the listening ear and answering soul, to which his song will be floated sooner or later. But the poet's sensibility without his voice—the poet's sensibility that finds no vent but in silent tears on the sunny bank, when the noonday light sparkles on the water, or in an inward shudder at the sound of harsh human tones, the sight of a cold human eye—this dumb passion brings with it a fatal solitude of soul in the society of one's fellow-men. My least solitary moments were those in which I pushed off in my boat, at evening, towards the centre of the lake; it seemed to me that the sky, and the glowing mountain-tops, and the wide blue water, surrounded me with a cherishing love such as no human face had shed on me since my mother's love had vanished out of my life. I used to do as Jean Jacques[9] did—lie down in my boat and let it glide where it would, while I looked up at the departing glow leaving one mountain-top after the other, as if the prophet's chariot of fire were passing over them on its way to the home of light. Then, when the white summits were all sad and corpse-like, I had to push homeward, for I was under careful surveillance, and was allowed no late wanderings. This disposition of mine was not favourable to the formation of intimate friendships among the numerous youths of my own age who are always to be found studying at Geneva. Yet I made *one* such friendship; and, singularly enough, it was with a youth whose intellectual tendencies were the very reverse of my own. I shall call him Charles Meunier; his real surname—an English one, for he was of English extraction—having since become celebrated. He was an orphan, who lived on a miserable pittance while he pursued the medical studies for which he had a special genius. Strange; that with my vague mind, impressionable and unobservant, hating inquiry and given up to contemplation, I should

have been drawn towards a youth whose strongest passion was science. But the bond was not an intellectual one; it came from a source that can happily blend the stupid with the brilliant, the dreamy with the practical: it came from community of feeling. Charles was poor and ugly, derided by Genevese *gamins,*[1] and not acceptable in drawing-rooms. I saw that he was isolated, as I was, though from a different cause, and, stimulated by a sympathetic resentment, I made timid advances towards him. It is enough to say that there sprang up as much *camaraderie* between us as our different habits would allow; and in Charles's rare holidays we went up the Salève together, or took the boat to Vevay, while I listened dreamily to the monologues in which he unfolded his bold conceptions of future experiment and discovery. I mingled them confusedly in my thought with glimpses of blue water and delicate floating cloud, with the notes of birds and the distant glitter of the glacier. He knew quite well that my mind was half absent, yet he liked to talk to me in this way; for don't we talk of our hopes and our projects even to dogs and birds, when they love us? I have mentioned this one friendship because of its connection with a strange and terrible scene which I shall have to narrate in my subsequent life.

This happier life at Geneva was put an end to by a terrible illness, which is partly a blank to me, partly a time of dimly-remembered suffering, with the presence of my father by my bed from time to time. Then came the languid monotony of convalescence, the days gradually breaking into variety and distinctness as my strength enabled me to take longer and longer drives. On one of these more vividly remembered days, my father said to me, as he sat beside my sofa,

"When you are quite well enough to travel, Latimer, I shall take you home with me. The journey will amuse you and do you good, for I shall go through the Tyrol and Austria, and you will see many new places. Our neighbours, the Filmores, are come; Alfred will join us at Basle, and we shall all go together to Vienna, and back by Prague" . . .

My father was called away before he had finished his sentence, and he left my mind resting on the word *Prague,* with a strange sense that a new and wondrous scene was breaking upon me: a city under the broad sunshine, that seemed to me as if it were the summer sunshine of a long-past century arrested in its course—unrefreshed for ages by the dews of night, or the rushing rain-cloud; scorching the dusty, weary, time-eaten grandeur of a people doomed to live on in the stale repetition of memories, like deposed and superannuated kings, in their regal gold-inwoven tatters. The city looked so thirsty that the broad river seemed to me a sheet of metal; and the blackened statues, as I passed under their blank gaze, along the unending bridge, with their ancient garments and their saintly crowns, seemed to me the real inhabitants and owners of this place, while the busy, trivial men and women, hurrying to and fro, were a swarm of ephemeral visitants infesting it for a day. It is such grim, stony beings as these, I thought, who are the fathers of ancient faded children, in those tanned time-fretted dwellings that crowd the steep before me; who pay their court in the worn and crumbling pomp of the palace which stretches its monotonous length on the height; who worship wearily in the stifling air of the churches, urged by no fear or hope, but compelled by their doom to be ever old and undying, to live on in the rigidity of habit, as they live on in perpetual mid-day, without the repose of night or the new birth of morning.

A stunning clang of metal suddenly thrilled through me, and I became conscious of the objects in my room again: one of the fire-irons had fallen, as Pierre opened the door to bring me my draught. My heart was palpitating violently, and I begged Pierre to leave my draught[2] beside me; I would take it presently.

As soon as I was alone again, I began to ask myself whether I had been sleeping. Was this a dream—this wonderfully distinct vision—minute in its distinctness down to a patch of coloured light on the pavement, transmitted through a coloured lamp in the shape of a star—of a strange city, quite unfamiliar to my imagination? I had seen no picture of Prague: it lay in my mind as a mere name, with

vaguely remembered historical associations—ill-defined memories of imperial grandeur and religious wars.

Nothing of this sort had ever occurred in my dreaming experience before, for I had often been humiliated because my dreams were only saved from being utterly disjointed and commonplace by the frequent terrors of nightmare. But I could not believe that I had been asleep, for I remembered distinctly the gradual breaking-in of the vision upon me, like the new images in a dissolving view, or, the growing distinctness of the landscape as the sun lifts up the veil of the morning mist. And while I was conscious of this incipient vision, I was also conscious that Pierre came to tell my father Mr Filmore was waiting for him, and that my father hurried out of the room. No, it was not a dream; was it—the thought was full of tremulous exultation—was it the poet's nature in me, hitherto only a troubled, yearning sensibility, now manifesting itself suddenly as spontaneous creation? Surely it was in this way that Homer saw the plain of Troy, that Dante saw the abodes of the departed, that Milton[3] saw the earthward flight of the Tempter. Was it that my illness had wrought some happy change in my organisation—given a firmer tension to my nerves—carried off some dull obstruction? I had often read of such effects—in works of fiction at least. Nay; in genuine biographies I had read of the subtilising or exalting influence of some diseases on the mental powers. Did not Novalis[4] feel his inspiration intensified under the progress of consumption?

When my mind had dwelt for some time on this blissful idea, it seemed to me that I might perhaps test it by an exertion of my will. The vision had commenced when my father was speaking of our going to Prague. I did not for a moment believe it was really a representation of that city; I believed—I hoped it was a picture that my newly-liberated genius had painted in fiery haste, with the colours snatched from lazy memory. Suppose I were to fix my mind on some other place—Venice, for example, which was far more familiar to my imagination than Prague: perhaps the same sort of result would follow. I concentrated my thoughts on Venice; I

stimulated my imagination with poetic memories, and strove to feel myself present in Venice, as I had felt myself present in Prague. But in vain. I was only colouring the Canaletto[5] engravings that hung in my old bedroom at home; the picture was a shifting one, my mind wandering uncertainly in search of more vivid images; I could see no accident of form or shadow without conscious labour after the necessary conditions. It was all prosaic effort, not rapt passivity, such as I had experienced half an hour before. I was discouraged; but I remembered that inspiration was fitful.

For several days I was in a state of excited expectation, watching for a recurrence of my new gift. I sent my thoughts ranging over my world of knowledge, in the hope that they would find some object which would send a reawakening vibration through my slumbering genius. But no; my world remained as dim as ever, and that flash of strange light refused to come again, though I watched for it with palpitating eagerness.

My father accompanied me every day in a drive, and a gradually lengthening walk as my powers of walking increased; and one evening he had agreed to come and fetch me at twelve the next day, that we might go together to select a musical snuff-box, and other purchases, rigorously demanded of a rich Englishman visiting Geneva. He was one of the most punctual of men and bankers, and I was always nervously anxious to be quite ready for him at the appointed time. But, to my surprise, at a quarter past twelve he had not appeared. I felt all the impatience of a convalescent who has nothing particular to do, and who has just taken a tonic in the prospect of immediate exercise that would carry off the stimulus.

Unable to sit still and reserve my strength, I walked up and down the room, looking out on the current of the Rhone, just where it leaves the dark-blue lake; but thinking all the while of the possible causes that could detain my father.

Suddenly I was conscious that my father was in the room, but not alone; there were two persons with him. Strange! I had heard no footstep, I had not seen the door open; but I saw my father, and at his right hand our neighbour Mrs Filmore, whom I remembered

very well, though I had not seen her for five years. She was a commonplace middle-aged woman, in silk and cashmere; but the lady on the left of my father was not more than twenty, a tall, slim, willowy figure, with luxuriant blond hair arranged in cunning braids and folds that looked almost too massive for the slight figure and the small-featured, thin-lipped face they crowned. But the face had not a girlish expression: the features were sharp, the pale grey eyes at once acute, restless, and sarcastic. They were fixed on me in half-smiling curiosity, and I felt a painful sensation as if a sharp wind were cutting me. The pale-green dress, and the green leaves that seemed to form a border about her blond hair, made me think of a Water-Nixie[6]—for my mind was full of German lyrics, and this pale, fatal-eyed woman, with the green weeds, looked like a birth from some cold, sedgy stream, the daughter of an aged river.

"Well, Latimer, you thought me long," my father said. . . .

But while the last word was in my ears, the whole group vanished, and there was nothing between me and the Chinese painted folding-screen that stood before the door. I was cold and trembling; I could only totter forward and throw myself on the sofa. This strange new power had manifested itself again. . . . . But *was* it a power? Might it not rather be a disease—a sort of intermittent delirium, concentrating my energy of brain into moments of unhealthy activity, and leaving my saner hours all the more barren? I felt a dizzy sense of unreality in what my eye rested on; I grasped the bell convulsively, like one trying to free himself from nightmare, and rang it twice. Pierre came with a look of alarm in his face.

"Monsieur ne se trouve pas bien?"[7] he said, anxiously.

"I'm tired of waiting, Pierre," I said, as distinctly and emphatically as I could, like a man determined to be sober in spite of wine; "I'm afraid something has happened to my father—he's usually so punctual. Run to the Hotel des Bergues and see if he is there."

Pierre left the room at once, with a soothing "Bien, Monsieur;" and I felt the better for this scene of simple, waking prose. Seeking to calm myself still further, I went into my bedroom, adjoining the salon, and opened a case of eau-de-cologne; took out a bottle; went

through the process of taking out the cork very neatly, and then rubbed the reviving spirit over my hands and forehead, and under my nostrils, drawing a new delight from the scent because I had procured it by slow details of labour, and by no strange sudden madness. Already I had begun to taste something of the horror that belongs to the lot of a human being whose nature is not adjusted to simple human conditions.

Still enjoying the scent, I returned to the salon, but it was not unoccupied, as it had been before I left it. In front of the Chinese folding-screen there was my father, with Mrs Filmore on his right hand, and on his left——the slim blond-haired girl, with the keen face and the keen eyes fixed on me in half-smiling curiosity.

"Well, Latimer, you thought me long," my father said. . . .

I heard no more, felt no more, till I became conscious that I was lying with my head low on the sofa, Pierre and my father by my side. As soon as I was thoroughly revived, my father left the room, and presently returned, saying,

"I've been to tell the ladies how you are, Latimer. They were waiting in the next room. We shall put off our shopping expedition to-day."

Presently he said, "That young lady is Bertha Grant, Mrs Filmore's orphan niece. Filmore has adopted her, and she lives with them, so you will have her for a neighbour when we go home—perhaps for a near relation; for there is a tenderness between her and Alfred, I suspect, and I should be gratified by the match, since Filmore means to provide for her in every way as if she were his daughter. It hadn't occurred to me that you knew nothing about her living with the Filmores."

He made no further allusion to the fact of my having fainted at the moment of seeing her, and I would not for the world have told him the reason: I shrank from the idea of disclosing to any one what might be regarded as a pitiable peculiarity, most of all from betraying it to my father, who would have suspected my sanity ever after.

I do not mean to dwell with particularity on the details of my experience. I have described these two cases at length, because

they had definite, clearly traceable results in my after lot.

Shortly after this last occurrence—I think the very next day—I began to be aware of a phase in my abnormal sensibility, to which, from the languid and slight nature of my intercourse with others since my illness, I had not been alive before. This was the obtrusion on my mind of the mental process going forward in first one person, and then another, with whom I happened to be in contact: the vagrant, frivolous ideas and emotions of some uninteresting acquaintance—Mrs Filmore, for example—would force themselves on my consciousness like an importunate, ill-played musical instrument, or the loud activity of an imprisoned insect. But this unpleasant sensibility was fitful, and left me moments of rest, when the souls of my companions were once more shut out from me, and I felt a relief such as silence brings to wearied nerves. I might have believed this importunate insight to be merely a diseased activity of the imagination, but that my prevision of incalculable words and actions proved it to have a fixed relation to the mental process in other minds. But this superadded consciousness, wearying and annoying enough when it urged on me the trivial experience of indifferent people, became an intense pain and grief when it seemed to be opening to me the souls of those who were in a close relation to me —when the rational talk, the graceful attentions, the bon-mots,[8] and the kindly deeds, which used to make the web of their characters, were seen as if thrust asunder by a microscopic vision, that showed all the intermediate frivolities, all the suppressed egoism, all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague capricious memories, and indolent make-shift thoughts, from which human words and deeds emerge like leaflets covering a fermenting heap.

At Basle we were joined by my brother Alfred, now a handsome self-confident man of six-and-twenty—a thorough contrast to my fragile, nervous, ineffectual self. I believe I was held to have a sort of half-womanish, half-ghostly beauty; for the portrait-painters, who are thick as weeds at Geneva, had often asked me to sit to them, and I had been the model of a dying minstrel in a fancy picture. But I thoroughly disliked my own physique, and nothing but the belief

that it was a condition of poetic genius would have reconciled me to it. That brief hope was quite fled, and I saw in my face now nothing but the stamp of a morbid organisation, framed for passive suffering —too feeble for the sublime resistance of poetic production. Alfred, from whom I had been almost constantly separated, and who, in his present stage of character and appearance, came before me as a perfect stranger, was bent on being extremely friendly and brother-like to me. He had the superficial kindness of a good-humoured, self-satisfied nature, that fears no rivalry, and has encountered no contrarieties. I am not sure that my disposition was good enough for me to have been quite free from envy towards him, even if our desires had not clashed, and if I had been in the healthy human condition that admits of generous confidence and charitable construction. There must always have been an antipathy between our natures. As it was, he became in a few weeks an object of intense hatred to me; and when he entered the room, still more when he spoke, it was as if a sensation of grating metal had set my teeth on edge. My diseased consciousness was more intensely and continually occupied with his thoughts and emotions, than with those of any other person who came in my way. I was perpetually exasperated with the petty promptings of his conceit and his love of patronage, with his self-complacent belief in Bertha Grant's passion for him, with his half-pitying contempt for me—seen not in the ordinary indications of intonation and phrase and slight action, which an acute and suspicious mind is on the watch for, but in all their naked skinless complication.

For we were rivals, and our desires clashed, though he was not aware of it. I have said nothing yet of the effect Bertha Grant produced in me on a nearer acquaintance. That effect was chiefly determined by the fact that she made the only exception, among all the human beings about me, to my unhappy gift of insight. About Bertha I was always in a state of uncertainty; I could watch the expression of her face, and speculate on its meaning; I could ask for her opinion with the real interest of ignorance; I could listen for her words and watch for her smile with hope and fear: she had for me

the fascination of an unravelled destiny. I say it was this fact that chiefly determined the strong effect she produced on me: for, in the abstract, no womanly character could seem to have less sympathy with that of a shrinking, romantic, passionate youth than Bertha's. She was keen, sarcastic, unimaginative, prematurely cynical, remaining critical and unmoved in the most impressive scenes, inclined to dissect all my favourite poems, and, most of all, contemptuous towards the German lyrics, which were my pet literature at that time. To this moment I am unable to define my feeling towards her: it was not ordinary boyish admiration, for she was the very opposite, even to the colour of her hair, of the ideal woman who still remained to me the type of loveliness; and she was without that enthusiasm for the great and good, which, even at the moment of her strongest dominion over me, I should have declared to be the highest element of character. But there is no tyranny more complete than that which a self-centred negative nature exercises over a morbidly sensitive nature perpetually craving sympathy and support. The most independent people feel the effect of a man's silence in heightening their value for his opinion—feel an additional triumph in conquering the reverence of a critic habitually captious and satirical: no wonder, then, that an enthusiastic self-distrusting youth should watch and wait before the closed secret of a sarcastic woman's face, as if it were the shrine of the doubtfully benignant deity who ruled his destiny. For a young enthusiast is unable to imagine the total negation in another mind of the emotions that are stirring his own: they may be feeble, latent, inactive, he thinks, but they are there, they may be called forth—sometimes, in moments of happy hallucination, he believes they may be there in all the greater strength because he sees no outward sign of them. And this effect, as I have intimated, was heightened to its utmost intensity in me, because Bertha was the only being who remained for me in the mysterious seclusion of soul that renders such youthful delusion possible. Doubtless there was another sort of fascination at work—that subtle physical attraction which delights in cheating our psychological predictions, and in compelling the men who paint

sylphs, to fall in love with some *bonne et brave femme,*[9] heavy-heeled and freckled.

Bertha's behaviour towards me was such as to encourage all my illusions, to heighten my boyish passion, and make me more and more dependent on her smiles. Looking back with my present wretched knowledge, I conclude that her vanity and love of power were intensely gratified by the belief that I had fainted on first seeing her purely from the strong impression her person had produced on me. The most prosaic woman likes to believe herself the object of a violent, a poetic passion; and without a grain of romance in her, Bertha had that spirit of intrigue which gave piquancy to the idea that the brother of the man she meant to marry was dying with love and jealousy for her sake. That she meant to marry my brother, was what at that time I did not believe; for though he was assiduous in his attentions to her, and I knew well enough that both he and my father had made up their minds to this result, there was not yet an understood engagement—there had been no explicit declaration; and Bertha habitually, while she flirted with my brother, and accepted his homage in a way that implied to him a thorough recognition of its intention, made me believe, by the subtlest looks and phrases, slight feminine nothings that could never be quoted against her, that he was really the object of her secret ridicule; that she thought him, as I did, a coxcomb, whom she would have pleasure in disappointing. Me she openly petted in my brother's presence, as if I were too young and sickly ever to be thought of as a lover; and that was the view he took of me. But I believe she must inwardly have delighted in the tremors into which she threw me by the coaxing way in which she patted my curls, while she laughed at my quotations. Such caresses were always given in the presence of our friends, for when we were alone together, she affected a much greater distance towards me, and now and then took the opportunity, by words or slight actions, to stimulate my foolish timid hope that she really preferred me. And why should she not follow her inclination? I was not in so advantageous a position as my brother, but I had fortune, I was not a year younger than she was,

and she was an heiress, who would soon be of age to decide for herself.

The fluctuations of hope and fear, confined to this one channel, made each day in her presence a delicious torment. There was one deliberate act of hers which especially helped to intoxicate me. When we were at Vienna her twentieth birthday occurred, and as she was very fond of ornaments, we all took the opportunity of the splendid jewellers' shops in that Teutonic Paris, to purchase her a birthday present of jewellery. Mine, naturally, was the least expensive; it was an opal ring—the opal was my favourite stone, because it seems to blush and turn pale as if it had a soul. I told Bertha so when I gave it her, and said that it was an emblem of the poetic nature, changing with the changing light of heaven and of woman's eyes. In the evening she appeared elegantly dressed, and wearing conspicuously all the birthday presents except mine. I looked eagerly at her fingers, but saw no opal. I had no opportunity of noticing this to her during the evening; but the next day, when I found her seated near the window alone, after breakfast, I said, "You scorn to wear my poor opal. I should have remembered that you despised poetic natures, and should have given you coral, or turquoise, or some other opaque unresponsive stone." "Do I despise it?" she answered, taking hold of a delicate gold chain which she always wore round her neck and drawing out the end from her bosom with my ring hanging to it; "it hurts me a little, I can tell you, she said, with her usual dubious smile, "to wear it in that secret place; and since your poetical nature is so stupid as to prefer a more public position, I shall not endure the pain any longer."

She took off the ring from the chain and put it on her finger, smiling still, while the blood rushed to my cheeks, and I could not trust myself to say a word of entreaty that she would keep the ring where it was before.

I was completely fooled by this, and for two days shut myself up in my own room whenever Bertha was absent, that I might intoxicate myself afresh with the thought of this scene, and all it implied.

I should mention that during these two months—which seemed a long life to me from the novelty and intensity of the pleasures and pains I underwent—my diseased participation in other people's consciousness continued to torment me; now it was my father, and now my brother, now Mrs Filmore or her husband, and now our German courier, whose stream of thought rushed upon me like a ringing in the ears not to be got rid of, though it allowed my own impulses and ideas to continue their uninterrupted course. It was like a preternaturally heightened sense of hearing, making audible to one a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness. The weariness and disgust of this involuntary intrusion into other souls was counteracted only by my ignorance of Bertha, and my growing passion for her; a passion enormously stimulated, if not produced, by that ignorance. She was my oasis of mystery in the dreary desert of knowledge. I had never allowed my diseased condition to betray itself, or to drive me into any unusual speech or action, except once, when, in a moment of peculiar bitterness against my brother, I had forestalled some words which I knew he was going to utacornter—a clever observation, which he had prepared beforehand. He had occasionally a slightly-affected hesitation in his speech, and when he paused an instant after the second word, my impatience and jealousy impelled me to continue the speech for him, as if it were something we had both learnt by rote. He coloured and looked astonished, as well as annoyed; and the words had no sooner escaped my lips than I felt a shock of alarm lest such an anticipation of words, very far from being words of course easy to divine, should have betrayed me as an exceptional being, a sort of quiet energumen,[1] that every one, Bertha above all, would shudder at and avoid. But I magnified, as usual, the impression any word or deed of mine could produce on others; for no one gave any sign of having noticed my interruption as more than a rudeness, to be forgiven me on the score of my feeble nervous condition.

While this superadded consciousness of the actual was almost constant with me, I had never had a recurrence of that distinct prevision which I have described in relation to my first interview with

Bertha; and I was waiting with eager curiosity to know whether or not my vision of Prague would prove to have been an instance of the same kind. A few days after the incident of the opal ring, we were paying one of our frequent visits to the Lichtenberg Palace. I could never look at many pictures in succession; for pictures, when they are at all powerful, affect me so strongly that one or two exhaust all my capability of contemplation. This morning I had been looking at Giorgione's[2] picture of the cruel-eyed woman, said to be a likeness of Lucrezia Borgia.[3] I had stood long alone before it, fascinated by the terrible reality of that cunning, relentless face, till I felt a strange poisoned sensation, as if I had long been inhaling a fatal odour, and was just beginning to be conscious of its effects. Perhaps even then I should not have moved away, if the rest of the party had not returned to this room, and announced that they were going to the Belvedere Gallery to settle a bet which had arisen between my brother and Mr Filmore about a portrait. I followed them dreamily, and was hardly alive to what occurred till they had all gone up to the gallery, leaving me below; for I refused to come within sight of another picture that day. I made my way to the Grand Terrace, for it was agreed that we should saunter in the gardens when the dispute had been decided. I had been sitting here a short space, vaguely conscious of trim gardens, with a city and green hills in the distance, when, wishing to avoid the proximity of the sentinel, I rose and walked down the broad stone steps, intending to seat myself farther on in the gardens. Just as I reached the gravel walk, I felt an arm slipped within mine, and a light hand gently pressing my wrist. In the same instant a strange intoxicating numbness passed over me, like the continuance or climax of the sensation I was still feeling from the gaze of Lucrezia Borgia. The gardens, the summer sky, the consciousness of Bertha's arm being within mine, all vanished, and I seemed to be suddenly in darkness, out of which there gradually broke a dim firelight, and I felt myself sitting in my father's leather chair in the library at home. I knew the fireplace—the dogs[4] for the wood fire—the black marble chimney-piece with the white marble medallion of the dying Cleopatra in the centre. Intense and hopeless

misery was pressing on my soul; the light became stronger, for Bertha was entering with a candle in her hand—Bertha, my wife—with cruel eyes, with green jewels and green leaves on her white ball-dress; every hateful thought within her present to me. . . . . "Madman, idiot! why don't you kill yourself, then?" It was a moment of hell. I saw into her pitiless soul—saw its barren worldliness, its scorching hate—and felt it clothe me round like an air I was obliged to breathe. She came with her candle and stood over me with a bitter smile of contempt; I saw the great emerald brooch on her bosom, a studded serpent with diamond eyes. I shuddered—I despised this woman with the barren soul and mean thoughts; but I felt helpless before her, as if she clutched my bleeding heart, and would clutch it till the last drop of life-blood ebbed away. She was my wife, and we hated each other. Gradually the hearth, the dim library, the candle-light disappeared—seemed to melt away into a background of light, the green serpent with the diamond eyes remaining a dark image on the retina. Then I had a sense of my eyelids quivering, and the living daylight broke in upon me; I saw gardens, and heard voices; I was seated on the steps of the Belvedere Terrace, and my friends were round me.

The tumult of mind into which I was thrown by this hideous vision made me ill for several days, and prolonged our stay at Vienna. I shuddered with horror as the scene recurred to me; and it recurred constantly, with all its minutiæ, as if they had been burnt into my memory; and yet, such is the madness of the human heart under the influence of its immediate desires, I felt a wild hell-braving joy that Bertha was to be mine; for the fulfilment of my former prevision concerning her first appearance before me, left me little hope that this last hideous glimpse of the future was the mere diseased play of my own mind, and had no relation to external realities. One thing alone I looked towards as a possible means of casting doubt on my terrible conviction—the discovery that my vision of Prague had been false—and Prague was the next city on our route.

Meanwhile, I was no sooner in Bertha's society again, than I was as completely under her sway as before. What if I saw into the heart of Bertha, the matured woman—Bertha, my wife? Bertha, the girl, was a fascinating secret to me still: I trembled under her touch; I felt the witchery of her presence; I yearned to be assured of her love. The fear of poison is feeble against the sense of thirst. Nay, I was just as jealous of my brother as before—just as much irritated by his small patronising ways; for my pride, my diseased sensibility, were there as they had always been, and winced as inevitably under every offence as my eye winced from an intruding mote. The future, even when brought within the compass of feeling by a vision that made me shudder, had still no more than the force of an idea, compared with the force of present emotion—of my love for Bertha, of my dislike and jealousy towards my brother.

It is an old story, that men sell themselves to the tempter, and sign a bond with their blood, because it is only to take effect at a distant day; then rush on to snatch the cup their souls thirst after with no less savage an impulse, because there is a dark shadow beside them for evermore. There is no short cut, no patent tram-road, to wisdom: after all the centuries of invention, the soul's path lies through the thorny wilderness which must be still trodden in solitude, with bleeding feet, with sobs for help, as it was trodden by them of old time.

My mind speculated eagerly on the means by which I should become my brother's successful rival, for I was still too timid, in my ignorance of Bertha's actual feeling, to venture on any step that would urge from her an avowal of it. I thought I should gain confidence even for this, if my vision of Prague proved to have been veracious; and yet, the horror of that certitude! Behind the slim girl Bertha, whose words and looks I watched for, whose touch was bliss, there stood continually that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth,—with the barren selfish soul laid bare; no longer a fascinating secret, but a measured fact, urging itself perpetually on my unwilling sight. Are you unable to give me your sympathy—you who read this? Are you unable to imagine this

double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams that never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? Yet you must have known something of the presentiments that spring from an insight at war with passion; and my visions were only like presentiments intensified to horror. You have known the powerlessness of ideas before the might of impulse; and my visions, when once they had passed into memory, were mere ideas—pale shadows that beckoned in vain, while my hand was grasped by the living and the loved.

In after days I thought with bitter regret that if I had foreseen something more or something different—if instead of that hideous vision which poisoned the passion it could not destroy, or if, even along with it, I could have had a foreshadowing of that moment when I looked on my brother's face for the last time, some softening influence would have been shed over my feeling towards him: pride and hatred would surely have been subdued into pity, and the record of those hidden sins would have been shortened. But this is one of the vain thoughts with which we men flatter ourselves, trying to believe that the egoism within us would have easily been melted, and that it was only the narrowness of our knowledge which hindered our generosity, our awe, our human piety, from flooding our hard cruel indifference to the sensations and feelings of our fellow, with the tenderness and self-renunciation which have only come when the egoism has had its day, when, after our mean striving for a triumph that is to be another's loss, the triumph comes suddenly, and we shudder at it because it is held out by the chill hand of death.

Our arrival in Prague happened at night, and I was glad of this, for it seemed like a deferring of a terribly decisive moment, to be in the city for hours without seeing it. As we were not to remain long in Prague, but to go on speedily to Dresden, it was proposed that we should drive out the next morning and take a general view of the place, as well as visit some of its specially interesting spots, before the heat became oppressive—for we were in August, and the season was hot and dry. But it happened that the ladies were rather late at

their morning toilette, and to my father's politely repressed but perceptible annoyance, we were not in the carriage till the morning was far advanced. I thought with a sense of relief, as we entered the Jews' quarter, where we were to visit the old synagogue, that we should be kept in this flat, shut-up part of the city, until we should all be too tired and too warm to go farther, and so we should return without seeing more than the streets through which we had already passed. That would give me another day's suspense—suspense, the only form in which a fearful spirit knows the solace of hope. But, as I stood under the blackened, groined arches of that old synagogue, made dimly visible by the seven thin candles in the sacred lamp, while our Jewish cicerone[5] reached down the Book of the Law, and read to us in its ancient tongue,—I felt a shuddering impression that this strange building, with its shrunken lights, this surviving withered remnant of medieval Judaism, was of a piece with my vision. Those darkened dusty Christian saints, with their loftier arches and their larger candles, needed the consolatory scorn with which they might point to a more shrivelled death in life than their own.

As I expected, when we left the Jews' quarter, the elders of our party wished to return to the hotel. But now, instead of rejoicing in this, as I had done beforehand, I felt a sudden overpowering impulse to go on at once to the bridge, and put an end to the suspense I had been wishing to protract. I declared, with unusual decision, that I would get out of the carriage and walk on alone; they might return without me. My father, thinking this merely a sample of my usual "poetic nonsense," objected that I should only do myself harm by walking in the heat; but when I persisted, he said angrily that I might follow my own absurd devices, but that Schmidt (our courier) must go with me. I assented to this, and set off with Schmidt towards the bridge. I had no sooner passed from under the archway of the grand old gate leading on to the bridge, than a trembling seized me, and I turned cold under the mid-day sun; yet I went on; I was in search of something—a small detail which I remembered with special intensity as part of my vision. There it was

—the patch of coloured light on the pavement transmitted through a lamp in the shape of a star.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A form of heart disease marked by intense pain due to insufficient blood flow.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Inscription on Swift's tombstone [*Eliot's note*]. Trans: Where savage indignation can lacerate his heart no more (Latin). "Swift": Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Anglo-Irish author of works including *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and A Modest Proposal" (1729). He is buried inside St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, Ireland.
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A preparatory school for the British elite.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Greek and Latin were central to British elite education.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The narrator is referring to popular translations of Greek and Roman classics. The implication is that no basis for his assessments, never having read these texts in the original.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Elite private boarding school such as Eton.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Mr. Letherall is practicing phrenology, or the attempt to understand character from the shape of the skull.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Don Quixote* (1605), novel by Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616); Plutarch (46–after 119), Greek biographer and philosopher; William Shakespeare (1564–1616), British playwright and poet.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Romantic philosopher.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Boys.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Medicine.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: John Milton (1608–1674), British author and political theorist; Homer (ca. 8th century B.C.E.): author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; Dante Aligheri (1265–1321), author of *The Divine Comedy*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The pseudonym for Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg (1772–1801), poet, philosopher, and mystic.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Giovanni Antonio Canal (1697–1768), Italian painter.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Water spirit from Grimms' fairy tales.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: "Sir is not well?" (French).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Witty remarks.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Good woman (French).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A person possessed by the devil.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Giorgione (ca. 1477–1510), Italian painter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Noblewoman (1480–1519) who reigned as the governor of Spoleto; she is rumored to have engaged in multiple murders and illicit affairs.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Andirons.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Museum guide.Return to reference 5

CHAPTER II

Before the autumn was at an end, and while the brown leaves still stood thick on the beeches in our park, my brother and Bertha were engaged to each other, and it was understood that their marriage was to take place early in the next spring. In spite of the certainty I had felt from that moment, on the bridge at Prague, that Bertha would one day be my wife, my constitutional timidity and distrust had continued to benumb me, and the words in which I had sometimes premeditated a confession of my love, had died away unuttered. The same conflict had gone on within me as before—the longing for an assurance of love from Bertha's lips, the dread lest a word of contempt and denial should fall upon me like a corrosive acid. What was the conviction of a distant necessity to me? I trembled under a present glance, I hungered after a present joy, I was clogged and chilled by a present fear. And so the days passed on; I witnessed Bertha's engagement and heard her marriage discussed as if I were under a conscious nightmare—knowing it was a dream that would vanish, but feeling stifled under the grasp of hard-clutching fingers.

When I was not in Bertha's presence—and I was with her very often, for she continued to treat me with a playful patronage that wakened no jealousy in my brother—I spent my time chiefly in wandering, in strolling, or taking long rides while the daylight lasted, and then shutting myself up with my unread books; for books had lost the power of chaining my attention. My self-consciousness was heightened to that pitch of intensity in which our own emotions take the form of a drama that urges itself imperatively on our contemplation, and we begin to weep, less under the sense of our suffering than at the thought of it. I felt a sort of pitying anguish over the pathos of my own lot—the lot of a being finely organised for pain, but with hardly any fibres that responded to pleasure—to whom the idea of future evil robbed the present of its joy, and for whom the idea of future good did not still the uneasiness of a present yearning or a present dread: I went dumbly through that

stage of the poet's suffering, in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows.

I was left entirely without remonstrance concerning this dreamy wayward life: I knew my father's thought about me:—"That lad will never be good for anything in life: he may waste his years in an insignificant way on the income that falls to him: I shall not trouble myself about a career for him."

One mild morning in the beginning of November, it happened that I was standing outside the portico patting lazy old Cæsar, a Newfoundland almost blind with age, the only dog that ever took any notice of me—for the very dogs shunned me, and fawned on the happier people about me—when the groom brought up my brother's horse which was to carry him to the hunt, and my brother himself appeared at the door, florid, broad-chested, and self-complacent, feeling what a good-natured fellow he was not to behave insolently to us all on the strength of his great advantages.

"Latimer, old boy," he said to me in a tone of compassionate cordiality, "what a pity it is you don't have a run with the hounds now and then. The finest thing in the world for low spirits!"

"Low spirits!" I thought bitterly, as he rode away; "that's the sort of phrase with which coarse, narrow natures like yours think you completely define experience of which you can know no more than your horse knows. It is to such as you that the good of this world falls: ready dulness, healthy selfishness, good-tempered conceit—these are the keys to happiness."

The quick thought came, that my selfishness was even stronger than his—it was only a suffering selfishness instead of an enjoying one. But then, again, my exasperating insight into Alfred's self-complacent soul, his freedom from all the doubts and fears, the unsatisfied yearnings, the exquisite tortures of sensitiveness, that had made the web of my life, seemed to absolve me from all bonds towards him. This man needed no pity, no love; those fine influences would have been as little felt by him as the delicate white mist is felt by the rock it caresses. There was no evil in store for *him*: if he was

not to marry Bertha, it would be because he had found a lot pleasanter to himself.

Mr Filmore's house lay not more than half a mile beyond our own gates, and whenever I knew my brother was gone in another direction, I went there for the chance of finding Bertha at home. Later on in the day I walked thither. By a rare accident she was alone, and we walked out in the grounds together, for she seldom went on foot beyond the trimly-swept gravel-walks. I remember what a beautiful sylph she looked to me as the low November sun shone on her blond hair, and she tripped along teasing me with her usual light banter, to which I listened half fondly, half moodily: it was all the sign Bertha's mysterious inner self ever made to me. To-day perhaps the moodiness predominated, for I had not yet shaken off the access of jealous hate which my brother had raised in me by his parting patronage. Suddenly I interrupted and startled her by saying, almost fiercely, "Bertha, how can you love Alfred?"

She looked at me with surprise for a moment, but soon her light smile came again, and she answered sarcastically, "Why do you suppose I love him?"

"How can you ask that, Bertha?"

"What! your wisdom thinks I must love the man I'm going to marry? The most unpleasant thing in the world. I should quarrel with him; I should be jealous of him; our *ménage*[6] would be conducted in a very ill-bred manner. A little quiet contempt contributes greatly to the elegance of life."

"Bertha, that is not your real feeling. Why do you delight in trying to deceive me by inventing such cynical speeches?"

"I need never take the trouble of invention in order to deceive you, my small Tasso"[7]—(that was the mocking name she usually gave me). "The easiest way to deceive a poet is to tell him the truth."

She was testing the validity of her epigram in a daring way, and for a moment the shadow of my vision—the Bertha whose soul was no secret to me—passed between me and the radiant girl, the playful sylph whose feelings were a fascinating mystery. I suppose I

must have shuddered, or betrayed in some other way my momentary chill of horror.

"Tasso!" she said, seizing my wrist, and peeping round into my face, "are you really beginning to discern what a heartless girl I am? Why, you are not half the poet I thought you were; you are actually capable of believing the truth about me."

The shadow passed from between us, and was no longer the object nearest to me. The girl whose light fingers grasped me, whose elfish charming face looked into mine—who, I thought, was betraying an interest in my feelings that she would not have directly avowed,—this warm-breathing presence again possessed my senses and imagination like a returning syren melody that had been overpowered for an instant by the roar of threatening waves. It was a moment as delicious to me as the waking up to a consciousness of youth after a dream of middle age. I forgot everything but my passion, and said, with swimming eyes—

"Bertha, shall you love me when we are first married? I wouldn't mind if you really loved me only for a little while."

Her look of astonishment, as she loosed my hand and started away from me, recalled me to a sense of my strange, my criminal indiscretion.

"Forgive me," I said, hurriedly, as soon as I could speak again; "I didn't know what I was saying."

"Ah, Tasso's mad fit has come on, I see," she answered quietly, for she had recovered herself sooner than I had. "Let him go home and keep his head cool. I must go in, for the sun is setting."

I left her—full of indignation against myself. I had let slip words which, if she reflected on them, might rouse in her a suspicion of my abnormal mental condition—a suspicion which of all things I dreaded. And besides that, I was ashamed of the apparent baseness I had committed in uttering them to my brother's betrothed wife. I wandered home slowly, entering our park through a private gate instead of by the lodges. As I approached the house, I saw a man dashing off at full speed from the stable-yard across the park. Had any accident happened at home? No; perhaps it was only one of my

father's peremptory business errands that required this headlong haste. Nevertheless I quickened my pace without any distinct motive, and was soon at the house. I will not dwell on the scene I found there. My brother was dead—had been pitched from his horse, and killed on the spot by a concussion of the brain.

I went up to the room where he lay, and where my father was seated beside him with a look of rigid despair. I had shunned my father more than any one since our return home, for the radical antipathy between our natures made my insight into his inner self a constant affliction to me. But now, as I went up to him, and stood beside him in sad silence, I felt the presence of a new element that blended us as we had never been blent before. My father had been one of the most successful men in the money-getting world: he had had no sentimental sufferings, no illness. The heaviest trouble that had befallen him was the death of his first wife. But he married my mother soon after; and I remember he seemed exactly the same, to my keen childish observation, the week after her death as before. But now, at last, a sorrow had come—the sorrow of old age, which suffers the more from the crushing of its pride and its hopes, in proportion as the pride and hope are narrow and prosaic. His son was to have been married soon—would probably have stood for the borough at the next election. That son's existence was the best motive that could be alleged for making new purchases of land every year to round off the estate. It is a dreary thing to live on doing the same things year after year, without knowing why we do them. Perhaps the tragedy of disappointed youth and passion is less piteous than the tragedy of disappointed age and worldliness.

As I saw into the desolation of my father's heart, I felt a movement of deep pity towards him, which was the beginning of a new affection—an affection that grew and strengthened in spite of the strange bitterness with which he regarded me in the first month or two after my brother's death. If it had not been for the softening influence of my compassion for him—the first deep compassion I had ever felt—I should have been stung by the perception that my father transferred the inheritance of an eldest son to me with a

mortified sense that fate had compelled him to the unwelcome course of caring for me as an important being. It was only in spite of himself that he began to think of me with anxious regard. There is hardly any neglected child, for whom death has made vacant a more favoured place, that will not understand what I mean.

Gradually, however, my new deference to his wishes, the effect of that patience which was born of my pity for him, won upon his affection, and he began to please himself with the endeavour to make me fill my brother's place as fully as my feebler personality would admit. I saw that the prospect which by-and-by presented itself of my becoming Bertha's husband was welcome to him, and he even contemplated in my case what he had not intended in my brother's—that his son and daughter-in-law should make one household with him. My softened feeling towards my father made this the happiest time I had known since childhood;—these last months in which I retained the delicious illusion of loving Bertha, of longing and doubting and hoping that she loved me. She behaved with a certain new consciousness and distance towards me after my brother's death; and I too was under a double constraint—that of delicacy towards my brother's memory, and of anxiety as to the impression my abrupt words had left on her mind. But the additional screen this mutual reserve erected between us only brought me more completely under her power: no matter how empty the adytum,[8] so that the veil be thick enough. So absolute is our soul's need of something hidden and uncertain for the maintenance of that doubt and hope and effort which are the breath of its life, that if the whole future were laid bare to us beyond to-day, the interest of all mankind would be bent on the hours that lie between; we should pant after the uncertainties of our one morning and our one afternoon; we should rush fiercely to the Exchange for our last possibility of speculation, of success, of disappointment; we should have a glut of political prophets foretelling a crisis or a no-crisis within the only twenty-four hours left open to prophecy. Conceive the condition of the human mind if all propositions whatsoever were self-evident except one, which was to become self-evident at the

close of a summer's day, but in the mean time might be the subject of question, of hypothesis, of debate. Art and philosophy, literature and science, would fasten like bees on that one proposition that had the honey of probability in it, and be the more eager because their enjoyment would end with sunset. Our impulses, our spiritual activities, no more adjust themselves to the idea of their future nullity, than the beating of our heart, or the irritability of our muscles.

Bertha, the slim, fair-haired girl, whose present thoughts and emotions were an enigma to me amidst the fatiguing obviousness of the other minds around me, was as absorbing to me as a single unknown to-day—as a single hypothetic proposition to remain problematic till sunset; and all the cramped, hemmed-in belief and disbelief, trust and distrust, of my nature, welled out in this one narrow channel.

And she made me believe that she loved me. Without ever quitting her tone of badinage and playful superiority, she intoxicated me with the sense that I was necessary to her, that she was never at ease unless I was near her, submitting to her playful tyranny. It costs a woman so little effort to besot us in this way! A half-repressed word, a moment's unexpected silence, even an easy fit of petulance on our account, will serve us as *hashish* for a long while. Out of the subtlest web of scarcely-perceptible signs, she set me weaving the fancy that she had always unconsciously loved me better than Alfred, but that, with the ignorant fluttered sensibility of a young girl, she had been imposed on by the charm that lay for her in the distinction of being admired and chosen by a man who made so brilliant a figure in the world as my brother. She satirised herself in a very graceful way for her vanity and ambition. What was it to me that I had the light of my wretched prevision on the fact that now it was I who possessed at least all but the personal part of my brother's advantages? Our sweet illusions are half of them conscious illusions, like effects of colour that we know to be made up of tinsel, broken glass, and rags.

We were married eighteen months after Alfred's death, one cold, clear morning in April, when there came hail and sunshine both together; and Bertha, in her white silk and pale-green leaves, and the pale sunshine of her hair and eyes, looked like the spirit of the morning. My father was happier than he had thought of being again: my marriage, he felt sure, would complete the desirable modification of my character, and make me practical and worldly enough to take my place in society among sane men. For he delighted in Bertha's tact and acuteness, and felt sure she would be mistress of me, and make me what she chose: I was only twenty-one, and madly in love with her. Poor father! He kept that hope a little while after our first year of marriage, and it was not quite extinct when paralysis came and saved him from utter disappointment.

I shall hurry through the rest of my story, not dwelling so much as I have hitherto done on my inward experience. When people are well known to each other, they talk rather of what befals them externally, leaving their feelings and sentiments to be inferred.

We lived in a round of visits for some time after our return home, giving splendid dinner-parties, and making a sensation in our neighbourhood by the new lustre of our equipage, for my father had reserved this display of his increased wealth for the period of his son's marriage; and we gave our acquaintances liberal opportunity for remarking that it was a pity I made so poor a figure as an heir and a bridegroom. The nervous fatigue of this existence, the insincerities and platitudes which I had to live through twice over—through my inner and outward sense—would have been maddening to me, if I had not had that sort of intoxicated callousness which came from the delights of a first passion. A bride and bridegroom, surrounded by all the appliances of wealth, hurried through the day by the whirl of society, filling their solitary moments with hastily-snatched caresses, are prepared for their future life together, as the novice is prepared for the cloister, by experiencing its utmost contrast.

Through all these crowded excited months, Bertha's inward self remained shrouded from me, and I still read her thoughts only

through the language of her lips and demeanour: I had still the delicious human interest of wondering whether what I did and said pleased her, of longing to hear a word of affection, of giving a delicious exaggeration of meaning to her smile. But I was conscious of a growing difference in her manner towards me; sometimes strong enough to be called haughty coldness, cutting and chilling me as the hail had done that came across the sunshine on our marriage morning; sometimes only perceptible in the dexterous avoidance of a *tête-à-tête*[9] walk or dinner, to which I had been looking forward. I had been deeply pained by this—had even felt a sort of crushing of the heart, from the sense that my brief day of happiness was near its setting; but still I remained dependent on Bertha, eager for the last rays of a bliss that would soon be gone for ever, hoping and watching for some after-glow more beautiful from the impending night.

I remember—how should I not remember?—the time when that dependence and hope utterly left me—when the sadness I had felt in Bertha's growing estrangement became a joy that I looked back upon with longing, as a man might look back on the last pains in a paralysed limb. It was just after the close of my father's last illness, which necessarily withdrew us from society, and threw us more upon each other. It was the evening of my father's death. On that evening the veil that had shrouded Bertha's soul from me, and made me find in her alone among my fellow-beings the blessed possibility of mystery, and doubt, and expectation, was first withdrawn. Perhaps it was the first day since the beginning of my passion for her, in which that passion was completely neutralised by the presence of an absorbing feeling of another kind. I had been watching by my father's death-bed: I had been witnessing the last fitful yearning glances that his soul had cast back on the spent inheritance of life—the last faint consciousness of love that he had gathered from the pressure of my hand. What are all our personal loves when we have been sharing in that supreme agony? In the first moments when we come away from the presence of death, every other relation to the

living is merged, to our feeling, in the great relation of a common nature and a common destiny.

It was in that state of mind that I joined Bertha in her private sitting-room. She was seated in a leaning posture on a settee, with her back towards the door; the great rich coils of her blond hair surmounting her small neck, visible above the back of the settee. I remember, as I closed the door behind me, a cold tremulousness seizing me, and a vague sense of being hated and lonely—vague and strong, like a presentiment. I know how I looked at that moment, for I saw myself in Bertha's thought as she lifted her cutting grey eyes, and looked at me: a miserable ghost-seer, surrounded by phantoms in the noon-day, trembling under a breeze when the leaves were still, without appetite for the common objects of human desire, but pining after the moonbeams. We were front to front with each other, and judged each other. The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank prosaic wall: from that evening forth, through the sickening years that followed, I saw all round the narrow room of this woman's soul—saw petty artifice and mere negation where I had delighted to believe in coy sensibilities, and in wit at war with latent feeling—saw the light floating vanities of the girl defining themselves into the systematic coquetry, the scheming selfishness, of the woman—saw repulsion and antipathy hardening into cruel hatred, giving pain only for the sake of wreaking itself.

For Bertha too, after her kind, felt the bitterness of disillusion. She had believed that my wild poet's passion for her would make me her slave; and that, being her slave, I should execute her will in all things. With the essential shallowness of a negative, unimaginative nature, she was unable to conceive the fact that sensibilities were anything else than weaknesses. She had thought my weaknesses would put me in her power, and she found them unmanageable forces. Our positions were reversed. Before marriage, she had completely mastered my imagination, for she was a secret to me; and I created the unknown thought before which I trembled, as if it were hers. But now that her soul was laid open to me, now that I

was compelled to share the privacy of her motives, to follow all the petty devices that preceded her words and acts, she found herself powerless with me, except to produce in me the chill shudder of repulsion—powerless, because I could be acted on by no lever within her reach. I was dead to worldly ambitions, to social vanities, to all the incentives within the compass of her narrow imagination, and I lived under influences utterly invisible to her.

She was really pitiable to have such a husband, and so all the world thought. A graceful, brilliant woman, like Bertha, who smiled on morning callers, made a figure in ball-rooms, and was capable of that light repartee which, from such a woman, is accepted as wit, was secure of carrying off all sympathy from a husband who was sickly, abstracted, and, as some suspected, crack-brained. Even the servants in our house gave her the balance of their regard and pity. For there were no audible quarrels between us; our alienation, our repulsion from each other, lay within the silence of our own hearts; and if the mistress went out a great deal, and seemed to dislike the master's society, was it not natural, poor thing? The master was odd. I was kind and just to my dependants, but I excited in them a shrinking, half-contemptuous pity; for this class of men and women are but slightly determined in their estimate of others by general considerations of character. They judge of persons as they judge of coins, and value those who pass current at a high rate.

After a time I interfered so little with Bertha's habits, that it might seem wonderful how her hatred towards me could grow so intense and active as it did. But she had begun to suspect, by some involuntary betrayals of mine, that there was an abnormal power of penetration in me—that fitfully, at least, I was strangely cognisant of her thoughts and intentions, and she began to be haunted by a terror of me, which alternated every now and then with defiance. She meditated continually how the incubus[1] could be shaken off her life—how she could be freed from this hateful bond to a being whom she at once despised as an imbecile, and dreaded as an inquisitor. For a long while she lived in the hope that my evident wretchedness would drive me to the commission of suicide; but suicide was not in

my nature. I was too completely swayed by the sense that I was in the grasp of unknown forces, to believe in my power of self-release. Towards my own destiny I had become entirely passive; for my one ardent desire had spent itself, and impulse no longer predominated over knowledge. For this reason I never thought of taking any steps towards a complete separation, which would have made our alienation evident to the world. Why should I rush for help to a new course, when I was only suffering from the consequences of a deed which had been the act of my intensest will? That would have been the logic of one who had desires to gratify, and I had no desires. But Bertha and I lived more and more aloof from each other. The rich find it easy to live married and apart.

That course of our life which I have indicated in a few sentences filled the space of years. So much misery—so slow and hideous a growth of hatred and sin, may be compressed into a sentence! And men judge of each other's lives through this summary medium. They epitomise the experience of their fellow-mortal, and pronounce judgment on him in neat syntax, and feel themselves wise and virtuous—conquerors over the temptations they define in well-selected predicates. Seven years of wretchedness glide glibly over the lips of the man who has never counted them out in moments of chill disappointment, of head and heart throbbings, of dread and vain wrestling, of remorse and despair. We learn *words* by rote, but not their meaning; *that* must be paid for with our life-blood, and printed in the subtle fibres of our nerves.

But I will hasten to finish my story. Brevity is justified at once to those who readily understand, and to those who will never understand.

Some years after my father's death, I was sitting by the dim firelight in my library one January evening—sitting in the leather chair that used to be my father's—when Bertha appeared at the door, with a candle in her hand, and advanced towards me. I knew the ball-dress she had on—the white ball-dress, with the green jewels, shone upon by the light of the wax candle which lit up the medallion of the dying Cleopatra on the mantelpiece. Why did she

come to me before going out? I had not seen her in the library, which was my habitual place, for months. Why did she stand before me with the candle in her hand, with her cruel contemptuous eyes fixed on me, and the glittering serpent, like a familiar demon, on her breast? For a moment I thought this fulfilment of my vision at Vienna marked some dreadful crisis in my fate, but I saw nothing in Bertha's mind, as she stood before me, except scorn for the look of overwhelming misery with which I sat before her. . . . "Fool, idiot, why don't you kill yourself, then?"—that was her thought. But at length her thoughts reverted to her errand, and she spoke aloud. The apparently indifferent nature of the errand seemed to make a ridiculous anticlimax to my prevision and my agitation.

"I have had to hire a new maid. Fletcher is going to be married, and she wants me to ask you to let her husband have the public-house and farm at Molton. I wish him to have it. You must give the promise now, because Fletcher is going to-morrow morning—and quickly, because I'm in a hurry."

"Very well; you may promise her," I said, indifferently, and Bertha swept out of the library again.

I always shrank from the sight of a new person, and all the more when it was a person whose mental life was likely to weary my reluctant insight with worldly ignorant trivialities. But I shrank especially from the sight of this new maid, because her advent had been announced to me at a moment to which I could not cease to attach some fatality: I had a vague dread that I should find her mixed up with the dreary drama of my life—that some new sickening vision would reveal her to me as an evil genius. When at last I did unavoidably meet her, the vague dread was changed into definite disgust. She was a tall, wiry, dark-eyed woman, this Mrs Archer, with a face handsome enough to give her coarse hard nature the odious finish of bold, self-confident coquetry. That was enough to make me avoid her, quite apart from the contemptuous feeling with which she contemplated me. I seldom saw her; but I perceived that she rapidly became a favourite with her mistress, and, after the lapse of eight or nine months, I began to be aware that there had arisen in Bertha's

mind towards this woman a mingled feeling of fear and dependence, and that this feeling was associated with ill-defined images of candle-light scenes in her dressing-room, and the looking-up of something in Bertha's cabinet. My interviews with my wife had become so brief and so rarely solitary, that I had no opportunity of perceiving these images in her mind with more definiteness. The recollections of the past become contracted in the rapidity of thought till they sometimes bear hardly a more distinct resemblance to the external reality than the forms of an oriental alphabet to the objects that suggested them.

Besides, for the last year or more a modification had been going forward in my mental condition, and was growing more and more marked. My insight into the minds of those around me was becoming dimmer and more fitful, and the ideas that crowded my double consciousness became less and less dependent on any personal contact. All that was personal in me seemed to be suffering a gradual death, so that I was losing the organ through which the personal agitations and projects of others could affect me. But along with this relief from wearisome insight, there was a new development of what I concluded—as I have since found rightly—to be a prevision of external scenes. It was as if the relation between me and my fellow-men was more and more deadened, and my relation to what we call the inanimate was quickened into new life. The more I lived apart from society, and in proportion as my wretchedness subsided from the violent throb of agonised passion into the dulness of habitual pain, the more frequent and vivid became such visions as that I had had of Prague—of strange cities, of sandy plains, of gigantic ruins, of midnight skies with strange bright constellations, of mountain-passes, of grassy nooks flecked with the afternoon sunshine through the boughs: I was in the midst of all these scenes, and in all of them one presence seemed to weigh on me in all these mighty shapes—the presence of something unknown and pitiless. For continual suffering had annihilated religious faith within me: to the utterly miserable—the unloving and the unloved—there is no religion possible, no worship, but a worship

of devils. And beyond all these, and continually recurring, was the vision of my death—the pangs, the suffocation, the last struggle, when life would be grasped at in vain.

Things were in this state near the end of the seventh year. I had become entirely free from insight, from my abnormal cognisance of any other consciousness than my own, and instead of intruding involuntarily into the world of other minds, was living continually in my own solitary future. Bertha was aware that I was greatly changed. To my surprise she had of late seemed to seek opportunities of remaining in my society, and had cultivated that kind of distant yet familiar talk which is customary between a husband and wife who live in polite and irrevocable alienation. I bore this with languid submission, and without feeling enough interest in her motives to be roused into keen observation; yet I could not help perceiving something triumphant and excited in her carriage and the expression of her face—something too subtle to express itself in words or tones, but giving one the idea that she lived in a state of expectation or hopeful suspense. My chief feeling was satisfaction that her inner self was once more shut out from me; and I almost revelled for the moment in the absent melancholy that made me answer her at cross purposes, and betray utter ignorance of what she had been saying. I remember well the look and the smile with which she one day said, after a mistake of this kind on my part: "I used to think you were a clairvoyant, and that was the reason why you were so bitter against other clairvoyants, wanting to keep your monopoly; but I see now you have become rather duller than the rest of the world."

I said nothing in reply. It occurred to me that her recent obtrusion of herself upon me might have been prompted by the wish to test my power of detecting some of her secrets; but I let the thought drop again at once: her motives and her deeds had no interest for me, and whatever pleasures she might be seeking, I had no wish to baulk her. There was still pity in my soul for every living thing, and Bertha was living—was surrounded with possibilities of misery.

Just at this time there occurred an event which roused me somewhat from my inertia, and gave me an interest in the passing moment that I had thought impossible for me. It was a visit from Charles Meunier, who had written me word that he was coming to England for relaxation from too strenuous labour, and would like to see me. Meunier had now a European reputation; but his letter to me expressed that keen remembrance of an early regard, an early debt of sympathy, which is inseparable from nobility of character: and I too felt as if his presence would be to me like a transient resurrection into a happier pre-existence.

He came, and as far as possible, I renewed our old pleasure of making *tête-à-tête* excursions, though, instead of mountains and glaciers and the wide blue lake, we had to content ourselves with mere slopes and ponds and artificial plantations. The years had changed us both, but with what different result! Meunier was now a brilliant figure in society, to whom elegant women pretended to listen, and whose acquaintance was boasted of by noblemen ambitious of brains. He repressed with the utmost delicacy all betrayal of the shock which I am sure he must have received from our meeting, or of a desire to penetrate into my condition and circumstances, and sought by the utmost exertion of his charming social powers to make our reunion agreeable. Bertha was much struck by the unexpected fascinations of a visitor whom she had expected to find presentable only on the score of his celebrity, and put forth all her coquetries and accomplishments. Apparently she succeeded in attracting his admiration, for his manner towards her was attentive and flattering. The effect of his presence on me was so benignant, especially in those renewals of our old *tête-à-tête* wanderings, when he poured forth to me wonderful narratives of his professional experience, that more than once, when his talk turned on the psychological relations of disease, the thought crossed my mind that, if his stay with me were long enough, I might possibly bring myself to tell this man the secrets of my lot. Might there not lie some remedy for *me*, too, in his science? Might there not at least lie some comprehension and sympathy ready for me in his large and

susceptible mind? But the thought only flickered feebly now and then, and died out before it could become a wish. The horror I had of again breaking in on the privacy of another soul, made me, by an irrational instinct, draw the shroud of concealment more closely around my own, as we automatically perform the gesture we feel to be wanting in another.

When Meunier's visit was approaching its conclusion, there happened an event which caused some excitement in our household, owing to the surprisingly strong effect it appeared to produce on Bertha—on Bertha, the self-possessed, who usually seemed inaccessible to feminine agitations, and did even her hate in a self-restrained hygienic manner. This event was the sudden severe illness of her maid, Mrs Archer. I have reserved to this moment the mention of a circumstance which had forced itself on my notice shortly before Meunier's arrival, namely that there had been some quarrel between Bertha and this maid, apparently during a visit to a distant family, in which she had accompanied her mistress. I had overheard Archer speaking in a tone of bitter insolence, which I should have thought an adequate reason for immediate dismissal. No dismissal followed; on the contrary, Bertha seemed to be silently putting up with personal inconveniences from the exhibitions of this woman's temper. I was the more astonished to observe that her illness seemed a cause of strong solicitude to Bertha; that she was at the bedside night and day, and would allow no one else to officiate as head-nurse. It happened that our family doctor was out on a holiday, an accident which made Meunier's presence in the house doubly welcome, and he apparently entered into the case with an interest which seemed so much stronger than the ordinary professional feeling, that one day when he had fallen into a long fit of silence after visiting her, I said to him,

"Is this a very peculiar case of disease, Meunier?"

"No," he answered, "it is an attack of peritonitis,[2] which will be fatal, but which does not differ physically from many other cases that have come under my observation. But I'll tell you what I have on my mind. I want to make an experiment on this woman, if you

will give me permission. It can do her no harm—will give her no pain—for I shall not make it until life is extinct to all purposes of sensation. I want to try the effect of transfusing blood[3] into her arteries after the heart has ceased to beat for some minutes. I have tried the experiment again and again with animals that have died of this disease, with astounding results, and I want to try it on a human subject. I have the small tubes necessary, in a case I have with me, and the rest of the apparatus could be prepared readily. I should use my own blood—take it from my own arm. This woman won't live through the night, I'm convinced, and I want you to promise me your assistance in making the experiment. I can't do without another hand, but it would perhaps not be well to call in a medical assistant from among your provincial doctors. A disagreeable, foolish version of the thing might get abroad."

"Have you spoken to my wife on the subject?" I said, "because she appears to be peculiarly sensitive about this woman: she has been a favourite maid."

"To tell you the truth," said Meunier, "I don't want her to know about it. There are always insuperable difficulties with women in these matters, and the effect on the supposed dead body may be startling. You and I will sit up together, and be in readiness. When certain symptoms appear I shall take you in, and at the right moment we must manage to get every one else out of the room."

I need not give our farther conversation on the subject. He entered very fully into the details, and overcame my repulsion from them, by exciting in me a mingled awe and curiosity concerning the possible results of his experiment.

We prepared everything, and he instructed me in my part as assistant. He had not told Bertha of his absolute conviction that Archer would not survive through the night, and endeavoured to persuade her to leave the patient and take a night's rest. But she was obstinate, suspecting the fact that death was at hand, and supposing that he wished merely to save her nerves. She refused to leave the sick-room. Meunier and I sat up together in the library, he making frequent visits to the sickroom, and returning with the

information that the case was taking precisely the course he expected. Once he said to me, "Can you imagine any cause of ill feeling this woman has against her mistress, who is so devoted to her?"

"I think there was some misunderstanding between them before her illness. Why do you ask?"

"Because I have observed for the last five or six hours—since, I fancy, she has lost all hope of recovery—there seems a strange prompting in her to say something which pain and failing strength forbid her to utter; and there is a look of hideous meaning in her eyes, which she turns continually towards her mistress. In this disease the mind often remains singularly clear to the last."

"I am not surprised at an indication of malevolent feeling in her." I said. "She is a woman who has always inspired me with distrust and dislike, but she managed to insinuate herself into her mistress's favour." He remained silent after this, looking at the fire with an air of absorption, till he went up-stairs again. He remained away longer than usual, and on returning, said to me quietly, "Come now."

I followed him to the chamber where death was hovering. The dark hangings of the large bed made a background that gave a strong relief to Bertha's pale face as I entered. She started forward as she saw me enter, and then looked at Meunier with an expression of angry inquiry; but he lifted up his hand as if to impose silence, while he fixed his glance on the dying woman and felt her pulse. The face was pinched and ghastly, a cold perspiration was on the forehead, and the eyelids were lowered so as almost to conceal the large dark eyes. After a minute or two, Meunier walked round to the other side of the bed where Bertha stood, and with his usual air of gentle politeness towards her begged her to leave the patient under our care—everything should be done for her—she was no longer in a state to be conscious of an affectionate presence. Bertha was hesitating, apparently almost willing to believe his assurance and to comply. She looked round at the ghastly dying face, as if to read the confirmation of that assurance, when for a moment the lowered eyelids were raised again, and it seemed as if the eyes were looking

towards Bertha, but blankly. A shudder passed through Bertha's frame, and she returned to her station near the pillow, tacitly implying that she would not leave the room.

The eyelids were lifted no more. Once I looked at Bertha, as she watched the face of the dying one. She wore a rich peignoir,[4] and her blond hair was half covered by a lace cap: in her attire she was, as always, an elegant woman, fit to figure in a picture of modern aristocratic life: but I asked myself how that face of hers could ever have seemed to me the face of a woman born of woman, with memories of childhood, capable of pain, needing to be fondled? The features at that moment looked so preternaturally sharp, the eyes were so hard and eager—she looked like a cruel immortal, finding her spiritual feast in the agonies of a dying race. For across those hard features there came something like a flash when the last hour had been breathed out, and we all felt that the dark veil had completely fallen. What secret was there between Bertha and this woman? I turned my eyes from her with a horrible dread lest my insight should return, and I should be obliged to see what had been breeding about two unloving women's hearts. I felt that Bertha had been watching for the moment of death as the sealing of her secret: I thanked Heaven it could remain sealed for me.

Meunier said quietly, "Gone." He then gave his arm to Bertha, and she submitted to be led out of the room.

I suppose it was at her order that two female attendants came into the room, and dismissed the younger one who had been present before. When they entered, Meunier had already opened the artery in the long thin neck that lay rigid on the pillow, and I dismissed them, ordering them to remain at a distance till we rang: the doctor, I said, had an operation to perform—he was not sure about the death. For the next twenty minutes I forgot everything but Meunier and the experiment in which he was so absorbed, that I think his senses would have been closed against all sounds or sights that had no relation to it. It was my task at first to keep up the artificial respiration in the body after the transfusion had been effected, but presently Meunier relieved me, and I could see the

wondrous slow return of life: the breast began to heave, the inspirations became stronger, the eyelids quivered, and the soul seemed to have returned beneath them. The artificial respiration was withdrawn: still the breathing continued, and there was a movement of the lips.

Just then I heard the handle of the door moving: I suppose Bertha had heard from the women that they had been dismissed: probably a vague fear had arisen in her mind, for she entered with a look of alarm. She came to the foot of the bed and gave a stifled cry.

The dead woman's eyes were wide open, and met hers in full recognition—the recognition of hate. With a sudden strong effort, the hand that Bertha had thought for ever still was pointed towards her, and the haggard face moved. The gasping eager voice said,

"You mean to poison your husband. . . . the poison is in the black cabinet. . . . I got it for you. . . . you laughed at me, and told lies about me behind my back, to make me disgusting. . . . because you were jealous. . . . are you sorry . . . now?"

The lips continued to murmur, but the sounds were no longer distinct. Soon there was no sound—only a slight movement: the flame had leaped out, and was being extinguished the faster. The wretched woman's heart-strings had been set to hatred and vengeance; the spirit of life had swept the chords for an instant, and was gone again for ever. Good God! This is what it is to live again . . . to wake up with our unstilled thirst upon us, with our unuttered curses rising to our lips, with our muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins.

Bertha stood pale at the foot of the bed, quivering and helpless, despairing of devices, like a cunning animal whose hiding-places are surrounded by swift-advancing flame. Even Meunier looked paralysed; life for that moment ceased to be a scientific problem to him. As for me, this scene seemed of one texture with the rest of my existence: horror was my familiar, and this new revelation was only like an old pain recurring with new circumstances.

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Since then Bertha and I have lived apart—she in her own neighbourhood, the mistress of half our wealth, I as a wanderer in foreign countries, until I came to this Devonshire nest to die. Bertha lives pitied and admired—for what had I against that charming woman, whom every one but myself could have been happy with? There had been no witness of the scene in the dying room except Meunier, and while Meunier lived, his lips were sealed by a promise to me.

Once or twice, weary of wandering, I rested in a favourite spot, and my heart went out towards the men and women and children whose faces were becoming familiar to me: but I was driven away again in terror at the approach of my old insight—driven away to live continually with the one Unknown Presence revealed and yet hidden by the moving curtain of the earth and sky. Till at last disease took hold of me and forced me to rest here—forced me to live in dependence on my servants. And then the curse of insight—of my double consciousness, came again, and has never left me. I know all their narrow thoughts, their feeble regard, their half-wearied pity.

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It is the 20th of September 1850. I know these figures I have just written, as if they were a long familiar inscription. I have seen them on this page in my desk unnumbered times, when the scene of my dying struggle has opened upon me. . . .

1859

Endnotes

- Note 6: Household.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Torquato Tasso (1544–1595), Italian poet.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Inner sanctum, refuge.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Private conversation.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Demon in male form.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Inflammation of the membrane lining the intestine; usually fatal.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Although transfusing blood was occasionally used as a remedy for hemophilia, it remained a highly experimental procedure until blood types were discovered and understood in the early 20th century.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dressing gown.Return to reference 4

Victorian Debates about Women, Gender, and Sexuality

"The principal difference between ourselves and our ancestors is, that they took society as they found it, and never troubled themselves on the subject; while we are self-conscious and perplexed. . . . The institution of marriage might almost seem just now to be . . . just now upon its trial." This assertion by Justin M'Carthy, appearing in an essay on novels in the *Westminster Review* (July 1864), could be further extended, for on trial throughout the Victorian period was not only the institution of marriage but also the family itself and, most particularly, the traditional roles of women as wives, mothers, and daughters.

As indicated in the introduction to the Victorian Age, the "Woman Question," as it was often called, encompassed not one question but many. The mixed opinions of Queen Victoria illustrate some of its different aspects. Believing in education for her sex, she supported the founding of a college for women in 1847. At the same time, she described efforts to expand the franchise to women as "mad folly." Happily married herself until the death of Prince Albert in 1861, Victoria was nevertheless aware of some of the sacrifices marriage imposed on women. Writing in 1858 to her recently married daughter, she remarked: "There is great happiness . . . in devoting oneself to another who is worthy of one's affection; still, men are very selfish and the woman's devotion is always one of submission which makes our poor sex so very unenviable. This you will feel hereafter—I know; though it cannot be otherwise as God has willed it so."

Many of the queen's female subjects shared her assumption that women's role in the home was to be accepted as divinely willed.

Others justified the "submission" of which the Queen wrote on the grounds of women's supposed intellectual inferiority. In this context it would follow that a woman who tried to cultivate her intellect was violating the orders of both Nature and God. Woman was to be valued, instead, for other qualities considered especially characteristic of her sex: tenderness, innocence, domestic affection, and, in various degrees, submissiveness. This vision of womanhood played an important role in relation to middle-class men, as the writings of Sarah Stickney Ellis begin to suggest: while men's striving for worldly aggrandizement "is constantly misleading their steps, closing their ears against the voice of conscience, and beguiling them with the promise of peace, where peace was never found," she writes, with his wife's help, he might be able to preserve his best, least selfish, most spiritual self at home. Naturally more virtuous, and sequestered from political issues and economic competition, wives were imagined to serve as a kind of spiritual reservoir for husbands exposed to the rigors and dangers of the marketplace.

Such values could be onerous for middle- and upper-class women, many of whom complained of the boredom and frustration of being prohibited from exercising their brains and bodies. But they could also be dangerous, insofar as they helped justify the legal erasure of married women under the doctrine of "coverture." Coverture regarded women as "covered" or represented by their husbands, and hence unable to own property, sue or be sued, or file for divorce. Marital rape was not recognized in British law until 1992, and children legally belonged to their fathers. This situation changed gradually over the course of the century, with the 1857 and 1864 Marital Causes Acts, and the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882. Nevertheless, for most women, for most of the century, the law made it nearly impossible to escape abusive or exploitative marriages, even when their own lives or those of their children were imperiled. Meanwhile, unmarried middle-class women had almost no professional opportunities beyond working as governesses or companions that would not lead to the forfeiture of respectability.

While the cult of womanhood could be a burden for middle- and upper-class women, it was an inaccessible ideal for poor women. In the mid-nineteenth century, one-quarter of England's female population had jobs outside the home, most of which were physically gruelling and low paying. Thus, millions of women were employed as domestics, seamstresses, factory workers, farm laborers, or prostitutes. The realities of working women's lives were rarely acknowledged by those responsible for perpetuating certain myths of womanhood—though they figure prominently in the literature of reform of this period.

The first section of this cluster attends to the prevailing myth of womanhood as domestic goddess. Sarah Stickney Ellis, Coventry Patmore, and John Ruskin all make powerful claims about women's role in securing the virtues of their husbands—and hence, too, the virtue of the nation. The second and third attend to some of the most problematic consequences of this myth in the marriage laws that absorbed married women's legal identities into their husbands', and in the judgments made of women unable or unwilling to embody it. Blackstone's *Commentaries* offers the standard definition of "coverture," while Lady Caroline Norton became famous (or infamous) for her exposure of the abuse to which this law exposed even the richest and supposedly most powerful women in the country. The third section demonstrates how norms of femininity could be used to condemn social ills, whether those ills involved the conditions in factories where women were typically paid lower wages and so preferred to men (Engels), or the rampant prostitution that belied the normative marital heterosexuality that was advocated by both domestic ideologists and medical practitioners.

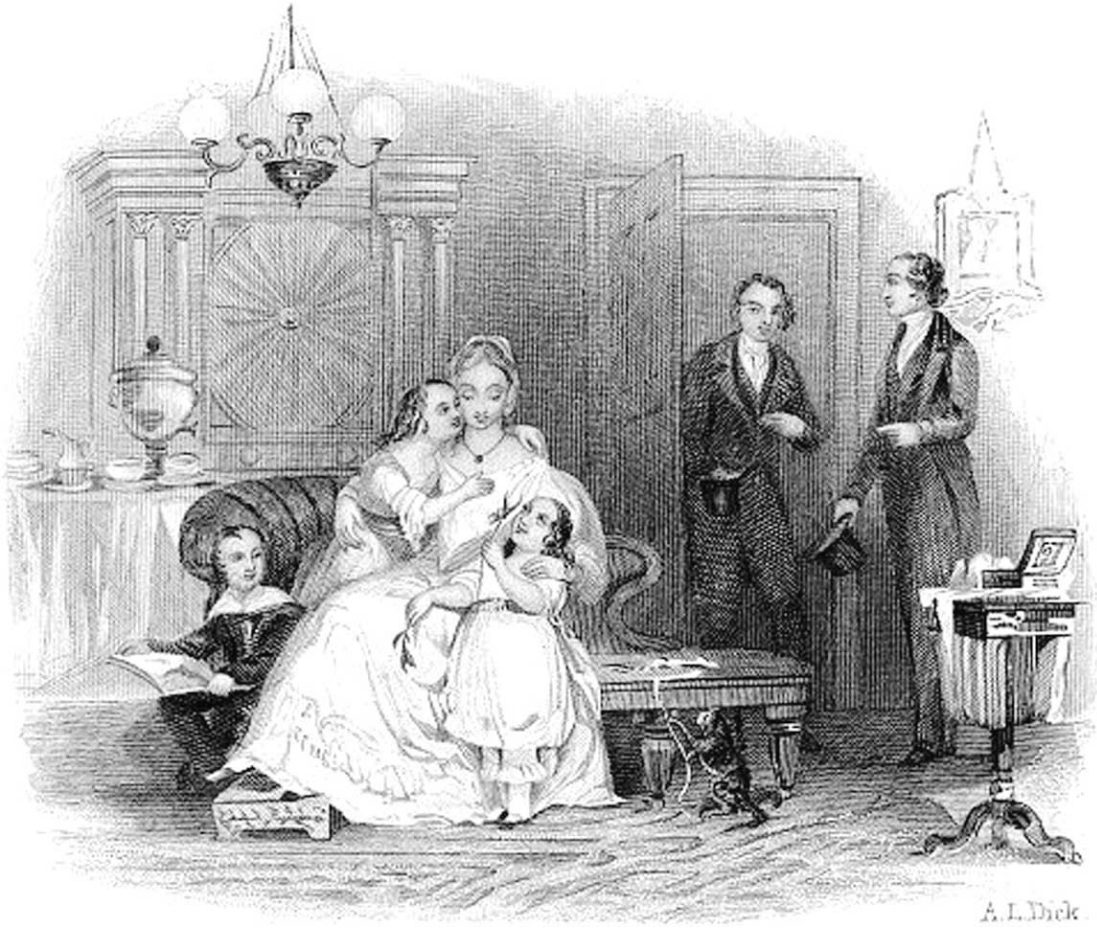
The fourth section focuses on the pathologization of sexuality—whether heterosexual (as in the case of William Acton, who regards sex between husbands and wives as nearly as dangerous as homosexuality or masturbation), homosexual, or onanistic. The final section focuses on the role gender norms played in the expansion of empire. British women were commonly regarded as powerful civilizing agents or means of disseminating British values. They were

also used as exemplars of the superiority of British culture: by comparison with the "hareem" that Harriet Martineau describes, or the barely human Fugueans that Charles Darwin depicts, the modest, cultivated, independent British woman was consistently offered to explain the responsibility of the British Empire to its less civilized neighbors. As critic Gayatri Spivak writes, one powerful apology for empire was the notion that it involved "white men saving brown women from brown men." White women played an important role in this notion, insofar as their supposed independence, virtue, and industry was offered as evidence of the superiority of British culture.

Middle-Class Women

SARAH STICKNEY ELLIS

In 1837 the essayist Sarah Stickney (1812?–1872) married William Ellis, a missionary, and began to work with him for the temperance movement and other evangelical causes. Ellis's 1839 book on women's education and domestic roles became a best seller, going through sixteen editions in two years. In the 1840s she founded a girls' school that put into practice her belief that feminine education should cultivate what she called "the heart" rather than the intellectual faculties of her pupils.



Home Comforts. The original caption to this frontispiece to *The Women of England* runs as follows: "It is the home comforts and fireside virtues."

From The Women of England: Their Social Duties and Domestic Habits

[DISINTERESTED KINDNESS]

To men belongs the potent—(I had almost said the *omnipotent*) consideration of worldly aggrandizement; and it is constantly misleading their steps, closing their ears against the voice of conscience, and beguiling them with the promise of peace, where peace was never found.

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How often has man returned to his home with a mind confused by the many voices, which in the mart, the exchange, or the public assembly, have addressed themselves to his inborn selfishness, or his worldly pride; and while his integrity was shaken, and his resolution gave way beneath the pressure of apparent necessity, or the insidious pretenses of expediency, he has stood corrected before the clear eye of woman, as it looked directly to the naked truth, and detected the lurking evil of the specious act he was about to commit. Nay, so potent may have become this secret influence, that he may have borne it about with him like a kind of second conscience, for mental reference, and spiritual counsel, in moments of trial; and when the snares of the world were around him, and temptations from within and without have bribed over the witness in his own bosom, he has thought of the humble monitress[1] who sat alone, guarding the fireside comforts of his distant home; and the remembrance of her character, clothed in moral beauty, has scattered the clouds before his mental vision, and sent him back to that beloved home, a wiser and a better man.

The women of England, possessing the grand privilege of being better instructed than those of any other country, in the minutiae of domestic comfort, have obtained a degree of importance in society far beyond what their unobtrusive virtues would appear to claim. The long-established customs of their country have placed in their hands the high and holy duty of cherishing and protecting the minor morals of life, from whence springs all that is elevated in purpose, and glorious in action. The sphere of their direct personal influence is central, and consequently small; but its extreme operations are as widely extended as the range of human feeling. They may be less striking in society than some of the women of other countries, and may feel themselves, on brilliant and stirring occasions, as simple, rude, and unsophisticated in the popular science of excitement; but as far as the noble daring of Britain has sent forth her adventurous sons, and that is to every point of danger on the habitable globe, they have borne along with them a generosity, a disinterestedness,[2] and a moral courage, derived in no small measure from the female influence of their native country.

It is a fact well worthy of our serious attention, and one which bears immediately upon the subject under consideration, that the present state of our national affairs is such as to indicate that the influence of woman in counteracting the growing evils of society is about to be more needed than ever.

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In order to ascertain what kind of education is most effective in making woman what she ought to be, the best method is to inquire into the character, station, and peculiar duties of woman throughout the largest portion of her earthly career; and then ask, for what she is most valued, admired, and beloved?

In answer to this, I have little hesitation in saying—for her disinterested kindness. Look at all the heroines, whether of romance or reality—at all the female characters that are held up to universal admiration—at all who have gone down to honored graves, amongst

the tears and lamentations of their survivors. Have these been the learned, the accomplished women; the women who could solve problems, and elucidate systems of philosophy? No: or if they have, they have also been women who were dignified with the majesty of moral greatness.

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I still cling fondly to the hope that some system of female instruction will be discovered, by which the young women of England may be sent from school to the homes of their parents, habituated to be on the watch for every opportunity of doing good to others; making it the first and the last inquiry of every day, "What can I do to make my parents, my brothers, or my sisters, more happy? I am but a feeble instrument in the hands of Providence, but as He will give me strength, I hope to pursue the plan to which I have been accustomed, of seeking my own happiness only in the happiness of others."

1839

Endnotes

- Note 1: Female adviser or mentor.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, independence, impartiality.Return to reference 2

COVENTRY PATMORE

Originally published between 1854 and 1862, *The Angel in the House*, a long poem about courtship and marriage by Coventry Patmore (1823–1896), became a best seller in the United States and later in Britain. Dedicated to the author's first wife, Emily Augusta Andrews, the poem celebrates their fifteen years of married life. (She died in 1862, and Patmore, who lived another three decades, remarried twice.) The poem, popular among Patmore's contemporaries (including Gerard Manley Hopkins and John Ruskin), fell out of favor in later years. Feminist critics such as Virginia Woolf criticized *The Angel in the House* both for the sentimentality of its ideal of woman and for the oppressive effect of this ideal on women's lives. Since Woolf, the phrase "the angel in the house" has often been used to encapsulate a patronizing Victorian attitude toward women, for which the poem is cited as prime evidence.

From The Angel in the House

The Paragon

When I behold the skies aloft
  Passing the pageantry of dreams,
The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,
  A couch for nuptial Juno[1] seems,
The ocean broad, the mountains bright,
  The shadowy vales with feeding herds,
I from my lyre the music smite,
  Nor want for justly matching words.
All forces of the sea and air,
  All interests of hill and plain,
I so can sing, in seasons fair,
  That who hath felt may feel again.
Elated oft by such free songs,
  I think with utterance free to raise
That hymn for which the whole world longs,
  A worthy hymn in woman's praise;
A hymn bright-noted like a bird's,
  Arousing these song-sleepy times
With rhapsodies of perfect words,
  Ruled by returning kiss of rhymes.
But when I look on her and hope
  To tell with joy what I admire,
My thoughts lie cramp'd in narrow scope,
  Or in the feeble birth expire;
No mystery of well-woven speech,
  No simplest phrase of tenderest fall,
No liken'd excellence can reach
  Her, the most excellent of all,

The best half of creation's best,
  Its heart to feel, its eye to see,
The crown and complex of the rest,
  Its aim and its epitome.
Nay, might I utter my conceit,°
  'Twere after all a vulgar song,
For she's so simply, subtly sweet,
  My deepest rapture does her wrong.
Yet is it now my chosen task
  To sing her worth as Maid and Wife;
Nor happier post than this I ask,
To live her laureate[2] all my life.
On wings of love uplifted free,
  And by her gentleness made great,
I'll teach how noble man should be
  To match with such a lovely mate;
And then in her may move the more
  The woman's wish to be desired,
(By praise increased,) till both shall soar,
  With blissful emulations fired.
And, as geranium, pink,° or rose
  Is thrice itself through power of art,
So may my happy skill disclose
  New fairness even in her fair heart;
Until that churl shall nowhere be
  Who bends not, awed, before the throne
Of her affecting majesty,
  So meek, so far unlike our own;
Until (for who may hope too much
  From her who wields the powers of love?)
Our lifted lives at last shall touch
  That happy goal to which they move;
Until we find, as darkness rolls
  Away, and evil mists dissolve,
The nuptial contrasts are the poles

On which the heavenly spheres revolve.

1854–62

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Roman mythology the wife of the chief god (Jupiter) and a goddess presiding especially over the married life of women.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, to be the one who celebrates her in poetry.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *fancy, idea*Return to reference °
- °: *pink carnation*Return to reference °

JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin (1819–1900) began his career writing about art but eventually became one of England's fiercest social critics. In 1864 he delivered two lectures in the industrial city of Manchester—the first, "Of Kings' Treasuries," supporting the development of public libraries in the name of "noble education," and the second, "Of Queens' Gardens," on the special powers and duties of women. Published together the following year as *Sesame and Lilies*, the essays were considered ideal reading matter for middle-class young women and enjoyed exceptional sales for the remainder of the nineteenth century. In recent years "Of Queens' Gardens," with its assertions about the distinct differences between men and women, and their respective roles in the two separate spheres of public and private life, has become a classic text for the examination of Victorian ideology.

From Of Queens' Gardens

Now their separate characters are briefly these. The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest, wherever war is just, wherever conquest necessary. But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle,—and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. She sees the qualities of things, their claims, and their places. Her great function is Praise; she enters into no contest, but infallibly adjudges the crown of contest. By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation. The man, in his rough work in open world, must encounter all peril and trial;—to him, therefore, must be the failure, the offence, the inevitable error: often he must be wounded, or subdued; often misled; and *always* hardened. But he guards the woman from all this; within his house, as ruled by her, unless she herself has sought it, need enter no danger, no temptation, no cause of error or offence. This is the true nature of home—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home; so far as the anxieties of the outer life penetrate into it, and the inconsistently-minded, unknown, unloved, or hostile society of the outer world is allowed by either husband or wife to cross the threshold, it ceases to be home; it is then only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over, and lighted fire in. But so far as it is a sacred place, a vestal temple, a temple of the hearth watched over by Household Gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love,—so far as it is this, and roof and fire are types only of a nobler shade and light,—shade as of the rock in a weary land, and light as of the Pharos[1] in the stormy sea;—so far it vindicates the name, and fulfils the praise, of Home.

And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars only may be over her head; the glowworm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot; but home is yet wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far round her, better than ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermilion,[2] shedding its quiet light far, for those who else were homeless.

This, then, I believe to be,—will you not admit it to be?—the woman's true place and power. But do not you see that, to fulfil this, she must—as far as one can use such terms of a human creature—be incapable of error? So far as she rules, all must be right, or nothing is. She must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise—wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side: wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely applicable, modesty of service—the true changefulness of woman. In that great sense—"La donna è mobile," not "Qual piúm' al vento";[3] no, nor yet "Variable as the shade, by the light quivering aspen made";[4] but variable as the *light*, manifold in fair and serene division, that it may take the colour of all that it falls upon, and exalt it.

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1864 **Endnotes** 1865

- Note 1: A lighthouse that was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World (its island is now part of the city of Alexandria). The phrase "rock in a weary land" alludes to Isaiah 32.2.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Jeremiah 22:14. "Ceiled": roofed over.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "Women are as fickle as feathers in the wind," the first two lines of the famous aria by the womanizing duke in

Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* (1851).Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion* (1808) 6.30.Return to reference 4

MARRIAGE LAW

WILLIAM BLACKSTONE

William Blackstone (1723–1780) was an English jurist, judge, Tory politician, and author of the extremely influential *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (4 vols. 1765–70), which systematized and explained common law in accessible terms. In this passage, Blackstone explains the doctrine of "coverture," which dictated that married women were considered to be "one person in law" with their husbands.

From Commentaries on the Laws of England

By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our law-french a *feme-covert*; is said-to be *covert-baron*, or under the protection and influence of her husband, her *baron*, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her *coverture*. Upon this principle, of an union of person in husband and wife, depend almost all the legal rights, duties, and disabilities, that either of them acquire by the marriage. I speak not at present of the rights of property, but of such as are merely *personal*. For this reason, a man cannot grant any thing to his wife, or enter into covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate existence; and to covenant with her, would be only to covenant with himself: and therefore it is also generally true, that all compacts made between husband and wife, when single, are voided by the intermarriage. A woman indeed may be attorney[1] for her husband; for that implies no separation from, but is rather a representation of, her lord. And a husband may also bequeath any thing to his wife by will; for that cannot take effect till the coverture is determined by his death. The husband is bound to provide his wife with necessaries by law, as much as himself; and if she contracts debts for them, he is obliged to pay them: but for any thing besides necessaries, he is not chargeable. Also if a wife elopes, and lives with another man, the husband is not chargeable even for necessaries; at least if the person, who furnishes them, is sufficiently apprized of her elopement. If the wife be indebted before marriage, the husband is bound afterwards to pay the debt; for he has adopted her and her circumstances together. If the wife be injured in

her person or her property, she can bring no action for redress without her husband's concurrence, and in his name, as well as her own: neither can she be sued, without making the husband a defendant. There is indeed one case where the wife shall sue and be sued as a feme sole,[2] viz. where the husband has abjured the realm, or is banished: for then he is dead in law; and, the husband being thus disabled to sue for or defend the wife, it would be most unreasonable if she had no remedy, or could make no defence at all. In criminal prosecutions, it is true, the wife may be indicted and punished separately; for the union is only a civil union. But, in trials of any sort, they are not allowed to be evidence for, or against, each other: partly because it is impossible their testimony should be indifferent; but principally because of the union of person: and therefore, if they were admitted to be witnesses *for* each other, they would contradict one maxim of law, "*nemo in propria causa testis esse debet*;"[3] and if *against* each other, they would contradict another maxim, "*nemo tenetur seipsum accusare*."[4]

1756

Endnotes

- Note 1: A person who acts for another, usually in business or in legal affairs.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A woman without a husband.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "No one should be a judge in his own cause" (Latin).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "No man must accuse himself" (Latin).Return to reference 4

CAROLINE NORTON

After leaving her husband, George Norton, Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton, Lady Stirling-Maxwell (1808–1877), sought to support herself on the income from her writings. Her husband subsequently appropriated her earnings (legally, since under *coverture*, she had no right to claim property) and abducted their three sons (again, legally, since they belonged to him). He also (unsuccessfully) sued Whig prime minister, Lord Melbourne, for having an affair with his wife. When one of the three boys died after being thrown from his horse, Caroline Norton held her husband responsible for the death. Norton's work publicizing the worst consequences of coverture helped pass the Custody of Infants Act (1839), which gave legally separated women custody of children up to the age of seven and periodic access thereafter. She also worked to pass the Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), which redefined marriage as a contract, thus paving the way for the 1870 Married Women's Property Act.

From A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth's Marriage and Divorce Bill

An English wife cannot make a will. She may have children or kindred whom she may earnestly desire to benefit;—she may be separated from her husband, who may be living with a mistress; no matter: the law gives what she has to him, and no will she could make would be valid.

An English wife cannot legally claim her own earnings. Whether wages for manual labour, or payment for intellectual exertion, whether she weed potatoes, or keep a school, her salary is *the husband's*; and he could compel a second payment, and treat the first as void, if paid to the wife without his sanction.

An English wife may not leave her husband's house. Not only can he sue her for "restitution of conjugal rights," but he has a right to enter the house of any friend or relation with whom she may take refuge, and who may "harbour her,"—as it is termed,—and carry her away by force, with or without the aid of the police.

If the wife sue for separation for cruelty, it must be "cruelty that endangers life or limb," and if she has once forgiven, or, in legal phrase, "*condoned*" his offences, she cannot plead them; though her past forgiveness only proves that she endured as long as endurance was possible.

If her husband take proceedings for a divorce, she is not, in the first instance, allowed to defend herself. She has no means of proving the falsehood of his allegations. She is not represented by attorney, nor permitted to be considered a party to the suit between him and her supposed lover, for "damages." Lord Brougham affirmed in the House of Lords: "*in that action the character of the woman was at immediate issue, although she was not prosecuted. The consequence not unfrequently was, that the character of a woman*

was sworn away; instances were known in which, by collusion between the husband and a pretended paramour, the character of the wife has been destroyed. All this could take place, and yet the wife had no defence; she was excluded from Westminster-hall, and behind her back, by the principles of our jurisprudence, her character was tried between her husband and the man called her paramour."

If an English wife be guilty of infidelity, her husband can divorce *her* so as to marry again; but she cannot divorce the husband *a vinculo*,[1] however profligate he may be. No law court can divorce in England. A special Act of Parliament annulling the marriage, is passed for each case. The House of Lords grants this almost as a matter of course to the husband, but not to the wife. In only four instances (two of which were cases of incest), has the wife obtained a divorce to marry again.

She cannot prosecute for a libel. Her husband must prosecute; and in cases of enmity and separation, of course she is without a remedy.

She cannot sign a lease, or transact responsible business.

She cannot claim support, as a matter of personal right, from her husband. The general belief and nominal rule is, that her husband is "bound to maintain her." That is not the law. He is not bound to *her*. He is bound to his country; bound to see that she does not cumber the parish in which she resides. If it be proved that means sufficient are at her disposal, from relatives or friends, her husband is quit of his obligation, and need not contribute a farthing: even if he have deserted her; or be in receipt of money which is hers by inheritance.

She cannot bind her husband by any agreement, except through a third party. A contract formally drawn out by a lawyer,—witnessed, and signed by her husband,—is *void in law*; and he can evade payment of an income so assured, by the legal quibble that "a man cannot contract with his own wife."

Separation from her husband by consent, or for his ill usage, does not alter their mutual relation. He retains the right to divorce her *after* separation,—as before,—though he himself be unfaithful.

Her being, on the other hand, of spotless character, and without reproach, gives her no advantage in law. She may have withdrawn from his roof knowing that he lives with "his "faithful housekeeper": having suffered personal violence at his hands; having "condoned" much, and being able to prove it by unimpeachable testimony: or he may have shut the doors of her house against her: all this is quite immaterial: the law takes no cognisance of which is to blame. As *her husband*, he has a right to all that is hers: as *his wife*, she has no right to anything that is his. As her husband, he may divorce her (if truth or false swearing can do it): as his wife, the utmost "divorce" she could obtain, is permission to reside alone,—married to his name. The marriage ceremony is a civil bond for him,—and an indissoluble sacrament for her; and the rights of mutual property which that ceremony is ignorantly supposed to confer, are made absolute for him, and null for her.

1855

Endnotes

- Note 1: Absolutely (Latin); thus, divorce *a vinculo* dissolves the marriage completely, as opposed to divorce *a mensa et thoro*, which is a divorce of "bed and board" only and does not allow either party to remarry.Return to reference 1

POOR WOMEN AND WOMEN'S WORK

FRIEDRICH ENGELS

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) is best known as the co-author, with Karl Marx, of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), but his *Condition of the Working Class in England* offers a scathing denunciation of the worst consequences of industrialization. A substantial portion of that work appears in Engels's entry in this volume. Here he describes the specific consequences of factory work for the reorganization of workers' domestic lives. Women and children were often preferred to adult men as employees because of the relatively low wages they were traditionally offered.

From The Condition of the Working Class in England

The employment of the wife dissolves the family utterly and of necessity, and this dissolution, in our present society, which is based upon the family, brings the most demoralizing consequences for parents as well as children. A mother who has no time to trouble herself about her child, to perform the most ordinary loving services for it during its first year, who scarcely indeed sees it, can be no real mother to the child, must inevitably grow indifferent to it, treat it unlovingly like a stranger. The children who grow up under such conditions are utterly ruined for later family life, can never feel at home in the family which they themselves found, because they have always been accustomed to isolation, and they contribute therefore to the already general undermining of the family in the working class. A similar dissolution of the family is brought about by the employment of the children. When they get on far enough to earn more than they cost their parents from week to week, they begin to pay the parents a fixed sum for board and lodging, and keep the rest for themselves. This often happens from the fourteenth or fifteenth year. In a word, the children emancipate themselves, and regard the paternal dwelling as a lodging-house, which they often exchange for another, as suits them.

In many cases the family is not wholly dissolved by the employment of the wife, but turned upside down. The wife supports the family, the husband sits at home, tends the children, sweeps the room and cooks. This case happens very frequently; in Manchester alone, many hundred such men could be cited, condemned to domestic occupations. It is easy to imagine the wrath aroused among the working men by this reversal of all relations within the family, while the other social conditions remain unchanged. There lies before me a letter from an English working man, Robert

Pounder, Baron's Buildings, Woodhouse, Moorside, in Leeds (the bourgeoisie may hunt him up there; I give the exact address for the purpose), written by him to Oastler.

He relates how another working man, being on tramp, came to St Helens, in Lancashire, and there looked up an old friend.

> He found him in a miserable, damp cellar, scarcely furnished; and when my poor friend went in, there sat poor Jack near the fire, and what did he, think you? why he sat and mended his wife's stockings with the bodkin; and as soon as he saw his old friend at the doorpost, he tried to hide them. But Joe, that is my friend's name, had seen it, and said: 'Jack, what the devil art thou doing? Where is the missus? Why, is that thy work?' and poor Jack was ashamed, and said: 'No, I know this is not my work, but my poor missus is i'th'factory; she has to leave at half-past five and works till eight at night, and then she is so knocked up that she cannot do aught when she gets home, so I have to do everything for her what I can, for I have no work, nor had any for more nor three years, and I shall never have any more work while I live'; and then he wept a big tear. Jack again said: 'There is work enough for women folks and childer hereabouts, but none for men; thou mayest sooner find a hundred pound on the road than work for men—but I should never have believed that either thou or any one else would have seen me mending my wife's stockings, for it is bad work. But she can hardly stand on her feet; I am afraid she will be laid up, and then I don't know what is to become of us, for it's a good bit that she has been the man in the house and I the woman; it is bad work, Joe;' and he cried bitterly, and said, 'It has not been always so.' 'No,' said Joe; 'but when thou hadn't no work, how hast thou not shifted?' 'I'll tell thee, Joe, as well as I can, but it was bad enough; thou knowest when I got married I had work plenty, and thou knows I was not lazy.' 'No, that thou wert not.' 'And we had a good furnished house, and Mary need not go to work. I could work for the two of us; but now the world is

> upside down. Mary has to work and I have to stop at home, mind the childer, sweep and wash, bake and mend; and, when the poor woman comes home at night, she is knocked up. Thou knows, Joe, it's hard for one that was used different.' 'Yes, boy, it is hard.' And then Jack began to cry again, and he wished he had never married, and that he had never been born; but he had never thought, when he wed Mary, that it would come to this. 'I have often cried over it,' said Jack. Now when Joe heard this, he told me that he had cursed and damned the factories, and the masters, and the Government, with all the curses that he had learned while he was in the factory from a child.

Can any one imagine a more insane state of things than that described in this letter? And yet this condition, which unsexes the man and takes from the woman all womanliness without being able to bestow upon the man true womanliness, or the woman true manliness—this condition which degrades in the most shameful way both sexes, and, through them, humanity, is the last result of our much-praised civilization, the final achievement of all the efforts and struggles of hundreds of generations to improve their own situation and that of their posterity. We must either despair of mankind, and its aims and efforts, when we see all our labour and toil result in such a mockery, or we must admit that human society has hitherto sought salvation in a false direction; we must admit that so total a reversal of the position of the sexes can have come to pass only because the sexes have been placed in a false position from the beginning. If the reign of the wife over the husband, as inevitably brought about by the factory system, is inhuman, the pristine rule of the husband over the wife must have been inhuman too. If the wife can now base her supremacy upon the fact that she supplies the greater part, nay, the whole of the common possession, the necessary inference is that this community of possession is no true and rational one, since one member of the family boasts offensively of contributing the greater share. If the family of our present society is being thus dissolved, this dissolution merely shows that, at

bottom, the binding tie of this family was not family affection, but private interest lurking under the cloak of a pretended community of possessions.

1845

ANONYMOUS

In early February 1858 a letter appeared in the London *Times* above the signature "One More Unfortunate." This individual, who claimed to be a prostitute, described her respectable upbringing and her experience as a governess, lamented her disgrace, and called on men to be more compassionate in their reform efforts. Responding in part to this piece, another letter, also apparently from a prostitute and titled "The Great Social Evil," was then published on February 24, 1858. Although it is impossible to establish definitively whether the letter writers were genuinely who they said they were, the story of how the second correspondent came to be a prostitute, which appears in the following extract, would have seemed extremely plausible to contemporary readers. This selection can profitably be compared with other representations and considerations of prostitutes and "fallen women" in this volume, such as those that appear in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem "Jenny" (1870) and his painting *Found* (1855) and William Holman Hunt's painting *The Awakening Conscience* (1853–54).

The Great Social Evil

To the Editor of the Times

Sir,—another "Unfortunate," but of a class entirely different from the one who has already instructed the public in your columns, presumes to address you.

I am a stranger to all the fine sentiments which still linger in the bosom of your correspondent. I have none of those youthful recollections which, contrasting her early days with her present life, aggravate the misery of the latter. My parents did not give me any education; they did not instil into my mind virtuous precepts nor set me a good example. All my experiences in early life were gleaned among associates who knew nothing of the laws of God but by dim tradition and faint report, and whose chiefest triumphs of wisdom consisted in picking their way through the paths of destitution in which they were cast by cunning evasion or in open defiance of the laws of man.

Found, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The artist began this painting in 1854, but it was still unfinished at the time of his death in 1882.

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Let me tell you something of my parents. My father's most profitable occupation was brickmaking. When not employed at this he did anything he could get to do. My mother worked with him in the

brickfield, and so did I and a progeny of brothers and sisters; for, somehow or other, although my parents occupied a very unimportant space in the world, it pleased God to make them fruitful. We all slept in the same room. There were few privacies, few family secrets in our house.

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I was a very pretty child, and had a sweet voice; of course I used to sing. Most London boys and girls of the lower classes sing. "My face is my fortune, kind Sir, she said" was the ditty on which I bestowed most pains, and my father and mother would wink knowingly as I sang it. The latter would also tell me how pretty she was when young, and how she sang, and what a fool she had been, and how well she might have done had she been wise.

Frequently we had quite a stir in our colony.[1] Some young lady who had quitted the paternal restraints, or perhaps, been started off, none knew whither or how, to seek her fortune, would reappear among us with a profusion of ribands, fine clothes, and lots of cash. Visiting the neighbours, treating indiscriminately, was the order of the day on such occasions, without any more definite information of the means by which the dazzling transformation had been effected than could be conveyed by knowing winks and the words "luck" and "friends." Then she would disappear and leave us in our dirt, penury, and obscurity. You cannot conceive, Sir, how our young ambition was stirred by these visitations.

Now commences an important era in my life. I was a fine, robust, healthy girl, 13 years of age. I had larked with the boys of my own age. I had huddled with them, boys and girls together, all night long in our common haunts. I had seen much and heard abundantly of the mysteries of the sexes. To me such things had been matters of common sight and common talk. For some time I had trembled and coquetted on the verge of a strong curiosity, and a natural desire, and without a particle of affection, scarce a partiality, I lost what?

not my virtue, for I never had any. That which is commonly, but untruly called virtue, I gave away.

You reverend Mr. Philanthropist—what call you virtue? Is it not the principle, the essence, which keeps watch and ward over the conduct, over the substance, the materiality? No such principle ever kept watch and ward over me, and I repeat that I never lost that which I never had—my virtue.

According to my own ideas at the time I only extended my rightful enjoyments. Opportunity was not long wanting to put my newly-acquired knowledge to profitable use. In the commencement of my fifteenth year one of our beribanded visitors took me off, and introduced me to the great world, and thus commenced my career as what you better classes call a prostitute. I cannot say that I felt any other shame than the bashfulness of a noviciate introduced to strange society. Remarkable for good looks, and no less so for good temper, I gained money, dressed gaily, and soon agreeably astonished my parents and old neighbours by making a descent upon them.

Passing over the vicissitudes of my course, alternating between reckless gaiety and extreme destitution, I improved myself greatly; and at the age of 18 was living partly under the protection of one who thought he discovered that I had talent, and some good qualities as well as beauty, who treated me more kindly and considerately than I had ever before been treated, and thus drew from me something like a feeling of regard, but not sufficiently strong to lift me to that sense of my position which the so-called virtuous and respectable members of society seem to entertain. Under the protection of this gentleman, and encouraged by him, I commenced the work of my education; that portion of education which is comprised in some knowledge of my own language and the ordinary accomplishments of my sex;—moral science, as I believe it is called, has always been an enigma to me, and is so to this day.

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Now, what if I am a prostitute, what business has society to abuse me? Have I received any favours at the hands of society? If I am a hideous cancer in society, are not the causes of the disease to be sought in the rottenness of the carcass? Am I not its legitimate child; no bastard, Sir? Why does my unnatural parent repudiate me, and what has society ever done for me, that I should do anything for it, and what have I ever done against society that it should drive me into a corner and crush me to the earth? I have neither stolen (at least not since I was a child), nor murdered, nor defrauded. I earn my money and pay my way, and try to do good with it, according to my ideas of good. I do not get drunk, nor fight, nor create uproar in the streets or out of them. I do not use bad language. I do not offend the public eye by open indecencies. I go to the Opera, I go to Almack's,[2] I go to the theatres, I go to quiet, well-conducted casinos, I go to all places of public amusement, behaving myself with as much propriety as society can exact. I pay business visits to my tradespeople, the most fashionable of the West-end.[3] My milliners, my silk-mercers,[4] my bootmaker know, all of them, who I am and how I live, and they solicit my patronage as earnestly and cringingly as if I were Madam, the lady of the right rev. patron of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.[5] They find my money as good and my pay better (for we are robbed on every hand) than that of Madam, my Lady; and, if all the circumstances and conditions of our lives had been reversed, would Madam, my Lady, have done better or been better than I?

I speak for others as well as for myself, for the very great majority, nearly all of the real undisguised prostitutes in London, spring from my class, and are made by and under pretty much such conditions of life as I have narrated, and particularly by untutored and unrestrained intercourse of the sexes in early life. We come from the dregs of society, as our so-called betters term it. What business has society to have dregs—such dregs as we? You railers of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, you the pious, the moral, the respectable, as you call yourselves, who stand on your smooth and pleasant side of the great gulf you have dug and keep between

yourselves and the dregs, why don't you bridge it over, or fill it up, and by some humane and generous process absorb us into your leavened mass, until we become interpenetrated with goodness like yourselves? Why stand on your eminence shouting that we should be ashamed of ourselves? What have we to be ashamed of, we who do not know what shame is—the shame you mean? I conduct myself prudently, and defy you and your policemen too. Why stand you there mouthing with sleek face about morality? What is morality? Will you make us responsible for what we never knew? Teach us what is right and tutor us in good before you punish us for doing wrong. We who are the real prostitutes of the true natural growth of society, and no impostors, will not be judged by "One more Unfortunate," nor measured by any standard of her setting up. She is a mere chance intruder in our ranks, and has no business there.

***

Hurling big figures at us, it is said that there are 80,000 of us in London alone—which is a monstrous falsehood—and of this 80,000, poor hardworking sewing girls, sewing women, are numbered in by thousands and called indiscriminately prostitutes; writing, preaching, speechifying, that they have lost their virtue too.

It is a cruel calumny to call them in mass prostitutes; and, as for their virtue, they lose it as one loses his watch who is robbed by the highway thief. Their virtue is the watch, and society is the thief. These poor women toiling on starvation wages, while penury, misery, and famine clutch them by the throat and say, "Render up your body or die."

***

Admire this magnificent shop in this fashionable street; its front, fittings, and decorations cost not less than a thousand pounds. The respectable master of the establishment keeps his carriage, and lives in his countryhouse. He has daughters too; his patronesses are fine

ladies, the choicest impersonations of society. Do they think, as they admire the taste and elegance of that tradesman's show, of the poor creatures who wrought it, and of what they were paid for it? Do they reflect on the weary toiling fingers, on the eyes dim with watching, on the bowels yearning with hunger, on the bended frames, on the broken constitutions, on poor human nature driven to its coldest corner and reduced to its narrowest means in the production of these luxuries and adornments? This is an old story! Would it not be truer and more charitable to call these poor souls "victims?"—some gentler, some more humane name than prostitute—to soften by some Christian expression, if you cannot better the un-Christian system, the opprobrium of a fate to which society has itself driven them by the direst straits? What business has society to point its finger in scorn, and to raise its voice in reprobation of them? Are they not its children, born of its cold indifference, of its callous selfishness, of its cruel pride?

Sir, I have trespassed on your patience beyond limit, and yet much remains to be said, which I leave for further communication if you think proper to insert this. The difficulty of dealing with the evil is not so great as society considers it. Setting aside "the sin," we are not so bad as we are thought to be. The difficulty is for society to set itself, with the necessary earnestness, self-humiliation, and self-denial to the work. But of this hereafter. To deprive us of proper and harmless amusements, to subject us in mass to the pressure of force —of force wielded, for the most part, by ignorant, and often by brutal men—is only to add the cruelty of active persecution to the cruelty of the passive indifference which made us as we are.

I remain your humble servant,
ANOTHER UNFORTUNATE

1858

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, neighborhood, group of streets.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Assembly rooms, the scene of social functions.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The affluent area of central London and location of fashionable shops and theaters.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dealers in textiles.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A society founded in 1802.Return to reference 5

JOSEPHINE BUTLER

Josephine Butler (1828–1906) was a prominent opponent of the Contagious Diseases Acts that required the medical inspection of all women suspected of prostitution in towns in which army and navy forces were stationed. Butler and others rejected the notion that the Acts constituted an effective way to curb the spread of venereal disease—their supposed aim—by objecting to the sexual double standard involved in examining only women, not men; the violation of basic rights involved in women's inability to refuse examination; the intrusiveness of the examinations; and the negative consequences of the examinations, since once known to have been examined, women were often unable to get any work other than prostitution. The overall effect, they argued, was to legitimate prostitution and to create a standing pool of prostitutes for the military.

From Testimony Before the Royal Commission upon the Administration and Operation of the Contagious Diseases

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In the original protest issued by the Ladies' Association[1] in January 1870 there occurred the following words, which express very well my own sense of the matter:

> We protest against this legislation, inasmuch as a moral restraint is withdrawn the moment the State recognizes and provides convenience for a vice, which by providing this convenience it declares to be necessary and venial.

The expression used is—a moral restraint. We have challenged the supporters of the Acts to answer this, and in not one single case have I ever received an answer. The only answer attempted has been this: "The ladies are mistaken if they imagine the fear of the disease acts as a check upon youth." Now it is not the fear of disease to which I allude; it is a different motive, and a better motive. It is a restraining moral motive which is taken away from our male youth by the presence in the midst of us of a recognised system of harlotry. We claim that laws shall not be made which teach, in an indirect and subtle, but most effectual manner, that impurity of life is not a sin but a necessity. We claim that laws shall not be made whose practical effect, so far as they are successful at all, is to offer protection and immunity to the sinner in the practice of his sin. Even a limited knowledge of human nature, and of history, reveals to us most clearly the inevitable connection between offered protection and a general increase of licentiousness. The elevation of impure and unlawful intercourse, to the dignity of a recognised

traffic under legal regulations, exercises a most baneful influence on the community. When, through the base teaching of a base law, a law grounded on a supposed necessity of impurity, the conscience of a people becomes dimmed and darkened, the foundations of virtue are undermined, the generations to come cease to discern clearly between good and evil, self-control is abandoned, and vice is increased. Neither can our moral objections to these Acts be met by assurances that a certain number of women are reclaimed under their operations. I ask where are the men reclaimed by them? As mothers of sons we demand to know what the influence of these Acts is on young men. It is vain to restore fallen women to virtue on the one hand, while on the other you stimulate the demand for these victims. Prove to us, if you can, that these Acts promote chastity among men, for that is what we are concerned about.

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The great evil, with its unpleasant physical consequences, must be met from a variety of sides at once. Legislation alone will not do it. Seduction must be punished. At present for the purpose of seduction, and of seduction only, our law declares every female child a woman at 12 years of age. I am ashamed to have to confess to such a shameful state of the law before you gentlemen, but a child is a woman, for that purpose alone, at 12 years of age. I know from my experience amongst this class of women, how many have become so from that cause. The law of bastardy must be altered. At present the responsibility of illegitimate children is thrown on the mothers only, the fathers are irresponsible. Better laws in this direction would aid in diminishing the causes of prostitution. A higher standard of public opinion as to the vice of men,—that is a thing in which we women are most deeply interested; we have had enough to do with the reclamation of women, we know about that, but we know now that nothing can be done until the vices of men are attacked and checked. Above all things a higher standard with regard to the morality of men is needed, and we, thousands of us,

are banded together to attain that if possible. The laws which we shall claim shall be constitutional, they shall not be a breach of the Constitution, they shall be moral in their tendency, and above all they shall be just; that is, they shall be laws which shall tend to repress crimes which we abhor equally in both sexes, and which shall deal with the vice itself, and not merely with its physical effects. Our measures will be directed against prostitution itself, and, with your permission, I will just call your attention to this, that whereas all legislation hitherto which is at all of the right kind has been directed against one sex only, we insist that it shall be directed against both sexes, and whereas it has been directed against the poor only, we insist, and the working men insist, that it shall also apply to the rich profligate. Partial laws, however excellent, will not effect the purification of society. It is quite the fashion, I find, in London, among the upper classes, to talk of this subject as if women were tempters, harpies, devils, while men are wholly innocent; and in every case the tempted, and legislation, following out this idea, has in almost all cases been protective for men and punitive for women. It cannot be said that men, in our own days, are entirely innocent and entirely the victims, while women are the sole assailants of purity. It cannot be said there is no such thing as seduction of young girls by gentlemen of the upper classes. It cannot be said there is no such thing as profuse patronage of houses of ill-fame by rich profligate men. I could tell you much of that from my own experience. Therefore we are profoundly convinced, and thousands among the working classes share our convictions in the matter, that legislation, however pure its aim, which is directed against the weaker sex only, will fail to accomplish any reduction in the amount of misery and sin there is amongst us. That is the general outline of a series of remedies, some of which it is intended to be proposed to the Legislature to adopt as legislative remedies. We have other remedies, especially with regard to increasing the number of industrial pursuits for women, which I should say is the most important, from the woman’s side of the matter, but could hardly be touched, I suppose, by legislation.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The National and Ladies' Association for Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was established in 1869 by Butler and Elizabeth Wolstenholme. Many influential women, including Florence Nightingale and Harriet Martineau, either joined the Association or publicly approved its work.Return to reference 1

WALTER BESANT

Walter Besant (1836–1901) was a literary critic, historian, and novelist. His history *The Queen's Reign* (1897) celebrated the improvements he felt he had witnessed during his lifetime.

From The Queen's Reign

[THE TRANSFORMATION OF WOMEN'S STATUS BETWEEN 1837 AND 1897]

Let me present to you, first, an early Victorian girl, born about the Waterloo year;[1] next, her granddaughter, born about 1875. * * *

The young lady of 1837 * * * cannot reason on any subject whatever because of her ignorance—as she herself would say, because she is a woman. In her presence, and indeed in the presence of ladies generally, men talk trivialities. * * * It has often been charged against Thackeray[2] that his good women were insipid. Thackeray, like most artists, could only draw the women of his own time, and at that time they were undoubtedly insipid. Men, I suppose, liked them so. To be childishly ignorant; to carry shrinking modesty so far as to find the point of a shoe projecting beyond the folds of a frock indelicate; to confess that serious subjects were beyond a woman's grasp; never even to pretend to form an independent judgment; to know nothing of Art, History, Science, Literature, Politics, Sociology, Manners—men liked these things; women yielded to please the men; her very ignorance formed a subject of laudable pride with the Englishwoman of the Forties. * * * There was something Oriental in the seclusion of women in the home, and their exclusion from active and practical life.

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A "New Woman. " This illustration from American magazine *Harper's Bazar* ("*Bazaar*" from 1930 on) features two of the three most common elements that appeared in representations of the "New Woman": bicycles, pantaloons, and cigarettes.

Let us turn to the Englishwoman—the young Englishwoman—of 1897. She is educated. Whatever things are taught to the young man are taught to the young woman. If she wants to explore the wickedness of the world she can do so, for it is all in the books. The secrets of Nature are not closed to her; she can learn the structure of the body if she wishes. At school, at college, she studies just as the young man studies, but harder and with greater concentration. * * * She has invaded the professions. She cannot become a priest, because the Oriental prejudice against women still prevails, so that women in High Church places are not allowed to sing in the choir, or to play the organ, not to speak of preaching. * * * In the same way she cannot enter the Law. Some day she will get over this restriction, but not yet. For a long time she was kept out of medicine. That restriction is now removed; she can, and she does, practice as a physician or a surgeon, generally the former.[3] I believe that she has shown in this profession, as in her university studies, she can stand, *inter pares,*[4] among her equals and her peers, not her superiors. There is no branch of literature in which women have not distinguished themselves. * * * In music they compose, but not greatly; they play and sing divinely. The acting of the best among them is equal to that of any living man. They have become journalists, in some cases of remarkable ability; in fact, there are thousands of women who now make their livelihood by writing in all its branches. As for the less common professions—the accountants, architects, actuaries, agents—they are rapidly being taken over by women.

It is no longer a question of necessity; women do not ask themselves whether they must earn their own bread, or live a life of dependence. Necessity or no necessity they demand work, with independence and personal liberty. Whether they will take upon them the duties and responsibilities of marriage, they postpone for further consideration. I believe that, although in the first eager running there are many who profess to despise marriage, the voice of nature and the instinctive yearning for love will prevail.

Personal independence: that is the keynote of the situation. Mothers no longer attempt the old control over their daughters: they would find it impossible. The girls go off by themselves on their bicycles;[5] they go about as they please; they neither compromise themselves nor get talked about. For the first time in man's history it is regarded as a right and proper thing to trust a girl as a boy insists upon being trusted. Out of this personal freedom will come, I daresay, a change in the old feelings of young man to maiden. He will not see in her a frail, tender plant which must be protected from cold winds; she can protect herself perfectly well. He will not see in her any longer a creature of sweet emotions and pure aspirations, coupled with a complete ignorance of the world, because she already knows all that she wants to know. Nor will he see in her a companion whose mind is a blank, and whose conversation is insipid, because she already knows as much as he knows himself. Nor, again, will he see in her a housewife whose whole time will be occupied in superintending servants or in making, brewing, confecting things with her own hand.

1897

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, 1815, the year Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated by British and Prussian forces at the Battle of Waterloo.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Makepeace Thackeray (1811–1863), British novelist. The character of Amelia Sedley, in his novel *Vanity Fair* (1848), is cited by Besant as typical of the "insipid" women of the 1840s.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The first woman to have her name placed on the British Medical Register was Elizabeth Blackwell (who earned her degree in the United States), in 1859; it took another two decades for women to gain the right to study and take the required examinations in medicine in Great Britain.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Among equals (Latin).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Modern bicycles (with wheels of equal size and pneumatic tires) began to be manufactured in the late 1880s and became extremely popular in Europe and the United States.Return to reference 5

PATHOLOGIZING SEX: PROSTITUTION, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND THE "NEW WOMAN"

WILLIAM ACTON

William Acton (1813–1875) was a medical doctor well known for his publications on sexuality and reproduction. His belief that semen is a vital fluid whose emission threatens to drain the energy of the adult male was a common one, although other aspects of his work were more idiosyncratic. It is important to emphasize that medical science in the nineteenth century was as subject to internal debate as it is today, and that there is no way to know whether there was any correlation between medical theory and personal practice. That said, Acton's insistence that most women are "not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind" corresponds to many aspects of the idealization of women described elsewhere in this section.

From The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive System in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Age

From *Masturbation in Childhood*

A vigorous healthy boy is not likely to have any tendency to debase himself, and it is a question with many if it is well (on his going to school) to caution him against the vile habit of masturbation and its consequences. My own impression long was, that it would be a pity to poison the mind of a high-spirited lad with any cautions about vile practices; but the confessions of many, who, in ignorance of the results, have, by the example of others, been led to practice masturbation, have very much altered my opinion; I believe that in many cases a parent *should* at least hint to his son that he may very possibly have to witness infamous practices, and conjure him at once manfully to resist and oppose them, pointing out at the same time the consequences to which they tend. Of course he runs the risk of tainting an ingenuous mind when he broaches such a subject, and unfolds before it this distressing page in the book of knowledge of good and evil. But when it is needful he should, in my opinion, accept the grave responsibility; for knowing what I know, and seeing what I see, I could not face the greater unknown ill of dismissing my child to the probability of contamination by those whose corruption has but lately gone before, without an attempt to save him. I esteem it false delicacy and a wrong, that a parent should demur to accept the office of exponent, when he can, at the most, anticipate by a few days or weeks the offices of a schoolmaster in vice, as ignorant of consequences as the pupil, and unable to administer the antidote with the poison.

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From *Marital Excesses*

Hitherto we have applied the word *excess* chiefly to illicit sexual connection. Of course, whether extravagant in degree or not, all such connection is, from one point of view, an excess. But any warning against sexual dangers would be very incomplete if it did not extend to the excesses too often committed by married persons in ignorance of their ill effects. Too frequent emission of the life-giving fluid, and too frequent sexual excitement of the nervous system, is, as we have seen, in itself most destructive. Whether it occurs in married or unmarried people has little, if anything, to do with the result. The married man who thinks that, because he is a married man, he can commit no excess, however often the act of sexual congress is repeated, will suffer as certainly and as seriously as the debauchee who acts on the same principle in his indulgences, perhaps more certainly, from his very ignorance and from his not taking those precautions and following those rules which a career of vice is apt to teach a man. Many a man has, until he married, lived a most continent life;—so has his wife. But as soon as they are wedded, intercourse is indulged in night after night, neither party having any idea that this is an excess which the system of neither can bear, and which to the man, at least, is simple ruin. The practice is continued till health is impaired, sometimes permanently, and when a patient is at last obliged to seek medical advice, he is thunderstruck at learning that his sufferings arise from such a cause as this. People often appear to think that connection may be repeated just as regularly and almost as often as meals may. Till they are told, the idea never enters their heads that they have been guilty of great and almost criminal excess; nor is this to be wondered at, as such a cause of disease is seldom hinted at by the medical man they consult.

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From *Want of Sexual Feeling in the Female a Cause of Impotence*

We have already mentioned lack of sexual feeling in the female as not an uncommon cause of apparent or temporary impotence in the male. There is so much ignorance on the subject, and false ideas as to women's sexual condition are productive of so much mischief, that I need offer no apology for giving here, before we proceed, the true state of the case.

I have taken pains to obtain and compare the opinions of large numbers of competent witnesses on this subject, and the result of my inquiries I may briefly epitomize as follows: I should say that the majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind. What men are habitually, women are only exceptionally. It is too true, I admit, as the divorce courts show, that there are some few women who have sexual desires so strong that they surpass those of men, and shock public feeling by their exhibition. I admit, of course, the existence of sexual excitement terminating in nymphomania,[1] a form of insanity that those accustomed to visit lunatic asylums must be fully conversant with; but, with these sad exceptions, there can be no doubt that sexual feeling in the female is in abeyance, and that it requires positive and considerable excitement to be roused at all; and even if roused (which in many instances it never can be), is very moderate compared with that of the male. Men, and particularly young men, form their ideas of women's feelings from what they notice early in life among loose, or at least low and vulgar, women. There is always a certain number of females who, though not ostensibly in the rank of prostitutes, make a kind of trade of a pretty face. They are fond of admiration, they like to attract the attention of those immediately above them. Any susceptible boy is easily led to believe, whether he is altogether overcome by the syren or not, that she, and therefore all women, must have at least as strong passions as himself. Such women, however, will give a very false idea of the condition of female sexual feeling in general.

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Married men—medical men—or married women themselves, would tell a very different tale, and vindicate female nature from the vile aspersions cast on it by the abandoned conduct and ungoverned lusts of a few of its worst examples.

There are many females who never feel any sexual excitement whatever. Others, again, immediately after each period, do become, to a limited degree, capable of experiencing it; but this capacity is often temporary, and may cease entirely till the next menstrual period. The best mothers, wives, and managers of households know little or nothing of sexual indulgences. Love of home, children, and domestic duties are the only passions they feel.[2]

As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions. No nervous or feeble young man need, therefore, be deterred from marriage by any exaggerated notion of the duties required from him. The married woman has no wish to be treated on the footing of a mistress.

1858

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  I shall probably have no other opportunity of noticing that, as excision of the clitoris has been recommended for the cure of this complaint, Kobelt thinks that it would not be necessary to remove the whole of the clitoris in nymphomania; the same results (that is destruction of veneral desire) would follow if the glans clitoridis had been alone removed, as it is now considered that it is in the glans alone in which the sensitive nerves expand. This view I do not agree with, as I have already stated

with regard to the analogous structures of the penis, p. 115 [*Acton's note*].

"Nymphomania": psychological condition characterized by insatiable sexual desire. "Kobelt": Georg Ludwig Kobelt (1804–1857), German anatomist who described the clitoris.

Return to reference 1

- Note 2:
  The physiologist will not be surprised that the human female should in these respects differ but little from the female among animals. We well know it as a fact, that the dog or horse is not allowed approach to the female except at particular seasons. In the human female, indeed, I believe, it is rather from the wish of pleasing or gratifying the husband than from any strong sexual feeling, that cohabitation is habitually allowed. Certainly, it is so during the months of gestation. I have known instances where the female has during gestation evinced positive loathing for any marital familiarity whatever. In some of these instances, indeed, feeling has been sacrificed to duty, and the wife has endured, with all the self-martyrdom of womanhood, what was almost worse than death [*Acton's note*].
  Return to reference 2

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT

The Criminal Law Amendment Act focused on raising the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen; however, it became most famous for the Amendment introduced by Member of Parliament Henry Labouchère that made "gross indecencies" between men a misdemeanor regardless of the age—or consent—of the participants. The vagueness of the category of "gross indecencies" meant that any homosexual activity between men could lead to a prison sentence. Oscar Wilde is the most famous victim of the Labouchère Amendment, as it came to be called: his period of hard labor in prison led directly to his death. It is worth noting that the Amendment only pertained to men; lesbianism was not even discussed in Parliament until 1921, when an amendment was discarded out of concern not to call attention to such practices. The Labouchère Amendment remained in place until 1967.

From the Criminal Law Amendment Act

[11. *Outrages on decency.*] Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of or procures (*a*) or attempts (*b*) to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency (*c*) with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor,[1] and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.

1885

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although the term "misdemeanor" suggests a minor infraction, as the Amendment makes clear, it could be punished with significant prison time.Return to reference 1

LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS

Lord Alfred Douglas (1870–1945), English poet, may be most famous as Oscar Wilde's lover and the occasion for the lawsuit that led to Wilde's incarceration. When Douglas's father publicly accused Wilde of homosexuality, Wilde sued him for criminal libel—which then led to his imprisonment under the Labouchère amendment. Douglas's poem "Two Loves" was cited as evidence against Wilde.

From Two Loves

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And lo! within the garden of my dream
I saw two walking on a shining plain
Of golden light. The one did joyous seem
And fair and blooming, and a sweet refrain
Came from his lips; he sang of pretty maids
And joyous love of comely girl and boy,
His eyes were bright, and 'mid the dancing blades
Of golden grass his feet did trip for joy;
And in his hands he held an ivory lute
With strings of gold that were as maidens' hair,
And sang with voice as tuneful as a flute,
And round his neck three chains of roses were.
But he that was his comrade walked aside;
He was full sad and sweet, and his large eyes
Were strange with wondrous brightness, staring wide
With gazing; and he sighed with many sighs
That moved me, and his cheeks were wan and white
Like pallid lilies, and his lips were red
Like poppies, and his hands he clenchéd tight
And yet again unclenchéd, and his head
Was wreathed with moon-flowers pale as lips of death.
A purple robe he wore, o'erwrought in gold
With the device of a great snake, whose breath
Was like curved flame: which when I did behold
I fell a-weeping, and I cried, 'Sweet youth,
Tell me why, sad and sighing, thou dost rove
These pleasant realms? I pray thee, speak me sooth
What is thy name?' He said, 'My name is Love.'

Then straight the first did turn himself to me
And cried: 'He lieth, for his name is Shame,
But I am Love, and I was wont to be
Alone in this fair garden, till he came
Unasked by night; I am true Love, I fill
The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame.
Then sighing, said the other: 'Have thy will,
I am the love that dare not speak its name.'

1892 1894

GENDER AND THE IMPERIAL PROJECT

BRITISH AND FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY

The British and Foreign School Society was a key sponsor of secular schools both in England and throughout the empire. The original goal of these schools was to enable poor children to read the Bible. The supposed oppression of Indigenous women by Indigenous men constituted an important defense of empire throughout the nineteenth century.

Appeal in Behalf of the Native Females of British India

From a Circular lately issued, we extract an appalling representation of the State of Female Society in India.

> It is a most painful fact, that there are, in Hindoostan, THIRTY MILLIONS OF FEMALES committed to the care of Great Britain, who are totally destitute of Education, and to whom every vestige of mental cultivation has been denied.
>
> The writings, which have hitherto formed the basis of legislation in that country, have prohibited to them the knowledge of their Sacred Books, and have doomed them to a state of mental subjection. The calamity the most dreaded there, WIDOWHOOD, is, by the jealousy of the other sex, suspended as a judgment of Providence over the Female who shall dare to acquire a knowledge of the alphabet. Menu, one of the Hindoo Legislators, says, "Women have no business with the Veda:[1] thus is the law fully settled. Having therefore no knowledge of expiating texts, sinful women"—meaning all women—"must be as foul as falsehood itself: and this is a fixed rule." Here the legislator first binds the sex fast in the chains of ignorance, and then reproaches and punishes them for the result of his own law!
>
> The dreadful consequences of such laws, and such a state of feeling toward the sex, are most strikingly exhibited in the present state of Female Society in India. Here is a whole empire, comprising so many Millions of Females, in which a single School for Girls has not existed for thousands of years. The Females have never seen a book, except in the hands of men; and have no knowledge of any one of the mental employments of females in a civilized country. Their fingers

have never touched a needle, a pair of scissors, a book, or a pen; and they are entirely excluded from all intellectual intercourse with the other sex. "A woman is not allowed by law to go out of the house without the consent of her husband; to talk with a stranger, nor to laugh without a veil on her face, nor to stand at the door, nor look out at the window."[2] (See Ward on the Hindoos, Vol. I. p. 812.) What can be expected, but that, in such a state of ignorance, the Female Character will be awfully debased? Hence, among the Rajpoot[3] Mothers, the murder of female infants is universally practised—not one survives. Mothers among other castes, in fulfilment of a vow to obtain offspring, are seen sacrificing their first child in the Brahmapootra,[4] and other sacred rivers. Many females drown themselves. A British Officer saw, one morning, while sitting at his own window at Allahabad,[5] sixteen females, under the influence of superstition, drown themselves at the junction of the Jumna and the Ganges: and there are now in London, copies of official documents, which prove, that, in the year 1817, under the Presidency of Bengal, not less than 705 Females, British Subjects, voluntarily immolated themselves,[6] by being burnt or buried alive with the dead bodies of their husbands!

No parallel case of such direful effects of ignorance appears to exist in human history. Never, in the most savage state, have fires like these been kindled, or similar graves been dug. Never were such appalling consequences of ignorance exhibited to the civilized world.

But the great object of the Circular is thus introduced—

Next to the wise and gradual interposition and influence of a benevolent Government, FEMALE EDUCATION forms the most probable and effectual means of putting an end to this deplorable state of Female Society.

In pursuit of this object, it is proposed to send to India, a Female, well qualified to superintend a School for training Native Female Teachers, who should be selected from the daughters of our countrymen in India, already acquainted with the native languages; in order, that, after proper instruction, they may be fixed, as Schoolmistresses, in suitable stations. A Fund is opened by the Committee of the British and Foreign School Society,[7] for providing for the outfit, passage, and support of such a Female; who is to be placed at the disposal and under the direction of the Calcutta School Society.

A Female of superior qualifications, agreeable manners, benevolent temper, and unfeigned piety, could not engage in an object of this nature, without becoming, under the Divine Blessing, an instrument of much ultimate good in India; and the support of such an object by an exclusive Fund at home, would tend to increase the interest which Females in particular should take therein.

1820

Endnotes

- Note 1: Collection of poems or hymns composed in archaic Sanskrit.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: William Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos, Including a Minute Description of Their Manners and Customs, and Translations from Their Principal Works* (1817).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A Hindu member of the military caste.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A river in northeast India.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A city in the Indian province of Uttar Pradesh.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A reference to the practice of *sati*, or the voluntary suicide of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Sati figured prominently in British defenses of empire as an example

of supposed barbarism which justified imperial intervention.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: A key sponsor of secular schools modeled on the work of Joseph Lancaster (1778–1838).Return to reference 7

HARRIET MARTINEAU

Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was an important political economist and vocal abolitionist, and is often credited with being the first sociologist. *Eastern Life* describes her travels through Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. Descriptions of harems were particularly fascinating to British readers for their exotic qualities and for the corrupt sensualism they were understood to display.

From Eastern Life, Present and Past

FROM THE HAREEM

I shall say but little of what I know. If there were the slightest chance of doing any good, I would speak out at all hazards;—I would meet all the danger, and endure all the disgust. But there is no reaching the minds of any who live under the accursed system. It is a system which belongs to a totally different region of ideas from ours: and there is nothing to appeal to in the minds of those who, knowing the facts of the institution, can endure it: and at home, no one needs appealing to and convincing. Any plea for liberality that we meet at home proceeds from some poetical fancy, or some laudable desire for impartiality in the absence of knowledge of the facts. Such pleas are not operative enough to render it worth while to shock and sadden many hearts by statements which no one should be required needlessly to endure. I will tell only something of what I saw; and but little of what I thought and know.

At ten o'clock, one morning, Mrs. Y. and I were home from our early ride, and dressed for our visit to a hareem of a high order. The lady to whose kindness we mainly owed this opportunity, accompanied us, with her daughter. We had a disagreeable drive in the carriage belonging to the hotel, knocking against asses,[1] horses and people all the way. We alighted at the entrance of a paved passage leading to a court which we crossed: and then, in a second court, we were before the entrance of the hareem.

A party of eunuchs stood before a faded curtain, which they held aside when the gentlemen of our party and the dragoman[2] had gone forward. Retired some way behind the curtain stood, in a half circle, eight or ten slave girls, in an attitude of deep obeisance. Two of them then took charge of each of us, holding us by the arms above the elbows, to help us upstairs. * * *

On cushions on the floor lay the chief lady, ill and miserable-looking. She rose as we entered; but we made her lie down again: and she was then covered with a silk counterpane. Her dress was, as we saw when she rose, loose trowsers of blue striped cotton under her black silk jacket: and the same blue cotton appeared at the wrists, under her black sleeves. Her headdress was of black net, bunched out curiously behind. Her hair was braided down the sides of this headdress behind, and the ends were pinned over her forehead. Some of the black net was brought round her face, and under the chin, showing the outline of a face which had no beauty in it, nor traces of former beauty, but which was interesting to-day from her manifest illness and unhappiness. There was a strong expression of waywardness and peevishness about the mouth, however. She wore two handsome diamond rings; and she and one other lady had watches and gold chains. She complained of her head; and her left hand was bound up: she made signs by pressing her bosom, and imitating the dandling of a baby, which, with her occasional tears, persuaded my companions that she had met with some accident and had lost her infant. On leaving the hareem, we found that it was not a child of her own that she was mourning, but that of a white girl in the hareem: and that the wife's illness was wholly from grief for the loss of this baby;—a curious illustration of the feelings and manners of the place! The children born in large hareems are extremely few: and they are usually idolised, and sometimes murdered. It is known that in the houses at home which morally most resemble these hareems (though little enough externally) when the rare event of the birth of a child happens, a passionate joy extends over the wretched household:—jars are quieted, drunkenness is moderated, and there is no self-denial which the poor creatures will not undergo during this gratification of their feminine instincts. They will nurse the child all night in illness, and pamper it all day with sweetmeats and toys; they will fight for the possession of it, and be almost heartbroken at its loss: and lose it they must; for the child always dies,—killed with kindness, even if born healthy. This natural outbreak of feminine instinct takes place in the too populous hareem, when a child is given to any one of the

many who are longing for the gift: and if it dies naturally, it is mourned as we saw through a wonderful conquest of personal jealousy by this general instinct. But when the jealousy is uppermost,—what happens then?—why, the strangling the innocent in its sleep,—or the letting it slip from the window into the river below,—or the mixing poison with its food;—the mother and the murderess, always rivals and now fiends, being shut up together for life. If the child lives, what then? If a girl, she sees before her from the beginning the nothingness of external life, and the chaos of interior existence, in which she is to dwell for life. If a boy, he remains among the women till ten years old, seeing things when the eunuchs come in to romp, and hearing things among the chatter of the ignorant women which brutalise him for life before the age of rationality comes. But I will not dwell on these hopeless miseries.

A sensible looking old lady, who had lost an eye, sat at the head of the invalid: and a nun-like elderly woman, whose head and throat were wrapped in unstarched muslin, sat behind for a time, and then went away, after an affectionate salutation to the invalid.—Towards the end of the visit, the husband's mother came in,—looking like a little old man in her coat trimmed with fur. Her countenance was cheerful and pleasant. We saw, I think, about twenty more women, —some slaves,—most or all young—some good-looking, but none handsome. Some few were black; and the rest very light:—Nubians or Abyssinians and Circassians,[3] no doubt. One of the best figures, as a picture, in the hareem, was a Nubian girl, in an amber-coloured watered silk, embroidered with black, looped up in festoons, and finished with a black boddice. The richness of the gay printed cotton skirts and sleeves surprised us: the finest shawls could hardly have looked better. One graceful girl had her pretty figure well shown by a tight-fitting black dress. Their heads were dressed much like the chief lady's. Two, who must have been sisters, if not twins, had patches between the eyes. One handmaid was barefoot, and several were without shoes. Though there were none of the whole large number who could be called particularly pretty individually, the scene was, on the whole, exceedingly striking, as the realisation of what

one knew before, but as in a dream. The girls went out and came in, but, for the most part, stood in a half circle. Two sat on their heels for a time: and some went to play in the neighbouring apartments.

Coffee was handed to us twice, with all the well-known apparatus of jewelled cups, embroidered tray cover, and gold-flowered napkins. There were chi bouques,[4] of course: and sherbets in cut glass cups. The time was passed in attempts to have conversation by signs; attempts which are fruitless among people of the different ideas which belong to different races. How much they made out about us, we do not know: but they inquired into the mutual relationships of the party, and put the extraordinary questions which are always put to ladies who visit the hareems.—A young lady of my acquaintance, of the age of eighteen, but looking younger, went with her mother to a hareem in Cairo (not the one I have been describing) and excited great amazement when obliged to confess that she had not either children or a husband. One of the wives threw her arms about her, intreated her to stay for ever, said she should have any husband she liked, but particularly recommended her own, saying that she was sure he would soon wish for another wife, and she had so much rather it should be my young friend, who would amuse her continually, than anybody else that she could not be so fond of. Everywhere they pitied us European women heartily, that we had to go about travelling, and appearing in the streets without being properly taken care of,—that is watched. They think us strangely neglected in being left so free, and boast of their spy system and imprisonment as tokens of the value in which they are held.

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The difficulty is to get away, when one is visiting a hareem. The poor ladies cannot conceive of one's having anything to do; and the only reason they can understand for the interview coming to an end is the arrival of sunset, after which it would, they think, be improper for any woman to be abroad. And the amusement to them of such a visit is so great that they protract it to the utmost, even in such a

case as ours to-day, when all intercourse was conducted by dumb show. It is certainly very tiresome; and the only wonder is that the hostesses can like it. To sit hour after hour on the deewán,[5] without any exchange of ideas, having our clothes examined, and being plied with successive cups of coffee and sherbet, and pipes, and being gazed at by a half-circle of girls in brocade and shawls, and made to sit down again as soon as one attempts to rise, is as wearisome an experience as one meets with in foreign lands.—The weariness of heart is, however, the worst part of it. I noted all the faces well during our constrained stay; and I saw no trace of mind in any one except in the homely one-eyed old lady. All the younger ones were dull, soulless, brutish, or peevish. How should it be otherwise, when the only idea of their whole lives is that which, with all our interests and engagements, we consider too prominent with us? There cannot be a woman of them all who is not dwarfed and withered in mind and soul by being kept wholly engrossed with that one interest,—detained at that stage in existence which, though most important in its place, is so as a means to ulterior ends. The ignorance is fearful enough; but the grossness is revolting.

1848

Endnotes

- Note 1: Donkeys.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Interpreter; “eunuchs”: castrated men.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A nation and ethnic group indigenous to the North Caucasus region; “Nubians”: an ethnolinguistic group indigenous to Egypt; “Abyssinians”: a population indigenous to the Horn of Africa.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Turkish pipes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Backless sofa or couch.Return to reference 5

CHARLES DARWIN

Charles Darwin's life and work is discussed at length elsewhere in this volume. This passage is included here to provide some sense of the disgust often directed at Indigenous peoples, and particularly Indigenous women. Despite Darwin's sympathy for their plight, the horror he feels toward their way of life is clearly manifest.

From Journal of Researches

WRETCHED STATE OF THE NATIVES

On the east coast the natives, as we have seen, have guanaco[1] cloaks, and on the west, they possess seal-skins. Amongst these central tribes the men generally have an otter-skin, or some small scrap about as large as a pocket-handkerchief, which is barely sufficient to cover their backs as low down as their loins. It is laced across the breast by strings, and according as the wind blows, it is shifted from side to side. But these Fuegians[2] in the canoe were quite naked, and even one full-grown woman was absolutely so. It was raining heavily, and the fresh water, together with the spray, trickled down her body. In another harbour not far distant, a woman, who was suckling a recently-born child, came one day alongside the vessel, and remained there out of mere curiosity, whilst the sleet fell and thawed on her naked bosom, and on the skin of her naked baby! These poor wretches were stunted in their growth, their hideous faces bedaubed with white paint, their skins filthy and greasy, their hair entangled, their voices discordant, and their gestures violent. Viewing such men, one can hardly make oneself believe that they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world. It is a common subject of conjecture what pleasure in life some of the lower animals can enjoy: how much more reasonably the same question may be asked with respect to these barbarians!

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: Llama-like animals native to the mountainous regions of South America.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The Indigenous peoples of Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America.Return to reference 2

FRIEDRICH ENGELS
1820–1895

The decision to include in this volume a portion of Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Ger. 1845, Eng. 1887) is anomalous in several respects. First, although he spent long periods living in England, he was born and raised in what was then Prussia and is now part of Germany. Second, he did not write in English, and the work reproduced here was not translated into English until relatively late in the nineteenth century. Even then, according to some historians, it was not especially influential in England until well into the twentieth century. Finally, Engels is not primarily regarded as a literary figure: his life's work (much of which involved collaborations with Karl Marx) was instead resolutely and consistently political. His claim to be included in this anthology, then, lies in the power of his descriptions of industrial England and the conditions of English workers. Written while representing his wealthy family's interests in Manchester, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* provides a detailed and passionate record of living and working conditions in that city. But it also offers a compelling account of how seemingly random decisions made by independent actors can conspire to create structures of oppression and exploitation. The decision to place commercial buildings on well-trafficked streets might seem commonsensical, for example, but those storefronts also serve to hide from middle-class view the unsanitary, and inhumane living conditions of workers and their

families. Many writers were concerned with the plight of British workers: Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Charles Dickens, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti are only a few of the authors who appear in this collection. But few described the material conditions of their lives in such unsentimental and damning detail.

Engels was born in 1820 in Barmen, Westphalia, the eldest son of a wealthy textile manufacturing family. Apparently destined to take his father's place as the head of the family firm, Engels instead embraced atheism and political radicalism early on. In 1842, his father sent him to England to work in the family's Manchester firm. Engels instead used his two-year-long trip to study the living and working conditions in what was at that time the world's most fully industrialized city—as well as to consider how those conditions might lead to the overthrow of the economic and political systems that had made them possible. The result was a series of articles that served as the basis of *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. By the time Engels returned to Germany in 1844, he had become a close friend and collaborator of political theorist and revolutionary Karl Marx. Together, the two men wrote *German Ideology* (1845–46) and *The Communist Manifesto* (1847). Engels also supported Marx financially for much of his life, and his family after his death. Although sometimes cast as merely Marx's secretary or assistant, Engels was a forceful thinker in his own right: the sole author of the first draft of *The Communist Manifesto*, and the source of at least some of Marx's early formulations of socialism. He was the author of several additional texts—including *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880) and *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

Despite his revolutionary commitments, Engels lived a strangely double life, particularly in his later years. From 1850 to 1869, he worked first as an employee and then as a partner for the family firm. In that later capacity, in particular, he participated in the ordinary activities of the bourgeois elite: hunting and patronizing the social and intellectual clubs of the city. Throughout this period, he also maintained a secret household with Mary Burns, an Irish laborer

he met working in his family's Manchester mill. The two never married as a result of their opposition to the oppressive nature of marriage. But Mary was also never admitted into Engels's social life. After Mary's death in 1863, he became romantically involved with her sister, Lizzie Burns. Engels died of throat cancer in 1895.

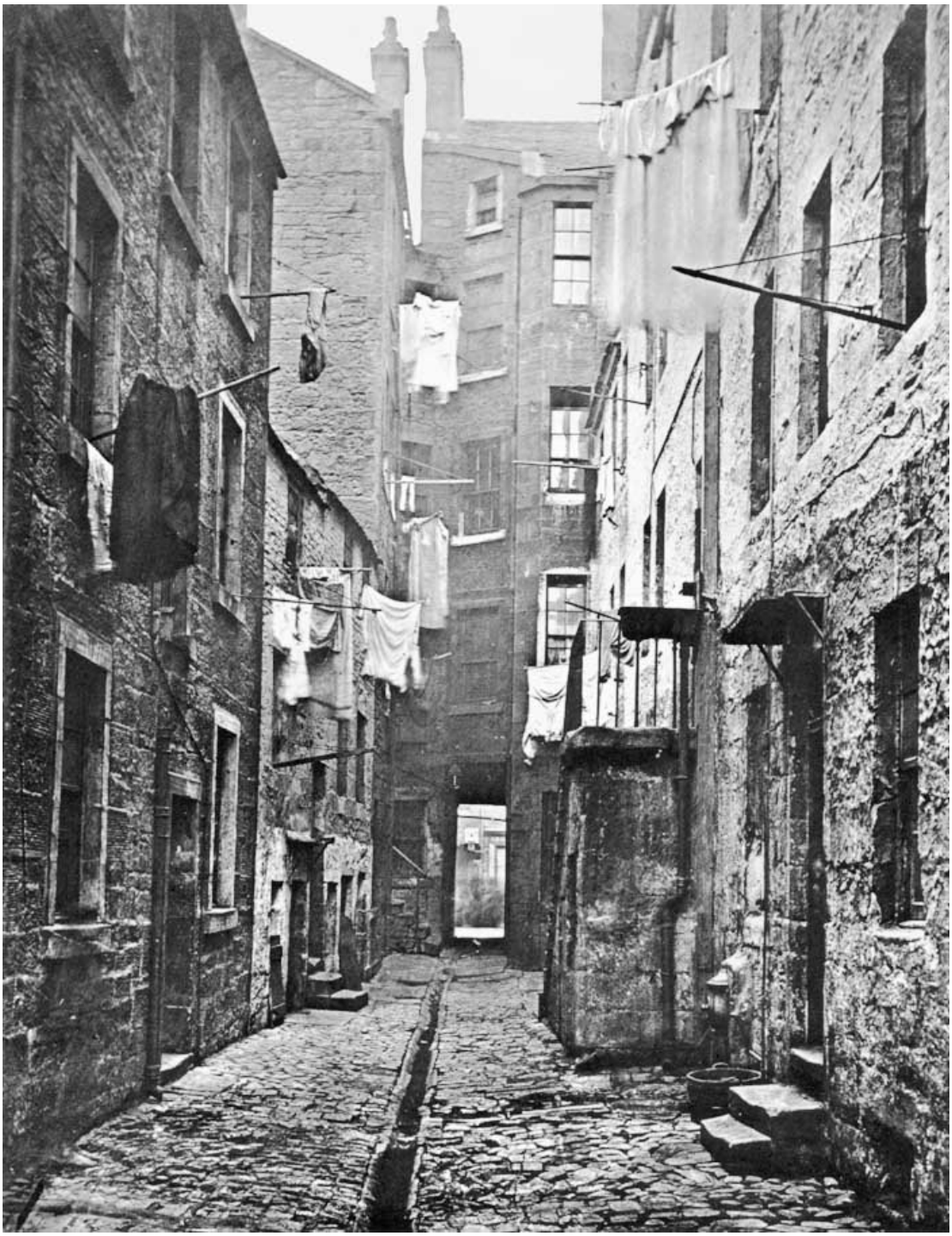
From The Condition of the Working Class in England

The Great Towns

A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing. This colossal centralisation, this heaping together of two and a half millions of human beings at one point, has multiplied the power of this two and a half millions a hundredfold; has raised London to the commercial capital of the world, created the giant docks and assembled the thousand vessels that continually cover the Thames. I know nothing more imposing than the view which the Thames offers during the ascent from the sea to London Bridge. The masses of buildings, the wharves on both sides, especially from Woolwich upwards, the countless ships along both shores, crowding ever closer and closer together, until, at last, only a narrow passage remains in the middle of the river, a passage through which hundreds of steamers shoot by one another; all this is so vast, so impressive, that a man cannot collect himself, but is lost in the marvel of England's greatness before he sets foot upon English soil.

But the sacrifices which all this has cost become apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realises for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilisation which crowd their city; that a hundred powers which slumbered within them have remained inactive, have been suppressed in order that a few might be developed more fully and multiply through union with those of others. The very turmoil of

the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? And have they not, in the end, to seek happiness in the same way, by the same means? And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing streams of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much as a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space. And, however much one may be aware that this isolation of the individual, this narrow self-seeking, is the fundamental principle of our society everywhere, it is nowhere so shamelessly barefaced, so self-conscious as just here in the crowding of the great city. The dissolution of mankind into monads, of which each one has a separate principle, and a separate purpose, the world of atoms, is here carried out to its utmost extreme.



Scottish Poverty. Thomas Annan (1829–1887) was one of the first photographers to record the housing conditions of the poor. This image of Scottish poverty in the late 1860s ("Close, No. 75 High Street") appeared in his book *The Old Closes and Streets of Glasgow* (1877).

Hence it comes, too, that the social war, the war of each against all, is here openly declared. Just as in Stirner's recent book,[1] people regard each other only as useful objects; each exploits the other, and the end of it all is, that the stronger treads the weaker under foot, and that the powerful few, the capitalists, seize everything for themselves, while to the weak many, the poor, scarcely a bare existence remains.

What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard egotism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together.

Since capital, the direct or indirect control of the means of subsistence and production, is the weapon with which this social warfare is carried on, it is clear that all the disadvantages of such a state must fall upon the poor. For him no one has the slightest concern. Cast into the whirlpool, he must struggle through as well as he can. If he is so happy as to find work, i.e. if the bourgeoisie does him the favour to enrich itself by means of him, wages await him which scarcely suffice to keep body and soul together; if he can get no work he may steal, if he is not afraid of the police, or starve, in which case the police will take care that he does so in a quiet and inoffensive manner. During my residence in England, at least twenty or thirty persons have died of simple starvation under the most revolting circumstances, and a jury has rarely been found possessed of the courage to speak the plain truth in the matter. Let the testimony of the witnesses be never so clear and unequivocal, the bourgeoisie, from which the jury is selected, always finds some backdoor through which to escape the frightful verdict, death from starvation. The bourgeoisie dare not speak the truth in these cases, for it would speak its own condemnation. But indirectly, far more

than directly, many have died of starvation, where long continued want of proper nourishment has called forth fatal illness, when it has produced such debility that causes which might otherwise have remained inoperative brought on severe illness and death. The English working-men call this "social murder," and accuse our whole society of perpetrating this crime perpetually. Are they wrong?

True, it is only individuals who starve, but what security has the working-man that it may not be his turn tomorrow? Who assures him employment, who vouches for it that, if for any reason or no reason his lord and master discharges him to-morrow, he can struggle along with those dependent upon him, until he may find some one else "to give him bread"? Who guarantees that willingness to work shall suffice to obtain work, that uprightness, industry, thrift, and the rest of the virtues recommended by the bourgeoisie, are really his road to happiness? No one. He knows that he has something to-day, and that it does not depend upon himself whether he shall have something to-morrow. He knows that every breeze that blows, every whim of his employer, every bad turn of trade may hurl him back into the fierce whirlpool from which he has temporarily saved himself, and in which it is hard and often impossible to keep his head above water. He knows that, though he may have the means of living to-day, it is very uncertain whether he shall to-morrow.

Meanwhile, let us proceed to a more detailed investigation of the position, in which the social war has placed the non-possessing class. Let us see what pay for his work society gives the working-man in the form of dwelling, clothing, food, what sort of subsistence it grants those who contribute most to the maintenance of society; and, first, let us consider the dwellings.

Every great city has one or more slums, where the working-class is crowded together. True, poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich; but, in general, a separate territory has been assigned to it, where, removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can. These slums are pretty equally arranged in all the great towns of England, the worst houses in the worst quarters of the towns; usually one or two-storied

cottages in long rows, perhaps with cellars used as dwellings, almost always irregularly built. These houses of three or four rooms and a kitchen form, throughout England, some parts of London excepted, the general dwellings of the working-class. The streets are generally unpaved, rough, dirty, filled with vegetable and animal refuse, without sewers or gutters, but supplied with foul, stagnant pools instead. Moreover, ventilation is impeded by the bad, confused method of building of the whole quarter, and since many human beings here live crowded into a small space, the atmosphere that prevails in these working-men's quarters may readily be imagined. Further, the streets serve as drying grounds in fine weather; lines are stretched across from house to house, and hung with wet clothing.

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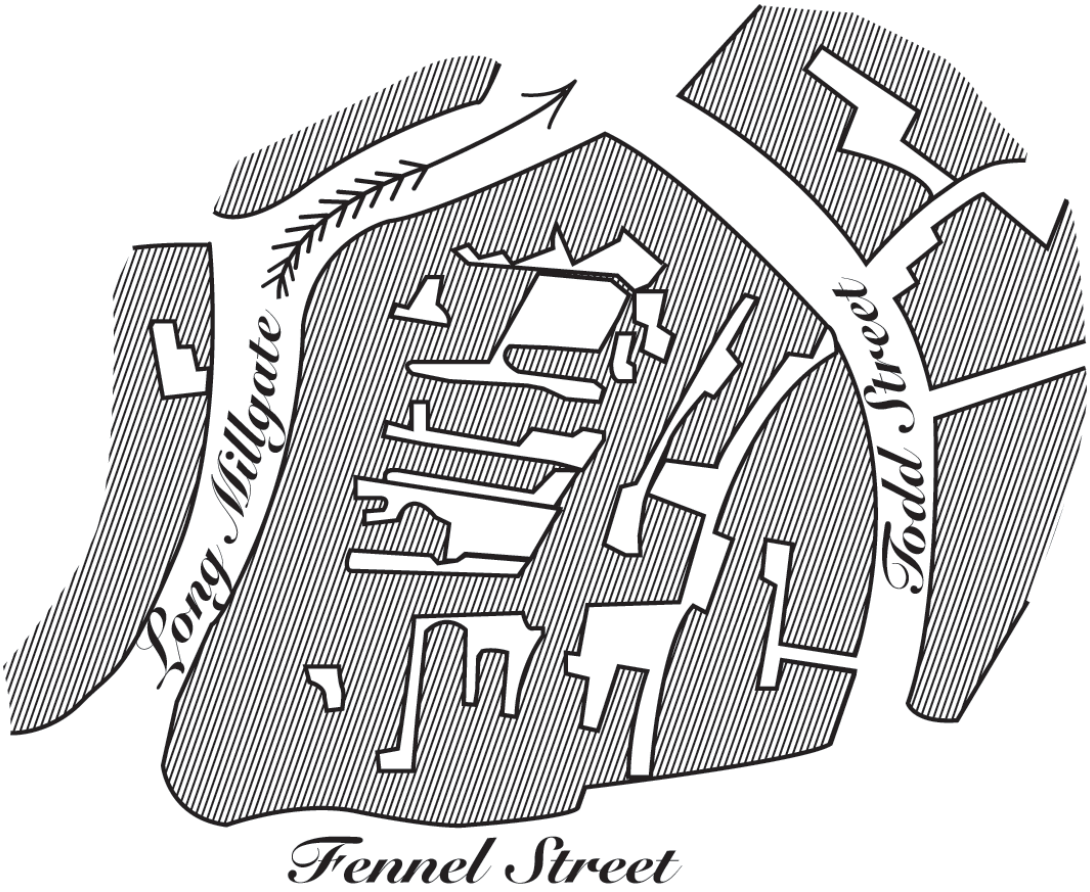
Manchester lies at the foot of the southern slope of a range of hills, which stretch hither from Oldham, their last peak, Kersallmoor, being at once the racecourse and the Mons Sacer of Manchester. Manchester proper lies on the left bank of the Irwell, between that stream and the two smaller ones, the Irk and the Medlock, which here empty into the Irwell. On the right bank of the Irwell, bounded by a sharp curve of the river, lies Salford, and farther westward Pendleton; northward from the Irwell lie Upper and Lower Broughton; northward of the Irk, Cheetham Hill; south of the Medlock lies Hulme; farther east Chorlton on Medlock; still farther, pretty well to the east of Manchester, Ardwick. The whole assemblage of buildings is commonly called Manchester, and contains about four hundred thousand inhabitants, rather more than less. The town itself is peculiarly built, so that a person may live in it for years, and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working-people's quarter or even with workers, that is, so long as he confines himself to his business or to pleasure walks. This arises chiefly from the fact, that by unconscious tacit agreement, as well as with outspoken conscious determination, the working-people's quarters are sharply separated from the sections of the city reserved for the middle-class; or, if this does not succeed, they are concealed with

the cloak of charity. Manchester contains, at its heart, a rather extended commercial district, perhaps half a mile long and about as broad, and consisting almost wholly of offices and warehouses. Nearly the whole district is abandoned by dwellers, and is lonely and deserted at night; only watchmen and policemen traverse its narrow lanes with their dark lanterns. This district is cut through by certain main thoroughfares upon which the vast traffic concentrates, and in which the ground level is lined with brilliant shops. In these streets the upper floors are occupied, here and there, and there is a good deal of life upon them until late at night. With the exception of this commercial district, all Manchester proper, all Salford and Hulme, a great part of Pendleton and Chorlton, two-thirds of Ardwick, and single stretches of Cheetham Hill and Broughton are all unmixed working-people's quarters, stretching like a girdle, averaging a mile and a half in breadth, around the commercial district. Outside, beyond this girdle, lives the upper and middle bourgeoisie, the middle bourgeoisie in regularly laid out streets in the vicinity of the working quarters, especially in Chorlton and the lower lying portions of Cheetham Hill; the upper bourgeoisie in remoter villas with gardens in Chorlton and Ardwick, or on the breezy heights of Cheetham Hill, Broughton, and Pendleton, in free, wholesome country air, in fine, comfortable homes, passed once every half or quarter hour by omnibuses going into the city. And the finest part of the arrangements is this, that the members of this money aristocracy can take the shortest road through the middle of all the labouring districts to their places of business, without ever seeing that they are in the midst of the grimy misery that lurks to the right and the left. For the thoroughfares leading from the Exchange in all directions out of the city are lined, on both sides, with an almost unbroken series of shops, and are so kept in the hands of the middle and lower bourgeoisie, which, out of self-interest, cares for a decent and cleanly external appearance and *can* care for it. True, these shops bear some relation to the districts which lie behind them, and are more elegant in the commercial and residential quarters than when they hide grimy working-men's dwellings; but they suffice to conceal from the eyes of the wealthy men and women of strong stomachs

and weak nerves the misery and grime which form the complement to their wealth. So, for instance, Deansgate, which leads from the Old Church directly southward, is lined first with mills and warehouses, then with second-rate shops and alehouses; farther south, when it leaves the commercial district, with less inviting shops, which grow dirtier and more interrupted by beerhouses and gin palaces the farther one goes, until at the southern end the appearance of the shops leaves no doubt that workers and workers only are their customers. So Market Street running south-east from the Exchange; at first brilliant shops of the best sort, with counting-houses or warehouses above; in the continuation, Piccadilly, immense hotels and warehouses; in the farther continuation, London Road, in the neighbourhood of the Medlock, factories, beerhouses, shops for the humbler bourgeoisie and the working population; and from this point onward, large gardens and villas of the wealthier merchants and manufacturers. In this way anyone who knows Manchester can infer the adjoining districts, from the appearance of the thoroughfare, but one is seldom in a position to catch from the street a glimpse of the real labouring districts. I know very well that this hypocritical plan is more or less common to all great cities; I know, too, that the retail dealers are forced by the nature of their business to take possession of the great highways; I know that there are more good buildings than bad ones upon such streets everywhere, and that the value of land is greater near them than in remoter districts; but at the same time I have never seen so systematic a shutting out of the working-class from the thoroughfares, so tender a concealment of everything which might affront the eye and the nerves of the bourgeoisie, as in Manchester. And yet, in other respects, Manchester is less built according to a plan, after official regulations, is more an outgrowth of accident, than any other city; and when I consider in this connection the eager assurances of the middle class, that the working class is doing famously, I cannot help feeling that the liberal manufacturers, the big-wigs of Manchester, are not so innocent after all, in the matter of this sensitive method of construction.

I may mention just here that the mills almost all adjoin the rivers or the different canals that ramify throughout the city, before I proceed at once to describe the labouring quarters. First of all, there is the Old Town of Manchester, which lies between the northern boundary of the commercial district and the Irk. Here the streets, even the better ones, are narrow and winding, like Todd Street, Long Millgate, Withy Grove, and Shude Hill, the houses dirty, old, and tumble-down, and the construction of the side streets utterly horrible. Going from the Old Church to Long Millgate, the stroller has at once a row of old-fashioned houses on the right, of which not one has kept its original level; these are remnants of the old pre-manufacturing Manchester, whose former inhabitants have removed with their descendants into better-built districts, and have left the houses, which were not good enough for them, to a working-class population strongly mixed with Irish blood. Here one is in an almost undisguised working-men's quarter, for even the shops and beerhouses hardly take the trouble to exhibit a trifling degree of cleanliness. But all this is nothing in comparison with the courts and lanes which lie behind, to which access can be gained only through covered passages, in which no two human beings can pass at the same time. Of the irregular cramming together of dwellings in ways which defy all rational plan, of the tangle in which they are crowded literally one upon the other, it is impossible to convey an idea. And it is not the buildings surviving from the old times of Manchester which are to blame for this; the confusion has only recently reached its height when every scrap of space left by the old way of building has been filled up and patched over until not a foot of land is left to be further occupied.



To confirm my statement I have drawn here a small section of the plan of Manchester—not the worst spot and not one-tenth of the whole Old Town.

This drawing will suffice to characterise the irrational manner in which the entire district was built, particularly the part near the Irk.

The south bank of the Irk is here very steep and between fifteen and thirty feet high. On this declivitous hillside there are planted three rows of houses, of which the lowest rise directly out of the river, while the front walls of the highest stand on the crest of the hill in Long Millgate. Among them are mills on the river, in short, the method of construction is as crowded and disorderly here as in the lower part of Long Millgate. Right and left a multitude of covered passages lead from the main street into numerous courts, and he who turns in thither gets into filth and disgusting grime, the equal of which is not to be found—especially in the courts which lead down to

the Irk, and which contain unqualifiedly the most horrible dwellings which I have yet beheld. In one of these courts there stands directly at the entrance, at the end of the covered passage, a privy without a door, so dirty that the inhabitants can pass into and out of the court only by passing through foul pools of stagnant urine and excrement. This is the first court on the Irk above Ducie Bridge—in case any one should care to look into it. Below it on the river there are several tanneries which fill the whole neighbourhood with the stench of animal putrefaction. Below Ducie Bridge the only entrance to most of the houses is by means of narrow, dirty stairs and over heaps of refuse and filth. The first court below Ducie Bridge, known as Allen's Court, was in such a state at the time of the cholera that the sanitary police ordered it evacuated, swept, and disinfected with chloride of lime. Dr Kay gives a terrible description of the state of this court at the time.[2] Since then, it seems to have been partially torn away and rebuilt; at least looking down from Ducie Bridge, the passer-by sees several ruined walls and heaps of *débris* with some newer houses. The view from this bridge, mercifully concealed from mortals of small stature by a parapet as high as a man, is characteristic for the whole district. At the bottom flows, or rather stagnates, the Irk, a narrow, coal-black, foul-smelling stream, full of débris and refuse, which it deposits on the shallower right bank. In dry weather, a long string of the most disgusting, blackish-green, slime pools are left standing on this bank, from the depths of which bubbles of miasmatic gas constantly arise and give forth a stench unendurable even on the bridge forty or fifty feet above the surface of the stream. But besides this, the stream itself is checked every few paces by high weirs,[3] behind which slime and refuse accumulate and rot in thick masses. Above the bridge are tanneries, bonemills, and gasworks, from which all drains and refuse find their way into the Irk, which receives further the contents of all the neighbouring sewers and privies. It may be easily imagined, therefore, what sort of residue the stream deposits. Below the bridge you look upon the piles of *débris*, the refuse, filth, and offal from the courts on the steep left bank; here each house is packed close behind its neighbour and a piece of each

is visible, all black, smoky, crumbling, ancient, with broken panes and window-frames. The background is furnished by old barrack-like factory buildings. On the lower right bank stands a long row of houses and mills; the second house being a ruin without a roof, piled with *débris*; the third stands so low that the lowest floor is uninhabitable, and therefore without windows or doors. Here the background embraces the pauper burial-ground, the station of the Liverpool and Leeds railway, and, in the rear of this, the Workhouse, the "Poor-Law Bastille" [4] of Manchester, which, like a citadel, looks threateningly down from behind its high walls and parapets on the hilltop, upon the working-people's quarter below.

Above Ducie Bridge, the left bank grows more flat and the right bank steeper, but the condition of the dwellings on both banks grows worse rather than better. He who turns to the left here from the main street, Long Millgate, is lost; he wanders from one court to another, turns countless corners, passes nothing but narrow, filthy nooks and alleys, until after a few minutes he has lost all clue, and knows not whither to turn. Everywhere half or wholly ruined buildings, some of them actually uninhabited, which means a great deal here; rarely a wooden or stone floor to be seen in the houses, almost uniformly broken, ill-fitting windows and doors, and a state of filth! Everywhere heaps of *débris*, refuse, and offal; standing pools for gutters, and a stench which alone would make it impossible for a human being in any degree civilised to live in such a district. The newly-built extension of the Leeds railway, which crosses the Irk here, has swept away some of these courts and lanes, laying others completely open to view. Immediately under the railway bridge there stands a court, the filth and horrors of which surpass all the others by far, just because it was hitherto so shut off, so secluded that the way to it could not be found without a good deal of trouble. I should never have discovered it myself, without the breaks made by the railway, though I thought I knew this whole region thoroughly. Passing along a rough bank, among stakes and washing-lines, one penetrates into this chaos of small one-storied, one-roomed huts, in most of which there is no artificial floor; kitchen, living and sleeping-

room all in one. In such a hole, scarcely five feet long by six broad, I found two beds—and such bedsteads and beds!—which, with a staircase and chimney-place, exactly filled the room. In several others I found absolutely nothing, while the door stood open, and the inhabitants leaned against it. Everywhere before the doors refuse and offal; that any sort of pavement lay underneath could not be seen but only felt, here and there, with the feet. This whole collection of cattle-sheds for human beings was surrounded on two sides by houses and a factory, and on the third by the river, and besides the narrow stair up the bank, a narrow doorway alone led out into another almost equally ill-built, ill-kept labyrinth of dwellings.

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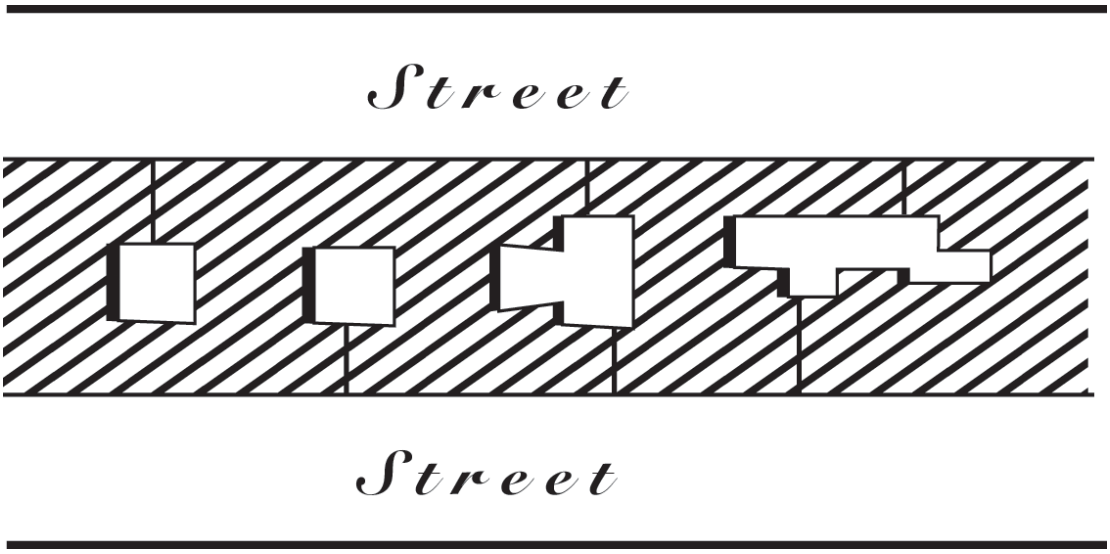
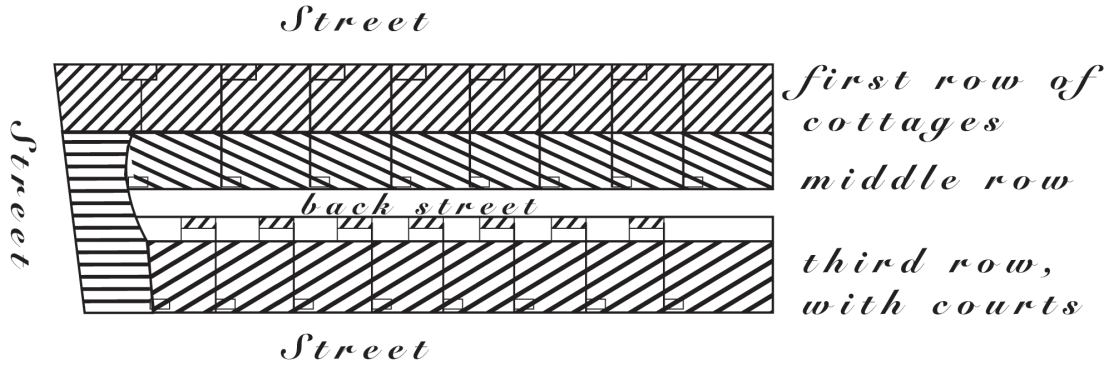
It may not be out of place to make some general observations here just as to the customary construction of working men's quarters in Manchester. We have seen how in the Old Town pure accident determined the grouping of the houses in general. Every house is built without reference to any other, and the scraps of space between them are called courts for want of another name. In the somewhat newer portions of the same quarter, and in other working-men's quarters, dating from the early days of industrial activity, a somewhat more orderly arrangement may be found. The space between two streets is divided into more regular, usually square courts.



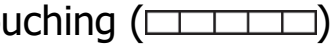
These courts were built in this way from the beginning, and communicate with the streets by means of covered passages. If the totally planless construction is injurious to the health of the workers by preventing ventilation, this method of shutting them up in courts surrounded on all sides by buildings is far more so. The air simply cannot escape; the chimneys of the houses are the sole drains for the imprisoned atmosphere of the courts, and they serve the purpose only so long as fire is kept burning.[5] Moreover, the houses surrounding such courts are usually built back to back, having the rear wall in common; and this alone suffices to prevent any sufficient through ventilation. And, as the police charged with care of the streets does not trouble itself about the condition of these courts, as everything quietly lies where it is thrown, there is no cause for wonder at the filth and heaps of ashes and offal to be found here. I have been in courts, in Millers Street, at least half a foot below the level of the thoroughfare, and without the slightest drainage for the water that accumulates in them in rainy weather! More recently another different method of building was adopted, and has now become general. Working-men’s cottages are almost never built singly, but always by the dozen or score; a single contractor building up one or two streets at a time. These are then arranged as follows: One front is formed of cottages of the best class, so fortunate as to possess a back door and small court, and these command the

highest rent. In the rear of these cottages runs a narrow alley, the back street, built up at both ends, into which either a narrow roadway or a covered passage leads from one side. The cottages which face this back street command least rent, and are most neglected. These have their rear walls in common with the third row of cottages which face a second street, and command less rent than the first row and more than the second. The streets are laid out somewhat in the following manner.



By this method of construction, comparatively good ventilation can be obtained for the first row of cottages, and the third row is no worse off than with the former method. The middle row, on the other hand, is at least as badly ventilated as the houses in the courts, and the back street is always in the same filthy, disgusting condition as they. The contractors prefer this method because it saves them space, and furnishes the means of fleecing better paid workers through the higher rents of the cottages in the first and third rows. These three different forms of cottage building are found all over Manchester and throughout Lancashire and Yorkshire, often mixed up together, but usually separate enough to indicate the relative age of parts of towns. The third system, that of the back alleys, prevails largely in the great working-men's district east of St George's Road and Ancoats Street, and is the one most often found in the other working-men's quarters of Manchester and its suburbs.

In the last-mentioned broad district, included under the name Ancoats, stand the largest mills of Manchester lining the canals, colossal six and seven-storied buildings towering with their slender

chimneys far above the low cottages of the workers. The population of the district consists, therefore, chiefly of mill-hands, and in the worst streets, of hand-weavers. The streets nearest the heart of the town are the oldest, and consequently the worst; they are, however, paved, and supplied with drains. Among them I include those nearest to and parallel with Oldham Road and Great Ancoats Street. Farther to the north-east lie many newly-built-up streets; here the cottages look neat and cleanly, doors and windows are new and freshly painted, the rooms within newly whitewashed; the streets themselves are better aired, the vacant building lots between them larger and more numerous. But this can be said of a minority of the houses only, while cellar dwellings are to be found under almost every cottage; many streets are unpaved and without sewers; and, worse than all, this neat appearance is all pretence, a pretence which vanishes within the first ten years. For the construction of the cottages individually is no less to be condemned than the plan of the streets. All such cottages look neat and substantial at first; their massive brick walls deceive the eye, and, on passing through a *newly-built* working-men's street, without remembering the back alleys and the construction of the houses themselves, one is inclined to agree with the assertion of the Liberal manufacturers that the working population is nowhere so well housed as in England. But on closer examination, it becomes evident that the walls of these cottages are as thin as it is possible to make them. The outer walls, those of the cellar, which bear the weight of the ground-floor and roof, are one whole brick thick at most, the bricks lying with their long sides touching ( ); but I have seen many a cottage of the same height, some in process of building, whose outer walls were but one-half brick thick, the bricks lying not sidewise but lengthwise, their narrow ends touching (). The object of this is to spare material, but there is also another reason for it; namely, the fact that the contractors never own the land but lease it, according to the English custom, for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty or ninety-nine years, at the expiration of which time it falls, with everything upon it, back into the possession of the original holder, who pays nothing in return for improvements upon it. The improvements are therefore so

calculated by the lessee as to be worth as little as possible at the expiration of the stipulated term. And as such cottages are often built but twenty or thirty years before the expiration of the term, it may easily be imagined that the contractors make no unnecessary expenditure upon them. Moreover, these contractors, usually carpenters and builders, or manufacturers, spend little or nothing in repairs, partly to avoid diminishing their rent receipts, and partly in view of the approaching surrender of the improvement to the landowner; while in consequence of commercial crises and the loss of work that follows them, whole streets often stand empty, the cottages falling rapidly into ruin and uninhabitableness. It is calculated in general that working-men's cottages last only forty years on the average. This sounds strangely enough when one sees the beautiful, massive walls of newly-built ones, which seem to give promise of lasting a couple of centuries; but the fact remains that the niggardliness of the original expenditure, the neglect of all repairs, the frequent periods of emptiness, the constant change of inhabitants, and the destruction carried on by the dwellers during the final ten years, usually Irish families, who do not hesitate to use the wooden portions for fire-wood—all this, taken together, accomplishes the complete ruin of the cottages by the end of forty years. Hence it comes that Ancoats, built chiefly since the sudden growth of manufacture, chiefly indeed within the present century, contains a vast number of ruinous houses, most of them being, in fact, in the last stages of inhabitableness. I will not dwell upon the amount of capital thus wasted, the small additional expenditure upon the original improvement and upon repairs which would suffice to keep this whole district clean, decent, and inhabitable for years together. I have to deal here with the state of the houses and their inhabitants, and it must be admitted that no more injurious and demoralizing method of housing the workers has yet been discovered than precisely this. The working-man is constrained to occupy such ruinous dwellings because he cannot pay for others, and because there are no others in the vicinity of his mill; perhaps, too, because they belong to the employer, who engages him only on condition of his taking such a cottage. The calculation with reference to the forty

years' duration of the cottage is, of course, not always perfectly strict; for, if the dwellings are in a thickly-built-up portion of the town, and there is a good prospect of finding steady occupants for them, while the ground rent is high, the contractors do a little something to keep the cottages inhabitable after the expiration of the forty years. They never do anything more, however, than is absolutely unavoidable, and the dwellings so repaired are the worst of all. Occasionally when an epidemic threatens, the otherwise sleepy conscience of the sanitary police is a little stirred, raids are made into the working-men's districts, whole rows of cellars and cottages are closed, as happened in the case of several lanes near Oldham Road; but this does not last long: the condemned cottages soon find occupants again, the owners are much better off by letting them, and the sanitary police will not come again so soon. These east and north-east sides of Manchester are the only ones on which the bourgeoisie has not built, because ten or eleven months of the year the west and south-west wind drives the smoke of all the factories hither, and that is for the working-people alone to breathe.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* (1844).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: James Ph. Kay, M.D., *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Class Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, 2nd edn, 1832. Dr Kay confuses the working class in general with the factory workers, otherwise an excellent pamphlet [*Engels's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Enclosures or dams to catch fish or regulate a river's flow.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The New Poor Law (1834) made it illegal for paupers to live outside or beg; instead, the poor were forced into workhouses to labor in exchange for shelter. Conditions were

deliberately harsh to discourage people from claiming relief. The Bastille was a fortress and prison in Paris; it was stormed by revolutionaries on the eve of the French Revolution.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: And yet an English Liberal wiseacre asserts, in the Report of the Children's Employment Commission, that these courts are the masterpiece of municipal architecture, because, like a multitude of little parks, they improve ventilation, the circulation of air! Certainly, if each court had two or four broad open entrances facing each other, through which the air could pour; but they never have two, rarely one, and usually only a narrow covered passage [*Engels's note*].Return to reference 5

From *Single Branches of Industry. Factory-hands*

To form a correct judgement of the influence of factory-work upon the health of the female sex, it is necessary first to consider the work of children, and then the nature of the work itself. From the beginning of manufacturing industry, children have been employed in mills, at first almost exclusively by reason of the smallness of the machines, which were later enlarged. Even children from the workhouses were employed in multitudes, being rented out for a number of years to the manufacturers as apprentices. They were lodged, fed, and clothed in common, and were, of course, completely the slaves of their masters, by whom they were treated with the utmost recklessness and barbarity. As early as 1796, the public objection to this revolting system found such vigorous expression through Dr Percival and Sir Robert Peel (father of the Cabinet Minister, and himself a cotton manufacturer), that in 1802 Parliament passed an Apprentices' Bill, by which the most crying evils were removed. Gradually the increasing competition of free workpeople crowded out the whole apprentice system; factories were built in cities, machinery was constructed on a large scale, and work-rooms were made more airy and wholesome; gradually, too, more work was found for adults and young persons. The number of children in the mills diminished somewhat, and the age at which they began to work rose a little; few children under eight or nine years were now employed. Later, as we shall see, the power of the State intervened several times to protect them from the money-greed of the bourgeoisie.

The great mortality among children of the working class, and especially among those of the factory operatives, is proof enough of the unwholesome conditions under which they pass their first years. These influences are at work, of course, among the children who survive, but not quite so powerfully as upon those who succumb. The result in the most favourable case is a tendency to disease, or some check in development, and consequent less than normal vigour of the constitution. A nine years old child of a factory

operative that has grown up in want, privation, and changing conditions, in cold and damp, with insufficient clothing and unwholesome dwellings, is far from having the working strength of a child brought up under healthier conditions. At nine years of age it is sent into the mill to work 6½ hours (formerly 8, earlier still, 12 to 14, even 16 hours) daily, until the thirteenth year; then twelve hours until the eighteenth year. The old enfeebling influences continue, while the work is added to them. It is not to be denied that a child of nine years, even an operative's child, can hold out through 6½ hours' daily work, without any one being able to trace visible bad results in its development directly to this cause; but in no case can its presence in the damp, heavy air of the factory, often at once warm and wet, contribute to good health; and, in any case, it is unpardonable to sacrifice to the greed of an unfeeling bourgeoisie the time of children which should be devoted solely to their physical and mental development, withdraw them from school and the fresh air, in order to wear them out for the benefit of the manufacturers. The bourgeoisie says: 'If we do not employ the children in the mills, they are only left under conditions unfavourable to their development'; and this is true on the whole. But what does this mean if it is not a confession that the bourgeoisie first places the children of the working-class under unfavourable conditions, and then exploits these bad conditions for its own benefit, appeals to that which is as much its own fault as the factory system, excuses the sin of to-day with the sin of yesterday? And if the Factory Act did not in some measure fetter their hands, how this "humane", this "benevolent" bourgeoisie, which has built its factories solely for the good of the working-class, would take care of the interests of these workers! Let us hear how they acted before the factory inspector was at their heels. Their own admitted testimony will convict them in the report of the Factories' Inquiry Commission of 1833.[1]

The report of the Central Commission relates that the manufacturers began to employ children rarely of five years, often of six, very often of seven, usually of eight to nine years; that the working day often lasted fourteen to sixteen hours, exclusive of

meals and intervals; that the manufacturers permitted overlookers to flog and maltreat children, and often took an active part in so doing themselves. One case is related of a Scotch manufacturer, who rode after a sixteen years old runaway, forced him to return, running after the employee as fast as the master's horse trotted, and beat him the whole way with a long whip. In the large towns where the operatives resisted more vigorously, such things naturally happened less often. But even this long working-day failed to satisfy the greed of the capitalists. Their aim was to make the capital invested in the building and machinery produce the highest return, by every available means, to make it work as actively as possible. Hence the manufacturers introduced the shameful system of night-work. Some of them employed two sets of operatives, each numerous enough to fill the whole mill, and let one set work the twelve hours of the day, and the other the twelve hours of the night. It is needless to picture the effect upon the frames of young children, and even upon the health of young persons and adults, produced by permanent loss of sleep at night, which cannot be made good by any amount of sleep during the day. Irritation of the whole nervous system, with general lassitude and enfeeblement of the entire frame, were the inevitable results, with the fostering of temptation to drunkenness and unbridled sexual indulgence. One manufacturer testifies that during the two years in which night-work was carried on in his factory, the number of illegitimate children born was doubled, and such general demoralization prevailed that he was obliged to give up night-work. Other manufacturers were yet more barbarous, requiring many hands to work thirty to forty hours at a stretch, several times a week, letting them get a couple of hours sleep only, because the night-shift was not complete, but calculated to replace a part of the operatives.

The reports of the Commission touching this barbarism surpass everything that is known to me in this line. Such infamies as are here related are nowhere else to be found—yet we shall see that the bourgeoisie constantly appeals to the testimony of the Commission as being in its own favour. The consequences of these cruelties

became evident quickly enough. The Commissioners mention a crowd of cripples who appeared before them, who clearly owed their distortion to the long working-hours. This distortion usually consists of a curving of the spinal column and legs, and is described as follows by Francis Sharp, M.R.C.S., of Leeds:

> "I never saw the peculiar bending of the lower ends of the thigh bones before I came to Leeds. At first I thought it was rachitis, but I was soon led to change my opinion in consequence of the mass of patients who presented themselves at the hospital, and the appearances of the disease at an age (from eight to fourteen) in which children are usually not subject to rachitis, as well as by the circumstance that the malady had first appeared after children began to work in the mills. Thus far I have seen about a hundred such cases, and can, most decidedly, express the opinion that they are the consequences of overwork. So far as I know they were all mill children, and themselves attributed the evil to this cause. The number of cases of curvature of the spine which has fallen under my observation, and which were evidently consequent upon too protracted standing, was not less than three hundred."

Precisely similar is the testimony of Dr Hey, for eighteen years physician in the hospital in Leeds:

> "Malformations of the spine are very frequent among mill-hands; some of them consequent upon mere overwork, others the effect of long work upon constitutions originally feeble, or weakened by bad food. Deformities seem even more frequent than these diseases; the knees were bent inward, the ligaments very often relaxed and enfeebled, and the long bones of the legs bent. The thick ends of these long bones were especially apt to be bent and disproportionately developed, and these patients came from the factories in which long work-hours were of frequent occurrence."

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The most common accident is the squeezing off of a single joint of a finger, somewhat less common the loss of the whole finger, half or a whole hand, an arm, etc., in the machinery. Lockjaw very often follows, even upon the lesser among these injuries, and brings death with it. Besides the deformed persons, a great number of maimed ones may be seen going about in Manchester; this one has lost an arm or a part of one, that one a foot, the third half a leg; it is like living in the midst of an army just returned from a campaign. But the most dangerous portion of the machinery is the strapping which conveys motive power from the shaft to the separate machines, especially if it contains buckles, which, however, are rarely used now. Whoever is seized by the strap is carried up with lightning speed, thrown against the ceiling above and floor below with such force that there is rarely a whole bone left in the body, and death follows instantly. Between June 12th and August 13th, 1843, the *Manchester Guardian* reported the following serious accidents (the trifling ones it does not notice): June 12th, a boy died in Manchester of lockjaw, caused by his hand being crushed between wheels. June 16th, a youth in Saddleworth seized by a wheel and carried away with it; died, horribly mangled. June 29th, a young man at Green Acres Moor, near Manchester, at work in a machine shop, fell under the grindstone, which broke two of his ribs and lacerated him terribly. July 24th, a girl in Oldham died, carried around fifty times by a strap; no bone unbroken. July 27th, a girl in Manchester seized by the blower (the first machine that receives the raw cotton), and died of injuries received. 3 August, a bobbins turner died in Dukenfield, caught in a strap, every rib broken. In the year 1843, the Manchester Infirmary treated 962 cases of wounds and mutilations caused by machinery, while the number of all other accidents within the district of the hospital was 2,426, so that for five accidents from all other causes, two were caused by machinery. The accidents which happened in Salford are not included here, nor those treated by surgeons in private practice. In such cases, whether or not the accident unfits the victim for further work, the employer, at best,

pays the doctor, or, in very exceptional cases, he may pay wages during treatment; what becomes of the operative afterwards, in case he cannot work, is no concern of the employer.

The Factory Report says on this subject, that employers must be made responsible for all cases, since children cannot take care, and adults will take care in their own interest. But the gentlemen who write the report are bourgeois, and so they must contradict themselves and bring up later all sorts of bosh on the subject of the culpable temerity of the operatives.

The state of the case is this: If children cannot take care, the employment of children must be forbidden. If adults are reckless, they must be mere over-grown children on a plane of intelligence which does not enable them to appreciate the danger in its full scope; and who is to blame for this but the bourgeoisie which keeps them in a condition in which their intelligence cannot develop? Or the machinery is ill-arranged, and must be surrounded with fencing, to supply which falls to the share of the bourgeoisie. Or the operative is under inducements which outweigh the threatened danger; he must work rapidly to earn his wages, has no time to take care, and for this too, the bourgeoisie is to blame. Many accidents happen, for instance, while the operatives are cleaning machinery in motion. Why? Because the bourgeois would otherwise oblige the worker to clean the machinery during the free hours while it is not in motion, and the worker naturally is not disposed to sacrifice any part of his free time. Every free hour is so precious to the worker that he often risks his life twice a week rather than sacrifice one of them to the bourgeois. Let the employer take from working-hours the time required for cleaning the machinery, and it will never again occur to an operative to clean machinery in motion. In short, from whatever point of view, the blame falls ultimately on the manufacturer, and of him should be required, at the very least, life-long support of the incapacitated operative, and support of the victim’s family in case death follows the accident. In the earliest period of manufacture, the accidents were much more numerous in proportion than now, for the machinery was inferior, smaller, more crowded, and almost never

fenced. But the number is still large enough, as the foregoing cases prove, to arouse grave questions as to a state of things which permits so many deformities and mutilations for the benefit of a single class, and plunges so many industrious working-people into want and starvation by reason of injuries undergone in the service and through the fault of the bourgeoisie.

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1845, 1887

Endnotes

- Note 1: A parliamentary commission investigating working conditions in textile factories.Return to reference 1

MATTHEW ARNOLD
1822–1888

How is a full and enjoyable life to be lived in a rapidly industrializing and democratizing society? This is the question raised in Matthew Arnold's poetry; his prose attempts some answers. In response to rapid and potentially dislocating social changes, Arnold strove to help his contemporaries achieve a richer intellectual, emotional, and cultural existence.

Arnold was born in Laleham, a village in the valley of the Thames. At the age of six, he was moved to Rugby School, where his father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, had become headmaster. Dr. Arnold became a well-known educational reformer: a teacher who instilled in his pupils an earnest preoccupation with moral and social issues as well as an awareness of the connection between a liberal (or broad, nonvocational) education and modern life. At Rugby, Matthew, the eldest son, was directly exposed to the powerful force of his father's mind and character. That he was permanently influenced by his father is evident in his poems and in his writings on religion, education, and politics; but, like many sons of clergymen, he also rebelled. As a student at Oxford, he dressed and behaved like a dandy: alternately languid or merry in manner. "His manner displeases, from its seeming foppery," wrote Charlotte Brontë after talking with the young man in later years. "The shade of Dr. Arnold," she added, "seemed to me to frown on his young representative." Even Arnold's studies did not seem to occupy him seriously. By a

session of cramming, he managed to earn second-class honors in his final examinations, a near disaster. Arnold's biographers usually dismiss his youthful frivolity of spirit as only a temporary pose or mask, but it permanently colored his prose style, brightening his most serious criticism with geniality and wit.

Unlike authors such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson and George Eliot, who committed themselves solely to their literary pursuits, Arnold confined his writing and reading to his spare time. In 1847 he took the post of private secretary to Lord Lansdowne; and in 1851, the year of his marriage, he became an inspector of schools, a demanding and time-consuming position that he held for thirty-five years. Although his work as an inspector may have reduced his output as a writer, it had several advantages. His extensive traveling in England took him to the homes of the more ardently Protestant middle classes. As a result, when he criticized the dullness of middle-class life (as he often did), his criticism was based on intimate knowledge. His position also led to travel on the Continent to study the schools of Europe, thus enabling him to make helpful comparisons and to draw on a stock of fresh ideas. Despite the monotony of much of his work as an inspector, Arnold was convinced of its importance. It contributed to what he regarded as his century's most pressing need: the development of a satisfactory national system of education.

Today Arnold is perhaps better known as a writer of prose than as a poet, although individual poems such as "Dover Beach" (1867) continue to be widely popular. During his lifetime, his poetry was well regarded and sometimes even preferred to his prose. Given Arnold's sophistication, it is perhaps surprising that his evocations of nature function so memorably in his poetry: rather than simply providing a picturesque backdrop, the setting—seashore or river or mountaintop—draws the poem's meaning together. In this respect, as in many others, Arnold displays a debt to William Wordsworth; but he also draws on his own bond with particular landscapes, especially those associated with his youth and early adulthood. The stanzas of "The Scholar Gypsy" (1853), for instance, are suffused in

a deep familiarity with the changing patterns of the rural scene, from the "frail-leafed, white anemone" and "dark bluebells drenched with dews" of May to the "scarlet poppies" and "pale pink convolvulus" of August.

Arnold's career as a writer can be roughly divided into four periods. He wrote and published poetry in the 1850s; in the 1860s, he turned to literary criticism and social criticism; in the 1870s, he focused on issues of religion and education; and in the 1880s, he wrote a second set of essays in literary criticism. One question this trajectory raises is why Arnold chose to abandon poetry. In a letter to his friend Arthur Hugh Clough in the 1850s, he begins to offer an answer: "I am glad you like the *Gypsy Scholar*—but what does it *do* for you? Homer *animates*—Shakespeare *animates*—in its poor way I think *Sohrab and Rustum animates*—the *Gypsy Scholar* at best awakens a pleasing melancholy. But this is not what we want." Early in his career Arnold had evolved a theory of what poetry should do for its readers, a theory based, in part, on his impression of what classical poetry had achieved. As he says in the 1853 preface to his *Poems*, poetry must "inspirit and rejoice the reader"; it must "convey a charm, and infuse delight." Such a demand does not exclude tragic poetry, but it does exclude works "in which suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continual state of mental distress is prolonged." In his prose his melancholy and "morbid" personality was subordinated to the resolutely cheerful and purposeful character he had created for himself. And although he could on occasion recommend the richness of language of such poets as John Keats or Tennyson—their "natural magic," as he called it—Arnold usually preferred literature that was unadorned and possessed the quality of "high seriousness." In a world in which the role of formal religion appeared to be shrinking, Arnold increasingly emphasized that the writer must be a serious thinker who could offer guidance to his readers.

Arnold's starting point as a critic of society is different from that of Carlyle and John Ruskin. While the older prophets attacked the Victorian middle classes on the grounds of their materialism and their selfish indifference to the sufferings of the poor, Arnold argued

instead that the "Philistines," as he called them, were not so much wicked as ignorant, narrow-minded, and suffering from the dullness of their private lives. This novel analysis was reinforced by Arnold's conviction that the world of the future, both in England and in America, would be a middle-class world and therefore would be dominated by a class inadequately equipped either to lead or to enjoy civilized living.

Arnold's relentless exposure of middle-class narrow-mindedness in his own country eventually led him into the arena of religious controversy. As a critic of religious institutions, he was arguing, in effect, that just as the middle classes did not know how to lead full lives, neither did they know how to read the Bible intelligently or attend church intelligently. Of the Christian religion he remarked that there are two things "that surely must be clear to anybody with eyes in his head. One is, that men cannot do without it; the other that they cannot do with it as it is." His three full-length studies of the Bible, including *Literature and Dogma* (1873), are thus best considered a postscript to his social criticism. The Bible, to Arnold, was a great work of literature like the *Odyssey*, and the Church of England was a great national institution like Parliament. Both Bible and Church must be preserved not because historical Christianity was credible but because both, when properly understood, were agents of what he called "culture"—they contributed to making humanity more civilized.

"Culture" is perhaps Arnold's most familiar catchword, although what he meant by it has sometimes been misunderstood. He used the term to capture the qualities of an open-minded intelligence (as described in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" [1864]) —a refusal to take things on authority. In this respect Arnold appears close to someone like J. S. Mill. But the word also connotes a full awareness of humanity's past and a capacity to enjoy the best works of art, literature, history, and philosophy that have come down to us from that past. As a way of viewing life in all its aspects, including the social, political, and religious, culture represents for Arnold the most effective cure for the ills of a sick society.

The attempt to define *culture* brings us to a final aspect of Arnold's career as a critic: his writings on education, in which he sought to make cultural values "prevail." At the core of nearly all his writings is his belief that good education is *the* crucial need. Arnold was essentially a great teacher. He has the faults of a teacher—a tendency to repeat himself, to lean too hard on formulaic phrases. He also has the great teacher's virtues, in particular the ability to convey to us the conviction on which all his arguments are based. This conviction is that the humanist tradition can enable the individual man or woman to live life more fully and to change the course of society. He believes that a democratic society can thrive only if its citizens become educated in "the best that is known and thought," which he equated with the Western tradition. In 1852, writing to Clough on the subject of equality, Arnold observed: "I am more and more convinced that the world tends to become more comfortable for the mass, and more uncomfortable for those of any natural gift or distinction—and it is as well perhaps that it should be so—for hitherto the gifted have astonished and delighted the world, but not trained or inspired or in any real way changed it." In making this claim, he was both embracing his responsibility as an educator of the world and criticizing the educated elite to which he belonged for its failure to do more, to do better.

Isolation. To Marguerite[1]

We were apart; yet, day by day,
I bade my heart more constant be.
I bade it keep the world away,
And grow a home for only thee;
Nor feared but thy love likewise grew,
Like mine, each day, more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,
What far too soon, alas! I learned—
The heart can bind itself alone,
And faith may oft be unreturned.
Self-swayed our feelings ebb and swell—
Thou lov'st no more—Farewell! Farewell!
Farewell!—and thou, thou lonely heart,[2]
Which never yet without remorse
Even for a moment didst depart
From thy remote and spherèd course
To haunt the place where passions reign—
Back to thy solitude again!

Back with the conscious thrill of shame
Which Luna felt, that summer night,
Flash through her pure immortal frame,
When she forsook the starry height
To hang over Endymion's sleep
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep.[3]
Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved
How vain a thing is mortal love,
Wandering in Heaven, far removed.
But thou hast long had place to prove°
This truth—to prove, and make thine own:

"Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone."

Or, if not quite alone, yet they
Which touch thee are unmating things—
Ocean and clouds and night and day;
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;
And life, and others' joy and pain,
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men—for they, at least,
Have *dreamed* two human hearts might blend
In one, and were through faith released
From isolation without end
Prolonged; nor knew, although not less
Alone than thou, their loneliness.

1849 1857

Endnotes

- Note 1: Addressed to a woman Arnold is reputed to have met in Switzerland in the 1840s. It has been commonly assumed that she was French or Swiss; but some recent biographies speculate she might have been Mary Claude, a woman Arnold knew in England at this same period who, though English, had connections with Germany and had translated German prose and verse.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Presumably the speaker's heart, not Marguerite's.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Luna (or Diana), virgin goddess of the moon, fell in love with Endymion, a handsome shepherd whom she discovered asleep on Mount Latmos.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *test*Return to reference °

To Marguerite—Continued

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,°
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone.*
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges° meet again!

Who ordered that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cooled?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance ruled!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.

1849 1852

Notes

- °: *encircled* Return to reference °

- °: *margins, edges*Return to reference °

The Buried Life

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o’er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile!
But there’s a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul.

Alas! is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men concealed
Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;
I knew they lived and moved
Tricked° in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—doth a like spell benumb
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb?
Ah! well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchained;
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordained!

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possessed,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,[1]
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,

But they course on forever unexpressed.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but ’tis not true!
And then we will no more be racked
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul’s subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.[2]

Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another’s eyes read clear,
When our world-deafened ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life’s flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth forever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

And then he thinks he knows
95 The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: This passage, like many others in Arnold's poetry, illustrates William Wordsworth's effect on his writings. In this instance compare with Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey (1798), lines 25–27: "But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din / Of towns and cities, I have owed to them, / In hours of weariness, sensations sweet." Compare with also *The Prelude* (1850) 7.626: "How oft amid those overflowing streets."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Wordworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1807), lines 149–51: "Those shadowy recollections, / Which, be they what they may, / Are yet the fountain light of all our day."Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *dressed up*Return to reference °

Lines Written in Kensington Gardens[1]

In this lone, open glade I lie,
Screened by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its end, to stay the eye,
Those black-crowned, red-boled pine trees stand!

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum.
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come![2]

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirred forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretched out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world, which roars hard° by,
Be others happy if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.[3]

I, on men's impious uproar hurled,

Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace forever new!
When I who watch them am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass!
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

1852

Endnotes

- Note 1: A park in the heart of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sheep sometimes grazed in London parks.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek mythology the god of woods and pastures.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *close*Return to reference °

The Scholar Gypsy The story of a seventeenth-century student who left Oxford and joined a band of gypsies had made a strong impression on Arnold. In the poem he wistfully imagines that the spirit of this scholar is still to be encountered in the Cumner countryside near Oxford, having achieved immortality by a serene pursuit of the secret of human existence. Like Keats's nightingale, the scholar has escaped "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of modern life.

At the outset the poet addresses a shepherd who has been helping him in his search for traces of the scholar. The shepherd is addressed as *you.* After line 61, with the shift to *thou* and *thy,* the person addressed is the scholar, and the poet thereafter sometimes uses the pronoun *we* to indicate he is speaking for all humanity of later generations.

About the setting Arnold wrote to his brother Tom on May 15, 1857: "You alone of my brothers are associated with that life at Oxford, the *freest* and most delightful part, perhaps, of my life, when with you and Clough and Walrond I shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgotten Oxfordshire and Berkshire country. Do you remember a poem of mine called 'The Scholar Gipsy'? It was meant to fix the remembrance of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner Hills."

The passage from Joseph Glanvill's *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) that inspired the poem was included by Arnold as a note:

> There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gypsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among

the gypsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such imposters as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.

The Scholar Gypsy

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes![1]
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,[2]
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded° flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn°—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screened is this nook o'er the high, half-reaped field,
And here till sundown, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield

Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvill's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts[3] and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gypsy lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst° he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life inquired;
Whereat he answered, that the gypsy crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and returned no more.—
But rumors hung about the countryside,
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gypsies wore.

Shepherds had met him on the Hurst[4] in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench,[5] the smock-frocked boors°
Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moored to the cool bank in the summer heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,[6]
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;[7]
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,

Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leafed, white anemone,
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandoned lasher[8] pass,
Have often passed thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Marked thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eying, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;°
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—
Where most the gypsies by the turf-edged way

Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged and shreds of grey,
Above the forest ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travelers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapped in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill,
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ Church hall[9]—
Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.°

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvill did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gypsy tribe;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited yew tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,°
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius[1] we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead!
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvill's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half[2] lives a hundred different lives;

Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose tomorrow the ground won today—
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,[3]
Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair—
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the countryside, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,[4]
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silvered branches of the glade—
Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue.
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles,° to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!

—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Aegean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies° steeped in brine—
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young lighthearted masters of the waves—
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes[5] and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians[6] come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.[7]

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: Sheep pens woven from sticks.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pot or jug for carrying his drink.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Of rich conception, many ideas.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A hill near Oxford. All the place-names in the poem (except those in the final two stanzas) refer to the countryside near Oxford.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Fireside bench.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Or Bablock Hythe (a *hithe* or *hythe* is a landing place on a river). "Stripling Thames": narrow upper reaches of the river before it broadens out to its full width.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The scholar's flat-bottomed boat ("punt") is tied up by a rope at the riverbank near the ferry crossing like the speaker's boat (in the previous stanza), which was "moored to the cool bank." The motion of the boat as it is stirred by the current of the river causes the chopping sound of the rope in the water.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Water that spills over a dam or weir.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The dining hall of this Oxford college.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Perhaps the spirit of the universe, which pauses briefly to receive back the life given to us. (In Roman mythology a *genius* was an attendant spirit.)Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An adverb modifying "lives."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Probably Goethe, although possibly referring to Tennyson, whose *In Memoriam* had appeared in 1850.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dido committed suicide after her lover, Aeneas, deserted her. When he later encountered her in Hades, she silently turned away from him (see Virgil's *Aeneid,* book 6).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shoals off the coast of North Africa.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Dark inhabitants of Spain and Portugal—perhaps associated with gypsies.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  The elaborate simile of the final two stanzas has been variously interpreted. The trader from Tyre (a Phoenician city, on the coast of what is now Lebanon) is disconcerted to see a new business rival, "the merry Grecian coaster," emerging from one of his habitual trading ports in the Greek islands. Like the Scholar Gypsy, when similarly intruded on by hearty extroverts, he resolves to flee and seek a less competitive sphere of life.

The reference (line 249) to the Iberians as "*shy* traffickers" (traders) is explained by Kenneth Allott as having been derived from Herodotus's *History* (4.196). Herodotus describes a distinctive method of selling goods established by merchants from Carthage who used to sail through the Strait of Gibraltar to trade with the inhabitants of the coast of West Africa. The Carthaginians would leave bales of their merchandise on display along the beaches and, without having seen their prospective customers, would return to their ships. The Indigenous people would then come down from their inland hiding places and set gold beside the bales they wished to buy. When the Indigenous people withdrew in their turn, the Carthaginians would return to the beach and decide whether payments were adequate, a process repeated until agreement was reached. On the Atlantic coasts this method of bargaining persisted into the 19th century. As William Beloe, a translator of the ancient Greek historian, noted in 1844: "In this manner they transact their exchange without seeing one another, or without the least instance of dishonesty . . . on either side." For the solitary Tyrian trader such a procedure, with its avoidance of "contact" (line 221), would have been especially appropriate.
Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *penned up*Return to reference °
- °: *grain or wheat*Return to reference °
- °: *long ago*Return to reference °
- °: *rustics*Return to reference °
- °: *cattle*Return to reference °
- °: *farmhouse*Return to reference °
- °: *vexation*Return to reference °
- °: *small deep valleys*Return to reference °
- °: *tuna fish*Return to reference °

Dover Beach

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery;[8] we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.[9]
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles[1] of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies[2] clash by night.

ca. 1851 1867

Endnotes

- Note 8: A reference to a chorus in *Antigone* that compares human sorrow to the sound of the waves moving the sand beneath them (lines 585–91).Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  This difficult line means, in general, that at high tide the sea envelops the land closely. Its forces are "gathered" up (to use William Wordsworth's term) like the "folds" of bright clothing ("girdle") that have been compressed ("furled"). At ebb tide, as the sea retreats, it is unfurled and spread out. It still surrounds the shoreline but not as an "enclasping flow" (as in "To Marguerite—Continued").
  Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Beaches covered with pebbles.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Perhaps alluding to conflicts in Arnold's own time such as occurred during the revolutions of 1848 in Europe, or at the Siege of Rome by the French in 1849 (the poem's date of composition is unknown, although generally assumed to be 1851). But the passage also refers back to another battle, one that occurred more than two thousand years earlier when an Athenian army was attempting an invasion of Sicily at nighttime. As this "night battle" was described by the ancient Greek

historian Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* (7.44), the invaders became confused by darkness and slaughtered many of their own men. Hence "ignorant armies." Return to reference 2

Preface to *Poems* (1853)

In two small volumes of poems, published anonymously, one in 1849, the other in 1852, many of the poems which compose the present volume have already appeared. The rest are now published for the first time.

I have, in the present collection, omitted the poem from which the volume published in 1852 took its title.[1] I have done so, not because the subject of it was a Sicilian Greek born between two and three thousand years ago, although many persons would think this a sufficient reason. Neither have I done so because I had, in my own opinion, failed in the delineation which I intended to effect. I intended to delineate the feelings of one of the last of the Greek religious philosophers, one of the family of Orpheus and Musaeus,[2] having survived his fellows, living on into a time when the habits of Greek thought and feeling had begun fast to change, character to dwindle, the influence of the Sophists[3] to prevail. Into the feelings of a man so situated there entered much that we are accustomed to consider as exclusively modern; how much, the fragments of Empedocles[4] himself which remain to us are sufficient at least to indicate. What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared; the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves, we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and of Faust.[5]

The representation of such a man's feelings must be interesting, if consistently drawn. We all naturally take pleasure, says Aristotle, in any imitation or representation whatever;[6] this is the basis of our love of poetry; and we take pleasure in them, he adds, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us; not to the philosopher only,

but to mankind at large. Every representation therefore which is consistently drawn may be supposed to be interesting, inasmuch as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds. What is *not* interesting is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm.

Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting; but, if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspirit and rejoice the reader; that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight. For the muses, as Hesiod says, were born that they might be "a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares":[7] and it is not enough that the poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. "All art," says Schiller, "is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment."[8]

A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of Art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known, may still subsist; the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it; the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible.

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something

monotonous. When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also.

To this class of situations, poetically faulty as it appears to me, that of Empedocles, as I have endeavored to represent him, belongs; and I have therefore excluded the poem from the present collection.

And why, it may be asked, have I entered into this explanation respecting a matter so unimportant as the admission or exclusion of the poem in question? I have done so, because I was anxious to avow that the sole reason for its exclusion was that which has been stated above; and that it has not been excluded in deference to the opinion which many critics of the present day appear to entertain against subjects chosen from distant times and countries: against the choice, in short, of any subjects but modern ones.

"The poet," it is said, and by an intelligent critic, "the poet who would really fix the public attention must leave the exhausted past, and draw his subjects from matters of present import, and *therefore* both of interest and novelty."[9]

Now this view I believe to be completely false. It is worth examining, inasmuch as it is a fair sample of a class of critical dicta everywhere current at the present day, having a philosophical form and air, but no real basis in fact; and which are calculated to vitiate the judgment of readers of poetry, while they exert, so far as they are adopted, a misleading influence on the practice of those who write it.

What are the eternal objects of poetry, among all nations and at all times? They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the poet.[1] Vainly will the latter imagine that he has everything in his own power; that he can make an intrinsically inferior action equally delightful with a more excellent one by his treatment of it; he may indeed compel us to admire his skill, but his work will possess, within itself, an incurable defect.

The poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent? Those, certainly,

which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also. The modernness or antiquity of an action, therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation; this depends upon its inherent qualities. To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. A great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting to it than a smaller human action of today, even though upon the representation of this last the most consummate skill may have been expended, and though it has the advantage of appealing by its modern language, familiar manners, and contemporary allusions, to all our transient feelings and interests. These, however, have no right to demand of a poetical work that it shall satisfy them; their claims are to be directed elsewhere. Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions; let them interest these, and the voice of all subordinate claims upon them is at once silenced.

Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido—what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an "exhausted past"? We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes;[2] we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time; yet I fearlessly assert that *Hermann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, The Excursion,*[3] leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the *Iliad,* by the *Oresteia,* or by the episode of Dido.[4] And why is this? Simply because in the three last-named cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense: and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.

It may be urged, however, that past actions may be interesting in themselves, but that they are not to be adopted by the modern poet, because it is impossible for him to have them clearly present to his own mind, and he cannot therefore feel them deeply, nor represent them forcibly. But this is not necessarily the case. The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of Oedipus or of Macbeth, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man; with their feelings and behavior in certain tragic situations, which engage their passions as men; these have in them nothing local and casual; they are as accessible to the modern poet as to a contemporary.

The date of an action, then, signifies nothing: the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this: that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style:* but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence; because it is so simple and so well subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys. For what reason was the Greek tragic poet confined to so limited a range of subjects? Because there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence: and it was not thought that on any but an excellent subject could an excellent poem be

constructed. A few actions, therefore, eminently adapted for tragedy, maintained almost exclusive possession of the Greek tragic stage; their significance appeared inexhaustible; they were as permanent problems, perpetually offered to the genius of every fresh poet. This too is the reason of what appears to us moderns a certain baldness of expression in Greek tragedy; of the triviality with which we often reproach the remarks of the chorus, where it takes part in the dialogue: that the action itself, the situation of Orestes, or Merope, or Alcmaeon,[5] was to stand the central point of interest, unforgotten, absorbing, principal; that no accessories were for a moment to distract the spectator's attention from this; that the tone of the parts was to be perpetually kept down, in order not to impair the grandiose effect of the whole. The terrible[6] old mythic story on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theater, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista: then came the poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in: stroke upon stroke, the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group; more and more it revealed itself to the riveted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty.

This was what a Greek critic demanded; this was what a Greek poet endeavored to effect. It signified nothing to what time an action belonged; we do not find that the *Persae* occupied a particularly high rank among the dramas of Aeschylus, because it represented a matter of contemporary interest:[7] this was not what a cultivated Athenian required, he required that the permanent elements of his nature should be moved; and dramas of which the action, though taken from a long-distant mythic time, yet was calculated to accomplish this in a higher degree than that of the *Persae,* stood higher in his estimation accordingly. The Greeks felt, no doubt, with their exquisite sagacity of taste, that an action of present times was too near them, too much mixed up with what was accidental and passing, to form a sufficiently grand, detached, and

self-subsistent object for a tragic poem: such objects belonged to the domain of the comic poet, and of the lighter kinds of poetry. For the more serious kinds, for *pragmatic* poetry, to use an excellent expression of Polybius,[8] they were more difficult and severe in the range of subjects which they permitted. Their theory and practice alike, the admirable treatise of Aristotle, and the unrivaled works of their poets, exclaim with a thousand tongues—"All depends upon the subject; choose a fitting action, penetrate yourself with the feeling of its situations; this done, everything else will follow."

But for all kinds of poetry alike there was one point on which they were rigidly exacting; the adaptability of the subject to the kind of poetry selected, and the careful construction of the poem.

How different a way of thinking from this is ours! We can hardly at the present day understand what Menander[9] meant when he told a man who inquired as to the progress of his comedy that he had finished it, not having yet written a single line, because he had constructed the action of it in his mind. A modern critic would have assured him that the merit of his piece depended on the brilliant things which arose under his pen as he went along. We have poems which seem to exist merely for the sake of single lines and passages; not for the sake of producing any total impression. We have critics who seem to direct their attention merely to detached expressions, to the language about the action, not to the action itself, I verily think that the majority of them do not in their hearts believe that there is such a thing as a total impression to be derived from a poem at all, or to be demanded from a poet; they think the term a commonplace of metaphysical criticism. They will permit the poet to select any action he pleases, and to suffer that action to go as it will, provided he gratifies them with occasional bursts of fine writing, and with a shower of isolated thoughts and images. That is, they permit him to leave their poetical sense ungratified, provided that he gratifies their rhetorical sense and their curiosity. Of his neglecting to gratify these, there is little danger. He needs rather to be warned against the danger of attempting to gratify these alone; he needs rather to be perpetually reminded to prefer his action to everything

else; so to treat this, as to permit its inherent excellences to develop themselves, without interruption from the intrusion of his personal peculiarities; most fortunate, when he most entirely succeeds in effacing himself, and in enabling a noble action to subsist as it did in nature.

But the modern critic not only permits a false practice; he absolutely prescribes false aims.—"A true allegory of the state of one's own mind in a representative history," the poet is told, "is perhaps the highest thing that one can attempt in the way of poetry."[1] And accordingly he attempts it. An allegory of the state of one's own mind, the highest problem of an art which imitates actions! No assuredly, it is not, it never can be so: no great poetical work has ever been produced with such an aim. *Faust* itself, in which something of the kind is attempted, wonderful passages as it contains, and in spite of the unsurpassed beauty of the scenes which relate to Margaret, *Faust* itself, judged as a whole, and judged strictly as a poetical work, is defective: its illustrious author, the greatest poet of modern times, the greatest critic of all times, would have been the first to acknowledge it; he only defended his work, indeed, by asserting it to be "something incommensurable."[2]

The confusion of the present times is great, the multitude of voices counseling different things bewildering, the number of existing works capable of attracting a young writer's attention and of becoming his models, immense. What he wants is a hand to guide him through the confusion, a voice to prescribe to him the aim which he should keep in view, and to explain to him that the value of the literary works which offer themselves to his attention is relative to their power of helping him forward on his road towards this aim. Such a guide the English writer at the present day will nowhere find. Failing this, all that can be looked for, all indeed that can be desired is, that his attention should be fixed on excellent models; that he may reproduce, at any rate, something of their excellence, by penetrating himself with their works and by catching their spirit, if he cannot be taught to produce what is excellent independently.

Foremost among these models for the English writer stands Shakespeare: a name the greatest perhaps of all poetical names; a name never to be mentioned without reverence. I will venture, however, to express a doubt, whether the influence of his works, excellent and fruitful for the readers of poetry, for the great majority, has been of unmixed advantage to the writers of it. Shakespeare indeed chose excellent subjects; the world could afford no better than Macbeth, or Romeo and Juliet, or Othello: he had no theory respecting the necessity of choosing subjects of present import, or the paramount interest attaching to allegories of the state of one's own mind; like all great poets, he knew well what constituted a poetical action; like them, wherever he found such an action, he took it; like them, too, he found his best in past times. But to these general characteristics of all great poets he added a special one of his own; a gift, namely, of happy, abundant, and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivaled: so eminent as irresistibly to strike the attention first in him, and even to throw into comparative shade his other excellences as a poet. Here has been the mischief. These other excellences were his fundamental excellences *as a poet;* what distinguishes the artist from the mere amateur, says Goethe, is *Architectonicè* in the highest sense;[3] that power of execution, which creates, forms, and constitutes: not the profoundness of single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration. But these attractive accessories of a poetical work being more easily seized than the spirit of the whole, and these accessories being possessed by Shakespeare in an unequaled degree, a young writer having recourse to Shakespeare as his model runs great risk of being vanquished and absorbed by them, and, in consequence, of reproducing, according to the measure of his power, these, and these alone.[4] Of this preponderating quality of Shakespeare's genius, accordingly almost the whole of modern English poetry has, it appears to me, felt the influence. To the exclusive attention on the part of his imitators to this it is in a great degree owing, that of the majority of modern poetical works the details alone are valuable, the composition worthless. In reading

them one is perpetually reminded of that terrible sentence on a modern French poet: *Il dit tout ce qu'il veut, mais malheureusement il n'a rien à dire.*[5]

Let me give an instance of what I mean. I will take it from the works of the very chief among those who seem to have been formed in the school of Shakespeare: of one whose exquisite genius and pathetic death render him forever interesting. I will take the poem of *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, by Keats. I choose this rather than the *Endymion,* because the latter work (which a modern critic has classed with the *Fairy Queen*!)[6] although undoubtedly there blows through it the breath of genius, is yet as a whole so utterly incoherent, as not strictly to merit the name of a poem at all. The poem of *Isabella,* then, is a perfect treasure house of graceful and felicitous words and images: almost in every stanza there occurs one of those vivid and picturesque turns of expression, by which the object is made to flash upon the eye of the mind, and which thrill the reader with a sudden delight. This one short poem contains, perhaps, a greater number of happy[7] single expressions which one could quote than all the extant tragedies of Sophocles. But the action, the story? The action in itself is an excellent one; but so feebly is it conceived by the poet, so loosely constructed, that the effect produced by it, in and for itself, is absolutely null. Let the reader, after he has finished the poem of Keats, turn to the same story in the *Decameron*:[8] he will then feel how pregnant and interesting the same action has become in the hands of a great artist, who above all things delineates his object; who subordinates expression to that which it is designed to express.

I have said that the imitators of Shakespeare, fixing their attention on his wonderful gift of expression, have directed their imitation to this, neglecting his other excellences. These excellences, the fundamental excellences of poetical art, Shakespeare no doubt possessed them—possessed many of them in a splendid degree; but it may perhaps be doubted whether even he himself did not sometimes give scope to his faculty of expression to the prejudice of a higher poetical duty. For we must never forget that Shakespeare is

the great poet he is from his skill in discerning and firmly conceiving an excellent action, from his power of intensely feeling a situation, of intimately associating himself with a character; not from his gift of expression, which rather even leads him astray, degenerating sometimes into a fondness for curiosity of expression, into an irritability of fancy, which seems to make it impossible for him to say a thing plainly, even when the press of the action demands the very direct language, or its level character the very simplest. Mr. Hallam, than whom it is impossible to find a saner and more judicious critic, has had the courage (for at the present day it needs courage) to remark, how extremely and faultily difficult Shakespeare's language often is.[9] It is so: you may find main scenes in some of his greatest tragedies, *King Lear* for instance, where the language is so artificial, so curiously tortured, and so difficult, that every speech has to be read two or three times before its meaning can be comprehended. This overcuriousness of expression is indeed but the excessive employment of a wonderful gift—of the power of saying a thing in a happier way than any other man; nevertheless, it is carried so far that one understands what M. Guizot meant, when he said that Shakespeare appears in his language to have tried all styles except that of simplicity.[1] He has not the severe and scrupulous self-restraint of the ancients, partly no doubt, because he had a far less cultivated and exacting audience. He has indeed a far wider range than they had, a far richer fertility of thought; in this respect he rises above them. In his strong conception of his subject, in the genuine way in which he is penetrated with it, he resembles them, and is unlike the moderns. But in the accurate limitation of it, the conscientious rejection of superfluities, the simple and rigorous development of it from the first line of his work to the last, he falls below them, and comes nearer to the moderns. In his chief works, besides what he has of his own, he has the elementary soundness of the ancients; he has their important action and their large and broad manner; but he has not their purity of method. He is therefore a less safe model; for what he has of his own is personal, and inseparable from his own rich nature; it may be imitated and exaggerated, it

cannot be learned or applied as an art. He is above all suggestive; more valuable, therefore, to young writers as men than as artists. But clearness of arrangement, rigor of development, simplicity of style—these may to a certain extent be learned; and these may, I am convinced, be learned best from the ancients, who although infinitely less suggestive than Shakespeare, are thus, to the artist, more instructive.

What, then, it will be asked, are the ancients to be our sole models? the ancients with their comparatively narrow range of experience, and their widely different circumstances? Not, certainly, that which is narrow in the ancients, nor that in which we can no longer sympathize. An action like the action of the *Antigone* of Sophocles, which turns upon the conflict between the heroine's duty to her brother's corpse and that to the laws of her country, is no longer one in which it is possible that we should feel a deep interest. I am speaking too, it will be remembered, not of the best sources of intellectual stimulus for the general reader, but of the best models of instruction for the individual writer. This last may certainly learn of the ancients, better than anywhere else, three things which it is vitally important for him to know: the all-importance of the choice of a subject; the necessity of accurate construction; and the subordinate character of expression. He will learn from them how unspeakably superior is the effect of the one moral impression left by a great action treated as a whole, to the effect produced by the most striking single thought or by the happiest image. As he penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works, as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect, unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient poets aimed; that it is this which constitutes the grandeur of their works, and which makes them immortal. He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will deliver himself from the jargon of modern criticism, and escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness.

The present age makes great claims upon us; we owe it service, it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practice it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment, not of literary works only, but of men and events in general. They are like persons who have had a very weighty and impressive experience; they are more truly than others under the empire of facts, and more independent of the language current among those with whom they live. They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age; they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves; they know, too, that this is no easy task —*χαλεπόν*, as Pittacus said, *χαλεπὸν ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι*[2]—and they ask themselves sincerely whether their age and its literature can assist them in the attempt. If they are endeavoring to practice any art, they remember the plain and simple proceedings of the old artists, who attained their grand results by penetrating themselves with some noble and significant action, not by inflating themselves with a belief in the pre-eminent importance and greatness of their own times. They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, nor of the coming poet; all this, they know, is the mere delirium of vanity; their business is not to praise their age, but to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them. They are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this they can do nothing; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such, and

an age of spiritual discomfort with difficulty be powerfully and delightfully affected by them.

A host of voices will indignantly rejoin that the present age is inferior to the past neither in moral grandeur nor in spiritual health. He who possesses the discipline I speak of will content himself with remembering the judgments passed upon the present age, in this respect, by the two men, the one of strongest head, the other of widest culture, whom it has produced; by Goethe and by Niebuhr.[3] It will be sufficient for him that he knows the opinions held by these two great men respecting the present age and its literature; and that he feels assured in his own mind that their aims and demands upon life were such as he would wish, at any rate, his own to be; and their judgment as to what is impeding and disabling such as he may safely follow. He will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age: he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time, and to enable others, through his representation of it, to delight in it also.

I am far indeed from making any claim, for myself, that I possess this discipline; or for the following poems, that they breathe its spirit. But I say, that in the sincere endeavor to learn and practice, amid the bewildering confusion of our times, what is sound and true in poetical art, I seemed to myself to find the only sure guidance, the only solid footing, among the ancients. They, at any rate, knew what they wanted in art, and we do not. It is this uncertainty which is disheartening, and not hostile criticism. How often have I felt this when reading words of disparagement or of cavil: that it is the uncertainty as to what is really to be aimed at which makes our difficulty, not the dissatisfaction of the critic, who himself suffers from the same uncertainty. *Non me tua fervida terrent Dicta; . . . Dii me terrent, et Jupiter hostis.*[4]

Two kinds of *dilettanti,* says Goethe, there are in poetry: he who neglects the indispensable mechanical part, and thinks he has done enough if he shows spirituality and feeling; and he who seeks to arrive at poetry merely by mechanism, in which he can acquire an artisan's readiness, and is without soul and matter.[5] And he adds, that the first does most harm to art, and the last to himself. If we must be *dilettanti*; if it is impossible for us, under the circumstances amidst which we live, to think clearly, to feel nobly, and to delineate firmly; if we cannot attain to the mastery of the great artists; let us, at least, have so much respect for our art as to prefer it to ourselves. Let us not bewilder our successors; let us transmit to them the practice of poetry, with its boundaries and wholesome regulative laws, under which excellent works may again, perhaps, at some future time, be produced, not yet fallen into oblivion through our neglect, not yet condemned and canceled by the influence of their eternal enemy, caprice.

1853

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Empedocles on Etna,* the long poem that supplied the title for Arnold's second collection of poems, portrays the disillusioned reflections of the Greek philosopher and scientist Empedocles and culminates in the speaker's suicide on Mount Etna in Sicily, in the 5th century B.C.E. Because of his dissatisfaction with what he calls the "morbid" tone of *Empedocles on Etna,* Arnold continued to exclude it from his volumes of poetry until 1867, when he reprinted it at the request, he said, "of a man of genius, whom it had the honour and good fortune to interest—Mr. Robert Browning." It should be noted that in the arguments developed in the preface against his own poem (and against 19th-century poetry in general), Arnold is exclusively concerned with narrative and dramatic poetry. The preface, as he remarked in 1854, "leaves . . .

untouched the question, how far, and in what manner, the opinions there expressed respecting the choice of subjects apply to lyric poetry; that region of the poetical field which is chiefly cultivated at present."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Pupil of the poet and musician Orpheus. The latter was the legendary founder of the Orphic religion that flourished in 6th-century B.C.E. Greece and later declined.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Greek rhetoricians, often criticized because of their reputed emphasis on winning arguments rather than on truth or knowledge.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Empedocles' writings (medical and scientific treatises in verse) have survived only in fragments.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Johann Faustus (ca. 1480–ca. 1540), a German teacher and magician who became the subject of many stories and folktales, and later the hero of the plays by Christopher Marlowe (1604) and Goethe (1808–32).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See Aristotle's *Poetics,* especially 1, 2, 4, 7, 14.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From *Theogony* 52–56, by the Greek poet Hesiod (ca. 700 B.C.E.).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: J. C. F. von Schiller's "On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy," prefatory essay to *The Bride of Messina* (1803). Schiller (1759–1805), German poet, playwright, and critic; see *Friedrich Schiller's Works* (1903) 8.224.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In the *Spectator* of April 2nd, 1853. The words quoted were not used with reference to poems of mine [*Arnold's note*]. According to Arnold, the "intelligent critic" was R. S. Rintoul, editor of the *Spectator.*Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Compare with Aristotle's *Poetics* 6.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Perhaps alluding to poems such as Tennyson's *The Princess* (1847) and Alexander Smith's *Life Drama* (1853) or to the modern novel.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Long poems by Goethe (1797), Byron (1818), Alphonse-Marie-Louis de Lamartine (1836), and William Wordsworth (1814), respectively.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: See Virgil's *Aeneid,* book 4. *Oresteia*: a trilogy of plays by Aeschylus that tells the story of Agamemnon's murder by his wife, Clytemnestra, and the vengeance taken by their son, Orestes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The son of a legendary Greek hero, who, like Orestes, avenged his father's death by killing his mother. He was the subject of several Greek plays now lost. Merope, queen of Messene in Greece, appears in plays by Euripides and in Arnold's own play *Merope* (1858).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Terrifying, awe-inspiring.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Aeschylus's *Persians* (472 B.C.E.) portrays the Greek victory over the Persian invaders, which had occurred only a few years before the play was produced.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Greek historian (ca. 200–ca. 118 B.C.E.).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Greek writer of comedies (ca. 342–ca. 292 B.C.E.).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: *North British Review* 19 (August 1853): 180 (U.S. ed.). Arnold seems not to have noticed that Goethe (a critic he revered) had been cited earlier in the article as the authority for this critical generalization.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: J. Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* January 3, 1830.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the essay "Concerning the So-called Dilettantism" (1799) in his *Werke* (1833) 44.262–63.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  Compare with Arnold's letter to Clough (October 28, 1852):

  > More and more I feel that the difference between a mature and a youthful age of the world compels the poetry of the former to use great plainness of speech . . . and that Keats and Shelley were on a false track when they set themselves to reproduce the exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and the felicity, of the Elizabethan poets.

Return to reference 4

- Note 5: He says everything he wishes to, but unfortunately he has nothing to say (French). A comment about Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), whose emphasis on style was severely criticized by Arnold in his late essay "Wordsworth" (1888).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the *North British Review* 19 (August 1853): 172–74, John Keats's *Endymion* (1818) is twice linked with Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590) as "leisurely compositions of the sweet sensuous order."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Well-judged, fitting.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: By Boccaccio (1353): fourth day, fifth story.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* (1838–39), chap. 23, by the historian Henry Hallam (1779–1859).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: F. P. G. Guizot (1787–1874), French historian, discusses Shakespeare's sonnets in his *Shakespeare et Son Temps* (1852).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: It is hard to be good (Greek); an aphorism of the statesman and sage Pittacus (ca. 650–570 B.C.E.).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: B. G. Niebuhr (1776–1831), German historian. Both writers felt that their own age had added little to the store of great literature.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The gods frighten me, and [having] Jupiter as an enemy (Latin); Virgil's *Aeneid* 12.894–95. Turnus, a warrior abandoned by the gods, is replying to Aeneas, who has taunted him with being afraid.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: See "Concerning the So-called Dilettantism" (1799) in his *Werke* (1833), 44.281.Return to reference 5

From Culture and Anarchy[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Arnold began *Culture and Anarchy* in the context of the turbulent political debate that preceded the passage of the second Reform Bill in 1867. The political climate seemed to some to threaten anarchy, to which Arnold opposed culture. A characteristic quality of the cultured state of mind is summed up, for his purposes, in his formula "sweetness and light," a phrase suggesting reasonableness of temper and intellectual insight. Arnold derived the phrase from a fable contrasting the spider with the bee in Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books* (1704). The spider (representing a narrow, self-centered, and uncultured mind) spins out of itself "nothing at all but flybane and cobweb." The bee (representing a cultured mind that has drawn nourishment from the humanist tradition) ranges far and wide and makes in its hive honey and also wax out of which candles may be made. Therefore, the bee, Swift says, furnishes humankind "with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light."

  The selections printed here illustrate aspects of Arnold's indictment of the middle classes for their lack of sweetness and light. The first and third expose the narrowness and dullness of middle-class Puritan religious institutions in both the 17th and 19th centuries. The second, "Doing As One Likes," shows the limitations of the middle-class political bias and the irresponsibility of laissez-faire economics. Here Arnold is most close to Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin.
  Return to reference 1

From *Chapter 1. Sweetness and Light*

The impulse of the English race towards moral development and self-conquest has nowhere so powerfully manifested itself as in Puritanism. Nowhere has Puritanism found so adequate an expression as in the religious organization of the Independents.[2] The modern Independents have a newspaper, the *Nonconformist*, written with great sincerity and ability. The motto, the standard, the profession of faith which this organ of theirs carries aloft, is: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." There is sweetness and light, and an ideal of complete harmonious human perfection! One need not go to culture and poetry to find language to judge it. Religion, with its instinct for perfection, supplies language to judge it, language, too, which is in our mouths every day. "Finally, be of one mind, united in feeling," says St. Peter.[3] There is an ideal which judges the Puritan ideal: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion!" And religious organizations like this are what people believe in, rest in, would give their lives for! Such, I say, is the wonderful virtue of even the beginnings of perfection, of having conquered even the plain faults of our animality, that the religious organization which has helped us to do it can seem to us something precious, salutary, and to be propagated, even when it wears such a brand of imperfection on its forehead as this. And men have got such a habit of giving to the language of religion a special application, of making it a mere jargon, that for the condemnation which religion itself passes on the shortcomings of their religious organizations they have no ear; they are sure to cheat themselves and to explain this condemnation away. They can only be reached by the criticism which culture, like poetry, speaking of language not to be sophisticated, and resolutely testing these organizations by the ideal of a human perfection complete on all sides, applies to them.

But men of culture and poetry, it will be said, are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to a harmonious perfection, in the subduing of the great obvious faults of

our animality, which it is the glory of these religious organizations to have helped us to subdue. True, they do often so fail. They have often been without the virtues as well as the faults of the Puritan; it has been one of their dangers that they so felt the Puritan's faults that they too much neglected the practice of his virtues. I will not, however, exculpate them at the Puritan's expense. They have often failed in morality, and morality is indispensable. And they have been punished for their failure, as the Puritan has been rewarded for his performance. They have been punished wherein they erred; but their ideal of beauty, of sweetness and light, and a human nature complete on all its sides, remains the true ideal of perfection still; just as the Puritan's ideal of perfection remains narrow and inadequate, although for what he did well he has been richly rewarded. Notwithstanding the mighty results of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage, they and their standard of perfection are rightly judged when we figure to ourselves Shakespeare or Virgil[4]—souls in whom sweetness and light, and all that in human nature is most humane, were eminent—accompanying them on their voyage, and think what intolerable company Shakespeare and Virgil would have found them! In the same way let us judge the religious organizations which we see all around us. Do not let us deny the good and the happiness which they have accomplished; but do not let us fail to see clearly that their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it—so I say with regard to the religious organizations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the *Nonconformist*—a life of jealousy of the Establishment,[5] disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light, and perfection!

Endnotes

- Note 2: A 17th-century Puritan group (of which Oliver Cromwell was an adherent), allied with the Congregationalists.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare with 1 Peter 3:8.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Roman poet (70–19 B.C.E.).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Church of England or the Established Church.Return to reference 5

From *Chapter 2. Doing As One Likes*

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When I began to speak of culture, I insisted on our bondage to machinery,[6] on our proneness to value machinery as an end in itself, without looking beyond it to the end for which alone, in truth, it is valuable. Freedom, I said, was one of those things which we thus worshiped in itself, without enough regarding the ends for which freedom is to be desired. In our common notions and talk about freedom, we eminently show our idolatry of machinery. Our prevalent notion is—and I quoted a number of instances to prove it—that it is a most happy and important thing for a man merely to be able to do as he likes. On what he is to do when he is thus free to do as he likes, we do not lay so much stress. Our familiar praise of the British Constitution under which we live, is that it is a system of checks—a system which stops and paralyzes any power in interfering with the free action of individuals. To this effect Mr. Bright,[7] who loves to walk in the old ways of the Constitution, said forcibly in one of his great speeches, what many other people are every day saying less forcibly, that the central idea of English life and politics is *the assertion of personal liberty.* Evidently this is so; but evidently, also, as feudalism, which with its ideas, and habits of subordination was for many centuries silently behind the British Constitution, dies out, and we are left with nothing but our system of checks, and our notion of its being the great right and happiness of an Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes, we are in danger of drifting towards anarchy. We have not the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of *the State*—the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals. We say, what is very true, that this notion is often made instrumental to tyranny; we say that a State is in reality made up of the individuals who compose it, and

that every individual is the best judge of his own interests. Our leading class is an aristocracy, and no aristocracy likes the notion of a State-authority greater than itself, with a stringent administrative machinery superseding the decorative inutilities of lord-lieutenancy, deputy-lieutenancy, and the *posse comitatus*,[8] which are all in its own hands. Our middle class, the great representative of trade and Dissent, with its maxims of every man for himself in business, every man for himself in religion, dreads a powerful administration which might somehow interfere with it; and besides, it has its own decorative inutilities of vestrymanship[9] and guardianship, which are to this class what lord-lieutenancy and the county magistracy are to the aristocratic class, and a stringent administration might either take these functions out of its hands, or prevent its exercising them in its own comfortable, independent manner, as at present.

Then as to our working class. This class, pressed constantly by the hard daily compulsion of material wants, is naturally the very center and stronghold of our national idea, that it is man's ideal right and felicity to do as he likes. I think I have somewhere related how M. Michelet[1] said to me of the people of France, that it was "a nation of barbarians civilized by the conscription." He meant that through their military service the idea of public duty and of discipline was brought to the mind of these masses, in other respects so raw and uncultivated. Our masses are quite as raw and uncultivated as the French; and so far from their having the idea of public duty and of discipline, superior to the individual's self-will, brought to their mind by a universal obligation of military service, such as that of the conscription—so far from their having this, the very idea of a conscription is so at variance with our English notion of the prime right and blessedness of doing as one likes, that I remember the manager of the Clay Cross works in Derbyshire told me during the Crimean war,[2] when our want of soldiers was much felt and some people were talking of a conscription, that sooner than submit to a conscription the population of that district would flee to the mines, and lead a sort of Robin Hood life underground.

For a long time, as I have said, the strong feudal habits of subordination and deference continued to tell upon the working class. The modern spirit has now almost entirely dissolved those habits, and the anarchical tendency of our worship of freedom in and for itself, of our superstitious faith, as I say, in machinery, is becoming very manifest. More and more, because of this our blind faith in machinery, because of our want of light to enable us to look beyond machinery to the end for which machinery is valuable, this and that man, and this and that body of men, all over the country, are beginning to assert and put in practice an Englishman's right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes.[3] All this, I say, tends to anarchy; and though a number of excellent people, and particularly my friends of the Liberal or progressive party, as they call themselves, are kind enough to reassure us by saying that these are trifles, that a few transient outbreaks of rowdyism signify nothing, that our system of liberty is one which itself cures all the evils which it works, that the educated and intelligent classes stand in overwhelming strength and majestic repose, ready, like our military force in riots, to act at a moment's notice—yet one finds that one's Liberal friends generally say this because they have such faith in themselves and their nostrums, when they shall return, as the public welfare requires, to place and power. But this faith of theirs one cannot exactly share, when one has so long had them and their nostrums at work, and see that they have not prevented our coming to our present embarrassed condition. And one finds, also, that the outbreaks of rowdyism tend to become less and less of trifles, to become more frequent rather than less frequent; and that meanwhile our educated and intelligent classes remain in their majestic repose, and somehow or other, whatever happens, their overwhelming strength, like our military force in riots, never does act.

How indeed, *should* their overwhelming strength act, when the man who gives an inflammatory lecture, or breaks down the park railings, or invades a Secretary of State's office, is only following an

Englishman's impulse to do as he likes; and our own conscience tells us that we ourselves have always regarded this impulse as something primary and sacred? Mr. Murphy[4] lectures at Birmingham, and showers on the Catholic population of that town "words," says the Home Secretary, "only fit to be addressed to thieves or murderers." What then? Mr. Murphy has his own reasons of several kinds. He suspects the Roman Catholic Church of designs upon Mrs. Murphy; and he says if mayors and magistrates do not care for their wives and daughters, he does. But, above all, he is doing as he likes; or, in worthier language, asserting his personal liberty. "I will carry out my lectures if they walk over my body as a dead corpse, and I say to the Mayor of Birmingham that he is my servant while I am in Birmingham, and as my servant he must do his duty and protect me." Touching and beautiful words, which find a sympathetic chord in every British bosom! The moment it is plainly put before us that a man is asserting his personal liberty, we are half disarmed; because we are believers in freedom, and not in some dream of a right reason to which the assertion of our freedom is to be subordinated. Accordingly, the Secretary of State had to say that although the lecturer's language was "only fit to be addressed to thieves or murderers," yet, "I do not think he is to be deprived, I do not think that anything I have said could justify the inference that he is to be deprived, of the right of protection in a place built by him for the purpose of these lectures; because the language was not language which afforded grounds for a criminal prosecution." No, nor to be silenced by Mayor, or Home Secretary, or any administrative authority on earth, simply on their notion of what is discreet and reasonable! This is in perfect consonance with our public opinion, and with our national love for the assertion of personal liberty.

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Endnotes

- Note 6: Arnold uses this word to signify systems of operation and organization, not mechanized apparatus.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: John Bright (1811–1889), self-made businessman who became a noted orator and politician.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Power of the county (Latin); a feudal method of enforcing law by local authorities instead of by agencies of the central government.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A vestryman is an appointed member on a local church council.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Jules Michelet (1798–1874), French historian.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A war (1854–56) in which Britain joined France, Sardinia, and Turkey in fighting against Russia in Ukraine.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A reference to the riots of 1866 in which a London mob demolished the iron railings enclosing Hyde Park.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An orator whose inflammatory anti-Catholic public speech "The Errors of the Roman Church" led to rioting in Birmingham and other cities in 1867.Return to reference 4

From *Chapter 5. Porro Unum Est Necessarium*[5]

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Sweetness and light evidently have to do with the bent or side in humanity which we call Hellenic. Greek intelligence has obviously for its essence the instinct for what Plato[6] calls the true, firm, intelligible law of things; the law of light, of seeing things as they are. Even in the natural sciences, where the Greeks had not time and means adequately to apply this instinct, and where we have gone a great deal further than they did, it is this instinct which is the root of the whole matter and the ground of all our success; and this instinct the world has mainly learnt of the Greeks, inasmuch as they are humanity's most signal manifestation of it. Greek art, again, Greek beauty, have their root in the same impulse to see things as they really are, inasmuch as Greek art and beauty rest on fidelity to nature—the *best* nature—and on a delicate discrimination of what this best nature is. To say we work for sweetness and light, then, is only another way of saying that we work for Hellenism. But, oh! cry many people, sweetness and light are not enough; you must put strength or energy along with them, and make a kind of trinity of strength, sweetness and light, and then, perhaps, you may do some good. That is to say, we are to join Hebraism, strictness of the moral conscience, and manful walking by the best light we have, together with Hellenism, inculcate both, and rehearse[7] the praises of both.

Or, rather, we may praise both in conjunction, but we must be careful to praise Hebraism most. "Culture," says an acute, though somewhat rigid critic, Mr. Sidgwick,[8] "diffuses sweetness and light. I do not undervalue these blessings, but religion gives fire and strength, and the world wants[9] fire and strength even more than sweetness and light." By religion, let me explain, Mr. Sidgwick here means particularly that Puritanism on the insufficiency of which I have been commenting and to which he says I am unfair. Now, no doubt, it is possible to be a fanatical partisan of light and the

instincts which push us to it, a fanatical enemy of strictness of moral conscience and the instincts which push us to it. A fanaticism of this sort deforms and vulgarizes the well-known work, in some respects so remarkable, of the late Mr. Buckle.[1] Such a fanaticism carries its own mark with it, in lacking sweetness; and its own penalty, in that, lacking sweetness, it comes in the end to lack light too. And the Greeks—the great exponents of humanity's bent for sweetness and light united, of its perception that the truth of things must be at the same time beauty—singularly escaped the fanaticism which we moderns, whether we Hellenize or whether we Hebraize, are so apt to show. They arrived—though failing, as has been said, to give adequate practical satisfaction to the claims of man's moral side—at the idea of a comprehensive adjustment of the claims of both the sides in man, the moral as well as the intellectual, of a full estimate of both, and of a reconciliation of both; an idea which is philosophically of the greatest value, and the best of lessons for us moderns. So we ought to have no difficulty in conceding to Mr. Sidgwick that manful walking by the best light one has—fire and strength as he calls it—has its high value as well as culture, the endeavor to see things in their truth and beauty, the pursuit of sweetness and light. But whether at this or that time, and to this or that set of persons, one ought to insist most on the praises of fire and strength, or on the praises of sweetness and light, must depend, one would think, on the circumstances and needs of that particular time and those particular persons. And all that we have been saying, and indeed any glance at the world around us, shows that with us, with the most respectable and strongest part of us, the ruling force is now, and long has been, a Puritan force—the care for fire and strength, strictness of conscience, Hebraism, rather than the care for sweetness and light, spontaneity of consciousness, Hellenism.

Well, then, what is the good of our now rehearsing the praises of fire and strength to ourselves, who dwell too exclusively on them already? When Mr. Sidgwick says so broadly, that the world wants fire and strength even more than sweetness and light, is he not carried away by a turn for broad generalization? does he not forget

that the world is not all of one piece, and every piece with the same needs at the same time? It may be true that the Roman world at the beginning of our era, or Leo the Tenth's Court at the time of the Reformation, or French society in the eighteenth century,[2] needed fire and strength even more than sweetness and light. But can it be said that the Barbarians who overran the empire needed fire and strength even more than sweetness and light; or that the Puritans needed them more; or that Mr. Murphy, the Birmingham lecturer, and the Rev. W. Cattle[3] and his friends, need them more?

The Puritan's great danger is that he imagines himself in possession of a rule telling him the *unum necessarium,* or one thing needful, and that he then remains satisfied with a very crude conception of what this rule really is and what it tells him, thinks he has now knowledge and henceforth needs only to act, and, in this dangerous state of assurance and self-satisfaction, proceeds to give full swing to a number of the instincts of his ordinary self. Some of the instincts of his ordinary self he has, by the help of his rule of life, conquered; but others which he has not conquered by this help he is so far from perceiving to need subjugation, and to be instincts of an inferior self, that he even fancies it to be his right and duty, in virtue of having conquered a limited part of himself, to give unchecked swing to the remainder. He is, I say, a victim of Hebraism, of the tendency to cultivate strictness of conscience rather than spontaneity of consciousness. And what he wants is a larger conception of human nature, showing him the number of other points at which his nature must come to its best, besides the points which he himself knows and thinks of. There is no *unum necessarium,* or one thing needful, which can free human nature from the obligation of trying to come to its best at all these points. The real *unum necessarium* for us is to come to our best at all points. Instead of our "one thing needful," justifying in us vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence—our vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence, are really so many touchstones[4] which try our one thing needful, and which prove that in the state, at any rate, in which we ourselves have it, it is not all we want. And as the force

which encourages us to stand staunch and fast by the rule and ground we have is Hebraism, so the force which encourages us to go back upon this rule, and to try the very ground on which we appear to stand, is Hellenism—a turn for giving our consciousness free play and enlarging its range. And what I say is, not that Hellenism is always for everybody more wanted than Hebraism, but that for the Rev. W. Cattle at this particular moment, and for the great majority of us his fellow countrymen, it is more wanted.

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1868, 1869

Endnotes

- Note 5: But one thing is needful (Latin; Luke 10.42). This chapter develops a contrast established in chap. 4 between *Hebraism* (Puritan morality and energetic devotion to work) and *Hellenism* (cultivation of the aesthetic and intellectual understanding of life). The Puritan middle classes, according to Arnold, think that the "one thing needful" is the Hebraic form of virtue.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Greek philosopher (ca. 427–ca. 347 B.C.E.).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Repeat.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900), philosopher whose article on Arnold appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* (Aug. 1867).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lacks.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862), author of *A History of Civilization* (1857–61).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Societies representing an excess of sophisticated worldliness as at the courts of a Roman emperor such as Nero (54–68 C.E.) or of Pope Leo X (1513–21) or Louis XV (1715–74), respectively.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A Nonconformist clergyman who was chairman of the anti-Catholic meeting addressed by Murphy in 1867 (see chap. 2, "Doing As One Likes," p. 587).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: For the importance to Arnold of the concept of the touchstone—a succinct instance or standard by which to judge other materials—see also "The Study of Poetry."Return to reference 4

Literature and Science[1]

Practical people talk with a smile of Plato and of his absolute ideas: and it is impossible to deny that Plato's ideas do often seem unpractical and unpracticable, and especially when one views them in connection with the life of a great work-a-day world like the United States. The necessary staple of the life of such a world Plato regards with disdain; handicraft and trade and the working professions he regards with disdain; but what becomes of the life of an industrial modern community if you take handicraft and trade and the working professions out of it? The base mechanic arts and handicrafts, says Plato, bring about a natural weakness in the principle of excellence in a man, so that he cannot govern the ignoble growths in him, but nurses them, and cannot understand fostering any other. Those who exercise such arts and trades, as they have their bodies, he says, marred by their vulgar businesses, so they have their souls, too, bowed and broken by them. And if one of these uncomely people has a mind to seek self-culture and philosophy, Plato compares him to a bald little tinker, who has scraped together money, and has got his release from service, and has had a bath, and bought a new coat, and is rigged out like a bridegroom about to marry the daughter of his master who has fallen into poor and helpless estate.[2]

Nor do the working professions fare any better than trade at the hands of Plato. He draws for us an inimitable picture of the working lawyer, and of his life of bondage; he shows how this bondage from his youth up has stunted and warped him, and made him small and crooked of soul, encompassing him with difficulties which he is not man enough to rely on justice and truth as means to encounter, but has recourse, for help out of them, to falsehood and wrong. And so, says Plato, this poor creature is bent and broken, and grows up from

boy to man without a particle of soundness in him, although exceedingly smart and clever in his own esteem.[3]

One cannot refuse to admire the artist who draws these pictures. But we say to ourselves that his ideas show the influence of a primitive and obsolete order of things, when the warrior caste and the priestly caste were alone in honor, and the humble work of the world was done by slaves. We have now changed all that; the modern majesty consists in work, as Emerson declares;[4] and in work, we may add, principally of such plain and dusty kind as the work of cultivators of the ground, handicraftsmen, men of trade and business, men of the working professions. Above all is this true in a great industrious community such as that of the United States.

Now education, many people go on to say, is still mainly governed by the ideas of men like Plato, who lived when the warrior caste and the priestly or philosophical class were alone in honor, and the really useful part of the community were slaves. It is an education fitted for persons of leisure in such a community. This education passed from Greece and Rome to the feudal communities of Europe, where also the warrior caste and the priestly caste were alone held in honor, and where the really useful and working part of the community, though not nominally slaves as in the pagan world, were practically not much better off than slaves, and not more seriously regarded. And how absurd it is, people end by saying, to inflict this education upon an industrious modern community, where very few indeed are persons of leisure, and the mass to be considered has not leisure, but is bound, for its own great good, and for the great good of the world at large, to plain labor and to industrial pursuits, and the education in question tends necessarily to make men dissatisfied with these pursuits and unfitted for them!

That is what is said. So far I must defend Plato, as to plead that his view of education and studies is in the general, as it seems to me, sound enough, and fitted for all sorts and conditions of men, whatever their pursuits may be. "An intelligent man," says Plato, "will prize those studies which result in his soul getting soberness, righteousness, and wisdom, and will less value the others."[5] I cannot

consider *that* a bad description of the aim of education, and of the motives which should govern us in the choice of studies, whether we are preparing ourselves for a hereditary seat in the English House of Lords or for the pork trade in Chicago.

Still I admit that Plato's world was not ours, that his scorn of trade and handicraft is fantastic,[6] that he had no conception of a great industrial community such as that of the United States, and that such a community must and will shape its education to suit its own needs. If the usual education handed down to it from the past does not suit it, it will certainly before long drop this and try another. The usual education in the past has been mainly literary. The question is whether the studies which were long supposed to be the best for all of us are practically the best now; whether others are not better. The tyranny of the past, many think, weighs on us injuriously in the predominance given to letters in education. The question is raised whether, to meet the needs of our modern life, the predominance ought not now to pass from letters to science; and naturally the question is nowhere raised with more energy than here in the United States. The design of abasing what is called "mere literary instruction and education," and of exalting what is called "sound, extensive, and practical scientific knowledge," is, in this intensely modern world of the United States, even more perhaps than in Europe, a very popular design, and makes great and rapid progress.

I am going to ask whether the present movement for ousting letters from their old predominance in education, and for transferring the predominance in education to the natural sciences, whether this brisk and flourishing movement ought to prevail, and whether it is likely that in the end it really will prevail. An objection may be raised which I will anticipate. My own studies have been almost wholly in letters, and my visits to the field of the natural sciences have been very slight and inadequate, although those sciences have always strongly moved my curiosity. A man of letters, it will perhaps be said, is not competent to discuss the comparative merits of letters and natural science as means of education. To this objection I reply, first

of all, that his incompetence, if he attempts the discussion but is really incompetent for it, will be abundantly visible; nobody will be taken in; he will have plenty of sharp observers and critics to save mankind from that danger. But the line I am going to follow is, as you will soon discover, so extremely simple, that perhaps it may be followed without failure even by one who for a more ambitious line of discussion would be quite incompetent.

Some of you may possibly remember a phrase of mine which has been the object of a good deal of comment; an observation to the effect that in our culture, the aim being *to know ourselves and the world*, we have, as the means to this end, *to know the best which has been thought and said in the world.*[7] A man of science, who is also an excellent writer and the very prince of debaters, Professor Huxley,[8] in a discourse at the opening of Sir Josiah Mason's college at Birmingham, laying hold of this phrase, expanded it by quoting some more words of mine, which are these: "The civilized world is to be regarded as now being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have for their proper outfit a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another. Special local and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this program."

Now on my phrase, thus enlarged, Professor Huxley remarks that when I speak of the above-mentioned knowledge as enabling us to know ourselves and the world, I assert *literature* to contain the materials which suffice for thus making us know ourselves and the world. But it is not by any means clear, says he, that after having learnt all which ancient and modern literatures have to tell us, we have laid a sufficiently broad and deep foundation for that criticism of life, that knowledge of ourselves and the world, which constitutes culture. On the contrary, Professor Huxley declares that he finds himself "wholly unable to admit that either nations or individuals will really advance, if their outfit draws nothing from the stores of

physical science. An army without weapons of precision, and with no particular base of operations, might more hopefully enter upon a campaign on the Rhine, than a man, devoid of a knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, upon a criticism of life."

This shows how needful it is for those who are to discuss any matter together, to have a common understanding as to the sense of the terms they employ—how needful, and how difficult. What Professor Huxley says, implies just the reproach which is so often brought against the study of belles-lettres, as they are called: that the study is an elegant one, but slight and ineffectual; a smattering of Greek and Latin and other ornamental things, of little use for anyone whose object is to get at truth, and to be a practical man. So, too, M. Renan[9] talks of the "superficial humanism" of a school course which treats us as if we were all going to be poets, writers, preachers, orators, and he opposes this humanism to positive science, or the critical search after truth. And there is always a tendency in those who are remonstrating against the predominance of letters in education, to understand by letters belles-lettres, and by belles-lettres a superficial humanism, the opposite of science or true knowledge.

But when we talk of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, for instance, which is the knowledge people have called the humanities, I for my part mean a knowledge which is something more than a superficial humanism, mainly decorative. "I call all teaching *scientific,*" says Wolf,[1] the critic of Homer, "which is systematically laid out and followed up to its original sources. For example: a knowledge of classical antiquity is scientific when the remains of classical antiquity are correctly studied in the original languages." There can be no doubt that Wolf is perfectly right; that all learning is scientific which is systematically laid out and followed up to its original sources, and that a genuine humanism is scientific.

When I speak of knowing Greek and Roman antiquity, therefore, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, I mean more than a knowledge of so much vocabulary, so much grammar, so many portions of authors in the Greek and Latin languages, I mean

knowing the Greeks and Romans, and their life and genius,[2] and what they were and did in the world; what we get from them, and what is its value. That, at least, is the ideal; and when we talk of endeavoring to know Greek and Roman antiquity, as a help to knowing ourselves and the world, we mean endeavoring so to know them as to satisfy this ideal, however much we may still fall short of it.

The same also as to knowing our own and other modern nations, with the like aim of getting to understand ourselves and the world. To know the best that has been thought and said by the modern nations, is to know, says Professor Huxley, "only what modern *literatures* have to tell us; it is the criticism of life contained in modern literature." And yet "the distinctive character of our times," he urges, "lies in the vast and constantly increasing part which is played by natural knowledge." And how, therefore, can a man, devoid of knowledge of what physical science has done in the last century, enter hopefully upon a criticism of modern life?

Let us, I say, be agreed about the meaning of the terms we are using. I talk of knowing the best which has been thought and uttered in the world; Professor Huxley says this means knowing *literature.* Literature is a large word; it may mean everything written with letters or printed in a book. Euclid's *Elements* and Newton's *Principia*[3] are thus literature. All knowledge that reaches us through books is literature. But by literature Professor Huxley means belles-lettres. He means to make me say, that knowing the best which has been thought and said by the modern nations is knowing their belles-lettres and no more. And this is no sufficient equipment, he argues, for a criticism of modern life. But as I do not mean, by knowing ancient Rome, knowing merely more or less of Latin belles-lettres, and taking no account of Rome's military, and political, and legal, and administrative work in the world; and as, by knowing ancient Greece, I understand knowing her as the giver of Greek art, and the guide to a free and right use of reason and to scientific method, and the founder of our mathematics and physics and astronomy and biology—I understand knowing her as all this, and

not merely knowing certain Greek poems, and histories, and treatises, and speeches—so as to the knowledge of modern nations also. By knowing modern nations, I mean not merely knowing their belles-lettres, but knowing also what has been done by such men as Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Darwin. "Our ancestors learned," says Professor Huxley, "that the earth is the center of the visible universe, and that man is the cynosure of things terrestrial; and more especially was it inculcated that the course of nature had no fixed order, but that it could be, and constantly was, altered." "But for us now," continues Professor Huxley, "the notions of the beginning and the end of the world entertained by our forefathers are no longer credible. It is very certain that the earth is not the chief body in the material universe, and that the world is not subordinated to man's use. It is even more certain that nature is the expression of a definite order, with which nothing interferes." "And yet," he cries, "the purely classical education advocated by the representatives of the humanists in our day gives no inkling of all this."

In due place and time I will just touch upon that vexed question of classical education; but at present the question is as to what is meant by knowing the best which modern nations have thought and said. It is not knowing their belles-lettres merely which is meant. To know Italian belles-lettres is not to know Italy, and to know English belles-lettres is not to know England. Into knowing Italy and England there comes a great deal more, Galileo and Newton amongst it. The reproach of being a superficial humanism, a tincture of belles-lettres, may attach rightly enough to some other disciplines; but to the particular discipline recommended when I proposed knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world, it does not apply. In that best I certainly include what in modern times has been thought and said by the great observers and knowers of nature.

There is, therefore, really no question between Professor Huxley and me as to whether knowing the great results of the modern scientific study of nature is not required as a part of our culture, as well as knowing the products of literature and art. But to follow the processes by which those results are reached, ought, say the friends

of physical science, to be made the staple of education for the bulk of mankind. And here there does arise a question between those whom Professor Huxley calls with playful sarcasm "the Levites of culture," and those whom the poor humanist is sometimes apt to regard as its Nebuchadnezzars.[4]

The great results of the scientific investigation of nature we are agreed upon knowing, but how much of our study are we bound to give to the processes by which those results are reached? The results have their visible bearing on human life. But all the processes, too, all the items of fact, by which those results are reached and established, are interesting. All knowledge is interesting to a wise man, and the knowledge of nature is interesting to all men. It is very interesting to know, that, from the albuminous white of the egg, the chick in the egg gets the materials for its flesh, bones, blood, and feathers; while, from the fatty yolk of the egg, it gets the heat and energy which enable it at length to break its shell and begin the world. It is less interesting, perhaps, but still it is interesting, to know that when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water. Moreover, it is quite true that the habit of dealing with facts, which is given by the study of nature, is, as the friends of physical science praise it for being, an excellent discipline. The appeal, in the study of nature, is constantly to observation and experiment; not only is it said that the thing is so, but we can be made to see that it is so. Not only does a man tell us that when a taper burns the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water, as a man may tell us, if he likes, that Charon[5] is punting his ferry boat on the river Styx, or that Victor Hugo is a sublime poet, or Mr. Gladstone[6] the most admirable of statesmen; but we are made to see that the conversion into carbonic acid and water does actually happen. This reality of natural knowledge it is, which makes the friends of physical science contrast it, as a knowledge of things, with the humanist's knowledge, which is, say they, a knowledge of words. And hence Professor Huxley is moved to lay it down that, "for the purpose of attaining real culture, an exclusively scientific education is at least as effectual as an exclusively literary education." And a

certain President of the Section for Mechanical Science in the British Association is, in Scripture phrase, "very bold,"[7] and declares that if a man, in his mental training, "has substituted literature and history for natural science, he has chosen the less useful alternative." But whether we go these lengths or not, we must all admit that in natural science the habit gained of dealing with facts is a most valuable discipline, and that everyone should have some experience of it.

More than this, however, is demanded by the reformers. It is proposed to make the training in natural science the main part of education, for the great majority of mankind at any rate. And here, I confess, I part company with the friends of physical science, with whom up to this point I have been agreeing. In differing from them, however, I wish to proceed with the utmost caution and diffidence. The smallness of my own acquaintance with the disciplines of natural science is ever before my mind, and I am fearful of doing these disciplines an injustice. The ability and pugnacity of the partisans of natural science make them formidable persons to contradict. The tone of tentative inquiry, which befits a being of dim faculties and bounded knowledge, is the tone I would wish to take and not to depart from. At present it seems to me, that those who are for giving to natural knowledge, as they call it, the chief place in the education of the majority of mankind, leave one important thing out of their account: the constitution of human nature. But I put this forward on the strength of some facts not at all recondite, very far from it; facts capable of being stated in the simplest possible fashion, and to which, if I so state them, the man of science will, I am sure, be willing to allow their due weight.

Deny the facts altogether, I think, he hardly can. He can hardly deny, that when we set ourselves to enumerate the powers which go to the building up of human life, and say that they are the power of conduct, the power of intellect and knowledge, the power of beauty, and the power of social life and manners—he can hardly deny that this scheme, though drawn in rough and plain lines enough, and not pretending to scientific exactness, does yet give a fairly true

representation of the matter. Human nature is built up by these powers; we have the need for them all. When we have rightly met and adjusted the claims of them all, we shall then be in a fair way for getting soberness and righteousness, with wisdom. This is evident enough, and the friends of physical science would admit it.

But perhaps they may not have sufficiently observed another thing: namely, that the several powers just mentioned are not isolated, but there is, in the generality of mankind, a perpetual tendency to relate them one to another in divers ways. With one such way of relating them I am particularly concerned now. Following our instinct for intellect and knowledge, we acquire pieces of knowledge; and presently, in the generality of men, there arises the desire to relate these pieces of knowledge to our sense for conduct, to our sense for beauty—and there is weariness and dissatisfaction if the desire is balked. Now in this desire lies, I think, the strength of that hold which letters have upon us.

All knowledge is, as I said just now, interesting; and even items of knowledge which from the nature of the case cannot well be related, but must stand isolated in our thoughts, have their interest. Even lists of exceptions have their interest. If we are studying Greek accents, it is interesting to know that *pais* and *pas,* and some other monosyllables of the same form of declension, do not take the circumflex upon the last syllable of the genitive plural, but vary, in this respect, from the common rule. If we are studying physiology, it is interesting to know that the pulmonary artery carries dark blood and the pulmonary vein carries bright blood, departing in this respect from the common rule for the division of labor between the veins and the arteries. But everyone knows how we seek naturally to combine the pieces of our knowledge together, to bring them under general rules, to relate them to principles; and how unsatisfactory and tiresome it would be to go on forever learning lists of exceptions, or accumulating items of fact which must stand isolated.

Well, that same need of relating our knowledge, which operates here within the sphere of our knowledge itself, we shall find operating, also, outside that sphere. We experience, as we go on

learning and knowing—the vast majority of us experience—the need of relating what we have learnt and known to the sense which we have in us for conduct, to the sense which we have in us for beauty.

A certain Greek prophetess of Mantineia in Arcadia, Diotima by name, once explained to the philosopher Socrates that love, and impulse, and bent of all kinds, is, in fact, nothing else but the desire in men that good should forever be present to them. This desire for good, Diotima assured Socrates, is our fundamental desire, of which fundamental desire every impulse in us is only some one particular form.[8] And therefore this fundamental desire it is, I suppose—this desire in men that good should be forever present to them—which acts in us when we feel the impulse for relating our knowledge to our sense for conduct and to our sense for beauty. At any rate, with men in general the instinct exists. Such is human nature. And the instinct, it will be admitted, is innocent, and human nature is preserved by our following the lead of its innocent instincts. Therefore, in seeking to gratify this instinct in question, we are following the instinct of self-preservation in humanity.

But, no doubt, some kinds of knowledge cannot be made to directly serve the instinct in question, cannot be directly related to the sense for beauty, to the sense for conduct. These are instrument knowledges; they lead on to other knowledges, which can. A man who passes his life in instrument knowledges is a specialist. They may be invaluable as instruments to something beyond, for those who have the gift thus to employ them; and they may be disciplines in themselves wherein it is useful for everyone to have some schooling. But it is inconceivable that the generality of men should pass all their mental life with Greek accents or with formal logic. My friend Professor Sylvester, who is one of the first[9] mathematicians in the world, holds transcendental doctrines as to the virtue of mathematics, but those doctrines are not for common men. In the very Senate House and heart of our English Cambridge[1] I once ventured, though not without an apology for my profaneness, to hazard the opinion that for the majority of mankind a little of mathematics, even, goes a long way. Of course this is quite

consistent with their being of immense importance as an instrument to something else; but it is the few who have the aptitude for thus using them, not the bulk of mankind.

The natural sciences do not, however, stand on the same footing with these instrument knowledges. Experience shows us that the generality of men will find more interest in learning that, when a taper burns, the wax is converted into carbonic acid and water, or in learning the explanation of the phenomenon of dew, or in learning how the circulation of the blood is carried on, than they find in learning that the genitive plural of *pais* and *pas* does not take the circumflex on the termination. And one piece of natural knowledge is added to another, and others are added to that, and at last we come to propositions so interesting as Mr. Darwin's famous proposition that "our ancestor was a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits."[2] Or we come to propositions of such reach and magnitude as those which Professor Huxley delivers, when he says that the notions of our forefathers about the beginning and the end of the world were all wrong, and that nature is the expression of a definite order with which nothing interferes.

Interesting, indeed, these results of science are, important they are, and we should all of us be acquainted with them. But what I now wish you to mark is, that we are still, when they are propounded to us and we receive them, we are still in the sphere of intellect and knowledge. And for the generality of men there will be found, I say, to arise, when they have duly taken in the proposition that their ancestor was "a hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits," there will be found to arise an invincible desire to relate this proposition to the sense in us for conduct, and to the sense in us for beauty. But this the men of science will not do for us, and will hardly even profess to do. They will give us other pieces of knowledge, other facts, about other animals and their ancestors, or about plants, or about stones, or about stars; and they may finally bring us to those great "general conceptions of the universe, which are forced upon us all," says

Professor Huxley, "by the progress of physical science." But still it will be *knowledge* only which they give us; knowledge not put for us into relation with our sense for conduct, our sense for beauty, and touched with emotion by being so put; not thus put for us, and therefore, to the majority of mankind, after a certain while, unsatisfying, wearying.

Not to the born naturalist, I admit. But what do we mean by a born naturalist? We mean a man in whom the zeal for observing nature is so uncommonly strong and eminent, that it marks him off from the bulk of mankind. Such a man will pass his life happily in collecting natural knowledge and reasoning upon it, and will ask for nothing, or hardly anything, more. I have heard it said that the sagacious and admirable naturalist whom we lost not very long ago, Mr. Darwin, once owned to a friend that for his part he did not experience the necessity for two things which most men find so necessary to them—religion and poetry; science and the domestic affections, he thought, were enough. To a born naturalist, I can well understand that this should seem so. So absorbing is his occupation with nature, so strong his love for his occupation, that he goes on acquiring natural knowledge and reasoning upon it, and has little time or inclination for thinking about getting it related to the desire in man for conduct, the desire in man for beauty. He relates it to them for himself as he goes along, so far as he feels the need; and he draws from the domestic affections all the additional solace necessary. But then Darwins are extremely rare. Another great and admirable master of natural knowledge, Faraday,[3] was a Sandemanian. That is to say, he related his knowledge to his instinct for conduct and to his instinct for beauty, by the aid of that respectable Scottish sectary, Robert Sandeman.[4] And so strong, in general, is the demand of religion and poetry to have their share in a man, to associate themselves with his knowing, and to relieve and rejoice it, that, probably, for one man amongst us with the disposition to do as Darwin did in this respect, there are at least fifty with the disposition to do as Faraday.

Education lays hold upon us, in fact, by satisfying this demand. Professor Huxley holds up to scorn medieval education, with its neglect of the knowledge of nature, its poverty even of literary studies, its formal logic devoted to "showing how and why that which the Church said was true must be true." But the great medieval Universities were not brought into being, we may be sure, by the zeal for giving a jejune and contemptible education. Kings have been their nursing fathers, and queens have been their nursing mothers,[5] but not for this. The medieval Universities came into being, because the supposed knowledge, delivered by Scripture and the Church, so deeply engaged men's hearts, by so simply, easily, and powerfully relating itself to their desire for conduct, their desire for beauty. All other knowledge was dominated by this supposed knowledge and was subordinated to it, because of the surpassing strength of the hold which it gained upon the affections of men, by allying itself profoundly with their sense for conduct, their sense for beauty.

But now, says Professor Huxley, conceptions of the universe fatal to the notions held by our forefathers have been forced upon us by physical science. Grant to him that they are thus fatal, that the new conceptions must and will soon become current everywhere, and that everyone will finally perceive them to be fatal to the beliefs of our forefathers. The need of humane letters, as they are truly called, because they serve the paramount desire in men that good should be forever present to them—the need of humane letters, to establish a relation between the new conceptions, and our instinct for beauty, our instinct for conduct, is only the more visible. The Middle Age could do without humane letters, as it could do without the study of nature, because its supposed knowledge was made to engage its emotions so powerfully. Grant that the supposed knowledge disappears, its power of being made to engage the emotions will of course disappear along with it—but the emotions themselves, and their claim to be engaged and satisfied, will remain. Now if we find by experience that humane letters have an undeniable power of engaging the emotions, the importance of humane letters in a man's

training becomes not less, but greater, in proportion to the success of modern science in extirpating what it calls "medieval thinking."

Have humane letters, then, have poetry and eloquence, the power here attributed to them of engaging the emotions, and do they exercise it? And if they have it and exercise it, *how* do they exercise it, so as to exert an influence upon man's sense for conduct, his sense for beauty? Finally, even if they both can and do exert an influence upon the senses in question, how are they to relate to them the results—the modern results—of natural science? All these questions may be asked. First, have poetry and eloquence the power of calling out the emotions? The appeal is to experience. Experience shows that for the vast majority of men, for mankind in general, they have the power. Next, do they exercise it? They do. But then, *how* do they exercise it so as to affect man's sense for conduct, his sense for beauty? And this is perhaps a case for applying the Preacher's words: "Though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea, farther, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it."[6] Why should it be one thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say, "Patience is a virtue," and quite another thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with Homer,

τλητὸν γὰρ Μοῖραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν[7]—

"for an enduring heart have the destinies appointed to the children of men"? Why should it be one thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with the philosopher Spinoza, *Felicitas in eo consistit quod homo suum esse conservare potest*—"Man's happiness consists in his being able to preserve his own essence,"[8] and quite another thing, in its effect upon the emotions, to say with the Gospel, "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, forfeit himself?"[9] How does this difference of effect arise? I cannot tell, and I am not much concerned to know; the important thing is that it does arise, and that we can profit by it. But how, finally, are poetry and eloquence to exercise the power of relating the modern results of natural science to man's instinct for

conduct, his instinct for beauty? And here again I answer that I do not know *how* they will exercise it, but that they can and will exercise it I am sure. I do not mean that modern philosophical poets and modern philosophical moralists are to come and relate for us, in express terms, the results of modern scientific research to our instinct for conduct, our instinct for beauty. But I mean that we shall find, as a matter of experience, if we know the best that has been thought and uttered in the world, we shall find that the art and poetry and eloquence of men who lived, perhaps, long ago, who had the most limited natural knowledge, who had the most erroneous conceptions about many important matters, we shall find that this art, and poetry, and eloquence, have in fact not only the power of refreshing and delighting us, they have also the power—such is the strength and worth, in essentials, of their authors' criticism of life—they have a fortifying, and elevating, and quickening, and suggestive power, capable of wonderfully helping us to relate the results of modern science to our need for conduct, our need for beauty. Homer's conceptions of the physical universe were, I imagine, grotesque; but really, under the shock of hearing from modern science that "the world is not subordinated to man's use, and that man is not the cynosure of things terrestrial," I could, for my own part, desire no better comfort than Homer's line which I quoted just now,

τλητὸν γὰρ Mo4ραι θυμὸν θέσαν ἀνθρώποισιν—

"for an enduring heart have the destinies appointed to the children of men"!

And the more that men's minds are cleared, the more that the results of science are frankly accepted, the more that poetry and eloquence come to be received and studied as what in truth they really are—the criticism of life by gifted men, alive and active with extraordinary power at an unusual number of points—so much the more will the value of humane letters, and of art also, which is an utterance having a like kind of power with theirs, be felt and acknowledged, and their place in education be secured.

Let us therefore, all of us, avoid indeed as much as possible any invidious comparison between the merits of humane letters, as means of education, and the merits of the natural sciences. But when some President of a Section for Mechanical Science insists on making the comparison, and tells us that "he who in his training has substituted literature and history for natural science has chosen the less useful alternative," let us make answer to him that the student of humane letters only, will, at least, know also the great general conceptions brought in by modern physical science; for science, as Professor Huxley says, forces them upon us all. But the student of the natural sciences only, will, by our very hypothesis, know nothing of humane letters; not to mention that in setting himself to be perpetually accumulating natural knowledge, he sets himself to do what only specialists have in general the gift for doing genially. And so he will probably be unsatisfied, or at any rate incomplete, and even more incomplete than the student of humane letters only.

I once mentioned in a school report, how a young man in one of our English training colleges having to paraphrase the passage in *Macbeth* beginning,

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?[1]

turned this line into, "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" And I remarked what a curious state of things it would be, if every pupil of our national schools knew, let us say, that the moon is two thousand one hundred and sixty miles in diameter, and thought at the same time that a good paraphrase for

Can'st thou not minister to a mind diseased?

was, "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" If one is driven to choose, I think I would rather have a young person ignorant about the moon's diameter, but aware that "Can you not wait upon the lunatic?" is bad, than a young person whose education had been such as to manage things the other way.

Or to go higher than the pupils of our national schools. I have in my mind's eye a member of our British Parliament who comes to travel here in America, who afterwards relates his travels, and who shows a really masterly knowledge of the geology of this great country and of its mining capabilities, but who ends by gravely suggesting that the United States should borrow a prince from our Royal Family, and should make him their king, and should create a House of Lords of great landed proprietors after the pattern of ours; and then America, he thinks, would have her future happily and perfectly secured. Surely, in this case, the President of the Section for Mechanical Science would himself hardly say that our member of Parliament, by concentrating himself upon geology and mineralogy, and so on, and not attending to literature and history, had "chosen the more useful alternative."

If then there is to be separation and option between humane letters on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other, the great majority of mankind, all who have not exceptional and overpowering aptitudes for the study of nature, would do well, I cannot but think, to choose to be educated in humane letters rather than in the natural sciences. Letters will call out their being at more points, will make them live more.

I said that before I ended I would just touch on the question of classical education, and I will keep my word. Even if literature is to retain a large place in our education, yet Latin and Greek, say the friends of progress, will certainly have to go. Greek is the grand offender in the eyes of these gentlemen. The attackers of the established course of study think that against Greek, at any rate, they have irresistible arguments. Literature may perhaps be needed in education, they say; but why on earth should it be Greek literature? Why not French or German? Nay, "has not an Englishman models in his own literature of every kind of excellence?"[2] As before, it is not on any weak pleadings of my own that I rely for convincing the gainsayers; it is on the constitution of human nature itself, and on the instinct of self-preservation in humanity. The instinct for beauty is set in human nature, as surely as the instinct for

knowledge is set there, or the instinct for conduct. If the instinct for beauty is served by Greek literature and art as it is served by no other literature and art, we may trust to the instinct of self-preservation in humanity for keeping Greek as part of our culture. We may trust to it for even making the study of Greek more prevalent than it is now. Greek will come, I hope, some day to be studied more rationally than at present; but it will be increasingly studied as men increasingly feel the need in them for beauty, and how powerfully Greek art and Greek literature can serve this need. Women will again study Greek, as Lady Jane Grey[3] did; I believe that in that chain of forts, with which the fair host of the Amazons are now engirdling our English universities,[4] I find that here in America, in colleges like Smith College in Massachusetts, and Vassar College in the State of New York, and in the happy families of the mixed universities out West, they are studying it already.

Defuit una mihi symmetria prisca—"The antique symmetry was the one thing wanting to me," said Leonardo da Vinci; and he was an Italian. I will not presume to speak for the Americans, but I am sure that, in the Englishman, the want of this admirable symmetry of the Greeks is a thousand times more great and crying than in any Italian. The results of the want show themselves most glaringly, perhaps, in our architecture, but they show themselves, also, in all our art. *Fit details strictly combined, in view of a large general result nobly conceived;* that is just the beautiful *symmetria prisca* of the Greeks, and it is just where we English fail, where all our art fails. Striking ideas we have, and well-executed details we have; but that high symmetry which, with satisfying and delightful effect, combines them, we seldom or never have. The glorious beauty of the Acropolis at Athens did not come from single fine things stuck about on that hill, a statue here, a gateway there—no, it arose from all things being perfectly combined for a supreme total effect. What must not an Englishman feel about our deficiencies in this respect, as the sense for beauty, whereof this symmetry is an essential element, awakens and strengthens within him! what will not one day be his respect and desire for Greece and its *symmetria prisca,* when the

scales drop from his eyes as he walks the London streets, and he sees such a lesson in meanness as the Strand, for instance, in its true deformity! But here we are coming to our friend Mr. Ruskin's province,[5] and I will not intrude upon it, for he is its very sufficient guardian.

And so we at last find, it seems, we find flowing in favor of the humanities the natural and necessary stream of things, which seemed against them when we started. The "hairy quadruped furnished with a tail and pointed ears, probably arboreal in his habits," this good fellow carried hidden in his nature, apparently, something destined to develop into a necessity for humane letters. Nay, more; we seem finally to be even led to the further conclusion that our hairy ancestor carried in his nature, also, a necessity for Greek.

And therefore, to say the truth, I cannot really think that humane letters are in much actual danger of being thrust out from their leading place in education, in spite of the array of authorities against them at this moment. So long as human nature is what it is, their attractions will remain irresistible. As with Greek, so with letters generally: they will some day come, we may hope, to be studied more rationally, but they will not lose their place. What will happen will rather be that there will be crowded into education other matters besides, far too many; there will be, perhaps, a period of unsettlement and confusion and false tendency; but letters will not in the end lose their leading place. If they lose it for a time, they will get it back again. We shall be brought back to them by our wants and aspirations. And a poor humanist may possess his soul in patience, neither strive nor cry,[6] admit the energy and brilliancy of the partisans of physical science, and their present favor with the public, to be far greater than his own, and still have a happy faith that the nature of things works silently on behalf of the studies which he loves, and that, while we shall all have to acquaint ourselves with the great results reached by modern science, and to give ourselves as much training in its disciplines as we can conveniently carry, yet the majority of men will always require

humane letters; and so much the more, as they have the more and the greater results of science to relate to the need in man for conduct, and to the need in him for beauty.

1882, 1885

Endnotes

- Note 1: Delivered as a lecture during Arnold's tour of the United States in 1883 and published in *Discourses in America* (1885), this essay has become a classic contribution to a subject endlessly debated. Its main argument was summed up by Stuart P. Sherman: "If Arnold had said outright that the study of letters helps us to *bear* the grand results of science, he would not have been guilty of a superficial epigram; he would have spoken from the depths of his experience."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *Republic* 6.495.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *Republic* 3.405.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See "Literary Ethics," an address delivered at Dartmouth College in 1838 by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: *Republic* 9.591.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Unconvincing, fanciful.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: This phrase is taken from Arnold's essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), biologist, anthropologist, and public speaker on issues relating to scientific inquiry, is perhaps best remembered for his passionate defense of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Ernest Renan (1823–1892), French religious philosopher and archaeologist.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824), German scholar.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Characteristic spirit or excellence.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A comprehensive treatise on mathematics (ca. 300 B.C.E.) and a foundational work of modern physics (*The*

Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, 1687), respectively.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Huxley implies that the humanists are hidebound conservatives like the Levites, priests who were preoccupied with traditional ritual observances. Arnold implies that the scientists may be like Nebuchadnezzar, a Babylonian king who destroyed the temple of Jerusalem.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Greek mythology the boatman who conducted the souls of the dead across the river Styx.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), leader of the Liberal Party from 1868 to 1875 and from 1880 to 1894 and prime minister four times. Hugo (1802–1885), French poet and novelist.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Romans 10:20.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Plato's *Symposium* 201–7.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Foremost. James J. Sylvester (1814–1897), professor of mathematics at Johns Hopkins University and at Oxford.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In its original form "Literature and Science" had been delivered as a lecture at Cambridge University, where mathematics traditionally has been emphasized.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *The Descent of Man* (1871), chap. 21 (see p. 302).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Michael Faraday (1791–1867), British chemist.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Founder of a Scottish sect bearing his name (1718–1771). "Sectary": zealous member of a sect.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Isaiah 49:23.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ecclesiastes 8:17 [*Arnold's note*].Return to reference 6
- Note 7: *Iliad* 24.49 [*Arnold's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Ethics* (1677) 4.18.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Luke 9:25.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 5.3.42.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Arnold is here responding to Huxley's claim that training in science is better preparation for life than a classical education.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Reputed to be a learned scholar in Greek. Grey (1537–1554) was proclaimed queen of England in 1553 but was forced to abdicate the throne nine days later. She was executed by order of Queen Mary.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Colleges for women at Oxford and Cambridge.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In books such as *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), John Ruskin had criticized the "meanness" of Victorian architecture.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Matthew 12:19; "possess his soul in patience," Luke 21:9.Return to reference 6

Pre-Raphaelitism

Pre-Raphaelitism was more than a movement in nineteenth-century art. It was also a cultural attitude: a complex of taste, style, and belief. The movement began among a set of young artists studying painting at the Royal Academy in the late 1840s. In revolt against the compositional principles of the academic art of their day, which derived from the work of the Italian Renaissance painter Raphael (1483–1520), they came together in 1848 to form a secret society they named the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, signing their paintings with the mysterious initials "PRB." The leaders of the group were William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, all young at the time—twenty-one, nineteen, and twenty. Although the bright colors, foreshortened perspective, and medieval subjects of some of their early paintings suggest medieval models, they embraced such models because of their commitment to a new ideal of naturalism. Art since Raphael, they felt, paid more attention to conventional formulas of picture making; to find a purer naturalism, the artist needed to go back to the art before Raphael. In their pursuit of realism their strongest influence was John Ruskin. Hunt had read *Modern Painters* in 1847, and introduced it to his fellow artists. The Pre-Raphaelites aspired to paint directly from nature, working in the open air, often making extraordinary efforts to achieve a photographic fidelity of detail. To depict the nighttime landscape accurately for his religious painting of Christ, *The Light of the World*, Hunt constructed a straw hut in a farm orchard, where he worked by the light of the full moon.

As soon as they began to exhibit their paintings in 1849, the Pre-Raphaelites provoked energetic debate. To expound their ideas about art and to publish writing by themselves and their friends, they founded *The Germ*, the first journal ever published by an artistic group. (It was in *The Germ* that Rossetti's poem "The Blessed Damozel" originally appeared.) The controversy about their

work reached a peak in 1850, when John Everett Millais exhibited his painting *Christ in the House of His Parents*. Charles Dickens virulently attacked the painting in his journal, *Household Words*; the figures in the painting, he wrote, "might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received." Ruskin came to the defense, both in letters to the *Times* and in a pamphlet, *Pre-Raphaelitism.* The argument was essentially about realism: should the artist represent sacred subjects with naturalistic models? The Pre-Raphaelites' rendition of detail was equally controversial; their canvases were crowded with objects, each weighted with symbolic meaning and painted with photographic accuracy.

By 1853, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood had begun to disintegrate. "The P.R.B. is in its decadence," Christina Rossetti wrote in a whimsical sonnet. In 1853 Millais was elected to the Royal Academy against which he had rebelled; Hunt began a series of trips to the Holy Land to paint biblical scenes on location; and Rossetti, in his sister's words, shunned "the vulgar optic." However, other artists began to adopt their principles, and collectors started to acquire their work.

Meanwhile, Rossetti had turned to painting watercolors on medieval themes. His work attracted the admiration of two undergraduates at Oxford, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, who independently had developed an interest in all things medieval. Burne-Jones sought Rossetti out, and the three formed a partnership. In 1857 the three gained a commission to paint murals from the *Morte d'Arthur* in the Debating Society Hall of the Oxford Union. At Rossetti's urging, Morris and Burne-Jones rented a flat in Bloomsbury, which they began to decorate in medieval style, designing and making furniture, just as they imagined medieval artisans might do—a project that led Morris in 1861 to establish a firm to make handcrafted furniture, tapestries, wallpaper, fabric, and other decorative objects. Rossetti also encouraged Morris to write poetry, his sister Christina began to publish her work, and he himself started to publish again for the first time since the short-lived *Germ.*

While painting the Oxford murals, Rossetti met Algernon Charles Swinburne, at the time an undergraduate, who started to move in Pre-Raphaelite circles. The association of Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones thus became the nucleus of a second phase of Pre-Raphaelitism, one central to the emergence in the last third of the century of aestheticism in poetry and of the Arts and Crafts movement. The second phase of Pre-Raphaelite painting presents many contrasts to the first. In the 1860s Rossetti began to paint looming images of women incarnating various aspects of female beauty; Burne-Jones concentrated on legends and myths represented in a highly mannered, dreamy style.

Despite the stylistic contrasts between the two phases of Pre-Raphaelitism, they share a changed understanding of the artist in relationship to society. The artist defines himself as apart from society, self-consciously avant-garde, in rebellion against artistic and cultural conventions. This rebellion takes a number of overlapping, sometimes conflicting forms: naturalism, medievalism, aestheticism. Throughout the evolution of Pre-Raphaelitism, painting and poetry remain closely allied, and not merely because Rossetti was at once painter and poet. Both the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the group that came together at Oxford in the late 1850s frequently chose literary subjects for their paintings; the poets among them wrote works that fused fantasy with a vivid sense of visual detail. Both groups were trying to explore the symbol, whether the plenitude of details weighted with meaning in Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* or the looming female figures that Rossetti painted and described in his paired paintings and sonnets, *Soul's Beauty* and *Body's Beauty.* Pre-Raphaelitism has been a difficult term to define in the history of poetry and painting because it seems to encompass such conflicting elements—microscopic fidelity to detail, dreamlike reverie, prominence of pattern and design. Late in his life, Rossetti dismissed the seriousness of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, claiming that the banding together under that title was all a joke of a half-dozen boys. But he conceded that the movement was serious. In the course of its history, that movement came to define more

than a style of painting; it was an attitude toward design that shaped the Arts and Crafts movement, an attitude toward symbol central to aestheticism and decadence, and a vision of the arts in relationship both to each other and to society that had a deep impact on writers like the young Yeats, developing their work in the final decade of the century.

Reproductions of *Christ in the House of His Parents*, *The Awakening Conscience*, *Soul's Beauty*, *Body's Beauty*, and other Pre-Raphaelite works appear in this volume's Image Gallery.

CHARLES DICKENS

Dickens (1812–1870) published the following article in *Household Words*, the weekly journal he edited.

From Old Lamps for New Ones

In the fifteenth century, a certain feeble lamp of art arose in the Italian town of Urbino. This poor light, Raphael Sanzio by name, better known to a few miserably mistaken wretches in these later days, as Raphael (another burned at the same time, called Titian),[1] was fed with a preposterous idea of Beauty—with a ridiculous power of etherealising, and exalting to the very Heaven of Heavens, what was most sublime and lovely in the expression of the human face divine on Earth—with the truly contemptible conceit of finding in poor humanity the fallen likeness of the angels of GOD, and raising it up again to their pure spiritual condition. This very fantastic whim effected a low revolution in Art, in this wise, that Beauty came to be regarded as one of its indispensable elements. In this very poor delusion, Artists have continued until this present nineteenth century, when it was reserved for some bold aspirants to "put it down."

The Pre-Raphael Brotherhood, Ladies and Gentlemen, is the dread Tribunal which is to set this matter right. Walk up, walk up; and here, conspicuous on the wall of the Royal Academy of Art in England, in the eighty-second year of their annual exhibition, you shall see what this new Holy Brotherhood, this terrible Police that is to disperse all Post-Raphael offenders, has "been and done!"

You come—in this Royal Academy Exhibition, which is familiar with the works of WILKIE, COLLINS, ETTY, EASTLAKE, LESLIE, MACLISE, TURNER, STANFIELD, LANDSEER, ROBERTS, DANBY, CRESWICK, LEE, WEBSTER, HERBERT, DYCE, COPE,[2] and others who would have been renowned as great masters in any age or country—you come, in this place, to the contemplation of a Holy Family.[3] You will have the goodness to discharge from your minds all Post-Raphael ideas, all religious aspirations, all elevating thoughts; all tender, awful, sorrowful, ennobling, sacred, graceful, or beautiful associations; and to prepare

yourselves, as befits such a subject—Pre-Raphaelly considered—for the lowest depths of what is mean, odious, repulsive, and revolting.

You behold the interior of a carpenter's shop. In the foreground of that carpenter's shop is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-headed boy, in a bed-gown; who appears to have received a poke in the hand, from the stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness, that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a Monster, in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England. Two almost naked carpenters, master and journeyman, worthy companions of this agreeable female, are working at their trade; a boy, with some small flavor of humanity in him, is entering with a vessel of water; and nobody is paying any attention to a snuffy old woman who seems to have mistaken that shop for the tobacconist's next door, and to be hopelessly waiting at the counter to be served with half an ounce of her favourite mixture. Wherever it is possible to express ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude, you have it expressed. Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in any hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles's.[4]

This, in the nineteenth century, and in the eighty-second year of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Art, is the Pre-Raphael representation to us, Ladies and Gentlemen, of the most solemn passage which our minds can ever approach. This, in the nineteenth century, and in the eighty-second year of the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Art, is what Pre-Raphael Art can do to render reverence and homage to the faith in which we live and die!

1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: Raphael (1483–1520) and Titian (1490–1576), painters of the Italian Renaissance.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: All 19th-century British painters exhibited at the Royal Academy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See the color insert for a reproduction of this painting, *Christ in the House of His Parents*, by John Everett Millais.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A slum district in central London.Return to reference 4

JOHN RUSKIN

This letter from Ruskin (1819–1900) appeared in the London *Times.*

["The Awakening Conscience"]

SIR,—Your kind insertion of my notes on Mr. Hunt's principal picture[1] encourages me to hope that you may yet allow me room in your columns for a few words respecting his second work in the Royal Academy, the "Awakening Conscience."[2] Not that this picture is obscure, or its story feebly told. I am at a loss to know how its meaning could be rendered more distinctly, but assuredly it is not understood. People gaze at it in a blank wonder, and leave it hopelessly; so that, though it is almost an insult to the painter to explain his thoughts in this instance, I cannot persuade myself to leave it thus misunderstood. The poor girl has been sitting singing with her seducer; some chance words of the song, "Oft in the stilly night,"[3] have struck upon the numbed places of her heart; she has started up in agony; he, not seeing her face, goes on singing, striking the keys carelessly with his gloved hand.

I suppose that no one possessing the slightest knowledge of expression could remain untouched by the countenance of the lost girl, rent from its beauty into sudden horror; the lips half open, indistinct in their purple quivering; the teeth set hard; the eyes filled with the fearful light of futurity, and with tears of ancient days.[4] But I can easily understand that to many persons the careful rendering of the inferior details in this picture cannot but be at first offensive, as calling their attention away from the principal subject. It is true that detail of this kind has long been so carelessly rendered, that the perfect finishing of it becomes a matter of curiosity, and therefore an interruption to serious thought. But, without entering into the question of the general propriety of such treatment, I would only observe that, at least in this instance, it is based on a truer principle of the pathetic than any of the common artistical expedients of the schools. Nothing is more notable than the way in which even the most trivial objects force themselves upon the attention of a mind

which has been fevered by violent and distressful excitement. They thrust themselves forward with a ghastly and unendurable distinctness, as if they would compel the sufferer to count, or measure, or learn them by heart. Even to the mere spectator a strange interest exalts the accessories of a scene in which he bears witness to human sorrow. There is not a single object in all that room—common, modern, vulgar (in the vulgar sense, as it may be), but it becomes tragical, if rightly read. That furniture so carefully painted, even to the last vein of the rosewood—is there nothing to be learnt from that terrible lustre of it, from its fatal newness; nothing there that has the old thoughts of home upon it, or that is ever to become a part of home? Those embossed books, vain and useless—they also new—marked with no happy wearing of beloved leaves; the torn and dying bird upon the floor; the gilded tapestry, with the fowls of the air feeding on the ripened corn; the picture above the fireplace, with its single drooping figure—the woman taken in adultery;[5] nay, the very hem of the poor girl's dress, at which the painter has laboured so closely, thread by thread, has story in it, if we think how soon its pure whiteness may be soiled with dust and rain, her outcast feet failing in the street; and the fair garden flowers, seen in that reflected sunshine of the mirror,—these also have their language—

> "Hope not to find delight in us, they say,
> For we are spotless, Jessy—we are pure."[6]

I surely need not go on. Examine the whole range of the walls of the Academy,—nay, examine those of all our public and private galleries,—and while pictures will be met with by the thousand which literally tempt to evil, by the thousand which are directed to the meanest trivialities of incident or emotion, by the thousand to the delicate fancies of inactive religion, there will not be found one powerful as this to meet full in the front the moral evil of the age in which it is painted; to waken into mercy the cruel thoughtlessness of youth, and subdue the severities of judgment into the sanctity of compassion.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR OF "MODERN PAINTERS."

1854

Endnotes

- Note 1: *The Light of the World,* a painting of the figure of Jesus.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See the color insert for a reproduction of this painting.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A song, with words by the Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779–1852), about the pull of childhood memories.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Hunt later softened the look on the girl's face in the original painting at the request of its buyer, who found he couldn't bear to look at it.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: John, 8:3.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From "Elegy 26" by British poet William Shenstone (1714–1763).Return to reference 6

JOHN RUSKIN

This selection is taken from the fourth of a series of lectures on architecture and painting that Ruskin delivered in Edinburgh, later published as a book.

From Pre-Raphaelitism

Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only.[1] Every Pre-Raphaelite landscape background is painted to the last touch, in the open air, from the thing itself. Every Pre-Raphaelite figure, however studied in expression, is a true portrait of some living person. Every minute accessory is painted in the same manner. And one of the chief reasons for the violent opposition with which the school has been attacked by other artists, is the enormous cost of care and labour which such a system demands from those who adopt it, in contradistinction to the present slovenly and imperfect style.

This is the main Pre-Raphaelite principle. But the battle which its supporters have to fight is a hard one; and for that battle they have been fitted by a very peculiar character.

You perceive that the principal resistance they have to make is to that spurious beauty, whose attractiveness had tempted men to forget, or to despise, the more noble quality of sincerity: and in order at once to put them beyond the power of temptation from this beauty, they are, as a body, characterised by a total absence of sensibility to the ordinary and popular forms of artistic gracefulness; while, to all that still lower kind of prettiness, which regulates the disposition of our scenes upon the stage, and which appears in our lower art, as in our annuals, our commonplace portraits, and statuary, the Pre-Raphaelites are not only dead, but they regard it with a contempt and aversion approaching to disgust. This character is absolutely necessary to them in the present time; but it, of course, occasionally renders their work comparatively unpleasing. As the school becomes less aggressive, and more authoritative—which it will do—they will enlist into their ranks men who will work, mainly,

upon their principles, and yet embrace more of those characters which are generally attractive, and this great ground of offence will be removed.

Again: you observe that as landscape painters, their principles must, in great part, confine them to mere foreground work; and singularly enough, that they may not be tempted away from this work, they have been born with comparatively little enjoyment of those evanescent effects and distant sublimities which nothing but the memory can arrest, and nothing but a daring conventionalism portray. But for this work they are not now needed. Turner,[2] the first and greatest of the Pre-Raphaelites, has done it already; he, though his capacity embraced everything, and though he would sometimes, in his foregrounds, paint the spots upon a dead trout, and the dyes upon a butterfly's wing, yet for the most part delighted to begin at that very point where the other branches of Pre-Raphaelitism become powerless.

Lastly. The habit of constantly carrying everything up to the utmost point of completion deadens the Pre-Raphaelites in general to the merits of men who, with an equal love of truth up to a certain point, yet express themselves habitually with speed and power, rather than with finish, and give abstracts of truth rather than total truth. Probably to the end of time artists will more or less be divided into these classes, and it will be impossible to make men like Millais understand the merits of men like Tintoret,[3] but this is the more to be regretted because the Pre-Raphaelites have enormous powers of imagination, as well as of realisation, and do not yet themselves know of how much they would be capable, if they sometimes worked on a larger scale, and with a less laborious finish.

With all their faults, their pictures are, since Turner's death, the best—incomparably the best—on the walls of the Royal Academy; and such works as Mr. Hunt's[4] "Claudio and Isabella" have never been rivalled, in some respects never approached, at any other period of art.

This I believe to be a most candid statement of all their faults and all their deficiencies; not such, you perceive, as are likely to

arrest their progress. The "magna est veritas"[5] was never more sure of accomplishment than by these men. Their adversaries have no chance with them. They will gradually unite their influence with whatever is true or powerful in the reactionary art of other countries; and on their works such a school will be founded as shall justify the third age of the world's civilisation, and render it as great in creation as it has been in discovery.

And now let me remind you but of one thing more. As you examine into the career of historical painting, you will be more and more struck with the fact I have this evening stated to you,—that none was ever truly great but that which represented the living forms and daily deeds of the people among whom it arose—that all precious historical work records, not the past, but the present. Remember, therefore, that it is not so much in *buying* pictures, as in *being* pictures, that you can encourage a noble school. The best patronage of art is not that which seeks for the pleasures of sentiment in a vague ideality, not for beauty of form in a marble image; but that which educates your children into living heroes, and binds down the flights and the fondnesses of the heart into practical duty and faithful devotion.

1853 1859

Endnotes

- Note 1: Or, where imagination is necessarily trusted to, by always endeavouring to conceive a fact as it really was likely to have happened, rather than as it most prettily *might* have happened. The various members of the school are not all equally severe in carrying out its principles, some of them trusting their memory or fancy very far; only all agreeing in the effort to make their memories as to seem like portraiture, and their fancy as probably to seem like memory [*Ruskin's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), British landscape painter whom Ruskin praised as the model of truth to nature in art in *Modern Painters*. The atmospheric effects and evocation of light

in Turner's painting seem to place him at a far distance from the Pre-Raphaelites, but Ruskin saw their work as expressing different aspects of naturalism. See Ruskin's description of Turner's *Slave Ship,* from *Modern Painters*(p. 466) and the color insert for a reproduction of the painting.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Tintoretto (1518–1594), Italian Renaissance painter known for special lighting effects. John Everett Millais (1829–1896), one of the leading Pre-Raphaelites.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), a leading Pre-Raphaelite painter.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "Great is truth" (1 Esdras 4:41).Return to reference 5

WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI

Rossetti (1829–1919) published his brother Dante Gabriel's letters in 1895. This account of the aesthetic principles of Pre-Raphaelitism comes from the memoir he included in the first volume.

[The Pre-Raphaelite Manifesto]

Had the Præraphaelite Brotherhood any ulterior aim beyond that of producing good works of art? Yes, and No. Assuredly it had the aim of developing such *ideas* as are suited to the medium of fine art, and of bringing the arts of form into general unison with what is highest in other arts, especially poetry. Likewise the aim of showing by contrast how threadbare were the pretensions of most painters of the day, and how incapable they were of constituting or developing any sort of School of Art worthy of the name. In the person of two at least of its members, Hunt and Collinson,[1] it had also a definite relation to a Christian, and not a pagan or latitudinarian, line of thought. On the other hand, the notion that the Brotherhood, as such, had anything whatever to do with particular movements in the religious world—whether Roman Catholicism, Anglican Tractarianism,[2] or what not—is totally, and, to one who formed a link in its composition, even ludicrously, erroneous. To say that Præraphaelitism was part of "the ever-rising protest and rebellion of our century against artificial authority," as in the cases of "the French Revolution" and Wordsworth and Darwin, etc.,[3] is not indeed untrue, but is far too vague to account for anything. Again, the so-called German Præraphaelites—such as Schnorr, Overbeck, and Cornelius[4] —were in no repute with the young British artists. They did, however, admire very much certain designs by Fuhrich[5] from the Legend of St. Genevieve. Neither was Ruskin their inciter, though it is true that Hunt had read and laid to heart in 1847 the first volume of *Modern Painters*, the only thing then current as Ruskin's work. I do not think any other P.R.B. (with the possible exception of Collinson) had, up to 1848 or later, read him at all. That the Præraphaelites valued moral and spiritual ideas as an important section of the ideas germane to fine art is most true, and not one of them was in the least inclined to do any work of a gross, lascivious,

or sensual description; but neither did they limit the province of art to the spiritual or the moral. I will therefore take it upon me to say that the bond of union among the Members of the Brotherhood was really and simply this—1, To have genuine ideas to express; 2, to study Nature attentively, so as to know how to express them; 3, to sympathize with what is direct and serious and heartfelt in previous art, to the exclusion of what is conventional and self-parading and learned by rote; and 4, and most indispensable of all, to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues.

1895

Endnotes

- Note 1: William Holman Hunt (1827–1910) and James Collinson (1825–1881), both original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mid-19th-century Anglican movement to bring church ritual closer to its Catholic roots.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Esther Wood's *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite Movement* (1894), 9.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794–1872), Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789–1869), and Peter von Cornelius (1783–1867), German Romantic artists called the Nazarenes with principles similar to those of the British Pre-Raphaelites.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Joseph von Führich (1800–1876), a Nazarene painter.Return to reference 5

ROBERT BUCHANAN

Buchanan (1841–1901) was a Scottish poet and critic of modest reputation. “The Fleshly School of Poetry” brought him a great deal of attention when it was first published, and he went on to publish it as a pamphlet. He later regretted its severity. “The Fleshly School” provides an important reminder that the PRB’s literary work followed many of the same principles as their visual art—and was nearly as controversial.

From The Fleshly School of Poetry

Although he has been known for many years as a poet as well as a painter—as a painter and poet idolized by his own family and personal associates—and although he has once or twice appeared in print as a contributor to magazines, Mr. Rossetti did not formally appeal to the public until rather more than a year ago, when he published a copious volume of poems, with the announcement that the book, although it contained pieces composed at intervals during a period of many years, "included nothing which the author believes to be immature." This work was inscribed to his brother, Mr. William Rossetti, who, having written much both in poetry and criticism, will perhaps be known to bibliographers as the editor of the worst edition of Shelley which has yet seen the light. No sooner had the work appeared than the chorus of eulogy began. "The book is satisfactory from end to end," wrote Mr. Morris in the *Academy*;[1] "I think these lyrics, with all their other merits, the most complete of their time; nor do I know what lyrics of any time are to be called *great*, if we are to deny the title to these." On the same subject Mr. Swinburne went into a hysteria of admiration: "golden affluence," "jewel-coloured words," "chastity of form," "harmonious nakedness," "consummate fleshly sculpture," and so on in Mr. Swinburne's well-known manner when reviewing his friends. Other critics, with a singular similarity of phrase, followed suit. Strange to say, moreover, no one accused Mr. Rossetti of naughtiness. What had been heinous in Mr. Swinburne was majestic exquisiteness in Mr. Rossetti. Yet we question if there is anything in the unfortunate "Poems and Ballads" quite so questionable on the score of thorough nastiness as many pieces in Mr. Rossetti's collection. Mr. Swinburne was wilder, more outrageous, more blasphemous, and his subjects were more atrocious in themselves; yet the hysterical tone slew the animalism, the furiousness of epithet lowered the sensation; and the first feeling of disgust at such themes as "Laus Veneris" and "Anactoria," faded

away into comic amazement. It was only a little mad boy letting off squibs;[2] not a great strong man, who might be really dangerous to society. "I *will* be naughty!" screamed the little boy; but, after all, what did it matter? It is quite different, however, when a grown man, with the self-control and easy audacity of actual experience, comes forward to chronicle his amorous sensations, and, first proclaiming in a loud voice his literary maturity, and consequent responsibility, shamelessly prints and publishes such a piece of writing as this sonnet on "Nuptial Sleep":—

> At length their long kiss severed, with secret smart:
> And as the last slow sudden drops are shed
> From sparkling cares when all the storm has fled,
> So singly flagged the pulses of each heart.
> Their bosoms sundered, with the opening start
> Of married flowers to either side outspread
> From the knit stem; yet still their mouths, burnt red,
> Fawned on each other where they lay apart.
>
> Sleep sank them lower than the tide of dreams,
> And their dreams watched them sink, and slid away.
> Slowly their souls swam up again, through gleams
> Of watered light and dull drowned waifs of day;
> Till from some wonder of now woods and streams
> He woke, and wondered more: for there she lay.[3]

This, then, is "the golden affluence of words, the firm outline, the justice and chastity of form." Here is a full-grown man, presumably intelligent and cultivated, putting on record for other full-grown men to read, the most secret mysteries of sexual connection, and that with so sickening a desire to reproduce the sensual mood, so careful

a choice of epithet to convey mere animal sensations, that we merely shudder at the shameless nakedness. We are no purists in such matters. We hold the sensual part of our nature to be as holy as the spiritual or intellectual part and we believe that such things must find their equivalent in all; but it is neither poetic, nor manly, nor even human, to obtrude such things as the themes of whole poems. It is simply nasty. Nasty as it is, we are very mistaken if many readers do not think it nice. English society of one kind purchases the *Day's Doings*.[4] English society of another kind goes into ecstasy over Mr. Solomon's pictures[5]—pretty pieces of morality, such as "Love dying by the breath of Lust." There is not much to choose between the two objects of admiration, except that painters like Mr. Solomon lend actual genius to worthless subjects, and thereby produce veritable monsters—like the lovely devils that danced round Saint Anthony.[6] Mr. Rossetti owes his so-called success to the same causes. In poems like "Nuptial Sleep," the man who is too sensitive to exhibit his pictures, and so modest that it takes him years to make up his mind to publish his poems, parades his private sensations before a coarse public, and is gratified by their applause.

1871

Endnotes

- Note 1: *The Academy*, London periodical published from 1869 to 1902; William Morris (1834–1896), British poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Small firecrackers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This poem also appears on p. 632, as a stand-alone text with other works by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: London weekly pictorial newspaper.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Simeon Solomon (1840–1905), a painter associated with the Pre-Raphaelites.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Anthony of Padua (1195–1231), Franciscan priest, known for preaching to the poor, the sick, and heretics.Return to reference 6

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI
1828–1882

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the son of an Italian patriot and scholar whose political activities had led to his being exiled to England. The Rossetti household in London was one in which liberal politics and artistic topics were hotly debated: all four children—Maria Francesca, Dante Gabriel, William Michael, and Christina Georgina—wrote, drew, or engaged in scholarly pursuits from a young age. Displaying extraordinary early promise both as a painter and as a poet, Dante Gabriel luxuriated in colors and textures, and was especially drawn to feminine beauty. His view of life and art, derived in part from his close study of John Keats's poems and letters, anticipated by many years the aesthetic movement later to be represented by writers such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, and the painter James McNeill Whistler, who insisted that art must be exclusively concerned with the beautiful, not with the useful or didactic.

The beauty Rossetti admired in women's faces was of a distinctive kind. In at least two of his models he found what he sought. The first was his wife, Elizabeth Siddal, whose suicide in 1862 haunted him with a sense of guilt for the rest of his life. The other was Jane Morris, the wife of his friend William Morris. In Rossetti's paintings both of these models are shown with dreamy stares, as if breathless from visions of heaven; but counteracting this impression is an emphasis on parted lips and voluptuous curves suggesting a more earthly kind of ecstasy. Similar combinations of

spirituality and physicality, or mind and body, are to be found in many of Rossetti's poems. For instance, the central figure of "The Blessed Damozel" (1850), a poem begun when Rossetti was eighteen and which was heavily influenced by the work of Dante Alighieri, leans on "the gold bar of heaven" and makes it "warm" with her bosom. In "Jenny" (1870), another work started in Rossetti's early adulthood, a male speaker muses about the life and thoughts of the young prostitute whose head rests upon his knee as she sleeps: his speculations thus replace, or stand in for, both her thoughts and more explicit sexual acts between them. And *The House of Life* (1870), his sonnet sequence, explores the relationship of spirit to body in love. Some Victorian readers found little Dante-like spirituality in *The House of Life*; the critic Robert Buchanan, for example, saw only lewd sensuality, and his 1871 pamphlet, "The Fleshly School of Poetry," treated Rossetti's poetry to the most severe abuse. Buchanan's attack hurt the poet profoundly and contributed to the bouts of depression from which he suffered in the remaining years of his life.

The Blessed Damozel[1]

The blessed damozel leaned out
  From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
  Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
  And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
  No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
  For service meetly° worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
  Was yellow like ripe corn.°

Herseemed[2] she scarce had been a day
  One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
  From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
  Had counted as ten years.

(To one it is ten years of years.
  . . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
  Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
  The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
  That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
  The which is Space begun;

So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.[3]

(Ah, sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be harkened? When those bells
Possessed the midday air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in heaven?—on earth,

The Blessed Damozel (1875–78; detail). In the second phase of his painting career, Rossetti turned from the religious and literary subjects of his early work (see, for instance, his illustration for "The Lady of Shalott," p. 212) to huge sensual portraits of women, often designed as companion pieces to his poems. For other examples of Rossetti's visual art, see the frontispiece he drew for his sister Christina's first volume of poems, p. 646, and his paintings.

Lord, Lord, has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole° clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult,° withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree[4]
Within whose secret growth the Dove[5]
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity

The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret, and Rosalys.[6]

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply,° and be dumb;
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak;
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles;
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.[7]

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love—only to be,
As then awhile, forever now,
Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled toward her, filled
With angels in strong, level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres;
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

1846 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: A poetic version of "damsel," signifying a young unmarried lady. Rossetti once explained that "Blessed Damozel" is related to Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" (1845), a poem he admired. "I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven." The thoughts of the damozel's still-living lover appear in the poem in parentheses.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: It seemed to her.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Job 38:7.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The tree of life, as described in an apocalyptic vision in the Bible (Revelation 22:2).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A tangible manifestation of the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10), frequent in Christian art.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Rossetti creates this list of Mary's handmaidens from various saints, historical figures, and allegorical characters.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Guitarlike instruments.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *fittingly*Return to reference °
- °: *grain*Return to reference °
- °: *halo*Return to reference °
- °: *hidden, mysterious*Return to reference °
- °: *perhaps*Return to reference °

My Sister's Sleep[1]

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve.
   At length the long-ungranted shade
   Of weary eyelids overweighed
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
   Over the bed from chime to chime,
   Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little worktable was spread
   With work to finish. For° the glare
   Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
   Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
   The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
   Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
   And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
   And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
   Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
   Heard in each hour, crept off; and then

The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat;
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled—no other noise than that.

"Glory unto the Newly Born!"
So, as said angels, she did say,
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stooped an instant, calm, and turned,
But suddenly turned back again;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word.
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept;
And both my arms fell, and I said,
"God knows I knew that she was dead."
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o’clock,
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
“Christ’s blessing on the newly born!”

1847 1850

Endnotes

- Note 1: The incident in this poem is imaginary, not autobiographical.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *because of*Return to reference °

Jenny

Vengeance of Jenny's case! Fie on her! Never name her, child!
—(Mrs. Quickly.)[1]

Lazy laughing languid Jenny,
Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea,[2]
Whose head upon my knee to-night
Rests for a while, as if grown light
With all our dances and the sound
To which the wild tunes spun you round:
Fair Jenny mine, the thoughtless queen
Of kisses which the blush between
Could hardly make much daintier;
Whose eyes are as blue skies, whose hair
Is countless gold incomparable:
Fresh flower, scarce touched with signs that tell
Of Love's exuberant hotbed:—Nay,
Poor flower left torn since yesterday
Until to-morrow leave you bare;
Poor handful of bright spring-water
Flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face;
Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace[3]
Thus with your head upon my knee;—
Whose person or whose purse may be
The lodestar° of your reverie?

This room of yours, my Jenny, looks
A change from mine so full of books,
Whose serried[4] ranks hold fast, forsooth,
So many captive hours of youth,—
The hours they thieve from day and night

To make one's cherished work come right,
And leave it wrong for all their theft,
Even as to-night my work was left:
Until I vowed that since my brain
And eyes of dancing seemed so fain,°
My feet should have some dancing too:—
And thus it was I met with you.
Well, I suppose 'twas hard to part,
For here I am. And now, sweetheart,
You seem too tired to get to bed.

It was a careless life I led
When rooms like this were scarce so strange
Not long ago. What breeds the change,—
The many aims or the few years?
Because to-night it all appears
Something I do not know again.

The cloud's not danced out of my brain—
The cloud that made it turn and swim
While hour by hour the books grew dim.
Why, Jenny, as I watch you there,—
For all your wealth of loosened hair,
Your silk ungirdled and unlac'd
And warm sweets open to the waist.
All golden in the lamplight's gleam,—
You know not what a book you seem,
Half-read by lightning in a dream!
How should you know, my Jenny? Nay,
And I should be ashamed to say:—
Poor beauty, so well worth a kiss!
But while my thought runs on like this
With wasteful whims more than enough,
I wonder what you're thinking of.

If of myself you think at all,

What is the thought?—conjectural
On sorry matters best unsolved?—
Or inly° is each grace revolved
To fit me with a lure?—or (sad
To think!) perhaps you're merely glad
That I'm not drunk or ruffianly
And let you rest upon my knee.

For sometimes, were the truth confess'd,
You're thankful for a little rest,—
Glad from the crush to rest within,
From the heart-sickness and the din
Where envy's voice at virtue's pitch
Mocks you because your gown is rich;
And from the pale girl's dumb rebuke,
Whose ill-clad grace and toil-worn look
Proclaim the strength that keeps her weak,
And other nights than yours bespeak;
And from the wise unchildish elf,
To schoolmate lesser than himself
Pointing you out, what thing you are:—
Yes, from the daily jeer and jar,
From shame and shame's outbraving too,
Is rest not sometimes sweet to you?—
But most from the hatefulness of man,
Who spares not to end what he began,
Whose acts are ill and his speech ill,
Who, having used you at his will,
Thrusts you aside, as when I dine
I serve° the dishes and the wine.

Well, handsome Jenny mine, sit up:
I've filled our glasses, let us sup,
And do not let me think of you,
Lest shame of yours suffice for two.
What, still so tired? Well, well then, keep

Your head there, so you do not sleep;
But that the weariness may pass
And leave you merry, take this glass.
Ah! lazy lily hand, more bless'd
If ne'er in rings it had been dress'd
Nor ever by a glove conceal'd!

Behold the lilies of the field,
They toil not neither do they spin;
(So doth the ancient text[5] begin,—
Not of such rest as one of these
Can share.) Another rest and ease
Along each summer-sated path
From its new lord the garden hath,
Than that whose spring in blessings ran
Which praised the bounteous husbandman,°
Ere yet, in days of hankering breath,
The lilies sickened unto death.

What, Jenny, are your lilies dead?
Aye, and the snow-white leaves are spread
Like winter on the garden-bed.
But you had roses left in May,—
They were not gone too. Jenny, nay,
But must your roses die, and those
Their purfled[6] buds that should unclose?
Even so; the leaves are curled apart,
Still red as from the broken heart,
And here's the naked stem of thorns.

Nay, nay, mere words. Here nothing warns
As yet of winter. Sickness here
Or want alone could waken fear,—
Nothing but passion wrings a tear.
Except when there may rise unsought
Haply at times a passing thought

Of the old days which seem to be
Much older than any history
That is written in any book;
When she would lie in fields and look
Along the ground through the blown grass
And wonder where the city was,
Far out of sight, whose broil and bale° [°]
They told her then for a child's tale.

Jenny, you know the city now.
A child can tell the tale there, how
Some things which are not yet enroll'd
In market-lists are bought and sold
Even till the early Sunday light,
When Saturday night is market-night
Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
And market-night in the Haymarket.[7]
Our learned London children know,
Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe;
Have seen your lifted silken skirt
Advertise dainties through the dirt;
Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
On virtue; and have learned your look
When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
Along the streets alone, and there,
Round the long park, across the bridge,
The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
Wind on together and apart,
A fiery serpent for your heart.

Let the thoughts pass, an empty cloud I
Suppose I were to think aloud,—
What if to her all this were said?
Why, as a volume seldom read
Being opened halfway shuts again,
So might the pages of her brain

Be parted at such words, and thence
Close back upon the dusty sense.
For is there hue or shape defin'd
In Jenny's desecrated mind,
Where all contagious currents meet,
A Lethe[8] of the middle street?
Nay, it reflects not any face,
Nor sound is in its sluggish pace,
But as they coil those eddies° clot,
And night and day remember not.

Why, Jenny, you're asleep at last!—
Asleep, poor Jenny, hard and fast,—
So young and soft and tired; so fair,
With chin thus nestled in your hair,
Mouth quiet, eyelids almost blue
As if some sky of dreams shone through!

Just as another woman sleeps!
Enough to throw one's thoughts in heaps
Of doubt and horror,—what to say
Or think,—this awful secret sway,
The potter's power over the clay!
Of the same lump (it has been said)
For honour and dishonour made,[9]
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

My cousin Nell is fond of fun,
And fond of dress, and change, and praise,
So mere a woman in her ways:
And if her sweet eyes rich in youth
Are like her lips that tell the truth,
My cousin Nell is fond of love.
And she's the girl I'm proudest of.
Who does not prize her, guard her well?
The love of change, in cousin Nell,

Shall find the best and hold it dear:
The unconquered mirth turn quieter
Not through her own, through others' woe:
The conscious pride of beauty glow
Beside another's pride in her,
One little part of all they share.
For Love himself shall ripen these
In a kind soil to just increase
Through years of fertilizing peace.

Of the same lump (as it is said)
For honour and dishonour made,
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

It makes a goblin[1] of the sun.

So pure,—so fall'n! How dare to think
Of the first common kindred link?
Yet, Jenny, till the world shall burn
It seems that all things take their turn;
And who shall say but this fair tree
May need, in changes that may be,
Your children's children's charity?
Scorned then, no doubt, as you are scorn'd!
Shall no man hold his pride forewarn'd
Till in the end, the Day of Days,
At Judgment, one of his own race,
As frail and lost as you, shall rise,—
His daughter, with his mother's eyes?

How Jenny's clock ticks on the shelf!
Might not the dial scorn itself
That has such hours to register?
Yet as to me, even so to her
Are golden sun and silver moon,
In daily largesse of earth's boon,

Counted for life-coins to one tune.
And if, as blindfold fates are toss'd,
Through some one man this life be lost,
Shall soul not somehow pay for soul?

Fair shines the gilded aureole[°]
In which our highest painters place
Some living woman's simple face.
And the stilled features thus descried
As Jenny's long throat droops aside,—
The shadows where the cheeks are thin,
And pure wide curve from ear to chin,—
With Raffael's, Leonardo's[2] hand
To show them to men's souls, might stand,
Whole ages long, the whole world through,
For preachings of what God can do.
What has man done here? How atone,
Great God, for this which man has done?
And for the body and soul which by
Man's pitiless doom must now comply
With lifelong hell, what lullaby
Of sweet forgetful second birth
Remains? All dark. No sign on earth
What measure of God's rest endows
The many mansions of his house.[3]

If but a woman's heart might see
Such erring heart unerringly
For once! But that can never be.

Like a rose shut in a book
In which pure women may not look,
For its base pages claim control
To crush the flower within the soul;
Where through each dead rose-leaf that clings,
Pale as transparent Psyche-wings,[4]

To the vile text, are traced such things
As might make lady's cheek indeed
More than a living rose to read;
So nought save foolish foulness may
Watch with hard eyes the sure decay:
And so the life-blood of this rose,
Puddled with shameful knowledge, flows
Through leaves no chaste hand may unclose;
Yet still it keeps such faded show
Of when 'twas gathered long ago,
That the crushed petals' lovely grain,
The sweetness of the sanguine° stain,
Seen of a woman's eyes, must make
Her pitiful heart, so prone to ache,
Love roses better for its sake:—
Only that this can never be:—
Even so unto her sex is she.

Yet, Jenny, looking long at you,
The woman almost fades from view.
A cipher of man's changeless sum
Of lust, past, present, and to come,
Is left. A riddle that one shrinks
To challenge from the scornful sphinx.[5]

Like a toad within a stone
Seated while Time crumbles on;
Which sits there since the earth was curs'd
For Man's transgression at the first;
Which, living through all centuries,
Not once has seen the sun arise;
Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,
The earth's whole summers have not warmed;
Which always—whitherso the stone
Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind, alone;—
Aye, and shall not be driven out

Till that which shuts him round about
Break at the very Master's stroke,
And the dust thereof vanish as smoke,
And the seed of Man vanish as dust:—
Even so within this world is Lust.

Come, come, what use in thoughts like this?
Poor little Jenny, good to kiss,—
You'd not believe by what strange roads
Thought travels, when your beauty goads
A man to-night to think of toads!
Jenny, wake up . . . Why, there's the dawn!

And there's an early waggon drawn
To market, and some sheep that jog
Bleating before a barking dog;
And the old streets come peering through
Another night that London knew;
And all as ghostlike as the lamps.

So on the wings of day decamps
My last night's frolic. Glooms begin
To shiver off as lights creep in
Past the gauze curtains half drawn-to,
And the lamp's doubled shade grows blue,—
Your lamp, my Jenny, kept alight,
Like a wise virgin's, all one night![6]
And in the alcove coolly spread
Glimmers with dawn your empty bed;
And yonder your fair face I see
Reflected lying on my knee,
Where teems with first foreshadowings
Your pier-glass[7] scrawled with diamond rings:
And on your bosom all night worn
Yesterday's rose now droops forlorn,
But dies not yet this summer morn.

And now without, as if some word
Had called upon them that they heard,
The London sparrows far and nigh
Clamour together suddenly;
And Jenny's cage-bird grown awake
Here in their song his part must take,
Because here too the day doth break.

And somehow in myself the dawn
Among stirred clouds and veils withdrawn
Strikes greyly on her. Let her sleep.
But will it wake her if I heap
These cushions thus beneath her head
Where my knee was? No,—there's your bed,
My Jenny, while you dream. And there
I lay among your golden hair,
Perhaps the subject of your dreams,
These golden coins.
For still one deems
That Jenny's flattering sleep confers
New magic on the magic purse,—
Grim web, how clogged with shrivelled flies!
Between the threads fine fumes arise
And shape their pictures in the brain.
There roll no streets in glare and rain.
Nor flagrant man-swine whets his tusk;
But delicately sighs in musk
The homage of the dim boudoir;
Or like a palpitating star
Thrilled into song, the opera-night
Breathes faint in the quick pulse of light;
Or at the carriage-window shine
Rich wares for choice; or, free to dine,
Whirls through its hour of health (divine
For her) the concourse of the Park.

And though in the discounted dark
Her functions there and here are one,
Beneath the lamps and in the sun
There reigns at least the acknowledged belle
Apparelled beyond parallel.
Ah Jenny, yes, we know your dreams.

For even the Paphian[8] Venus seems
A goddess o'er the realms of love,
When silver-shrined in shadowy grove:
Aye, or let offerings nicely plac'd
But hide Priapus[9] to the waist,
And whoso looks on him shall see
An eligible deity.

Why, Jenny, waking here alone
May help you to remember one,
Though all the memory's long outworn
Of many a double-pillowed morn.
I think I see you when you wake,
And rub your eyes for me, and shake
My gold, in rising, from your hair,
A Danaë[1] for a moment there.

Jenny, my love rang true! for still
Love at first sight is vague, until
That tinkling makes him audible.

And must I mock you to the last,
Ashamed of my own shame,—aghast
Because some thoughts not born amiss
Rose at a poor fair face like this?
Well, of such thoughts so much I know:
In my life, as in hers, they show,
By a far gleam which I may near,
A dark path I can strive to clear.

390 Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear.

1848 1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* 4.1.53–54. Mistress Quickly continues: "if she be a whore."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: English gold coin worth twenty-one shillings.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Allusion to the first line of the prayer to the Virgin Mary: "Hail Mary, full of grace."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Pressed close together.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Matthew 6:28.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: With a decorative edging.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Street in London frequented by prostitutes.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The river of forgetfulness in the Greek underworld. Gutters in London often ran through the middle of the street.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Romans 9:21: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A gold coin (slang).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The painters Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483–1520) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare with John 14:2: "In my Father's house are many mansions."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The soul, often symbolized by a butterfly that escaped the body after death. Also, in the well-known story told by Apuleius (*The Golden Ass,* 2nd century C.E.), Psyche was a maiden beloved by Cupid.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Greek mythology a monster with a lion's body, bird's wings, and woman's face. The answer to her riddle—what walks

on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?—is man, at different ages.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Compare with Matthew 25:1–13. In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the wise virgins took sufficient oil to keep their lamps burning all night.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A mirror. Lovers would scratch their names on it with the diamonds in their rings.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of Paphos, a city on Cyprus that was the site of a famous temple of Aphrodite (the Roman Venus). Also, a term for prostitute.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A Greek fertility god, whose symbol was the phallus.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In Greek mythology a maiden whom Zeus visited in the form of a shower of gold.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *guiding star*Return to reference °
- °: *desirous*Return to reference °
- °: *inwardly*Return to reference °
- °: *treat*Return to reference °
- °: *farmer*Return to reference °
- °: *turmoil and evil*Return to reference °
- °: *small whirlpools*Return to reference °
- °: *halo*Return to reference °
- °: *bloodred*Return to reference °

From The House of Life

The Sonnet

A Sonnet is a moment's monument—
  Memorial from the Soul's eternity
  To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral° rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fullness reverent;
  Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
  As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin; its face reveals
  The soul—its converse, to what Power 'tis due—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
  Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's[1] palm it pay the toll to Death.

Endnotes

- Note 1: In classical mythology the ferryman who, for a fee, rowed the souls of the dead across the river Styx.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *purificatory*Return to reference °

Nuptial Sleep[2]

At length their long kiss severed, with sweet smart:[°]
And as the last slow sudden drops are shed
From sparkling eaves when all the storm has fled,
So singly flagged the pulses of each heart.
Their bosoms sundered, with the opening start
Of married flowers to either side outspread
From the knit stem; yet still their mouths, burnt red,
Fawned on each other where they lay apart.

Sleep sank them lower than the tide of dreams,
And their dreams watched them sink, and slid away.
Slowly their souls swam up again, through gleams
Of watered light and dull drowned waifs of day;
Till from some wonder of new woods and streams
He woke, and wondered more: for there she lay.

Endnotes

- Note 2: In "The Fleshly School of Poetry" (1871), Robert Buchanan made this poem the focus of his attack on what he felt was Rossetti's lewd sensuality in the 1870 volume *Poems.* In 1881, when Rossetti published his next collection of poems, he omitted this sonnet from *The House of Life.*Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *pain*Return to reference °

Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass—
  The finger-points look through like rosy blooms;
  Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
  Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
  Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hourglass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragonfly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky—
  So this winged hour is dropped to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
  When twofold silence was the song of love.

Soul's Beauty[3]

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
  Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
  Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
  The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
  By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman° of her palm and wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
  Thy voice and hand shake still,—long known to thee
    By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
    Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
  How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

Endnotes

- Note 3: This sonnet and the next were not originally part of *The House of Life,* but were composed to accompany paintings with the same names as the sonnets' original titles (see the color insert). The original title of "Soul's Beauty" was "Sibylla Palmifera," or "palm-bearing sibyl." Sibyls are prophetesses; one of them, the Sibyl of Cumae, wrote her prophecies on palm leaves. The original title of "Body's Beauty" was "Lilith"; in Talmudic legend, Lilith, Adam's first wife, ran away from her husband and became a witch.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *slave*Return to reference °

Body's Beauty

Of Adams's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

1848–80 1870, 1881

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
1830–1894

Christina Rossetti, the youngest of four siblings, grew up in a home that actively engaged with the arts and liberal politics. Her father was an exiled Italian patriot who wrote poetry and commentaries on Dante that tried to find evidence in his poems of mysterious ancient conspiracies; her mother was an Anglo-Italian who had worked as a governess. Their household was a lively gathering place for Italian exiles, full of conversation of politics and culture; and Christina, like her brothers Dante Gabriel and William Michael, was encouraged to develop a love for art and literature and to draw and write poetry from a very early age. When she was an adolescent, her life changed dramatically: her father became a permanent invalid, the family's economic situation worsened, and her own health deteriorated. Subsequently she, her mother, and her sister Maria became intensely involved with the Anglo-Catholic movement within the Church of England. For the rest of her life, Rossetti governed herself by strict religious principles, giving up theater, opera, and chess; on two occasions she canceled plans for marriage because of religious scruples, breaking her first engagement when her fiancé reverted to Roman Catholicism and ultimately refusing to marry a second suitor because he seemed insufficiently concerned with religion. She lived a quiet life, occupying herself with charitable work —including ten years of volunteer service at a penitentiary for "fallen" women—with caring for her family, and with writing poetry.

Rossetti's first volume of poetry, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862), contains all the different poetic modes that mark her achievement—pure lyric, narrative fable, ballad, and the devotional verse to which she increasingly turned in her later years. The most remarkable poem in the book is the title piece, which early established its popularity as a seemingly simple moral fable for children. Later readers have likened it to Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) and have detected in it a complex representation of the religious themes of temptation and sin, and of redemption by vicarious suffering; the fruit that tempts Laura, however, clearly is not from the tree of knowledge but from the orchard of sensual delights. In its deceptively simple style, *Goblin Market,* like many of Rossetti's poems, demonstrates her affinity with the early aims of the Pre-Raphaelite group, though her work as a whole resists this classification. A consciousness of gender often leads her to criticize the conventional representation of women in Pre-Raphaelite art, as in her sonnet "In an Artist's Studio" (1896), and a stern religious vision controls the sensuous impulses typical of Pre-Raphaelite poetry and painting. Virginia Woolf has described the distinctive combination of sensuousness and religious severity in Rossetti's work:

> Your poems are full of gold dust and "sweet geraniums' varied brightness"; your eye noted incessantly how rushes are "velvet headed," and lizards have a "strange metallic mail"—your eye, indeed, observed with a sensual pre-Raphaelite intensity that must have surprised Christina the Anglo-Catholic. But to her you owed perhaps the fixity and sadness of your muse. . . . No sooner have you feasted on beauty with your eyes than your mind tells you that beauty is vain and beauty passes. Death, oblivion, and rest lap round your songs with their dark wave.

William Michael Rossetti wrote of his sister, "She was replete with the spirit of self-postponement." Christina Rossetti was a poet who created, in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's phrase, "an

aesthetics of renunciation." She writes a poetry of deferral, of deflection, of negation, whose very denials and constraints give her a powerful way to articulate a poetic self in critical relationship to the little that the world offers. Like Emily Dickinson, she often, as in "Winter: My Secret" (1862), uses a coy playfulness and sardonic wit to reduce the self but at the same time to preserve for it a secret inner space. And like Dickinson, she wrote many poems of an extraordinarily pure lyric beauty that made Woolf also compare Rossetti's work to that of classical composers: "Your instinct was so sure, so direct, so intense that it produced poems that sing like music in one's ears—like a melody by Mozart or an air by Gluck."

Song

She sat and sang alway
  By the green margin of a stream,
Watching the fishes leap and play
  Beneath the glad sunbeam.

I sat and wept alway
  Beneath the moon's most shadowy beam,
Watching the blossoms of the May
  Weep leaves into the stream.

I wept for memory;
  She sang for hope that is so fair:
My tears were swallowed by the sea;
  Her songs died on the air.

1848 1862

Song

When I am dead, my dearest,
  Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:[1]
Be the green grass above me
  With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
  Sing on, as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
  That doth not rise nor set,
Haply° I may remember,
  And haply may forget.

1848 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: The cypress tree is associated with mourning.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *perhaps*Return to reference °

After Death

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may[1]
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
Where thro' the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
And could not hear him; but I heard him say:
"Poor child, poor child": and as he turned away
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
To know he still is warm tho' I am cold.

1849 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: Plants associated with death.Return to reference 1

Dead before Death

Ah! changed and cold, how changed and very cold!
With stiffened smiling lips and cold calm eyes:
Changed, yet the same; much knowing, little wise;
This was the promise of the days of old!
Grown hard and stubborn in the ancient mould,
Grown rigid in the sham of lifelong lies:
We hoped for better things as years would rise,
But it is over as a tale once told.
All fallen the blossom that no fruitage bore,
All lost the present and the future time,
All lost, all lost, the lapse that went before:
So lost till death shut-to the opened door,
So lost from chime to everlasting chime,
So cold and lost for ever evermore.

1854 1862

Cobwebs

It is a land with neither night nor day,
Nor heat nor cold, nor any wind, nor rain,
Nor hills nor valleys; but one even plain
Stretches thro’ long unbroken miles away:
While thro’ the sluggish air a twilight grey
Broodeth; no moons or seasons wax and wane,
No ebb and flow are there along the main,°
No bud-time no leaf-falling, there for aye:°—
No ripple on the sea, no shifting sand,
No beat of wings to stir the stagnant space,
No pulse of life thro’ all the loveless land:
And loveless sea; no trace of days before,
No guarded home, no toil-won resting place,
No future hope no fear for evermore.

1855 1896

Notes

- °: *ocean*Return to reference °
- °: *forever*Return to reference °

A Triad

Three sang of love together: one with lips
  Crimson, with cheeks and bosom in a glow,
Flushed to the yellow hair and finger tips;
  And one there sang who soft and smooth as snow
  Bloomed like a tinted hyacinth at a show;
And one was blue with famine after love,
  Who like a harpstring snapped rang harsh and low
The burden of what those were singing of.
One shamed herself in love; one temperately
  Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife;
One famished died for love. Thus two of three
  Took death for love and won him after strife;
One droned in sweetness like a fattened bee:
  All on the threshold, yet all short of life.

1856 1862

In an Artist's Studio[1]

One face looks out from all his canvases,
  One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans;
  We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
  A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
  A saint, an angel;—every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
  And she with true kind eyes looks back on him
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
  Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
  Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

1856 1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: According to Christina's brother William Michael, this poem focuses on the work of their older brother, Dante Gabriel: "The reference is apparently to our brother's studio, and to his constantly repeated heads of the lady whom he afterwards married, Miss Siddal."Return to reference 1

A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;°
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon° sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair° and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

1857 1862

Notes

- °: *slim branch* Return to reference °
- °: *tranquil* Return to reference °
- °: *squirrel fur* Return to reference °

An Apple-Gathering

I plucked pink blossoms from mine apple tree
  And wore them all that evening in my hair:
Then in due season when I went to see
    I found no apples there.

With dangling basket all along the grass
  As I had come I went the selfsame track:
My neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass
    So empty-handed back.

Lilian and Lilias smiled in trudging by,
  Their heaped-up basket teazed me like a jeer;
Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset sky,
    Their mother's home was near.

Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full,
  A stronger hand than hers helped it along;
A voice talked with her thro' the shadows cool
    More sweet to me than song.

Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
  Than apples with their green leaves piled above?
I counted rosiest apples on the earth
    Of far less worth than love.

So once it was with me you stooped to talk
  Laughing and listening in this very lane:
To think that by this way we used to walk
    We shall not walk again!

I let my neighbours pass me, ones and twos
  And groups; the latest said the night grew chill,

And hastened: but I loitered, while the dews
Fell fast I loitered still.

1857 1862

Winter: My Secret

I tell my secret? No indeed, not I:
Perhaps some day, who knows?
But not today; it froze, and blows, and snows,
And you're too curious: fie!
You want to hear it? well:
Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

Or, after all, perhaps there's none:
Suppose there is no secret after all,
But only just my fun.
Today's a nipping day, a biting day;
In which one wants a shawl,
A veil, a cloak, and other wraps:
I cannot ope to every one who taps,
And let the draughts come whistling thro' my hall;
Come bounding and surrounding me,
Come buffeting, astounding me,
Nipping and clipping thro' my wraps and all.
I wear my mask for warmth: who ever shows
His nose to Russian snows
To be pecked at by every wind that blows?
You would not peck? I thank you for good will,
Believe, but leave that truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time: yet I don't trust
March with its peck of dust,
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,
Nor even May, whose flowers
One frost may wither thro' the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,

When drowsy birds sing less and less,
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,
If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud,
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,
Perhaps my secret I may say,
Or you may guess.

1857 1862

Up-Hill

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.

1858 1862

Goblin Market

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons[1] and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Thro' those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."

She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel[2] tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,°
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared° his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves and rough nuts brown

(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money:
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still° for "Pretty Polly;"—
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze[3]
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together:
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock.[4]
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,[5]
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;

She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel-stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.°
You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
Tomorrow night I will
Buy more:" and kissed her:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums tomorrow

Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

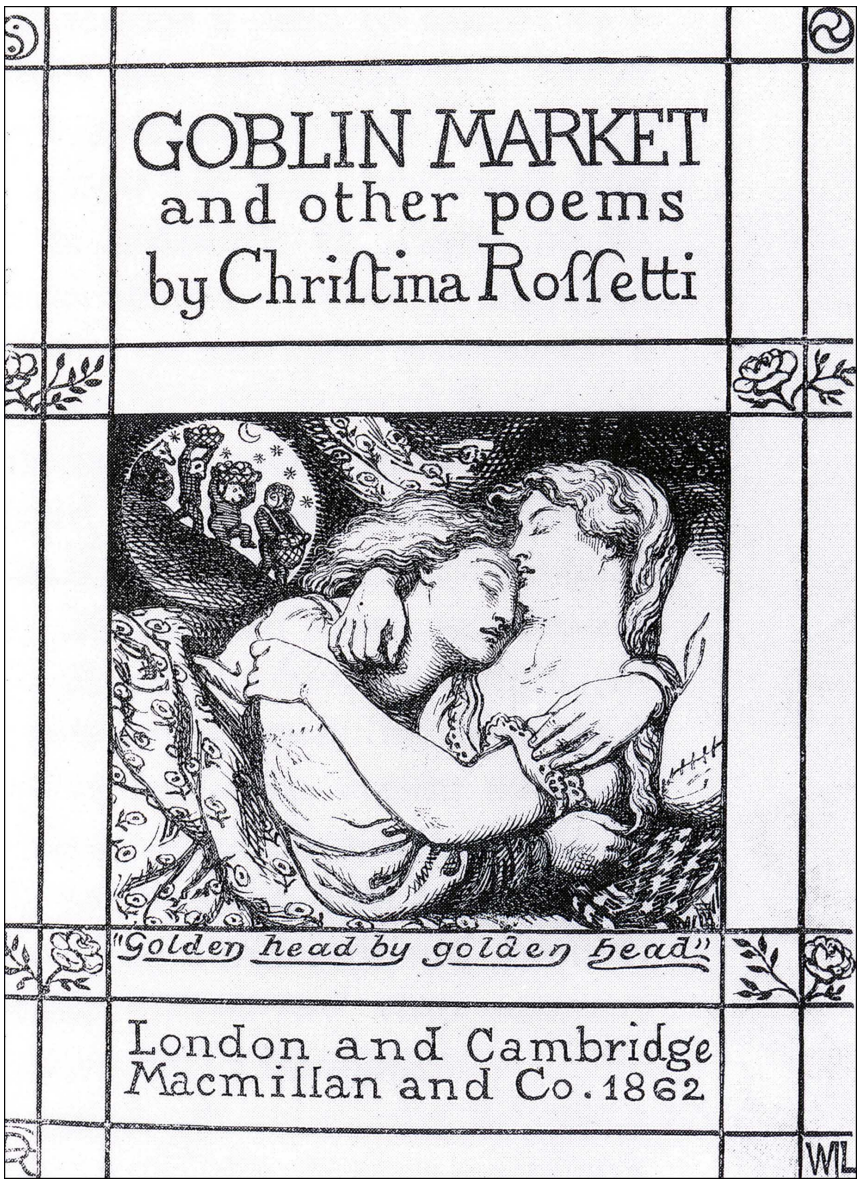
Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful° kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,

Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,°
Then turning homewards said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill:
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin



Goblin Market. This frontispiece is one of the two illustrations that Dante Gabriel Rossetti provided for his sister's first volume of poetry in 1862.

Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
240 Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;

I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Tho' this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us thro';
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous° pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy;"—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright

Her hair grew thin and gray;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,

But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest Winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weighed° no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,[6]
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel-and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,

Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugged her and kissed her,
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many:"—
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,"
They answered grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.

Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us.”—
“Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits tho’ much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee.”—

They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,

Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Tho’ the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syruped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people
Worn out by her resistance
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,

Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me:
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,

Undone in mine undoing
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?”—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish° fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems[7] the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread thro’ her veins, knocked at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,

Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not° twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,

Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint° fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town:)
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

1859 1862

Endnotes

- Note 1: Bullaces, greengages, and damsons are varieties of plums.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: South African mammal resembling a badger (pronounced *ray-tell).*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Gorse; a wild shrub with thorns and small yellow flowers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Psalms 81:16.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Psalms 104:15.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Grimacing, making faces.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Makes headway against.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *small brook*Return to reference °

- °: *raised* Return to reference °
- °: *always* Return to reference °
- °: *bloom* Return to reference °
- °: *awe-inspiring* Return to reference °
- °: *irises* Return to reference °
- °: *juicy, succulent* Return to reference °
- °: *evaluated, considered* Return to reference °
- °: *feverish* Return to reference °
- °: *not only* Return to reference °
- °: *strange* Return to reference °

The Round Tower at Jhansi—June 8, 1857[1]

A hundred, a thousand to one; even so;
  Not a hope in the world remained;
The swarming, howling wretches below
  Gained, and gained, and gained.

S—— look'd at his pale young wife:—
  "Is the time come?" "The time *is* come."
Young, strong, and so full of life;
  The agony struck them dumb.

"Will it hurt much?" "No, mine own;
  I wish I could bear the pang for both."
"I wish I could bear the pang alone:
  Courage, dear! I am not loth."

Kiss and kiss: "It is not pain
  Thus to kiss and die.
One kiss more." "And yet one again."
  "Goodbye." "Goodbye."

1862

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This poem misrepresents an event from the Indian Uprising of 1857. The poem was written in September 1857. It was printed first in 1859, again in 1862, and a third time in 1875. In the 1862 reprinting of the poem, Rossetti added the following stanza in the middle of the poem: "Close his arm about her

now, / Close her cheek to his, / Close the pistol to her brow— / God forgive them this!”

In 1875, Rossetti removed the added stanza and added this note: “I retain this little poem, not as historically accurate, but as written and published before I heard the supposed facts of its first verse contradicted.” Rossetti is referring to false reports that the British superintendent of the Jhansi District, Captain Alexander Skene, shot his wife and himself before they could be seized by insurgents. Instead, Skene surrendered only then to be shot along with his wife.

Return to reference 1

“No, Thank You, John”

I never said I loved you, John:
   Why will you teaze me day by day,
And wax a weariness to think upon
      With always “do” and “pray”?

You know I never loved you, John;
   No fault of mine made me your toast:
Why will you haunt me with a face as wan
      As shows an hour-old ghost?

I dare say Meg or Moll would take
   Pity upon you, if you’d ask:
And pray don’t remain single for my sake
      Who can’t perform that task.

I have no heart?—Perhaps I have not;
   But then you’re mad to take offence
That I don’t give you what I have not got:
      Use your own common sense.

Let bygones be bygones:
   Don’t call me false, who owed not to be true:
I’d rather answer “No” to fifty Johns
      Than answer “Yes” to you.

Let’s mar our pleasant days no more,
   Song-birds of passage, days of youth:
Catch at today, forget the days before:
      I’ll wink° at your untruth.

Let us strike hands as hearty friends;
   No more, no less; and friendship’s good:

Only don’t keep in view ulterior ends,
And points not understood

In open treaty. Rise above
Quibbles and shuffling off and on:
Here’s friendship for you if you like; but love,—
No, thank you, John.

1860 1862

Notes

- °: *close (both) eyes* Return to reference °

Promises Like Pie-Crust

Promise me no promises,
So will I not promise you:
Keep we both our liberties,
Never false and never true:
Let us hold the die uncast,
Free to come as free to go:
For I cannot know your past,
And of mine what can you know?

You, so warm, may once have been
Warmer towards another one:
I, so cold, may once have seen
Sunlight, once have felt the sun:
Who shall show us if it was
Thus indeed in time of old?
Fades the image from the glass,
And the fortune is not told.

If you promised, you might grieve
For lost liberty again:
If I promised, I believe
I should fret to break the chain.
Let us be the friends we were,
Nothing more but nothing less:
Many thrive on frugal fare
Who would perish of excess.

1861 1896

In Progress

Ten years ago it seemed impossible
  That she should ever grow so calm as this,
  With self-remembrance in her warmest kiss
And dim dried eyes like an exhausted well.
Slow-speaking when she has some fact to tell,
  Silent with long-unbroken silences,
  Centred in self yet not unpleased to please,
Gravely monotonous like a passing bell.[1]
Mindful of drudging daily common things,
  Patient at pastime, patient at her work,
    Wearied perhaps but strenuous certainly.
    Sometimes I fancy we may one day see
  Her head shoot forth seven stars from where they lurk
And her eyes lightnings and her shoulders wings.

1862 1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: Bell rung during or after a person's death, a death bell.Return to reference 1

A Life’s Parallels

Never on this side of the grave again,
On this side of the river,
On this side of the garner° of the grain,
Never,—

Ever while time flows on and on and on,
That narrow noiseless river,
Ever while corn bows heavy-headed, wan,
Ever,—

Never despairing, often fainting, rueing,
But looking back, ah never!
Faint yet pursuing, faint yet still pursuing
Ever.

1881

Notes

- °: *storehouse*Return to reference °

WILLIAM MORRIS
1834–1896

William Morris's career was more multifaceted than that of any other Victorian writer in this anthology. He was a poet, a writer of prose romances, a painter, a designer of furniture, a businessman, a printer, and a leader of the British socialist movement.

Born of wealthy parents and brought up in the Essex countryside, he went to Oxford with the intention of becoming a clergyman. However, art for him soon displaced religion. At Oxford he discovered the work of John Ruskin, which was, in his words, "a revelation." Later in life he wrote, "It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent. . . . Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization." Morris's career in many ways realized Ruskin's views. In 1861 Morris and several friends founded a company to design and produce furniture, wallpaper, textiles, stained glass, tapestries, and carpets, objects still prized today as masterpieces of decorative art. Morris's aim was not only to make beautiful things but to restore creativity to modern manufacture, much as Ruskin had urged in "The Nature of Gothic," a chapter in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53). The minor arts, he believed, were in a state of complete degradation; through his firm he wanted to restore beauty of design and individual craftsmanship.

In his design work Morris developed close ties with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; its cofounder Dante Gabriel Rossetti

became a particular friend. In 1858 Morris published a remarkable book of poetry, *The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems*, which some critics regard as the finest book of Pre-Raphaelite verse. Using medieval materials, the poems plunge the reader into the middle of dramatic situations with little sense of larger narrative context or even right and wrong, where little is clear but the vividness of the characters' perceptions. After *The Defence of Guenevere*, Morris turned from lyric to narrative, publishing *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867) and *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70), a series of twenty-four classical and medieval tales. He then discovered the Icelandic sagas. He co-translated the *Volsunga Saga* and wrote a poem based on it, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung* (1876). In 1877 he founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

In the late 1870s, after Morris came to the conclusion that art could not have real life and growth under the commercialism of modern society, he turned to socialism. In 1883 he joined the Socialist Democratic Federation; the next year he led the secession of a large faction to found the Socialist League. He was at the center of socialist activity in England through the rest of the decade. At the famous debates held on Sunday evenings at Morris's house, political and literary figures regularly gathered, including William Butler Yeats and George Bernard Shaw. Morris lectured and wrote tirelessly for the cause, producing essays, columns, and a series of socialist literary works, among them *A Dream of John Ball* (1887) and *News from Nowhere* (1890), a utopian vision of life under communism in twenty-first-century England.

In 1890 Morris's health failed and factionalism brought his leadership of the Socialist League to an end. In 1891 he cofounded the Kelmscott Press, the first fine art press in England, whose masterpiece was the Kelmscott Chaucer, an edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (1387) with illustrations by the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne Jones and designs by Morris himself.

In the obituary he published after Morris's death, Shaw wrote, "He was ultramodern—not merely up-to-date, but far ahead of it: his wall papers, his hangings, his tapestries, and his printed books have

the twentieth century in every touch of them." Not only did Morris develop design principles that remained important in the twentieth century, but he also had a radical vision of the relationship of aesthetics to politics. He was, as Shaw said, "a complete artist."

The Defence of Guenevere For this poem Morris created strikingly original adaptations of episodes from one of his favorite books, Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1470). In Malory's narrative, Arthur's kingdom is eventually destroyed by dissension among his followers; especially damaging to the king's reign are rumors of an adulterous relationship between Queen Guenevere and Arthur's chief knight, Launcelot. Morris's poem alludes to two occasions in Malory's work when Guenevere is discovered in apparently compromising circumstances that lead to public accusations of adultery. On the first occasion (described in lines 167–220), her accuser, Sir Mellyagraunce, is challenged by Launcelot to a trial of battle. After Mellyagraunce is slain, the queen's honor is temporarily restored, though in Morris's telling this earlier scandal is revived by Sir Gauwaine in his accusations against her. The second occasion, which occurs just before Morris's poem opens, is more seriously incriminating. Thirteen knights plot successfully to trap Launcelot when he is visiting the queen's chamber at night at her invitation (events described in lines 242–76). In his escape Launcelot kills all but one of the knights—an event that later leads to civil war. In Malory's version there is no formal trial of the queen after Launcelot's escape; she is simply told of her sentence—she will be burned at the stake—and is thereafter rescued by Launcelot, who takes her away to safety in his castle. In inventing his trial scene Morris probably drew from a different episode in Malory (book 18, chapter 3), which ends with Sir Gauwaine accusing Guenevere of murder and treason in the presence of many other knights.

According to Morris's daughter, this poem originally opened with a long introductory passage of description and background. Because Morris subsequently decided to omit it, we are plunged at once into a dramatic scene much like those that begin some of the poems of Robert Browning (the Victorian poet whom Morris most admired). Also reminiscent of Browning's work are the constant shifts in Guenevere's speech from an awareness of her present situation to the recollection of moments in her past, such as the spring day early in her marriage to Arthur when Launcelot first kissed her.

Despite his copious production of visual artifacts, *Queen Guenevere* (1858) is the only full-size oil painting Morris ever finished. His model for Guenevere, who stands pensively in front of a rumpled bed, was Jane Burden, who became his wife the following year.

The Defence of Guenevere

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught° but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill°
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot° I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right, such great lords—still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then someone speak:

" 'One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth forever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" 'Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

"A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

"Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"After a shivering half hour you said,
'God help! heaven's color, the blue'; and he said,
'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known';
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

" 'Son of King Ban[1] of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea.

"And in Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love,
Must I give up forever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,[2]
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord[3]

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping there was some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like seaweed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast,

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting:

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had° made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darkened fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;

But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remembered bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinned this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes° never weeps—
Gauwaine, be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head severed in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell° blow,[4]
I pray your pity! let me not scream out

Forever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
Forever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light![°]
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde,*[5] for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed[6]—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

" 'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer out
—'Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

" 'A knife-point last night': so must I defend
The honor of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce

When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
'Slayer of unarmed men, here is a chance!

" 'Setter of traps,[7] I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies,[8] that my hand feels lead

" 'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and groveled at his feet,
And groaned at being slain so young—'at least.'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-armed will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,°

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen°
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain,[9] when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leaped caitiff's° sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wondered how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went:
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,°
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent°

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to gray, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvelously colored gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,[1]
When you can see my face with no lie there

"Forever? am I not a gracious proof—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

" 'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

" 'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here tonight,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

" 'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight:

" 'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

" 'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

" 'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said 'Come?' there was one less than three

"In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

"By God! I will not tell you more today,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot stilled their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood.
Turned sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She leaned eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger° drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Launcelot’s father, a king of Brittany.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Her marriage vow.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Her bond with Launcelot.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Morris’s version Gauwaine’s brother, Agravaine, beheads their mother, Morgan Le Fay, after she is accused of adultery. In Malory’s narrative another brother, Gaheris, kills her (book 10, chap. 24).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The False Castle (French); a term expressing her contempt. Launcelot’s castle is named the Joyous Garde.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In an earlier episode in Malory’s narrative, Guenevere and some of her young knights who have been wounded in a skirmish are confined for a night in a room in Mellyagraunce’s castle. Discovering bloodstains on her bedclothes the following morning, Mellyagraunce accuses her of adulterous relations with one of the wounded knights. Actually her visiting bedfellow had been Launcelot, who had cut his hand on the window bars as he climbed into her room.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Mellyagraunce tried to prevent Launcelot from coming to defend the queen’s honor by making him fall through a trapdoor into a dungeon.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Mellyagraunce discovers the bloodstains on Guenevere’s bedclothes by pulling open her bed-curtains; he had intended to rape the queen.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: She is chained to a stake, at which she will be burned if Launcelot fails to overcome her accuser.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The threads woven across the threads stretched lengthwise on a loom (the warp). Guenevere imagines these lies as being woven on a loom.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *anything*Return to reference °
- °: *use*Return to reference °
- °: *knows*Return to reference °
- °: *would have*Return to reference °
- °: *certainly*Return to reference °
- °: *cruel*Return to reference °
- °: *weak*Return to reference °
- °: *know*Return to reference °
- °: *prison*Return to reference °
- °: *coward's*Return to reference °
- °: *destroyed*Return to reference °
- °: *blinded*Return to reference °
- °: *battle horse*Return to reference °

How I Became a Socialist[1]

I am asked by the Editor to give some sort of a history of the above conversion, and I feel that it may be of some use to do so, if my readers will look upon me as a type of a certain group of people, but not so easy to do clearly, briefly and truly. Let me, however, try. But first, I will say what I mean by being a Socialist, since I am told that the word no longer expresses definitely and with certainty what it did ten years ago. Well, what I mean by Socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor, neither master nor master's man, neither idle nor overworked, neither brain-sick brain workers, nor heart-sick hand workers, in a word, in which all men would be living in equality of condition, and would manage their affairs unwastefully, and with the full consciousness that harm to one would mean harm to all—the realization at last of the meaning of the word COMMONWEALTH.

Now this view of Socialism which I hold to-day, and hope to die holding, is what I began with; I had no transitional period, unless you may call such a brief period of political radicalism during which I saw my ideal clear enough, but had no hope of any realization of it. That came to an end some months before I joined the (then) Democratic Federation,[2] and the meaning of my joining that body was that I had conceived a hope of the realization of my ideal. If you ask me how much of a hope, or what I thought we Socialists then living and working would accomplish towards it, or when there would be effected any change in the face of society, I must say, I do not know. I can only say that I did not measure my hope, nor the joy that it brought me at the time. For the rest, when I took that step I was blankly ignorant of economics; I had never so much as opened Adam Smith, or heard of Ricardo, or of Karl Marx.[3] Oddly enough, I *had* read some of Mill,[4] to wit, those posthumous papers of his (published, was it in the *Westminster Review* or the

Fortnightly?) in which he attacks Socialism in its Fourierist[5] guise. In those papers he put the arguments, as far as they go, clearly and honestly, and the result, so far as I was concerned, was to convince me that Socialism was a necessary change, and that it was possible to bring it about in our own days. Those papers put the finishing touch to my conversion to Socialism. Well, having joined a Socialist body (for the Federation soon became definitely Socialist), I put some conscience into trying to learn the economical side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though I must confess that, whereas I thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of "Capital," I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of that great work. Anyhow, I read what I could, and will hope that some information stuck to me from my reading; but more, I must think, from continuous conversation with such friends as Bax and Hyndman and Scheu,[6] and the brisk course of propaganda meetings which were going on at the time, and in which I took my share. Such finish to what of education in practical Socialism as I am capable of I received afterwards from some of my Anarchist friends, from whom I learned, quite against their intention, that Anarchism was impossible, much as I learned from Mill against *his* intention that Socialism was necessary.

But in this telling how I fell into *practical* Socialism I have begun, as I perceive, in the middle, for in my position of a well-to-do man, not suffering from the disabilities which oppress a working-man at every step, I feel that I might never have been drawn into the practical side of the question if an ideal had not forced me to seek towards it. For politics as politics, *i.e.*, not regarded as a necessary if cumbersome and disgustful means to an end, would never have attracted me, nor when I had become conscious of the wrongs of society as it now is, and the oppression of poor people, could I have ever believed in the possibility of a *partial* setting right of those wrongs. In other words, I could never have been such a fool as to believe in the happy and "respectable" poor.

If, therefore, my ideal forced me to look for practical Socialism, what was it that forced me to conceive of an ideal? Now, here comes

in what I said (in this paper) of my being a type of a certain group of mind.

Before the uprising of *modern* Socialism almost all intelligent people either were, or professed themselves to be, quite contented with the civilization of this century. Again, almost all of these really were thus contented, and saw nothing to do but to perfect the said civilization by getting rid of a few ridiculous survivals of the barbarous ages. To be short, this was the *Whig*[7] frame of mind, natural to the modern prosperous middle-class men, who, in fact, as far as mechanical progress is concerned, have nothing to ask for, if only Socialism would leave them alone to enjoy their plentiful style.

But besides these contented ones there were others who were not really contented, but had a vague sentiment of repulsion to the triumph of civilization, but were coerced into silence by the measureless power of Whiggery. Lastly, there were a few who were in open rebellion against the said Whiggery—a few, say two, Carlyle and Ruskin. The latter, before my days of practical Socialism, was my master towards the ideal aforesaid, and, looking backward, I cannot help saying, by the way, how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent, which I must say was not by any means vague. Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization. What shall I say of it now, when the words are put into my mouth, my hope of its destruction—what shall I say of its supplanting by Socialism?

What shall I say concerning its mastery of and its waste of mechanical power, its commonwealth so poor, its enemies of the commonwealth so rich, its stupendous organization—for the misery of life! Its contempt of simple pleasures which everyone could enjoy but for its folly? Its eyeless vulgarity which has destroyed art, the one certain solace of labour? All this I felt then as now, but I did not know why it was so. The hope of the past times was gone, the struggles of mankind for many ages had produced nothing but this sordid, aimless, ugly confusion; the immediate future seemed to me

likely to intensify all the present evils by sweeping away the last survivals of the days before the dull squalor of civilization had settled down on the world. This was a bad lookout indeed, and, if I may mention myself as a personality and not as a mere type, especially so to a man of my disposition, careless of metaphysics and religion, as well as of scientific analysis, but with a deep love of the earth and the life on it, and a passion for the history of the past of mankind. Think of it! Was it all to end in a counting-house on the top of a cinder-heap, with Podsnap's[8] drawing-room in the offing, and a Whig committee dealing out champagne to the rich and margarine to the poor in such convenient proportions as would make all men contented together, though the pleasure of the eyes was gone from the world, and the place of Homer was to be taken by Huxley?[9] Yet, believe me, in my heart, when I really forced myself to look towards the future, that is what I saw in it, and, as far as I could tell, scarce anyone seemed to think it worth while to struggle against such a consummation of civilization. So there I was in for a fine pessimistic end of life, if it had not somehow dawned on me that amidst all this filth of civilization the seeds of a great chance, what we others call Social-Revolution, were beginning to germinate. The whole face of things was changed to me by that discovery, and all I had to do then in order to become a Socialist was to hook myself on to the practical movement, which, as before said, I have tried to do as well as I could.

To sum up, then, the study of history and the love and practice of art forced me into a hatred of the civilization which, if things were to stop as they are, would turn history into inconsequent nonsense, and make art a collection of the curiosities of the past which would have no serious relation to the life of the present.

But the consciousness of revolution stirring amidst our hateful modern society prevented me, luckier than many others of artistic perceptions, from crystallizing into a mere railer against "progress" on the one hand, and on the other from wasting time and energy in any of the numerous schemes by which the quasi-artistic of the

middle classes hope to make art grow when it has no longer any root, and thus I became a practical Socialist.

A last word or two. Perhaps some of our friends will say, what have we to do with these matters of history and art? We want by means of Social-Democracy to win a decent livelihood, we want in some sort to live, and that at once. Surely any one who professes to think that the question of art and cultivation must go before that of the knife and fork (and there are some who do propose that) does not understand what art means, or how that its roots must have a soil of a thriving and unanxious life. Yet it must be remembered that civilization has reduced the workman to such a skinny and pitiful existence, that he scarcely knows how to frame a desire for any life much better than that which he now endures perforce. It is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life before him, a life to which the perception and creation of beauty, the enjoyment of real pleasure that is, shall be felt to be as necessary to man as his daily bread, and that no man, and no set of men, can be deprived of this except by mere opposition, which should be resisted to the utmost.

1894 1894

Endnotes

- Note 1: Written for the socialist magazine *Justice* in 1894.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The first socialist organization in London, founded in 1881.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: German political philosopher (1818–1883), who developed the concept of communism; his *Capital* (1867–94) is an analysis of capitalism. Smith (1723–1790), Scottish economist who argued that natural laws of production and exchange govern economies and produce wealth. Smith's work was an important justification of capitalism and laissez-faire (noninterventionist) economics. David Ricardo (1772–1823), English economist whose labor theory of value influenced Marx.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: James Mill (1773–1836), philosopher, political economist, and historian, and the father of John Stuart Mill.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Characteristic of a political philosophy, developed by Charles Fourier (1772–1837), that advocated a social reorganization to equalize wealth.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ernest Belfort Bax (1854–1926), H. M. Hyndman (1842–1921), and Andreas Scheu (1844–1927), leaders in the early English socialist movement.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From the monarchical crisis of 1678–81 onward, the term *Whig* (from *whiggamore*, a Scottish name for a cattle driver) designated a member of one of the two major parliamentary alliances (the Tories being the opposing group). Originally an aristocratic faction interested in reducing the power of the Crown, the Whigs became progressively associated with reform, and thus formed important bonds with other groups and individuals, such as moneyed industrialists, champions of free trade, and religious dissenters. This Whig-Radical coalition was known colloquially as the Liberal Party from 1839 onward; it adopted the name officially when it assumed the form of a modern political party in the 1860s. The term *Whig* remained in informal use, often in connection with a self-congratulatory state of mind most famously promulgated by Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859). His writings presented all English history as leading up to the parliamentary Reform Bill of 1832, and celebrated contemporary English life as the pinnacle of human achievement and civilization.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Podsnap is a character in Charles Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) who represents the epitome of pretentious middle-class respectability. "Counting-house": accountant's office.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: T. H. Huxley (1825–1895), writer on science, education, and philosophy.Return to reference 9

AUGUSTA WEBSTER
1837–1894

Even relatively reclusive writers tend to leave behind letters or journals; this is not the case with Augusta Webster. We do not even have much in the way of anecdotes from friends or acquaintances. We know she was born in 1837, in Poole, Dorset, to Julia Hume Davies and Vice-Admiral George Davies, and that she spent at least some of her childhood living on her father's ship, the *Griper*. In 1851, her father was appointed chief constable of Cambridgeshire where she came to be known as "one of the brilliant daughters of Admiral Davies"—though we do not know for certain how many sisters she may have had. She must have had a brother, since the writer Vernon Lee claims she learned Greek in order to help him. She also learned Italian, Spanish, and French. And we know that she was admitted to the South Kensington Art School, although according to the British feminist and politician Ray Strachey, she "nearly dashed the prospects of women art students for ever by being expelled for whistling."

Augusta Davies married Trinity fellow and law lecturer Thomas Webster in 1863; the couple had one child, a daughter. Sometime around 1870, the family moved to London so as to allow Augusta to pursue her literary career and her political activism: she was elected head of the Chelsea division of the London school board twice and was active in the movement for women's education.

In terms of her writing, Webster was the author of several powerful volumes of poetry, including *Dramatic Studies* (1866), *A Woman Sold* (1867), and *Portraits* (1870), along with a novel, several plays, and translations from the Greek. She also worked as poetry reviewer for *The Athenaeum* and wrote articles for *The Examiner*. Her poetry was popular during her lifetime: *Portraits*, for example, went to three editions. She suffered the fate of many women poets, however, in being regarded as a "woman poet," rather than being assessed simply as a "poet." This is a fate she attempted to avoid by using the pseudonym "Cecil Home" for her first few publications. After 1864, she published under her own name.

Some have called Webster's characteristic form "dramatic monologue," but her work differs significantly from that of the most important practitioner in that mode, Robert Browning. While his speakers often have an obvious interlocutor, hers rarely do; as a result, they can seem like ruminations rather than confessions or speeches. In addition, while his work tends to focus on interior states and purely psychological issues (greed, jealousy, possessiveness, sensuousness, love), she tends to address interior states as they relate to social conditions. While Webster's poetry is political, however, it is also important aesthetically: as critic Herbert Tucker points out, she is "an exquisite innovator in the resources of blank verse."

Webster died in 1894, by which point whatever respect that had been accorded to her poetry had already begun to fade. Only in the 1980s and 1990s did feminist scholars begin to call attention to the power and interest of her work.

Circe[1]

The sun drops luridly into the west;
darkness has raised her arms to draw him down
before the time, not waiting as of wont
till he has come to her behind the sea;
and the smooth waves grow sullen in the gloom
and wear their threatening purple; more and more
the plain of waters sways and seems to rise
convexly from its level of the shores;
and low dull thunder rolls along the beach:
there will be storm at last, storm, glorious storm.

Oh welcome, welcome, though it rend my bowers,
scattering my blossomed roses like the dust,
splitting the shrieking branches, tossing down
my riotous vines with their young half-tinged grapes
like small round amethysts or beryls strung
tumultuously in clusters, though it sate°
its ravenous spite among my goodliest pines
standing there round and still against the sky
that makes blue lakes between their sombre tufts,
or harry from my silvery olive slopes
some hoary king whose gnarled fantastic limbs
wear crooked armour of a thousand years;
though it will hurl high on my flowery shores
the hostile wave that rives at the poor sward[2]
and drags it down the slants,° that swirls its foam
over my terraces, shakes their firm blocks
of great bright marbles into tumbled heaps,
and makes my pleached and mossy labyrinths,
where the small odorous blossoms grow like stars
strewn in the milky way, a briny marsh.

What matter? let it come and bring me change,
breaking the sickly sweet monotony.

I am too weary of this long bright calm;
always the same blue sky, always the sea
the same blue perfect likeness of the sky,
one rose to match the other that has waned,
to-morrow's dawn the twin of yesterday's;
and every night the ceaseless crickets chirp
the same long joy and the late strain of birds
repeats their strain of all the even month;
and changelessly the petty plashing surfs
bubble their chiming burden round the stones;
dusk after dusk brings the same languid trance
upon the shadowy hills, and in the fields
the waves of fireflies come and go the same,
making the very flash of light and stir
vex one like dronings of the spinning wheel.

Give me some change. Must life be only sweet,
all honey-pap[3] as babes would have their food?
And, if my heart must always be adrowse
in a hush of stagnant sunshine, give me then
something outside me stirring; let the storm
break up the sluggish beauty, let it fall
beaten below the feet of passionate winds,
and then to-morrow waken jubilant
in a new birth: let me see subtle joy
of anguish and of hopes, of change and growth.

What fate is mine who, far apart from pains
and fears and turmoils of the cross-grained world,
dwell, like a lonely god, in a charmed isle
where I am first and only, and, like one
who should love poisonous savours more than mead,
long for a tempest on me and grow sick

of resting, and divine free carelessness!
Oh me, I am a woman, not a god;
yea, those who tend me even are more than I,
my nymphs who have the souls of flowers and birds
singing and blossoming immortally.

Ah me! these love a day and laugh again,
and loving, laughing, find a full content;
but I know nought of peace, and have not loved.

Where is my love? Does some one cry for me,
not knowing whom he calls? does his soul cry
for mine to grow beside it, grow in it?
does he beseech the gods to give him me,
the one unknown rare woman by whose side
no other woman, thrice as beautiful,
should once seem fair to him; to whose voice heard
in any common tones no sweetest sound
of love made melody on silver lutes,
or singing like Apollo's[4] when the gods
grow pale with happy listening, might be peered
for making music to him; whom once found
there will be no more seeking anything?

Oh love, oh love, oh love, art not yet come
out of the waiting shadows into life?
art not yet come after so many years
that I have longed for thee? Come! I am here.

Not yet. For surely I should feel a sound
of his far answering, if now in the world
he sought me who will seek me—Oh ye gods
will he not seek me? Is it all a dream?
will there be never never such a man?
will there be only these, these bestial things
who wallow in my styes, or mop and mow

among the trees, or munch in pens and byres,[5]
or snarl and filch° behind their wattled[6] coops;
these things who had believed that they were men?

Nay but he *will* come. Why am I so fair,
and marvellously minded, and with sight
which flashes suddenly on hidden things,
as the gods see who do not need to look?
why wear I in my eyes that stronger power
than basilisks,[7] whose gaze can only kill,
to draw men's souls to me to live or die
as I would have them? why am I given pride
which yet longs to be broken, and this scorn
cruel and vengeful for the lesser men
who meet the smiles I waste for lack of him
and grow too glad? why am I who I am,
but for the sake of him whom fate will send
one day to be my master utterly,
that he should take me, the desire of all,
whom only he in the world could bow to him?

Oh sunlike glory of pale glittering hairs,
bright as the filmy wires my weavers take
to make me golden gauzes; oh deep eyes,
darker and softer than the bluest dusk
of August violets, darker and deep
like crystal fathomless lakes in summer noons;
oh sad sweet longing smile; oh lips that tempt
my very self to kisses; oh round cheeks,
tenderly radiant with the even flush
of pale smoothed coral; perfect lovely face
answering my gaze from out this fleckless pool;
wonder of glossy shoulders, chiselled limbs;
should I be so your lover as I am,
drinking an exquisite joy to watch you thus
in all a hundred changes through the day,

but that I love you for him till he comes,
but that my beauty means his loving it?

Oh, look! a speck on this side of the sun,
coming—yes, coming with the rising wind
that frays the darkening cloud wrack on the verge
and in a little while will leap abroad,
spattering the sky with rushing blacknesses,
dashing the hissing mountainous waves at the stars.
'Twill drive me that black speck a shuddering hulk
caught in the buffeting waves, dashed impotent
from ridge to ridge, will drive it in the night
with that dull jarring crash upon the beach,
and the cries for help and the cries of fear and hope.

And then to-morrow they will thoughtfully,
with grave low voices, count their perils up,
and thank the gods for having let them live,
and tell of wives or mothers in their homes,
and children, who would have such loss in them
that they must weep, and may be I weep too,
with fancy of the weepings had they died.
And the next morrow they will feel their ease
and sigh with sleek content, or laugh elate,
tasting delights of rest and revelling,
music and perfumes, joyaunce for the eyes
of rosy faces and luxurious pomps,
the savour of the banquet and the glow
and fragrance of the wine-cup; and they'll talk
how good it is to house in palaces
out of the storms and struggles, and what luck
strewed their good ship on our accessless coast.
Then the next day the beast in them will wake,
and one will strike and bicker, and one swell
with puffed up greatness, and one gibe and strut
in apish pranks, and one will line his sleeve

with pilfered booties, and one snatch the gems
out of the carven goblets as they pass,
one will grow mad with fever of the wine,
and one will sluggishly besot himself,
and one be lewd, and one be gluttonous;
and I shall sickly look, and loathe them all.

Oh my rare cup! my pure and crystal cup,
with not one speck of colour to make false
the passing lights, or flaw to make them swerve!
My cup of Truth! How the lost fools will laugh
and thank me for my boon, as if I gave
some momentary flash of the gods' joy,
to drink where I have drunk and touch the touch
of my lips with their own! Aye, let them touch.

Too cruel am I? And the silly beasts,
crowding around me when I pass their way,
glower on me and, although they love me still,
(with their poor sorts of love such as they could,)
call wrath and vengeance to their humid eyes
to scare me into mercy, or creep near
with piteous fawnings, supplicating bleats.
Too cruel? Did I choose them what they are?
or change them from themselves by poisonous
charms?
But any draught, pure water, natural wine,
out of my cup, revealed them to themselves
and to each other. Change? there was no change;
only disguise gone from them unawares:
and had there been one right true man of them
he would have drunk the draught as I had drunk,
and stood unchanged, and looked me in the eyes,
abashing me before him. But these things—
why, which of them has even shown the kind
of some one nobler beast? Pah, yapping wolves

and pitiless stealthy wild-cats, curs and apes
and gorging swine and slinking venomous snakes
all false and ravenous and sensual brutes
that shame the Earth that bore them, these they are.

Lo, lo! the shivering blueness darting forth
on half the heavens, and the forked thin fire
strikes to the sea: and hark, the sudden voice
that rushes through the trees before the storm,
and shuddering of the branches. Yet the sky
is blue against them still, and early stars
glimmer above the pine-tops; and the air
clings faint and motionless around me here.

Another burst of flame—and the black speck
shows in the glare, lashed onwards. It were well
I bade make ready for our guests to-night.

1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: A minor Greek goddess and enchantress.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Grassy ground; “rives”: forcibly split.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sweet, soft food for babies.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Greek and Roman god of archery and patron of herdsmen and shepherds.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A stable for cows.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Made from interwoven twigs or rods.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Mythical reptiles that can cause death with a glance.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *satisfy* Return to reference °
- °: *slopes* Return to reference °
- °: *steal* Return to reference °

A Castaway

Poor little diary, with its simple thoughts,
its good resolves, its "Studied French an hour,"
"Read Modern History," "Trimmed up my grey hat,"
"Darned stockings," "Tatted,"° "Practised my new song,"
"Went to the daily service," "Took Bess soup,"
"Went out to tea." Poor simple diary!
and did *I* write it? Was I this good girl,
this budding colourless young rose of home?
did I so live content in such a life,
seeing no larger scope, nor asking it,
than this small constant round—old clothes to mend,
new clothes to make, then go and say my prayers,
or carry soup, or take a little walk
and pick the ragged-robins° in the hedge?
Then for ambition, (was there ever life
that could forego that?) to improve my mind
and know French better and sing harder songs;
for gaiety, to go, in my best white
well washed and starched and freshened with new bows,
and take tea out to meet the clergyman.
No wishes and no cares, almost no hopes,
only the young girl's hazed and golden dreams
that veil the Future from her.

So long since:
and now it seems a jest to talk of me
as if I could be one with her, of me
who am. . . . . me.

And what is that? My looking-glass
answers it passably; a woman sure,
no fiend, no slimy thing out of the pools,
a woman with a ripe and smiling lip
that has no venom in its touch I think,
with a white brow on which there is no brand;
a woman none dare call not beautiful,
not womanly in every woman's grace.

Aye let me feed upon my beauty thus,
be glad in it like painters when they see
at last the face they dreamed but could not find
look from their canvass on them, triumph in it,
the dearest thing I have. Why, 'tis my all,
let me make much of it: is it not this,
this beauty, my own curse at once and tool
to snare men's souls—(I know what the good say
of beauty in such creatures)—is it not this
that makes me feel myself a woman still,
some little pride some little—

Here's a jest!
what word will fit the sense but modesty?
A wanton I but modest!

Modest, true;
I'm not drunk in the streets, ply not for hire
at infamous corners with my likenesses
of the humbler kind; yes, modesty's my word—
'twould shape my mouth well too, I think I'll try:
"Sir, Mr What-you-will, Lord Who-knows-what,
my present lover or my next to come,
value me at my worth, fill your purse full,
for I am modest; yes, and honour me
as though your schoolgirl sister or your wife

could let her skirts brush mine or talk of me;
for I am modest."

Well, I flout myself:
but yet, but yet——

Fie, poor fantastic fool,
why do I play the hypocrite alone,
who am no hypocrite with others by?
where should be my "But yet"? I am that thing
called half a dozen dainty names, and none
dainty enough to serve the turn and hide
the one coarse English worst that lurks beneath:
just that, no worse, no better.

And, for me,
I say let no one be above her trade;
I own my kindredship with any drab
who sells herself as I, although she crouch
in fetid garrets and I have a home
all velvet and marqueterie and pastilles,[1]
although she hide her skeleton in rags
and I set fashions and wear cobweb lace:
the difference lies but in my choicer ware,
that I sell beauty and she ugliness;
our traffic's one—I'm no sweet slaver-tongue
to gloze[2] upon it and explain myself
a sort of fractious angel misconceived—
our traffic's one: I own it. And what then?
I know of worse that are called honourable.
Our lawyers, who, with noble eloquence
and virtuous outbursts, lie to hang a man,
or lie to save him, which way goes the fee:
our preachers, gloating on your future hell
for not believing what they doubt themselves:
our doctors, who sort poisons out by chance,

and wonder how they'll answer, and grow rich:
our journalists, whose business is to fib
and juggle truths and falsehoods to and fro:
our tradesmen, who must keep unspotted names
and cheat the least like stealing that they can:
our——all of them, the virtuous worthy men
who feed on the world's follies, vices, wants,
and do their businesses of lies and shams
honestly, reputably, while the world
claps hands and cries "good luck," which of their
trades,
their honourable trades, barefaced like mine,
all secrets brazened out, would shew more white?

And whom do I hurt more than they? as much?
The wives? Poor fools, what do I take from them
worth crying for or keeping? If they knew
what their fine husbands look like seen by eyes
that may perceive there are more men than one!
But, if they can, let them just take the pains
to keep them: 'tis not such a mighty task
to pin an idiot to your apron-string;
and wives have an advantage over us,
(the good and blind ones have), the smile or pout
leaves them no secret nausea at odd times.
Oh they could keep their husbands if they cared,
but 'tis an easier life to let them go,
and whimper at it for morality.

Oh! those shrill carping virtues, safely housed
from reach of even a smile that should put red
on a decorous cheek, who rail at us
with such a spiteful scorn and rancourousness,
(which maybe is half envy at the heart),
and boast themselves so measurelessly good
and us so measurelessly unlike them,

what is their wondrous merit that they stay
in comfortable homes whence not a soul
has ever thought of tempting them, and wear
no kisses but a husband's upon lips
there is no other man desires to kiss—
refrain in fact from sin impossible?
How dare they hate us so? what have they done,
what borne, to prove them other than we are?
What right have they to scorn us—glass-case saints,
Dianas[3] under lock and key—what right
more than the well-fed helpless barn-door fowl
to scorn the larcenous wild-birds?

Pshaw, let be!
Scorn or no scorn, what matter for their scorn?
I have outfaced my own—that's harder work.
Oh let their virtuous malice dribble on—
mock snowstorms on the stage—I'm proof long since:
I have looked coolly on my what and why,
and I accept myself.

Oh I'll endorse
the shamefullest revilings mouthed at me,
cry "True! Oh perfect picture! Yes, that's I!"
and add a telling blackness here and there,
and then dare swear you, every nine of ten,
my judges and accusers, I'd not change
my conscience against yours, you who tread out
your devil's pilgrimage along the roads
that take in church and chapel, and arrange
a roundabout and decent way to hell.

Well mine's a short way and a merry one:
so says my pious hash of ohs and ahs,
choice texts and choicer threats, appropriate names,

(Rahabs and Jezebels), some fierce Tartuffe[4]
hurled at me through the post. We had rare fun
over that tract digested with champagne.
Where is it? where's my rich repertory
of insults biblical? '*I prey on souls*'—
only my men have oftenest none I think:
'*I snare the simple ones*'—but in these days
there seem to be none simple and none snared,
and most men have their favourite sinnings planned
to do them civilly and sensibly:
'*I braid my hair*'—but braids are out of date:
'*I paint my cheeks*'—I always wear them pale:
'*I*—'

Pshaw! the trash is savourless to-day:
one cannot laugh alone. There, let it burn.
What, does the windy dullard think one needs
his wisdom dove-tailed on to Solomon's,[5]
his threats out-threatening God's, to teach the news
that those who need not sin have safer souls?
We know it, but we've bodies to save too;
and so we earn our living.

Well lit, tract!
at least you've made me a good leaping blaze.
Up, up, how the flame shoots! and now 'tis dead.
Oh proper finish, preaching to the last—
no such bad omen either; sudden end,
and no sad withering horrible old age.
How one would clutch at youth to hold it tight!
and then to know it gone, to see it gone,
be taught its absence by harsh careless looks,
to live forgotten, solitary, old—
the cruellest word that ever woman learns.
Old—that's to be nothing, or to be at best
a grey memorial that in better days

there was a woman once with such a name.
No, no, I could not bear it: death itself
shows kinder promise. . . . . even death itself,
since it must come one day—

Oh this grey gloom!
This rain, rain, rain, what wretched thoughts it
brings!
Death: I'll not think of it.

Will no one come?
'Tis dreary work alone.

Why did I read
that silly diary? Now, sing song, ding dong,
come the old vexing echoes back again,
church bells and nursery good-books, back again
upon my shrinking ears that had forgotten—
I hate the useless memories: 'tis fools' work
singing the hacknied dirge of 'better days':
best take Now kindly, give the past good-bye,
whether it were a better or a worse.

Yes, yes, I listened to the echoes once,
the echoes and the thoughts from the old days.
The worse for me: I lost my richest friend,
and that was all the difference. For the world
I would not have that flight known. How they'd roar:
"What! Eulalie, when she refused us all,
'ill' and 'away,' was doing Magdalene,
tears, ashes, and her Bible, and then off
to hide her in a Refuge . . . for a week!"[6]

A wild whim that, to fancy I could change
my new self for my old, because I wished!
Since then, when in my languid days there comes

that craving, like homesickness, to go back
to the good days, the dear old stupid days,
to the quiet and the innocence, I know
'tis a sick fancy and try palliatives.

What is it? You go back to the old home,
and 'tis not *your* home, has no place for you,
and, if it had, you could not fit you in it.
And could I fit me to my former self?
If I had had the wit, like some of us,
to sow my wild-oats into three per cents,°
could I not find me shelter in the peace
of some far nook where none of them would come,
nor whisper travel from this scurrilous world,
that gloats and moralizes through its leers,
to blast me with my fashionable shame?
There I might—oh my castle in the clouds!
and where's its rent?—but there, were there a there,
I might again live the grave blameless life
among such simple pleasures, simple cares:
but could they be my pleasures be my cares?
The blameless life, but never the content—
never. How could I henceforth be content
in any life but one that sets the brain
in a hot merry fever with its stir?
What would there be in quiet rustic days,
each like the other, full of time to think,
to keep one bold enough to live at all?
Quiet is hell, I say—as if a woman
could bear to sit alone, quiet all day,
and loathe herself, and sicken on her thoughts.

They tried it at the Refuge, and I failed:
I could not bear it. Dreary hideous room,
coarse pittance, prison rules, one might bear these
and keep one's purpose; but so much alone,

and then made faint and weak and fanciful
by change from pampering to half-famishing—
good God, what thoughts come! Only one week more
and 'twould have ended: but in one day more
I must have killed myself. And I loathe death,
the dreadful foul corruption, with who knows
what future after it.

Well, I came back,
back to my slough.° Who says I had my choice?
Could I stay there to die of some mad death?
and if I rambled out into the world,
sinless but penniless, what else were that
but slower death, slow pining shivering death
by misery and hunger? Choice! what choice
of living well or ill? could I have that?
And who would give it me? I think indeed
if some kind hand, a woman's—I hate men—
had stretched itself to help me to firm ground,
taken a chance and risked my falling back,
I could have gone my way not falling back:
but, let her be all brave, all charitable,
how could she do it? Such a trifling boon,
a little work to live by, 'tis not much,
and I might have found will enough to last:
but where's the work? More sempstresses than shirts;
and defter hands at white work than are mine
drop starved at last: dressmakers, milliners,
too many too they say; and then their trades
need skill, apprenticeship. And who so bold
as hire me for their humblest drudgery?
not even for scullery slut;[7] not even, I think,
for governess, although they'd get me cheap.
And after all it would be something hard,

with the marts for decent women overfull,
if I could elbow in and snatch a chance
and oust some good girl so, who then perforce
must come and snatch her chance among our crowd.

Why, if the worthy men who think all's done
if we'll but come where we can hear them preach,
could bring us all, or any half of us,
into their fold, teach all us wandering sheep,
or only half of us, to stand in rows
and baa them hymns and moral songs, good lack,
what would they do with us? what could they do?
Just think! with were't but half of us on hand
to find work for . . . or husbands. Would they try
to ship us to the colonies for wives?[8]

Well, well, I know the wise ones talk and talk:
"Here's cause, here's cure:" "No, here it is and here:"
and find society to blame, or law,
the Church, the men, the women, too few schools,
too many schools, too much, too little taught:
somewhere or somehow someone is to blame:
but I say all the fault's with God himself
who puts too many women in the world.
We ought to die off reasonably and leave
as many as the men want, none to waste.
Here's cause; the woman's superfluity:[9]
and for the cure, why, if it were the law,
say, every year, in due percentages,
balancing them with men as the times need,
to kill off female infants, 'twould make room;
and some of us would not have lost too much,
losing life ere we know what it *can* mean.

The other day I saw a woman weep

beside her dead child's bed: the little thing
lay smiling, and the mother wailed half mad,
shrieking to God to give it back again.
I could have laughed aloud: the little girl
living had but her mother's life to live;
there she lay smiling, and her mother wept
to know her gone!

My mother would have wept.

Oh mother, mother, did you ever dream,
you good grave simple mother, you pure soul
no evil could come nigh, did you once dream
in all your dying cares for your lone girl
left to fight out her fortune all alone
that there would be *this* danger?—for *your* girl,
taught by you, lapped in a sweet ignorance,
scarcely more wise of what things sin could be
than some young child a summer six months old,
where in the north the summer makes a day,
of what is darkness . . . darkness that will come
to-morrow suddenly. Thank God at least
for this much of my life, that when you died,
that when you kissed me dying, not a thought
of this made sorrow for you, that I too
was pure of even fear.

Oh yes, I thought,
still new in my insipid treadmill life,
(my father so late dead), and hopeful still
there might be something pleasant somewhere in it,
some sudden fairy come, no doubt, to turn
my pumpkin to a chariot, I thought then
that I might plod, and plod, and drum the sounds
of useless facts into unwilling ears,
tease children with dull questions half the day,

then con dull answers in my room at night
ready for next day's questions, mend quill pens
and cut my fingers, add up sums done wrong
and never get them right; teach, teach, and teach—
what I half knew, or not at all—teach, teach
for years, a lifetime—*I!*

And yet, who knows?
it might have been, for I was patient once,
and willing, and meant well; it might have been
had I but still clung on in my first place—
a safe dull place, where mostly there were smiles
but never merry-makings; where all days
jogged on sedately busy, with no haste;
where all seemed measured out, but margins broad:
a dull home but a peaceful, where I felt
my pupils would be dear young sisters soon,
and felt their mother take me to her heart,
motherly to all lonely harmless things.
But I must have a conscience, must blurt out
my great discovery of my ignorance!
And who required it of me? And who gained?
What did it matter for a more or less
the girls learnt in their schoolbooks, to forget
in their first season? We did well together:
they loved me and I them: but I went off
to housemaid's pay, six crossgrained brats to teach,
wrangles and jangles, doubts, disgrace . . . then this;
and they had a perfection found for them,
who has all ladies' learning in her head
abridged and scheduled, speaks five languages,
knows botany and conchology and globes,[1]
draws, paints, plays, sings, embroiders, teaches all
on a patent method never known to fail:
and now they're finished and, I hear, poor things,
are the worst dancers and worst dressers out.

And, where's their profit of those prison years
all gone to make them wise in lesson books?
who wants his wife to know weeds' Latin names?
who ever chose a girl for saying dates?
or asked if she had learned to trace a map?

Well, well, the silly rules this silly world
makes about women! This is one of them.
Why must there be pretence of teaching them
what no one ever cares that they should know,
what, grown out of the schoolroom, they cast off
like the schoolroom pinafore, no better fit
for any use of real grown-up life,
for any use to her who seeks or waits
the husband and the home, for any use,
for any shallowest pretence of use,
to her who has them? Do I not know this,
I like my betters, that a woman's life,
her natural life, her good life, her one life,
is in her husband, God on earth to her,
and what she knows and what she can and is
is only good as it brings good to him?

Oh God, do I not know it? I the thing
of shame and rottenness, the animal
that feed men's lusts and prey on them, I, I,
who should not dare to take the name of wife
on my polluted lips, who in the word
hear but my own reviling, I know that.
I could have lived by that rule, how content:
my pleasure to make him some pleasure, pride
to be as he would have me, duty, care,
to fit all to his taste, rule my small sphere
to his intention; then to lean on him,
be guided, tutored, loved—no not that word,
that *loved* which between men and women means

all selfishness, all putrid talk, all lust,
all vanity, all idiocy—not loved
but cared for. I've been loved myself, I think,
some once or twice since my poor mother died,
but *cared for*, never:—that a word for homes,
kind homes, good homes, where simple children come
and ask their mother is this right or wrong,
because they know she's perfect, cannot err;
their father told them so, and he knows all,
being so wise and good and wonderful,
even enough to scorn even her at times
and tell her everything she does not know.
Ah the sweet nursery logic!

Fool! thrice fool!
do I hanker after that too? Fancy me
infallible nursery saint, live code of law!
me preaching! teaching innocence to be good!—
a mother!

Yet the baby thing that woke
and wailed an hour or two, and then was dead,
was mine, and had he lived. . . . . why then my name
would have been mother. But 'twas well he died:
I could have been no mother, I, lost then
beyond his saving. Had he come before
and lived, come to me in the doubtful days
when shame and boldness had not grown one sense,
for his sake, with the courage come of him,
I might have struggled back.

But how? But how?
His father would not then have let me go:
his time had not yet come to make an end

of my ‘for ever’ with a hireling’s fee
and civil light dismissal. None but him
to claim a bit of bread of if I went,
child or no child: would he have given it me?
He! no; he had not done with me. No help,
no help, no help. Some ways can be trodden back,
but never our way, we who one wild day
have given goodbye to what in our deep hearts
the lowest woman still holds best in life,
good name—good name though given by the world
that mouths and garbles with its decent prate,
and wraps it in respectable grave shams,
and patches conscience partly by the rule
of what one’s neighbour thinks but something more
by what his eyes are sharp enough to see.
How I could scorn it with its Pharisees,[2]
if it could not scorn me: but yet, but yet—
oh God, if I could look it in the face!

Oh I am wild, am ill, I think, to-night:
will no one come and laugh with me? No feast,
no merriment to-night. So long alone!
Will no one come?

At least there’s a new dress
to try, and grumble at—they never fit
to one’s ideal. Yes, a new rich dress,
with lace like this too; that’s a soothing balm
for any fretting woman, cannot fail,
I’ve heard men say it . . . and they know so well
what’s in all women’s hearts, especially
women like me.

No help! no help! no help!
How could it be? It was too late long since—
even at the first too late. Whose blame is that?

there are some kindly people in the world,
but what can they do? If one hurls oneself
into a quicksand, what can be the end,
but that one sinks and sinks? Cry out for help?
Ah yes, and, if it came, who is so strong
to strain from the firm ground and lift one out?
And how, so firmly clutching the stretched hand,
as death's pursuing terror bids, even so,
how can one reach firm land, having to foot
the treacherous crumbling soil that slides and gives
and sucks one in again? Impossible path!
No, why waste struggles, I or any one?
what is must be. What then? I, where I am,
sinking and sinking; let the wise pass by
and keep their wisdom for an apter use,
let me sink merrily as I best may.

Only, I think, my brother—I forgot
he stopped his brotherhood some years ago—
but if he had been just so much less good
as to remember mercy. Did he think
how once I was his sister, prizing him
as sisters do, content to learn for him
the lesson girls with brothers all must learn,
to do without?

I have heard girls lament
that doing so without all things one would,
but I saw never aught to murmur at,
for men must be made ready for their work,
and women all have more or less their chance
of husbands to work for them, keep them safe
like summer roses in soft greenhouse air
that never guess 'tis winter out of doors:
no, I saw never aught to murmur at,
content with stinted fare and shabby clothes

and cloistered silent life to save expense,
teaching myself out of my borrowed books,
while he for some one pastime, (needful true
to keep him of his rank, 'twas not his fault),
spent in a month what might have given me
my teachers for a year.

'Twas no one's fault:
for could he be launched forth on the rude sea
of this contentious world and left to find
oars and the boatman's skill by some good chance?
'Twas no one's fault: yet still he might have thought
of our so different youths, and owned at least
'tis pitiful when a mere nerveless° girl,
untutored, must put forth upon that sea,
not in the woman's true place, the wife's place,
to trust a husband and be borne along,
but impotent blind pilot to herself.

Merciless, merciless—like the prudent world
that will not have the flawed soul prank itself
with a hoped second virtue, will not have
the woman fallen once lift up herself. . . . . .
lest she should fall again. Oh how his taunts,
his loathing fierce reproaches, scarred and seared,
like branding iron hissing in a wound!
And it was true—*that* killed me: and I felt
a hideous hopeless shame kill out my heart,
and knew myself for ever that he said,
that which I was—Oh it was true, true, true.

No, not true then. I was not all that then.
Oh, I have drifted on before mad winds
and made ignoble shipwreck, not to-day
could any breeze of heaven prosper me
into the track again, nor any hand

snatch me out of the whirlpool I have reached;
but then?

Nay he judged very well: he knew
repentance was too dear a luxury
for a beggar's buying, knew it earns no bread—
and knew me a too base and nerveless thing
to bear my first fault's sequel and just die.
And how could he have helped me? Held my hand,
owned me for his, fronted the angry world
clothed with my ignominy? Or maybe
taken me to his home to damn him worse?
What did I look for? for what less would serve
that he could do, a man without a purse?
He meant me well, he sent me that five pounds,
much to him then; and, if he bade me work
and never vex him more with news of me,
we both knew him too poor for pensioners.
I see he did his best; I could wish now
sending it back I had professed some thanks.

But there! I was too wretched to be meek:
it seemed to me as if he, every one,
the whole great world, were guilty of my guilt,
abettors and avengers: in my heart
I gibed them back their gibings; I was wild.

I see clear now and know one has one's life
in hand at first to spend or spare or give
like any other coin; spend it or give
or drop it in the mire, can the world see
you get your value for it, or bar back
the hurrying of its marts to grope it up
and give it back to you for better use?
And if you spend or give that is your choice;
and if you let it slip that's your choice too,

you should have held it firmer. Yours the blame,
and not another's, not the indifferent world's
that goes on steadily, statistically,
and count by censuses not separate souls—
and if it somehow needs to its worst use
so many lives of women, useless else,
it buys us of ourselves, we could hold back,
free all of us to starve, and some of us,
(those who have done no ill and are in luck),
to slave their lives out and have food and clothes
until they grow unserviceably old.

Oh I blame no one—scarcely even myself.
It was to be: the very good in me
has always turned to hurt; all I thought right
at the hot moment, judged of afterwards,
shows reckless.

Why, look at it, had I taken
the pay my dead child's father offered me
for having been its mother, I could then
have kept life in me, (many have to do it,
that swarm in the back alleys, on no more,
cold sometimes, mostly hungry, but they live);
I could have gained a respite trying it,
and maybe found at last some humble work
to eke the pittance out. Not I, forsooth,
I must have spirit, must have womanly pride,
must dash back his contemptuous wages, I,
who had not scorned to earn them, dash them back
the fiercer that he dared to count our boy
in my appraising: and yet now I think
I might have taken it for my dead boy's sake;
it would have been *his* gift.

But I went forth

with my fine scorn, and whither did it lead?
Money's the root of evil do they say?
money is virtue, strength: money to me
would then have been repentance: could I live
upon my idiot's pride?

Well, it fell soon.
I had prayed Edward might believe me dead,
and yet I begged of him—That's like me too,
beg of him and then send him back his alms!
What if he gave as to a whining wretch
that holds her hand and lies? I am less to him
than such a one; her rags do him no wrong,
but I, I, wrong him merely that I live,
being his sister. Could I not at least
have still let him forget me? But 'tis past:
and naturally he may hope I am long dead.

Good God! to think that we were what we were
one to the other . . . and now!

He has done well;
married a sort of heiress, I have heard,
a dapper little madam, dimple cheeked
and dimple brained, who makes him a good wife—
No doubt she'd never own but just to him,
and in a whisper, she can even suspect
that we exist, we other women-things:
what would she say if she could learn one day
she has a sister-in-law! So he and I
must stand apart till doomsday.

But the jest,
to think how she would look!—Her fright, poor thing!
The notion!—I could laugh outright. . . . . or else,
for I feel near it, roll on the ground and sob.

Well, after all, there's not much difference
between the two sometimes.

Was that the bell?
Some one at last, thank goodness. There's a voice,
and that's a pleasure. Whose though? Ah I know.
Why did she come alone, the cackling goose?
why not have brought her sister?—she tells more
and titters less. No matter; half a loaf
is better than no bread.

Oh, is it you?
Most welcome, dear: one gets so moped alone.

1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: A sugar-coated sweet or medicated lozenge; "marqueterie": the craft of using veneer to make decorations.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: To make glosses or explain.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Diana is the Roman goddess of wild animals and the hunt.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Character in the eponymous comedy by Molière (1622–1673); "Rahab": in the Hebrew Bible, Rahab helps the Israelites capture Jericho; "Jezebel": queen who instituted the worship of pagan gods.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The wise king of Israel in the Hebrew Bible.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Magdalene asylums were religious houses for "fallen women"—that is, women who had committed sexual transgressions.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A *scullery* is a room for washing and chores adjacent to a kitchen; a *slut* could be either the person who performs these

chores or a promiscuous woman.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The British government shipped convicts and indentured servants, including women and children, to its colonies around the globe to perform labor and maintain colonial populations.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Mid-19th-century census data revealed a gender imbalance in the population, which suggested that many women would not be able to marry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Geography, or the study of globes; “conchology”: the study of mollusk shells.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Groups that resisted Hellenization and became the foundation for Rabbinic Judaism.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *knotted lace*Return to reference °
- °: *a type of flower*Return to reference °
- °: *investments*Return to reference °
- °: *deep mud; mire*Return to reference °
- °: *weak; without courage*Return to reference °

Medea in Athens[1]

Dead is he? Yes, our stranger guest said dead—
said it by noonday, when it seemed a thing
most natural and so indifferent
as if the tale ran that a while ago
there died a man I talked with a chance hour
when he by chance was near me. If I spoke
"Good news for us but ill news for the dead
when the gods sweep a villain down to them,"
'twas the prompt trick of words, like a pat phrase
from some one other's song, found on the lips
and used because 'tis there: for through all day
the news seemed neither good nor ill to me.

And now, when day with all its useless talk
and useless smiles and idiots' prying eyes
that impotently peer into one's life,
when day with all its seemly lying shows
has gone its way and left pleased fools to sleep,
while weary mummers,° taking off the mask,
discern that face themselves forgot anon
and, sitting in the lap of sheltering night,
learn their own secrets from her—even now
does it seem either good or ill to me?
No, but mere strange.

And this most strange of all
that I care nothing.

Nay, how wild thought grows.
Meseems one came and told of Jason's death:
but 'twas a dream. Else should I, wondering thus,

reck not of him, nor with the virulent hate
that should be mine against mine enemy,
nor with that weakness which sometimes I feared
should this day make me, not remembering Glaucè,
envy him to death as though he had died mine?

Can he be dead? It were so strange a world
with him not in it.

Dimly I recall
some prophecy a god breathed by my mouth.
It could not err. What was it? For I think
it told his death.

Has a god come to me?
Is it thou, my Hecate? How know I all?
For I know all as if from long ago:
and I know all beholding instantly.
Is not that he, arisen through the mists?—
a lean and haggard man, rough round the eyes,
dull and with no scorn left upon his lip,
decayed out of his goodliness and strength;
a wanned and broken image of a god;
dim counterfeit of Jason, heavily
wearing the name of him and memories.

And lo, he rests with lax and careless limbs
on the loose sandbed wind-heaped round his ship
that rots in sloth like him, and props his head
on a half-buried fallen spar. The sea,
climbing the beach towards him, seethes and frets,
and on the verge two sunned and shadowed clouds
take shapes of notched rock-islands; and his thoughts
drift languid to the steep Symplegades[2]
and the sound of waters crashing at their base.

And now he speaks out to his loneliness
"I was afraid and careful, but she laughed:
'Love steers' she said: and when the rocks were far,
grey twinkling spots in distance, suddenly
her face grew white, and, looking back to them,
she said, 'Oh love, a god has whispered me
'twere well had we died there, for strange mad woes
are waiting for us in your Greece': and then
she tossed her head back, while her brown hair streamed
gold in the wind and sun, and her face glowed
with daring beauty, 'What of woes', she cried,
'if only they leave time for love enough?'
But what a fire and flush! It took one's breath!
And then he lay half musing, half adoze,
shadows of me went misty through his sight.

And bye and bye he roused and cried "Oh dolt!
Glaucè was never half so beautiful."
Then under part-closed lids remembering her,
"Poor Glaucè, a sweet face, and yet methinks
she might have wearied me:" and suddenly,
smiting the sand awhirl with his angry hand,
scorned at himself "What god befooled my wits
to dream my fancy for her yellow curls
and milk-white softness subtle policy?
Wealth and a royal bride: but what beyond?
Medea, with her skills, her presciences,
man's wisdom, woman's craft, her rage of love
that gave her to serve me strength next divine,
Medea would have made me what I would;
Glaucè but what she could. I schemed amiss
and earned the curses the gods send on fools.
Ruined, ruined! A laughing stock to foes!
No man so mean but he may pity me;
no man so wretched but will keep aloof

lest the curse upon me make him wretcheder.
Ruined!”

And lo I see him hide his face
like a man who’ll weep with passion: but to him
the passion comes not, only slow few tears
of one too weary. And from the great field
where the boys race he hears their jubilant shout
hum through the distance, and he sighs “Ah me!
she might have spared the children, left me them:—
no sons, no sons to stand about me now
and prosper me, and tend me bye and bye
in faltering age, and keep my name on earth
when I shall be departed out of sight.”

And the shout hummed louder forth: and whirring past
a screaming sea-bird flapped out to the bay,
and listlessly he watched it dip and rise
till it skimmed out of sight, so small a speck
as a mayfly on the brook; and then he said
“Fly forth, fly forth, bird, fly to fierce Medea
where by great Ægeus[3] she sits queening it,
belike a joyful mother of new sons;
tell her she never loved me as she talked,
else had no wrong at my hand shewn so great:
tell her that she breaks oaths more than I broke,
even so much as she seemed to love most—
she who fits fondling in a husband’s arms
while I am desolate.” And again he said
“My house is perished with me—ruined, ruined!”

At that he rose and, muttering in his teeth
still “ruined, ruined,” slowly paced the sands:
then stood and, gazing on the ragged hulk,

cried "Oh loathed tool of fiends, that, through all storms
and sundering waters, borest me to Medea,
rot, rot, accursed thing," and petulant
pashed at the side—

Lo, lo! I see it part!
a tottering spar—it parts, it falls, it strikes!
He is prone on the sand, the blood wells from his brow,
he moans, he speaks, "Medea's prophecy."
See he has fainted.

Hush, hush! he has lain
with death and silence long: now he wakes up—
"Where is Medea? Let her bind my head."
Hush, hush! A sigh—a breath—He is dead.

******

Medea!
What, is it thou? What, thou, this whimpering fool,
this kind meek coward! Sick for pity art thou?
Or did the vision scare thee? Out on me!
do I drivel like a slight disconsolate girl
wailing her love?

No, not one foolish tear
that shamed my cheek welled up for any grief
at his so pitiful lone end. The touch
of ancient memories and the woman's trick
of easy weeping took me unawares:
but grief! Why should I grieve?

And yet for this,
that he is dead. He should still pine and dwine,°

hungry for his old lost strong food of life
vanished with me, hungry for children's love,
hungry for me. Ever to think of me—
with love, with hate, what care I? hate is love—
Ever to think and long. Oh it was well!
Yea, my new marriage hope has been achieved:
for he *did* count me happy, picture me
happy with Ægeus; he *did* dream of me
as all to Ægeus that I was to him,
and to him nothing; and *did* yearn for me
and know me lost—we two so far apart
as dead and living, I an envied wife
and he alone and childless. Jason, Jason,
come back to earth; live, live for my revenge.

But lo the man is dead: I am forgotten.
Forgotten; something goes from life in that—
as if oneself had died, when the half self
of one's true living time has slipped away
from reach of memories, has ceased to know
that such a woman is.

A wondrous thing
to be so separate having been so near—
near by hate last and once by so strong love.
Would love have kept us near if he had died
in the good days? Tush, I should have died too:
we should have gone together, hand in hand,
and made dusk Hades glorious each to each.

Ah me, if then when through the fitful seas
we saw the great rocks glimmer, and the crew
howled "We are lost! lo the Symplegades!"
too late to shun them, if but then some wave,
our secret friend, had dashed us from our course,
sending us to be shivered at the base,

well, well indeed! And yet what say I there?
Ten years together were they not worth cost
of all the anguish? Oh me, how I loved him!
Why did I not die loving him?

* * * * * *

What thou!
Have the dead no room, or do they drive thee forth
loathing thee near them? Dost thou threaten me?
Why, so I saw thee last, and was not scared:
think not to scare me now; I am no babe
to shiver at an unavailing shade.
Go, go, thou canst not curse me, none will hear:
the gods remember justice. Wrongs! thy wrongs!
the vengeance, ghost! What hast thou to avenge
as I have? Lo, thy meek-eyed Glaucè died,
and thy king-kinsman Creon died: but I,
I live what thou hast made me.

Oh smooth adder,
who with fanged kisses changedst my natural blood
to venom in me, say, didst thou not find me
a grave and simple girl in a still home,
learning my spells for pleasant services
or to make sick beds easier? With me went
the sweet sound of friends' voices praising me:
all faces smiled on me, even lifeless things
seemed glad because of me; and I could smile
to every face, to everything, to trees,
to skies and waters, to the passing herds,
to the small thievish sparrows, to the grass
with sunshine through it, to the weed's bold flowers:
for all things glad and harmless seemed my kin,
and all seemed glad and harmless in the world.
Thou cam'st, and from the day thou, finding me

in Hecate's dim grove to cull my herbs,
didst burn my cheeks with kisses hot and strange,
the curse of thee compelled me. Lo I am
the wretch thou say'st; but wherefore? by whose
work?
Who, binding me with dreadful marriage oaths
in the midnight temple, led my treacherous flight
from home and father? Whose voice when I turned,
desperate to save thee, on my own young brother,
my so loved brother, whose voice as I smote
nerved me, cried "Brave Medea"? For whose ends
did I decoy the credulous girls, poor fools,
to slay their father? When have I been base,
when cruel, save for thee, until—Man, man,
wilt thou accuse my guilt? Whose is my guilt?
mine or thine, Jason? Oh, soul of my crimes,
how shall I pardon thee for what I am?

Never. And if, with the poor womanish heart
that for the loving's sake will still love on,
I could let such a past wane as a dream
and turn to thee at waking—turn to thee!
I, put aside like some slight purchased slave
who pleased thee and then tired, still turn to thee!—
yet never, not if thou and I could live
thousands of years and all thy years were pain
and all my years were to behold thy pain,
never could I forgive thee for my boys;
never could I look on this hand of mine
that slew them and not hate thee. Childless thou,
what is thy childlessness to mine? Go, go,
thou foolish angry ghost, what wrongs hast thou?
would I could wrong thee more. Come thou
sometimes
and see me happy.

Dost thou mock at me
with thy cold smiling? Aye, can I not love?
What then? am I not folded round with love,
with a life's whole of love? There doth no thought
come near to Ægeus save what is of me:
am I no happy wife? And I go proud,
and treasure him for noblest of the world:
am I no happy wife?

Dost mock me still?
My children is it? Are the dead so wise?
Why, who told thee my transport of despair
when from the Sun who willed me not to die
nor creep away, sudden and too late came
the winged swift car that could have saved them,
mine,
from thee and from their foes? Tush, 'twas best so.
If they had lived, sometimes thou hadst had hope:
for thou wouldst still have said "I have two sons,"
and dreamed perchance they'd bring thee use at last
and build thy greatness higher: but now, now,
thou hast died shamed and childless, none to keep
thy name and memory fresh upon the earth,
none to make boast of thee "My father did it."

Yea, 'twas best so: my sons, we are avenged.
Thou, mock me not. What if I have ill dreams
to see them loathe me, fly from me in dread,
when I would feed my hungry mouth with kisses?
what if I moan in tossing fever thirsts,
crying for them whom I shall have no more,
here nor among the dead, who never more,
here nor among the dead, will smile to me
with young lips prattling "Mother, mother dear"?
what if I turn sick when the women pass

that lead their boys, and hate a child's young face?
265 what if—

Go, go, thou mind'st me of my sons,
and then I hate thee worse; go to thy grave
by which none weeps. I have forgotten thee.

1870

Endnotes

- Note 1: Medea is the protagonist of a play by Euripides that Webster translated and published in 1868. She is a sorcerer and princess who helps Jason and the Argonauts obtain the golden fleece. When Jason abandons her for Glaucè, Medea sends her two sons with a robe and diadem covered with poison. Both Glaucè and her father are killed. In Euripides' version, Medea also kills her two sons as revenge against her lover.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A pair of rocks that crashed together whenever a ship passed through them. Jason and the Argonauts survived by following Phineus's advice to send a dove before the ship to calculate how fast they would have to sail to avoid being crushed by the rocks.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King of Athens who drowned himself when he believed his son Theseus had died; he gave his name to the Aegean Sea.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *actors, mimes*Return to reference °
- °: *waste away*Return to reference °

From Mother and Daughter[1]

An Uncompleted Sonnet-Sequence

I

Young laughters, and my music! Aye till now
  The voice can reach no blending minors near;
  ’Tis the bird’s trill because the spring is here
And spring means trilling on a blossomy bough;
’Tis the spring joy that has no why or how,
  But sees the sun and hopes not nor can fear—
  Spring is so sweet and spring seems all the year.
Dear voice, the first-come birds but trill as thou.

Oh music of my heart, be thus for long:
Too soon the spring bird learns the later song;
  Too soon a sadder sweetness slays content;
Too soon! There comes new light on onward day,
There comes new perfume o’er a rosier way:
  Comes not again the young spring joy that went.

II

That she is beautiful is not delight,
  As some think mothers joy, by pride of her,
  To witness questing eyes caught prisoner
And hear her praised the livelong dancing night;
But the glad impulse that makes painters sight
  Bids me note her and grow the happier;
  And love that finds me as her worshipper
Reveals me each best loveliness aright.

Oh goddess head! Oh innocent brave eyes!
Oh curved and parted lips where smiles are rare
And sweetness ever! Oh smooth shadowy hair
Gathered around the silence of her brow!
  Child, I'd needs love thy beauty strangerwise:
And oh the beauty of it, being thou!

III

I watch the sweet grave face in timorous thought
  Lest I should see it dawn to some unrest
  And read that in her heart is youth's ill guest,
The querulous young sadness, born of nought,
That wearies of the strife it has not fought,
  And finds the life it has not had unblest,
  And asks it knows not what that should be best,
And till Love come has never what it sought.

But she is still. A full and crystal lake
  So gives its skies their passage to its deeps
In an unruffled morn where no winds wake,
  And, strong and fretless, stirs not, nor yet sleeps.
My darling smiles and 'tis for gladness' sake;
  She hears a woe, 'tis simple tears she weeps.

IV

'Tis but a child. The quiet Juno[2] gaze
  Breaks at a trifle into mirth and glow,
  Changed as a folded bud bursts into blow,
And she springs, buoyant, on some busy craze,
Or, in the rhythm of her girlish plays,
  Like light upon swift waves floats to and fro,
  And, whatsoe'er's her mirth, needs me to know,
And keeps me young by her young innocent ways.

Just now she and her kitten raced and sprang
To catch the daisy ball she tossed about;
Then they grew grave, and found a shady tree,
And kitty tried to see the notes she sang:
Now she flies hitherward—"Mother! Quick! Come see!
Two hyacinths in my garden almost out!"

V

Last night the broad blue lightnings flamed the sky;
We watched, our breaths caught as each burst its way,
And through its fire out-leaped the sharp white ray,
And sudden dark re-closed when it went by:
But she, that where we are will needs be nigh,
Had tired with hunting orchids half the day.
Her father thought she called us; he and I,
Half anxious, reached the bedroom where she lay.

Oh lily face upon the whiteness blent!
How calm she lay in her unconscious grace!
A peal crashed on the silence ere we went;
She stirred in sleep, a little changed her place,
"Mother," she breathed, a smile grew on her face:
"Mother," my darling breathed, and slept content.

VI

Sometimes, as young things will, she vexes me,
Wayward, or too unheeding, or too blind.
Like aimless birds that, flying on a wind,
Strike slant against their own familiar tree;
Like venturous children pacing with the sea,

That turn but when the breaker spurts behind
Outreaching them with spray: she in such kind
Is borne against some fault, or does not flee.

And so, may be, I blame her for her wrong,
And she will frown and lightly plead her part,
And then I bid her go. But 'tis not long:
Then comes she lip to ear and heart to heart.
And thus forgiven her love seems newly strong,
And, oh my penitent, how dear thou art!

VII

Her father lessons me I at times am hard,
Chiding a moment's fault as too grave ill,
And let some little blot my vision fill,
Scanning her with a narrow near regard.
True. Love's unresting gaze is self-debarred
From all sweet ignorance, and learns a skill,
Not painless, of such signs as hurt love's will,
That would not have its prize one tittle marred.

Alas! Who rears and loves a dawning rose
Starts at a speck upon one petal's rim:
Who sees a dusk creep in the shrined pearl's glows,
Is ruined at once: "My jewel growing dim!"
I watch one bud that on my bosom blows,
I watch one treasured pearl for me and him.

VIII

A little child she, half defiant came
Reasoning her case—'twas not so long ago—
"I cannot mind your scolding, for I know
However bad I were you'd love the same."
And I, what countering answer could I frame?

'Twas true, and true, and God's self told her so.
One does but ask one's child to smile and grow,
And each rebuke has love for its right name.

And yet, methinks, sad mothers who for years,
Watching the child pass forth that was their boast,
Have counted all the footsteps by new fears
Till even lost fears seem hopes whereof they're reft
And of all mother's good love sole is left—
Is their Love, Love, or some remembered ghost?

IX

Oh weary hearts! Poor mothers that look back!
So outcasts from the vale where they were born
Turn on their road and, with a joy forlorn,
See the far roofs below their arid track:
So in chill buffets while the sea grows black
And windy skies, once blue, are tost and torn,
We are not yet forgetful of the morn,
And praise anew the sunshine that we lack.

Oh, sadder than pale sufferers by a tomb
That say "My dead is happier, and is more,"
Are they who dare no "is" but tell what's o'er—
Thus the frank childhood, those the lovable ways—
Stirring the ashes of remembered days
For yet some sparks to warm the livelong gloom.

X

Love's Counterfeit.

Not Love, not Love, that worn and footsore thrall
Who, crowned with withered buds and leaves gone dry,
Plods in his chains to follow one passed by,

Guerdoned° with only tears himself lets fall.
Love is asleep and smiling in his pall,
  And this that wears his shape and will not die
  Was once his comrade shadow, Memory—
His shadow that now stands for him in all.

And there are those who, hurrying on past reach,
  See the dim follower and laugh, content,
  "Lo, Love pursues me, go where'er I will!"
Yet, longer gazing, some may half beseech,
  "This *must* be Love that wears his features still:
Or else when was the moment that Love went?"

1895

Endnotes

- Note 1: Although never completed, the sequence contains twenty-seven sonnets.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Ancient Roman goddess, protector of the state and Roman women.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *rewarded*Return to reference °

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE
1837–1909

In a review of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), Algernon Charles Swinburne remarks that "the mass of readers seem actually to think that a poem is the better for containing a moral lesson." He goes on to praise the courage and sense of a man who acts on the conviction "that the art of poetry has nothing to do with didactic matter at all." Certainly Swinburne's poems are not didactic in the sense of containing traditional moral values. As John Morley commented while reviewing Swinburne's first volume of poems, "He is so firmly and avowedly fixed in an attitude of revolt against the current notions of decency and dignity and social duty that to beg of him to be a little more decent, to fly a little less persistently and gleefully to the animal side of human nature, is simply to beg him to be something different from Mr. Swinburne." Swinburne set about shocking his elders by a variety of rebellious gestures. In religion he appeared to be a pagan; in politics, a liberal republican dedicated to the overthrow of established governments. On the subjects of love and sex, he was similarly unconventional. Frequently preoccupied with the pleasures of the lover who inflicts or accepts pain (particularly with the excitement of flagellation), Swinburne also often turns in his poetry to the theme of homoerotic desire, a taboo topic for his Victorian audience. As Arnold Bennett said of "Anactoria" (1866), a dramatic monologue in which the poet Sappho addresses a woman with whom she is madly in love, Swinburne

played "a rare trick" on England by "enshrining in the topmost heights of its literature a lovely poem that cannot be discussed."

To a more limited extent, Swinburne also expressed his rebellion against established codes by his personal behavior. He came from a distinguished family and attended Eton and Oxford, but sought the company of the bohemians of Paris and of London, where he became temporarily associated with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and other Pre-Raphaelites. By 1879 his alcoholism had profoundly affected his frail physique, and he was obliged to put himself into the protective custody of a friend, Theodore Watts-Dunton, who took him to the countryside and kept him alive, although sobered and tamed.

Swinburne continued to write voluminously and sometimes memorably, but his most fascinating poetry appeared in his early publications. He described his early play *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) as "pure Greek," and his command of classical allusions here, as well as in other poems, is indeed impressive. Yet the kind of spirit that he found in Greek literature was not the traditional quality of classic serenity admired by Matthew Arnold. Like Percy Bysshe Shelley (the poet he most closely resembles), Swinburne loved Greece as a land of liberty in which men had expressed themselves with the fewest restraints.

In his play and in the volume that followed it, *Poems and Ballads* (1866), Swinburne demonstrated a metrical virtuosity that dazzled his early readers and is still dazzling. Those who demand that poetry should make sense, first and foremost, may find that much of his poetry is not to their taste. What he offers, instead, are heady rhythmical patterns in which words are relished as much for their sound as for their meaning.

> There lived a singer in France of old
> By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
> In a land of sand and ruin and gold
> Here shone one woman, and none but she.

These lines from "The Triumph of Time" (1866) have often been cited to illustrate Swinburne's qualities. Like some poems of the later

French symbolists, such passages defy traditional kinds of critical analysis and oblige us to reconsider the variety of ways in which poetry may achieve its effects.

Another noteworthy aspect of these poems is their recurring preoccupation with death, as in the memorable re-creations of Proserpina's underworld garden, frozen in timelessness. And as the critic Jerome McGann notes: "No English poet has composed more elegies than Swinburne." The death of any prominent figure, such as Robert Browning, almost always prompted Swinburne to compose a poem for the occasion. "Ave atque Vale" (1868), his farewell to Baudelaire, is an especially moving tribute, and shows Swinburne focusing on a subject extremely close to his heart. For Swinburne the work of his beloved French poet possessed a "languid, lurid beauty"; to us the phrase may seem equally applicable to Swinburne's poetry.

Hymn to Proserpine

(*After the Proclamation in Rome of the Christian Faith*)

Vicisti, Galilaee[1]

I have lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo,[2] with hair and harpstring of gold,
A bitter god to follow, a beautiful god to behold?
I am sick of singing; the bays[3] burn deep and chafe. I am fain°
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.

O gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New gods are crowned in the city; their flowers have broken your rods;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the gods are at strife; ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? But these thou shalt not take—
The laurel, the palms, and the paean, the breasts of the nymphs in the brake,°
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;

All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears;
Why should he labor, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean,[4] and fed on the fullness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing look to the end.

All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past;
Where beyond the extreme sea wall, and between the remote sea gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits;
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears,
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years;
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour.
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour;

And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depths as the roots of the sea;
And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost stars of the air;
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?[5]
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you or kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were gods are dead, and thou being dead art a god,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean[6] be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to thee dead.

Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another; but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam.
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.[7]
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.

And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.

Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her° still, having seen she shall surely abide in
the end.
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where
thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the
heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is
white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the
night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and
undone.
Thou art more than the gods who number the days of our temporal
breath;
For these give labor and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass° of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span.
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no god found stronger than death; and death is a sleep.

1866

Endnotes

- Note 1: Thou hast conquered, O Galilean (Latin); words supposedly addressed to Jesus, who grew up in Galilee, by the Roman emperor

Julian the Apostate on his deathbed in 363. Julian had tried to revive paganism and to discourage Christianity, which, after a proclamation in 313, had been tolerated in Rome. His efforts were unsuccessful. The speaker of the poem, a Roman patrician and also a poet (line 9), is like Emperor Julian: he prefers the old order of pagan gods. His hymn is addressed to the goddess Proserpina (the Greek Persephone), who was carried off by Pluto (Hades) to be queen of the underworld. In this role she is addressed in the poem as goddess of death and of sleep. The speaker also associates her with the earth (line 93) because she was the daughter of Ceres (or Demeter), goddess of agriculture, whose Greek name means "Earth Mother." Swinburne may have derived some details here from the 4th-century Latin poet Claudian, whose long narrative *The Rape of Proserpina* provides helpful background for this hymn.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Classical god of poetry, and in art the ideal of young male beauty.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Laurel leaves of a poet's crown.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, of Lethe (literally, "Forgetfulness"), a river in the underworld.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: According to the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, after storm waves destroyed his bridge the enraged Xerxes, king of the Persians, ordered that the Hellespont be whipped; see *History* 7.33–34.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Venus (or Aphrodite), who was born from the waves near the island of Cythera.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Romans traced their legendary origins back to Aeneas, a Trojan prince who was the son of Aphrodite.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *glad*Return to reference °
- °: *thicket*Return to reference °
- °: *Proserpina*Return to reference °
- °: *mirror*Return to reference °

Hermaphroditus[1]

1

Lift up thy lips, turn round, look back for love,
  Blind love that comes by night and casts out rest
  Of all things tired thy lips look weariest,
Save the long smile that they are wearied of.
Ah sweet, albeit no love be sweet enough,
  Choose of two loves and cleave unto the best;
  Two loves at either blossom of thy breast
Strive until one be under and one above.
Their breath is fire upon the amorous air,
Fire in thine eyes and where thy lips suspire:°
And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,
  Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;
A strong desire begot on great despair,
  A great despair cast out by strong desire.

2

Where between sleep and life some brief space is,
  With love like gold bound round about the head,
  Sex to sweet sex with lips and limbs is wed,
Turning the fruitful feud of hers and his
To the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss;
  Yet from them something like as fire is shed
  That shall not be assuaged till death be dead,
Though neither life nor sleep can find out this.
Love made himself of flesh that perisheth
  A pleasure-house for all the loves his kin;
But on the one side sat a man like death,
  And on the other a woman sat like sin.

So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath
Love turned himself and would not enter in.

3

Love, is it love or sleep or shadow or light
That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?
Like a flower laid upon a flower it lies,
Or like the night's dew laid upon the night.
Love stands upon thy left hand and thy right,
Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise
Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs,
Or make thee woman for a man's delight.
To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?
Hid love in all the folds of all thy hair,
Fed thee on summers, watered thee with showers,
Given all the gold that all the seasons wear
To thee that art a thing of barren hours?

4

Yea, love, I see; it is not love but fear.
Nay, sweet, it is not fear but love, I know;
Or wherefore should thy body's blossom blow
So sweetly, or thine eyelids leave so clear
Thy gracious eyes that never made a tear—
Though for their love our tears like blood should flow,
Though love and life and death should come and go,
So dreadful, so desirable, so dear?
Yea, sweet, I know; I saw in what swift wise°
Beneath the woman's and the water's kiss
Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis,
And the large light turned tender in thine eyes,

And all thy boy's breath softened into sighs;
But Love being blind,[2] how should he know of this?

Au Musée du Louvre, *Mars* 1863.[3]

1863 1866

Endnotes

- Note 1: Son of Hermes and Aphrodite. One day as he bathed in a spring, Salmacis, the nymph of the spring, fell in love with him. When he rejected her, she clung to him, praying that their bodies never be separated. The gods answered her prayer, making their bodies one. The statue in the Louvre that inspired this poem, a Roman copy of a Greek original, shows the god lying on his side, with the breasts of a woman and the genitals of a man.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Love, personified in classical mythology as Eros or Cupid, is often represented as blindfolded or blind.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: At the Museum of the Louvre, March 1863 (French).Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *breathe out*Return to reference °
- °: *how swiftly*Return to reference °

Ave atque Vale[1]

In Memory of Charles Baudelaire

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.

—"Les Fleurs du Mal"[2]

1

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,[3]
Brother, on this that was the veil[4] of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower molded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads° weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?[5]

2

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,

The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave[6]
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

3

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.[7]

4

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang

As dew from flower-bell drips?

5

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith naught,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

6

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,[8]
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

7

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,

Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene° root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

8

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's[9] veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

9

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who are wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,

Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

10

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal[1]—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical[2]
Of many mourners rolled.

11

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.[3]

12

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs[4] that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfill all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

13

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light[5]
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came;
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

14

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress[6] crown.
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting,
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,

And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.[7]

15

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,[8]
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill;
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine;[9]
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey,[1] compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

16

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,[2]
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell[3]
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

17

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

18

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,[4]
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

1866–67 1868

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Hail and farewell (Latin); from an elegy by Catullus occasioned by a visit to the grave of his brother, to whom he brought gifts, a situation closely echoed in Swinburne's final stanza. Swinburne's elegy also begins with a visit to the grave of a man

whom the poet regards as a brother but had never met. Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) had impressed Swinburne as one of the "most perfect poets of the century." In 1861, in an essay on the 2nd edition of Baudelaire's collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*Flowers of Evil*, 1857), Swinburne had commented on the French poet's preoccupation with "sad and strange things"—"the sharp and cruel enjoyments of pain, the acrid relish of suffering felt or inflicted"; "it has the languid, lurid beauty of close and threatening weather—a heavy, heated temperature, with dangerous hothouse scents in it." These qualities are also celebrated in the elegy, into which are woven many allusions to Baudelaire's poems, especially "Litanies de Satan," which Swinburne regarded as the keynote poem of *Les Fleurs du Mal.* Return to reference 1

- Note 2:
  From "La Servante au Grand Coeur" ("The Great-hearted Servant"): We must nevertheless bring some flowers to her [or him]. / The dead, the poor dead, have great sadnesses, / And when October, the pruner of old trees, blows, / Its melancholy wind in the vicinity of their marble tombs, / Then indeed they must find the living highly ungrateful (French).
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Respectively, symbols of love, mourning, and poetic fame.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the body as a veil for the soul.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A voyage to the tropics in Baudelaire's youth made a lasting impact on his poetry.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: According to legend, the poet Sappho, who was born on the island of Lesbos, killed herself by leaping from the rock of Leucas into the Ionian Sea. In this section Swinburne makes allusions to Baudelaire's "Lesbos."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with Galatians 6:7: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An allusion to Baudelaire's "La Géante" ("The Giantess").Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Queen of the underworld.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to Jerome McGann, Swinburne associates Baudelaire's distinctive kind of poetry with a tenth muse, one who inspires songs of lamentation ("funereal").Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, a musical mourning.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  For lines 120–29, see *The Libation Bearers*, the second play in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy. King Agamemnon, after returning home victorious from Troy, is brutally killed by his wife, Clytemnestra. His son, Orestes, places two locks of his hair on Agamemnon's grave in tribute; they are discovered soon thereafter by his sister Electra, who visits her father's grave to offer mourning libations.
  Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Referring to the muses and holy poets, not to Orestes and Electra [noted by Jerome McGann].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Apollo, god of light and poetry.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Associated with mourning. "Laurel": the crown of Apollo, a wreath honoring poets.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, flickering light of the underworld.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of Lethe, the river of forgetfulness in Hades.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  The Venus of medieval legends held her court inside a mountain in Germany (the Hörselberg). This later Venus is a transformed version of the joyous foam-born goddess associated with the island of Cythera and also worshipped in Sicily at a shrine on Mount Eryx (hence "Erycine"). The Roman poet Horace described her as "blithe goddess of Eryx, about whom hover mirth and desire" (*Odes* 1.2.33–34).
  Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  The first "prey" of Venus had been Tannhäuser, whom she had lured into the "footless places" of her cave. Baudelaire is her

"second prey." Swinburne, after reading Baudelaire's 1861 pamphlet on Wagner's *Tannhäuser* (1845), described this Venus as "the queen of evil, the lady of lust."
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Such a miraculous event occurred when Tannhäuser made a pilgrimage to Rome to seek absolution for having lived in sin with Venus. Previously the pope had denied absolution until the day his staff should bloom.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Presumably the abode of the ghosts of the dead.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: After Niobe boasted of having more children than the goddess Leto, the goddess's children—Apollo and Diana (Artemis)—killed them all.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *wood nymphs*Return to reference °
- °: *earthly*Return to reference °

WALTER PATER
1839–1894

Studies in the History of the Renaissance, a collection of essays published in 1873, was the first of several volumes that established Walter Pater as one of the most influential writers of the late Victorian period. His flair for critical writing may have first been sparked when he was an undergraduate at Oxford (1858–62), where he heard and enjoyed the lectures of Matthew Arnold, who was then professor of poetry. After graduation Pater remained at Oxford, a shy bachelor who spent his life teaching classics. In view of his quiet disposition Pater was surprised and even alarmed by the impact made by his books on young readers of the 1870s and 1880s. Some of his younger followers such as Oscar Wilde and George Moore may have misread him. As T. S. Eliot wrote somewhat primly, "[Pater's] view of art, as expressed in *The Renaissance,* impressed itself upon a number of writers in the nineties, and propagated some confusion between life and art which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives." It can be demonstrated that Pater's writings (especially his historical novel *Marius the Epicurean*, 1885) have much in common with the works of his earnest-minded mid-Victorian predecessors, but his disciples overlooked these similarities. To them his work seemed strikingly different and, in its quiet way, more subversive than the head-on attacks against traditional Victorianism made by Algernon Charles Swinburne. Instead of recommending a continuation of the painful quest for Truth that had dominated

Oxford in the days of John Henry Newman, Pater assured his readers that the quest was pointless. Truth, he said, is relative. And instead of echoing Thomas Carlyle's call to duty and social responsibilities, Pater reminded his readers that life passes quickly and that our only responsibility is to enjoy fully "this short day of frost and sun"—to relish its sensations, especially those sensations provoked by works of art.

This epicurean gospel was conveyed in a highly wrought prose style that baffles anyone who likes to read quickly. Pater believed that prose was as difficult an art as poetry, and he expected his own elaborate sentences to be savored. Like Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), the French novelist whom he admired, Pater painstakingly revised his sentences with special attention to their rhythms, seeking always the right word—*le mot juste*, as Flaubert called it. For many years Pater's day would begin with his making a careful study of a dictionary. What Pater said of Dante is an apt description of his own polished style: "He is one of those artists whose general effect largely depends on vocabulary, on the minute particles of which his work is wrought, on the colour and outline of single words and phrases." An additional characteristic of his highly wrought style is its relative absence of humor. Pater was valued among his friends for his flashes of wit and for his lively and irreverent conversation, but in his writings such traits are suppressed. As Michael Levey observed in *The Case of Walter Pater* (1978), "Even for irony the mood of his writing is almost too intense."

In addition to being a key figure in the transition from mid-Victorianism to the "decadence" of the 1890s, Pater commands our attention as the writer of exemplary impressionistic criticism. In each of his essays he seeks to communicate what he called the "special unique impression of pleasure" made on him by the works of some artist or writer. His range of subjects included the dialogues of Plato, the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, the plays of Shakespeare, and the writings of the French Romantic school of the nineteenth century. Of particular value to students of English literature are his discriminating studies of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor

Coleridge, Charles Lamb, and Sir Thomas Browne in his volume of *Appreciations* (1889) and his essay on the poetry of William Morris titled "Aesthetic Poetry" (1868). These and other essays by Pater were praised by Oscar Wilde in a review in 1890 as "absolutely modern, in the true meaning of the term modernity. For he to whom the present is the only thing that is present, knows nothing of the age in which he lives. . . . The true critic is he who bears within himself the dreams and ideas and feelings of myriad generations, and to whom no form of thought is alien, no emotional impulse obscure."

The final sentences of his *Appreciations* volume are a revealing indication of Pater's critical position. After having attempted to show the differences between the classical and romantic schools of art, he concludes that most great artists combine the qualities of both. "To discriminate schools, of art, of literature," he writes, "is, of course, part of the obvious business of literary criticism: but, in the work of literary production, it is easy to be overmuch occupied concerning them. For, in truth, the legitimate contention is, not of one age or school of literary art against another, but of all successive schools alike, against the stupidity which is dead to the substance, and the vulgarity which is dead to form."

From Studies in the History of the Renaissance

Preface

Many attempts have been made by writers on art and poetry to define beauty in the abstract, to express it in the most general terms, to find some universal formula for it. The value of these attempts has most often been in the suggestive and penetrating things said by the way. Such discussions help us very little to enjoy what has been well done in art or poetry, to discriminate between what is more and what is less excellent in them, or to use words like beauty, excellence, art, poetry, with a more precise meaning than they would otherwise have. Beauty, like all other qualities presented to human experience, is relative; and the definition of it becomes unmeaning and useless in proportion to its abstractness. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.

"To see the object as in itself it really is,"[1] has been justly said to be the aim of all true criticism whatever; and in aesthetic criticism the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly. The objects with which aesthetic criticism deals—music, poetry, artistic and accomplished forms of human life—are indeed receptacles of so many powers or forces: they possess, like the products of nature, so many virtues or qualities. What is this song or picture, this engaging personality presented in life or in a book, to *me?* What effect does it really produce on me? Does it give me pleasure? and if so, what sort or degree of pleasure? How is my nature modified by its presence, and under its influence? The answers to these questions are the original facts with which the aesthetic critic has to do; and, as in the study of light, of morals, of number, one must realize such primary data for one's self, or not at all. And he who experiences these impressions strongly, and drives directly at the discrimination and analysis of them, has no need to trouble himself with the abstract question what beauty is in itself, or

what its exact relation to truth or experience—metaphysical questions, as unprofitable as metaphysical questions elsewhere. He may pass them all by as being, answerable or not, of no interest to him.

The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, by analyzing and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, "La Gioconda," the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola,[2] are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure. Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyze, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critic of Sainte-Beuve: *De se borner à connaître de près les belles choses, et à s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.*[3]

What is important, then, is not that the critic should possess a correct abstract definition of beauty for the intellect, but a certain kind of temperament, the power of being deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects. He will remember always that beauty exists in many forms. To him all periods, types, schools of taste, are in themselves equal. In all ages there have been some excellent workmen, and some excellent work done. The question he asks is always: In whom did the stir, the genius, the sentiment of the period find itself? where was the receptacle of its refinement, its elevation,

its taste? "The ages are all equal," says William Blake, "but genius is always above its age."[4]

Often it will require great nicety to disengage this virtue from the commoner elements with which it may be found in combination. Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off all debris, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallized a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the stanzas on *Resolution and Independence,* or the *Ode on the Recollections of Childhood,*[5] sometimes, as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here or there, in a matter it does not wholly search through and transmute, we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man's life as a part of nature, drawing strength and color and character from local influences, from the hills and streams, and from natural sights and sounds. Well! that is the *virtue,* the active principle in Wordsworth's poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is to follow up that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse.

The subjects of the following studies are taken from the history of the *Renaissance,* and touch what I think the chief points in that complex, many-sided movement. I have explained in the first of them what I understand by the word, giving it a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century which was only one of many results of a general excitement and enlightening of the human mind, but of which the great aim and achievements of what, as Christian art, is often falsely opposed to the Renaissance, were another result. This outbreak of the human spirit may be traced far into the Middle Age itself, with its motives already clearly pronounced, the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body,

the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the Middle Age imposed on the heart and the imagination. I have taken as an example of this movement, this earlier Renaissance within the Middle Age itself, and as an expression of its qualities, two little compositions in early French; not because they constitute the best possible expression of them, but because they help the unity of my series, inasmuch as the Renaissance ends also in France, in French poetry, in a phase of which the writings of Joachim du Bellay[6] are in many ways the most perfect illustration. The Renaissance, in truth, put forth in France an aftermath, a wonderful later growth, the products of which have to the full that subtle and delicate sweetness which belongs to a refined and comely decadence, just as its earliest phases have the freshness which belongs to all periods of growth in art, the charm of *ascêsis,*[7] of the austere and serious girding of the loins in youth.

But it is in Italy, in the fifteenth century, that the interest of the Renaissance mainly lies—in that solemn fifteenth century which can hardly be studied too much, not merely for its positive results in the things of the intellect and the imagination, its concrete works of art, its special and prominent personalities, with their profound aesthetic charm, but for its general spirit and character, for the ethical qualities of which it is a consummate type.

The various forms of intellectual activity which together make up the culture of an age, move for the most part from different starting points, and by unconnected roads. As products of the same generation they partake indeed of a common character, and unconsciously illustrate each other; but of the producers themselves, each group is solitary, gaining what advantage or disadvantage there may be in intellectual isolation. Art and poetry, philosophy and the religious life, and that other life of refined pleasure and action in the conspicuous places of the world, are each of them confined to its own circle of ideas, and those who prosecute either of them are generally little curious of the thoughts of others. There come, however, from time to time, eras of more favorable conditions, in which the thoughts of men draw nearer together than is their wont,

and the many interests of the intellectual world combine in one complete type of general culture. The fifteenth century in Italy is one of these happier eras, and what is sometimes said of the age of Pericles is true of that of Lorenzo:[8] it is an age productive in personalities, many-sided, centralized, complete. Here, artists and philosophers and those whom the action of the world has elevated and made keen, do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air, and catch light and heat from each other's thoughts. There is a spirit of general elevation and enlightenment in which all alike communicate. The unity of this spirit gives unity to all the various products of the Renaissance; and it is to this intimate alliance with mind, this participation in the best thoughts which that age produced, that the art of Italy in the fifteenth century owes much of its grave dignity and influence.

I have added an essay on Winckelmann,[9] as not incongruous with the studies which precede it, because Winckelmann, coming in the eighteenth century, really belongs in spirit to an earlier age. By his enthusiasm for the things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake, by his Hellenism, his lifelong struggle to attain to the Greek spirit, he is in sympathy with the humanists of a previous century. He is the last fruit of the Renaissance, and explains in a striking way its motive and tendencies.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Matthew Arnold, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Italian philosopher and classical scholar, subject of an essay by Pater that was included in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance.* "La Gioconda": another name for Leonardo da Vinci's painting the *Mona Lisa* (1503–06; see p. 716). "The hills of Carrara": marble quarries in Italy, particularly associated with Michelangelo (1475–1564).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: To confine themselves to knowing beautiful things intimately, and to sustain themselves by these, as sensitive amateurs and accomplished humanists do (French). In 1980 the editor Donald J. Hill discovered that this quotation is *by* the French man of letters Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804–1869) rather than about him; therefore, Hill conjectures that "a recent critic" ought to be "a recent critique."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From Blake's annotations to *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (1778). The "genius" was the German artist Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Wordsworth's ode is actually titled "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"; both poems were published in 1807.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: French poet and critic (ca. 1522–1560), subject of another essay in *Studies of the History of the Renaissance*.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Asceticism (Greek).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Lorenzo de Medici (1449–1492, also known as Lorenzo the Magnificent), ruler of Florence and patron of the arts. Pericles (ca. 495–429 B.C.E.), a statesman who led Athens during its period of greatest political and cultural dominance.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), German classicist.Return to reference 9

[“LA GIOCONDA”][1]

“La Gioconda” is, in the truest sense, Leonardo’s masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the “Melancholia” of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least. As often happens with works in which invention seems to reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio,[2] faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo’s work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams, and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had the dream and the person grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first incorporeally in Leonardo’s brain, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo’s house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes[3] and flute-players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labor never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?

The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all “the ends of the world are come,” [4] and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out

from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how would they be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and molded there, in that which they have of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the Middle Age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias.[5] She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants, and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy,[6] and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has molded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands. The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one; and modern philosophy has conceived the idea of humanity as wrought upon by, and summing up in itself, all modes of thought and life. Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Or *Mona Lisa,* the famous painting by Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) that now hangs in the Louvre in Paris. The sitter for the portrait may have been Lisa, the third wife of the Florentine Francesco del Giocondo (to whom Pater refers as "Il Giocondo")—hence her title, La Gioconda. *Mona* (more correctly *Monna*) *Lisa* means "Madonna Lisa" or "My Lady Lisa." This selection is drawn from the essay on da Vinci.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Andrea del Verrocchio (1435–1488), Florentine painter and sculptor. Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574), author of *Lives of the Most Excellent Italian Painters* (1550).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Mimics or clowns.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: 1 Corinthians 10:11.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A powerful Italian family during the Renaissance, notorious for scandalous conduct.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Helen’s father was Zeus (who approached Leda in the form of a swan).Return to reference 6

Conclusion[7]

Λέγει πον Ἡράκλειτος ὅτι πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει[8]

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals, the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But those elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibers, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the waste and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain under every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us: it rusts iron and ripens corn.[9] Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven in many currents; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or, if we begin with the inward world of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye, the gradual fading of colour from the wall—movements of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest—but the race of the midstream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate

reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to play upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—colour, odour, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world. Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it, a relic more or less fleeting, of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

Philosophiren, says Novalis, *ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren.*[1] The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some

mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, We may well grasp at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendour of our experience and of its awful[2] brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of Comte, or of Hegel,[3] or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought."[4] The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or of what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful passages of Rousseau[5] is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions,* where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had clung always about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire.[6] Well! we are all *condamnés* as Victor Hugo[7] says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve—*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis*: we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest, at least among "the children of this world,"[8] in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of such wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for its own sake, has most. For art comes to you proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

1868 1873

Endnotes

- Note 7: This brief "Conclusion" was omitted in the second edition of this book, as I conceived it might possibly mislead some of those young men into whose hands it might fall. On the whole, I have thought it best to reprint it here, with some slight changes which bring it closer to my original meaning. I have dealt more fully in *Marius the Epicurean* with the thoughts

suggested by it [*Pater's note to the 3rd edition, 1888*].Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Heraclitus says, "All things give way; nothing remaineth" [*Pater's translation*]. The Greek philosopher was active ca. 500 B.C.E.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Grain.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: To philosophize is to cast off inertia, to make oneself alive (German). "Novalis" was the pseudonym of Friedrich von Hardenberg (1772–1801), German Romantic writer.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Awe-inspiring.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Georg W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), German idealistic philosopher. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), French founder of positivism.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The quotation is taken from the novel *Les Misérables* (1862) by the French writer Victor Hugo (1802–1885).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Swiss-born French political theorist and philosopher; his *Confessions* were published in 1781 and 1788.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The pen name of the French author and philosopher François-Marie Arouet (1694–1778).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The quotation is taken from his work *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné* (*The Last Day of a Condemned Man,* 1832).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Luke 16:8.Return to reference 8

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS
1844–1889

It has been said that the most important date in Gerard Manley Hopkins's career was 1918, twenty-nine years after his death, for it was then that the first publication of his poems made them accessible to the world of readers. During his lifetime these remarkable poems, most of them celebrating the wonders of God's creation, had been known only to a small circle of friends, including his literary executor, the poet Robert Bridges, who waited until 1918 before releasing them to a publisher. Partly because his work was first made public in a twentieth-century volume, but especially because of his striking experiments in meter and diction, Hopkins was widely hailed as a pioneering figure of "modern" literature, miraculously unconnected with his fellow Victorian poets (who during the 1920s and 1930s were largely out of fashion among critical readers). And this way of classifying and evaluating his writings has long persisted. In 1936 a substantial selection of his poems led off *The Faber Book of Modern Verse,* one of the most influential anthologies of the century, featuring poets such as W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, and T. S. Eliot (the only one whose selections occupy more pages than those allotted to Hopkins). And the first four editions of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (1962–79) grouped Hopkins with these twentieth-century poets. To reclassify him is not to repudiate his earlier reputation as a modern but rather to suggest that his work can be better understood and

appreciated if it is restored to the Victorian world out of which it developed.

Hopkins was born near London into a large and cultivated family in comfortable circumstances. After a brilliant career at Highgate School, he entered Oxford in 1863, where he was exposed to a variety of Victorian ways of thinking, both secular and religious. Among the influential leaders at Oxford was Matthew Arnold, professor of poetry; but more important for Hopkins was his tutor, Walter Pater, an aesthetician whose emphasis on the intense apprehension of sensuous beauty struck a responsive chord in Hopkins. At Oxford he was also exposed to the Broad Church theology of one of the tutors at his college (Balliol), Benjamin Jowett. But Hopkins became increasingly attracted first to the High Church movement represented at Oxford by Edward Pusey, and then to Roman Catholicism. Profoundly influenced by John Henry Newman's conversion to Rome and by subsequent conversations with Newman, Hopkins entered the Roman Catholic Church in 1866. The estrangement from his family that resulted from his conversion was very painful for him; his parents' letters to him were so "terrible" (he reported to Newman) that he could not bear to "read them twice." And this alienation was heightened by his decision not only to become a Roman Catholic but to become a priest and, in particular, a Jesuit priest, for many Victorian Protestants regarded the Jesuit order with a special distrust. For the rest of his life, Hopkins served as a priest and teacher in various places, among them Oxford, Liverpool, and Lancashire. In 1884 he was appointed professor of classics at University College in Dublin.

At school and at Oxford in the early 1860s, Hopkins had written poems in the vein of John Keats. He burned most of these early writings after his conversion (although drafts survive), for he believed that his vocation must require renouncing such personal satisfactions as the writing of poems. Only after his superiors in the church encouraged him to do so did he resume writing poetry. Yet during the seven years of silence, as his letters show, he had been thinking about experimenting with what he called a "new rhythm."

The result, in 1876, was his rhapsodic lyric-narrative, "The Wreck of the Deutschland," a long ode about the wreck of a ship in which five Franciscan nuns were drowned. The style of the poem was so distinctive that the editor of the Jesuit magazine to which he had submitted it "dared not print it," as Hopkins reported. During the remaining fourteen years of his life, Hopkins wrote poems but seldom submitted them for publication, partly because he was convinced that poetic fame was incompatible with his religious vocation but also because of a fear that readers would be discouraged by the eccentricity of his work.

Hopkins's sense of his own uniqueness is in accord with the larger philosophy that informs his poetry. Drawing on the theology of Duns Scotus, a medieval philosopher, he felt that everything in the universe was characterized by what he called *inscape,* the distinctive design that constitutes individual identity. This identity is not static but dynamic. Each being in the universe "selves," that is, enacts its identity. And the human being, the most highly selved, the most individually distinctive being in the universe, recognizes the inscape of other beings in an act that Hopkins calls *instress,* the apprehension of an object in an intense thrust of energy toward it that enables one to realize its specific distinctiveness. Ultimately, the instress of inscape leads one to Christ, for the individual identity of any object is the stamp of divine creation on it. In the act of instress, therefore, the human being becomes a celebrant of the divine, at once recognizing God's creation and enacting his or her own God-given identity within it.

Poetry for Hopkins enacts this celebration. It is instress, and it realizes the inscape of its subject in its own distinctive design. Hopkins wrote, "But as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling 'inscape' is what I above all aim at in poetry." To create inscape, Hopkins seeks to give each poem a unique design that captures the initial inspiration when he is "caught" by his subject. Many of the characteristics of Hopkins's style—his disruption of conventional syntax, his coining and compounding of words, his

use of ellipsis and repetition—can be understood as ways of representing the stress and action of the brain in moments of inspiration. He creates compounds to represent the unique interlocking of the characteristics of an object—"piece-bright," "dapple-dawn-drawn," "blue-bleak." He omits syntactical connections to fuse qualities more intensely—"the dearest freshness deep down things." He creates puns to suggest how God's creation rhymes and chimes in a divine patterning. He violates conventional syntactic order to represent the shape of mental experience. In the act of imaginative apprehension, a language particular to the moment generates itself.

Hopkins also uses a new rhythm to give each poem its distinctive design. In the metric system he created, which he called *sprung rhythm,* lines have a given number of stresses, but the number and placement of unstressed syllables is highly variable. Hopkins rarely marks all the intended stresses, only those that readers might not anticipate. To indicate stressed syllables, Hopkins often uses both the stress (´) and the "great stress" (˝). A curved line marks an "outride"—one or more syllables added to a foot but not counted in the scansion of the line; they indicate a stronger stress on the preceding syllable and a short pause after the outride. Here, for example, is the scansion for the first three lines of "The Windhover":

I caúght this mórning mórning's mínion, kíng-
dom of dáylight's daúphin, dapple-dawń-drawn Fálcon, in his
ríding Of the rólling level uńderneáth him steady aír, and
stríding

Hopkins argued that sprung rhythm was the natural rhythm of common speech and written prose, as well as of music. He found a model for it in Old English poetry and in nursery rhymes, but he claimed that it had not been used in English poetry since the Elizabethan age.

The density and difficulty that result from Hopkins's unconventional rhythm and syntax make his poetry seem modern, but his concern with the imagination's shaping of the natural world

puts him very much in the Romantic tradition; and his creation of a rough and difficult style, designed to capture the mind's own motion, resembles the style of Robert Browning. "A horrible thing has happened to me," Hopkins wrote in 1864, "I have begun to *doubt* Tennyson." He criticizes Tennyson for using the grand style as a smooth and habitual poetic speech. Like Algernon Charles Swinburne, Walter Pater, and Henry James as well as Browning, Hopkins displays a new mannerism, characteristic of the latter part of the nineteenth century, which paradoxically combines an elaborate aestheticism with a more complex representation of consciousness.

In Hopkins's early poetry his singular apprehension of the beauty of individual objects always brings him to an ecstatic illumination of the presence of God. But in his late poems, the so-called terrible sonnets, his distinctive individuality comes to isolate him from the God who made him thus. Hopkins wrote, "To me there is no resemblance: searching nature, I taste *self* but at one tankard, that of my own being." In the terrible sonnets Hopkins confronts the solipsism to which his own stress on individuality seems to lead him. Like the mad speakers of so many Victorian dramatic monologues, he cannot escape a world solely of his own imagining. Yet even these poems of despair, which simultaneously echo the bleaker side of the Romantic tradition and anticipate more modern attitudes, reflect a traditional religious vision: the dark night of the soul as described by the Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross.

In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse,* Yeats calls Hopkins's poetry "a last development of poetical diction." Yeats's remark indicates the anomaly that Hopkins's work poses. Perhaps it is only appropriate for a writer who stressed the uniqueness of inscape to strike us with the individuality of his achievement.

God’s Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;[1]
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed.[2] Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for° all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Hopkins explained this image in a letter: “I mean foil in its sense of leaf or tinsel. . . . Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, and this is true of nothing else, owing to its zigzag dints and creasings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of fork lightning too.”Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, from the crushing of olives.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *despite*Return to reference °

The Starlight Night

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
Down in dim woods the diamond delves![°] the elves'-eyes!
The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold;[1] lies!
Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles[°] set on a flare!
Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!—
Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize.

Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, alms, vows.
Look, look: a May-mess,[2] like on orchard boughs!
Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow sallows![3]
These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
The shocks. This piece-bright paling[4] shuts the spouse
Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.[°]

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Coined by analogy with quicksilver. The starlight night resembles the lawns below it, where the dew, reflecting the starlight, looks like gold.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A profusion of growing things such as May blossoms.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Willows, here with yellow spots like meal.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This word choice connects the upright siding of the barn's walls to the planks (or "pales") of a fence. "Shocks": sheaves of grain.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *quarries*Return to reference °
- °: *white poplars*Return to reference °
- °: *saints*Return to reference °

As Kingfishers[1] Catch Fire

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
  As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
  Stones ring; like each tucked° string tells, each
  hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
  Deals out that being indoors° each one dwells;
  Selves[2]—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

I say more: the just man justices;[3]
  Keeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
  Chríst. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
  To the Father through the features of men's faces.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Small, brightly colored birds.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Fulfills its individuality.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Acts in a just manner.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *plucked*Return to reference °
- °: *within*Return to reference °

Spring

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring—
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
In Eden garden.—Have, get, before it cloy,
Before it cloud, Christ, lord, and sour with sinning,
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and boy,
Most, O maid's child,[1] thy choice and worthy the winning.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Jesus, son of the Virgin Mary.Return to reference 1

The Windhover[1]

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion,[°] king-
dom of daylight's dauphin,[2] dapple-dawn-drawn
Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and
striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein[3] of a
wimpling[°] wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:
the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the
thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride,
plume, here
Buckle![4] AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a
billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!
[°]

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down
sillion[5]
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall[6] themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Kestrel, a small falcon noted for hovering in the air.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A prince who is heir to the French throne.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Circled at the end of a rein.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The verb can be read as imperative or indicative. All three meanings are relevant: to prepare for action, to fasten together, to collapse.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The ridge between two furrows of a plowed field.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Break the surface of.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *darling*Return to reference °
- °: *rippling*Return to reference °
- °: *knight*Return to reference °

Pied[1] Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded[2] cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls,[3] finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;[4]
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.°

All things counter,° original, spare,° strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Of two or more colors in blotches, variegated.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Brownish orange in color with streaks of gray.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, freshly fallen chestnuts, bright as coals.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Divided into fields used as pastures ("fold"), lying fallow, or plowed for cultivation. The landscape thus appears like patches of different colors.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *equipment*Return to reference °

- °: *contrary* Return to reference °
- °: *rare*Return to reference °

Hurrahing in Harvest

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks[1] rise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, éyes, heárt, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

1877 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Sheaves of grain.Return to reference 1

Binsey Poplars

felled 1879

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
Of a fresh and following folded rank
Not spared, not one
That dandled a sandalled
Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow and river and wind-wandering
weed-winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do
When we delve° or hew—
Hack and rack° the growing green!
Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball°
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
To mend her we end her,
When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
Strokes of havoc únselve°
The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.

1879 1918

Notes

- °: *dig*Return to reference °
- °: *torture*Return to reference °
- °: *the eye*Return to reference °
- °: *rob of self*Return to reference °

Duns Scotus's Oxford[1]

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rook-racked, river-rounded;
The dapple-eared lily below thee; that country and town did
Once encounter in, here coped and poisèd powers;

Thou hast a base and brickish skirt there, sours
That neighbour-nature thy grey beauty is grounded
Best in;[2] graceless growth, thou hast confounded
Rural rural keeping—folk, flocks, and flowers.

Yet ah! this air I gather and I release
He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what
He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to peace;

Of realty° the rarest-veinèd unraveller; a not
Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;
Who fired France for Mary without spot.[3]

1879 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Duns Scotus, the medieval theologian, lectured at Oxford about 1301. His idea that individuality is the final perfection of any creature influenced Hopkins's conception of inscape. When Hopkins came on two of Scotus's commentaries in 1872, he wrote that he was immediately "flush with a new stroke of enthusiasm . . . when I took in any inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hopkins contrasts the "here" of the "grey beauty" of the medieval city of Oxford, where country and town are both protected ("coped," as within a priest's cloak) and in equilibrium ("poisèd powers"), with the "there" of its new surburban "brickish skirt" (housing developments and industrial complexes that were built around the perimeter of the city in the 19th century).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: In Paris, Scotus was influential in defending the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception—that Mary's mother, St. Anne, conceived her daughter without sin.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *reality*Return to reference °

Felix Randal

Felix Randal the farrier,[°] O is he dead then? my duty
all ended,
Who have watched his mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome
Pining, pining, till time when reason rambled in it and some
Fatal four disorders, fleshed there, all contended?

Sickness broke him. Impatient, he cursed at first, but mended
Being anointed[1] and all; though a heavenlier heart began some
Months earlier, since I had our sweet reprieve and ransom[2]
Tendered to him. Ah well, God rest him all road ever[3] he offended!
This seeing the sick endears them to us, us too it endears.
My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal;
How far from then forethought of, all thy more boisterous years,
When thou at the random[4] grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
Didst fettle[°] for the great grey drayhorse his bright and
battering sandal!

1880 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Extreme Unction (the sacrament for the dying).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Holy Communion preceded by confession and absolution.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In whatever way.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Built with stones of irregular size and shape.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *blacksmith*Return to reference °
- °: *prepare*Return to reference °

Spring and Fall:[1]

to a young child

Márgarét, áre you gríeving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Áh! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal[2] lie;
And yet you *will* weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrow's sprígs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost° guessed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

1880 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: This deceptively simple poem is deeply informed by Christian theology: according to Catholic doctrine, the fall of Adam and Eve brought into the world both mortality and the legacy of Original Sin for all human beings ("the blight man was born for").Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Coined by analogy with piecemeal. "Wanwood": pale or dim; the forest may be pale because of light-colored autumn leaves or dim because light is filtered through the leaves.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *spirit*Return to reference °

[Carrion Comfort][1]

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee,[2]
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more.* I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock?[3] lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruisèd bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoidthee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie,[4] sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil,° since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand rather,[5] my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, wouldlaugh, chéer.
Cheer whom though? The Hero whose heaven-handlingflung me, fóot tród
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

1885 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: This title was supplied by Hopkins's literary executor, the poet Robert Bridges (1844–1930). The poem is one of the "terrible sonnets," as are the three following poems.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The satisfaction of giving in to despair as a kind of "comfort" is implicitly likened to a vulture's satisfaction in feasting on dead flesh.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, why would you roughly rock me with your world-wringing right foot?Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Metaphors of winnowing, or removing the empty husks ("chaff") that are blown away from the valuable grain that remains, appear frequently in the Bible to represent the separation of virtue from wickedness. See, for example, Psalms 1:4, Luke 3:16–17.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: That is, the hand that wields the rod.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *tumultReturn to reference °*

No worst, there is none

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

My cries heave, herds-long;[1] huddle in a main, a chief-
woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked "No ling-
ering! Let me be fell:° force[2] I must be brief."
O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance° deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

1885 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Like the succession of cries made by cattle that have been following one another in a long line.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Necessarily, inevitably.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *fierce, cruel*Return to reference °
- °: *endurance*Return to reference °

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day

I wake and feel the fell° of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hoürs we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters[1] sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.

Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

1885 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Letters undelivered or returned to the sender by the post office.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *cruelty*Return to reference °

That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire[1] and of the Comfort of the Resurrection

Cloud-puffball, torn tufts, tossed pillows | flaunt forth, then chevy°
on an air-
built thoroughfare: heaven-roysterers,° in gay-gangs | they
throng; they glitter in marches.
Down roughcast, down dazzling whitewash, | wherever an elm arches.
Shivelights and shadowtackle[2] in long | lashes lace, lance, and pair.
Delightfully the bright wind boisterous | ropes, wrestles, beats earth bare
Of yestertempest's creases; in pool and rut peel parches[3]
Squandering ooze to squeezed | dough, crust, dust; stanches, starches
Squadroned masks and manmarks[4] | treadmire toil there
Footfretted in it. Million-fuelèd, | nature's bonfire burns on.
But quench her bonniest, dearest | to her, her clearest-selvèd°
spark
Man, how fast his firedint | his mark on mind, is gone!
Both are in an unfathomable, all is in an enormous dark
Drowned. O pity and indig | nation! Manshape, that shone
Sheer off, disseveral,° a star, | death blots black out; nor mark
Is any of him at all so stark
But vastness blurs and time | beats level. Enough! the Resurrection,
A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, | joyless days, dejection.
Across my foundering deck shone
A beacon, an eternal beam. | Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; | world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood,[5] immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

1888 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Greek philosopher Heraclitus (flourished ca. 500 B.C.E.) taught that all things are in flux and that they ultimately return to the basic principle of fire.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Branches imagined as the shadows of a ship's rigging. "Shivelights": strips of light.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ruts described as peeled places. "Parches" is a verb whose subject is *wind.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The marks that people have made on the earth by walking ("footfretted") on it.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Kindling. "Jack": ordinary man.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *race*Return to reference °
- °: *swaggerers*Return to reference °
- °: *most individual*Return to reference °
- °: *separate*Return to reference °

Thou art indeed just, Lord

Justus quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum; verumtamen justaloquar ad te: Quare via impiorum prosperatur? &c.[1]

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend
With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.
Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend,
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me? Oh, the sots and thralls of lust
Do in spare hours more thrive than I that spend,

Sir, life upon thy cause. See, banks and brakes°
Now, leavèd how thick! lacèd they are again
With fretty chervil,[2] look, and fresh wind shakes

Them; birds build—but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

1889 1918

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jeremiah 12:1). The Latin was Hopkins's title.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A kind of herb, related to parsley.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *thickets*Return to reference °

MICHAEL FIELD
Katherine Harris Bradley (1846–1914)
Edith Emma Cooper (1862–1913)

Michael Field is the pseudonym adopted by Katherine Harris Bradley and her niece Edith Emma Cooper; together they published twenty-seven verse plays and eight volumes of poems. When Robert Browning wrote to Michael Field to praise a volume of plays, Cooper responded by comparing her collaborative relationship with Bradley to that of two famous Jacobean playwrights: "My Aunt and I work together after the fashion of Beaumont and Fletcher. She is my senior, by but fifteen years. She has lived with me, taught me, encouraged me and joined me to her poetic life." Bradley later begged him to maintain the disguise. The revelation of their secret, she pleaded, "would indeed be utter ruin to us," adding, "[w]e have many things to say that the world will not tolerate from a woman's lips."

Katherine Harris Bradley's father, a tobacco manufacturer, died when she was two; her mother died twenty years later. After her mother's death Bradley attended Newnham College, the newly established women's college at Cambridge, and the Collège de France in Paris. On her return home she joined John Ruskin's Guild of Saint George, a small utopian society. When Bradley wrote to Ruskin telling him that she had lost God and found a Skye terrier, he angrily ended their friendship. Shortly thereafter she began attending classes at Bristol University with her niece, Edith Emma

Cooper, whom she had adopted and raised after Edith's mother became ill. The two became lovers and began a life of writing and traveling together. Their first joint volume of poetry, *Long Ago* (1889), was inspired by Henry Wharton's 1885 edition of the writings of the ancient Greek poet Sappho, the first English translation to represent the object of Sappho's love poems as a woman. The preface to *Long Ago* explains their attempt to create poems elaborating on Sappho's fragments: "Devoutly as the fiery-bosomed Greek turned in her anguish to Aphrodite to accomplish her heart's desires, I have turned to the one woman who has dared to speak unfalteringly of the fearful mastery of love."

Bradley and Cooper knew most of the literary figures of the 1890s, including Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, and William Butler Yeats, although their relationship to the decadent movement was complex. The eroticism of their early poetry, with its frank expression of love between women, seems consistent with the spirit of the decade, but Bradley and Cooper sharply criticized the work of the artist Aubrey Beardsley for its depravity and withdrew one of their poems from publication in *The Yellow Book* to protest its style (Beardsley was the journal's art editor). In 1906 they converted to Roman Catholicism when their beloved chow dog died, thus reversing the substitution of dog for God that Bradley had flippantly described to Ruskin three decades earlier. In 1911 Cooper was diagnosed with cancer. Also suffering from the same disease, which she kept a secret from Cooper to spare her pain, Bradley survived her niece by only eight months.

Maids, not to you my mind doth change

Ταῖσ κάλαισ ἴMMιν [το] νόηMα τ2Μον ού διάMειπτον.[1]

Maids, not to you my mind doth change;
Men I defy, allure, estrange,
Prostrate, make bond or free:
Soft as the stream beneath the plane°
To you I sing my love's refrain;
Between us is no thought of pain,
Peril, satiety.

Soon doth a lover's patience tire,
But ye to manifold desire
Can yield response, ye know
When for long, museful days I pine,
The presage at my heart divine;
To you I never breathe a sign
Of inward want or woe.

When injuries my spirit bruise,
Allaying virtue ye infuse
With unobtrusive skill:
And if care frets ye come to me
As fresh as nymph from stream or tree,
And with your soft vitality
My weary bosom fill.

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: A fragment from the works of the Greek poet Sappho (born ca. 612 B.C.E.); the epigraph is translated in the first line of the poem.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *tree*Return to reference °

La Gioconda[1]

LEONARDO DA VINCI[2]

The Louvre[3]

Historic, side-long, implicating eyes;
A smile of velvet's lustre on the cheek;
Calm lips the smile leads upward; hand that lies
Glowing and soft, the patience in its rest
Of cruelty that waits and doth not seek
For prey; a dusky forehead and a breast
Where twilight touches ripeness amorously:
Behind her, crystal rocks, a sea and skies
Of evanescent blue on cloud and creek;
Landscape that shines suppressive of its zest
For those vicissitudes by which men die.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Italian name for the *Mona Lisa* (1503), oil painting.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Italian Renaissance painter and polymath (1452–1519).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Art museum in Paris.Return to reference 3

A Pen-Drawing of Leda[1]

SODOMA[2]

The Grand Duke's Palace at Weimar[3]

'Tis Leda lovely, wild and free,
  Drawing her gracious Swan down through the grass to see
  Certain round eggs without a speck:
One hand plunged in the reeds and one dinting the downy neck,
  Although his hectoring bill
  Gapes toward her tresses,
She draws the fondled creature to her will.

  She joys to bend in the live light
Her glistening body toward her love, how much more bright!
  Though on her breast the sunshine lies
And spreads its affluence on the wide curves of her waist and thighs,
  To her meek, smitten gaze
  Where her hand presses
The Swan's white neck sink Heaven's concentred rays.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: According to Greek mythology, Leda was raped by Zeus, who came to her in the form of a swan.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Although the drawing to which this poem refers is now attributed to da Vinci, at the time of its composition, it was credited to Il Sodoma, or Giovanni Antonio Bazzi (1477–1549), another Italian Renaissance painter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A palace in Germany, home to a collection of art.Return to reference 3

The Sleeping Venus

GIORGIONE[1]

The Dresden Gallery[2]

Here is Venus by our homes
And resting on the verdant swell
Of a soft country flanked with mountain domes:
She has left her archèd shell,
Has left the barren wave that foams,
Amid earth's fruitful tilths to dwell.
Nobly lighted while she sleeps
As sward-lands or the corn-field sweeps,
Pure as are the things that man
Needs for life and using can
Never violate nor spot—
Thus she slumbers in no grot,
But on open ground,
With the great hill-sides around.

And her body has the curves,
The same extensive smoothness seen
In yonder breadths of pasture, in the swerves
Of the grassy mountain-green
That for her propping pillow serves:
There is a sympathy between
Her and Earth of largest reach,
For the sex that forms them each
Is a bond, a holiness,
That unconsciously must bless
And unite them, as they lie
Shameless underneath the sky

A long, opal cloud
Doth in noontide haze enshroud.

O’er her head her right arm bends;
And from the elbow raised aloft
Down to the crossing knees a line descends
Unimpeachable and soft
As the adjacent slope that ends
In chequered plain of hedge and croft.
Circular as lovely knolls,
Up to which a landscape rolls
With desirous sway, each breast
Rises from the level chest,
One in contour, one in round—
Either exquisite, low mound
Firm in shape and given
To the August warmth of heaven.

With bold freedom of incline,
With an uttermost repose,
From hip to herbage-cushioned foot the line
Of her left leg stretching shows
Against the turf direct and fine,
Dissimilar in grace to those
Little bays that in and out
By the ankle wind about;
Or that shallow bend, the right
Curled-up knee has brought to sight
Underneath its bossy rise,
Where the loveliest shadow lies!
Charmed umbrage rests
On her neck and by her breasts.

Her left arm remains beside
The plastic body’s lower heaves,
Controlled by them, as when a river-side

With its sandy margin weaves
Deflections in a lenient tide;
Her hand the thigh's tense surface leaves,
  Falling inward. Not even sleep
  Dare invalidate the deep,
  Universal pleasure sex
  Must unto itself annex—
  Even the stillest sleep; at peace,
  More profound with rest's increase,
  She enjoys the good
  Of delicious womanhood.

Cheek and eyebrow touch the fold
Of the raised arm that frames her hair,
Her braided hair in colour like to old
Copper glinting here and there:
While through her skin of olive-gold
The scarce carnations mount and share
  Faultlessly the oval space
  Of her temperate, grave face.
  Eyelids underneath the day
  Wrinkle as full buds that stay,
  Through the tranquil, summer hours,
  Closed although they might be flowers;
  The red lips shut in
  Gracious secrets that begin.

On white drapery she sleeps,
That fold by fold is stained with shade;
Her mantle's ruddy pomegranate in heaps
For a cushion she has laid
Beneath her; and the glow that steeps
Its grain of richer depth is made
  By an overswelling bank,
  Tufted with dun° grasses rank.
  From this hillock's outer heaves

One small bush defines its leaves
Broadly on the sober blue
The pale cloud-bank rises to,
Whilst it sinks in bland
Sunshine on the distant land.

Near her resting-place are spread,
In deep or greener-lighted brown,
Wolds, that half-withered by the heat o'erhead,
Press up to a little town
Of castle, archway; roof and shed,
Then slope in grave continuance down:
On their border, in a group,
Trees of brooding foliage droop
Sidelong; and a single tree
Springs with bright simplicity,
Central from the sunlit plain.
Of a blue no flowers attain,
On the fair, vague sky
Adamantine° summits lie.

And her resting is so strong
That while we gaze it seems as though
She had lain thus the solemn glebes[3] among
In the ages far ago
And would continue, till the long,
Last evening of Earth's summer glow
In communion with the sweet
Life that ripens at her feet:
We can never fear that she
From Italian fields will flee,
For she does not come from far,
She is of the things that are;
And she will not pass
While the sun strikes on the grass.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Italian painter of the High Renaissance.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Important museum in Dresden, GermanyReturn to reference 2
- Note 3: Land belonging to a parish church.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *brownish, dark gray*Return to reference °
- °: *hard and shiny*Return to reference °

[A girl]

A girl,
Her soul a deep-wave pearl
Dim, lucent of all lovely mysteries;
A face flowered for heart's ease,
A brow's grace soft as seas
Seen through faint forest-trees:
A mouth, the lips apart,
Like aspen-leaflets trembling in the breeze
From her tempestuous heart.
Such: and our souls so knit,
I leave a page half-writ—
The work begun
Will be to heaven's conception done,
If she come to it.

1893

Unbosoming

The love that breeds
In my heart for thee!
As the iris is full, brimful of seeds,
And all that it flowered for among the reeds
Is packed in a thousand vermilion-beads
That push, and riot, and squeeze, and clip,°
Till they burst the sides of the silver scrip,°
And at last we see
What the bloom, with its tremulous, bowery fold
Of zephyr-petal at heart did hold:
So my breast is rent
With the burthen and strain of its great content;
For the summer of fragrance and sighs is dead,
The harvest-secret is burning red,
And I would give thee, after my kind,
The final issues of heart and mind.

1893

Notes

- °: *clutch*Return to reference °
- °: *purse*Return to reference °

[It was deep April, and the morn]

It was deep April, and the morn
  Shakspere was born;[1]
The world was on us, pressing sore;
My Love and I took hands and swore,
  Against the world, to be
Poets and lovers evermore,
To laugh and dream on Lethe's[2] shore,
To sing to Charon[3] in his boat,
Heartening the timid souls afloat;
Of judgment never to take heed,
But to those fast-locked souls to speed,
Who never from Apollo[4] fled,
Who spent no hour among the dead;
  Continually
  With them to dwell,
Indifferent to heaven and hell.

1893

Endnotes

- Note 1: Shakespeare's birthday is traditionally ascribed to April 23, 1564.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The river of forgetfulness in the underworld (a reference, like those that follow, to classical mythology).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The ferryman who rows the dead across the river Styx to the underworld.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: God of poetry and of the sun.Return to reference 4

Tiger-Lilies

Lilies, are you come!
I quail before you as your buds upswell;
It is the miracle
Of fire and sculpture in your brazen urns
That strikes me dumb,—
Fire of midsummer that burns,
And as it passes,
Flinging rich sparkles on its own clear blare,
Wreathes with the wreathing tongues and rays,
Great tiger-lilies, of your deep-cleft masses!
It is the wonder
I am laid under
By the firm heaves
And overtumbling edges of your liberal leaves.

1893

To Christina Rossetti

Lady, we would behold thee moving bright
As Beatrice or Matilda[1] mid the trees,
Alas! thy moan was as a moan for ease
And passage through cool shadows to the night:
Fleeing from love, hadst thou not poet's right
To slip into the universe? The seas
Are fathomless to rivers drowned in these,
And sorrow is secure in leafy light.
Ah, had this secret touched thee, in a tomb
Thou hadst not buried thy enchanting self,
As happy Syrinx[2] murmuring with the wind,
Or Daphne,[3] thrilled through all her mystic bloom,
From safe recess as genius[4] or as elf,
Thou hadst breathed joy in earth and in thy kind.

1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: An idealized virgin in Dante's *Purgatorio* (28.30), who explains to the poet that he is in the Garden of Eden. Beatrice, Dante's idealized beloved, appears to the poet in the Earthly Paradise at the top of the mountain of Purgatory.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A nymph who, when pursued by Pan, prayed to the river nymphs to save her; she was transformed into reeds, from which Pan made his flute (in Greek, *syrinx* literally means "Panpipe").Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A nymph who, to escape Apollo's pursuit, was transformed into a laurel tree (the literal meaning of *daphnë* in

Greek).Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The spirit of a place.Return to reference 4

Nests in Elms

The rooks are cawing up and down the trees!
Among their nests they caw. O sound I treasure,
Ripe as old music is, the summer's measure,
Sleep at her gossip, sylvan mysteries,
With prate and clamour to give zest of these—
In rune I trace the ancient law of pleasure,
Of love, of all the busy-ness of leisure,
With dream on dream of never-thwarted ease.
O homely birds, whose cry is harbinger
Of nothing sad, who know not anything
Of sea-birds' loneliness, of Procne's[1] strife,
Rock round me when I die! So sweet it were
To die by open doors, with you on wing
Humming the deep security of life.

1908

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Greek mythology Procne's husband, King Tereus, raped her sister, Philomela. Tereus then ripped out Philomela's tongue to keep her from revealing the crime, but she wove the story into a tapestry. In revenge Procne killed their son and served him to Tereus in a stew. When the sisters fled Tereus, all three were changed into birds: Tereus, into a hoopoe; Procne, a nightingale; and Philomela, a swallow.Return to reference 1

Eros[1]

O Eros of the mountains, of the earth,
One thing I know of thee that thou art old,
Far, sovereign, lonesome tyrant of the dearth
Of chaos, ruler of the primal cold!
None gave thee nurture: chaos' icy rings
Pressed on thy plenitude. O fostering power,
Thine the first voice, first warmth, first golden wings,
First blowing zephyr, earliest opened flower,
Thine the first smile of Time: thou hast no mate,
Thou art alone forever, giving all:
After thine image, Love, thou did'st create
Man to be poor, man to be prodigal;
And thus, O awful° god, he is endued
With the raw hungers of thy solitude.

1908

Endnotes

- Note 1: Love (Greek); in Greek mythology the god of love.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *awe-inspiring*Return to reference °

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
1850–1894

Robert Louis (originally Lewis) Balfour Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on November 13, 1850, the only child of Margaret Balfour and Thomas Stevenson, a well-known marine engineer and designer of lighthouses. His family was part of the respectable Scottish middle classes, a membership that would both benefit Stevenson—although there were difficult stretches in his relationship with his father, he generally did not have to worry about money—and leave him with a restlessness for adventure and excitement. Driven at the same time by a quest for a climate that would ease his chronically diseased lungs, Stevenson traveled more broadly than any other prominent Victorian writer. And yet it could be argued that although he was constantly on the move in far-flung lands, Stevenson returned again and again in his creative fiction, explicitly or implicitly, to the tensions of his own personal and national heritage—to the pronounced conflicts of his upbringing and of Scotland's somber, religiously oppressive society.

An awkward sensitive boy, Stevenson was subjected to the disciplinary strictures of his stern Presbyterian father and to the more affectionate, although also deeply devout, care of his mother and his nurse. Plagued by night terrors and bouts of sickness, the young Stevenson seemed "in body . . . assuredly badly set up," as a schoolmate said in later years; "his limbs were long, lean, and spidery, and his chest flat, so as almost to suggest some

malnutrition." This constitutional weakness was to afflict Stevenson throughout his life, and he enjoyed only short periods of reasonable health. As a student at Edinburgh University, Stevenson soon began to avoid the engineering classes that would have enabled him to follow in his father's footsteps, and embarked instead on a course of reading—"an extensive and highly rational system of truancy," as he called it—to learn how to become a writer. In time, as a compromise to placate his father, he switched to the study of law; although he never practiced as a lawyer, he did pass the Scottish bar examination in 1875. But Stevenson's interests clearly lay elsewhere; in this period he began reading scandalous French poetry and hanging around brothels, where the prostitutes nicknamed him "Velvet Jacket." His appearance and wit attracted attention: describing their first encounter in 1873, Stevenson's friend the folklorist and writer Andrew Lang later recalled that he "wore a wide blue cloak, with a grace that hovered between that of an Italian poet and an early pirate. It was impossible not to discover, in a short conversation, that he was very clever."

At the age of twenty-two, Stevenson further distanced himself from his father by confessing that he had turned both socialist and agnostic; he subsequently began to spend increasingly longer periods in France, partly because of respiratory troubles but also to be in the company of painters and writers. Back in Britain he developed important and useful friendships with artistic and literary figures, including Sidney Colvin, a professor of art, and the poet and editor W. E. Henley; with their support Stevenson started to publish essays and books of travel writing. As if to complete his breach with bourgeois Scottish respectability, Stevenson then fell in love with Fanny Osbourne, an American woman ten years his senior, who was estranged from her husband but not yet divorced.

In 1879 Stevenson's global wanderings began in earnest, starting with a trip to California to marry the newly divorced Fanny. Despite constant travel and recurrent illness, Stevenson found the time and energy to write. *Treasure Island*, begun as an amusement for his stepson, was his first popular success: serialized in 1881 and

published in book form in 1883, the story of the cabin boy Jim Hawkins's adventures includes a covert portrait of Stevenson's one-legged friend Henley in the figure of the pirate Long John Silver. Soon thereafter he published another children's classic: *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885), a collection of poems dedicated to his former nurse. In the years to come, Stevenson worked in numerous genres, including short fiction, swashbuckling romances, historical adventures (*Kidnapped*, 1886, a story set in Scotland just after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, and its sequel, *Catriona*, 1893), and more gothic undertakings, such as the bleak and brooding novel *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889).

The work that first established Stevenson's critical reputation, however, was a horror story that prefigured *The Master of Ballantrae*'s fascination with the darker side of human nature and reflected his long-standing interest in the idea of a double life: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, written in 1885 and published the following year. The novella rapidly became a best seller in both Britain and America, and like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* of 1818 (to which *Jekyll and Hyde* pays homage at various moments) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), the story has enjoyed a continuous and lively presence in popular culture up to the present day. Yet our familiarity with the outline of the tale may not prepare us for the psychological and ethical complexity of the original. Certainly the novelist's friends found *Jekyll and Hyde* genuinely unnerving: the writer and historian J. A. Symonds wrote to Stevenson that the story "has left such a deeply painful impression on my heart that I do not know how I am ever to turn to it again," while Lang commented that "we would welcome a spectre, a ghoul, or even a vampire, rather than meet Mr. Edward Hyde." For some, many aspects of the novella have seemed markedly Scottish in flavor: the novelist G. K. Chesterton insisted that its London is really Edinburgh, its Englishmen actually Scotsmen—"No modern English lawyer," he protested of the character Mr. Utterson, "ever read a book of dry divinity in the evening, merely because it was Sunday." Nevertheless, the distinctive tone and theme of *Jekyll and Hyde* have

led many critics to characterize it—often together with another work that shares its preoccupation with the divided self, Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)—as an expression of quintessentially fin de siècle anxieties.

From 1888 onward the Stevensons embarked on a series of journeys in the South Seas, once again in the hope that the climate would benefit the writer's health. They eventually settled in Samoa, where Stevenson became a favorite with the locals (who called him Tusitala, or "teller of tales") before he died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1894. At the time of his death, Stevenson was only forty-four years old and still furiously at work, this time on a historical novel titled *Weir of Hermiston.*

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Story of the Door

Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance, that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved[1] tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. "I incline to Cain's heresy,"[2] he used to say quaintly: "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanour.

No doubt the feat was easy to Mr. Utterson; for he was undemonstrative at the best, and even his friendship seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity[3] of good-nature. It is the mark of a modest man to accept his friendly circle ready-made from the hands of opportunity; and that was the lawyer's way. His friends were those of his own blood or those whom he had known the longest; his affections, like ivy, were the growth of time, they implied no aptness in the object. Hence, no doubt, the bond that united him to Mr. Richard Enfield, his distant kinsman, the well-known man about town. It was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common. It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks, that they said nothing, looked singularly dull, and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend. For all that, the two men put the

greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted.

It chanced on one of these rambles that their way led them down a by-street in a busy quarter of London. The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the week-days. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed, and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their gains in coquetry;[4] so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.[5]

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point, a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained.[6] Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Mr. Enfield and the lawyer were on the other side of the by-street; but when they came abreast of the entry, the former lifted up his cane and pointed.

"Did you ever remark that door?" he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative, "It is connected in my mind," added he, "with a very odd story."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Utterson, with a slight change of voice, "and what was that?"

"Well, it was this way," returned Mr. Enfield: "I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut.[7] I gave a view halloa,[8] took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. The people who had turned out were the girl's own family; and pretty soon, the doctor, for whom she had been sent, put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much the worse, more frightened, according to the Sawbones;[9] and there you might have supposed would be an end to it. But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me. He was the usual cut and dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent, and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us; every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turn sick and white with the desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best. We told the man we

could and would make such a scandal out of this, as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or any credit,[1] we undertook that he should lose them. And all the time, as we were pitching it in red hot, we were keeping the women off him as best we could, for they were as wild as harpies.[2] I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle, with a kind of black, sneering coolness—frightened too, I could see that—but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan. 'If you choose to make capital out of this accident,' said he, 'I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene,' says he. 'Name your figure.' Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child's family; he would have clearly liked to stick out; but there was something about the lot of us that meant mischief, and at last he struck.[3] The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door?—whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts's,[4] drawn payable to bearer and signed with a name that I can't mention, though it's one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The figure was stiff; but the signature was good for more than that, if it was only genuine. I took the liberty of pointing out to my gentleman that the whole business looked apocryphal, and that a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out of it with another man's cheque for close upon a hundred pounds. But he was quite easy and sneering. 'Set your mind at rest,' says he, 'I will stay with you till the banks open and cash the cheque myself.' So we all set off, the doctor, and the child's father, and our friend and myself, and passed the rest of the night in my chambers; and next day, when we had breakfasted, went in a body to the bank. I gave in the check myself, and said I had every reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The cheque was genuine."

"Tut-tut," said Mr. Utterson.

"I see you feel as I do," said Mr. Enfield. "Yes, it's a bad story. For my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really

damnable man; and the person that drew the cheque is the very pink of the proprieties, celebrated too, and (what makes it worse) one of your fellows who do what they call good. Black mail, I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. Black Mail House is what I call that place with the door, in consequence. Though even that, you know, is far from explaining all," he added, and with the words fell into a vein of musing.

From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: "And you don't know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?"

"A likely place, isn't it?" returned Mr. Enfield. "But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other."

"And you never asked about the—place with the door?" said Mr. Utterson.

"No, sir: I had a delicacy," was the reply. "I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the day of judgment. You start a question, and it's like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others; and presently some bland old bird (the last you would have thought of) is knocked on the head in his own back garden and the family have to change their name. No, sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street,[5] the less I ask."

"A very good rule, too," said the lawyer.

"But I have studied the place for myself," continued Mr. Enfield. "It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. There are three windows looking on the court on the first floor;[6] none below; the windows are always shut but they're clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody must live there. And yet it's not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about that court, that it's hard to say where one ends and another begins."

The pair walked on again for a while in silence; and then "Enfield," said Mr. Utterson, "that's a good rule of yours."

"Yes, I think it is," returned Enfield.

“But for all that,” continued the lawyer, “there’s one point I want to ask: I want to ask the name of that man who walked over the child.”

“Well,” said Mr. Enfield, “I can’t see what harm it would do. It was a man of the name of Hyde.”

“H’m,” said Mr. Utterson. “What sort of a man is he to see?”

“He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can’t describe him. And it’s not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment.”

Mr. Utterson again walked some way in silence and obviously under a weight of consideration. “You are sure he used a key?” he inquired at last.

“My dear sir . . .” began Enfield, surprised out of himself.

“Yes, I know,” said Utterson; “I know it must seem strange. The fact is, if I do not ask you the name of the other party, it is because I know it already. You see, Richard, your tale has gone home. If you have been inexact in any point, you had better correct it.”

“I think you might have warned me,” returned the other with a touch of sullenness. “But I have been pedantically exact, as you call it. The fellow had a key; and what’s more, he has it still. I saw him use it, not a week ago.”

Mr. Utterson sighed deeply but said never a word; and the young man presently resumed. “Here is another lesson to say nothing,” said he. “I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again.”

“With all my heart,” said the lawyer. “I shake hands on that, Richard.”

Endnotes

- Note 1: Proved.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Refusal of responsibility for one's fellow human beings. After Cain kills his brother, Abel, and God asks where Abel is, Cain responds, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Universality.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Attractive display.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Passerby.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Discolored.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A relentless destructive force. From Jagannath, a Hindu deity considered a form of Vishnu or his avatar Krishna. Pilgrims travel to an annual festival to watch a huge statue of the god dragged on a cart through Puri, a city in the Indian state of Odisha; 19th-century reports, furnished by European travelers, of worshippers throwing themselves under the wheels to be crushed were most likely apocryphal.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Shout.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Doctor (slang).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Good name.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In classical mythology monsters with women's faces and bodies and birds' wings and claws.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Gave in.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A prestigious London bank.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, looks like someone is in trouble or a bad fix (slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the first floor above the ground floor (what Americans call the second floor).Return to reference 6

Search for Mr. Hyde

That evening Mr. Utterson came home to his bachelor house in sombre spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom of a Sunday, when this meal was over, to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity[7] on his reading desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed. On this night, however, as soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business room. There he opened his safe, took from the most private part of it a document endorsed on the envelope as Dr. Jekyll's Will, and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents. The will was holograph,[8] for Mr. Utterson, though he took charge of it now that it was made, had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S.,[9] etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his "friend and benefactor Edward Hyde," but that in case of Dr. Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence for any period exceeding three calendar months," the said Edward Hyde should step into the said Henry Jekyll's shoes without further delay and free from any burthen or obligation, beyond the payment of a few small sums to the members of the doctor's household. This document had long been the lawyer's eyesore. It offended him both as a lawyer and as a lover of the sane and customary sides of life, to whom the fanciful was the immodest. And hitherto it was his ignorance of Mr. Hyde that had swelled his indignation; now, by a sudden turn, it was his knowledge. It was already bad enough when the name was but a name of which he could learn no more. It was worse when it began to be clothed upon with detestable attributes; and out of the shifting, insubstantial mists that had so long baffled his eye, there leaped up the sudden, definite presentment[1] of a fiend.

"I thought it was madness," he said, as he replaced the obnoxious paper in the safe, "and now I begin to fear it is disgrace."

With that he blew out his candle, put on a greatcoat, and set forth in the direction of Cavendish Square, that citadel of medicine,[2] where his friend, the great Dr. Lanyon, had his house and received his crowding patients. "If anyone knows, it will be Lanyon," he had thought.

The solemn butler knew and welcomed him; he was subjected to no stage of delay, but ushered direct from the door to the dining-room where Dr. Lanyon sat alone over his wine. This was a hearty, healthy, dapper, red-faced gentleman, with a shock of hair prematurely white, and a boisterous and decided manner. At sight of Mr. Utterson, he sprang up from his chair and welcomed him with both hands. The geniality, as was the way of the man, was somewhat theatrical to the eye; but it reposed on genuine feeling. For these two were old friends, old mates both at school and college, both thorough respecters of themselves and of each other, and, what does not always follow, men who thoroughly enjoyed each other's company.

After a little rambling talk, the lawyer led up to the subject which so disagreeably preoccupied his mind.

"I suppose, Lanyon," said he, "you and I must be the two oldest friends that Henry Jekyll has?"

"I wish the friends were younger," chuckled Dr. Lanyon. "But I suppose we are. And what of that? I see little of him now."

"Indeed?" said Utterson. "I thought you had a bond of common interest."

"We had," was the reply. "But it is more than ten years since Henry Jekyll became too fanciful for me. He began to go wrong, wrong in mind; and though of course I continue to take an interest in him for old sake's sake, as they say, I see and I have seen devilish little of the man. Such unscientific balderdash," added the doctor, flushing suddenly purple, "would have estranged Damon and Pythias."[3]

This little spirit of temper was somewhat of a relief to Mr. Utterson. "They have only differed on some point of science," he thought; and being a man of no scientific passions (except in the

matter of conveyancing,[4]) he even added: “It is nothing worse than that!” He gave his friend a few seconds to recover his composure, and then approached the question he had come to put. “Did you ever come across a protégé of his—one Hyde?” he asked.

“Hyde?” repeated Lanyon. “No. Never heard of him. Since my time.”

That was the amount of information that the lawyer carried back with him to the great, dark bed on which he tossed to and fro, until the small hours of the morning began to grow large. It was a night of little ease to his toiling mind, toiling in mere[5] darkness and besieged by questions.

Six o’clock struck on the bells of the church that was so conveniently near to Mr. Utterson’s dwelling, and still he was digging at the problem. Hitherto it had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved; and as he lay and tossed in the gross darkness of the night and the curtained room, Mr. Enfield’s tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of the figure of a man walking swiftly; then of a child running from the doctor’s; and then these met, and that human Juggernaut trod the child down and passed on regardless of her screams. Or else he would see a room in a rich house, where his friend lay asleep, dreaming and smiling at his dreams; and then the door of that room would be opened, the curtains of the bed plucked apart, and the sleeper recalled,[6] and lo! there would stand by his side a figure to whom power was given, and even at that dead hour, he must rise and do its bidding. The figure in these two phases haunted the lawyer all night; and if at any time he dozed over, it was but to see it glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamp-lighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. And still the figure had no face by which he might know it; even in his dreams, it had no face, or one that baffled him and melted before his eyes; and thus it was that there sprang up and grew apace in the

lawyer's mind a singularly strong, almost an inordinate, curiosity to behold the features of the real Mr. Hyde. If he could but once set eyes on him, he thought the mystery would lighten and perhaps roll altogether away, as was the habit of mysterious things when well examined. He might see a reason for his friend's strange preference or bondage (call it which you please) and even for the startling clause of the will. At least it would be a face worth seeing: the face of a man who was without bowels of mercy:[7] a face which had but to show itself to raise up, in the mind of the unimpressionable Enfield, a spirit of enduring hatred.

From that time forward, Mr. Utterson began to haunt the door in the bystreet of shops. In the morning before office hours, at noon when business was plenty, and time scarce, at night under the face of the fogged city moon, by all lights and at all hours of solitude or concourse, the lawyer was to be found on his chosen post.

"If he be Mr. Hyde," he had thought, "I shall be Mr. Seek."

And at last his patience was rewarded. It was a fine dry night; frost in the air; the streets as clean as a ballroom floor; the lamps, unshaken by any wind, drawing a regular pattern of light and shadow. By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent. Small sounds carried far; domestic sounds out of the houses were clearly audible on either side of the roadway; and the rumour[8] of the approach of any passenger preceded him by a long time. Mr. Utterson had been some minutes at his post, when he was aware of an odd, light footstep drawing near. In the course of his nightly patrols, he had long grown accustomed to the quaint effect with which the footfalls of a single person, while he is still a great way off, suddenly spring out distinct from the vast hum and clatter of the city. Yet his attention had never before been so sharply and decisively arrested; and it was with a strong, superstitious prevision of success that he withdrew into the entry of the court.

The steps drew swiftly nearer, and swelled out suddenly louder as they turned the end of the street. The lawyer, looking forth from the entry, could soon see what manner of man he had to deal with.

He was small and very plainly dressed, and the look of him, even at that distance, went somehow strongly against the watcher's inclination. But he made straight for the door, crossing the roadway to save time; and as he came, he drew a key from his pocket like one approaching home.

Mr. Utterson stepped out and touched him on the shoulder as he passed. "Mr. Hyde, I think?"

Mr. Hyde shrank back with a hissing intake of the breath. But his fear was only momentary; and though he did not look the lawyer in the face, he answered coolly enough: "That is my name. What do you want?"

"I see you are going in," returned the lawyer. "I am an old friend of Dr. Jekyll's—Mr. Utterson of Gaunt Street—you must have heard my name; and meeting you so conveniently, I thought you might admit me."

"You will not find Dr. Jekyll; he is from home," replied Mr. Hyde, blowing in the key. And then suddenly, but still without looking up, "How did you know me?" he asked.

"On your side," said Mr. Utterson, "will you do me a favour?"

"With pleasure," replied the other. "What shall it be?"

"Will you let me see your face?" asked the lawyer.

Mr. Hyde appeared to hesitate, and then, as if upon some sudden reflection, fronted about with an air of defiance; and the pair stared at each other pretty fixedly for a few seconds. "Now I shall know you again," said Mr. Utterson. "It may be useful."

"Yes," returned Mr. Hyde, "it is as well we have met; and *à propos*, you should have my address." And he gave a number of a street in Soho.[9]

"Good God!" thought Mr. Utterson, "can he, too, have been thinking of the will?" But he kept his feelings to himself and only grunted in acknowledgment of the address.

"And now," said the other, "how did you know me?"

"By description," was the reply.

"Whose description?"

"We have common friends," said Mr. Utterson.

"Common friends?" echoed Mr. Hyde, a little hoarsely. "Who are they?"

"Jekyll, for instance," said the lawyer.

"He never told you," cried Mr. Hyde, with a flush of anger. "I did not think you would have lied."

"Come," said Mr. Utterson, "that is not fitting language."

The other snarled aloud into a savage laugh; and the next moment, with extraordinary quickness, he had unlocked the door and disappeared into the house.

The lawyer stood awhile when Mr. Hyde had left him, the picture of disquietude. Then he began slowly to mount the street, pausing every step or two and putting his hand to his brow like a man in mental perplexity. The problem he was thus debating as he walked, was one of a class that is rarely solved. Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness, and he spoke with a husky, whispering and somewhat broken voice; all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which Mr. Utterson regarded him. "There must be something else," said the perplexed gentleman. "There *is* something more, if I could find a name for it. God bless me, the man seems hardly human! Something troglodytic,[1] shall we say? or can it be the old story of Dr. Fell?[2] or is it the mere radiance of a foul soul that thus transpires through, and transfigures, its clay continent?[3] The last, I think; for, O my poor old Harry Jekyll, if ever I read Satan's signature upon a face, it is on that of your new friend."

Round the corner from the by-street, there was a square of ancient, handsome houses, now for the most part decayed from their high estate and let in flats and chambers to all sorts and conditions of men: map-engravers, architects, shady lawyers and the agents of obscure enterprises. One house, however, second from the corner, was still occupied entire; and at the door of this, which wore

a great air of wealth and comfort, though it was now plunged in darkness except for the fanlight, Mr. Utterson stopped and knocked. A well-dressed, elderly servant opened the door.

"Is Dr. Jekyll at home, Poole?" asked the lawyer.

"I will see, Mr. Utterson," said Poole, admitting the visitor, as he spoke, into a large, low-roofed, comfortable hall, paved with flags,[4] warmed (after the fashion of a country house) by a bright, open fire, and furnished with costly cabinets of oak. "Will you wait here by the fire, sir? or shall I give you a light in the dining-room?"

"Here, thank you," said the lawyer, and he drew near and leaned on the tall fender.[5] This hall, in which he was now left alone, was a pet fancy of his friend the doctor's; and Utterson himself was wont to speak of it as the pleasantest room in London. But to-night there was a shudder in his blood; the face of Hyde sat heavy on his memory; he felt (what was rare with him) a nausea and distaste of life; and in the gloom of his spirits, he seemed to read a menace in the flickering of the firelight on the polished cabinets and the uneasy starting of the shadow on the roof. He was ashamed of his relief, when Poole presently returned to announce that Dr. Jekyll was gone out.

"I saw Mr. Hyde go in by the old dissecting-room door, Poole," he said. "Is that right, when Dr. Jekyll is from home?"

"Quite right, Mr. Utterson, sir," replied the servant. "Mr. Hyde has a key."

"Your master seems to repose a great deal of trust in that young man, Poole," resumed the other musingly.

"Yes, sir, he do indeed," said Poole. "We have all orders to obey him."

"I do not think I ever met Mr. Hyde?" asked Utterson.

"O, dear no, sir. He never *dines* here," replied the butler. "Indeed we see very little of him on this side of the house; he mostly comes and goes by the laboratory."

"Well, good-night, Poole."

"Good-night, Mr. Utterson."

And the lawyer set out homeward with a very heavy heart. "Poor Harry Jekyll," he thought, "my mind misgives me he is in deep waters! He was wild when he was young; a long while ago to be sure; but in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. Ay, it must be that; the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, *pede claudo*,[6] years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault." And the lawyer, scared by the thought, brooded awhile on his own past, groping in all the corners of memory, lest by chance some Jack-in-the-Box of an old iniquity should leap to light there. His past was fairly blameless; few men could read the rolls of their life with less apprehension; yet he was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done, and raised up again into a sober and fearful gratitude by the many that he had come so near to doing, yet avoided. And then by a return on his former subject, he conceived a spark of hope. "This Master Hyde, if he were studied," thought he, "must have secrets of his own; black secrets, by the look of him; secrets compared to which poor Jekyll's worst would be like sunshine. Things cannot continue as they are. It turns me cold to think of this creature stealing like a thief to Harry's bedside; poor Harry, what a wakening! And the danger of it; for if this Hyde suspects the existence of the will, he may grow impatient to inherit. Ay, I must put my shoulder to the wheel—if Jekyll will but let me," he added, "if Jekyll will only let me." For once more he saw before his mind's eye, as clear as a transparency, the strange clauses of the will.

Endnotes

- Note 7: Theology.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In the author's handwriting.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Civil Law, Doctor of Laws, and Fellow of the Royal Society, respectively.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Image.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A once-aristocratic neighborhood where fashionable doctors had their offices. "Greatcoat": long, heavy overcoat.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Two inseparable youths in Greek legend whose willingness to die for each other symbolizes true friendship.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Legal transfer of property by writing deeds.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pure.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Revived, awakened.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compassion.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Noise.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Seedy district in central London. "*À propos*": by the way (French).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Like a prehistoric cave dweller or apelike.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A figure from the nursery rhyme "I do not like thee Dr. Fell; / The reason why I cannot tell."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Container.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Flagstones, large stone slabs.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Metal frame in front of a fireplace.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: With lame foot (Latin). From the Roman poet Horace's *Odes* 3.2.32: "Rarely has Vengeance with her lame foot abandoned the wicked man with a head start on her."Return to reference 6

Dr. Jekyll Was Quite at Ease

A fortnight later, by excellent good fortune, the doctor gave one of his pleasant dinners to some five or six old cronies, all intelligent, reputable men and all judges of good wine; and Mr. Utterson so contrived that he remained behind after the others had departed. This was no new arrangement, but a thing that had befallen many scores of times. Where Utterson was liked, he was liked well. Hosts loved to detain the dry lawyer, when the light-hearted and the loose-tongued had already their foot on the threshold; they liked to sit awhile in his unobtrusive company, practising for solitude, sobering their minds in the man's rich silence after the expense and strain of gaiety. To this rule, Dr. Jekyll was no exception; and as he now sat on the opposite side of the fire—a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness—you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection.

"I have been wanting to speak to you, Jekyll," began the latter. "You know that will of yours?"

A close observer might have gathered that the topic was distasteful; but the doctor carried it off gaily. "My poor Utterson," said he, "you are unfortunate in such a client. I never saw a man so distressed as you were by my will; unless it were that hide-bound pedant, Lanyon, at what he called my scientific heresies. O, I know he's a good fellow—you needn't frown—an excellent fellow, and I always mean to see more of him; but a hide-bound pedant for all that; an ignorant, blatant pedant. I was never more disappointed in any man than Lanyon."

"You know I never approved of it," pursued Utterson, ruthlessly disregarding the fresh topic.

"My will? Yes, certainly, I know that," said the doctor, a trifle sharply. "You have told me so."

"Well, I tell you so again," continued the lawyer. "I have been learning something of young Hyde."

The large handsome face of Dr. Jekyll grew pale to the very lips, and there came a blackness about his eyes. "I do not care to hear more," said he. "This is a matter I thought we had agreed to drop."

"What I heard was abominable," said Utterson.

"It can make no change. You do not understand my position," returned the doctor, with a certain incoherency of manner. "I am painfully situated, Utterson; my position is a very strange—a very strange one. It is one of those affairs that cannot be mended by talking."

"Jekyll," said Utterson, "you know me: I am a man to be trusted. Make a clean breast of this in confidence; and I make no doubt I can get you out of it."

"My good Utterson," said the doctor, "this is very good of you, this is downright good of you, and I cannot find words to thank you in. I believe you fully; I would trust you before any man alive, ay, before myself, if I could make the choice; but indeed it isn't what you fancy; it is not so bad as that; and just to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr. Hyde. I give you my hand upon that; and I thank you again and again; and I will just add one little word, Utterson, that I'm sure you'll take in good part: this is a private matter, and I beg of you to let it sleep."

Utterson reflected a little, looking in the fire.

"I have no doubt you are perfectly right," he said at last, getting to his feet.

"Well, but since we have touched upon this business, and for the last time I hope," continued the doctor, "there is one point I should like you to understand. I have really a very great interest in poor Hyde. I know you have seen him; he told me so; and I fear he was rude. But I do sincerely take a great, a very great interest in that young man; and if I am taken away, Utterson, I wish you to promise me that you will bear with him and get his rights for him. I think you would, if you knew all; and it would be a weight off my mind if you would promise."

"I can't pretend that I shall ever like him," said the lawyer.

"I don't ask that," pleaded Jekyll, laying his hand upon the other's arm; "I only ask for justice; I only ask you to help him for my sake, when I am no longer here."

Utterson heaved an irrepressible sigh. "Well," said he, "I promise."

The Carew Murder Case

Nearly a year later, in the month of October, 18—, London was startled by a crime of singular ferocity and rendered all the more notable by the high position of the victim. The details were few and startling. A maid servant living alone in a house not far from the river, had gone upstairs to bed about eleven. Although a fog rolled over the city in the small hours, the early part of the night was cloudless, and the lane, which the maid's window overlooked, was brilliantly lit by the full moon. It seems she was romantically given, for she sat down upon her box,[7] which stood immediately under the window, and fell into a dream of musing. Never (she used to say, with streaming tears, when she narrated that experience), never had she felt more at peace with all men or thought more kindly of the world. And as she so sat she became aware of an aged and beautiful gentleman with white hair, drawing near along the lane; and advancing to meet him, another and very small gentleman, to whom at first she paid less attention. When they had come within speech (which was just under the maid's eyes) the older man bowed and accosted the other with a very pretty manner of politeness. It did not seem as if the subject of his address were of great importance; indeed, from his pointing, it sometimes appeared as if he were only inquiring his way; but the moon shone on his face as he spoke, and the girl was pleased to watch it, it seemed to breathe such an innocent and old-world kindness of disposition, yet with something high too, as of a well-founded self-content. Presently her eye wandered to the other, and she was surprised to recognise in him a certain Mr. Hyde, who had once visited her master and for whom she had conceived a dislike. He had in his hand a heavy cane, with which he was trifling; but he answered never a word, and seemed to listen with an ill-contained impatience. And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr. Hyde broke out of all

bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway. At the horror of these sights and sounds, the maid fainted.

It was two o'clock when she came to herself and called for the police. The murderer was gone long ago; but there lay his victim in the middle of the lane, incredibly mangled. The stick with which the deed had been done, although it was of some rare and very tough and heavy wood, had broken in the middle under the stress of this insensate cruelty; and one splintered half had rolled in the neighbouring gutter—the other, without doubt, had been carried away by the murderer. A purse and a gold watch were found upon the victim; but no cards or papers, except a sealed and stamped envelope, which he had been probably carrying to the post,[8] and which bore the name and address of Mr. Utterson.

This was brought to the lawyer the next morning, before he was out of bed; and he had no sooner seen it and been told the circumstances, than he shot out a solemn lip. "I shall say nothing till I have seen the body," said he; "this may be very serious. Have the kindness to wait while I dress." And with the same grave countenance he hurried through his breakfast and drove to the police station, whither the body had been carried. As soon as he came into the cell, he nodded.

"Yes," said he, "I recognise him. I am sorry to say that this is Sir Danvers Carew."

"Good God, sir," exclaimed the officer, "is it possible?" And the next moment his eye lighted up with professional ambition. "This will make a deal of noise," he said. "And perhaps you can help us to the man." And he briefly narrated what the maid had seen, and showed the broken stick.

Mr. Utterson had already quailed at the name of Hyde; but when the stick was laid before him, he could doubt no longer; broken and battered as it was, he recognised it for one that he had himself presented many years before to Henry Jekyll.

"Is this Mr. Hyde a person of small stature?" he inquired.

"Particularly small and particularly wicked-looking, is what the maid calls him," said the officer.

Mr. Utterson reflected; and then, raising his head, "If you will come with me in my cab," he said, "I think I can take you to his house."

It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered[9] over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr. Utterson beheld a marvellous number of degrees and hues of twilight; for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening; and there would be a glow of a rich, lurid brown, like the light of some strange conflagration; and here, for a moment, the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths. The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. The thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye; and when he glanced at the companion of his drive, he was conscious of some touch of that terror of the law and the law's officers, which may at times assail the most honest.

As the cab drew up before the address indicated, the fog lifted a little and showed him a dingy street, a gin palace, a low French eating house, a shop for the retail of penny numbers[1] and twopenny salads, many ragged children huddled in the doorways, and many women of many different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass; and the next moment the fog settled down again upon that part, as brown as umber, and cut him off from his blackguardly surroundings. This was the home of Henry Jekyll's favourite; of a man who was heir to quarter of a million sterling.[2]

An ivory-faced and silvery-haired old woman opened the door. She had an evil face, smoothed by hypocrisy; but her manners were

excellent. Yes, she said, this was Mr. Hyde's, but he was not at home; he had been in that night very late, but had gone away again in less than an hour; there was nothing strange in that; his habits were very irregular, and he was often absent; for instance, it was nearly two months since she had seen him till yesterday.

"Very well, then, we wish to see his rooms," said the lawyer; and when the woman began to declare it was impossible, "I had better tell you who this person is," he added. "This is Inspector Newcomen of Scotland Yard."

A flash of odious joy appeared upon the woman's face. "Ah!" said she, "he is in trouble! What has he done?"

Mr. Utterson and the inspector exchanged glances. "He don't seem a very popular character," observed the latter. "And now, my good woman, just let me and this gentleman have a look about us."

In the whole extent of the house, which but for the old woman remained otherwise empty, Mr. Hyde had only used a couple of rooms; but these were furnished with luxury and good taste. A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery[3] elegant; a good picture hung upon the walls, a gift (as Utterson supposed) from Henry Jekyll, who was much of a connoisseur; and the carpets were of many piles and agreeable in colour. At this moment, however, the rooms bore every mark of having been recently and hurriedly ransacked; clothes lay about the floor, with their pockets inside out; lock-fast drawers stood open; and on the hearth there lay a pile of gray ashes, as though many papers had been burned. From these embers the inspector disinterred the butt end of a green cheque book, which had resisted the action of the fire; the other half of the stick was found behind the door; and as this clinched his suspicions, the officer declared himself delighted. A visit to the bank, where several thousand pounds were found to be lying to the murderer's credit, completed his gratification.

"You may depend upon it, sir," he told Mr. Utterson: "I have him in my hand. He must have lost his head, or he never would have left the stick or, above all, burned the cheque book. Why, money's life to

the man. We have nothing to do but wait for him at the bank, and get out the handbills."

This last, however, was not so easy of accomplishment; for Mr. Hyde had numbered few familiars—even the master of the servant maid had only seen him twice; his family could nowhere be traced; he had never been photographed; and the few who could describe him differed widely, as common observers will. Only on one point, were they agreed; and that was the haunting sense of unexpressed deformity with which the fugitive impressed his beholders.

Endnotes

- Note 7: Servants, and other members of the poorer classes, typically stored their few items of clothing in a wooden box.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, postal letter box.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Was gloomy and threatening.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Cheap serial installments of popular fiction. "Gin palace": cheap bar.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, pounds sterling.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Table linen.Return to reference 3

Incident of the Letter

It was late in the afternoon, when Mr. Utterson found his way to Dr. Jekyll's door, where he was at once admitted by Poole, and carried down by the kitchen offices and across a yard which had once been a garden, to the building which was indifferently[4] known as the laboratory or the dissecting rooms. The doctor had bought the house from the heirs of a celebrated surgeon; and his own tastes being rather chemical than anatomical, had changed the destination[5] of the block at the bottom of the garden. It was the first time that the lawyer had been received in that part of his friend's quarters; and he eyed the dingy, windowless structure with curiosity, and gazed round with a distasteful sense of strangeness as he crossed the theatre,[6] once crowded with eager students and now lying gaunt and silent, the tables laden with chemical apparatus, the floor strewn with crates and littered with packing straw, and the light falling dimly through the foggy cupola. At the further end, a flight of stairs mounted to a door covered with red baize; and through this, Mr. Utterson was at last received into the doctor's cabinet.[7] It was a large room, fitted round with glass presses, furnished, among other things, with a cheval-glass[8] and a business table, and looking out upon the court by three dusty windows barred with iron. A fire burned in the grate; a lamp was set lighted on the chimney shelf, for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly; and there, close up to the warmth, sat Dr. Jekyll, looking deadly sick. He did not rise to meet his visitor, but held out a cold hand and bade him welcome in a changed voice.

"And now," said Mr. Utterson, as soon as Poole had left them, "you have heard the news?"

The doctor shuddered. "They were crying it in the square," he said. "I heard them in my dining-room."

"One word," said the lawyer. "Carew was my client, but so are you, and I want to know what I am doing. You have not been mad enough to hide this fellow?"

"Utterson, I swear to God," cried the doctor, "I swear to God I will never set eyes on him again. I bind my honour to you that I am done with him in this world. It is all at an end. And indeed he does not want my help; you do not know him as I do; he is safe, he is quite safe; mark my words, he will never more be heard of."

The lawyer listened gloomily; he did not like his friend's feverish manner. "You seem pretty sure of him," said he; "and for your sake, I hope you may be right. If it came to a trial, your name might appear."

"I am quite sure of him," replied Jekyll; "I have grounds for certainty that I cannot share with anyone. But there is one thing on which you may advise me. I have—I have received a letter; and I am at a loss whether I should show it to the police. I should like to leave it in your hands, Utterson; you would judge wisely, I am sure; I have so great a trust in you."

"You fear, I suppose, that it might lead to his detection?" asked the lawyer.

"No," said the other. "I cannot say that I care what becomes of Hyde; I am quite done with him. I was thinking of my own character, which this hateful business has rather exposed."

Utterson ruminated awhile; he was surprised at his friend's selfishness, and yet relieved by it. "Well," said he, at last, "let me see the letter."

The letter was written in an odd, upright hand and signed "Edward Hyde": and it signified, briefly enough, that the writer's benefactor, Dr. Jekyll, whom he had long so unworthily repaid for a thousand generosities, need labour under no alarm for his safety, as he had means of escape on which he placed a sure dependence. The lawyer liked this letter well enough; it put a better colour on the intimacy than he had looked for; and he blamed himself for some of his past suspicions.

"Have you the envelope?" he asked.

"I burned it," replied Jekyll, "before I thought what I was about. But it bore no postmark. The note was handed in."

"Shall I keep this and sleep upon it?" asked Utterson.

"I wish you to judge for me entirely," was the reply. "I have lost confidence in myself."

"Well, I shall consider," returned the lawyer. "And now one word more: it was Hyde who dictated the terms in your will about that disappearance?"

The doctor seemed seized with a qualm of faintness; he shut his mouth tight and nodded.

"I knew it," said Utterson. "He meant to murder you. You have had a fine escape."

"I have had what is far more to the purpose," returned the doctor solemnly: "I have had a lesson—O God, Utterson, what a lesson I have had!" And he covered his face for a moment with his hands.

On his way out, the lawyer stopped and had a word or two with Poole. "By the bye," said he, "there was a letter handed in to-day: what was the messenger like?" But Poole was positive nothing had come except by post; "and only circulars by that," he added.

This news sent off the visitor with his fears renewed. Plainly the letter had come by the laboratory door; possibly, indeed, it had been written in the cabinet; and if that were so, it must be differently judged, and handled with the more caution. The newsboys, as he went, were crying themselves hoarse along the footways: "Special edition. Shocking murder of an M.P."[9] That was the funeral oration of one friend and client; and he could not help a certain apprehension lest the good name of another should be sucked down in the eddy of the scandal. It was, at least, a ticklish decision that he had to make; and self-reliant as he was by habit, he began to cherish a longing for advice. It was not to be had directly; but perhaps, he thought, it might be fished for.

Presently after, he sat on one side of his own hearth, with Mr. Guest, his head clerk, upon the other, and midway between, at a nicely calculated distance from the fire, a bottle of a particular old wine that had long dwelt unsunned in the foundations of his house. The fog still slept on the wing above the drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles;[1] and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was

still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. But the room was gay with firelight. In the bottle the acids were long ago resolved; the imperial dye[2] had softened with time, as the colour grows richer in stained windows; and the glow of hot autumn afternoons on hillside vineyards, was ready to be set free and to disperse the fogs of London. Insensibly the lawyer melted. There was no man from whom he kept fewer secrets than Mr. Guest; and he was not always sure that he kept as many as he meant. Guest had often been on business to the doctor's; he knew Poole; he could scarce have failed to hear of Mr. Hyde's familiarity about the house; he might draw conclusions: was it not as well, then, that he should see a letter which put that mystery to rights? and above all since Guest, being a great student and critic of handwriting, would consider the step natural and obliging? The clerk, besides, was a man of counsel; he would scarce read so strange a document without dropping a remark; and by that remark Mr. Utterson might shape his future course.

"This is a sad business about Sir Danvers," he said.

"Yes, sir, indeed. It has elicited a great deal of public feeling," returned Guest. "The man, of course, was mad."

"I should like to hear your views on that," replied Utterson. "I have a document here in his handwriting; it is between ourselves, for I scarce know what to do about it; it is an ugly business at the best. But there it is; quite in your way: a murderer's autograph."

Guest's eyes brightened, and he sat down at once and studied it with passion. "No, sir," he said: "not mad; but it is an odd hand."

"And by all accounts a very odd writer," added the lawyer.

Just then the servant entered with a note.

"Is that from Dr. Jekyll, sir?" inquired the clerk. "I thought I knew the writing. Anything private, Mr. Utterson?"

"Only an invitation to dinner. Why? Do you want to see it?"

"One moment. I thank you, sir;" and the clerk laid the two sheets of paper alongside and sedulously compared their contents. "Thank you, sir," he said at last, returning both; "it's a very interesting autograph."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Utterson struggled with himself. “Why did you compare them, Guest?” he inquired suddenly.

“Well, sir,” returned the clerk, “there’s a rather singular resemblance; the two hands are in many points identical: only differently sloped.”

“Rather quaint,”[3] said Utterson.

“It is, as you say, rather quaint,” returned Guest.

“I wouldn’t speak of this note, you know,” said the master.

“No, sir,” said the clerk. “I understand.”

But no sooner was Mr. Utterson alone that night than he locked the note into his safe, where it reposed from that time forward. “What!” he thought. “Henry Jekyll forge for a murderer!” And his blood ran cold in his veins.

Endnotes

- Note 4: Without distinction.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Purpose.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Room with tiers of rising seats surrounding a central platform, used for lectures and medical demonstrations.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Small private room. “Baize”: coarse woolen material.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Large freestanding mirror, hinged on a frame. “Presses”: cupboards with glass doors.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Member of Parliament.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Precious fiery-red stones.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Purple.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Odd, unusual.Return to reference 3

Remarkable Incident of Dr. Lanyon

Time ran on; thousands of pounds were offered in reward, for the death of Sir Danvers was resented as a public injury; but Mr. Hyde had disappeared out of the ken of the police as though he had never existed. Much of his past was unearthed, indeed, and all disreputable: tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once so callous and violent; of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career; but of his present whereabouts, not a whisper. From the time he had left the house in Soho on the morning of the murder, he was simply blotted out; and gradually, as time drew on, Mr. Utterson began to recover from the hotness of his alarm, and to grow more at quiet with himself. The death of Sir Danvers was, to his way of thinking, more than paid for by the disappearance of Mr. Hyde. Now that that evil influence had been withdrawn, a new life began for Dr. Jekyll. He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion. He was busy, he was much in the open air, he did good; his face seemed to open and brighten, as if with an inward consciousness of service; and for more than two months, the doctor was at peace.

On the 8th of January Utterson had dined at the doctor's with a small party; Lanyon had been there; and the face of the host had looked from one to the other as in the old days when the trio were inseparable friends. On the 12th, and again on the 14th, the door was shut against the lawyer. "The doctor was confined to the house," Poole said, "and saw no one." On the 15th, he tried again, and was again refused; and having now been used for the last two months to see his friend almost daily, he found this return of solitude to weigh upon his spirits. The fifth night he had in Guest to dine with him; and the sixth he betook himself to Dr. Lanyon's.

There at least he was not denied admittance; but when he came in, he was shocked at the change which had taken place in the doctor's appearance. He had his death-warrant written legibly upon

his face. The rosy man had grown pale; his flesh had fallen away; he was visibly balder and older; and yet it was not so much these tokens of a swift physical decay that arrested the lawyer's notice, as a look in the eye and quality of manner that seemed to testify to some deep-seated terror of the mind. It was unlikely that the doctor should fear death; and yet that was what Utterson was tempted to suspect. "Yes," he thought; "he is a doctor, he must know his own state and that his days are counted; and the knowledge is more than he can bear." And yet when Utterson remarked on his ill-looks, it was with an air of great firmness that Lanyon declared himself a doomed man.

"I have had a shock," he said, "and I shall never recover. It is a question of weeks. Well, life has been pleasant; I liked it; yes, sir, I used to like it. I sometimes think if we knew all, we should be more glad to get away."

"Jekyll is ill, too," observed Utterson. "Have you seen him?"

But Lanyon's face changed, and he held up a trembling hand. "I wish to see or hear no more of Dr. Jekyll," he said in a loud, unsteady voice. "I am quite done with that person; and I beg that you will spare me any allusion to one whom I regard as dead."

"Tut-tut," said Mr. Utterson; and then after a considerable pause, "Can't I do anything?" he inquired. "We are three very old friends, Lanyon; we shall not live to make others."

"Nothing can be done," returned Lanyon; "ask himself."

"He will not see me," said the lawyer.

"I am not surprised at that," was the reply. "Some day, Utterson, after I am dead, you may perhaps come to learn the right and wrong of this. I cannot tell you. And in the meantime, if you can sit and talk with me of other things, for God's sake, stay and do so; but if you cannot keep clear of this accursed topic, then, in God's name, go, for I cannot bear it."

As soon as he got home, Utterson sat down and wrote to Jekyll, complaining of his exclusion from the house, and asking the cause of this unhappy break with Lanyon; and the next day brought him a long answer, often very pathetically worded, and sometimes darkly

mysterious in drift. The quarrel with Lanyon was incurable. "I do not blame our old friend," Jekyll wrote, "but I share his view that we must never meet. I mean from henceforth to lead a life of extreme seclusion; you must not be surprised, nor must you doubt my friendship, if my door is often shut even to you. You must suffer me to go my own dark way. I have brought on myself a punishment and a danger that I cannot name. If I am the chief of sinners, I am the chief of sufferers also. I could not think that this earth contained a place for sufferings and terrors so unmanning; and you can do but one thing, Utterson, to lighten this destiny, and that is to respect my silence." Utterson was amazed; the dark influence of Hyde had been withdrawn, the doctor had returned to his old tasks and amities; a week ago, the prospect had smiled with every promise of a cheerful and an honoured age; and now in a moment, friendship, and peace of mind, and the whole tenor of his life were wrecked. So great and unprepared a change pointed to madness; but in view of Lanyon's manner and words, there must lie for it some deeper ground.

A week afterwards Dr. Lanyon took to his bed, and in something less than a fortnight he was dead. The night after the funeral, at which he had been sadly affected, Utterson locked the door of his business room, and sitting there by the light of a melancholy candle, drew out and set before him an envelope addressed by the hand and sealed with the seal of his dead friend. "PRIVATE: for the hands of G. J. Utterson ALONE, and in case of his predecease *to be destroyed unread*," so it was emphatically superscribed; and the lawyer dreaded to behold the contents. "I have buried one friend today," he thought: "what if this should cost me another?" And then he condemned the fear as a disloyalty, and broke the seal. Within there was another enclosure, likewise sealed, and marked upon the cover as "not to be opened till the death or disappearance of Dr. Henry Jekyll." Utterson could not trust his eyes. Yes, it was disappearance; here again, as in the mad will which he had long ago restored to its author, here again were the idea of a disappearance and the name of Henry Jekyll bracketted. But in the will, that idea had sprung from the sinister suggestion of the man Hyde; it was set there with a

purpose all too plain and horrible. Written by the hand of Lanyon, what should it mean? A great curiosity came on the trustee, to disregard the prohibition and dive at once to the bottom of these mysteries; but professional honour and faith to his dead friend were stringent obligations; and the packet slept in the inmost corner of his private safe.

It is one thing to mortify curiosity, another to conquer it; and it may be doubted if, from that day forth, Utterson desired the society of his surviving friend with the same eagerness. He thought of him kindly; but his thoughts were disquieted and fearful. He went to call indeed; but he was perhaps relieved to be denied admittance; perhaps, in his heart, he preferred to speak with Poole upon the doorstep and surrounded by the air and sounds of the open city, rather than to be admitted into that house of voluntary bondage, and to sit and speak with its inscrutable recluse. Poole had, indeed, no very pleasant news to communicate. The doctor, it appeared, now more than ever confined himself to the cabinet over the laboratory, where he would sometimes even sleep; he was out of spirits, he had grown very silent, he did not read; it seemed as if he had something on his mind. Utterson became so used to the unvarying character of these reports, that he fell off little by little in the frequency of his visits.

Incident at the Window

It chanced on Sunday, when Mr. Utterson was on his usual walk with Mr. Enfield, that their way lay once again through the by-street; and that when they came in front of the door, both stopped to gaze on it.

"Well," said Enfield, "that story's at an end at least. We shall never see more of Mr. Hyde."

"I hope not," said Utterson. "Did I ever tell you that I once saw him, and shared your feeling of repulsion?"

"It was impossible to do the one without the other," returned Enfield. "And by the way, what an ass you must have thought me, not to know that this was a back way to Dr. Jekyll's! It was partly your own fault that I found it out, even when I did."

"So you found it out, did you?" said Utterson. "But if that be so, we may step into the court and take a look at the windows. To tell you the truth, I am uneasy about poor Jekyll; and even outside, I feel as if the presence of a friend might do him good."

The court was very cool and a little damp, and full of premature twilight, although the sky, high up overhead, was still bright with sunset. The middle one of the three windows was half way open; and sitting close beside it, taking the air with an infinite sadness of mien, like some disconsolate prisoner, Utterson saw Dr. Jekyll.

"What! Jekyll!" he cried. "I trust you are better."

"I am very low, Utterson," replied the doctor, drearily, "very low. It will not last long, thank God."

"You stay too much indoors," said the lawyer. "You should be out, whipping up the circulation like Mr. Enfield and me. (This is my cousin—Mr. Enfield—Dr. Jekyll.) Come now; get your hat and take a quick turn with us."

"You are very good," sighed the other. "I should like to very much; but no, no, no, it is quite impossible; I dare not. But indeed, Utterson, I am very glad to see you; this is really a great pleasure; I would ask you and Mr. Enfield up, but the place is really not fit."

"Why then," said the lawyer, good-naturedly, "the best thing we can do is to stay down here and speak with you from where we are."

"That is just what I was about to venture to propose," returned the doctor with a smile. But the words were hardly uttered, before the smile was struck out of his face and succeeded by an expression of such abject terror and despair, as froze the very blood of the two gentlemen below. They saw it but for a glimpse, for the window was instantly thrust down; but that glimpse had been sufficient, and they turned and left the court without a word. In silence, too, they traversed the by-street; and it was not until they had come into a neighbouring thoroughfare, where even upon a Sunday there were still some stirrings of life, that Mr. Utterson at last turned and looked at his companion. They were both pale; and there was an answering horror in their eyes.

"God forgive us, God forgive us," said Mr. Utterson.

But Mr. Enfield only nodded his head very seriously, and walked on once more in silence.

The Last Night

Mr. Utterson was sitting by his fireside one evening after dinner, when he was surprised to receive a visit from Poole.

"Bless me, Poole, what brings you here?" he cried; and then taking a second look at him, "What ails you?" he added; "is the doctor ill?"

"Mr. Utterson," said the man, "there is something wrong."

"Take a seat, and here is a glass of wine for you," said the lawyer. "Now, take your time, and tell me plainly what you want."

"You know the doctor's ways, sir," replied Poole, "and how he shuts himself up. Well, he's shut up again in the cabinet; and I don't like it, sir—I wish I may die if I like it. Mr. Utterson, sir, I'm afraid."

"Now, my good man," said the lawyer, "be explicit. What are you afraid of?"

"I've been afraid for about a week," returned Poole, doggedly disregarding the question, "and I can bear it no more."

The man's appearance amply bore out his words; his manner was altered for the worse; and except for the moment when he had first announced his terror, he had not once looked the lawyer in the face. Even now, he sat with the glass of wine untasted on his knee, and his eyes directed to a corner of the floor. "I can bear it no more," he repeated.

"Come," said the lawyer, "I see you have some good reason, Poole; I see there is something seriously amiss. Try to tell me what it is."

"I think there's been foul play," said Poole, hoarsely.

"Foul play!" cried the lawyer, a good deal frightened and rather inclined to be irritated in consequence. "What foul play? What does the man mean?"

"I daren't say, sir," was the answer; "but will you come along with me and see for yourself?"

Mr. Utterson's only answer was to rise and get his hat and great coat; but he observed with wonder the greatness of the relief that

appeared upon the butler's face, and perhaps with no less, that the wine was still untasted when he set it down to follow.

It was a wild, cold, seasonable night of March, with a pale moon, lying on her back as though the wind had tilted her, and a flying wrack of the most diaphanous and lawny[4] texture. The wind made talking difficult, and flecked the blood into the face. It seemed to have swept the streets unusually bare of passengers, besides; for Mr. Utterson thought he had never seen that part of London so deserted. He could have wished it otherwise; never in his life had he been conscious of so sharp a wish to see and touch his fellow-creatures; for struggle as he might, there was born in upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity. The square, when they got there, was all full of wind and dust, and the thin trees in the garden were lashing themselves along the railing. Poole, who had kept all the way a pace or two ahead, now pulled up in the middle of the pavement, and in spite of the biting weather, took off his hat and mopped his brow with a red pocket-handkerchief. But for all the hurry of his coming, these were not the dews of exertion that he wiped away, but the moisture of some strangling anguish; for his face was white and his voice, when he spoke, harsh and broken.

"Well, sir," he said, "here we are, and God grant there be nothing wrong."

"Amen, Poole," said the lawyer.

Thereupon the servant knocked in a very guarded manner; the door was opened on the chain; and a voice asked from within, "Is that you, Poole?"

"It's all right," said Poole. "Open the door."

The hall, when they entered it, was brightly lighted up; the fire was built high; and about the hearth the whole of the servants, men and women, stood huddled together like a flock of sheep. At the sight of Mr. Utterson, the housemaid broke into hysterical whimpering; and the cook, crying out "Bless God! it's Mr. Utterson," ran forward as if to take him in her arms.

"What, what? Are you all here?" said the lawyer peevishly. "Very irregular, very unseemly; your master would be far from pleased."

"They're all afraid," said Poole.

Blank silence followed, no one protesting; only the maid lifted up her voice and now wept loudly.

"Hold your tongue!" Poole said to her, with a ferocity of accent that testified to his own jangled nerves; and indeed, when the girl had so suddenly raised the note of her lamentation, they had all started and turned towards the inner door with faces of dreadful expectation. "And now," continued the butler, addressing the knife-boy, "reach me a candle, and we'll get this through hands[5] at once." And then he begged Mr. Utterson to follow him, and led the way to the back garden.

"Now, sir," said he, "you come as gently as you can. I want you to hear, and I don't want you to be heard. And see here, sir, if by any chance he was to ask you in, don't go."

Mr. Utterson's nerves, at this unlooked-for termination, gave a jerk that nearly threw him from his balance; but he recollected his courage and followed the butler into the laboratory building and through the surgical theatre, with its lumber[6] of crates and bottles, to the foot of the stair. Here Poole motioned him to stand on one side and listen; while he himself, setting down the candle and making a great and obvious call on his resolution, mounted the steps and knocked with a somewhat uncertain hand on the red baize of the cabinet door.

"Mr. Utterson, sir, asking to see you," he called; and even as he did so, once more violently signed to the lawyer to give ear.

A voice answered from within: "Tell him I cannot see anyone," it said complainingly.

"Thank you, sir," said Poole, with a note of something like triumph in his voice; and taking up his candle, he led Mr. Utterson back across the yard and into the great kitchen, where the fire was out and the beetles were leaping on the floor.

"Sir," he said, looking Mr. Utterson in the eyes, "was that my master's voice?"

"It seems much changed," replied the lawyer, very pale, but giving look for look.

"Changed? Well, yes, I think so," said the butler. "Have I been twenty years in this man's house, to be deceived about his voice? No, sir; master's made away with; he was made away with, eight days ago, when we heard him cry out upon the name of God; and *who's* in there instead of him, and *why* it stays there, is a thing that cries to Heaven, Mr. Utterson!"

"This is a very strange tale, Poole; this is rather a wild tale, my man," said Mr. Utterson, biting his finger. "Suppose it were as you suppose, supposing Dr. Jekyll to have been—well, murdered, what could induce the murderer to stay? That won't hold water; it doesn't commend itself to reason."

"Well, Mr. Utterson, you are a hard man to satisfy, but I'll do it yet," said Poole. "All this last week (you must know) him, or it, or whatever it is that lives in that cabinet, has been crying night and day for some sort of medicine and cannot get it to his mind. It was sometimes his way—the master's, that is—to write his orders on a sheet of paper and throw it on the stair. We've had nothing else this week back; nothing but papers, and a closed door, and the very meals left there to be smuggled in when nobody was looking. Well, sir, every day, ay, and twice and thrice in the same day, there have been orders and complaints, and I have been sent flying to all the wholesale chemists in town. Every time I brought the stuff back, there would be another paper telling me to return it, because it was not pure, and another order to a different firm. This drug is wanted bitter bad, sir, whatever for."

"Have you any of these papers?" asked Mr. Utterson.

Poole felt in his pocket and handed out a crumpled note, which the lawyer, bending nearer to the candle, carefully examined. Its contents ran thus: "Dr. Jekyll presents his compliments to Messrs. Maw. He assures them that their last sample is impure and quite useless for his present purpose. In the year 18—, Dr. J. purchased a somewhat large quantity from Messrs. M. He now begs them to search with the most sedulous care, and should any of the same quality be left, to forward it to him at once. Expense is no consideration. The importance of this to Dr. J. can hardly be

exaggerated." So far the letter had run composedly enough, but here with a sudden splutter of the pen, the writer's emotion had broken loose. "For God's sake," he had added, "find me some of the old."

"This is a strange note," said Mr. Utterson; and then sharply, "How do you come to have it open?"

"The man at Maw's was main angry, sir, and he threw it back to me like so much dirt," returned Poole.

"This is unquestionably the doctor's hand, do you know?" resumed the lawyer.

"I thought it looked like it," said the servant rather sulkily; and then, with another voice, "But what matters hand of write?" he said. "I've seen him!"

"Seen him?" repeated Mr. Utterson. "Well?"

"That's it!" said Poole. "It was this way. I came suddenly into the theatre from the garden. It seems he had slipped out to look for this drug or whatever it is; for the cabinet door was open, and there he was at the far end of the room digging among the crates. He looked up when I came in, gave a kind of cry, and whipped upstairs into the cabinet. It was but for one minute that I saw him, but the hair stood upon my head like quills. Sir, if that was my master, why had he a mask upon his face? If it was my master, why did he cry out like a rat, and run from me? I have served him long enough. And then . . ." The man paused and passed his hand over his face.

"These are all very strange circumstances," said Mr. Utterson, "but I think I begin to see daylight. Your master, Poole, is plainly seized with one of those maladies that both torture and deform the sufferer; hence, for aught I know, the alteration of his voice; hence the mask and the avoidance of his friends; hence his eagerness to find this drug, by means of which the poor soul retains some hope of ultimate recovery—God grant that he be not deceived! There is my explanation; it is sad enough, Poole, ay, and appalling to consider; but it is plain and natural, hangs well together, and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms."

"Sir," said the butler, turning to a sort of mottled pallor, "that thing was not my master, and there's the truth. My master"—here he

looked round him and began to whisper—"is a tall, fine build of a man, and this was more of a dwarf." Utterson attempted to protest. "O, sir," cried Poole, "do you think I do not know my master after twenty years? Do you think I do not know where his head comes to in the cabinet door, where I saw him every morning of my life? No, sir, that thing in the mask was never Dr. Jekyll—God knows what it was, but it was never Dr. Jekyll; and it is the belief of my heart that there was murder done."

"Poole," replied the lawyer, "if you say that, it will become my duty to make certain. Much as I desire to spare your master's feelings, much as I am puzzled by this note which seems to prove him to be still alive, I shall consider it my duty to break in that door."

"Ah, Mr. Utterson, that's talking!" cried the butler.

"And now comes the second question," resumed Utterson: "Who is going to do it?"

"Why, you and me," was the undaunted reply.

"That's very well said," returned the lawyer; "and whatever comes of it, I shall make it my business to see you are no loser."

"There is an axe in the theatre," continued Poole; "and you might take the kitchen poker for yourself."

The lawyer took that rude but weighty instrument into his hand, and balanced it. "Do you know, Poole," he said, looking up, "that you and I are about to place ourselves in a position of some peril?"

"You may say so, sir, indeed," returned the butler.

"It is well, then, that we should be frank," said the other. "We both think more than we have said; let us make a clean breast. This masked figure that you saw, did you recognise it?"

"Well, sir, it went so quick, and the creature was so doubled up, that I could hardly swear to that," was the answer. "But if you mean, was it Mr. Hyde?—why, yes, I think it was! You see, it was much of the same bigness; and it had the same quick, light way with it; and then who else could have got in by the laboratory door? You have not forgot, sir, that at the time of the murder he had still the key with him? But that's not all. I don't know, Mr. Utterson, if ever you met this Mr. Hyde?"

"Yes," said the lawyer, "I once spoke with him."

"Then you must know as well as the rest of us that there was something queer about that gentleman—something that gave a man a turn—I don't know rightly how to say it, sir, beyond this: that you felt it in your marrow kind of cold and thin."

"I own I felt something of what you describe," said Mr. Utterson.

"Quite so, sir," returned Poole. "Well, when that masked thing like a monkey jumped from among the chemicals and whipped into the cabinet, it went down my spine like ice. O, I know it's not evidence, Mr. Utterson; I'm book-learned enough for that; but a man has his feelings, and I give you my bible-word it was Mr. Hyde!"

"Ay, ay," said the lawyer. "My fears incline to the same point. Evil, I fear, founded—evil was sure to come—of that connection. Ay, truly, I believe you; I believe poor Harry is killed; and I believe his murderer (for what purpose, God alone can tell) is still lurking in his victim's room. Well, let our name be vengeance. Call Bradshaw."

The footman came at the summons, very white and nervous.

"Pull yourself together, Bradshaw," said the lawyer. "This suspense, I know, is telling upon all of you; but it is now our intention to make an end of it. Poole, here, and I are going to force our way into the cabinet. If all is well, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the blame. Meanwhile, lest anything should really be amiss, or any malefactor seek to escape by the back, you and the boy must go round the corner with a pair of good sticks and take your post at the laboratory door. We give you ten minutes, to get to your stations."

As Bradshaw left, the lawyer looked at his watch. "And now, Poole, let us get to ours," he said; and taking the poker under his arm, led the way into the yard. The scud[7] had banked over the moon, and it was now quite dark. The wind, which only broke in puffs and draughts into that deep well of building, tossed the light of the candle to and fro about their steps, until they came into the shelter of the theatre, where they sat down silently to wait. London hummed solemnly all around; but nearer at hand, the stillness was

only broken by the sounds of a footfall moving to and fro along the cabinet floor.

"So it will walk all day, sir," whispered Poole; "ay, and the better part of the night. Only when a new sample comes from the chemist, there's a bit of a break. Ah, it's an ill-conscience that's such an enemy to rest! Ah, sir, there's blood foully shed in every step of it! But hark again, a little closer—put your heart in your ears, Mr. Utterson, and tell me, is that the doctor's foot?"

The steps fell lightly and oddly, with a certain swing, for all they went so slowly; it was different indeed from the heavy creaking tread of Henry Jekyll. Utterson sighed. "Is there never anything else?" he asked.

Poole nodded. "Once," he said. "Once I heard it weeping!"

"Weeping? how that?" said the lawyer, conscious of a sudden chill of horror.

"Weeping like a woman or a lost soul," said the butler. "I came away with that upon my heart, that I could have wept too."

But now the ten minutes drew to an end. Poole disinterred the axe from under a stack of packing straw; the candle was set upon the nearest table to light them to the attack; and they drew near with bated breath to where that patient foot was still going up and down, up and down, in the quiet of the night.

"Jekyll," cried Utterson, with a loud voice, "I demand to see you." He paused a moment, but there came no reply. "I give you fair warning, our suspicions are aroused, and I must and shall see you," he resumed; "if not by fair means, then by foul—if not of your consent, then by brute force!"

"Utterson," said the voice, "for God's sake, have mercy!"

"Ah, that's not Jekyll's voice—it's Hyde's!" cried Utterson. "Down with the door, Poole!"

Poole swung the axe over his shoulder; the blow shook the building, and the red baize door leaped against the lock and hinges. A dismal screech, as of mere animal terror, rang from the cabinet. Up went the axe again, and again the panels crashed and the frame bounded; four times the blow fell; but the wood was tough and the

fittings were of excellent workmanship; and it was not until the fifth, that the lock burst in sunder and the wreck of the door fell inwards on the carpet.

The besiegers, appalled by their own riot and the stillness that had succeeded, stood back a little and peered in. There lay the cabinet before their eyes in the quiet lamplight, a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its thin strain, a drawer or two open, papers neatly set forth on the business table, and nearer the fire, the things laid out for tea: the quietest room, you would have said, and, but for the glazed presses full of chemicals, the most commonplace that night in London.

Right in the midst there lay the body of a man sorely contorted and still twitching. They drew near on tip-toe, turned it on its back and beheld the face of Edward Hyde. He was dressed in clothes far too large for him, clothes of the doctor's bigness; the cords of his face still moved with a semblance of life, but life was quite gone: and by the crushed phial in the hand and the strong smell of kernels[8] that hung upon the air, Utterson knew that he was looking on the body of a self-destroyer.

"We have come too late," he said sternly, "whether to save or punish. Hyde is gone to his account; and it only remains for us to find the body of your master."

The far greater proportion of the building was occupied by the theatre, which filled almost the whole ground story and was lighted from above, and by the cabinet, which formed an upper story at one end and looked upon the court. A corridor joined the theatre to the door on the by-street; and with this the cabinet communicated separately by a second flight of stairs. There were besides a few dark closets and a spacious cellar. All these they now thoroughly examined. Each closet needed but a glance, for all were empty, and all, by the dust that fell from their doors, had stood long unopened. The cellar, indeed, was filled with crazy lumber,[9] mostly dating from the times of the surgeon who was Jekyll's predecessor; but even as they opened the door they were advertised of the uselessness of further search, by the fall of a perfect mat of cobweb which had for

years sealed up the entrance. Nowhere was there any trace of Henry Jekyll, dead or alive.

Poole stamped on the flags of the corridor. “He must be buried here,” he said, hearkening to the sound.

“Or he may have fled,” said Utterson, and he turned to examine the door in the by-street. It was locked; and lying near by on the flags, they found the key, already stained with rust.

“This does not look like use,” observed the lawyer.

“Use!” echoed Poole. “Do you not see, sir, it is broken? much as if a man had stamped on it.”

“Ay,” continued Utterson, “and the fractures, too, are rusty.” The two men looked at each other with a scare. “This is beyond me, Poole,” said the lawyer. “Let us go back to the cabinet.”

They mounted the stair in silence, and still with an occasional awestruck glance at the dead body, proceeded more thoroughly to examine the contents of the cabinet. At one table, there were traces of chemical work, various measured heaps of some white salt being laid on glass saucers, as though for an experiment in which the unhappy man had been prevented.

“That is the same drug that I was always bringing him,” said Poole; and even as he spoke, the kettle with a startling noise boiled over.

This brought them to the fireside, where the easy-chair was drawn cosily up, and the tea things stood ready to the sitter’s elbow, the very sugar in the cup. There were several books on a shelf; one lay beside the tea things open, and Utterson was amazed to find it a copy of a pious work, for which Jekyll had several times expressed a great esteem, annotated, in his own hand, with startling blasphemies.

Next, in the course of their review of the chamber, the searchers came to the cheval-glass, into whose depths they looked with an involuntary horror. But it was so turned as to show them nothing but the rosy glow playing on the roof, the fire sparkling in a hundred repetitions along the glazed front of the presses, and their own pale and fearful countenances stooping to look in.

"This glass have seen some strange things, sir," whispered Poole.

"And surely none stranger than itself," echoed the lawyer in the same tones. "For what did Jekyll"—he caught himself up at the word with a start, and then conquering the weakness—"what could Jekyll want with it?" he said.

"You may say that!" said Poole.

Next they turned to the business table. On the desk, among the neat array of papers, a large envelope was uppermost, and bore, in the doctor's hand, the name of Mr. Utterson. The lawyer unsealed it, and several enclosures fell to the floor. The first was a will, drawn in the same eccentric terms as the one which he had returned six months before, to serve as a testament in case of death and as a deed of gift in case of disappearance; but in place of the name of Edward Hyde, the lawyer, with indescribable amazement, read the name of Gabriel John Utterson. He looked at Poole, and then back at the paper, and last of all at the dead malefactor stretched upon the carpet.

"My head goes round," he said. "He has been all these days in possession; he had no cause to like me; he must have raged to see himself displaced; and he has not destroyed this document."

He caught up the next paper; it was a brief note in the doctor's hand and dated at the top. "O Poole!" the lawyer cried, "he was alive and here this day. He cannot have been disposed of in so short a space; he must be still alive, he must have fled! And then, why fled? and how? and in that case, can we venture to declare this suicide? O, we must be careful. I foresee that we may yet involve your master in some dire catastrophe."

"Why don't you read it, sir?" asked Poole.

"Because I fear," replied the lawyer solemnly. "God grant I have no cause for it!" And with that he brought the paper to his eyes and read as follows:

"My Dear Utterson,—When this shall fall into your hands, I shall have disappeared, under what circumstances I have not the penetration to foresee, but my instinct and all the circumstances of

my nameless situation tell me that the end is sure and must be early. Go then, and first read the narrative which Lanyon warned me he was to place in your hands; and if you care to hear more, turn to the confession of

"Your unworthy and unhappy friend,

"HENRY JEKYLL."

"There was a third enclosure?" asked Utterson.

"Here, sir," said Poole, and gave into his hands a considerable packet sealed in several places.

The lawyer put it in his pocket. "I would say nothing of this paper. If your master has fled or is dead, we may at least save his credit. It is now ten; I must go home and read these documents in quiet; but I shall be back before midnight, when we shall send for the police."

They went out, locking the door of the theatre behind them; and Utterson, once more leaving the servants gathered about the fire in the hall, trudged back to his office to read the two narratives in which this mystery was now to be explained.

Endnotes

- Note 4: Of fine linen. "Wrack": that is, rack, a mass of high clouds driven by the wind.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: We'll deal with this.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Random accumulation of disused objects.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Loose clouds driven rapidly before the wind.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, pits: cyanide smells of bitter almond or of peach pits.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: See p. 762, n. 6.Return to reference 9

Dr. Lanyon's Narrative

On the ninth of January, now four days ago, I received by the evening delivery a registered envelope, addressed in the hand of my colleague and old school-companion, Henry Jekyll. I was a good deal surprised by this; for we were by no means in the habit of correspondence; I had seen the man, dined with him, indeed, the night before; and I could imagine nothing in our intercourse that should justify formality of registration. The contents increased my wonder; for this is how the letter ran:

"10th December,[1] 18—

"DEAR LANYON,—You are one of my oldest friends; and although we may have differed at times on scientific questions, I cannot remember, at least on my side, any break in our affection. There was never a day when, if you had said to me, 'Jekyll, my life, my honour, my reason, depend upon you,' I would not have sacrificed my left hand to help you. Lanyon, my life, my honour, my reason, are all at your mercy; if you fail me to-night I am lost. You might suppose, after this preface, that I am going to ask you for something dishonourable to grant. Judge for yourself.

"I want you to postpone all other engagements for to-night —ay, even if you were summoned to the bedside of an emperor; to take a cab, unless your carriage should be actually at the door; and with this letter in your hand for consultation, to drive straight to my house. Poole, my butler, has his orders; you will find him waiting your arrival with a locksmith. The door of my cabinet is then to be forced: and you are to go in alone; to open the glazed press (letter E) on the left hand, breaking the lock if it be shut; and to draw out, *with all its contents as they stand*, the fourth drawer from the top or (which is the same thing) the third from the bottom. In my extreme distress of mind, I have a morbid fear of misdirecting you; but even if I am in error, you may know the

right drawer by its contents: some powders, a phial and a paper book. This drawer I beg of you to carry back with you to Cavendish Square exactly as it stands.

"That is the first part of the service: now for the second. You should be back, if you set out at once on the receipt of this, long before midnight; but I will leave you that amount of margin, not only in the fear of one of those obstacles that can neither be prevented nor foreseen, but because an hour when your servants are in bed is to be preferred for what will then remain to do. At midnight, then, I have to ask you to be alone in your consulting room, to admit with your own hand into the house a man who will present himself in my name, and to place in his hands the drawer that you will have brought with you from my cabinet. Then you will have played your part and earned my gratitude completely. Five minutes afterwards, if you insist upon an explanation, you will have understood that these arrangements are of capital importance; and that by the neglect of one of them, fantastic as they must appear, you might have charged your conscience with my death or the shipwreck of my reason.

"Confident as I am that you will not trifle with this appeal, my heart sinks and my hand trembles at the bare thought of such a possibility. Think of me at this hour, in a strange place, labouring under a blackness of distress that no fancy can exaggerate, and yet well aware that, if you will but punctually serve me, my troubles will roll away like a story that is told. Serve me, my dear Lanyon, and save

"Your friend,
H. J."

"P. S.—I had already sealed this up when a fresh terror struck upon my soul. It is possible that the post-office may fail me, and this letter not come into your hands until to-morrow morning. In that case, dear Lanyon, do my errand when it shall be most convenient for you in the course of the day; and once more expect my messenger at midnight. It

> may then already be too late; and if that night passes without event, you will know that you have seen the last of Henry Jekyll.”

Upon the reading of this letter, I made sure my colleague was insane; but till that was proved beyond the possibility of doubt, I felt bound to do as he requested. The less I understood of this farrago[2] the less I was in a position to judge of its importance; and an appeal so worded could not be set aside without a grave responsibility. I rose accordingly from table, got into a hansom, and drove straight to Jekyll’s house. The butler was awaiting my arrival; he had received by the same post as mine a registered letter of instruction, and had sent at once for a locksmith and a carpenter. The tradesmen came while we were yet speaking; and we moved in a body to old Dr. Denman’s surgical theatre, from which (as you are doubtless aware) Jekyll’s private cabinet is most conveniently entered. The door was very strong, the lock excellent; the carpenter avowed he would have great trouble and have to do much damage, if force were to be used; and the locksmith was near despair. But this last was a handy fellow, and after two hours’ work, the door stood open. The press marked E was unlocked; and I took out the drawer, had it filled up with straw and tied in a sheet, and returned with it to Cavendish Square.

Here I proceeded to examine its contents. The powders were neatly enough made up, but not with the nicety of the dispensing chemist; so that it was plain they were of Jekyll’s private manufacture: and when I opened one of the wrappers I found what seemed to me a simple crystalline salt of a white colour. The phial, to which I next turned my attention, might have been about half full of a blood-red liquor, which was highly pungent to the sense of smell and seemed to me to contain phosphorus and some volatile ether. At the other ingredients I could make no guess. The book was an ordinary version book[3] and contained little but a series of dates. These covered a period of many years, but I observed that the entries ceased nearly a year ago and quite abruptly. Here and there

a brief remark was appended to a date, usually no more than a single word: "double" occurring perhaps six times in a total of several hundred entries; and once very early in the list and followed by several marks of exclamation, "total failure!!!" All this, though it whetted my curiosity, told me little that was definite. Here were a phial of some tincture, a paper of some salt, and the record of a series of experiments that had led (like too many of Jekyll's investigations) to no end of practical usefulness. How could the presence of these articles in my house affect either the honour, the sanity, or the life of my flighty colleague? If his messenger could go to one place, why could he not go to another? And even granting some impediment, why was this gentleman to be received by me in secret? The more I reflected the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease; and though I dismissed my servants to bed, I loaded an old revolver, that I might be found in some posture of self-defence.

Twelve o'clock had scarce rung out over London, ere the knocker sounded very gently on the door. I went myself at the summons, and found a small man crouching against the pillars of the portico.

"Are you come from Dr. Jekyll?" I asked.

He told me "yes" by a constrained gesture; and when I had bidden him enter, he did not obey me without a searching backward glance into the darkness of the square. There was a policeman not far off, advancing with his bull's eye[4] open; and at the sight, I thought my visitor started and made greater haste.

These particulars struck me, I confess, disagreeably; and as I followed him into the bright light of the consulting room, I kept my hand ready on my weapon. Here, at last, I had a chance of clearly seeing him. I had never set eyes on him before, so much was certain. He was small, as I have said; I was struck besides with the shocking expression of his face, with his remarkable combination of great muscular activity and great apparent debility of constitution, and—last but not least—with the odd, subjective disturbance caused by his neighbourhood. This bore some resemblance to incipient rigour,[5] and was accompanied by a marked sinking of the pulse. At

the time, I set it down to some idiosyncratic, personal distaste, and merely wondered at the acuteness of the symptoms; but I have since had reason to believe the cause to lie much deeper in the nature of man, and to turn on some nobler hinge than the principle of hatred.

This person (who had thus, from the first moment of his entrance, struck in me what I can only describe as a disgustful curiosity) was dressed in a fashion that would have made an ordinary person laughable; his clothes, that is to say, although they were of rich and sober fabric, were enormously too large for him in every measurement—the trousers hanging on his legs and rolled up to keep them from the ground, the waist of the coat below his haunches, and the collar sprawling wide upon his shoulders. Strange to relate, this ludicrous accoutrement was far from moving me to laughter. Rather, as there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature that now faced me—something seizing,[6] surprising and revolting—this fresh disparity seemed but to fit in with and to reinforce it; so that to my interest in the man's nature and character, there was added a curiosity as to his origin, his life, his fortune and status in the world.

These observations, though they have taken so great a space to be set down in, were yet the work of a few seconds. My visitor was, indeed, on fire with sombre excitement.

"Have you got it?" he cried. "Have you got it?" And so lively was his impatience that he even laid his hand upon my arm and sought to shake me.

I put him back, conscious at his touch of a certain icy pang along my blood. "Come, sir," said I. "You forget that I have not yet the pleasure of your acquaintance. Be seated, if you please." And I showed him an example, and sat down myself in my customary seat and with as fair an imitation of my ordinary manner to a patient, as the lateness of the hour, the nature of my preoccupations, and the horror I had of my visitor, would suffer me to muster.

"I beg your pardon, Dr. Lanyon," he replied civilly enough. "What you say is very well founded; and my impatience has shown its heels

to my politeness. I come here at the instance[7] of your colleague, Dr. Henry Jekyll, on a piece of business of some moment; and I understood . . .” He paused and put his hand to his throat, and I could see, in spite of his collected manner, that he was wrestling against the approaches of the hysteria—“I understood, a drawer . . .”

But here I took pity on my visitor’s suspense, and some perhaps on my own growing curiosity.

“There it is, sir,” said I, pointing to the drawer, where it lay on the floor behind a table and still covered with the sheet.

He sprang to it, and then paused, and laid his hand upon his heart: I could hear his teeth grate with the convulsive action of his jaws; and his face was so ghastly to see that I grew alarmed both for his life and reason.

“Compose yourself,” said I.

He turned a dreadful smile to me, and as if with the decision of despair, plucked away the sheet. At sight of the contents, he uttered one loud sob of such immense relief that I sat petrified. And the next moment, in a voice that was already fairly well under control, “Have you a graduated[8] glass?” he asked.

I rose from my place with something of an effort and gave him what he asked.

He thanked me with a smiling nod, measured out a few minims[9] of the red tincture and added one of the powders. The mixture, which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in colour, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapour. Suddenly and at the same moment, the ebullition[1] ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple, which faded again more slowly to a watery green. My visitor, who had watched these metamorphoses with a keen eye, smiled, set down the glass upon the table, and then turned and looked upon me with an air of scrutiny.

“And now,” said he, “to settle what remains. Will you be wise? will you be guided? will you suffer me to take this glass in my hand

and to go forth from your house without further parley? or has the greed of curiosity too much command of you? Think before you answer, for it shall be done as you decide. As you decide, you shall be left as you were before, and neither richer nor wiser, unless the sense of service rendered to a man in mortal distress may be counted as a kind of riches of the soul. Or, if you shall so prefer to choose, a new province of knowledge and new avenues to fame and power shall be laid open to you, here, in this room, upon the instant; and your sight shall be blasted by a prodigy to stagger the unbelief of Satan."

"Sir," said I, affecting a coolness that I was far from truly possessing, "you speak enigmas, and you will perhaps not wonder that I hear you with no very strong impression of belief. But I have gone too far in the way of inexplicable services to pause before I see the end."

"It is well," replied my visitor. "Lanyon, you remember your vows: what follows is under the seal of our profession. And now, you who have so long been bound to the most narrow and material views, you who have denied the virtue of transcendental medicine, you who have derided your superiors—behold!"

He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with injected[2] eyes, gasping with open mouth; and as I looked there came, I thought, a change—he seemed to swell—his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter—and the next moment, I had sprung to my feet and leaped back against the wall, my arm raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror.

"O God!" I screamed, and "O God!" again and again; for there before my eyes—pale and shaken, and half fainting, and groping before him with his hands, like a man restored from death—there stood Henry Jekyll!

What he told me in the next hour, I cannot bring my mind to set on paper. I saw what I saw, I heard what I heard, and my soul sickened at it; and yet now when that sight has faded from my eyes,

I ask myself if I believe it, and I cannot answer. My life is shaken to its roots; sleep has left me; the deadliest terror sits by me at all hours of the day and night; I feel that my days are numbered, and that I must die; and yet I shall die incredulous. As for the moral turpitude that man unveiled to me, even with tears of penitence, I cannot, even in memory, dwell on it without a start of horror. I will say but one thing, Utterson, and that (if you can bring your mind to credit it) will be more than enough. The creature who crept into my house that night was, on Jekyll's own confession, known by the name of Hyde and hunted for in every corner of the land as the murderer of Carew.

HASTIE LANYON.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Stevenson's own error; the first sentence of *Dr. Lanyon's Narrative* makes it clear that the letter should be dated "9th January." Literary critic Richard Dury attributes the slip to the following circumstances: Stevenson had originally wanted to publish his story in time for the Christmas market and align Lanyon's witnessing of Hyde's transformation with December, a time for mysterious events. Later he forgot to change this detail.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mixture.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: School notebook used to record translations.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sliding door of his lantern.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sudden chill.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Powerfully impressive.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Request.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Marked with lines to indicate quantities.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Drops (a minim is a liquid measure equal to 1/480th of an ounce).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Bubbling.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Swollen.Return to reference 2

Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case

I was born in the year 18— to a large fortune, endowed besides with excellent parts,[3] inclined by nature to industry, fond of the respect of the wise and good among my fellow-men, and thus, as might have been supposed, with every guarantee of an honourable and distinguished future. And indeed the worst of my faults was a certain impatient gaiety of disposition, such as has made the happiness of many, but such as I found it hard to reconcile with my imperious desire to carry my head high, and wear a more than commonly grave countenance before the public. Hence it came about that I concealed my pleasures; and that when I reached years of reflection, and began to look round me and take stock of my progress and position in the world, I stood already committed to a profound duplicity of life. Many a man would have even blazoned such irregularities as I was guilty of; but from the high views that I had set before me, I regarded and hid them with an almost morbid sense of shame. It was thus rather the exacting nature of my aspirations than any particular degradation in my faults, that made me what I was, and, with even a deeper trench than in the majority of men, severed in me those provinces of good and ill which divide and compound man's dual nature. In this case, I was driven to reflect deeply and inveterately on that hard law of life, which lies at the root of religion and is one of the most plentiful springs of distress. Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental, reacted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck:

that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens. I for my part, from the nature of my life, advanced infallibly in one direction and in one direction only. It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognise the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved day-dream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable; the unjust might go his way, delivered from the aspirations and remorse of his more upright twin; and the just could walk steadfastly and securely on his upward path, doing the good things in which he found his pleasure, and no longer exposed to disgrace and penitence by the hands of this extraneous evil. It was the curse of mankind that these incongruous faggots[4] were thus bound together—that in the agonised womb of consciousness, these polar twins should be continuously struggling. How, then, were they dissociated?

I was so far in my reflections when, as I have said, a side light began to shine upon the subject from the laboratory table. I began to perceive more deeply than it has ever yet been stated, the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired. Certain agents I found to have the power to shake and to pluck back that fleshly vestment, even as a wind might toss the curtains of a pavilion. For two good reasons, I will not enter deeply into this scientific branch of my confession. First, because I have been made to learn that the doom and burthen of our life is bound forever on man’s shoulders, and when the

attempt is made to cast it off, it but returns upon us with more unfamiliar and more awful pressure. Second, because, as my narrative will make, alas! too evident, my discoveries were incomplete. Enough, then, that I not only recognised my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but managed to compound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy, and a second form and countenance substituted, none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul.

I hesitated long before I put this theory to the test of practice. I knew well that I risked death; for any drug that so potently controlled and shook the very fortress of identity, might by the least scruple[5] of an overdose or at the least inopportunity in the moment of exhibition, utterly blot out that immaterial tabernacle which I looked to it to change. But the temptation of a discovery so singular and profound, at last overcame the suggestions of alarm. I had long since prepared my tincture; I purchased at once, from a firm of wholesale chemists, a large quantity of a particular salt which I knew, from my experiments, to be the last ingredient required; and late one accursed night, I compounded the elements, watched them boil and smoke together in the glass, and when the ebullition had subsided, with a strong glow of courage, drank off the potion.

The most racking pangs succeeded: a grinding in the bones, deadly nausea, and a horror of the spirit that cannot be exceeded at the hour of birth or death. Then these agonies began swiftly to subside, and I came to myself as if out of a great sickness. There was something strange in my sensations, something indescribably new and, from its very novelty, incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body; within I was conscious of a heady recklessness, a current of disordered sensual images running like a mill race[6] in my fancy, a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul. I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that

moment, braced and delighted me like wine. I stretched out my hands, exulting in the freshness of these sensations; and in the act, I was suddenly aware that I had lost in stature.

There was no mirror, at that date, in my room; that which stands beside me as I write, was brought there later on and for the very purpose of these transformations. The night, however, was far gone into the morning—the morning, black as it was, was nearly ripe for the conception of the day—the inmates of my house were locked in the most rigorous hours of slumber; and I determined, flushed as I was with hope and triumph, to venture in my new shape as far as to my bedroom. I crossed the yard, wherein the constellations looked down upon me, I could have thought, with wonder, the first creature of that sort that their unsleeping vigilance had yet disclosed to them; I stole through the corridors, a stranger in my own house; and coming to my room, I saw for the first time the appearance of Edward Hyde.

I must here speak by theory alone, saying not that which I know, but that which I suppose to be most probable. The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy, was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed. Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine-tenths a life of effort, virtue and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted. And hence, as I think, it came about that Edward Hyde was so much smaller, slighter and younger than Henry Jekyll. Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other. Evil besides (which I must still believe to be the lethal side of man) had left on that body an imprint of deformity and decay. And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human. In my eyes it bore a livelier image of the spirit, it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine. And in so far I was doubtless right. I have observed that when I wore the semblance of Edward Hyde, none could come near to me

at first without a visible misgiving of the flesh. This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil: and Edward Hyde, alone in the ranks of mankind, was pure evil.

I lingered but a moment at the mirror: the second and conclusive experiment had yet to be attempted; it yet remained to be seen if I had lost my identity beyond redemption and must flee before daylight from a house that was no longer mine; and hurrying back to my cabinet, I once more prepared and drank the cup, once more suffered the pangs of dissolution, and came to myself once more with the character, the stature and the face of Henry Jekyll.

That night I had come to the fatal cross roads. Had I approached my discovery in a more noble spirit, had I risked the experiment while under the empire of generous or pious aspirations, all must have been otherwise, and from these agonies of death and birth, I had come forth an angel instead of a fiend. The drug had no discriminating action; it was neither diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prison-house of my disposition; and like the captives of Philippi, that which stood within ran forth.[7] At that time my virtue slumbered; my evil, kept awake by ambition, was alert and swift to seize the occasion; and the thing that was projected was Edward Hyde. Hence, although I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly towards the worse.

Even at that time, I had not yet conquered my aversion to the dryness of a life of study. I would still be merrily disposed at times; and as my pleasures were (to say the least) undignified, and I was not only well known and highly considered, but growing towards the elderly man, this incoherency of my life was daily growing more unwelcome. It was on this side that my new power tempted me until I fell in slavery. I had but to drink the cup, to doff at once the body of the noted professor, and to assume, like a thick cloak, that of Edward Hyde. I smiled at the notion; it seemed to me at the time to

be humorous; and I made my preparations with the most studious care. I took and furnished that house in Soho, to which Hyde was tracked by the police; and engaged as housekeeper a creature whom I well knew to be silent and unscrupulous. On the other side, I announced to my servants that a Mr. Hyde (whom I described) was to have full liberty and power about my house in the square; and to parry mishaps, I even called and made myself a familiar object, in my second character. I next drew up that will to which you so much objected; so that if anything befell me in the person of Dr. Jekyll, I could enter on that of Edward Hyde without pecuniary loss. And thus fortified, as I supposed, on every side, I began to profit by the strange immunities of my position.

Men have before hired bravos[8] to transact their crimes, while their own person and reputation sat under shelter. I was the first that ever did so for his pleasures. I was the first that could thus plod in the public eye with a load of genial respectability, and in a moment, like a schoolboy, strip off these lendings[9] and spring headlong into the sea of liberty. But for me, in my impenetrable mantle, the safety was complete. Think of it—I did not even exist! Let me but escape into my laboratory door, give me but a second or two to mix and swallow the draught that I had always standing ready; and whatever he had done, Edward Hyde would pass away like the stain of breath upon a mirror; and there in his stead, quietly at home, trimming the midnight lamp in his study, a man who could afford to laugh at suspicion, would be Henry Jekyll.

The pleasures which I made haste to seek in my disguise were, as I have said, undignified; I would scarce use a harder term. But in the hands of Edward Hyde, they soon began to turn towards the monstrous. When I would come back from these excursions, I was often plunged into a kind of wonder at my vicarious depravity. This familiar[1] that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone. Henry Jekyll stood at times aghast before the acts of

Edward Hyde; but the situation was apart from ordinary laws, and insidiously relaxed the grasp of conscience. It was Hyde, after all, and Hyde alone, that was guilty. Jekyll was no worse; he woke again to his good qualities seemingly unimpaired; he would even make haste, where it was possible, to undo the evil done by Hyde. And thus his conscience slumbered.

Into the details of the infamy at which I thus connived (for even now I can scarce grant that I committed it) I have no design of entering; I mean but to point out the warnings and the successive steps with which my chastisement approached. I met with one accident which, as it brought on no consequence, I shall no more than mention. An act of cruelty to a child aroused against me the anger of a passer-by, whom I recognised the other day in the person of your kinsman; the doctor and the child's family joined him; there were moments when I feared for my life; and at last, in order to pacify their too just resentment, Edward Hyde had to bring them to the door, and pay them in a cheque drawn in the name of Henry Jekyll. But this danger was easily eliminated from the future, by opening an account at another bank in the name of Edward Hyde himself; and when, by sloping my own hand backward, I had supplied my double with a signature, I thought I sat beyond the reach of fate.

Some two months before the murder of Sir Danvers, I had been out for one of my adventures, had returned at a late hour, and woke the next day in bed with somewhat odd sensations. It was in vain I looked about me; in vain I saw the decent furniture and tall proportions of my room in the square; in vain that I recognised the pattern of the bed curtains and the design of the mahogany frame; something still kept insisting that I was not where I was, that I had not wakened where I seemed to be, but in the little room in Soho where I was accustomed to sleep in the body of Edward Hyde. I smiled to myself, and, in my psychological way began lazily to inquire into the elements of this illusion, occasionally, even as I did so, dropping back into a comfortable morning doze. I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eyes fell

upon my hand. Now the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart[2] growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde.

I must have stared upon it for near half a minute, sunk as I was in the mere stupidity of wonder, before terror woke up in my breast as sudden and startling as the crash of cymbals; and bounding from my bed, I rushed to the mirror. At the sight that met my eyes, my blood was changed into something exquisitely thin and icy. Yes, I had gone to bed Henry Jekyll, I had awakened Edward Hyde. How was this to be explained? I asked myself; and then, with another bound of terror—how was it to be remedied? It was well on in the morning; the servants were up; all my drugs were in the cabinet—a long journey down two pair of stairs, through the back passage, across the open court and through the anatomical theatre, from where I was then standing horror-struck. It might indeed be possible to cover my face; but of what use was that, when I was unable to conceal the alteration in my stature? And then with an overpowering sweetness of relief, it came back upon my mind that the servants were already used to the coming and going of my second self. I had soon dressed, as well as I was able, in clothes of my own size: had soon passed through the house, where Bradshaw stared and drew back at seeing Mr. Hyde at such an hour and in such a strange array; and ten minutes later, Dr. Jekyll had returned to his own shape and was sitting down, with a darkened brow, to make a feint of breakfasting.

Small indeed was my appetite. This inexplicable incident, this reversal of my previous experience, seemed, like the Babylonian finger on the wall,[3] to be spelling out the letters of my judgment; and I began to reflect more seriously than ever before on the issues and possibilities of my double existence. That part of me which I had the power of projecting, had lately been much exercised and

nourished; it had seemed to me of late as though the body of Edward Hyde had grown in stature, as though (when I wore that form) I were conscious of a more generous tide of blood; and I began to spy a danger that, if this were much prolonged, the balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown, the power of voluntary change be forfeited, and the character of Edward Hyde become irrevocably mine. The power of the drug had not been always equally displayed. Once, very early in my career, it had totally failed me; since then I had been obliged on more than one occasion to double, and once, with infinite risk of death, to treble the amount; and these rare uncertainties had cast hitherto the sole shadow on my contentment. Now, however, and in the light of that morning's accident, I was led to remark that whereas, in the beginning, the difficulty had been to throw off the body of Jekyll, it had of late gradually but decidedly transferred itself to the other side. All things therefore seemed to point to this: that I was slowly losing hold of my original and better self, and becoming slowly incorporated with my second and worse.

Between these two, I now felt I had to choose. My two natures had memory in common, but all other faculties were most unequally shared between them. Jekyll (who was composite) now with the most sensitive apprehensions, now with a greedy gusto, projected and shared in the pleasures and adventures of Hyde; but Hyde was indifferent to Jekyll, or but remembered him as the mountain bandit remembers the cavern in which he conceals himself from pursuit. Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference. To cast in my lot with Jekyll, was to die to those appetites which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde, was to die to a thousand interests and aspirations, and to become, at a blow and forever, despised and friendless. The bargain might appear unequal; but there was still another consideration in the scales; for while Jekyll would suffer smartingly in the fires of abstinence, Hyde would be not even conscious of all that he had lost. Strange as my circumstances were, the terms of this debate are as old and commonplace as man; much

the same inducements and alarms cast the die for any tempted and trembling sinner; and it fell out with me, as it falls with so vast a majority of my fellows, that I chose the better part and was found wanting in the strength to keep to it.

Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses and secret pleasures, that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde. I made this choice perhaps with some unconscious reservation, for I neither gave up the house in Soho, nor destroyed the clothes of Edward Hyde, which still lay ready in my cabinet. For two months, however, I was true to my determination; for two months I led a life of such severity as I had never before attained to, and enjoyed the compensations of an approving conscience. But time began at last to obliterate the freshness of my alarm; the praises of conscience began to grow into a thing of course; I began to be tortured with throes and longings, as of Hyde struggling after freedom; and at last, in an hour of moral weakness, I once again compounded and swallowed the transforming draught.

I do not suppose that, when a drunkard reasons with himself upon his vice, he is once out of five hundred times affected by the dangers that he runs through his brutish, physical insensibility; neither had I, long as I had considered my position, made enough allowance for the complete moral insensibility and insensate readiness to evil, which were the leading characters of Edward Hyde. Yet it was by these that I was punished. My devil had been long caged, he came out roaring. I was conscious, even when I took the draught, of a more unbridled, a more furious propensity to ill. It must have been this, I suppose, that stirred in my soul that tempest of impatience with which I listened to the civilities of my unhappy victim; I declare, at least, before God, no man morally sane could have been guilty of that crime upon so pitiful a provocation; and that I struck in no more reasonable spirit than that in which a sick child may break a plaything. But I had voluntarily stripped myself of all those balancing instincts by which even the worst of us continues to

walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations; and in my case, to be tempted, however slightly, was to fall.

Instantly the spirit of hell awoke in me and raged. With a transport of glee, I mauled the unresisting body, tasting delight from every blow; and it was not till weariness had begun to succeed, that I was suddenly, in the top fit of my delirium, struck through the heart by a cold thrill of terror. A mist dispersed; I saw my life to be forfeit; and fled from the scene of these excesses, at once glorifying and trembling, my lust of evil gratified and stimulated, my love of life screwed to the topmost peg.[4] I ran to the house in Soho, and (to make assurance doubly sure) destroyed my papers; thence I set out through the lamplit streets, in the same divided ecstasy of mind, gloating on my crime, light-headedly devising others in the future, and yet still hastening and still hearkening in my wake for the steps of the avenger. Hyde had a song upon his lips as he compounded the draught, and as he drank it, pledged[5] the dead man. The pangs of transformation had not done tearing him, before Henry Jekyll, with streaming tears of gratitude and remorse, had fallen upon his knees and lifted his clasped hands to God. The veil of self-indulgence was rent from head to foot.[6] I saw my life as a whole: I followed it up from the days of childhood, when I had walked with my father's hand, and through the self-denying toils of my professional life, to arrive again and again, with the same sense of unreality, at the damned horrors of the evening. I could have screamed aloud; I sought with tears and prayers to smother down the crowd of hideous images and sounds with which my memory swarmed against me; and still, between the petitions, the ugly face of my iniquity stared into my soul. As the acuteness of this remorse began to die away, it was succeeded by a sense of joy. The problem of my conduct was solved. Hyde was thenceforth impossible; whether I would or not, I was now confined to the better part of my existence; and O, how I rejoiced to think it! with what willing humility, I embraced anew the restrictions of natural life! with what sincere renunciation, I locked the door by which I had so often gone and come, and ground the key under my heel!

The next day, came the news that the murder had been overlooked,[7] that the guilt of Hyde was patent to the world, and that the victim was a man high in public estimation. It was not only a crime, it had been a tragic folly. I think I was glad to know it; I think I was glad to have my better impulses thus buttressed and guarded by the terrors of the scaffold. Jekyll was now my city of refuge; let but Hyde peep out an instant, and the hands of all men would be raised to take and slay him.

I resolved in my future conduct to redeem the past; and I can say with honesty that my resolve was fruitful of some good. You know yourself how earnestly in the last months of last year, I laboured to relieve suffering; you know that much was done for others, and that the days passed quietly, almost happily for myself. Nor can I truly say that I wearied of this beneficent and innocent life; I think instead that I daily enjoyed it more completely; but I was still cursed with my duality of purpose; and as the first edge of my penitence wore off, the lower side of me, so long indulged, so recently chained down, began to growl for license. Not that I dreamed of resuscitating Hyde; the bare idea of that would startle me to frenzy: no, it was in my own person, that I was once more tempted to trifle with my conscience; and it was as an ordinary secret sinner, that I at last fell before the assaults of temptation.

There comes an end to all things; the most capacious measure is filled at last; and this brief condescension to my evil finally destroyed the balance of my soul. And yet I was not alarmed; the fall seemed natural, like a return to the old days before I had made my discovery. It was a fine, clear, January day, wet under foot where the frost had melted, but cloudless overhead; and the Regent's Park[8] was full of winter chirrupings and sweet with spring odours. I sat in the sun on a bench; the animal within me licking the chops of memory; the spiritual side a little drowsed, promising subsequent penitence, but not yet moved to begin. After all, I reflected, I was like my neighbours; and then I smiled, comparing myself with other men, comparing my active goodwill with the lazy cruelty of their neglect. And at the very moment of that vain-glorious thought, a

qualm came over me, a horrid nausea and the most deadly shuddering. These passed away, and left me faint; and then as in its turn the faintness subsided, I began to be aware of a change in the temper of my thoughts, a greater boldness, a contempt of danger, a solution of the bonds of obligation. I looked down; my clothes hung formlessly on my shrunken limbs; the hand that lay on my knee was corded and hairy. I was once more Edward Hyde. A moment before I had been safe of all men's respect, wealthy, beloved—the cloth laying for me in the dining-room at home; and now I was the common quarry of mankind, hunted, houseless, a known murderer, thrall to the gallows.

My reason wavered, but it did not fail me utterly. I have more than once observed that, in my second character, my faculties seemed sharpened to a point and my spirits more tensely elastic; thus it came about that, where Jekyll perhaps might have succumbed, Hyde rose to the importance of the moment. My drugs were in one of the presses of my cabinet; how was I to reach them? That was the problem that (crushing my temples in my hands) I set myself to solve. The laboratory door I had closed. If I sought to enter by the house, my own servants would consign me to the gallows. I saw I must employ another hand, and thought of Lanyon. How was he to be reached? how persuaded? Supposing that I escaped capture in the streets, how was I to make my way into his presence? and how should I, an unknown and displeasing visitor, prevail on the famous physician to rifle the study of his colleague, Dr. Jekyll? Then I remembered that of my original character, one part remained to me: I could write my own hand; and once I had conceived that kindling spark, the way that I must follow became lighted up from end to end.

Thereupon, I arranged my clothes as best I could, and summoning a passing hansom, drove to an hotel in Portland Street, the name of which I chanced to remember. At my appearance (which was indeed comical enough, however tragic a fate these garments covered) the driver could not conceal his mirth. I gnashed my teeth upon him with a gust of devilish fury; and the smile

withered from his face—happily for him—yet more happily for myself, for in another instant I had certainly dragged him from his perch. At the inn, as I entered, I looked about me with so black a countenance as made the attendants tremble; not a look did they exchange in my presence; but obsequiously took my orders, led me to a private room, and brought me wherewithal to write. Hyde in danger of his life was a creature new to me; shaken with inordinate anger, strung to the pitch of murder, lusting to inflict pain. Yet the creature was astute; mastered his fury with a great effort of the will; composed his two important letters, one to Lanyon and one to Poole; and that he might receive actual evidence of their being posted, sent them out with directions that they should be registered.

Thenceforward, he sat all day over the fire in the private room, gnawing his nails; there he dined, sitting alone with his fears, the waiter visibly quailing before his eye; and thence, when the night was fully come, he set forth in the corner of a closed cab, and was driven to and fro about the streets of the city. He, I say—I cannot say, I. That child of Hell had nothing human; nothing lived in him but fear and hatred. And when at last, thinking the driver had begun to grow suspicious, he discharged the cab and ventured on foot, attired in his misfitting clothes, an object marked out for observation, into the midst of the nocturnal passengers, these two base passions raged within him like a tempest. He walked fast, hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less frequented thoroughfares, counting the minutes that still divided him from midnight. Once a woman spoke to him, offering, I think, a box of lights.[9] He smote her in the face, and she fled.

When I came to myself at Lanyon's, the horror of my old friend perhaps affected me somewhat: I do not know; it was at least but a drop in the sea to the abhorrence with which I looked back upon these hours. A change had come over me. It was no longer the fear of the gallows, it was the horror of being Hyde that racked me. I received Lanyon's condemnation partly in a dream; it was partly in a dream that I came home to my own house and got into bed. I slept after the prostration of the day, with a stringent and profound

slumber which not even the nightmares that wrung me could avail to break. I awoke in the morning shaken, weakened, but refreshed. I still hated and feared the thought of the brute that slept within me, and I had not of course forgotten the appalling dangers of the day before; but I was once more at home, in my own house and close to my drugs; and gratitude for my escape shone so strong in my soul that it almost rivalled the brightness of hope.

I was stepping leisurely across the court after breakfast, drinking the chill of the air with pleasure, when I was seized again with those indescribable sensations that heralded the change; and I had but the time to gain the shelter of my cabinet, before I was once again raging and freezing with the passions of Hyde. It took on this occasion a double dose to recall me to myself; and alas! six hours after, as I sat looking sadly in the fire, the pangs returned, and the drug had to be re-administered. In short, from that day forth it seemed only by a great effort as of gymnastics, and only under the immediate stimulation of the drug, that I was able to wear the countenance of Jekyll. At all hours of the day and night, I would be taken with the premonitory shudder; above all, if I slept, or even dozed for a moment in my chair, it was always as Hyde that I awakened. Under the strain of this continually impending doom and by the sleeplessness to which I now condemned myself, ay, even beyond what I had thought possible to man, I became, in my own person, a creature eaten up and emptied by fever, languidly weak both in body and mind, and solely occupied by one thought: the horror of my other self. But when I slept, or when the virtue of the medicine wore off, I would leap almost without transition (for the pangs of transformation grew daily less marked) into the possession of a fancy brimming with images of terror, a soul boiling with causeless hatreds, and a body that seemed not strong enough to contain the raging energies of life. The powers of Hyde seemed to have grown with the sickliness of Jekyll. And certainly the hate that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was a thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and

was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic. This was the shocking thing; that the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices; that the amorphous dust gesticulated and sinned; that what was dead, and had no shape, should usurp the offices of life. And this again, that that insurgent horror was knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye; lay caged in his flesh, where he heard it mutter and felt it struggle to be born; and at every hour of weakness, and in the confidence of slumber, prevailed against him, and deposed him out of life. The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll, was of a different order. His terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person; but he loathed the necessity, he loathed the despondency into which Jekyll was now fallen, and he resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded. Hence the apelike tricks that he would play me, scrawling in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books, burning the letters and destroying the portrait of my father; and indeed, had it not been for his fear of death, he would long ago have ruined himself in order to involve me in the ruin. But his love of life is wonderful; I go further: I, who sicken and freeze at the mere thought of him, when I recall the abjection and passion of this attachment, and when I know how he fears my power to cut him off by suicide, I find it in my heart to pity him.

It is useless, and the time awfully fails me, to prolong this description; no one has ever suffered such torments, let that suffice; and yet even to these, habit brought—no, not alleviation—but a certain callousness of soul, a certain acquiescence of despair; and my punishment might have gone on for years, but for the last calamity which has now fallen, and which has finally severed me from my own face and nature. My provision of the salt, which had never been renewed since the date of the first experiment, began to run low. I sent out for a fresh supply, and mixed the draught; the ebullition followed, and the first change of colour, not the second; I

drank it and it was without efficiency. You will learn from Poole how I have had London ransacked; it was in vain; and I am now persuaded that my first supply was impure, and that it was that unknown impurity which lent efficacy to the draught.

About a week has passed, and I am now finishing this statement under the influence of the last of the old powders. This, then, is the last time, short of a miracle, that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face (now how sadly altered!) in the glass. Nor must I delay too long to bring my writing to an end; for if my narrative has hitherto escaped destruction, it has been by a combination of great prudence and great good luck. Should the throes of change take me in the act of writing it, Hyde will tear it in pieces; but if some time shall have elapsed after I have laid it by, his wonderful selfishness and circumscription to the moment will probably save it once again from the action of his apelike spite. And indeed the doom that is closing on us both, has already changed and crushed him. Half an hour from now, when I shall again and forever reindue[1] that hated personality, I know how I shall sit shuddering and weeping in my chair, or continue, with the most strained and fearstruck ecstasy of listening, to pace up and down this room (my last earthly refuge) and give ear to every sound of menace. Will Hyde die upon the scaffold? or will he find courage to release himself at the last moment? God knows; I am careless;[2] this is my true hour of death, and what is to follow concerns another than myself. Here then, as I lay down the pen and proceed to seal up my confession, I bring the life of that unhappy Henry Jekyll to an end.

1885 1886

Endnotes

- Note 3: Abilities.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Bundles of sticks used for fuel.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A minute amount (literally, an apothecaries' weight equal to about 1.3 grams).Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Water current that drives a mill wheel.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with Acts 16:26, when the apostle Paul and his friend Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, a city in eastern Macedonia, an earthquake freed all the prisoners (none of whom fled).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Thugs.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Borrowed clothing; a reference to King Lear's cry on the heath, "Off, off you lendings!" (Shakespeare, *King Lear* 3.4.97).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Spirit or demon.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Dark.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Daniel 5:5–31; the writing foretold the overthrow of Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, because of his transgressions against the Lord.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Strained to the highest point.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Drank a toast to.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See Matthew 27:51: "the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Seen from above.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A large park in northwest London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Matches.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Put on again.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Indifferent.Return to reference 2

OSCAR WILDE
1854–1900

In Oscar Wilde's comedy *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), Jack Worthing claims to have received a telegram about the death of his (imaginary) rakish brother Ernest in a Paris hotel. Five years later Wilde died in a hotel in Paris, where he was living in exile. The coincidence seems a curious paradigm of Wilde's career, for the connections between his life and his art were unusually close. Indeed, in his last years he told André Gide that he seemed to have put his genius into his life and only his talent into his writings.

Wilde was born and raised in Dublin, where his mother, Jane, an Irish nationalist, wrote poetry under the pseudonym "Speranza," and his father, Sir William, was a distinguished surgeon. After studying classics at Trinity College, Dublin, he won a scholarship to Oxford and there established a brilliant academic record. At Oxford he came under the influence of the aesthetic theories of John Ruskin (who was at the time professor of fine arts) and, more important, of Walter Pater. With characteristic hyperbole Wilde affirmed of Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873): "It is my golden book; I never travel anywhere without it. But it is the very flower of decadence; the last trumpet should have sounded the moment it was written."

After graduating in 1878, Wilde moved to London, where his fellow Irishmen George Bernard Shaw and William Butler Yeats were also to settle. Here Wilde quickly established himself both as a writer

and as a spokesperson for the school of "art for art's sake." In Wilde's view this school included not only French poets and critics but also a line of English poets going back through Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites to John Keats. In 1882 he visited America for a long (and successful) lecture tour, during which he startled audiences by airing the gospel of the "aesthetic movement." In one of these lectures, he asserted that "to disagree with three fourths of all England on all points of view is one of the first elements of sanity."

For his role as a spokesperson for aestheticism, Wilde had many gifts. From all accounts he was a dazzling conversationalist. Yeats reported, after first listening to him: "I never before heard a man talking with perfect sentences, as if he had written them all overnight with labour and yet all spontaneous." Wilde delighted his listeners not only by his polished wordplay but also by uttering opinions that were both outrageous and incongruous—for example, his solemn affirmation that Queen Victoria was one of the three women he most admired and whom he would have married "with pleasure" (the other two were the actress Sarah Bernhardt and Lillie Langtry, reputedly a mistress of Victoria's son Edward, Prince of Wales).

In addition to his mastery of witty conversation, Wilde had the gifts of an actor who delights in gaining attention. Pater had been a very shy and reticent man, but there was nothing reticent about his disciple, who had early discovered that a flamboyant style of dress was one of the most effective means of gaining attention. Like the dandies of the earlier decades of the nineteenth century (including Benjamin Disraeli and Charles Dickens), Wilde favored colorful costumes in marked contrast to the sober black suits of the late-Victorian middle classes. A green carnation in his buttonhole and velvet knee breeches became for Wilde badges of his youthful iconoclasm; and even when he approached middle age, he continued to emphasize the gap between generations. In a letter written when he was forty-two years old, he remarks: "The opinions of the old on matters of Art are, of course, of no value whatever."

Wilde's campaign quickly gained an amused response from middle-class quarters. In 1881 W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan staged their comic opera *Patience*, which mocked the affectations of the aesthetes like Wilde in the character of Bunthorne, especially in his song "If You're Anxious for to Shine in the High Aesthetic Line."

Wilde's successes for seventeen years in England and America were, of course, not limited to his self-advertising stunts as a dandy. In his writings he excelled in a variety of genres: as a critic of literature and of society (*The Decay of Lying*, 1889, and *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 1891) and also as a novelist, poet, and dramatist. Much of his prose, including *The Critic as Artist* (1890), develops Pater's aestheticism, particularly its sense of the superiority of art to life and its lack of obligation to any standards of mimesis. His novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, which created a sensation when it was published in 1891, takes a somewhat different perspective. The novel is a strikingly ingenious story of a handsome young man and his selfish pursuit of sensual pleasures. Until the end of the book he remains fresh and healthy in appearance while his portrait mysteriously changes into a horrible image of his corrupted soul. Although the preface to the novel (reprinted here) emphasizes that art and morality are totally separate, in the novel, at least in its later chapters, Wilde seems to be portraying the evils of self-regarding hedonism.

As a poet Wilde felt overshadowed by the Victorian predecessors whom he admired—Robert Browning, D. G. Rossetti, and Algernon Charles Swinburne—and had trouble finding his own voice. Many of the poems in his first volume (1881) are highly derivative, but pieces such as "Impression du Matin" (1885) and "The Harlot's House" (1881) offer a distinctive perspective on city streets that seems to anticipate early poems by T. S. Eliot. His most outstanding success, however, was as a writer of comedies; staged in London and New York from 1892 through 1895, these included *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest.*

In the spring of 1895 this triumphant success suddenly crumbled when Wilde was arrested and sentenced to prison, with hard labor, for two years. Although Wilde was married and the father of two children, he did not hide his relationships with men, and in fact ended up shaping, to his personal cost, a long-standing public image of "the homosexual." When he began a romance (in 1891) with the handsome young poet Lord Alfred Douglas, he set in motion the events that brought about his ruin. In 1895 Lord Alfred's father, the marquess of Queensberry, accused Wilde of homosexuality; Wilde recklessly sued for libel, lost the case, and was thereupon arrested and convicted for what had only recently come onto the statute books as a serious offense. (A late addition to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, known as the Labouchère Amendment after the member of Parliament who had proposed it, effectively criminalized all forms of sexual relations between men. An excerpt from the amendment appears in this volume.) The revulsion of feeling against him in Britain and America was violent, and the aesthetic movement suffered a severe setback not only with the public but also among writers as well.

His two years in jail led Wilde to write two uncharacteristically sober works, his poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898) and his prose confession *De Profundis* (1905). After leaving prison, Wilde emigrated to France, where he lived out the last three years of his life under an assumed name. Before his departure from England he had been divorced and declared a bankrupt, and in France he had to rely on friends for financial support. Wilde is buried in Paris in the Père Lachaise cemetery.

Impression du Matin[1]

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold[2]
  Changed to a harmony in grey;
  A barge with ochre-colored hay
Dropped from the wharf:[3] and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down
  The bridges, till the houses' walls
  Seemed changed to shadows, and St. Paul's
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.[4]

Then suddenly arose the clang
  Of waking life; the streets were stirred
  With country wagons; and a bird
Flew to the glistening roofs and sang.

But one pale woman all alone,
  The daylight kissing her wan hair,
  Loitered beneath the gas lamps' flare,
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

1881

Endnotes

- Note 1: Impression of the morning (French).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with the "Nocturnes" (paintings of nighttime scenes) by James McNeill Whistler in the 1870s. *Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge* was one of this series; it was painted by 1875 but given its present title in 1892. In the next line Wilde may be referring to an earlier painting by

Whistler, *Harmony in Gray and Green: Miss Cicely Alexander* (1872–74).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: That is, left the wharf and went down river with the ebb tide.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the large dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.Return to reference 4

The Harlot's House

We caught the tread of dancing feet,
We loitered down the moonlit street,
And stopped beneath the Harlot's house.

Inside, above the din and fray,
We heard the loud musicians play
The "Treues Liebes Herz" of Strauss.[1]

Like strange mechanical grotesques,
Making fantastic arabesques,
The shadows raced across the blind.

We watched the ghostly dancers spin
To sound of horn and violin,
Like black leaves wheeling in the wind.

Like wire-pulled automatons,
Slim silhouetted skeletons
Went sidling through the slow quadrille,[2]

Then took each other by the hand,
And danced a stately saraband;[3]
Their laughter echoed thin and shrill.

Sometimes a clockwork puppet pressed
A phantom lover to her breast,
Sometimes they seemed to try to sing,

Sometimes a horrible marionette
Came out, and smoked its cigarette
Upon the steps like a live thing.[4]

Then turning to my love I said,
"The dead are dancing with the dead,
The dust is whirling with the dust."

But she, she heard the violin,
And left my side, and entered in;
Love passed into the house of Lust.

Then suddenly the tune went false,
The dancers wearied of the waltz,
The shadows ceased to wheel and whirl,

And down the long and silent street,
The dawn, with silver-sandaled feet,
Crept like a frightened girl.

1885, 1908

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Heart of True Love*, a waltz by the Austrian composer and "Waltz King" Johann Strauss (1825–1899).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An intricate dance involving four couples facing each other in a square.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A slow and stately dance, originating in Spain.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In an illustration for the poem by Althea Gyles (approved by Wilde), the marionette is pictured as a man in evening dress.Return to reference 4

From The Critic as Artist[1]

[CRITICISM ITSELF AN ART]

ERNEST Gilbert, you sound too harsh a note. Let us go back to the more gracious fields of literature. What was it you said? That it was more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it?

GILBERT [*After a pause.*] Yes: I believe I ventured upon that simple truth. Surely you see now that I am right? When man acts he is a puppet. When he describes he is a poet. The whole secret lies in that. It was easy enough on the sandy plains by windy Ilion[2] to send the notched arrow from the painted bow, or to hurl against the shield of hide and flamelike brass the long ash-handled spear. It was easy for the adulterous queen to spread the Tyrian carpets for her lord,[3] and then, as he lay couched in the marble bath, to throw over his head the purple net, and call to her smooth-faced lover to stab through the meshes at the heart that should have broken at Aulis.[4] For Antigone[5] even, with Death waiting for her as her bridegroom, it was easy to pass through the tainted air at noon, and climb the hill, and strew with kindly earth the wretched naked corse that had no tomb. But what of those who wrote about these things? What of those who gave them reality, and made them live forever? Are they not greater than the men and women they sing of? "Hector that sweet knight is dead."[6] And Lucian[7] tells us how in the dim underworld Menippus saw the bleaching skull of Helen, and marveled that it was for so grim a favour that all those horned ships were launched, those beautiful mailed men laid low, those towered cities brought to dust. Yet, every day the swanlike daughter of Leda comes out on the battlements, and looks down at the tide of war. The greybeards wonder at her loveliness, and she stands by the side of the king.[8] In his chamber of stained ivory lies her leman.[9] He is polishing his

dainty armour, and combing the scarlet plume. With squire and page, her husband passes from tent to tent. She can see his bright hair, and hears, or fancies that she hears, that clear cold voice. In the courtyard below, the son of Priam is buckling on his brazen cuirass. The white arms of Andromache[1] are around his neck. He sets his helmet on the ground, lest their babe should be frightened. Behind the embroidered curtains of his pavilion sits Achilles,[2] in perfumed raiment, while in harness of gilt and silver the friend of his soul[3] arrays himself to go forth to fight. From a curiously carven chest that his mother Thetis had brought to his shipside, the Lord of the Myrmidons[4] takes out that mystic chalice that the lip of man had never touched, and cleanses it with brimstone, and with fresh water cools it, and, having washed his hands, fills with black wine its burnished hollow, and spills the thick grape-blood upon the ground in honor of Him whom at Dodona[5] barefooted prophets worshipped, and prays to Him, and knows not that he prays in vain, and that by the hands of two knights from Troy, Panthous' son, Euphorbus, whose love-locks were looped with gold, and the Priamid,[6] the lion-hearted, Patroclus, the comrade of comrades, must meet his doom. Phantoms, are they? Heroes of mist and mountain? Shadows in a song? No: they are real. Action! What is action? It dies at the moment of its energy. It is a base concession to fact. The world is made by the singer for the dreamer.

ERNEST While you talk it seems to me to be so.

GILBERT It is so in truth. On the mouldering citadel of Troy lies the lizard like a thing of green bronze. The owl has built her nest in the palace of Priam. Over the empty plain wander shepherd and goatherd with their flocks, and where, on the wine-surfaced, oily sea, *οἴνοψ πόντος*,[7] as Homer calls it, copper-prowed and streaked with vermilion, the great galleys of the Danaoi[8] came in their gleaming crescent, the lonely tunny-fisher[9] sits in his little boat and watches the bobbing corks of his net. Yet, every morning the doors of the city are thrown open, and on foot, or in horse-drawn chariot, the warriors go forth to battle, and mock their

enemies from behind their iron masks. All day long the fight rages, and when night comes the torches gleam by the tents, and the cresset[1] burns in the hall. Those who live in marble or on painted panel know of life but a single exquisite instant, eternal indeed in its beauty, but limited to one note of passion or one mood of calm. Those whom the poet makes live have their myriad emotions of joy and terror, of courage and despair, of pleasure and of suffering. The seasons come and go in glad or saddening pageant, and with winged or leaden feet the years pass by before them. They have their youth and their manhood, they are children, and they grow old. It is always dawn for St. Helena, as Veronese saw her at the window.[2] Through the still morning air the angels bring her the symbol of God's pain.[3] The cool breezes of the morning lift the gilt threads from her brow. On that little hill by the city of Florence, where the lovers of Giorgione[4] are lying, it is always the solstice of noon, made so languorous by summer suns that hardly can the slim naked girl dip into the marble tank the round bubble of clear glass, and the long fingers of the lute player rest idly upon the chords. It is twilight always for the dancing nymphs whom Corot[5] set free among the silver poplars of France. In eternal twilight they move, those frail diaphanous figures, whose tremulous white feet seem not to touch the dew-drenched grass they tread on. But those who walk in epos,[6] drama, or romance, see through the labouring months the young moons wax and wane, and watch the night from evening unto morning star, and from sunrise unto sunsetting can note the shifting day with all its gold and shadow. For them, as for us, the flowers bloom and wither, and the Earth, that Green-tressed Goddess as Coleridge calls her,[7] alters her raiment for their pleasure. The statue is concentrated to one moment of perfection. The image stained upon the canvas possesses no spiritual element of growth or change. If they know nothing of death, it is because they know little of life, for the secrets of life and death belong to those, and those only, whom the sequence of time affects, and who possess not merely the present but the future, and can rise or fall from a

past of glory or of shame. Movement, that problem of the visible arts, can be truly realized by Literature alone. It is Literature that shows us the body in its swiftness and the soul in its unrest.

ERNEST Yes; I see now what you mean. But, surely, the higher you place the creative artist, the lower must the critic rank.

GILBERT Why so?

ERNEST Because the best that he can give us will be but an echo of rich music, a dim shadow of clear-outlined form. It may, indeed, be that life is chaos, as you tell me that it is; that its martyrdoms are mean and its heroisms ignoble; and that it is the function of Literature to create, from the rough material of actual existence, a new world that will be more marvellous, more enduring, and more true than the world that common eyes look upon, and through which common natures seek to realize their perfection. But surely, if this new world has been made by the spirit and touch of a great artist, it will be a thing so complete and perfect that there will be nothing left for the critic to do. I quite understand now, and indeed admit most readily, that it is far more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it. But it seems to me that this sound and sensible maxim, which is really extremely soothing to one's feelings, and should be adopted as its motto by every Academy of Literature all over the world, applies only to the relations that exist between Art and Life, and not to any relations that there may be between Art and Criticism.

GILBERT But, surely, Criticism is itself an art. And just as artistic creation implies the working of the critical faculty, and, indeed, without it cannot be said to exist at all, so Criticism is really creative in the highest sense of the word. Criticism is, in fact, both creative and independent.

ERNEST Independent?

GILBERT Yes; independent. Criticism is no more to be judged by any low standard of imitation or resemblance than is the work of poet or sculptor. The critic occupies the same relation to the work of art that he criticizes as the artist does to the visible world of form and colour, or the unseen world of passion and of thought. He does not even require for the perfection of his art the finest materials.

Anything will serve his purpose. And just as out of the sordid and sentimental amours of the silly wife of a small country doctor in the squalid village of Yonville-l'Abbaye, near Rouen, Gustave Flaubert[8] was able to create a classic, and make a masterpiece of style, so, from subjects of little or of no importance, such as the pictures in this year's Royal Academy,[9] or in any year's Royal Academy for that matter, Mr. Lewis Morris's poems, M. Ohnet's novels, or the plays of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones,[1] the true critic can, if it be his pleasure so to direct or waste his faculty of contemplation, produce work that will be flawless in beauty and instinct with intellectual subtlety. Why not? Dullness is always an irresistible temptation for brilliancy, and stupidity is the permanent *Bestia Trionfans*[2] that calls wisdom from its cave. To an artist so creative as the critic, what does subject matter signify? No more and no less than it does to the novelist and the painter. Like them, he can find his motives everywhere. Treatment is the test. There is nothing that has not in it suggestion or challenge.

ERNEST But is Criticism really a creative art?

GILBERT Why should it not be? It works with materials, and puts them into a form that is at once new and delightful. What more can one say of poetry? Indeed, I would call criticism a creation within a creation. For just as the great artists, from Homer and Aeschylus, down to Shakespeare and Keats, did not go directly to life for their subject matter, but sought for it in myth, and legend, and ancient tale, so the critic deals with materials that others have, as it were, purified for him, and to which imaginative form and colour have been already added. Nay, more, I would say that the highest Criticism, being the purest form of personal impression, is in its way more creative than creation, as it has least reference to any standard external to itself, and is, in fact, its own reason for existing, and, as the Greeks would put it, in itself, and to itself, an end. Certainly, it is never trammeled by any shackles of verisimilitude. No ignoble considerations of probability, that cowardly concession to the tedious repetitions of domestic or

public life, affect it ever. One may appeal from fiction unto fact. But from the soul there is no appeal.

ERNEST From the soul?

GILBERT Yes, from the soul. That is what the highest criticism really is, the record of one's own soul. It is more fascinating than history, as it is concerned simply with oneself. It is more delightful than philosophy, as its subject is concrete and not abstract, real and not vague. It is the only civilized form of autobiography, as it deals not with the events, but with the thoughts of one's life, not with life's physical accidents of deed or circumstance, but with the spiritual moods and imaginative passions of the mind. I am always amused by the silly vanity of those writers and artists of our day who seem to imagine that the primary function of the critic is to chatter about their second-rate work. The best that one can say of most modern creative art is that it is just a little less vulgar than reality, and so the critic, with his fine sense of distinction and sure instinct of delicate refinement, will prefer to look into the silver mirror or through the woven veil, and will turn his eyes away from the chaos and clamour of actual existence, though the mirror be tarnished and the veil be torn. His sole aim is to chronicle his own impressions. It is for him that pictures are painted, books written, and marble hewn into form.

ERNEST I seem to have heard another theory of Criticism.

GILBERT Yes: it has been said by one whose gracious memory we all revere,[3] and the music of whose pipe once lured Proserpina from her Sicilian fields, and made those white feet stir, and not in vain, the Cumnor cowslips, that the proper aim of Criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is. But this is a very serious error, and takes no cognizance of Criticism's most perfect form, which is in its essence purely subjective, and seeks to reveal its own secret and not the secret of another. For the highest Criticism deals with art not as expressive but as impressive purely.

ERNEST But is that really so?

GILBERT Of course it is. Who cares whether Mr. Ruskin's views on Turner[4] are sound or not? What does it matter? That mighty and

majestic prose of his, so fervid and so fiery-colored in its noble eloquence, so rich in its elaborate symphonic music, so sure and certain, at its best, in subtle choice of word and epithet, is at least as great a work of art as any of those wonderful sunsets that bleach or rot on their corrupted canvases in England's Gallery; greater indeed, one is apt to think at times, not merely because its equal beauty is more enduring, but on account of the fuller variety of its appeal, soul speaking to soul in those long-cadenced lines, not through form and colour alone, though through these, indeed, completely and without loss, but with intellectual and emotional utterance, with lofty passion and with loftier thought, with imaginative insight, and with poetic aim; greater, I always think, even as Literature is the greater art. Who, again, cares whether Mr. Pater has put into the portrait of Mona Lisa[5] something that Leonardo never dreamed of? The painter may have been merely the slave of an archaic smile, as some have fancied, but whenever I pass into the cool galleries of the Palace of the Louvre, and stand before that strange figure "set in its marble chair in that cirque of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea," I murmur to myself, "She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her: and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants; and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as St. Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands." And I say to my friend, "The presence that thus so strangely rose beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years man had come to desire"; and he answers me, "Hers is the head upon which all 'the ends of the world are come,' and the eyelids are a little weary."

And so the picture becomes more wonderful to us than it really is, and reveals to us a secret of which, in truth, it knows nothing,

and the music of the mystical prose is as sweet in our ears as was that flute-player's music that lent to the lips of La Gioconda[6] those subtle and poisonous curves. Do you ask me what Leonardo would have said had any one told him of this picture that "all the thoughts and experience of the world had etched and moulded therein that which they had of power to refine and make expressive the outward form, the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the reverie of the Middle Age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias?" He would probably have answered that he had contemplated none of these things, but had concerned himself simply with certain arrangements of lines and masses, and with new and curious colour-harmonies of blue and green. And it is for this very reason that the criticism which I have quoted is criticism of the highest kind. It treats the work of art simply as a starting point for a new creation. It does not confine itself—let us at least suppose so for the moment—to discovering the real intention of the artist and accepting that as final. And in this it is right, for the meaning of any beautiful created thing is, at least, as much in the soul of him who looks at it, as it was in his soul who wrought it. Nay, it is rather the beholder who lends to the beautiful thing its myriad meanings, and makes it marvelous for us, and sets it in some new relation to the age, so that it becomes a vital portion of our lives, and symbol of what we pray for, or perhaps of what, having prayed for, we fear that we may receive. The longer I study, Ernest, the more clearly I see that the beauty of the visible arts is, as the beauty of music, impressive[7] primarily, and that it may be marred, and indeed often is so, by any excess of intellectual intention on the part of the artist. For when the work is finished it has, as it were, an independent life of its own, and may deliver a message far other than that which was put into its lips to say. Sometimes, when I listen to the overture to *Tannhäuser*,[8] I seem indeed to see that comely knight treading delicately on the flower-strewn grass, and to hear the voice of Venus calling to him from the caverned hill. But at other times it speaks to me of a

thousand different things, of myself, it may be, and my own life, or of the lives of others whom one has loved and grown weary of loving, or of the passions that man has known, or of the passions that man has not known, and so has sought for. Tonight it may fill one with that ΕΡΩΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΔΥΝΑΤΩΝ, that *amour de l'impossible*,[9] which falls like a madness on many who think they live securely and out of reach of harm, so that they sicken suddenly with the poison of unlimited desire, and, in the infinite pursuit of what they may not obtain, grow faint and swoon or stumble. Tomorrow, like the music of which Aristotle and Plato tell us, the noble Dorian music of the Greek,[1] it may perform the office of a physician, and give us an anodyne against pain, and heal the spirit that is wounded, and "bring the soul into harmony with all right things." And what is true about music is true about all the arts. Beauty has as many meanings as man has moods. Beauty is the symbol of symbols. Beauty reveals everything, because it expresses nothing. When it shows us itself, it shows us the whole fiery-coloured world.

ERNEST But is such work as you have talked about really criticism?

GILBERT It is the highest Criticism, for it criticizes not merely the individual work of art, but Beauty itself, and fills with wonder a form which the artist may have left void, or not understood, or understood incompletely.

ERNEST The highest Criticism, then, is more creative than creation, and the primary aim of the critic is to see the object as in itself it really is not; that is your theory, I believe?

GILBERT Yes, that is my theory. To the critic the work of art is simply a suggestion for a new work of his own, that need not necessarily bear any obvious resemblance to the thing it criticizes. The one characteristic of a beautiful form is that one can put into it whatever one wishes, and see in it whatever one chooses to see; and the Beauty, that gives to creation its universal and aesthetic element, makes the critic a creator in his turn, and whispers of a thousand different things which were not present in the mind of

him who carved the statue or painted the panel or graved the gem.

It is sometimes said by those who understand neither the nature of the highest Criticism nor the charm of the highest Art, that the pictures that the critic loves most to write about are those that belong to the anecdotage of painting, and that deal with scenes taken out of literature or history. But this is not so. Indeed, pictures of this kind are far too intelligible. As a class, they rank with illustrations, and even considered from this point of view are failures, as they do not stir the imagination, but set definite bounds to it. For the domain of the painter is, as I suggested before, widely different from that of the poet. To the latter belongs life in its full and absolute entirety; not merely the beauty that men look at, but the beauty that men listen to also; not merely the momentary grace of form or the transient gladness of colour, but the whole sphere of feeling, the perfect cycle of thought. The painter is so far limited that it is only through the mask of the body that he can show us the mystery of the soul; only through conventional images that he can handle ideas; only through its physical equivalents that he can deal with psychology. And how inadequately does he do it then, asking us to accept the torn turban of the Moor for the noble rage of Othello, or a dotard in a storm for the wild madness of Lear! Yet it seems as if nothing could stop him. Most of our elderly English painters spend their wicked and wasted lives in poaching upon the domain of the poets, marring their motives by clumsy treatment, and striving to render, by visible form or colour, the marvel of what is invisible, the splendour of what is not seen. Their pictures are, as a natural consequence, insufferably tedious. They have degraded the invisible arts into the obvious arts, and the one thing not worth looking at is the obvious. I do not say that poet and painter may not treat of the same subject. They have always done so, and will always do so. But while the poet can be pictorial or not, as he chooses, the painter must be pictorial always. For a painter is limited, not to what he sees in nature, but to what upon canvas may be seen.

And so, my dear Ernest, pictures of this kind will not really fascinate the critic. He will turn from them to such works as make him brood and dream and fancy, to works that possess the subtle quality of suggestion, and seem to tell one that even from them there is an escape into a wider world. It is sometimes said that the tragedy of an artist's life is that he cannot realize his ideal. But the true tragedy that dogs the steps of most artists is that they realize their ideal too absolutely. For, when the ideal is realized, it is robbed of its wonder and its mystery, and becomes simply a new starting point for an ideal that is other than itself. This is the reason why music is the perfect type of art. Music can never reveal its ultimate secret. This, also, is the explanation of the value of limitations in art. The sculptor gladly surrenders imitative colour, and the painter the actual dimensions of form, because by such renunciations they are able to avoid too definite a presentation of the Real, which would be mere imitation, and too definite a realization of the Ideal, which would be too purely intellectual. It is through its very incompleteness that Art becomes complete in beauty, and so addresses itself, not to the faculty of recognition nor to the faculty of reason, but to the aesthetic sense alone, which, while accepting both reason and recognition as stages of apprehension, subordinates them both to a pure synthetic impression of the work of art as a whole, and, taking whatever alien emotional elements the work may possess, uses their very complexity as a means by which a richer unity may be added to the ultimate impression itself. You see, then, how it is that the aesthetic critic rejects these obvious modes of art that have but one message to deliver, and having delivered it become dumb and sterile, and seeks rather for such modes as suggest reverie and mood, and by their imaginative beauty make all interpretations true, and no interpretation final. Some resemblance, no doubt, the creative work of the critic will have to the work that has stirred him to creation, but it will be such resemblance as exists, not between Nature and the mirror that the painter of landscape or figure may be supposed to hold up to her, but between Nature and the work of the decorative artist. Just as

on the flowerless carpets of Persia, tulip and rose blossom indeed and are lovely to look on, though they are not reproduced in visible shape or line; just as the pearl and purple of the sea shell is echoed in the church of St. Mark at Venice; just as the vaulted ceiling of the wondrous chapel at Ravenna is made gorgeous by the gold and green and sapphire of the peacock's tail, though the birds of Juno[2] fly not across it; so the critic reproduces the work that he criticizes in a mode that is never imitative, and part of whose charm may really consist in the rejection of resemblance, and shows us in this way not merely the meaning but also the mystery of Beauty, and, by transforming each art into literature, solves once for all the problem of Art's unity.

But I see it is time for supper. After we have discussed some Chambertin and a few ortolans,[3] we will pass on to the question of the critic considered in the light of the interpreter.

ERNEST Ah! you admit, then, that the critic may occasionally be allowed to see the object as in itself it really is.

GILBERT I am not quite sure. Perhaps I may admit it after supper. There is a subtle influence in supper.

1890, 1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: In "the library of a house in Piccadilly," Gilbert and Ernest, two sophisticated young men, are talking about the use and function of criticism. Earlier in the dialogue Ernest had complained that criticism is officious and useless: "Why should the artist be troubled by the shrill clamour of criticism? Why should those who cannot create take upon themselves to estimate the value of creative work?" Gilbert, in his reply, argues that criticism is creative in its own right. He digresses to compare the life of action unfavorably with the life of art: actions are dangerous and their results unpredictable; "if we lived long enough to see the results of our actions it may be

that those who call themselves good would be sickened by a dull remorse, and those whom the world calls evil stirred by a noble joy." The excerpt printed here begins immediately after this digression.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Troy. Gilbert is referring to Homer's *Iliad.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Agamemnon, king of Mycenae. Aeschylus's tragedy of that name tells how his wife, Clytemnestra ("the adulterous queen"), and his cousin Aegisthus ("her smooth-faced lover") conspired to murder him. He hubristically walked on carpets dyed purple, a color derived from shellfish off Tyre (a city located in what is today Lebanon).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Where Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia (so that the Greek fleet could sail for Troy), thus incurring Clytemnestra's wrath.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Antigone defied Creon, king of Thebes, by sprinkling earth on the body of her brother whose burial Creon had forbidden, and was punished by death; see Sophocles' play *Antigone* (ca. 441 B.C.E.).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Compare with Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2.647: "The sweet war-man [Hector] is dead and rotten."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Greek satirist (b. ca. 120 C.E.), one of whose main influences was Menippus (early 3rd century B.C.E.), a Greek philosopher who was the first to express his views in a seriocomic style. The reference is to Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead.*Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Priam. Homer in *Iliad* 3.156–58 describes the old men of Troy admiring the beauty of Helen, daughter of Leda and of Zeus (who came to Leda in the form of a swan).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Lover (that is, Paris).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Wife of Hector, one of the sons of Priam and the finest Trojan warrior.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Son of Peleus and of the sea nymph Thetis; Achilles was the greatest Greek warrior fighting in the Trojan War. The scene

set here is a tissue of recollections from the *Iliad.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, Patroclus.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Warriors who accompanied Achilles to Troy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Seat of a very ancient oracle of Zeus.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The son of Priam, that is, Hector. With Euphorbus's help he killed Patroclus, and in turn he was slain by Achilles.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Wine-dark sea (Greek).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Greeks.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Tuna fishers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Metal basket holding fuel burned for illumination, often hung from the ceiling.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: One of the best-known works of the Italian painter Paolo Veronese (Paolo Caliari, 1528–1588) is *Helena's Vision.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, the cross.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Italian painter (ca. 1477–1511), the most brilliant colorist of his time. The painting is *The Concert.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796–1875), French painter best known for his shimmering trees.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Epic poetry.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with S. T. Coleridge's "Hymn to the Earth" (1834), line 10, where Earth is called "Green-haired Goddess."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: French novelist (1821–1880); the reference is to his novel *Madame Bovary* (1857).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The Royal Academy of Arts, founded in 1768, holds an annual summer exhibition of new work.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Wilde is mischievously suggesting his low opinion of the contemporary writers just named. Morris (1833–1907) was a popular Welsh poet and essayist often ridiculed by the critics.

Georges Ohnet (1848–1918) was a French novelist and dramatist. Jones (1851–1929) was one of the leading English playwrights of his time.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Triumphant beast (Wilde's mixture of Italian and Latin); a reference to *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante* (*Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast,* 1584), a philosophical allegory by the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, Matthew Arnold, whose poem "Thyrsis" (1866; lines 91–100) evokes the legend of Proserpina, a goddess associated with the pastoral landscapes of Sicily. Arnold believed that it would be "in vain" to summon Proserpina to visit the Cumnor hills landscape (near Oxford), but Wilde's speaker here flatters Arnold that the summons was so beautiful that it was "not in vain." For the prose passage about the "aim of Criticism," see Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: For John Ruskin's defense of the paintings of J. M. W. Turner, see *Modern Painters* (1843), especially his praise of Turner's *The Slave Ship* (p. 466).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: All remaining references in this paragraph and the first in the next are to Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (p. 712).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the *Mona Lisa* (the portrait was of the wife of Francesco del Gioconda—hence "La Gioconda").Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, designed to create an impression of the senses.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The 1845 opera by Richard Wagner, based on the legend of a 14th-century German poet who fell under the spell of Venus and lived with her in a mountain, Hörselberg.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Love of the impossible, in Greek (in capital letters, perhaps to give the effect of an inscription) and in French.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Both Plato (*Republic* 3) and Aristotle (*Politics* 8) praise the educational appropriateness of the Dorian mode (Aristotle

calls it especially steady and manly), as opposed to Eastern music; the Dorians were a people of ancient Greece, the last of the northern invaders (ca. 1100–950 B.C.E.).Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Peacocks, associated in classical mythology with the goddess Juno (in Greek, Hera) because she is said to have set in the bird's tail the eyes of hundred-eyed Argus, who died in her service.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Small birds esteemed by epicures for their delicate flavor. "Chambertin": one of the finest wines of Burgundy.Return to reference 3

Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The artist is the creator of beautiful things.
To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.
The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things.

The highest, as the lowest, form of criticism is a mode of autobiography.

Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.

Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope.

They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty.

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book.
Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.

The nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban[1] seeing his own face in a glass.

The nineteenth-century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.

The moral life of man forms part of the subject matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium. No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved.

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.

No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express everything.

Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art.

Vice and Virtue are to the artist materials for an art.

From the point of view of form, the type of all the arts is the art of the musician.
From the point of view of feeling, the actor's craft is the type.

All art is at once surface and symbol.

Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.

Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.

Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital.

When critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself. We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless.

1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: The character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* who is half-human, half-monster.Return to reference 1

The Importance of Being Earnest

Of the four stage comedies by Wilde, his last, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, is generally regarded as his masterpiece. It was first staged in February 1895 and was an immediate hit. Only one critic failed to find it delightful; curiously, this was Wilde's fellow playwright from Ireland, George Bernard Shaw, who, though amused, found Wilde's wit "hateful" and "sinister," and thought the play exhibited "real degeneracy." Despite Shaw's complaints, the first London production ran for eighty-six performances; but when Wilde was sentenced to prison, production ceased for several years. Shortly before his death it was revived in London and New York, and it has subsequently become a classic.

In its original version the play was in four acts. At the request of the stage producer, Wilde reduced it to three acts—the version almost always used in performances and the version reprinted here. A few of the notes in the text cite passages from the four-act version.

The play was first published in 1899. Earlier, in an interview, Wilde had described his overall aim in writing it: "It has as its philosophy . . . that we should treat all the trivial things of life seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality." Just before his death he remarked that although he was pleased with the "bright and happy" tone and temper of his play, he wished it might have had a "higher seriousness of intent." Later critics have found this seriousness of intent in the play's deconstruction of Victorian moral and social values. Like another Victorian masterpiece of the absurd, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *The Importance of Being Earnest* empties manners and morals of their underlying sense to create a nominalist world where earnest is not a quality of character but a name, where words, to paraphrase Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), mean what you choose them to mean, neither more nor less.

The literary ancestry of Wilde's play has been variously identified. In its witty wordplay and worldly attitudes it has been likened to

comedies of the Restoration period such as William Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695). In its genial and lighthearted tone, it has some affinities with the festive comedies of Shakespeare, such as *Twelfth Night* (ca. 1601), and with Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). A more immediate predecessor was *Engaged* (1877), a comic play by W. S. Gilbert that anticipated some of the burlesque effects exploited by Wilde, such as the inviolable imperturbability of the speakers and the interrupting of sentimental scenes by the consumption of food. Gilbert's advice to the actors who were putting on his *Engaged* is worth citing as a clue to how *The Importance of Being Earnest* may be most effectively imagined as a stage representation:

> It is absolutely essential to the success of this piece that it should be played with the most perfect earnestness and gravity throughout. . . . Directly the actors show that they are conscious of the absurdity of their utterances the piece begins to drag.

The Importance of Being Earnest

First Act

SCENE—*Morning room in* ALGERNON *'s flat in Half-Moon Street.*[1]

The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

[LANE *is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased,* ALGERNON *enters.*]

ALGERNON Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

LANE I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGERNON I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—anyone can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE Yes, sir.

ALGERNON And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?[2]

LANE Yes, sir. [*Hands them on a salver.*]

ALGERNON [*Inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.*] Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book[3] that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreham and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

LANE Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

ALGERNON Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

LANE I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGERNON Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

ALGERNON [*Languidly.*] I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGERNON Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE Thank you, sir. [LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

[*Enter* LANE .]

LANE Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[*Enter* JACK.] [LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGERNON [*Stiffly.*] I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK [*Sitting down on the sofa.*] In the country.

ALGERNON What on earth do you do there?

JACK [*Pulling off his gloves.*] When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGERNON And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [*Airily.*] Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

ALGERNON Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

JACK Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGERNON How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich.*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK Eh? Shropshire?[4] Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

ALGERNON Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK How perfectly delightful!

ALGERNON Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK May I ask why?

ALGERNON My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGERNON I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

JACK How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGERNON I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

JACK I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

ALGERNON Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—[JACK *puts out his hand to take a sandwich*. ALGERNON *at once interferes.*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it.*]

JACK Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGERNON That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*Takes plate from below.*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

JACK [*Advancing to table and helping himself.*] And very good bread and butter it is too.

ALGERNON Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

JACK Why on earth do you say that?

ALGERNON Well, in the first place, girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

JACK Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

JACK Your consent!

ALGERNON My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rings bell.*]

JACK Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

[*Enter* LANE .]

ALGERNON Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

LANE Yes, sir. [LANE *goes out.*]

JACK Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard[5] about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

ALGERNON Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.[6]

JACK There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[*Enter* LANE *with the cigarette case on a salver.* ALGERNON *takes it at once*. LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it.*] However, it makes no matter, for,

now that I look at the inscription inside, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him.*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGERNON Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

JACK I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

ALGERNON Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

JACK Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGERNON Your aunt!

JACK Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells.[7] Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGERNON [*Retreating to back of sofa.*] But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading.*] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK [*Moving to sofa and kneeling upon it.*] My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows Algy round the room.*]

ALGERNON Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGERNON You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany."[8] I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket.*]

JACK Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGERNON Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGERNON Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

JACK Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

ALGERNON I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

JACK Well, produce my cigarette case first.

ALGERNON Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*]

JACK My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his granddaughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could

not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGERNON Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGERNON I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburyed all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGERNON The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

JACK That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

ALGERNON Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK What on earth do you mean?

ALGERNON You have invented a very useful young brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be

able to dine with you at Willis's tonight, for I have been really engaged[9] to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

JACK I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere tonight.

ALGERNON I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

JACK You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

ALGERNON I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with[1] either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, tonight. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist, I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

JACK I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

ALGERNON Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

JACK That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

ALGERNON Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none.

JACK [*Sententiously.*] That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.[2]

ALGERNON Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

JACK For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

ALGERNON My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything nowadays. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner.[3] Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you tonight at Willis's?

JACK I suppose so, if you want to.

ALGERNON Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[*Enter* LANE .]

LANE Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax.

[ALGERNON *goes forward to meet them. Enter* LADY BRACKNELL *and* GWENDOLEN.]

LADY BRACKNELL Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGERNON I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [*Sees* JACK *and bows to him with icy coldness.*]

ALGERNON [*To*gwendolen.] Dear me, you are smart![4]

GWENDOLEN I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr. Worthing?

JACK You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in many directions.

[GWENDOLEN *and* JACK *sit down together in the corner.*]

LADY BRACKNELL I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

ALGERNON Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [*Goes over to tea-table.*]

LADY BRACKNELL Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN Thanks, mamma,[5] I'm quite comfortable where I am.

ALGERNON [*Picking up empty plate in horror.*] Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

LANE [*Gravely.*] There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

ALGERNON No cucumbers!

LANE No, sir. Not even for ready money.[6]

ALGERNON That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE Thank you, sir.

ALGERNON I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

LADY BRACKNELL It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets[7] with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

ALGERNON I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

LADY BRACKNELL It certainly has changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [ALGERNON *crosses and hands tea.*] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you tonight, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

ALGERNON I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you tonight after all.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Frowning.*] I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs.[8] Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

ALGERNON It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram

to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [*Exchanges glances with* JACK.] They seem to think I should be with him.

LADY BRACKNELL It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

ALGERNON Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

LADY BRACKNELL Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season[9] when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

ALGERNON I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. Of course the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music, people don't talk. But I'll run over the program I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

LADY BRACKNELL Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following* ALGERNON .] I'm sure the program will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

GWENDOLEN Certainly, mamma.

[LADY BRACKNELL *and* ALGERNON *go into the music room*, GWENDOLEN *remains behind.*]

JACK Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

JACK I do mean something else.

GWENDOLEN I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence . . .

GWENDOLEN I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK [*Nervously.*] Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

GWENDOLEN Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [JACK *looks at her in amazement.*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told: and my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN Passionately!

JACK Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWENDOLEN My own Ernest!

JACK But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

GWENDOLEN But your name is Ernest.

JACK Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

GWENDOLEN [*Glibly.*] Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

JACK Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

GWENDOLEN It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

JACK Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

GWendolen Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations. . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

JACK Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWENDOLEN Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK [*Astounded.*] Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWENDOLEN I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK Well . . . may I propose to you now?

GWENDOLEN I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK You know what I have got to say to you.

GWENDOLEN Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes on his knees.*]

GWENDOLEN Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

GWENDOLEN Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girlfriends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[*Enter* LADY BRACKNELL .]

LADY BRACKNELL Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

GWENDOLEN Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him.*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

LADY BRACKNELL Finished what, may I ask?

GWENDOLEN I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

[*They rise together.*]

LADY BRACKNELL Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to someone, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

GWENDOLEN [*Reproachfully.*] Mamma!

LADY BRACKNELL In the carriage, Gwendolen! [GWENDOLEN *goes to the door. She and* JACK *blow kisses to each other behind* LADY BRACKNELL *'s back.* LADY BRACKNELL *looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.*] Gwendolen, the carriage!

GWENDOLEN Yes, mamma. [*Goes out, looking back at* JACK.]

LADY BRACKNELL [*Sitting down.*] You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

[*Looks in her pocket for notebook and pencil.*]

JACK Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Pencil and notebook in hand.*] I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK [*After some hesitation.*] I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.[1] What is your income?

JACK Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Makes a note in her book.*] In land, or in investments?

JACK In investments, chiefly.

LADY BRACKNELL That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death,[2] land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY BRACKNELL A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square,[3] but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY BRACKNELL Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY BRACKNELL Ah, nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK 149.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Shaking her head.*] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY BRACKNELL [*Sternly.*] Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.[4]

LADY BRACKNELL Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK I have lost both my parents.

LADY BRACKNELL Both? To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune—to lose *both* seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of aristocracy?

JACK I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that

my parents seem to have lost me. . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY BRACKNELL Found!

JACK The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY BRACKNELL Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK [*Gravely.*] In a handbag.

LADY BRACKNELL A handbag?

JACK [*Very seriously.*] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a handbag—a somewhat large, black leather handbag, with handles to it—an ordinary handbag, in fact.

LADY BRACKNELL In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary handbag?

JACK In the cloak room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.[5]

LADY BRACKNELL The cloak room at Victoria Station?

JACK Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY BRACKNELL The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate, bred in a handbag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the handbag was found, a cloak room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY BRACKNELL I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.[6]

JACK Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the handbag at any moment, it is in my dressing room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

[LADY BRACKNELL *sweeps out in majestic indignation.*]

JACK Good morning! [ALGERNON, *from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March*. JACK *looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door.*] For goodness' sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are!

[*The music stops, and* ALGERNON *Enters cheerily.*]

ALGERNON Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

JACK Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet.[7] As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon[8] . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

ALGERNON My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

JACK Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON It isn't!

JACK Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

ALGERNON That is exactly what things were originally made for.

JACK Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself . . . [*A pause.*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGERNON All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK Is that clever?

ALGERNON It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

JACK I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGERNON We have.

JACK I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

ALGERNON The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

JACK What fools!

ALGERNON By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK [*In a very patronizing manner.*] My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice sweet refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGERNON The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to[9] her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGERNON What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGERNON Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGERNON Of course it isn't!

JACK Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.[1]

ALGERNON But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes on long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGERNON I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

ALGERNON Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

ALGERNON Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

JACK [*Irritably.*] Oh! it always is nearly seven.

ALGERNON Well, I'm hungry.

JACK I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

ALGERNON What shall we do after dinner? Go to the theatre?

JACK Oh no! I loathe listening.

ALGERNON Well, let us go to the club?

JACK Oh, no! I hate talking.

ALGERNON Well, we might trot around to the Empire[2] at ten?

JACK Oh no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

ALGERNON Well, what shall we do?

JACK Nothing!

ALGERNON It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

[*Enter* LANE .]

LANE Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter* GWENDOLEN. LANE *goes out.*]

ALGERNON Gwendolen, upon my word!

GWENDOLEN Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

ALGERNON Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

GWENDOLEN Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that. [ALGERNON *retires to the fireplace.*]

JACK My own darling!

GWENDOLEN Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

JACK Dear Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

JACK The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[ALGERNON, *who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff.*[3] *Then picks up the Railway Guide.*]

GWENDOLEN There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That of course will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

JACK My own one!

GWENDOLEN How long do you remain in town?

JACK Till Monday.

GWENDOLEN Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

ALGERNON Thanks, I've turned round already.

GWENDOLEN You may also ring the bell.

JACK You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

GWENDOLEN Certainly.

JACK [*To* LANE, *who now enters.*] I will see Miss Fairfax out.

LANE Yes, sir. [JACK *and* GWENDOLEN *go off.*]

[LANE *presents several letters on a salver to* ALGERNON . *It is to be surmised that they are bills, as* ALGERNON *after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.*]

ALGERNON A glass of sherry, Lane.

LANE Yes, sir.

ALGERNON Tomorrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

LANE Yes, sir.

ALGERNON I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket,[4] and all the Bunbury suits . . .

LANE Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry.*]

ALGERNON I hope tomorrow will be a fine day, Lane.

LANE It never is, sir.

ALGERNON Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

LANE I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

[*Enter* JACK. LANE *goes off.*]

JACK There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life. [ALGERNON *is laughing immoderately.*] What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGERNON Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that is all.

JACK If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

ALGERNON I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

JACK Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

ALGERNON Nobody ever does.

[JACK *looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room.* ALGERNON *lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles.*]

ACT-DROP[5]

Endnotes

- Note 1: A highly fashionable location (at the time of the play) in the West End of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Bracknell is the name of a place in Berkshire where the mother of Lord Alfred Douglas had her summer home, which Wilde had visited.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cellar book, in which records were kept of wines.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: As we learn later, the estate is in Hertfordshire, a long distance from Shropshire. In the four-act version of the play, when this discrepancy is pointed out by Algernon, Jack replies: "My dear fellow! Surely you don't expect me to be accurate about geography? No gentleman is accurate about geography. Why, I got a prize for geography when I was at school. I can't be expected to know anything about it now."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Police headquarters in London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Short of money.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A fashionable resort town south of London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A former residence of the Duke of Albany (brother of George IV) near Piccadilly that had been converted to elegant apartments.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: That is, committed to attend her dinner party. "Willis's": a first-class restaurant in the vicinity of St. James's Street, in the center of London.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, required to escort, as a dinner partner.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Almost all the plays by the leading French playwrights of the second half of the 19th century (Alexandre Dumas *fils*, Émile Augier, and Victorien Sardou) focus on marital infidelity. As Brander Matthews, an American critic, noted in 1882, "the trio—husband, wife, and lover" had become "almost universal" in the French theater.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Insistently loud, like some of the music in the large-scale operas of Richard Wagner (1813–1883).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Elegantly fashionable.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pronounced with the accent on the second syllable.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Immediate payment in cash (rather than on credit).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Round griddle breads, served toasted.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Because otherwise she would have more women than men at the table.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The social season, extending from May through July, when people of fashion came into London from their country estates for entertainments and parties.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A fashionable residential area in the West End of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The wordplay is on "death duties"—that is, inheritance taxes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Another fashionable residential area in the West End.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A splinter group of members of the Liberal Party who in 1886, led by Joseph Chamberlain, joined forces with the Conservative Party (the "Tories") in opposing home rule for Ireland.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: In the four-act version of the play, Jack explains further what happened to Mr. Cardew: "He did not discover the error till he arrived at his own house. All subsequent efforts to ascertain who I was were unavailing."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the four-act version of the play, Jack later comments to Algernon about Lady Bracknell's demands about locating parents: "After all what does it matter whether a man has ever had a father and mother or not? Mothers, of course, are all right. They pay a chap's bills and don't bother him. But fathers bother a chap and never pay his bills. I don't know a single chap at the club who speaks to his father." And Algernon remarks: "Yes. Fathers are certainly not popular just at present. . . . They are like these chaps, the minor poets. They are never quoted."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Proverbial expression meaning reliably steady, like a tripod ("trivet") used to support pots over a fire.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In classical mythology a snake-haired female monster; at the sight of her, other creatures turned to stone.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Woo, court.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In the four-act version of the play, Jack explains further: "I'll wear mourning for him, of course; that would be only decent. I don't at all mind wearing mourning. I think that all black, with a good pearl pin, rather smart. Then I'll go down home and break the news to my household."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A music hall in Leicester Square that featured light entertainment.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Because shirt cuffs were heavily starched they provided a good surface on which to make notes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Coat worn when gentlemen assembled in a room designated for smoking. The object was to avoid contaminating their regular clothing with the smell of cigars or pipes, which was considered offensive to ladies. "Put up": pack up.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A special curtain lowered during theatrical performances to denote intervals between acts or scenes.Return to reference 5

Second Act

SCENE—*Garden at the Manor House. A flight of grey stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.*

[MISS PRISM[6] *discovered seated at the table*. CECILY *is at the back watering flowers.*]

MISS PRISM [*Calling.*] Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

CECILY [*Coming over very slowly.*] But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

MISS PRISM Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

CECILY Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometime he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

MISS PRISM [*Drawing herself up.*] Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

CECILY I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

MISS PRISM Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man his brother.

CECILY I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good

influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [CECILY *begins to write in her diary.*]

MISS PRISM [*Shaking her head.*] I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favor of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap.[7] You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

CECILY I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down I should probably forget all about them.

MISS PRISM Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

CECILY Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie[8] sends us.

MISS PRISM Do not speak slightingly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

CECILY Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

MISS PRISM The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

CECILY I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

MISS PRISM Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECILY [*Smiling.*] But I see dear Dr. Chasuble[9] coming up through the garden.

MISS PRISM [*Rising and advancing.*] Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[*Enter* CANON CHASUBLE.]

CHASUBLE And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECILY Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the Park, Dr. Chasuble.

MISS PRISM Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECILY No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

CHASUBLE I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECILY Oh, I am afraid I am.

CHASUBLE That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [MISS PRISM *glares.*] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

MISS PRISM We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

CHASUBLE Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man his brother seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria[1] and her pupil any longer.

MISS PRISM Egeria? My name is Laetitia, Doctor.

CHASUBLE [*Bowing.*] A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?[2]

MISS PRISM I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

CHASUBLE With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

MISS PRISM That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy[3] in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee[4] you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side. [*Goes down the garden with* DR. CHASUBLE.]

CECILY [*Picks up books and throws them back on table.*] Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[*Enter* MERRIMAN *with a card on a salver.*]

MERRIMAN Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

CECILY [*Takes the card and reads it.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany, W." Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

CECILY. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. [MERRIMAN *goes off.*]

CECILY I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else. [*Enter* ALGERNON, *very gay and debonair.*] He does!

ALGERNON [*Raising his hat.*] You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

CECILY You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [ALGERNON *is rather taken aback.*] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

ALGERNON Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECILY If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

ALGERNON [*Looks at her in amazement*] Oh! Of course I have been rather reckless.

CECILY I am glad to hear it.

ALGERNON In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

CECILY I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

ALGERNON It is much pleasanter being here with you.

CECILY I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

ALGERNON That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

CECILY Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

ALGERNON No: the appointment is in London.

CECILY Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

ALGERNON About my what?

CECILY Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

ALGERNON I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

CECILY I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.[5]

ALGERNON Australia? I'd sooner die.

CECILY Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

ALGERNON Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

CECILY Yes, but are you good enough for it?

ALGERNON I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

CECILY I'm afraid I've no time, this afternoon.

ALGERNON Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

CECILY It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

ALGERNON I will. I feel better already.

CECILY You are looking a little worse.

ALGERNON That is because I am hungry.

CECILY How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

ALGERNON Thank you. Might I have a buttonhole[6] first? I never have any appetite unless I have a buttonhole first.

CECILY A Maréchal Niel?[7] [*Picks up scissors.*]

ALGERNON No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECILY Why? [*Cuts a flower.*]

ALGERNON Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

CECILY I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGERNON Then Miss Prism is a shortsighted old lady. [CECILY *puts the rose in his buttonhole.*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECILY Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

ALGERNON They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECILY Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[*They pass into the house.* MISS PRISM *and* DR. CHASUBLE *return.*]

MISS PRISM You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

CHASUBLE [*With a scholar's shudder.*][8] Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church[9] was distinctly against matrimony.

MISS PRISM [*Sententiously.*] That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHASUBLE But is a man not equally attractive when married?

MISS PRISM No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHASUBLE And often, I've been told, not even to her.

MISS PRISM That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [DR. CHASUBLE *starts.*] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHASUBLE Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[*Enter* JACK *slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hat-band and black gloves.*]

MISS PRISM Mr. Worthing!

CHASUBLE Mr. Worthing?

MISS PRISM This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*Shakes* MISS PRISM *'s hand in a tragic manner.*] I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHASUBLE Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK My brother.

MISS PRISM More shameful debts and extravagance?

CHASUBLE Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*Shaking his head.*] Dead!

CHASUBLE Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK Quite dead.

MISS PRISM What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

CHASUBLE Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

CHASUBLE Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

JACK No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

CHASUBLE Was the cause of death mentioned?

JACK A severe chill, it seems.

MISS PRISM As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHASUBLE [*Raising his hand.*] Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to drafts. Will

the interment take place here?

JACK No. He seemed to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHASUBLE In Paris! [*Shakes his head.*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [JACK *presses his hand convulsively.*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [*All sigh.*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

JACK Ah! That reminds me, you mentioned christenings, I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [DR. CHASUBLE *looks astounded.*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

MISS PRISM It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

CHASUBLE But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK Oh yes.

MISS PRISM [*Bitterly.*] People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHASUBLE But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK I don't remember anything about it.

CHASUBLE But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

JACK I certainly intend to have. Of course I don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

CHASUBLE Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

JACK Immersion!

CHASUBLE You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK Oh, I might trot round about five if that would suit you.

CHASUBLE Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hardworking man.

JACK Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

CHASUBLE Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch.*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials are often blessings in disguise.

MISS PRISM This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[*Enter* CECILY *from the house.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have got on! Do go and change them.

MISS PRISM Cecily!

CHASUBLE My child! my child! [CECILY *goes towards* JACK; *he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.*]

CECILY What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had toothache, and I have got such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining room? Your brother!

JACK Who?

CECILY Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK What nonsense! I haven't got a brother!

CECILY Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [*Runs back into the house.*]

CHASUBLE These are very joyful tidings.

MISS PRISM After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK My brother is in the dining room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[*Enter* ALGERNON *and* CECILY *hand in hand. They come slowly up to* JACK.]

JACK Good heavens! [*Motions* ALGERNON *away.*]

ALGERNON Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future. [JACK *glares at him and does not take his hand.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECILY Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend Mr. Bunbury whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

JACK Oh! he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

CECILY Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

JACK Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

ALGERNON Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

CECILY Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.

JACK Never forgive me?

CECILY Never, never, never!

JACK Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [*Shakes hands with* ALGERNON *and glares.*]

CHASUBLE It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

MISS PRISM Cecily, you will come with us.

CECILY Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

CHASUBLE You have done a beautiful action today, dear child.

MISS PRISM We must not be premature in our judgments.

CECILY I feel very happy. [*They all go off.*]

JACK You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

JACK What?

MERRIMAN Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

JACK His luggage?

MERRIMAN Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon basket.[1]

ALGERNON I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK Merriman, order the dogcart[2] at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRIMAN Yes, sir. [*Goes back into the house.*]

ALGERNON What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

JACK Yes, you have.

ALGERNON I haven't heard anyone call me.

JACK Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

ALGERNON My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

JACK I can quite understand that.

ALGERNON Well, Cecily is a darling.

JACK You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGERNON Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

ALGERNON I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

JACK Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGERNON Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

JACK Well, at any rate, that is better than being always overdressed as you are.

ALGERNON If I am occasionally a little overdressed, I make up for it by being always immensely overeducated.

JACK Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you. [*Goes into the house.*]

ALGERNON I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything.

[*Enter* CECILY *at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.*]

But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

CECILY Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGERNON He's gone to order the dogcart for me.

CECILY Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGERNON He's going to send me away.

CECILY Then have we got to part?

ALGERNON I am afraid so. It's very painful parting.

CECILY It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGERNON Thank you.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN The dogcart is at the door, sir. [ALGERNON *looks appealingly at* CECILY.]

CECILY It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. [*Exit* MERRIMAN.]

ALGERNON I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECILY I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me I will copy your remarks into my diary. [*Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.*]

ALGERNON Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

CECILY Oh no. [*Puts her hand over it.*] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached "absolute perfection." You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

ALGERNON [*Somewhat taken aback.*] Ahem! Ahem!

CECILY Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough. [*Writes as* ALGERNON *speaks.*]

ALGERNON [*Speaking very rapidly.*] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

CECILY I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

ALGERNON Cecily!

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN The dogcart is waiting, sir.

ALGERNON Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRIMAN [*Looks at* cecily, *who makes no sign.*] Yes, sir.

[MERRIMAN *retires.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

ALGERNON Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECILY You silly boy! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGERNON For the last three months?

CECILY Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGERNON But how did we become engaged?

CECILY Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGERNON Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECILY On the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGERNON Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [*Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.*]

ALGERNON My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

CECILY You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I always wrote three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGERNON Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

CECILY Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces box.*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

ALGERNON But was our engagement ever broken off?

CECILY Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary.*] "Today I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."

ALGERNON But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

CECILY It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

ALGERNON [*Crossing to her, and kneeling.*] What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

CECILY You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

ALGERNON Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECILY I am so glad.

ALGERNON You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECILY I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGERNON Yes, of course. [*Nervously.*]

CECILY You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest. [ALGERNON *rises*, CECILY *also.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGERNON But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECILY But what name?

ALGERNON Oh, any name you like—Algernon—for instance . . .

CECILY But I don't like the name of Algernon.

ALGERNON Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . . [*Moving to her.*] . . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECILY [*Rising.*] I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGERNON Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up hat.*] Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the Church?

CECILY Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

ALGERNON I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

CECILY Oh!

ALGERNON I shan't be away more than half an hour.

CECILY Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you today for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

ALGERNON I'll be back in no time. [*Kisses her and rushes down the garden.*]

CECILY What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECILY Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

MERRIMAN Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECILY Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRIMAN Yes, Miss. [*Goes out.*]

CECILY Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter* GWENDOLEN.] [*Exit* MERRIMAN.]

CECILY [*Advancing to meet her.*] Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWENDOLEN Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands.*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

CECILY How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

GWENDOLEN [*Still standing up.*] I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECILY With pleasure!

GWENDOLEN And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

CECILY If you wish.

GWENDOLEN Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

CECILY I hope so. [*A pause. They both sit down together.*]

GWENDOLEN Perhaps this might be a favourable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

CECILY I don't think so.

GWENDOLEN Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely shortsighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECILY Oh! not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

GWENDOLEN [*After examining*cecily *carefully through a lorgnette.*] You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECILY Oh no! I live here.

GWENDOLEN [*Severely.*] Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

CECILY Oh no! I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

GWENDOLEN Indeed?

CECILY My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

GWENDOLEN Your guardian?

CECILY Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

GWENDOLEN Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her.*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly——

CECILY Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

GWENDOLEN Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as

deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

CECILY I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

GWENDOLEN Yes.

CECILY Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

GWENDOLEN [*Sitting down again.*] Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

CECILY I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

GWENDOLEN Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECILY Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be his.

GWENDOLEN [*Inquiringly.*] I beg your pardon?

CECILY [*Rather shy and confidingly.*] Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLEN [*Quite politely, rising.*] My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post*[3] on Saturday at the latest.

CECILY [*Very politely, rising*.] I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary.*]

GWENDOLEN [*Examines diary through her lorgnette carefully.*] It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday

afternoon at 5:30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own.*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid *I* have the prior claim.

CECILY It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWENDOLEN [*Meditatively.*] If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECILY [*Thoughtfully and sadly.*] Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWENDOLEN Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECILY Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN [*Satirically.*] I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*Enter* MERRIMAN, *followed by the footman. He carries a salver, tablecloth, and plate stand*. CECILY *is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.*]

MERRIMAN Shall I lay tea here as usual, Miss?

CECILY [*Sternly, in a calm voice.*] Yes, as usual.

[MERRIMAN *begins to clear table and lay cloth. A long pause.* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *glare at each other.*]

GWENDOLEN Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

CECILY Oh! yes! a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

GWENDOLEN Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

CECILY [*Sweetly.*] I suppose that is why you live in town?

[GWENDOLEN *bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.*]

GWENDOLEN [*Looking round.*] Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

CECILY So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

CECILY Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

GWENDOLEN Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

CECILY Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present.[4] It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN [*With elaborate politeness.*] Thank you. [*Aside.*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECILY [*Sweetly.*] Sugar?

GWENDOLEN [*Superciliously.*] No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [CECILY *looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.*]

CECILY [*Severely.*] Cake or bread and butter?

GWENDOLEN [*In a bored manner.*] Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

CECILY [*Cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray.*] Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[MERRIMAN *does so, and goes out with footman.* GWENDOLEN *drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.*]

GWENDOLEN You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

CECILY [*Rising.*] To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

GWENDOLEN From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

CECILY It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighborhood.

[*Enter* JACK.]

GWENDOLEN [*Catching sight of him.*] Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK Gwendolen! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

GWENDOLEN [*Drawing hack.*] A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to* CECILY.]

JACK [*Laughing.*] To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

GWENDOLEN Thank you. You may! [*Offers her cheek.*]

CECILY [*Very sweetly.*] I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present round your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

GWENDOLEN I beg your pardon?

CECILY This is Uncle Jack.

GWENDOLEN [*Receding.*] Jack! Oh!

[*Enter* ALGERNON.]

CECILY Here is Ernest.

ALGERNON [*Goes straight over to*cecily *without noticing anyone else.*] My own love! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

CECILY [*Drawing back.*] A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGERNON [*Looking round.*] To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

CECILY Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

ALGERNON [*Laughing.*] Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

CECILY Thank you. [*Presenting her cheek to be kissed.*] You may. [ALGERNON *kisses her.*]

GWENDOLEN I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

CECILY [*Breaking away from* ALGERNON .] Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! [*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.*]

CECILY Are you called Algernon?

ALGERNON I cannot deny it.

CECILY Oh!

GWENDOLEN Is your name really John?

JACK [*Standing rather proudly.*] I could deny it if I liked, I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECILY [*To*gwendolen.] A gross deception has been practiced on both of us.

GWENDOLEN My poor wounded Cecily!

CECILY My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN [*Slowly and seriously.*] You will call me sister, will you not? [*They embrace*. JACK *and* ALGERNON *groan and walk up and down.*]

CECILY [*Rather brightly.*] There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

GWENDOLEN An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK [*Slowly and hesitatingly.*] Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind.

However I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECILY [*Surprised.*] No brother at all?

JACK [*Cheerily.*] None!

GWENDOLEN [*Severely.*] Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK [*Pleasantly.*] Never. Not even of any kind.

GWENDOLEN I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

CECILY It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

GWENDOLEN Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

CECILY No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[*They retire into the house with scornful looks.*]

JACK This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

ALGERNON Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

JACK Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

ALGERNON That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

JACK Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

ALGERNON Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

JACK Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too.

ALGERNON Your brother is a little off-colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing either.

JACK As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

ALGERNON I can see no possible defence at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

JACK I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

ALGERNON Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

JACK There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

ALGERNON I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

JACK Well, that is no business of yours.

ALGERNON If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins.*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stockbrokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGERNON When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising.*]

JACK [*Rising.*] Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from* ALGERNON.]

ALGERNON [*Offering tea cake.*] I wish you would have tea cake instead. I don't like tea cake.

JACK Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGERNON But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGERNON That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin dish from* JACK.]

JACK Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

ALGERNON You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5:30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

ALGERNON Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

JACK Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGERNON Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

JACK Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

ALGERNON It usen't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

JACK [*Picking up the muffin dish.*] Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

ALGERNON Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*Takes them.*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK But I hate tea cake.

ALGERNON Why on earth then do you allow tea cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

JACK Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go!

ALGERNON I haven't quite finished my tea yet! and there is still one muffin left. [*Jack groans, and sinks into a chair.* ALGERNON *still continues eating.*]

ACT-DROP

Endnotes

- Note 6: The name recalls Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), in which Mrs. General, a prim and proper teacher of manners for young ladies, trains them to repeat "prunes and prism" aloud because this exercise "gives a pretty form to the lips."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compare with Galatians 6:7: "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Mudie's Circulating Library, which lent copies of new three-volume novels (usually sentimental tales) to subscribers for a moderate fee. Mudie's power in controlling the book market, especially for novels, was on the wane by 1895.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A chasuble is an ornate garment worn by a priest.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In Roman legend a nymph who gave counsel to the second king of Rome. Her name was therefore also used as an

epithet for a woman who provides guidance.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Evening church services.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, book about economics.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The basic unit of currency in India. British civil servants who worked in India were paid in rupees and would suffer from its fall in value.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The British had originally viewed Australia as a place to which they banished their criminals. By this time, however, it was perceived in some quarters as a place, like Canada, to which families might send harmless but useless members, who would be paid an allowance to remain abroad.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, a flower to wear in the buttonhole of his coat lapel.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A chrome-yellow variety of rose named after Adolphe Niel (1802–1869), one of the generals of Napoleon III.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: He shudders because instead of using the correct word for woman hater, *misogynist*, she has coined her own term, one that is etymologically nonsensical.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The early Christian Church, of the 1st to 4th centuries.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  According to *Cassell's Domestic Dictionary* (1877–79), "a convenient little receptacle in which gentlemen who are going out shooting for the day, or artists who wish to sketch, can carry their luncheon with them." "Portmanteaus": large leather suitcases. A "dressing case" (also according to *Cassell's*) was "ordinarily made of rosewood, mahogany or coromandel wood." It was supposed to include "scent bottles, jars for pomade and tooth-powders, hair brushes and combs, shaving, nail and tooth brushes, razors and strop, nail scissors, buttonhook, tweezer, nail file and penknife" [noted by Russell Jackson].
  Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A horse-drawn cart with seats, originally designed to carry hunters and their hunting dogs.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A popular journal featuring society gossip and also announcements of engagements and marriages.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From the 1870s on, landowners (including aristocrats) had been suffering severe losses because of adverse economic conditions.Return to reference 4

Third Act

SCENE—*Morning room*[5] *at the Manor House.*

[GWENDOLEN *and* CECILY *are at the window, looking out into the garden.*]

GWENDOLEN The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECILY They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

GWENDOLEN [*After a pause.*] They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

CECILY But I haven't got a cough.

GWENDOLEN They're looking at us. What effrontery!

CECILY They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

GWENDOLEN Let us preserve a dignified silence.

CECILY Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

[*Enter* JACK *followed by* ALGERNON. *They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British Opera.*[6]]

GWENDOLEN This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

CECILY A most distasteful one.

GWENDOLEN But we will not be the first to speak.

CECILY Certainly not.

GWENDOLEN Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECILY Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

ALGERNON In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

CECILY [*To* GWENDOLEN.] That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

GWENDOLEN Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

CECILY I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

GWENDOLEN True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

JACK Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism.[7] [*Moving to* CECILY.] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

CECILY I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

GWENDOLEN Then you think we should forgive them?

CECILY Yes. I mean no.

GWENDOLEN True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

CECILY Could we not both speak at the same time?

GWENDOLEN An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

CECILY Certainly. [GWENDOLEN *beats time with uplifted finger.*]

GWENDOLEN AND CECILY [*Speaking together.*] Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

JACK AND ALGERNON [*Speaking together.*] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

GWENDOLEN [*To* JACK.] For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

JACK I am.

CECILY [*To* ALGERNON.] To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

ALGERNON I am!

GWENDOLEN How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

JACK We are. [*Clasps hands with* ALGERNON.]

CECILY They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

GWENDOLEN [*To* JACK.] Darling!

ALGERNON [*To* CECILY.] Darling. [*They fall into each other's arms.*]

[*Enter* MERRIMAN. *When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation.*]

MERRIMAN Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

JACK Good heavens!

[*Enter* LADY BRACKNELL. *The couples separate in alarm. Exit* MERRIMAN.]

LADY BRACKNELL Gwendolen! What does this mean?

GWENDOLEN Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, mamma.

LADY BRACKNELL Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to* JACK.] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train.[8] Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to undeceive him. Indeed I have never undeceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

JACK I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

LADY BRACKNELL You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

ALGERNON Yes, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

ALGERNON [*Stammering.*] Oh! No! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

LADY BRACKNELL Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

ALGERNON [*Airily.*] Oh! I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL What did he die of?

ALGERNON Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

LADY BRACKNELL Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

ALGERNON My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean —so Bunbury died.

LADY BRACKNELL He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury, may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

JACK That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward.

[LADY BRACKNELL *bows coldly to* CECILY.]

ALGERNON I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL I beg your pardon?

CECILY Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*With a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down.*] I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary inquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or

persons whose origin was a Terminus.[9] [JACK *looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself.*]

JACK [*In a clear, cold voice.*] Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporran, Fifeshire, N.B.[1]

LADY BRACKNELL That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

JACK I have carefully preserved the Court Guides[2] of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Grimly.*] I have known strange errors in that publication.

JACK Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

LADY BRACKNELL Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

JACK [*Very irritably.*] How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

LADY BRACKNELL Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favor of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch.*] Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

JACK Oh! about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds.[3] That is all. Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Sitting down again.*] A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look

at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To* CECILY.] Come over here, dear. [CECILY *goes across.*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

JACK [*Aside.*] And after six months nobody knew her.[4]

LADY BRACKNELL [*Glares at* JACK *for a few moments. Then bends, with a practiced smile, to* CECILY.] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [CECILY *turns completely round.*] No, the side view is what I want. [CECILY *presents her profile.*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

ALGERNON Yes, Aunt Augusta!

LADY BRACKNELL There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

ALGERNON Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

LADY BRACKNELL Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To* CECILY.] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

ALGERNON Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL Cecily, you may kiss me!

CECILY [*Kisses her.*] Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

CECILY Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

ALGERNON Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

CECILY Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

JACK I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

LADY BRACKNELL Upon what grounds may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

JACK It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful. [ALGERNON *and* CECILY *look at him in indignant amazement.*]

LADY BRACKNELL Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.[5]

JACK I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89;[6] a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first

that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

JACK That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

LADY BRACKNELL [*To* CECILY.] Come here, sweet child, [CECILY *goes over.*] How old are you, dear?

CECILY Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

LADY BRACKNELL You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In a meditative manner.*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

JACK Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

LADY BRACKNELL That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

CECILY Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

ALGERNON Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

CECILY Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like

punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

ALGERNON Then what is to be done, Cecily?

CECILY I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

LADY BRACKNELL My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

JACK But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Rising and drawing herself up.*] You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

JACK Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

LADY BRACKNELL This is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*Pulls out her watch.*] Come, dear; [GWENDOLEN *rises.*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*Enter* DR. CHASUBLE.]

CHASUBLE Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

LADY BRACKNELL The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature!

CHASUBLE [*Looking rather puzzled, and pointing to* JACK *and* ALGERNON.] Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

LADY BRACKNELL At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptized. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

CHASUBLE Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

JACK I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

CHASUBLE I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists,[7] views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener[8] that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

LADY BRACKNELL [*Starting.*] Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

CHASUBLE Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

LADY BRACKNELL Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

CHASUBLE [*Somewhat indignantly.*] She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

LADY BRACKNELL It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHASUBLE [*Severely.*] I am a celibate, madam.

JACK [*Interposing.*] Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

LADY BRACKNELL In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

CHASUBLE [*Looking off.*] She approaches; she is nigh.

[*Enter* MISS PRISM *hurriedly.*]

MISS PRISM I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three quarters. [*Catches sight of* LADY BRACKNELL *who has fixed her with a stony glare*. MISS PRISM *grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.*]

LADY BRACKNELL [*In a severe, judicial voice.*] Prism! [MISS PRISM *bows her head in shame.*] Come here, Prism! [MISS PRISM *approaches in a humble manner.*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation.* THE CANON *starts back in horror.* ALGERNON *and* JACK

pretend to be anxious to shield CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater.[9] It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [MISS PRISM *starts in involuntary indignation.*] But the baby was not there! [*Everyone looks at* MISS PRISM.] Prism! Where is that baby? [*A pause.*]

MISS PRISM Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious handbag, in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the handbag.

JACK [*Who has been listening attentively.*] But where did you deposit the handbag?

MISS PRISM Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

JACK Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the handbag that contained that infant.

MISS PRISM I left it in the cloak room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

JACK What railway station?

MISS PRISM [*Quite crushed.*] Victoria. The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair.*]

JACK I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

GWENDOLEN If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit* JACK *in great excitement.*]

CHASUBLE What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

LADY BRACKNELL I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing.

[*Noises heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everyone looks up.*]

CECILY Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

CHASUBLE Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

LADY BRACKNELL This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

CHASUBLE [*Looking up.*] It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled.*]

LADY BRACKNELL I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

GWENDOLEN This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

[*Enter* JACK *with a handbag of black leather in his hand.*]

JACK [*Rushing over to* MISS PRISM.] Is this the handbag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

MISS PRISM [*Calmly.*] It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage,[1] an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

JACK [*In a pathetic voice.*] Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this handbag. I was the baby you placed in it.

MISS PRISM [*Amazed.*] You!

JACK [*Embracing her.*] Yes . . . mother!

MISS PRISM [*Recoiling in indignant astonishment*] Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

JACK Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone[2] against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men, and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again.*]

MISS PRISM [*Still more indignant.*] Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to* LADY BRACKNELL.] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

JACK [*After a pause.*] Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

LADY BRACKNELL I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

JACK Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of* ALGERNON.] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

ALGERNON Well, not till today, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands.*]

GWENDOLEN [*To* JACK.] My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

JACK Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

GWENDOLEN I never change, except in my affections.

CECILY What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

JACK Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the handbag, had I been christened already?

LADY BRACKNELL Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

JACK Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

LADY BRACKNELL Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

JACK [*Irritably.*] Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

LADY BRACKNELL [*Meditatively.*] I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

JACK Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

ALGERNON My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

JACK His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

LADY BRACKNELL The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

JACK The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out.*] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm,[3] Magley, what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly.*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

LADY BRACKNELL Yes, I remember now that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

GWENDOLEN Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWENDOLEN I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

JACK My own one!

CHASUBLE [*To* MISS PRISM.] Laetitia! [*Embraces her.*]

MISS PRISM [*Enthusiastically.*] Frederick! At last!

ALGERNON Cecily! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

JACK Gwendolen! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

LADY BRACKNELL My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

CURTAIN

performed 1895 **Endnotes** 1899

- Note 5: A relatively informally furnished room for receiving visitors making morning calls (usually close friends of the host or hostess). Afternoon visitors, on the other hand, would be received in the drawing room, a much more formal and elegant setting.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Probably a reference to one of the operas of W. S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Many 19th-century German scholars (such as D. F. Strauss) were notorious among the British for being skeptical in their analyses of religious texts.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Freight train.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Station at the end of a railway line.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Presumably north Britain, that is, Scotland.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Directories commonly used in the era.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Interest-bearing government bonds.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, she became socially unacceptable because of her scandalous behavior.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, he had been a student at Oxford (in medieval Latin, *Oxonia*).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An outstanding brand and year of dry champagne.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A radical Protestant sect of the 17th century, whose repudiation of infant baptism was regarded as heretical by Anglicans.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A person employed at church services to usher worshippers to their pews and open the doors for them.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A once fashionable locality in the West End near Kensington Gardens.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A nonalcoholic drink. The temperance movement encouraged abstinence from alcohol.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: When the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus an adulterous woman with the reminder that the law of Moses required her to be stoned, he answered: “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A play on the name of Max Beerbohm (1872–1956), English essayist, caricaturist, and parodist.Return to reference 3

From De Profundis[1]

And the end of it all is that I have got to forgive you. I must do so. I don't write this letter to put bitterness into your heart, but to pluck it out of mine. For my own sake I must forgive you. One cannot always keep an adder in one's breast to feed on one, nor rise up every night to sow thorns in the garden of one's soul. It will not be difficult at all for me to do so, if you help me a little. Whatever you did to me in old days I always readily forgave. It did you no good then. Only one whose life is without stain of any kind can forgive sins. But now when I sit in humiliation and disgrace it is different. My forgiveness should mean a great deal to you now. Some day you will realise it. Whether you do so early or late, soon or not at all, my way is clear before me. I cannot allow you to go through life bearing in your heart the burden of having ruined a man like me. The thought might make you callously indifferent, or morbidly sad. I must take the burden from you and put it on my own shoulders.

I must say to myself that neither you nor your father, multiplied a thousand times over, could possibly have ruined a man like me: that I ruined myself: and that nobody, great or small, can be ruined except by his own hand. I am quite ready to do so. I am trying to do so, though you may not think it at the present moment. If I have brought this pitiless indictment against you, think what an indictment I bring without pity against myself. Terrible as what you did to me was, what I did to myself was far more terrible still.

I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age. I had realised this for myself at the very dawn of my manhood, and had forced my age to realise it afterwards. Few men hold such a position in their own lifetime and have it so acknowledged. It is usually discerned, if discerned at all, by the historian, or the critic, long after both the man and his age have passed away. With me it was different. I felt it myself, and made

others feel it. Byron[2] was a symbolic figure, but his relations were to the passion of his age and its weariness of passion. Mine were to something more noble, more permanent, of more vital issue, of larger scope.

The gods had given me almost everything. I had genius, a distinguished name, high social position, brilliancy, intellectual daring: I made art a philosophy, and philosophy an art: I altered the minds of men and the colours of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder: I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the sonnet, at the same time that I widened its range and enriched its characterization: drama, novel, poem in rhyme, poem in prose, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty: to truth itself I gave what is false no less than what is true as its rightful province, and showed that the false and the true are merely forms of intellectual existence. I treated Art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction: I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me: I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.

Along with these things, I had things that were different. I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a *flâneur*,[3] a dandy, a man of fashion. I surrounded myself with the smaller natures and the meaner[4] minds. I became the spendthrift of my own genius, and to waste an eternal youth gave me a curious joy. Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in the search for new sensations. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. Desire, at the end, was a malady, or a madness, or both. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber one has some day to cry aloud on the housetops. I ceased to be Lord over myself. I was no longer the Captain of my Soul,[5] and did not know

it. I allowed you to dominate me, and your father to frighten me. I ended in horrible disgrace. There is only one thing for me now, absolute Humility: just as there is only one thing for you, absolute Humility also. You had better come down into the dust and learn it beside me.

I have lain in prison for nearly two years. Out of my nature has come wild despair; an abandonment to grief that was piteous even to look at: terrible and impotent rage: bitterness and scorn: anguish that wept aloud: misery that could find no voice: sorrow that was dumb. I have passed through every possible mood of suffering. Better than Wordsworth himself I know what Wordsworth meant when he said:

> Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark
> And has the nature of Infinity.[6]

But while there were times when I rejoiced in the idea that my sufferings were to be endless, I could not bear them to be without meaning. Now I find hidden away in my nature something that tells me that nothing in the whole world is meaningless, and suffering least of all. That something hidden away in my nature, like a treasure in a field, is Humility.

It is the last thing left in me, and the best: the ultimate discovery at which I have arrived: the starting-point for a fresh development. It has come to me right out of myself, so I know that it has come at the proper time. It could not have come before, nor later. Had anyone told me of it, I would have rejected it. Had it been brought to me, I would have refused it. As I found it, I want to keep it. I must do so. It is the one thing that has in it the elements of life, of a new life, a *Vita Nuova*[7] for me.

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Morality does not help me. I am a born antinomian.[8] I am one of those who are made for exceptions, not for laws. But while I see

that there is nothing wrong in what one does, I see that there is something wrong in what one becomes. It is well to have learned that.

Religion does not help me. The faith that others give to what is unseen, I give to what one can touch, and look at. My Gods dwell in temples made with hands, and within the circle of actual experience is my creed made perfect and complete: too complete it may be, for like many or all of those who have placed their Heaven in this earth, I have found in it not merely the beauty of Heaven, but the horror of Hell also. When I think about Religion at all, I feel as if I would like to found an order for those who cannot believe: the Confraternity of the Fatherless one might call it, where on an altar, on which no taper burned, a priest, in whose heart peace had no dwelling, might celebrate with unblessed bread and a chalice empty of wine. Everything to be true must become a religion. And agnosticism should have its ritual no less than faith. It has sown its martyrs, it should reap its saints, and praise God daily for having hidden Himself from man. But whether it be faith or agnosticism, it must be nothing external to me. Its symbols must be of my own creating. Only that is spiritual which makes its own form. If I may not find its secret within myself, I shall never find it. If I have not got it already, it will never come to me.

Reason does not help me. It tells me that the laws under which I am convicted are wrong and unjust laws, and the system under which I have suffered a wrong and unjust system. But, somehow, I have got to make both of these things just and right to me. And exactly as in Art one is only concerned with what a particular thing is at a particular moment to oneself, so it is also in the ethical evolution of one's character. I have got to make everything that has happened to me good for me. The plank-bed, the loathsome food, the hard ropes shredded into oakum till one's fingertips grow dull with pain, the menial offices[9] with which each day begins and finishes, the harsh orders that routine seems to necessitate, the dreadful dress that makes sorrow grotesque to look at, the silence, the solitude, the shame—each and all of these things I have to transform into a

spiritual experience. There is not a single degradation of the body which I must not try and make into a spiritualizing of the soul.

I want to get to the point when I shall be able to say, quite simply and without affectation, that the two great turning-points of my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison. I will not say that it is the best thing that could have happened to me, for that phrase would savour of too great bitterness towards myself. I would sooner say, or hear it said of me, that I was so typical a child of my age that in my perversity,[1] and for that perversity's sake, I turned the good things of my life to evil, and the evil things of my life to good. What is said, however, by myself or by others matters little. The important thing, the thing that lies before me, the thing that I have to do, or be for the brief remainder of my days one maimed, marred, and incomplete, is to absorb into my nature all that has been done to me, to make it part of me, to accept it without complaint, fear, or reluctance. The supreme vice is shallowness. Whatever is realized is right.

1897 1962

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Out of the depths (Latin); Psalms 130:1: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." While in prison in Reading Gaol, Wilde was allowed a pen and paper only to write letters. Given one sheet of paper at a time, which was taken away after it was filled, Wilde wrote this work as a letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, whose nickname was Bosie. Wilde titled it *Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis (Letter: In Prison and in Chains).* He was given the manuscript on his release and turned it over to a friend, Robert Ross, who gave it its current title and published it in an abridged version in 1905, after Wilde's death. After Douglas's death in 1945, a fuller text was published by Wilde's son, Vyvyan Holland; but only in 1962, when scholars could consult the original manuscript, did a complete version appear.
  Return to reference 1

- Note 2: George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824), Romantic poet.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Idle stroller (French).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: More shallow or more trivial.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: See W. E. Henley's "Invictus" (1888), line 16.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From *The Borderers* (written 1796–97), lines 1543–44.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: New life (Italian); here Dante's earliest work (1292–94) about his love for Beatrice.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Rejecter of moral law.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Duties. "Oakum": loose fiber from old hemp ropes, which prisoners were often made to shred.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, obstinate desire to behave unconventionally.Return to reference 1

OLIVE SCHREINER
1855–1920

Novelist, feminist, pacifist, South African, "New Woman": it is difficult to know which of these terms should come first in describing Olive Schreiner. The daughter of a German missionary and his British wife, Schreiner was born in the British Cape Colony in what is now South Africa. She received no formal education but was an avid reader and began writing as a teenager. Schreiner came to England in 1881 in the hope of studying medicine and becoming a doctor. Instead, she published her best-known work, *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), and was quickly hailed as one of the foremost voices of the "New Woman" movement. This movement sought expanded educational and professional opportunities for women and condemned the sexual double standard that punished women harshly for transgressions largely accepted when committed by men. While in London, Schreiner developed close relationships with intellectuals and reformers such as Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, Karl Pearson, and Eleanor Marx, and became an active member of the Men and Women's Club, dedicated to the open discussion of gender and sex.

During her time in England, Schreiner wrote a series of allegories collected as *Dreams* (1890) and *Dream Life and Real Life* (1893). In 1889 she returned to South Africa where she focused on her country's political problems. She wrote a series of articles that were later collected as *Thoughts on South Africa* (1923), one portion of

which is reproduced here. Schreiner's opposition to the expansionist violence of Cape Colony's prime minister, Cecil Rhodes, was expressed in her satirical novel, *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland* (1897). Schreiner became a member of a small interracial band of South African anti-imperialists, one of whom eventually became her husband: Samuel Cronwright.

In *Women and Labour* (1911), Schreiner offers a scathing attack on the outdated notion that marriage and child-rearing are the only acceptable vocations for middle- and upper-class women. Pointing to the changed conditions that made child-bearing both less necessary (because of decreased infant mortality) and more costly (because industrialization requires fewer laborers), Schreiner writes that "We [women] do not ask that the wheels of time should reverse themselves. . . . We demand that, in the strange new world that is arising alike upon the man and the woman . . . we also shall have our share of honoured and socially useful human toil, our full half of the labour of the Children of Woman. We demand nothing more than this, and we will take nothing less. *This is our* 'Woman's Right!' "

With the exception of *Woman and Labour*, South Africa and South African politics provide an important context for most of Schreiner's writings. The Cape Colony officially became a British colony in 1814, and the British government actively encouraged British citizens to emigrate and become farmers. This move partially displaced Dutch farmers (Boers) in the area. It also exacerbated long-standing tensions between the Boers, the Xhosa, and the Zulu. The details of these conflicts are complex, but for the purposes of understanding Schreiner's work, what is most important to know is the cultural and racial diversity of the Cape Colony in the nineteenth century, and the way it was bound up with histories of violence and oppression. Schreiner herself held many racist views, but these opinions did not prevent her from deploring the divisions she saw weakening her country.

From Stray Thoughts on South Africa

It may be said that there are no states in South Africa whose boundaries represent deep-lying racial conditions, but rather mere fiscal and parochial divisions. All the conditions on which unity of national life depends cross and re-cross their boundaries in every direction. Race, language, religion, kinship, all militate against homogeneity. But not yet have we grasped the full complexity and difficulty of our South African question. Not only do the South Africans exist everywhere in superimposed layers of differing races, not only are our political states composed of a mingling of all our peoples, but in our households, our families, and very persons we are blended. * * * The peoples of South Africa resemble the ingredients of a pudding when they are in the process of being stirred together in a basin: plums, eggs, wine, flour, and water. To hope to re-sort them is vain; for good or for evil, the mixture is made; they have so permeated each other's substance that again to re-sort them is impossible, however much we may wish it. We can only go on further.

Looking, then, at South Africa as a whole, the thought forces itself on us: "Are the South Africans fated forever to remain an inchoate, shapeless mass of human particles, politically split up into artificial states, severed from each other by lines of racial scorn and opposition, and devoid of that national existence which is the matrix in which alone the full development of the individual takes place?" We believe that no man can impartially study the social and political condition of the South Africa of to-day without coming to the conclusion that there is one, and only one, form of healthful national organization open to us. Across the face of the whole map of South Africa there is no line which can be drawn which would stand for a healthy, natural line of division; it would be a line dividing homogeneous substances, not uniting them. There is one form, and one only, of crystallization possible to us—we must form one large,

united whole. This is at once simpler and easier than would be the organization of any division alone; and this alone can give us the power of dealing with our subtler internal difficulties. South African unity is not the dream of the visionary and the enthusiast; it is not even like that splendid vision of the first Napoleon[1] of a unified Europe, which failed because dreamed five hundred years before its time; it is a condition the necessity for which is daily and hourly forced upon us by the practical needs of life; it is the one possible course which offers any solution of our social and political difficulties; it is the one course open to us. It is for this unity that all great men born in South Africa will be compelled to labour during the next sixty years; it must precede the production of anything great and beautiful by our people as a whole. Neither art, nor science, nor literature, nor state-craft will flourish among us as long as we remain in our inchoate, divided form.

For the moment the most pressing and absorbing aspect of this union is the combination of our artificial and jarring political states into a harmonious political whole. It is a change many men now living will probably see accomplished; and so ripe is the time for it, and so obvious the necessity for it, that it may be with us before the decade is out. No man can study closely the conditions of the South Africa of to-day and the forces that are at work upon it without the conviction being forced upon him that within the next thirty years at least there will exist in South Africa a great central government, the embodiment of the united political aspirations and desires of the people; that our State divisions will be relegated to the performance of their normal and valuable function of internal sub-government.

But there is another aspect of the question of union more subtle and more vital, though for the moment less obtrusive. A central government, political unity, customs union, a common treasury, are but the shell in which the vital unity must be contained if South Africa is ever to become not simply a large, but a great and progressive nation.

The question which surpasses all others in importance to us, is, "Can we make of our opposed and conflicting races a socially

harmonious and united whole?" If we cannot so organize our conflicting elements, that should a foreign foe land on South African shores, and six men were left to defend them—two of English, two of Dutch, and two of Native extraction—if those six men would not stand shoulder to shoulder fighting for their land—then, however large, rich, populous South Africa may become, we shall never be able to look free, united peoples in the face.

In past ages empires have existed which were founded on racial division, hatred, and contention. Of this type were all the great States of antiquity—Greece, Assyria, Rome, Egypt, and many of the more modern world. They have all passed; but for a time they were all able to maintain themselves against States of like construction with themselves, only falling when they came into contact with freer or more united peoples.

In the twentieth century it will not be possible for a State constructed after the model of the ancient world to attain to greatness even for a time. In an age in which the nations of the civilised world are, with Titanic efforts, shaping rafts with which to shoot those rapids[2] down which race after race, and civilisation after civilisation have disappeared; and will shoot them and appear below them free and united peoples; if the South Africa of the future is to remain eaten internally by race hatreds, a film of culture and intelligence spread over seething masses of ignorance and brutality, inter-support and union being wholly lacking; then, though it may be our misfortune rather than our crime, we shall have to take the back place among the nations. In art, in science, in material inventions, in the discovery of larger and more satisfactory modes of conducting human life, they will surpass us.

The problem of South Africa, "How shall these two modes of union be attained?" is a problem so complex, so vast, so beset with difficulties, that it may be said that no European nation has during the last eight hundred years had to face anything approaching it in complexity and difficulty. To find any analogy to it, we must go back as far as the England of Alfred, when divided Saxons and invading Danes[3] were the elements out of which organic unity had to be

constructed. But there is an element in our problem which no European nation has ever had to face, and which no migratory part of a European race has ever had to deal with in exactly the form in which it meets us. Our race question is complicated by a question of colour, which has to be faced in an age which does not allow of the old methods in dealing with alien and inferior peoples. In South Africa the nineteenth century is brought face to face with a pre-historic world.

To understand the difficulty of our problem, to grasp the nature of the obstructions which lie in our path to union, our crying need for it, and the ground we have for hope, it will be well to examine more closely, as I propose to do in my next article, the different races of which we are composed, and finally to glance briefly at some of the conditions and individuals that are at the present moment influencing the future of South Africa.

A Returned South African.

1891

Endnotes

- Note 1: Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), French military and political leader, emperor of the French Empire from 1804 to 1814 and again in 1815.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, to navigate in rapidly moving water.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Alfred the Great, king of the West Saxons (871–86), who made an agreement to divide rule of England between Saxons and Vikings.Return to reference 3

The Woman’s Rose

I have an old, brown, carved box; the lid is broken and tied with a string. In it I keep little squares of paper, with hair inside, and a little picture which hung over my brother’s bed when we were children, and other things as small. I HAVE IN IT a rose. Other women also have such boxes where they keep such trifles, but no one has my rose.

When my eye is dim, and my heart grows faint, and my faith in woman flickers, and her present is an agony to me, and her future a despair, the scent of that dead rose, withered for twelve years, comes back to me. I know there will be spring; as surely as the birds know it when they see above the snow two tiny, quivering green leaves. Spring cannot fail us.

There were other flowers in the box once; a bunch of white acacia flowers, gathered by the strong hand of a man, as we passed down a village street on a sultry afternoon, when it had rained, and the drops fell on us from the leaves of the acacia-trees. The flowers were d they made mildew marks on the paper I folded them in. After many years I threw them away. There is nothing of them left in the box now, but a faint, strong smell of dried acacia, that recalls that sultry summer afternoon; but the rose is in the box still.

It is many years ago now; I was a girl of fifteen, and I went to visit in a small up-country town. It was young in those days, and two days’ journey from the nearest village; the population consisted mainly of men. A few were married, and had their wives and children, but most were single. There was only one young girl there when I came. She was about seventeen, fair, and rather fully-fleshed; she had large dreamy blue eyes, and wavy light hair; full, rather heavy lips, until she smiled; then her face broke into dimples, and all her white teeth shone. The hotel-keeper may have had a daughter, and the farmer in the outskirts had two, but we never saw them. She reigned alone. All the men worshipped her. She was the

only woman they had to think of. They talked of her on the "stoep,"[1] at the market, at the hotel; they watched for her at street corners; they hated the man she bowed to or walked with down the street. They brought flowers to the front door; they offered her their horses; they begged her to marry them when they dared. Partly, there was something noble and heroic in this devotion of men to the best woman they knew; partly there was something natural in it, that these men, shut off from the world, should pour at the feet of one woman the worship that otherwise would have been given to twenty; and partly there was something mean in their envy of one another. If she had raised her little finger, I suppose, she might have married any one out of twenty of them.

Then I came. I do not think I was prettier; I do not think I was so pretty as she was. I was certainly not as handsome. But I was vital, and I was new, and she was old—they all forsook her and followed me. They worshipped me. It was to my door that the flowers came; it was I had twenty horses offered me when I could only ride one; it was for me they waited at street corners; it was what I said and did that they talked of. Partly I liked it. I had lived alone all my life; no one ever had told me I was beautiful and a woman. I believed them. I did not know it was simply a fashion, which one man had set and the rest followed unreasoningly. I liked them to ask me to marry them, and to say, No. I despised them. The mother heart had not swelled in me yet; I did not know all men were my children, as the large woman knows when her heart is grown. I was too small to be tender. I liked my power. I was like a child with a new whip, which it goes about cracking everywhere, not caring against what. I could not wind it up and put it away. Men were curious creatures, who liked me, I could never tell why. Only one thing took from my pleasure; I could not bear that they had deserted her for me. I liked her dreamy blue eyes, I liked her slow walk and drawl; when I saw her sitting among men, she seemed to me much too good to be among them; I would have given all their compliments if she would once have smiled at me as she smiled at them, with all her face breaking into radiance, with her dimples and

flashing teeth. But I knew it never could be; I felt sure she hated me; that she wished I was dead; that she wished I had never come to the village. She did not know, when we went out riding, and a man who had always ridden beside her came to ride beside me, that I sent him away; that once when a man thought to win my favour by ridiculing her slow drawl before me, I turned on him so fiercely that he never dared come before me again. I knew she knew that at the hotel men had made a bet as to which was the prettier, she or I, and had asked each man who came in, and that the one who had staked on me won. I hated them for it, but I would not let her see that I cared about what she felt towards me.

She and I never spoke to each other.

If we met in the village street we bowed and passed on; when we shook hands we did so silently, and did not look at each other. But I thought she felt my presence in a room just as I felt hers.

At last the time for my going came. I was to leave the next day. Some one I knew gave a party in my honour, to which all the village was invited.

It was midwinter; there was nothing in the gardens but a few dahlias and chrysanthemums, and I suppose that for two hundred miles round there was not a rose to be bought for love or money. Only in the garden of a friend of mine, in a sunny corner between the oven and the brick wall, there was a rose-tree growing which had on it one bud. It was white, and it had been promised to the fair-haired girl to wear at the party.

The evening came; when I arrived and went to the waiting-room, to take off my mantle, I found the girl there already. She was dressed in pure white, with her great white arms and shoulders showing, and her bright hair glittering in the candle-light, and the white rose fastened at her breast. She looked like a queen. I said "Good evening," and turned away quickly to the glass to arrange my old black scarf across my old black dress.

Then I felt a hand touch my hair.

"Stand still," she said.

I looked in the glass. She had taken the white rose from her breast, and was fastening it in my hair.

"How nice dark hair is! it sets off flowers so." She stepped back and looked at me. "It looks much better there!"

I turned round.

"You are so beautiful to me," I said.

"Y-e-s," she said, with her slow colonial drawl; "I'm so glad."

We stood looking at each other.

Then they came in and swept us away to dance. All the evening we did not come near each other. Only once, as she passed, she smiled at me.

The next morning I left the town.

I never saw her again.

Years afterwards I heard she had married and gone to America; it may or may not be so—but the rose—the rose is in the box still! When my faith in woman grows dim, and it seems that for want of love and magnanimity she can play no part in any future heaven; then the scent of that small withered thing comes back:—spring cannot fail us.

1893

Endnotes

- Note 1: Boer word for *porch*.Return to reference 1

From Woman and Labor

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In a million new directions forms of honored and remunerative social labor are opening up before the feet of the modern man, which his ancestors never dreamed of; and day by day they yet increase in numbers and importance. The steamship, the hydraulic lift, the patent road-maker, the railway-train, the electric tram-car, the steam-driven mill, the Maxim gun and the torpedo boat,[1] once made, may perform their labors with the guidance and assistance of comparatively few hands; but a whole army of men of science, engineers, clerks, and highly-trained workmen is necessary for their invention, construction, and maintenance. In the domains of art, of science, of literature, and above all in the field of politics and government, an almost infinite extension has taken place in the fields of male labor. * * *

So much is this the case, that, exactly as in the earlier conditions of society an excessive and almost crushing amount of the most important social labor generally devolved upon the female, so under modern civilized conditions among the wealthier and fully civilized classes, an unduly excessive share of labor tends to devolve upon the male. That almost entirely modern, morbid condition, affecting brain and nervous system, and shortening the lives of thousands in modern civilized societies, which is vulgarly known as "overwork" or "nervous breakdown," is but one evidence of the even excessive share of mental labor devolving upon the modern male of the cultured classes, who, in addition to maintaining himself, has frequently dependent upon him a larger or smaller number of entirely parasitic females. But, whatever the result of the changes of modern civilization may be with regard to the male, he certainly cannot complain that they have as a whole robbed him of his fields

of labor, diminished his share in the conduct of life, or reduced him to a condition of morbid inactivity.

In our woman's field of labor, matters have tended to shape themselves wholly otherwise! The changes which have taken place during the last centuries, and which we sum up under the compendious term "modern civilization," have tended to rob woman, not merely in part but almost wholly, of the more valuable part of her ancient domain of productive and social labor; and, where there has not been a determined and conscious resistance on her part, have nowhere spontaneously tended to open out to her new and compensatory fields.

It is this fact which constitutes our modern "Woman's Labor Problem."

Our spinning-wheels are all broken; in a thousand huge buildings steam-driven looms, guided by a few hundred thousands of hands (often those of men), produce the clothings of half the world; and we dare no longer say, proudly, as of old, that we and we alone clothe our peoples.

Our hoes and our grindstones passed from us long ago, when the plowman and the miller took our place but for a time we kept fast possession of the kneading-trough and the brewing-vat. To-day, steam often shapes our bread, and the loaves are set down at our very door—it may be by a man-driven motor-car! The history of our household drinks we know no longer; we merely see them set before us at our tables. Day by day machine-prepared and factory-produced viands take a larger and larger place in the dietary of rich and poor, till the working man's wife places before her household little that is of her own preparation; while among the wealthier classes, so far has domestic change gone that men are not infrequently found laboring in our houses and kitchens, and even standing behind our chairs ready to do all but actually place the morsels of food between our feminine lips. The army of rosy milkmaids has passed away for ever, to give place to the cream-separator and the, largely, male-and-machinery-manipulated butter pat. In every direction the ancient saw, that it was exclusively the

woman's sphere to prepare viands of her household, has become, in proportion as civilization has perfected itself, an antiquated lie.

Even the minor domestic operations are tending to pass out of the circle of woman's labor. In modern cities our carpets are beaten, our windows cleaned, our floors polished, by machinery, or extra domestic, and often male labor. Change has gone much farther than to the mere taking from us of the preparation of the materials from which the clothing is formed. Already the domestic sewing-machine, which has supplanted almost entirely the ancient needle, begins to become antiquated, and a thousand machines driven in factories by central engines are supplying not only the husband and son, but the woman herself, with almost every article of clothing from vest to jacket; while among the wealthy classes, the male dress-designer with his hundred male-milliners and dress-makers is helping finally to explode the ancient myth, that it is woman's exclusive sphere, and a part of her domestic toil, to cut and shape the garments she or her household wear.

Year by year, day by day, there is a silently working but determined tendency for the sphere of woman's domestic labors to contract itself; and the contraction is marked exactly in proportion as that complex condition which we term "modern civilization" is advanced.

It manifests itself more in England and America than in Italy and Spain, more in great cities than in country places, more among the wealthier classes than the poorer, and is an unfailing indication of advancing modern civilization.

But it is not only, nor even mainly, in the sphere of woman's material domestic labors that change has touched her and shrunk her ancient field of labor.

Time was, when the woman kept her children about her knees till adult years were reached. Hers was the training and influence which shaped them. From the moment when the infant first lay on her breast, till her daughters left her for marriage and her sons went to take share in man's labor, they were continually under the mother's influence. To-day so complex have become even the technical and

simpler branches of education, so mighty and inexorable are the demands which modern civilization makes for specialized instruction and training for all individuals who are to survive and retain their usefulness under modern conditions, that, from the earliest years of its life, the child is of necessity largely removed from the hands of the mother, and placed in those of the specialized instructor. Among the wealthier classes, scarcely is the infant born when it passes into the hands of the trained nurse, and from hers on into the hands of the qualified teacher; till, at nine or ten, the son in certain countries often leaves his home forever for the public school, to pass on to the college and university; while the daughter, in the hands of trained instructors and dependents, owes in the majority of cases hardly more of her education or formation to maternal toil.

Even among our poorer classes, the infant school, and the public school, and later on the necessity for manual training, take the son and often the daughter as completely, and always increasingly as civilization advances, from the mother's control. So marked has this change in woman's ancient field of labor become, that a woman of almost any class may have borne many children and yet at middle age be found sitting alone in an empty house, all her offspring gone from her to receive training and instruction at the hands of others. The ancient statement that the training and education of her offspring is exclusively the duty of the mother, however true it may have been with regard to a remote past, has become an absolute misstatement; and the woman who should at the present day insist on entirely educating her own offspring would, in nine cases out of ten, inflict an irreparable injury on them, because she is incompetent.

But, if possible, yet more deeply and radically have the changes of modern civilization touched our ancient field of labor in another direction—in that very portion of the field of human labor which is peculiarly and organically ours, and which can never be wholly taken from us. Here the shrinkage has been larger than in any other direction, and touches us as women more vitally.

Time was, and still is, among almost all primitive and savage folk, when the first and all-important duty of the female to her society was to bear, to bear much, and to bear unceasingly! On her adequate and persistent performance of this passive form of labor, and on her successful feeding of her young from her own breast, depended, not merely the welfare, but often the very existence, of her tribe or nation. Where, as is the case among almost all barbarous peoples, the rate of infant mortality is high; where the unceasing casualties resulting from war, the chase, and acts of personal violence tend continually to reduce the number of adult males; where, surgical knowledge being still in its infancy, most wounds are fatal; where, above all, recurrent pestilence and famine, unfailing if of irregular recurrence, decimated the people, it has been all important that woman should employ her creative power to its very uttermost limits if the race were not at once to dwindle and die out. "May thy wife's womb never cease from bearing," is still to-day the highest expression of good will on the part of a native African chief to his departing guest. For, not only does the prolific woman in the primitive state contribute to the wealth and strength of her nation as a whole, but to that of her own male companion and of her family.

Where the social conditions of life are so simple that, in addition to bearing and suckling the child, it is reared and nourished through childhood almost entirely through the labor and care of the mother, requiring no expenditure of tribal or family wealth on its training or education, its value as an adult enormously outweighs, both to the state and the male, the trouble and expense of rearing it, which falls almost entirely on the individual woman who bears it. The man who has twenty children to become warriors and laborers is by so much the richer and the more powerful than he who has but one; while the state whose women are prolific and labor for and rear their children stands so far insured against destruction. Incessant and persistent child-bearing is thus truly the highest duty and the most socially esteemed occupation of the primitive woman, equalling fully in social importance the labor of the man as hunter and warrior.

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The advance of science and the amelioration of the physical conditions of life tend rapidly toward a diminution of human mortality. The infant death-rate among the upper classes in modern civilizations has fallen by more than one-half; while among poorer classes it is already, though slowly, falling: the increased knowledge of the laws of sanitation has made among all highly civilized peoples the depopulation by plague a thing of the past, and the discoveries of the next twenty or thirty years will probably do away for ever with the danger to man of zymotic disease.[2] Famines of the old desolating type have become an impossibility where rapid means of transportation convey the superfluity of one land to supply the lack of another; and war and deeds of violence, though still lingering among us, have already become episodal in the lives of nations as of individuals; while the vast advances in antiseptic surgery have caused even the effects of wounds and dismemberments to become only very partially fatal to human life. All these changes have tended to diminish human mortality and protract human life; and they have to-day already made it possible for a race not only to maintain its numbers, but even to increase them, with a comparatively small expenditure of woman's vitality in the passive labor of child-bearing.

But yet more seriously has the demand for woman's labor as child-bearer been diminished by change in another direction.

Every mechanical invention which lessens the necessity for rough, untrained, muscular, human labor, diminishes also the social demand upon woman as the producer in large masses of such laborers. Already throughout the modern civilized world we have reached a point at which the social demand is not merely for human creatures in the bulk for use as beasts of burden, but, rather, and only, for such human creatures as shall be so trained and cultured as to be fitted for the performance of the more complex duties of modern life. Not, now, merely for many men, but, rather, for few men, and those few, well-born and well-instructed, is the modern demand. And the woman who to-day merely produces twelve

children and suckles them, and then turns them loose on her society and family, is regarded, and rightly so, as a curse and down-draft, and not the productive laborer, of her community. Indeed, so difficult and expensive has become in the modern world the rearing and training of even one individual, in a manner suited to fit it for coping with the complexities and difficulties of civilized life, that, to the family as well as to the state, unlimited fecundity on the part of the female has already, in most cases, become an irremediable evil. It is thus in the case of the artisan, who at the cost of immense self-sacrifice must support and train his children till their twelfth or fourteenth year, if they are ever to become even skilled manual laborers, and who if his family be large often sinks beneath the burden, allowing his offspring, untaught and untrained, to become waste products of human life. So with the professional man, who by his mental toil is compelled to support and educate, at immense expense, his sons till they are twenty or older, and to sustain his daughters, often throughout their whole lives should they not marry, and to whom a large family proves often no less disastrous; while the state whose women produce recklessly large masses of individuals in excess of those for whom they can provide instruction and nourishment is a state, in so far, tending toward deterioration. The commandment to the modern woman is now not simply "Thou shalt bear," but rather, "Thou shalt not bear in excess of thy power to rear and train satisfactorily"; and the woman who should to-day appear at the door of a workhouse or the tribunal of the poor-law guardians followed by her twelve infants, demanding honorable sustenance for them and herself in return for the labor she had undergone in producing them, would meet with but short shrift. And the modern man who on his wedding-day should be greeted with the ancient good wish, that he might become the father of twenty sons and twenty daughters, would regard it as a malediction rather than a blessing. It is certain that the time is now rapidly approaching when child-bearing will be regarded rather as a lofty privilege, permissible only to those who have shown their power rightly to train and provide for their offspring, than a labor which in itself, and under whatever conditions performed, is beneficial to society.

Further, owing partly to the diminished demand for child-bearing, rising from the extreme difficulty and expense of rearing and education, and to many other complex social causes, to which we shall return later, millions of women in our modern societies are so placed as to be absolutely compelled to go through life not merely childless, but without sex relationship in any form whatever; while another mighty army of women is reduced by the dislocations of our civilization to accepting sexual relationships which almost negate child-bearing, and whose only product is physical and moral disease.

Thus, it has come to pass that vast numbers of us are, by modern social conditions, prohibited from child-bearing at all, and that even those among us who are child-bearers are required, in proportion as the class or race to which we belong stands high in the scale of civilization, to produce in most cases a limited number of offspring; so that, even for these of us, child-bearing and suckling, instead of filling the entire circle of female life from the first appearance of puberty to the end of middle age, becomes an episodal occupation, employing from three or four to ten or twenty of the threescore-and-ten-years which are allotted to human life. In such societies the statement (so profoundly true when made with regard to most savage societies, and even largely true with regard to those in the intermediate stages of civilization) that the main and continuous occupation of all women from puberty to age is the bearing and suckling of children, and that this occupation must fully satisfy all her needs for social labor and activity, becomes an antiquated and unmitigated misstatement.

Not only are millions of our women precluded from ever bearing a child, but for those of us who do bear the demand is ever increasingly in civilized societies coupled with the condition that if we would act socially we must restrict our powers.

Looking round, then, with the uttermost impartiality we can command, on the entire field of woman's ancient and traditional labors, we find that *fully three-fourths of it have shrunk away for ever, and that the remaining fourth still tends to shrink.*

It is this great fact, so often and so completely overlooked, which lies as the propelling force behind that vast and restless "Woman's Movement" which marks our day. It is *this* fact, whether clearly and intellectually grasped, or, as is more often the case, vaguely and painfully *felt,* which awakes in the hearts of the ablest modern European women their passionate, and at times it would seem almost incoherent, cry for new forms of labor and new fields for the exercise of their powers.

Thrown into strict logical form, our demand is this: We do not ask that the wheels of time should reverse themselves, or the stream of life flow backward. We do not ask that our ancient spinning-wheels be again resuscitated and placed in our hands; we do not demand that our old grindstones and hoes be returned to us, or that man should again betake himself entirely to his ancient province of war and the chase, leaving to us all domestic and civil labor. We do not even demand that society shall immediately so reconstruct itself that every woman may be again a child-bearer (deep and overmastering as lies the hunger for motherhood in every virile woman's heart!); neither do we demand that the children whom we bear shall again be put exclusively into our hands to train. This, we know, cannot be. The past material conditions of life have gone for ever; no will of man can recall them, but *this* is our demand: We demand that, in that strange new world that is arising alike upon the man and the woman, where nothing is as it was, and all things are assuming new shapes and relations, that in this new world we also shall have our share of honored and socially useful human toil, our full half of the labor of the Children of Woman. We demand nothing more than this, and we will take nothing less. *This is our* "WOMAN'S RIGHT!"

1911

Endnotes

- Note 1: A small boat developed for launching torpedoes more quickly than they could be from larger, slower, heavier warships;

"hydraulic lift": elevators developed for moving raw materials between floors in factories and in coal mines; "Maxim gun": the first automatic firearm, a recoil-operated machine gun invented in 1884.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A 19th-century medical term for acute infectious diseases, named for the organism (*zyme* or *microzyme*) thought to cause the disease.Return to reference 2

TORU DUTT
1856–1877

"Papa says as there is no good opportunity to learn German now, we had better take up Sanskrit instead of doing nothing," Toru Dutt wrote to her friend Mary Martin in 1875. "I am very glad of this. I should so like to read the glorious epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, in the original. I shall be quite a Sanskrit Pundit when I revisit old Cambridge." This passage crystallizes the self-confident cosmopolitanism that intrigued Dutt's first English readers. In doing so it threatens to distort our image of this poet, translator, novelist, and essayist who died at the age of twenty-one. Dutt may have been as thoroughly steeped in European culture as this passage suggests—familiarly referring to "old Cambridge," and seeming to dismiss the study of Sanskrit as a stopgap until a German tutor could be found. But Dutt was by no means disdainful of Indian culture: although published posthumously, the loose translations of the Hindu legends collected in *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) served as the principal basis of her reputation as one of the most important poets of her time. Even as she references German, French, and English poets and poetic forms, the ballads and legends she re-creates in this volume were inspired by the Hindu hymns that brought her to tears as a child when her mother sang them to her.

Dutt's poetic commitments and forms were clearly influenced by her family background. Born into an affluent Bengali family, Dutt received an extraordinary education in European literature and

culture. Most of her family converted to Christianity when Dutt was six, a decision that cut them off from the Hindu community, but that enabled her to become one of the first Indian women to travel to Europe. (Ocean travel was forbidden to many high-caste Hindus.) Despite their enthusiasm for European culture, however, the Dutt family relationship to colonial power was not uncritical: Dutt's father resigned from his government position because of his recognition of the lack of opportunities for advancement available to Indian men.

Dutt's first major publication was a book of translations into English of French poetry, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876). This is the only work published during her lifetime. Her novel in French, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* (1879), her unfinished novel in English, *The Young Spanish Maiden* (published in installments in the *Bengal Magazine* in 1878), and her most famous and important work, *Legends of Hindustan*, were all published after her death from tuberculosis.

Dutt's work was immediately singled out for its exceptional ease in moving between European—and particularly British—poetic forms, and Indian themes and narratives. It is also the case that, like her favorite English poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Dutt's poetry cannot be wholly divorced from her political commitments: even as *Legends of Hindustan* translates Hindu poems for an English-speaking audience, it also suggests a nationalist attachment to Indian culture and forms.

Our Casuarina Tree[1]

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose.

When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest
A grey baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas[2] hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!

What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away
In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith
And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,
When earth lay trancèd in a dreamless swoon:
And every time the music rose,—before
Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
Unto thy honour, Tree, beloved of those
Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose,
Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!
Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done
With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,[3]
Under whose awful branches lingered pale
"Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
And Time the shadow;" and though weak the verse
That would thy beauty fain, on fain rehearse,
May Love defnd thee from Oblivion's curse.

1881

Endnotes

- Note 1: An enormous evergreen species native to the Indian subcontinent.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sanskrit name for a cuckoo bird.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Valley in the Lake District of England. The Lake District was famous, in part, as the home of Romantic poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey.Return to reference 3

Lakshman[1]

"Hark! Lakshman! Hark, again that cry!
It is,—it is my husband's voice!
Oh hasten, to his succour fly,
No more hast thou, dear friend, a choice.
He calls on thee, perhaps his foes
Environ him on all sides round,
That wail,—it means death's final throes!
Why standest thou, as magic-bound?

Is this time for thought,—oh gird
Thy bright sword on, and take thy bow!
He heeds not, hears not any word,
Evil hangs over us, I know!
Swift in decision, prompt in deed,
Brave unto rashness, can this be,
The man to whom all looked at need?
Is it my brother, that I see!

Ah no, and I must run alone,
For further here I cannot stay;
Art thou transformed to blind dumb stone!
Wherefore this impious, strange delay!
That cry,—that cry,—it seems to ring
Still in my ears,—I cannot bear
Suspense; if help we fail to bring
His death at least we both can share."

"Oh calm thyself, Videhan Queen,[2]
No cause is there for any fear,
Hast thou his prowess never seen?
Wipe off for shame that dastard tear!

What being of demonian birth
  Could ever brave his mighty arm?
Is there a creature on the earth
  That dares to work our hero harm?

The lion and the grisly bear
  Cower when they see his royal look,
Sun-staring eagles of the air
  His glance of anger cannot brook,
Pythons and cobras at his tread
  To their most secret coverts glide,
Bowed to the dust each serpent head
  Erect before in hooded pride.

Rakshases, Danavs,[3] demons, ghosts,
  Acknowledge in their hearts his might,
And slink to their remotest coasts,
  In terror at his very sight.
Evil to him! Oh fear it not,
  Whatever foes against him rise!
Banish for aye, the foolish thought,
  And be thyself,—bold, great, and wise.

He call for help! Canst thou believe
  He like a child would shriek for aid
Or pray for respite or reprieve—
  Not of such metal is he made!
Delusive was that piercing cry,—
  Some trick of magic by the foe;
He has a work,—he cannot die,
  Beseech me not from hence to go.

For here beside thee, as a guard
  'Twas he commanded me to stay,
And dangers with my life to ward
  If they should come across thy way.

Send me not hence, for in this wood
Bands scattered of the giants lurk,
Who on their wrongs and vengeance brood,
And wait the hour their will to work."

"Oh shame! And canst thou make my weal
A plea for lingering! Now I know
What thou art Lakshman! And I feel
Far better were an open foe.
Art thou a coward? I have seen
Thy bearing in the battle-fray
Where flew the death-fraught arrows keen,
Else had I judged thee so to-day.

But then thy leader stood beside!
Dazzles the cloud when shines the sun,
Reft of his radiance, see it glide
A shapeless mass of vapours dun;
So of thy courage,—or if not,
The matter is far darker dyed,
What makes thee loth to leave this spot?
Is there a motive thou wouldst hide?

He perishes—well, let him die!
His wife henceforth shall be mine own!
Can that thought deep imbedded lie
Within thy heart's most secret zone!
Search well and see! one brother takes
His kingdom,—one would take his wife!
A fair partition!—But it makes
Me shudder, and abhor my life.

Art thou in secret league with those
Who from his hope the kingdom rent?
A spy from his ignoble foes
To track him in his banishment?

And wouldst thou at his death rejoice?
I know thou wouldst, or sure ere now
When first thou heardst that well-known voice
Thou shouldst have run to aid, I trow.

Learn this,—whatever comes may come,
But I shall not survive my Love,—
Of all my thoughts here is the sum!
Witness it gods in heaven above.
If fire can burn, or water drown,
I follow him:—choose what thou wilt,
Truth with its everlasting crown,
Or falsehood, treachery, and guilt.

Remain here, with a vain pretence
Of shielding me from wrong and shame,
Or go and die in his defence
And leave behind a noble name.
Choose what thou wilt,—I urge no more,
My pathway lies before me clear,
I did not know thy mind before,
I know thee now,—and have no fear."

She said and proudly from him turned,—
Was this the gentle Sita? No.
Flames from her eyes shot forth and burned,
The tears therein had ceased to flow.
"Hear me, O Queen, ere I depart,
No longer can I bear thy words,
They lacerate my inmost heart
And torture me, like poisoned swords.

Have I deserved this at thine hand?
Of lifelong loyalty and truth
Is this the meed? I understand
Thy feelings, Sita, and in sooth

I blame thee not,—but thou mightst be
  Less rash in judgement. Look! I go,
Little I care what comes to me
  Wert thou but safe,—God keep thee so!

In going hence I disregard
  The plainest orders of my chief,
A deed for me,—a soldier,—hard
  And deeply painful, but thy grief
And language, wild and wrong, allow
  No other course. Mine be the crime,
And mine alone,—but oh, do thou
  Think better of me from this time.

Here with an arrow, lo, I trace
  A magic circle ere I leave,
No evil thing within this space
  May come to harm thee or to grieve.
Step not, for aught, across the line,
  Whatever thou mayst see or hear,
So shalt thou balk the bad design
  Of every enemy I fear.

And now farewell! What thou hast said,
  Though it has broken quite my heart,
So that I wish that I were dead—
  I would before, O Queen, we part
Freely forgive, for well I know
  That grief and fear have made thee wild,
We part as friends,—is it not so?”
  And speaking thus,—he sadly smiled.

“And oh ye sylvan gods that dwell
  Among these dim and sombre shades,
Whose voices in the breezes swell
  And blend with noises of cascades,

Watch over Sita, whom alone
I leave, and keep her safe from harm,
Till we return unto our own,
I and my brother, arm in arm.

For though ill omens round us rise
And frighten her dear heart, I feel
That he is safe. Beneath the skies
His equal is not,—and his heel
Shall tread all adversaries down,
Whoever they may chance to be.—
Farewell, O Sita! Blessings crown
And Peace for ever rest with thee!”

He said, and straight his weapons took
His bow and arrows pointed keen,
Kind,—nay, indulgent,—was his look,
No trace of anger there was seen,
Only a sorrow dark, that seemed
To deepen his resolve to dare
All dangers. Hoarse the vulture screamed,
As out he strode with dauntless air.

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: The God Rama’s younger brother in the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. According to legend, Rama left Lakshman to guard his wife, Sita, when he went to capture the magical golden deer she desired. Upon discovering the deer is a demon, Rama killed him, but as the demon is dying, he cries out for help in Rama’s voice. Hearing the cry, Sita insists Lakshman go to help him, although they both know him to be invincible. Lakshman finally agrees to go, but before he leaves he draws a line that Sita is not allowed to cross as a way to protect her in his absence.

When the evil king Ravana appears disguised as a beggar, Sita crosses the line in order to give him alms and is abducted.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A reference to Sita.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Group of demigod sons of Dana, associated with the waters of the heavens. “Rakshases”: mythical fanged demons that eat human flesh.Return to reference 3

Buttoo[1]

"Ho! Master of the wondrous art!
Instruct me in fair archery,
And buy for aye,—a grateful heart
That will not grudge to give thy fee."
Thus spoke a lad with kindling eyes,
A hunter's low-born son was he,—
To Dronacharjya, great and wise,
Who sat with princes round his knee.

Up Time's fair stream—far back,—oh far,
The great wise teacher must be sought!
The Kurus had not yet in war
With the Pandava[2] brethren fought.
In peace, at Dronacharjya's feet,
Magic and archery they learned,
A complex science, which we meet
No more, with ages past inurned.

"And who art thou," the teacher said,
"My science brave to learn so fain?
Which many kings who wear the thread
Have asked to learn of me in vain."
"My name is Buttoo," said the youth,
"A hunter's son, I know not Fear;"
The teacher answered, smiling smooth,
"Then know him from this time, my dear."

Unseen the magic arrow came,
Amidst the laughter and the scorn
Of royal youths,—like lightning flame
Sudden and sharp. They blew the horn,

As down upon the ground he fell,
Not hurt, but made a jest and game;—
He rose,—and waved a proud farewell,
But cheek and brow grew red with shame.

And lo,—a single, single tear
Dropped from his eyelash as he past,
"My place I gather is not here;
No matter,—what is rank or caste?
In us is honour, or disgrace,
Not out of us," 'twas thus he mused,
"The question is,—not wealth or place,
But gifts well used, or gifts abused."

"And I shall do my best to gain
The science that man will not teach,
For life is as a shadow vain,
Until the utmost goal we reach
To which the soul points. I shall try
To realize my waking dream,
And what if I should chance to die?
None miss one bubble from a stream."

So thinking, on and on he went,
Till he attained the forest's verge,
The garish day was well-nigh spent,
Birds had already raised its dirge.
Oh what a scene! How sweet and calm!
It soothed at once his wounded pride,
And on his spirit shed a balm
That all its yearnings purified.

What glorious trees! The sombre saul[3]
On which the eye delights to rest,
The betel-nut,[4]—a pillar tall,
With feathery branches for a crest,

The light-leaved tamarind[5] spreading wide,
The pale faint-scented bitter neem,[6]
The seemul,[7] gorgeous as a bride,
With flowers that have the ruby's gleam,

The Indian fig's[8] pavilion tent
In which whole armies might repose,
With here and there a little rent,
The sunset's beauty to disclose,
The bamboo boughs that sway and swing
'Neath bulbuls[9] as the south wind blows,
The mangoe-tope;[1] a close dark ring,
Home of the rooks and clamorous crows,

The champac, bok, and South-sea pine,[2]
The nagessur[3] with pendant flowers
Like ear-rings,—and the forest vine
That clinging over all, embowers,
The sirish° famed in Sanscrit song
Which rural maidens love to wear,
The peepul° giant-like and strong,
The bramble with its matted hair,

All these, and thousands, thousands more,
With helmet red, or golden crown,
Or green tiara, rose before
The youth in evening's shadows brown.
He passed into the forest,—there
New sights of wonder met his view,
A waving Pampas[4] green and fair
All glistening with the evening dew.

How vivid was the breast-high grass!
Here waved in patches, forest corn,—
Here intervened a deep morass,—

Here arid spots of verdure shorn
Lay open,—rock or barren sand,—
And here again the trees arose
Thick clustering,—a glorious band
Their tops still bright with sunset glows.—

Stirred in the breeze the crowding boughs,
And seemed to welcome him with signs,
Onwards and on,—till Buttoo's brows
Are gemmed with pearls, and day declines.
Then in a grassy open space
He sits and leans against a tree,
To let the wind blow on his face
And look around him leisurely.

Herds, and still herds, of timid deer
Were feeding in the solitude,
They knew not man, and felt no fear,
And heeded not his neighbourhood,
Some young ones with large eyes and sweet
Came close, and rubbed their foreheads smooth
Against his arms, and licked his feet,
As if they wished his cares to soothe.

"They touch me," he exclaimed with joy,
"They have no pride of caste like men,
They shrink not from the hunter-boy,
Should not my home be with them then?
Here in this forest let me dwell,
With these companions innocent,
And learn each science and each spell
All by myself in banishment.

A calm, calm life,—and it shall be
Its own exceeding great reward!
No thoughts to vex in all I see,

No jeers to bear or disregard;—
All creatures and inanimate things
Shall be my tutors; I shall learn
From beast, and fish, and bird with wings,
And rock, and stream, and tree, and fern.

With this resolve, he soon began
To build a hut, of reeds and leaves,
And when that needful work was done
He gathered in his store, the sheaves
Of forest corn, and all the fruit,
Date, plum, guava, he could find,
And every pleasant nut and root
By Providence for man designed,

A statue next of earth he made,
An image of the teacher wise,
So deft he laid, the light and shade,
On figure, forehead, face and eyes,
That any one who chanced to view
That image tall might soothly swear,
If he great Dronacharjya knew,
The teacher in his flesh was there.

Then at the statue's feet he placed
A bow, and arrows tipped with steel,
With wild-flower garlands interlaced,
And hailed the figure in his zeal
As Master, and his head he bowed,
A pupil reverent from that hour
Of one who late had disallowed
The claim, in pride of place and power.

By strainèd sense, by constant prayer,
By steadfastness of heart and will,
By courage to confront and dare,

All obstacles he conquered still;
A conscience clear,—a ready hand,
Joined to a meek humility,
Success must everywhere command,
How could he fail who had all three!

And now, by tests assured, he knows
His own God-gifted wondrous might,
Nothing to any man he owes,
Unaided he has won the fight;
Equal to gods themselves,—above
Wishmo and Drona,[5]—for his worth
His name, he feels, shall be with love
Reckoned with great names of the earth.

Yet lacks he not, in reverence
To Dronacharjya, who declined
To teach him,—nay, with e'en offence
That well might wound a noble mind,
Drove him away;—for in his heart
Meek, placable, and ever kind,
Resentment had not any part,
And Malice never was enshrined.

One evening, on his work intent,
Alone he practised Archery,
When lo! the bow proved false and sent
The arrow from its mark awry;
Again he tried,—and failed again;
Why was it? Hark!—A wild dog's bark!
An evil omen:—it was plain
Some evil on his path hung dark!

Thus many times he tried and failed,
And still that lean, persistent dog
At distance, like some spirit wailed,

Safe in the cover of a fog.
His nerves unstrung, with many a shout
He strove to frighten it away,
It would not go,—but roamed about,
Howling, as wolves howl for their prey.

Worried and almost in a rage,
One magic shaft at last he sent,
A sample of his science sage,
To quiet but the noises meant.
Unerring to its goal it flew,
No death ensued, no blood was dropped,
But by the hush the young man knew
At last that howling noise had stopped.

It happened on this very day
That the Pandava princes came
With all the Kuru princes gay
To beat the woods and hunt the game.
Parted from others in the chase,
Arjuna brave the wild dog found,—
Stuck still the shaft,—but not a trace
Of hurt, though tongue and lip were bound.

"Wonder of wonders! Didst not thou,
O Dronacharjya, promise me
Thy crown in time should deck my brow
And I be first in archery?
Lo! here, some other thou hast taught
A magic spell,—to all unknown;
Who has in secret from thee bought
The knowledge, in this arrow shown!"

Indignant thus Arjuna[6] spake
To his great Master when they met—
"My word, my honour, is at stake,

Judge not, Arjuna, judge not yet.
Come, let us see the dog,"—and straight
They followed up the creature's trace.
They found it, in the selfsame state,
Dumb, yet unhurt,—near Buttoo's place.

A hut,—a statue,—and a youth
In the dim forest,—what mean these?
They gazed in wonder, for in sooth
The thing seemed full of mysteries.
"Now who art thou that dar'st to raise
Mine image in the wilderness?
Is it for worship and for praise?
What is thine object? speak, confess."

"Oh Master, unto thee I came
To learn thy science. Name or pelf°
I had not, so was driven with shame,
And here I learn all by myself.
But still as Master thee revere,
For who so great in archery!
Lo, all my inspiration here,
And all my knowledge is from thee."

"If I am Master, now thou hast
Finished thy course, give me my due.
Let all the past, be dead and past,
Henceforth be ties between us new."
"All that I have, O Master mine,
All I shall conquer by my skill,
Gladly shall I to thee resign,
Let me but know thy gracious will."

"Is it a promise?" "Yea, I swear
So long as I have breath and life
To give thee all thou wilt." "Beware!

Rash promise ever ends in strife."
"Thou art my Master,—ask! oh ask!
From thee my inspiration came,
Thou canst not set too hard a task,
Nor aught refuse I, free from blame."

"If it be so,—Arjuna hear!"
Arjuna and the youth were dumb,
"For thy sake, loud I ask and clear,
Give me, O youth, thy right-hand thumb.
I promised in my faithfulness
No equal ever shall there be
To thee, Arjuna,—and I press
For this sad recompense—for thee."

Glanced the sharp knife one moment high,
The severed thumb was on the sod,
There was no tear in Buttoo's eye
He left the matter with his God.
"For this,"—said Dronacharjya,—"Fame
Shall sound thy praise from sea to sea,
And men shall ever link thy name
With Self-help, Truth, and Modesty."

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: This story is based on a story from the *Mahabharata*, but while in the original, Ekalavya is the son of a king, in the poem, the principal character, Buttoo, is the low-born son of a hunter who goes to master archer, Dronacharjya, to learn archery.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the *Mahabharata*, the Kurus and the Pandavas are rivals descended from the same line. Dronacharjya taught archery to both sides.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A valuable timber tree.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Nut of the areca palm tree.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Also known as the Indian date palm.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Also known as Indian lilac.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Also known as the red or silk cotton tree because of its red flowers.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Also known as the banyan tree.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A medium-sized songbird, related to the thrush. The name is Persian.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A tope is a cluster of trees.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An evergreen that grows to enormous height. "Champac": a sacred ornamental tree; a kind of magnolia. "Bok": Also known as the hummingbird tree, it has white, pink, or red flowers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Also known as the Indian rose chestnut, it has fragrant flowers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A reference to the South American pampas, or plains.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Drona is Dronacharjya; Wishmo is also known as Bhishma, an archer from the *Mahabharata*.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Arjuna is also from the *Mahabharata*: Dronacharjya's favorite student.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *shade tree*Return to reference °
- °: *sacred fig tree*Return to reference °
- °: *money*Return to reference °

France

1870[1]

Not dead,—oh no,—she cannot die!
  Only a swoon from loss of blood!
Levite[2] England passes her by,
Help, Samaritan! None is nigh;
  Who shall stanch me this sanguine flood?

Range the brown hair, it blinds her eyne,
  Dash cold water over her face!
Drowned in her blood, she makes no sign,
Give her a draught of generous wine.
  None heed, none hear, to do this grace.

Head of the human column, thus
  Ever in swoon wilt thou remain?
Thought, Freedom, Truth, quenched ominous,
Whence then shall Hope arise for us,
  Plunged in the darkness all again!

No, she stirs!—There's a fire in her glance,
  Ware, oh ware of that broken sword!
What, dare ye for an hour's mischance,
Gather around her, jeering France,
  Attila's own exultant horde?

Lo, she stands up,—stands up e'en now,
  Strong once more for the battle-fray,
Gleams bright the star, that from her brow
Lightens the world. Bow, nations, bow,
  Let her again lead on the way!

Endnotes

- Note 1: The speaker of the poem is mourning the possible defeat of France by Prussia in the war of 1870.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the parable known as the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus relates how a Levite (a Jewish man descended from the tribe of Levi) refuses to help a fellow Jew who has been beaten and robbed and left by the side of the road. When a Samaritan passes by, he stops and helps the injured man, despite the mutual hatred between Jews and Samaritans.Return to reference 2

Sonnet—Baugmaree[1]

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,
But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
Sharp contrasts of all colours here are seen;
The light-green graceful tamarinds abound
Amid the mangoe clumps of green profound,
And palms arise, like pillars gray, between;
And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls° lean,
Red,—red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.
But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges
Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon
Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes
Into a cup of silver. One might swoon
Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: Suburb of Calcutta and the location of Dutt's family's second home.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *flowering trees*Return to reference °

Sonnet—The Lotus

Love came to Flora[1] asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power
Had sung their claims. "The rose can never tower
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien"[2]—
"But is the lily lovelier? "Thus between
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche's[3] bower.
"Give me a flower delicious as the rose
And stately as the lily in her pride"—
"But of what colour?"—"Rose-red," Love first chose,
Then prayed,—"No, lily-white,—or, both provide;"
And Flora gave the lotus, "rose-red" dyed,
And "lily-white,"—the queenliest flower that blows.°

1882

Endnotes

- Note 1: Roman goddess of flowers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The goddess Juno was the protector of the state. "Mien" means face: she is usually described as dignified in demeanor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Roman goddess of the soul.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *blooms*Return to reference °

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
1859–1930

One of ten children, Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh on May 22, 1859, to parents of Irish descent. His father, Charles Altamont Doyle, worked as a civil servant but wished to be an artist; subject to depression and alcoholism for many years, he was eventually committed to an asylum in the 1880s. Despite the family's difficult circumstances, Conan Doyle's mother, Mary Foley, supported her son's passionate interest in reading and managed to send him at the age of nine to the preparatory school for the Roman Catholic Stonyhurst College, Britain's foremost Jesuit school. By the time Conan Doyle left Stonyhurst at the age of sixteen, however, he had rejected Christianity and become an agnostic.

From 1876 Conan Doyle studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh, where one of his teachers was Joseph Bell, a professor of clinical surgery. As Conan Doyle readily acknowledged in later years, Sherlock Holmes was modeled in part on Bell, who was remarkably skilled at deducing from minute physical details both his patients' ailments and their past histories and occupations. During this period Conan Doyle's medical training ran hand in hand with early forays into literary composition; he published his first story in *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal* at the age of twenty. After serving as ship's doctor on a voyage to West Africa, Conan Doyle established a medical practice in Southsea on the south coast of England in 1882. Here, with much time on his hands thanks to a dearth of patients, he

began writing the detective stories that would make him famous. Sherlock Holmes's debut occurred in the novella *A Study in Scarlet*, which appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887 and carried illustrations by Conan Doyle's father. After the publication of a second Holmes novella, *The Sign of Four*, a series of short stories titled "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" ran in *Strand Magazine* from July 1891.

Published in the February issue of 1892 with illustrations by Sidney Paget, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" was the eighth of the series. While the menace of the story is supplied by the violent and sinister Dr. Roylott and his web of exotic connections, the central puzzle is presented in its title: "The speckled band!" were the dying words of Roylott's stepdaughter Julia Stoner, the sister of Holmes's client, but to what had she been referring? During its composition Doyle referred to the story as a "thriller"; in later years, when asked which of his tales was his favorite, he chose this one. Many fans have agreed; readers' polls over the years have frequently rated "The Speckled Band" the best Holmes story of all. Certainly it is viewed as a paradigmatic example of a "locked room" mystery, a subdivision of the detective story genre in which a murder takes place in a closed space with either no, or a very limited set of, suspects.

Despite the enormous success of the series, Conan Doyle resented the fact that it drew his time and energies away from writing what he considered to be more serious work, such as historical fiction. He decided to kill Sherlock off because, as he explained to his mother in 1891, the detective took his mind "from better things"; at the same time Conan Doyle lamented that "it means I must bury my pocketbook with him." "The Final Problem," a story published in 1893, appeared to present readers with the fatal plunge of both their hero and his evil adversary Professor Moriarty over the Reichenbach Falls in Switzerland; Watson tracks their two sets of footprints heading to the cliff above the waterfall and discovers evidence of a violent struggle, but can find no signs of any return. Fans were outraged—"You brute" began one letter to the

author—and after pressure from his publishers, Conan Doyle caved, producing first *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1901, which he cannily set before Holmes's death, and then later "resurrecting" his detective in 1903 in "The Empty House." In this story Watson learns the "truth" of that apparent Swiss death: Holmes had in fact hidden on a ledge within the cliff to escape the vengeance of Moriarty's henchman. Eventually the Sherlock Holmes canon encompassed fifty-six stories and four novellas. Of Conan Doyle's other writings only the Professor Challenger series (which includes *The Lost World* of 1912) enjoyed any real success; none of his historical novels ever captured the public's imagination like the two famous residents of 221b Baker Street.

Conan Doyle married in 1885; his wife, Louisa "Touie" Hawkins, died from tuberculosis in 1906. During her illness he developed an allegedly platonic relationship with Jean Leckie, whom he married in 1907; Conan Doyle had two children with his first wife and three with his second. Following the death of Touie, and the deaths of his son, brother, two brothers-in-law, and two nephews in and after World War I, Conan Doyle found considerable comfort in Christian Spiritualism, an occult religion that believed that contact could be made with the dead. The author's interest in the paranormal also manifested itself in other ways; it led, for instance, to his advocating in 1920 for the authenticity of a series of photographs of girls and fairies (the "Cottingley Fairies" were exposed as a hoax decades later) and dominated many of his later, nonfiction, writings. In earlier years Conan Doyle had participated in some of his country's important political and legal debates. His pamphlets on the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 justified British military actions and led to his being knighted in 1902. Furthermore, his involvement in the George Edalji case—a miscarriage of justice in which a half-Indian man was wrongfully convicted of a crime—played an influential part in the establishment of the Court of Criminal Appeal in 1907. Conan Doyle died on July 7, 1930, and is buried in Hampshire.

The Speckled Band

In glancing over my notes of the seventy odd cases in which I have during the last eight years studied the methods of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange, but none commonplace; for, working as he did rather for the love of his art than for the acquirement of wealth, he refused to associate himself with any investigation which did not tend towards the unusual, and even the fantastic.[1] Of all these varied cases, however, I cannot recall any which presented more singular features than that which was associated with the well-known Surrey family of the Roylotts of Stoke Moran.[2] The events in question occurred in the early days of my association with Holmes, when we were sharing rooms as bachelors, in Baker-street.[3] It is possible that I might have placed them upon record before, but a promise of secrecy was made at the time, from which I have only been freed during the last month by the untimely death of the lady to whom the pledge was given. It is perhaps as well that the facts should now come to light, for I have reasons to know there are widespread rumours as to the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott which tend to make the matter even more terrible than the truth.

It was early in April, in the year ’83, that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed. He was a late riser as a rule, and, as the clock on the mantel-piece showed me that it was only a quarter past seven, I blinked up at him in some surprise, and perhaps just a little resentment, for I was myself regular in my habits.

“Very sorry to knock you up,[4] Watson,” said he, “but it’s the common lot this morning. Mrs. Hudson has been knocked up, she retorted upon me, and I on you.”

“What is it, then? A fire?”

"No, a client. It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement, who insists upon seeing me. She is waiting now in the sitting-room. Now, when young ladies wander about the Metropolis at this hour of the morning, and knock sleepy people up out of their beds, I presume that it is something very pressing which they have to communicate. Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought at any rate that I should call you, and give you the chance."

"My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything."

I had no keener pleasure than in following Holmes in his professional investigations, and in admiring the rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis, with which he unravelled the problems which were submitted to him. I rapidly threw on my clothes, and was ready in a few minutes to accompany my friend down to the sitting-room. A lady dressed in black and heavily veiled, who had been sitting in the window, rose as we entered.

"Good morning, madam," said Holmes, cheerily. "My name is Sherlock Holmes. This is my intimate friend and associate, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself. Ha, I am glad to see that Mrs. Hudson has had the good sense to light the fire. Pray draw up to it, and I shall order you a cup of hot coffee, for I observe that you are shivering."

"It is not cold which makes me shiver," said the woman in a low voice, changing her seat as requested.

"What then?"

"It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror." She raised her veil as she spoke, and we could see that she was indeed in a pitiable state of agitation, her face all drawn and grey, with restless, frightened eyes, like those of some hunted animal. Her features and figure were those of a woman of thirty, but her hair was shot with premature grey, and her expression was weary and haggard. Sherlock Holmes ran her over with one of his quick, all-comprehensive glances.

"You must not fear," said he, soothingly, bending forward and patting her forearm. "We shall soon set matters right, I have no doubt. You have come in by train this morning, I see."

"You know me, then?"

"No, but I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove. You must have started early, and yet you had a good drive in a dog-cart,[5] along heavy roads, before you reached the station."

The lady gave a violent start, and stared in bewilderment at my companion.

"There is no mystery, my dear madam," said he, smiling. "The left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places. The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way, and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver."

"Whatever your reasons[6] may be, you are perfectly correct," said she. "I started from home before six, reached Leatherhead at twenty past, and came in by the first train to Waterloo.[7] Sir, I can stand this strain no longer, I shall go mad if it continues. I have no one to turn to—none, save only one, who cares for me, and he, poor fellow, can be of little aid. I have heard of you, Mr. Holmes; I have heard of you from Mrs. Farintosh, whom you helped in the hour of her sore need. It was from her that I had your address. Oh, sir, do you not think you could help me too, and at least throw a little light through the dense darkness which surrounds me? At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services, but in a month or two I shall be married, with the control of my own income, and then at least you shall not find me ungrateful."

Holmes turned to his desk, and unlocking it, drew out a small case-book which he consulted.

"Farintosh," said he. "Ah, yes, I recall the case; it was concerned with an opal tiara. I think it was before your time, Watson. I can only say, madam, that I shall be happy to devote the same care to your case as I did to that of your friend. As to reward, my profession is its reward; but you are at liberty to defray whatever expenses I

may be put to, at the time which suits you best. And now I beg that you will lay before us everything that may help us in forming an opinion upon the matter."

"Alas!" replied our visitor. "The very horror of my situation lies in the fact that my fears are so vague, and my suspicions depend so entirely upon small points, which might seem trivial to another, that even he to whom of all others I have a right to look for help and advice looks upon all that I tell him about it as the fancies of a nervous woman. He does not say so, but I can read it from his soothing answers and averted eyes. But I have heard, Mr. Holmes, that you can see deeply into the manifold wickedness of the human heart. You may advise me how to walk amid the dangers which encompass me."

"I am all attention, madam."

"My name is Helen Stoner, and I am living with my stepfather, who is the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England, the Roylotts of Stoke Moran, on the western border of Surrey."

Holmes nodded his head. "The name is familiar to me," said he.

"The family was at one time among the richest in England, and the estate extended over the borders into Berkshire in the north, and Hampshire in the west. In the last century, however, four successive heirs were of a dissolute and wasteful disposition, and the family ruin was eventually completed by a gambler, in the days of the Regency.[8] Nothing was left save a few acres of ground, and the two-hundred-year-old house, which is itself crushed under a heavy mortgage. The last squire dragged out his existence there, living the horrible life of an aristocratic pauper; but his only son, my stepfather, seeing that he must adapt himself to the new conditions, obtained an advance from a relative, which enabled him to take a medical degree, and went out to Calcutta,[9] where, by his professional skill and his force of character, he established a large practice. In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he beat his native butler to death, and narrowly escaped a capital sentence. As it was, he

suffered a long term of imprisonment, and afterwards returned to England a morose and disappointed man.

"When Dr. Roylott was in India he married my mother, Mrs. Stoner, the young widow of Major-General Stoner, of the Bengal Artillery. My sister Julia and I were twins, and we were only two years old at the time of my mother's re-marriage. She had a considerable sum of money, not less than a thousand a year, and this she bequeathed to Dr. Roylott entirely whilst we resided with him, with a provision that a certain annual sum should be allowed to each of us in the event of our marriage. Shortly after our return to England my mother died—she was killed eight years ago in a railway accident near Crewe.[1] Dr. Roylott then abandoned his attempts to establish himself in practice in London, and took us to live with him in the old ancestral house at Stoke Moran. The money which my mother had left was enough for all our wants, and there seemed no obstacle to our happiness.

"But a terrible change came over our stepfather about this time. Instead of making friends and exchanging visits with our neighbours, who had at first been overjoyed to see a Roylott of Stoke Moran back in the old family seat, he shut himself up in his house, and seldom came out save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path. Violence of temper approaching to mania has been hereditary in the men of the family, and in my stepfather's case it had, I believe, been intensified by his long residence in the tropics. A series of disgraceful brawls took place, two of which ended in the police-court, until at last he became the terror of the village, and the folks would fly at his approach, for he is a man of immense strength, and absolutely uncontrollable in his anger.

"Last week he hurled the local blacksmith over a parapet[2] into a stream, and it was only by paying over all the money that I could gather together that I was able to avert another public exposure. He had no friends at all save the wandering gipsies, and he would give these vagabonds leave to encamp upon the few acres of bramble-covered land which represent the family estate, and would accept in return the hospitality of their tents, wandering away with them

sometimes for weeks on end. He has a passion also for Indian animals, which are sent over to him by a correspondent, and he has at this moment a cheetah and a baboon, which wander freely over his grounds, and are feared by the villagers almost as much as their master.

"You can imagine from what I say that my poor sister Julia and I had no great pleasure in our lives. No servant would stay with us, and for a long time we did all the work of the house. She was but thirty at the time of her death, and yet her hair had already begun to whiten, even as mine has."

"Your sister is dead, then?"

"She died just two years ago, and it is of her death that I wish to speak to you. You can understand that, living the life which I have described, we were little likely to see any one of our own age and position. We had, however, an aunt, my mother's maiden sister, Miss Honoria Westphail, who lives near Harrow,[3] and we were occasionally allowed to pay short visits at this lady's house. Julia went there at Christmas two years ago, and met there a half-pay Major of Marines,[4] to whom she became engaged. My stepfather learned of the engagement when my sister returned, and offered no objection to the marriage; but within a fortnight of the day which had been fixed for the wedding, the terrible event occurred which has deprived me of my only companion."

Sherlock Holmes had been leaning back in his chair with his eyes closed, and his head sunk in a cushion, but he half opened his lids now, and glanced across at his visitor.

"Pray be precise as to details," said he.

"It is easy for me to be so, for every event of that dreadful time is seared into my memory. The manor house is, as I have already said, very old, and only one wing is now inhabited. The bedrooms in this wing are on the ground floor, the sitting-rooms being in the central block of the buildings. Of these bedrooms the first is Dr. Roylott's, the second my sister's, and the third my own. There is no communication between them, but they all open out into the same corridor. Do I make myself plain?"

"Perfectly so."

"The windows of the three rooms open out upon the lawn. That fatal night Dr. Roylott had gone to his room early, though we knew that he had not retired to rest, for my sister was troubled by the smell of the strong Indian cigars which it was his custom to smoke. She left her room, therefore, and came into mine, where she sat for some time, chatting about her approaching wedding. At eleven o'clock she rose to leave me, but she paused at the door and looked back.

" 'Tell me, Helen,' said she, 'have you ever heard any one whistle in the dead of the night?'

" 'Never,' said I.

" 'I suppose that you could not possibly whistle yourself in your sleep?'

" 'Certainly not. But why?'

" 'Because during the last few nights I have always, about three in the morning, heard a low clear whistle. I am a light sleeper, and it has awakened me. I cannot tell where it came from—perhaps from the next room, perhaps from the lawn. I thought that I would just ask you whether you had heard it.'

" 'No, I have not. It must be those wretched gipsies in the plantation.'

" 'Very likely. And yet if it were on the lawn I wonder that you did not hear it also.'

" 'Ah, but I sleep more heavily than you.'

" 'Well, it is of no great consequence at any rate,' she smiled back at me, closed my door, and a few moments later I heard her key turn in the lock."

"Indeed," said Holmes. "Was it your custom always to lock yourselves in at night?"

"Always."

"And why?"

"I think that I mentioned to you that the Doctor kept a cheetah and a baboon. We had no feeling of security unless our doors were

locked."

"Quite so. Pray proceed with your statement."

"I could not sleep that night. A vague feeling of impending misfortune impressed me. My sister and I, you will recollect, were twins, and you know how subtle are the links which bind two souls which are so closely allied. It was a wild night. The wind was howling outside, and the rain was beating and splashing against the windows. Suddenly, amidst all the hubbub of the gale, there burst forth the wild scream of a terrified woman. I knew that it was my sister's voice. I sprang from my bed, wrapped a shawl round me, and rushed into the corridor. As I opened my door I seemed to hear a low whistle, such as my sister described, and a few moments later a clanging sound, as if a mass of metal had fallen. As I ran down the passage my sister's door was unlocked, and revolved slowly upon its hinges. I stared at it horror-stricken, not knowing what was about to issue from it. By the light of the corridor lamp I saw my sister appear at the opening, her face blanched with terror, her hands groping for help, her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard. I ran to her and threw my arms round her, but at that moment her knees seemed to give way and she fell to the ground. She writhed as one who is in terrible pain, and her limbs were dreadfully convulsed. At first I thought that she had not recognised me, but as I bent over her she suddenly shrieked out in a voice which I shall never forget, 'Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!' There was something else which she would fain have said, and she stabbed with her finger into the air in the direction of the Doctor's room, but a fresh convulsion seized her and choked her words. I rushed out, calling loudly for my stepfather, and I met him hastening from his room in his dressing-gown. When he reached my sister's side she was unconscious, and though he poured brandy down her throat, and sent for medical aid from the village, all efforts were in vain, for she slowly sank and died without having recovered her consciousness. Such was the dreadful end of my beloved sister."

"One moment," said Holmes; "are you sure about this whistle and metallic sound? Could you swear to it?"

"That was what the county coroner asked me at the inquiry. It is my strong impression that I heard it, and yet among the crash of the gale, and the creaking of an old house, I may possibly have been deceived."

"Was your sister dressed?"

"No, she was in her nightdress. In her right hand was found the charred stump of a match, and in her left a matchbox."

"Showing that she had struck a light and looked about her when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to?"

"He investigated the case with great care, for Dr. Roylott's conduct had long been notorious in the county, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. My evidence showed that the door had been fastened upon the inner side, and the windows were blocked by old-fashioned shutters with broad iron bars, which were secured every night. The walls were carefully sounded, and were shown to be quite solid all round, and the flooring was also thoroughly examined, with the same result. The chimney is wide, but is barred up by four large staples. It is certain, therefore, that my sister was quite alone when she met her end. Besides, there were no marks of any violence upon her."

"How about poison?"

"The doctors examined her for it, but without success."

"What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then?"

"It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was which frightened her I cannot imagine."

"Were there gipsies in the plantation at the time?"

"Yes, there are nearly always some there."

"Ah, and what did you gather from this allusion to a band—a speckled band?"

"Sometimes I have thought that it was merely the wild talk of delirium, sometimes that it may have referred to some band of

people, perhaps to these very gipsies in the plantation. I do not know whether the spotted handkerchiefs which so many of them wear over their heads might have suggested the strange adjective which she used."

Holmes shook his head like a man who is far from being satisfied.

"These are very deep waters," said he; "pray go on with your narrative."

"Two years have passed since then, and my life has been until lately lonelier than ever. A month ago, however, a dear friend, whom I have known for many years, has done me the honour to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage—Percy Armitage—the second son of Mr. Armitage, of Crane Water, near Reading.[5] My stepfather has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be married in the course of the spring. Two days ago some repairs were started in the west wing of the building, and my bedroom wall has been pierced, so that I have had to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept. Imagine, then, my thrill of terror when last night, as I lay awake, thinking over her terrible fate, I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald of her own death. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. I was too shaken to go to bed again, however, so I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight I slipped down, got a dog-cart at the 'Crown' inn, which is opposite, and drove to Leatherhead, from whence I have come on this morning with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice."

"You have done wisely," said my friend. "But have you told me all?"

"Yes, all."

"Miss Roylott, you have not. You are screening your stepfather."

"Why, what do you mean?"

For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.

"You have been cruelly used," said Holmes.

The lady coloured deeply, and covered over her injured wrist. "He is a hard man," she said, "and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength."

There was a long silence, during which Holmes leaned his chin upon his hands and stared into the crackling fire.

"This is very deep business," he said at last. "There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If we were to come to Stoke Moran to-day, would it be possible for us to see over these rooms without the knowledge of your stepfather?"

"As it happens, he spoke of coming into town to-day upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day, and that there would be nothing to disturb you. We have a housekeeper now, but she is old and foolish, and I could easily get her out of the way."

"Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?"

"By no means."

"Then we shall both come. What are you going to do yourself?"

"I have one or two things which I would wish to do now that I am in town. But I shall return by the twelve o'clock train, so as to be there in time for your coming."

"And you may expect us early in the afternoon. I have myself some small business matters to attend to. Will you not wait and breakfast?"

"No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon." She dropped her thick black veil over her face, and glided from the room.

"And what do you think of it all, Watson?" asked Sherlock Holmes, leaning back in his chair.

"It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business."

"Dark enough, and sinister enough."

"Yet if the lady is correct in saying that the flooring and walls are sound, and that the door, window, and chimney are impassable, then her sister must have been undoubtedly alone when she met her mysterious end."

"What becomes, then, of these nocturnal whistles, and what of the very peculiar words of the dying woman?"

"I cannot think."

"When you combine the ideas of whistles at night, the presence of a band of gipsies who are on intimate terms with this old doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe that the doctor has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter's marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang, which might have been caused by one of those metal bars which secured the shutters falling back into their place, I think that there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines."

"But what, then, did the gipsies do?"

"I cannot imagine."

"I see many objections to any such theory."

"And so do I. It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. But what, in the name of the devil!"

The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top hat, a long frock coat, and a pair of high gaiters,[6] with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high thin fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.

"Which of you is Holmes?" asked this apparition.

"My name, sir, but you have the advantage of me," said my companion, quietly.

"I am Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran."

"Indeed, Doctor," said Holmes, blandly. "Pray take a seat."

"I will do nothing of the kind. My stepdaughter has been here. I have traced her. What has she been saying to you?"

"It is a little cold for the time of the year," said Holmes.

"What has she been saying to you?" screamed the old man furiously.

"But I have heard that the crocuses promise well," continued my companion imperturbably.

"Ha! You put me off, do you?" said our new visitor, taking a step forward, and shaking his hunting-crop. "I know you, you scoundrel! I have heard of you before. You are Holmes the meddler."

My friend smiled.

"Holmes the busybody!"

His smile broadened.

"Holmes the Scotland-yard Jack-in-office."[7]

Holmes chuckled heartily. "Your conversation is most entertaining," said he. "When you go out close the door, for there is a decided draught."

"I will go when I have had my say. Don't you dare to meddle with my affairs. I know that Miss Stoner has been here—I traced her! I am a dangerous man to fall foul of! See here." He stepped swiftly forward, seized the poker, and bent it into a curve with his huge brown hands.

"See that you keep yourself out of my grip," he snarled, and hurling the twisted poker into the fireplace, he strode out of the room.

"He seems a very amiable person," said Holmes, laughing. "I am not quite so bulky, but if he had remained I might have shown him that my grip was not much more feeble than his own." As he spoke

he picked up the steel poker, and with a sudden effort straightened it out again.

"Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force! This incident gives zest to our investigation, however, and I only trust that our little friend will not suffer from her imprudence in allowing this brute to trace her. And now, Watson, we shall order breakfast, and afterwards I shall walk down to Doctors' Commons,[8] where I hope to get some data which may help us in this matter."

It was nearly one o'clock when Sherlock Holmes returned from his excursion. He held in his hand a sheet of blue paper, scrawled over with notes and figures.

"I have seen the will of the deceased wife," said he. "To determine its exact meaning I have been obliged to work out the present prices of the investments with which it is concerned. The total income, which at the time of the wife's death was little short of £1,100, is now through the fall in agricultural prices not more than £750. Each daughter can claim an income of £250, in case of marriage. It is evident, therefore, that if both girls had married this beauty would have had a mere pittance, while even one of them would cripple him to a very serious extent. My morning's work has not been wasted, since it has proved that he has the very strongest motives for standing in the way of anything of the sort. And now, Watson, this is too serious for dawdling, especially as the old man is aware that we are interesting ourselves in his affairs, so if you are ready we shall call a cab and drive to Waterloo. I should be very much obliged if you would slip your revolver into your pocket. An Eley's No. 2[9] is an excellent argument with gentlemen who can twist steel pokers into knots. That and a tooth-brush are, I think, all that we need."

At Waterloo we were fortunate in catching a train for Leatherhead, where we hired a trap[1] at the station inn, and drove for four or five miles through the lovely Surrey lanes. It was a perfect day, with a bright sun and a few fleecy clouds in the

heavens. The trees and wayside hedges were just throwing out their first green shoots, and the air was full of the pleasant smell of the moist earth. To me at least there was a strange contrast between the sweet promise of the spring and this sinister quest upon which we were engaged. My companion sat in front of the trap, his arms folded, his hat pulled down over his eyes, and his chin sunk upon his breast, buried in the deepest thought. Suddenly, however, he started, tapped me on the shoulder, and pointed over the meadows.

"Look there!" said he.

A heavily-timbered park stretched up in a gentle slope, thickening into a grove at the highest point. From amidst the branches there jutted out the grey gables and high roof-tree[2] of a very old mansion.

"Stoke Moran?" said he.

"Yes, sir, that be the house of Dr. Grimesby Roylott," remarked the driver.

"There is some building going on there," said Holmes; "that is where we are going."

"There's the village," said the driver, pointing to a cluster of roofs some distance to the left; "but if you want to get to the house, you'll find it shorter to get over this stile,[3] and so by the footpath over the fields. There it is, where the lady is walking."

"And the lady, I fancy, is Miss Stoner," observed Holmes, shading his eyes. "Yes, I think we had better do as you suggest."

We got off, paid our fare, and the trap rattled back on its way to Leatherhead.

"I thought it as well," said Holmes, as we climbed the stile, "that this fellow should think we had come here as architects, or on some definite business. It may stop his gossip. Good afternoon, Miss Stoner. You see that we have been as good as our word."

Our client of the morning had hurried forward to meet us with a face which spoke her joy. "I have been waiting so eagerly for you," she cried, shaking hands with us warmly. "All has turned out splendidly. Dr. Roylott has gone to town, and it is unlikely that he will be back before evening."

"We have had the pleasure of making the doctor's acquaintance," said Holmes, and in a few words he sketched out what had occurred. Miss Stoner turned white to the lips as she listened.

"Good heavens!" she cried, "he has followed me, then."

"So it appears."

"He is so cunning that I never know when I am safe from him. What will he say when he returns?"

"He must guard himself, for he may find that there is some one more cunning than himself upon his track. You must lock yourself up from him to-night. If he is violent, we shall take you away to your aunt's at Harrow. Now, we must make the best use of our time, so kindly take us at once to the rooms which we are to examine."

The building was of grey, lichen-blotched stone, with a high central portion, and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out on each side. In one of these wings the windows were broken, and blocked with wooden boards, while the roof was partly caved in, a picture of ruin. The central portion was in little better repair, but the right-hand block was comparatively modern, and the blinds in the windows, with the blue smoke curling up from the chimneys, showed that this was where the family resided. Some scaffolding had been erected against the end wall, and the stonework had been broken into, but there were no signs of any workmen at the moment of our visit. Holmes walked slowly up and down the ill-trimmed lawn, and examined with deep attention the outsides of the windows.

"This, I take it, belongs to the room in which you used to sleep, the centre one to your sister's, and the one next to the main building to Dr. Roylott's chamber?"

"Exactly so. But I am now sleeping in the middle one."

"Pending the alterations, as I understand. By the way, there does not seem to be any very pressing need for repairs at that end wall."

"There were none. I believe that it was an excuse to move me from my room."

"Ah! that is suggestive. Now, on the other side of this narrow wing runs the corridor from which these three rooms open. There

are windows in it, of course?"

"Yes, but very small ones. Too narrow for any one to pass through."

"As you both locked your doors at night your rooms were unapproachable from that side. Now, would you have the kindness to go into your room, and to bar your shutters."

Miss Stoner did so, and Holmes, after a careful examination through the open window, endeavoured in every way to force the shutter open, but without success. There was no slit through which a knife could be passed to raise the bar. Then with his lens[4] he tested the hinges, but they were of solid iron, built firmly into the massive masonry. "Hum!" said he, scratching his chin in some perplexity, "my theory certainly presents some difficulties. No one could pass these shutters if they were bolted. Well, we shall see if the inside throws any light upon the matter."

A small side-door led into the whitewashed corridor from which the three bedrooms opened. Holmes refused to examine the third chamber, so we passed at once to the second, that in which Miss Stoner was now sleeping, and in which her sister, had met her fate. It was a homely[5] little room, with a low ceiling and a gaping fireplace, after the fashion of old country houses. A brown chest of drawers stood in one corner, a narrow white-counterpaned bed in another, and a dressing-table on the left-hand side of the window. These articles, with two small wickerwork chairs, made up all the furniture in the room, save for a square of Wilton carpet[6] in the centre. The boards round and the panelling of the walls were brown, worm-eaten oak, so old and discoloured that it may have dated from the original building of the house. Holmes drew one of the chairs into a corner and sat silent, while his eyes travelled round and round and up and down, taking in every detail of the apartment.

"Where does that bell communicate with?" he asked at last, pointing to a thick bell-rope which hung down beside the bed, the tassel actually lying upon the pillow.

"It goes to the housekeeper's room."

"It looks newer than the other things?"

"Yes, it was only put there a couple of years ago."

"Your sister asked for it, I suppose?"

"No, I never heard of her using it. We used always to get what we wanted for ourselves."

"Indeed, it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there. You will excuse me for a few minutes while I satisfy myself as to this floor." He threw himself down upon his face with his lens in his hand, and crawled swiftly backwards and forwards, examining minutely the cracks between the boards. Then he did the same with the woodwork with which the chamber was panelled. Finally he walked over to the bed and spent some time in staring at it, and in running his eye up and down the wall. Finally he took the bell-rope in his hand and gave it a brisk tug.

"Why, it's a dummy," said he.

"Won't it ring?"

"No, it is not even attached to a wire. This is very interesting. You can see now that it is fastened to a hook just above where the little opening of the ventilator is."

"How very absurd! I never noticed that before."

"Very strange!" muttered Holmes, pulling at the rope. "There are one or two very singular points about this room. For example, what a fool a builder must be to open a ventilator into another room, when, with the same trouble, he might have communicated with the outside air!"

"That is also quite modern," said the lady.

"Done about the same time as the bell-rope," remarked Holmes.

"Yes, there were several little changes carried out about that time."

"They seem to have been of a most interesting character—dummy bell-ropes, and ventilators which do not ventilate. With your permission, Miss Stoner, we shall now carry our researches into the inner apartment."

Dr. Grimesby Roylott's chamber was larger than that of his stepdaughter, but was as plainly furnished. A camp bed, a small

wooden shelf full of books, mostly of a technical character, an armchair beside the bed, a plain wooden chair against the wall, a round table, and a large iron safe were the principal things which met the eye. Holmes walked slowly round and examined each and all of them with the keenest interest.

"What's in here?" he asked, tapping the safe.

"My stepfather's business papers."

"Oh! you have seen inside, then?"

"Only once, some years ago. I remember that it was full of papers."

"There isn't a cat in it, for example?"

"No. What a strange idea!"

"Well, look at this!" He took up a small saucer of milk which stood on the top of it.

"No; we don't keep a cat. But there is a cheetah and a baboon."

"Ah, yes, of course! Well, a cheetah is just a big cat, and yet a saucer of milk does not go very far in satisfying its wants, I daresay. There is one point which I should wish to determine." He squatted down in front of the wooden chair, and examined the seat of it with the greatest attention.

"Thank you. That is quite settled," said he, rising and putting his lens in his pocket. "Hullo! here is something interesting!"

The object which had caught his eye was a small dog lash[7] hung on one corner of the bed. The lash, however, was curled upon itself, and tied so as to make a loop of whipcord.

"What do you make of that, Watson?"

"It's a common enough lash. But I don't know why it should be tied."

"That is not quite so common, is it? Ah, me! it's a wicked world, and when a clever man turns his brains to crime it is the worst of all. I think that I have seen enough now, Miss Stoner, and, with your permission, we shall walk out upon the lawn."

I had never seen my friend's face so grim, or his brow so dark, as it was when we turned from the scene of this investigation. We had

walked several times up and down the lawn, neither Miss Stoner nor myself liking to break in upon his thoughts before he roused himself from his reverie.

"It is very essential, Miss Stoner," said he, "that you should absolutely follow my advice in every respect."

"I shall most certainly do so."

"The matter is too serious for any hesitation. Your life may depend upon your compliance."

"I assure you that I am in your hands."

"In the first place, both my friend and I must spend the night in your room."

Both Miss Stoner and I gazed at him in astonishment.

"Yes, it must be so. Let me explain. I believe that that is the village inn over there?"

"Yes, that is the 'Crown.' "

"Very good. Your windows would be visible from there?"

"Certainly."

"You must confine yourself to your room, on pretence of a headache, when your stepfather comes back. Then when you hear him retire for the night, you must open the shutters of your window, undo the hasp, put your lamp there as a signal to us, and then withdraw with everything which you are likely to want into the room which you used to occupy. I have no doubt that, in spite of the repairs, you could manage there for one night."

"Oh, yes, easily."

"The rest you will leave in our hands."

"But what will you do?"

"We shall spend the night in your room, and we shall investigate the cause of this noise which has disturbed you."

"I believe, Mr. Holmes, that you have already made up your mind," said Miss Stoner, laying her hand upon my companion's sleeve.

"Perhaps I have."

"Then for pity's sake tell me what was the cause of my sister's death."

"I should prefer to have clearer proofs before I speak."

"You can at least tell me whether my own thought is correct, and if she died from some sudden fright."

"No, I do not think so. I think that there was probably some more tangible cause. And now, Miss Stoner, we must leave you, for if Dr. Roylott returned and saw us, our journey would be in vain. Good-bye, and be brave, for if you will do what I have told you, you may rest assured that we shall soon drive away the dangers that threaten you."

Sherlock Holmes and I had no difficulty in engaging a bedroom and sitting-room at the 'Crown' Inn. They were on the upper floor, and from our window we could command a view of the avenue gate, and of the inhabited wing of Stoke Moran Manor House. At dusk we saw Dr. Grimesby Roylott drive past, his huge form looming up beside the little figure of the lad who drove him. The boy had some slight difficulty in undoing the heavy iron gates, and we heard the hoarse roar of the Doctor's voice, and saw the fury with which he shook his clenched fists at him. The trap drove on, and a few minutes later we saw a sudden light spring up among the trees as the lamp was lit in one of the sitting-rooms.

"Do you know, Watson," said Holmes, as we sat together in the gathering darkness, "I have really some scruples as to taking you to-night. There is a distinct element of danger."

"Can I be of assistance?"

"Your presence might be invaluable."

"Then I shall certainly come."

"It is very kind of you."

"You speak of danger. You have evidently seen more in these rooms than was visible to me."

"No, but I fancy that I may have deduced a little more. I imagine that you saw all that I did."

"I saw nothing remarkable save the bell rope, and what purpose that could answer I confess is more than I can imagine."

"You saw the ventilator, too?"

"Yes, but I do not think that it is such a very unusual thing to have a small opening between two rooms. It was so small that a rat could hardly pass through."

"I knew that we should find a ventilator before ever we came to Stoke Moran."

"My dear Holmes!"

"Oh, yes, I did. You remember in her statement she said that her sister could smell Dr. Roylott's cigar. Now, of course that suggests at once that there must be a communication between the two rooms. It could only be a small one, or it would have been remarked upon at the Coroner's inquiry. I deduced a ventilator."

"But what harm can there be in that?"

"Well, there is at least a curious coincidence of dates. A ventilator is made, a cord is hung, and a lady who sleeps in the bed dies. Does not that strike you?"

"I cannot as yet see any connection."

"Did you observe anything very peculiar about that bed?"

"No."

"It was clamped to the floor. Did you ever see a bed fastened like that before?"

"I cannot say that I have."

"The lady could not move her bed. It must always be in the same relative position to the ventilator and to the rope—for so we may call it, since it was clearly never meant for a bell-pull."

"Holmes," I cried, "I seem to see dimly what you are hinting at. We are only just in time to prevent some subtle and horrible crime."

"Subtle enough, and horrible enough. When a doctor does go wrong, he is the first of criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge. Palmer and Pritchard were among the heads of their profession.[8] This man strikes even deeper, but I think, Watson, that we shall be able to strike deeper still. But we shall have horrors enough before the night is over; for goodness' sake let us have a

quiet pipe, and turn our minds for a few hours to something more cheerful."

About nine o'clock the light among the trees was extinguished, and all was dark in the direction of the Manor House. Two hours passed slowly away, and then, suddenly, just at the stroke of eleven, a single bright light shone out right in front of us.

"That is our signal," said Holmes, springing to his feet; "it comes from the middle window."

As we passed out he exchanged a few words with the landlord, explaining that we were going on a late visit to an acquaintance, and that it was possible that we might spend the night there. A moment later we were out on the dark road, a chill wind blowing in our faces, and one yellow light twinkling in front of us through the gloom to guide us on our sombre errand.

There was little difficulty in entering the grounds, for unrepaired breaches gaped in the old park wall. Making our way among the trees, we reached the lawn, crossed it, and were about to enter through the window, when out from a clump of laurel bushes there darted what seemed to be a hideous and distorted child, who threw itself on the grass with writhing limbs, and then ran swiftly across the lawn into the darkness.

"My God!" I whispered; "did you see it?"

Holmes was for the moment as startled as I. His hand closed like a vice upon my wrist in his agitation. Then he broke into a low laugh, and put his lips to my ear.

"It is a nice household," he murmured. "That is the baboon."

I had forgotten the strange pets which the Doctor affected. There was a cheetah, too; perhaps we might find it upon our shoulders at any moment. I confess that I felt easier in my mind when, after following Holmes' example and slipping off my shoes, I found myself inside the bedroom. My companion noiselessly closed the shutters, moved the lamp on to the table, and cast his eyes round the room. All was as we had seen it in the day-time. Then creeping up to me

and making a trumpet of his hand, he whispered into my ear again so gently that it was all that I could do to distinguish the words—

"The least sound would be fatal to our plans."

I nodded to show that I had heard.

"We must sit without a light. He would see it through the ventilator."

I nodded again.

"Do not go asleep; your very life may depend upon it. Have your pistol ready in case we should need it. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair."

I took out my revolver and laid it on the corner of the table.

Holmes had brought up a long thin cane, and this he placed upon the bed beside him. By it he laid the box of matches and the stump of a candle. Then he turned down the lamp, and we were left in darkness.

How shall I ever forget that dreadful vigil? I could not hear a sound, not even the drawing of a breath, and yet I knew that my companion sat open-eyed, within a few feet of me, in the same state of nervous tension in which I was myself. The shutters cut off the least ray of light, and we waited in absolute darkness. From outside came the occasional cry of a night bird, and once at our very window a long drawn, cat-like whine, which told us that the cheetah was indeed at liberty. Far away we could hear the deep tones of the parish clock, which boomed out every quarter of an hour. How long they seemed, those quarters! Twelve struck, and one, and two, and three, and still we sat waiting silently for whatever might befall.

Suddenly there was the momentary gleam of a light up in the direction of the ventilator, which vanished immediately, but was succeeded by a strong smell of burning oil and heated metal. Some one in the next room had lit a dark lantern.[9] I heard a gentle sound of movement, and then all was silent once more, though the smell grew stronger. For half an hour I sat with straining ears. Then suddenly another sound became audible—a very gentle, soothing sound, like that of a small jet of steam escaping continually from a

kettle. The instant that we heard it, Holmes sprang from the bed, struck a match, and lashed furiously with his cane at the bell-pull.

"You see it, Watson?" he yelled. "You see it?"

But I saw nothing. At the moment when Holmes struck the light I heard a low, clear whistle, but the sudden glare flashing into my weary eyes made it impossible for me to tell what it was at which my friend lashed so savagely. I could, however, see that his face was deadly pale, and filled with horror and loathing.

He had ceased to strike, and was gazing up at the ventilator, when suddenly there broke from the silence of the night the most horrible cry to which I have ever listened. It swelled up louder and louder, a hoarse yell of pain and fear and anger all mingled in the one dreadful shriek. They say that away down in the village, and even in the distant parsonage, that cry raised the sleepers from their beds. It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it rose.

"What can it mean?" I gasped.

"It means that it is all over," Holmes answered. "And perhaps, after all, it is for the best. Take your pistol, and we shall enter Dr. Roylott's room."

With a grave face he lit the lamp, and led the way down the corridor. Twice he struck at the chamber door without any reply from within. Then he turned the handle and entered, I at his heels, with the cocked pistol in my hand.

It was a singular sight which met our eyes. On the table stood a dark lantern with the shutter half open, throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe, the door of which was ajar. Beside this table, on the wooden chair, sat Dr. Grimesby Roylott, clad in a long grey dressing-gown, his bare ankles protruding beneath, and his feet thrust into red heelless Turkish slippers. Across his lap lay the short stock with the long lash which we had noticed during the day. His chin was cocked upwards, and his eyes were fixed in a dreadful rigid stare at the corner of the ceiling. Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound

tightly round his head. As we entered he made neither sound nor motion.

"The band! the speckled band!" whispered Holmes.

I took a step forward. In an instant his strange headgear began to move, and there reared itself from among his hair the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent.

"It is a swamp adder!"[1] cried Holmes—"the deadliest snake in India. He has died within ten seconds of being bitten. Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another.[2] Let us thrust this creature back into its den, and we can then remove Miss Stoner to some place of shelter, and let the county police know what has happened."

As he spoke he drew the dog whip swiftly from the dead man's lap, and throwing the noose round the reptile's neck, he drew it from its horrid perch, and, carrying it at arm's length threw it into the iron safe, which he closed upon it.

Such are the true facts of the death of Dr. Grimesby Roylott, of Stoke Moran. It is not necessary that I should prolong a narrative which has already run to too great a length, by telling how we broke the sad news to the terrified girl, how we conveyed her by the morning train to the care of her good aunt at Harrow, of how the slow process of official inquiry came to the conclusion that the Doctor met his fate while indiscreetly playing with a dangerous pet. The little which I had yet to learn of the case was told me by Sherlock Holmes as we travelled back next day.

"I had," said he, "come to an entirely erroneous conclusion, which shows, my dear Watson, how dangerous it always is to reason from insufficient data. The presence of the gipsies, and the use of the word 'band,' which was used by the poor girl, no doubt, to explain the appearance which she had caught a hurried glimpse of by the light of her match, were sufficient to put me upon an entirely wrong scent. I can only claim the merit that I instantly reconsidered my position when, however, it became clear to me that whatever danger threatened an occupant of the room could not come either

from the window or the door. My attention was speedily drawn, as I have already remarked to you, to this ventilator, and to the bell rope which hung down to the bed. The discovery that this was a dummy, and that the bed was clamped to the floor, instantly gave rise to the suspicion that the rope was there as a bridge for something passing through the hole, and coming to the bed. The idea of a snake instantly occurred to me, and when I coupled it with my knowledge that the Doctor was furnished with a supply of creatures from India, I felt that I was probably on the right track. The idea of using a form of poison which could not possibly be discovered by any chemical test was just such a one as would occur to a clever and ruthless man who had had an Eastern training. The rapidity with which such a poison would take effect would also, from his point of view, be an advantage. It would be a sharp-eyed coroner indeed who could distinguish the two little dark punctures which would show where the poison fangs had done their work. Then I thought of the whistle. Of course, he must recall the snake before the morning light revealed it to the victim. He had trained it, probably by the use of the milk which we saw, to return to him when summoned.[3] He would put it through this ventilator at the hour that he thought best, with the certainty that it would crawl down the rope, and land on the bed. It might or might not bite the occupant, perhaps she might escape every night for a week, but sooner or later she must fall a victim.

"I had come to these conclusions before ever I had entered his room. An inspection of his chair showed me that he had been in the habit of standing on it, which, of course, would be necessary in order that he should reach the ventilator. The sight of the safe, the saucer of milk, and the loop of whipcord were enough to finally dispel any doubts which may have remained. The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner was obviously caused by her father hastily closing the door of his safe upon its terrible occupant. Having once made up my mind, you know the steps which I took in order to put the matter to the proof. I heard the creature hiss, as I have no doubt that you did also, and I instantly lit the light and attacked it."

"With the result of driving it through the ventilator."

"And also with the result of causing it to turn upon its master at the other side. Some of the blows of my cane came home, and roused its snakish temper, so that it flew upon the first person it saw. In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience."

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: So extreme as to challenge belief; incredible.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A fictitious location. Surrey is a county southeast of London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Street in central London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, wake you up by knocking.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A horse-drawn cart with seats, originally designed to carry hunters and their hunting dogs.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Reasoning.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: London railway station. Leatherhead is a town in Surrey.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From 1811 to 1820, the period when the son of George III functioned as ruler (Prince Regent) because of his father's insanity.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Major city (now Kolkata) in eastern India.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Town in northwest England.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Low wall.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Small town ten miles northwest of London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Officer in the British military receiving reduced pay because not on active service.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Large town west of London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Cloth or leather leggings.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Self-important official. Scotland Yard is the police headquarters in London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Informal name of London civil-law establishment located near St. Paul's Cathedral that had in earlier times handled the registration of marriage licences, wills, and other legal documents. Copies of wills were at this time held at Somerset House on the Strand.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A small powerful revolver (Conan Doyle most likely meant the Webley No. 2, a pistol that fired cartridges manufactured by Eley).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A small two-wheeled carriage.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Horizontal beam in a roof that supports the upper ends of the rafters.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A step or set of steps for climbing over a fence or wall.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Magnifying glass.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Simple, cozy.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A good-quality, cut-pile carpet.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Whip.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: William Palmer (the "Rugeley Poisoner") was executed in 1856 for the murder of an acquaintance; Edward William Pritchard was hanged in 1865 for poisoning his wife and mother-in-law. Both men were doctors but hardly "heads of their profession."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A lantern with a sliding shutter or panel to dim or hide its light.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An invented name for an imaginary reptile; there is no snake that completely fits the description given here.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Ecclesiastes 10:8: "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it." The verse continues "and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Objections have been made to this solution on the grounds that snakes are deaf, cannot climb up ropes, and do not (usually) drink milk.Return to reference 3

AMY LEVY
1861–1889

Although Amy Levy died while still in her twenties, she left behind an impressive body of work: three novels, three books of poetry, and a number of short stories. She started her career young: her first major poem, "Xantippe: A Fragment," was published when she was still a teenager. After attending Brighton High School for Girls, a school founded on feminist principles, she went on to become only the second Jewish woman to attend Cambridge University. She left upon the publication of her first book of poetry, *Xantippe and Other Verses* (1881), most likely as a result of the sexism and anti-Semitism she experienced while enrolled. After leaving Cambridge, Levy traveled in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, but also spent considerable time in London, where she met regularly with a group of intellectual women that included the writer and activist Olive Schreiner (whose work appears in this volume), Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor, and the sociologist, economist, and social reformer Beatrice Webb. While in Florence in 1886, Levy met and fell in love with Violet Page (who wrote under the pseudonym Vernon Lee) to whom she wrote several love poems, and she was introduced to Lee's circle of friends. She eventually became romantically involved with another member of this circle, the poet Dorothy Blomfield.

Oscar Wilde was just one of Levy's contemporaries who valued her work highly: in her obituary, he praised the "sincerity, directness, and melancholy" in her writings. "To write thus at six-and-twenty is

given to very few." Levy was both an accomplished poet and a witty and incisive writer of fiction. Not all her work was equally well received, however; her novel *Reuben Sachs, A Sketch* (1888) was regarded by some Jewish reviewers as anti-Semitic, and by some non-Jewish reviewers as confirming anti-Semitic stereotypes. Levy was not religious, but she appears to have valued her Jewish heritage, and these characterizations pained her deeply. The story included here, "Cohen of Trinity" (1889), is easily read as a response to her critics. Levy struggled with depression throughout her life, as the melancholy of many of her writings attests. She committed suicide on September 10, 1889, two months before her twenty-eighth birthday.

Xantippe.[1] A Fragment

What, have I waked again? I never thought
To see the rosy dawn, or ev'n this grey,
Dull, solemn stillness, ere the dawn has come;
The lamp burns low; low burns the lamp of life;
The still morn stays expectant, and my soul,
All weighted with a passive wonderment,
Waiteth and watcheth, waiteth for the dawn.
Come hither, maids; too soundly have ye slept
That should have watched me; nay, I would not chide—
Oft have I chidden, yet I would not chide
In this last hour;—now all should be at peace.
I have been dreaming in a troubled sleep
Of weary days I thought not to recall;
Of stormy days, whose storms are hushed long since;
Of gladsome days, of sunny days; alas!
In dreaming, all their sunshine seem'd so sad,
As though the current of the dark To-Be
Had flow'd, prophetic, through the happy hours.
And yet, full well, I know it was not thus;
I mind me sweetly of the summer days,
When, leaning from the lattice, I have caught
The fair, far glimpses of a shining sea;
And nearer, of tall ships which thronged the bay,
And stood out blackly from a tender sky,
All flecked with sulphur, azure, and bright gold;
And in the still, clear air have heard the hum
Of distant voices; and methinks there rose
No darker fount to mar or stain the joy
Which sprang ecstatic in my maiden breast,

Than just those vague desires, those hopes and fears,
Those eager longings, strong, though undefined,
Whose very sadness makes them seem so sweet,
What cared I for the merry mockeries
Of other maidens sitting at the loom?
Or for sharp voices, bidding me return
To maiden labour? Were we not apart,
I and my high thoughts, and my golden dreams,
My soul which yearned for knowledge, for a tongue
That should proclaim the stately mysteries
Of this fair world, and of the holy gods?
Then followed days of sadness, as I grew
To learn my woman-mind had gone astray,
And I was sinning in those very thoughts—
For maidens, mark, such are not woman's thoughts —
(And yet, 'tis strange, the gods who fashion us
Have given us such promptings). . . .
Fled the years,
Till seventeen had found me tall and strong,
And fairer, runs it, than Athenian maids
Are wont to seem; I had not learnt it well—
My lesson of dumb patience—and I stood
At Life's great threshold with a beating heart,
And soul resolved to conquer and attain. . . . .
Once, walking 'thwart the crowded market place,
With other maidens, bearing in the twigs,
White doves for Aphrodite's[2] sacrifice,
I saw him, all ungainly and uncouth,
Yet many gathered round to hear his words,
Tall youths and stranger-maidens—Sokrates[3]—
I saw his face and marked it, half with awe,
Half with a quick repulsion at the shape. . . .
The richest gem lies hidden furthest down,

And is the dearer for the weary search;
We grasp the shining shells which strew the shore,
Yet swift we fling them from us; but the gem
We keep for aye and cherish. So a soul,
Found after weary searching in the flesh
Which half repelled our senses, is more dear,
For that same seeking, than the sunny mind
Which lavish Nature marks with thousand hints
Upon a brow of beauty. We are prone
To everweigh such subtle hints, then deem,
In after disappointment, we are fooled. . . .
And when, at length, my father told me all,
That I should wed me with great Sokrates,
I foolish, wept to see at once cast down
The maiden image of a future love,
Where perfect body matched the perfect soul.
But slowly, softly did I cease to weep;
Slowly I 'gan to mark the magic flash
Leap to the eyes, to watch the sudden smile
Break round the mouth, and linger in the eyes;
To listen for the voice's lightest tone—
Great voice, whose cunning modulations seemed
Like to the notes of some sweet instrument.
So did I reach and strain, until at last
I caught the soul athwart the grosser flesh.
Again of thee, sweet Hope, my spirit dreamed!
I, guided by his wisdom and his love,
Led by his words, and counselled by his care,
Should lift the shrouding veil from things which be,
And at the flowing fountain of his soul
Refresh my thirsting spirit. . . .
And indeed,
In those long days which followed that strange day
When rites and song, and sacrifice and flow'rs,
Proclaimed that we were wedded, did I learn,
In sooth, a-many lessons; bitter ones

Which sorrow taught me, and not love inspired,
Which deeper knowledge of my kind impressed
With dark insistance on reluctant brain;—
But that great wisdom, deeper, which dispels
Narrowed conclusions of a half-grown mind,
And sees athwart the littleness of life
Nature's divineness, and her harmony,
Was never poor Xantippe's. . . .
I would pause,
And would recall no more, no more of life,
Than just the incomplete, imperfect dream
Of early summers, with their light and shade,
Their blossom-hopes, whose fruit was never ripe;
But something strong within me, some sad chord
Which loudly echoes to the later life,
Me to unfold the after-misery
Urges with plaintive wailing in my heart.
Yet, maidens, mark; I would not that ye thought
I blame my lord departed, for he meant
No evil, so I take it, to his wife.
'Twas only that the high philosopher,
Pregnant with noble theories and great thoughts,
Deigned not to stoop to touch so slight a thing
As the fine fabric of a woman's brain—
So subtle as a passionate woman's soul.
I think, if he had stooped a little, and cared,
I might have risen nearer to his height,
And not lain shattered, neither fit for use
As goodly household vessel, nor for that
Far finer thing which I had hoped to be. . . .
Death, holding high his retrospective lamp,
Shows me those first, far years of wedded life,
Ere I had learnt to grasp the barren shape
Of what the fates had destined for my life.
Then, as all youthful spirits are, was I
Wholly incredulous that Nature meant

So little, who had promised me so much.
At first I fought my fate with gentle words,
With high endeavours after greater things—
Striving to win the soul of Sokrates,
Like some slight bird, who sings her burning love
To human master, till at length she finds
Her tender language wholly misconceived,
And that same hand whose kind caress she sought,
With fingers flippant flings the careless corn. . . .
I do remember how, one summer's eve,
He, seated in an arbour's leafy shade,
Had bade me bring fresh wine-skins.[4] . . .
As I stood
Ling'ring upon the threshold, half concealed
By tender foliage; and my spirit light
With draughts of sunny weather, did I mark
An instant, the gay group before mine eyes.
Deepest in shade, and facing where I stood,
Sat Plato,[5] with his calm face and low brows,
Which met above the narrow Grecian eyes;
The pale, thin lips just parted to the smile,
Which dimpled that smooth olive of his cheek.
His head a little bent, sat Sokrates,
With one swart finger raised admonishing,
And on the air were borne his changing tones.
Low lounging at his feet, one fair arm thrown
Around his knee (the other, high in air
Brandish'd a brazen amphor,° which yet rained
Bright drops of ruby on the golden locks
And temples with their fillets of the vine),
Lay Alkibiades[6] the beautiful.
And thus, with solemn tone, spake Sokrates:
"This fair Aspasia, which our Pericles[7]
Hath brought from realms afar, and set on high
In our Athenian city, hath a mind,

I doubt not, of a strength beyond her race;
And makes employ of it, beyond the way
Of women nobly gifted: woman's frail—
Her body rarely stands the test of soul;
She grows intoxicate with knowledge; throws
The laws of custom, order, 'neath her feet,
Feasting at life's great banquet with wide throat."
Then sudden, stepping from my leafy screen,
Holding the swelling wine-skin o'er my head,
With breast that heaved, and eyes and cheeks aflame,
Lit by a fury and a thought, I spake:
"By all great powers around us! can it be
That we poor women are empirical?
That gods who fashioned us did strive to make
Beings too fine, too subtly delicate,
With sense that thrilled response to ev'ry touch
Of nature's, and their task is not complete?
That they have sent their half-completed work
To bleed and quiver, here upon the earth?—
To bleed and quiver, and to weep and weep,
To beat its soul against the marble walls
Of men's cold hearts, and then at last to sin!"
I ceased, the first hot passion stayed and stemmed
And frighted by the silence: I could see,
Framed by the arbour foliage, which the sun
In setting softly gilded with rich gold,
Those upturned faces, and those placid limbs;
Saw Plato's narrow eyes and niggard mouth,[8]
Which half did smile and half did criticise,
One hand held up, the shapely fingers framed
To gesture of entreaty—"Hush, I pray,
Do not disturb her; let us hear the rest—
Follow her mood, for here's another phase
Of your black-browed Xantippe. . . ."

Then I saw
Young Alkibiades, with laughing lips
And half-shut eyes, contemptuous, shrugging up
Soft, snowy shoulders, till he brought the gold
Of flowing ringlets round about his breasts.
But Sokrates, all slow and solemnly,
Raised, calm, his face to mine, and sudden spake:
"I thank thee for the wisdom which thy lips
Have thus let fall among us: prythee tell
From what high source, from what philosophies
Didst cull the sapient[9] notion of thy words?"
Then stood I straight and silent for a breath;
Dumb, crushed with all that weight of cold
contempt;
But swiftly in my bosom there uprose
A sudden flame, a merciful fury sent
To save me; with both angry hands I flung
The skin upon the marble, where it lay
Spouting red rills and fountains on the white;
Then, all unheeding faces, voices, eyes,
I fled across the threshold, hair unbound—
White garment stained to redness—beating heart
Flooded with all the flowing tide of hopes
Which once had gushed out golden, now sent back
Swift to their sources, never more to rise. . . .
I think I could have borne the weary life,
The narrow life within the narrow walls,
If he had loved me; but he kept his love
For this Athenian city and her sons;
And, haply, for some stranger-woman,° bold
With freedom, thought, and glib philosophy. . . .
Ah me! the long, long weeping through the nights,
The weary watching for the pale-eyed dawn
Which only brought fresh grieving; then I grew
Fiercer, and cursed from out my inmost heart

The Fates which marked me an Athenian maid.
Then faded that vain fury; hope died out;
A huge despair was stealing on my soul,
A sort of fierce acceptance of my fate,—
He wished a household vessel—well! 'twas good,
For he should have it! He should have no more
The yearning treasure of a woman's love,
But just the baser treasure which he sought.—
I called my maidens, ordered out the loom,
And spun unceasing from the morn till eve;
Watching all keenly over warp and woof,
Weighing the white wool with a jealous hand.
I spun until, methinks, I spun away
The soul from out my body, the high thoughts
From out my spirit; till at last I grew
As ye have known me,—eye exact to mark
The texture of the spinning; ear all keen
For aimless talking when the moon is up,
And ye should be a-sleeping; tongue to cut
With quick incision, 'thwart the merry words
Of idle maidens. . . .
Only yesterday
My hands did cease from spinning; I have wrought
My dreary duties, patient till the last.
The gods reward me! Nay, I will not tell
The after years of sorrow; wretched strife
With grimmest foes—sad Want and Poverty;—
Nor yet the time of horror, when they bore
My husband from the threshold; nay, not when
The subtle weed[1] had wrought its deadly work.
Alas, alas, I was not there to sooth
The last great moment; never any thought
Of her that loved him—save at least the charge,
All earthly, that her body should not starve. . . .
You weep, you weep; I would not that ye wept,

Such tears are idle; with the young, such grief
Soon grows to gratulation, as, "her love
Was withered by misfortune; mine shall grow
All nurtured by the loving," or "her life
Was wrecked and shattered—mine shall smoothly sail.". . . .
Enough, enough. In vain, in vain, in vain!
The gods forgive me! Sorely have I sinned
In all my life. A fairer fate befall
You all that stand there. . . . .
Ha! the dawn has come;
I see a rosy glimmer—nay! it grows dark;
Why stand ye so in silence? throw it wide,
The casement, quick; why tarry?—give me air—
O fling it wide, I say, and give me light![2]

1881

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wife of Socrates, mother to their three sons.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Greek goddess of love, beauty, and pleasure.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Philosopher from Athens, often considered the founder of Western philosophy.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Commonly used to store wine.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ancient Greek philosopher, student of Socrates, teacher of Aristotle. Plato wrote a series of dialogues featuring Socrates in conversation with other Athenian figures.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A prominent Athenian statesman who features in one of Plato's dialogues with Socrates about politics.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Greek politician and general, leader in Peloponnesian war. “Aspasia”: a foreign woman who moved to Athens and had a child with Pericles.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Stingy, miserly—this term derives from the Middle English *nigon* and the Old Norse *hniggw.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: “Gather the wisdom”: Socrates is mocking Xantippe by using words she might not understand.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: According to Plato’s account in *Phaedo*, Socrates was tried for impiety and corrupting the youth and found guilty after a day. He was sentenced to death by drinking hemlock.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: According to his 19th-century biographer, Goethe’s last words were “More light!”Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *two-handled vessel*Return to reference °
- °: *Aspasia*Return to reference °

Magdalen[1]

All things I can endure, save one.
The bare, blank room where is no sun;
The parcelled hours; the pallet hard;
The dreary faces here within;
The outer women's cold regard;
The Pastor's iterated "sin";—
These things could I endure, and count
No overstrain'd, unjust amount;
No undue payment for such bliss—
Yea, all things bear, save only this:
That you, who knew what thing would be,
Have wrought this evil unto me.
It is so strange to think on still—
That you, that *you* should do me ill!
Not as one ignorant or blind,
But seeing clearly in your mind
How this must be which now has been,
Nothing aghast at what was seen.
Now that the tale is told and done,
It is so strange to think upon.

You were so tender with me, too!
One summer's night a cold blast blew,
Closer about my throat you drew
The half-slipt shawl of dusky blue.
And once my hand, on a summer's morn,
I stretched to pluck a rose; a thorn
Struck through the flesh and made it bleed
(A little drop of blood indeed!)
Pale grew your cheek; you stoopt and bound
Your handkerchief about the wound;

Your voice came with a broken sound;
With the deep breath your breast was riven;
I wonder, did God laugh in Heaven?

How strange, that *you* should work my woe!
How strange! I wonder, do you know
How gladly, gladly I had died
(And life was very sweet that tide)
To save you from the least, light ill?
How gladly I had borne your pain.
With one great pulse we seem'd to thrill,—
Nay, but we thrill'd with pulses twain.

Even if one had told me this,
"A poison lurks within your kiss,
Gall that shall turn to night his day:"
Thereon I straight had turned away—
Ay, tho' my heart had crack'd with pain—
And never kiss'd your lips again.

At night, or when the daylight nears,
I hear the other women weep;
My own heart's anguish lies too deep
For the soft rain and pain of tears.
I think my heart has turn'd to stone,
A dull, dead weight that hurts my breast;
Here, on my pallet-bed alone,
I keep apart from all the rest.
Wide-eyed I lie upon my bed,
I often cannot sleep all night;
The future and the past are dead,
There is no thought can bring delight.
All night I lie and think and think;
If my heart were not made of stone,
But flesh and blood, it needs must shrink
Before such thoughts. Was ever known

A woman with a heart of stone?

The doctor says that I shall die.
It may be so, yet what care I?
Endless reposing from the strife,
Death do I trust no more than life.
For one thing is like one arrayed,
And there is neither false nor true;
But in a hideous masquerade
All things dance on, the ages through.
And good is evil, evil good;
Nothing is known or understood
Save only Pain. I have no faith
In God or Devil, Life or Death.

The doctor says that I shall die.
You, that I knew in days gone by,
I fain would see your face once more,
Con° well its features o'er and o'er;
And touch your hand and feel your kiss,
Look in your eyes and tell you this:
That all is done, that I am free;
That you, through all eternity,
Have neither part nor lot in me.

1884

Endnotes

- Note 1: Mary Magdalen was a reformed prostitute who traveled with Jesus, supported his ministry, and according to the Gospels of the New Testament was the first to witness his resurrectionReturn to reference 1

Notes

- °: *study*Return to reference °

To Lallie

(*Outside the British Museum.*)

Up those Museum steps you came,
And straightway all my blood was flame,
O Lallie, Lallie!

The world (I had been feeling low)
In one short moment's space did grow
A happy valley.

There was a friend, my friend, with you;
A meagre dame, in peacock blue
Apparelled quaintly:

This poet-heart went pit-a-pat;
I bowed and smiled and raised my hat;
You nodded—faintly.

My heart was full as full could be;
You had not got a word for me,
Not one short greeting;

That nonchalant small nod you gave
(The tyrant's motion to the slave)
Sole mark'd our meeting.

Is it so long? Do you forget
That first and last time that we met?
The time was summer;

The trees were green; the sky was blue;
Our host presented me to you—

A tardy comer.

You look'd demure, but when you spoke
You made a little, funny joke,
Yet half pathetic.

Your gown was grey, I recollect,
I think you patronized the sect
They call "æsthetic."

I brought you strawberries and cream,
I plied you long about a stream
With duckweed laden;

We solemnly discussed the—heat.
I found you shy and very sweet,
A rosebud maiden.

Ah me, to-day! You passed inside
To where the marble gods abide:
Hermes, Apollo,

Sweet Aphrodite, Pan; and where,
For aye reclined, a headless fair
Beats all fairs hollow

And I, I went upon my way,
Well—rather sadder, let us say;
The world looked flatter.

I had been sad enough before,
A little less, a little more,
What *does* it matter?

1884

Ballade of an Omnibus

To see my love suffices me.

—Ballades in Blue China[1]

Some men to carriages aspire;
On some the costly hansoms° wait;
Some seek a fly, on job or hire;[2]
Some mount the trotting steed, elate.
I envy not the rich and great,
A wandering minstrel, poor and free,
I am contented with my fate—
An omnibus suffices me.

In winter days of rain and mire
I find within a corner strait;
The 'busmen know me and my lyre
From Brompton to the Bull-and-Gate.
When summer comes, I mount in state
The topmost summit, whence I see
Crœsus[3] look up, compassionate—
An omnibus suffices me.

I mark, untroubled by desire,
Lucullus' phaeton[4] and its freight.
The scene whereof I cannot tire,
The human tale of love and hate,
The city pageant, early and late
Unfolds itself, rolls by, to be
A pleasure deep and delicate.
An omnibus suffices me.

Princess, your splendour you require,
I, my simplicity; agree
Neither to rate lower nor higher.
An omnibus suffices me.

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: Book of poetry by the Scottish writer Andrew Lang (1844–1912).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Contracted service; “fly”: a quick-traveling carriage; “job”: a brief, one-off engagement.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King of Lydia, renowned for his wealth.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sporty, open carriage; Lucullus was a Roman general, statesman, and conqueror.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *carriages*Return to reference °

New Love, New Life

I

She, who so long has lain
  Stone-stiff with folded wings,
Within my heart again
  The brown bird wakes and sings.

Brown nightingale, whose strain
  Is heard by day, by night,
She sings of joy and pain,
  Of sorrow and delight.

II

'Tis true,—in other days
  Have I unbarred the door;
He knows the walks and ways—
  Love has been here before.

Love blest and love accurst
  Was here in days long past;
This time is not the first,
  But this time is the last.

1889

Cohen of Trinity[1]

The news of poor Cohen's death came to me both as a shock and a surprise.

It is true that, in his melodramatic, self-conscious fashion, he had often declared a taste for suicide to be among the characteristics of his versatile race. And indeed in the Cambridge days, or in that obscure interval which elapsed between the termination of his unfortunate University career and the publication of *Gubernator*, there would have been nothing astonishing in such an act on his part. But now, when his book was in everyone's hands, his name on everyone's lips; when that recognition for which he had longed was so completely his; that success for which he had thirsted was poured out for him in so generous a draught—to turn away, to vanish without a word of explanation (he was so fond of explaining himself) is the very last thing one would have expected of him.

I

He came across the meadows towards the sunset, his upturned face pushed forwards catching the light, and glowing also with another radiance than the rich, reflected glory of the heavens.

A curious figure: slight, ungainly; shoulders in the ears; an awkward, rapid gait, half slouch, half hobble. One arm with its coarse hand swung like a bell-rope as he went; the other pressed a book close against his side, while the hand belonging to it held a few bulrushes and marsh marigolds.

Behind him streamed his shabby gown—it was a glorious afternoon of May—and his dusty trencher-cap pushed to the back of his head revealed clearly the oval contour of the face, the full, prominent lips, full, prominent eyes, and the curved beak of the nose with its restless nostrils.

"Who is he?" I asked of my companion, one of the younger dons.

"Cohen of Trinity."

He shook his head. The man had come up on a scholarship, but had entirely failed to follow up this preliminary distinction. He was no good, no good at all. He was idle, he was incompetent, he led a bad life in a bad set.

We passed on to other subjects, and out of sight passed the uncouth figure with the glowing face, the evil reputation, and that strange suggestion of latent force which clung to him.

The next time I saw Cohen was a few days later in Trinity quad. There were three or four men with him—little Cleaver of Sidney, and others of the same pattern. He was yelling and shrieking with laughter—at some joke of his own, apparently—and his companions were joining in the merriment.

Something in his attitude suggested that he was the ruling spirit of the group, that he was indeed enjoying the delights of addressing an audience, and appreciated to the full the advantages of the situation.

I came across him next morning, hanging moodily over King's Bridge, a striking contrast to the exuberant figure of yesterday.

He looked yellow and flaccid as a sucked lemon, and eyed the water flowing between the bridges with a suicidal air that its notorious shallowness made ridiculous.

Little Cleaver came up to him and threw out a suggestion of lecture.

Cohen turned round with a self-conscious, sham-tragedy air, gave a great guffaw, and roared out by way of answer the quotation from *Tom Cobb*:[2]

"The world's a beast, and I hate it!"

II

By degrees I scraped acquaintance with Cohen, who had interested me from the first.

I cannot quite explain my interest on so slight a knowledge; his manners were a distressing mixture of the *bourgeois* and the

canaille,[3] and a most unattractive lack of simplicity marked his whole personality. There never indeed existed between us anything that could bear the name of friendship. Our relations are easily stated: he liked to talk about himself, and I liked to listen.

I have sometimes reproached myself that I never grew fond of him; but a little reciprocity is necessary in these matters, and poor Cohen had not the art of being fond of people.

I soon discovered that he was desperately lonely and desperately unapproachable.

Once he quoted to me, with reference to himself, the lines from Browning:[4]

> . . . . Hath spied an icy fish
> That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where she lived,
> And thaw herself within the lukewarm waves,
> O' the lazy sea. . . .
> Only she ever sickened, found repulse
> At the other kind of water not her life,
> Flounced back from bliss she was not born to breathe,
> And in her old bonds buried her despair,
> Hating and loving warmth alike.

Of the men with whom I occasionally saw him—men who would have been willing enough to be his friends—he spoke with an open contempt that did him little credit, considering how unscrupulously he made use of them when his loneliness grew intolerable. There were others, too, besides Cleaver and his set, men of a coarser stamp—boon companions, as the story-books say—with whom, when the fit was on, he consented to herd.

But as friends, as permanent companions even, he rejected them, one and all, with a magnificence, an arrogant and bitter scorn that had in it a distinctly comic element.

I saw him once, to my astonishment, with Norwood, and it came out that he had the greatest admiration for Norwood and his set.

What connection there could be between those young puritans, aristocrats and scholars, the flower of the University—if prigs, a little, and *bornés*[5]—and a man of Cohen's way of life, it would be hard to say.

In aspiring to their acquaintance one scarcely knew if to accuse the man of an insane vanity or a pathetic hankering after better things.

Little Leuniger, who played the fiddle, a Jew, was the fashion at that time among them; but he resolutely turned the cold shoulder to poor Cohen, who, I believe, deeply resented this in his heart, and never lost an opportunity of hurling a bitterness at his compatriot.

A desire to stand well in one another's eyes, to make a brave show before one another, is, I have observed, a marked characteristic of the Jewish people.

As for little Leuniger, he went his way, and contented himself with saying that Cohen's family were not people that one "knew."

On the subject of his family, Cohen himself, at times savagely reserved, at others appallingly frank, volunteered little information, though on one occasion he had touched in with a few vivid strokes the background of his life.

I seemed to see it all before me: the little new house in Maida Vale;[6] a crowd of children, clamorous, unkempt; a sallow shrew in a torn dressing-gown, who alternately scolded, bewailed herself, and sank into moody silence; a fitful paternal figure coming and going, depressed, exhilarated according to the fluctuations of his mysterious financial affairs; and over everything the fumes of smoke, the glare of gas, the smell of food in preparation.

But, naturally enough, it was as an individual, not as the member of a family, that Cohen cared to discuss himself.

There was, indeed, a force, an exuberance, a robustness about his individuality that atoned—to the curious observer at least—for the presence of certain of the elements which helped to compose it. His unbounded arrogance, his enormous pretensions, alternating with and tempered by a bitter self-deprecation, overflowing at times

into self-reviling, impressed me, even while amusing and disgusting me.

It seemed that a frustrated sense of power, a disturbing consciousness of some blind force which sought an outlet, lurked within him and allowed him no rest.

Of his failure at his work he spoke often enough, scoffing at academic standards, yet writhing at his own inability to come up to them.

"On my honour," he said to me once, "I can't do better, and that's the truth. Of course you don't believe it; no one believes it. It's all a talk of wasted opportunities, squandered talents—but, before God, that part of my brain which won the scholarship has clean gone."

I pointed out to him that his way of life was not exactly calculated to encourage the working mood.

"Mood!" he shouted with a loud, exasperated laugh. "Mood! I tell you there's a devil in my brain and in my blood, and Heaven knows where it is leading me."

It led him this way and that at all hours of the day and night.

The end of the matter was not difficult to foresee, and I told him so plainly.

This sobered him a little, and he was quiet for three days, lying out on the grass with a lexicon and a pile of Oxford classics.

On the fourth the old mood was upon him and he rushed about like a hunted thing from dawn to sunset winding up with an entertainment which threatened his position as a member of the University.

He got off this time, however, but I shall never forget his face the next morning as he blustered loudly past Norwood and Blount in Trinity Street.

If he neglected his own work, he did, as far as could be seen, no other, unless fits of voracious and promiscuous reading may be allowed to count as such. I suspected him of writing verses, but on this matter of writing he always maintained, curiously enough, a profound reserve.

What I had for some time foreseen as inevitable at length came to pass. Cohen disappeared at a short notice from the University, no choice being given him in the matter.

I went off to his lodgings directly the news of his sentence reached me, but the bird had already flown, leaving no trace behind of its whereabouts.

As I stood in the dismantled little room, always untidy, but now littered from end to end with torn and dusty papers, there rose before my mind the vision of Cohen as I had first seen him in the meadows, with the bulrushes in his hand, the book beneath his arm, and on his face, which reflected the sunset, the radiance of a secret joy.

III

I did not see *Gubernator* till it was in its fourth edition, some three months after its publication and five years after the expulsion of Cohen from Trinity.

The name, Alfred Lazarus Cohen, printed in full on the title-page, revealed what had never before occurred to me, the identity of the author of that much-talked-of book with my unfortunate college acquaintance. I turned over the leaves with a new curiosity, and, it must be added, a new distrust. By-and-bye I ceased from this cursory, tentative inspection, I began at the beginning and finished the book at a sitting.

Everyone knows *Gubernator* by now, and I have no intention of describing it. Half poem, half essay, wholly unclassifiable, with a force, a fire, a vision, a vigour and felicity of phrase that carried you through its most glaring inequalities, its most appalling lapses of taste, the book fairly took the reader by storm.

Here was a clear case of figs from thistles.[7]

I grew anxious to know how Cohen was bearing himself under his success, which must surely have satisfied, for the time being at least, even his enormous claims.

Was that ludicrous, pathetic gap between his dues and his pretensions at last bridged over?

I asked myself this and many more questions, but a natural hesitation to hunt up the successful man where the obscure one had entirely escaped my memory prevented me from taking any steps to the renewal of our acquaintance.

But Cohen, as may be supposed, was beginning to be talked about, heard of and occasionally met, and I had no doubt that chance would soon give me the opportunity I did not feel justified in seeking.

There was growing up, naturally enough, among some of us Cambridge men a sense that Cohen had been hardly used, that (I do not think this was the case) he had been unjustly treated at the University. Lord Norwood, whom I came across one day at the club, remarked that no doubt his widespread popularity would more than atone to Cohen for the flouting he had met with at the hands of Alma Mater. He had read *Gubernator*; it was clever, but the book repelled him, just as the man, poor fellow, had always repelled him. The subject did not seem to interest him, and he went off shortly afterwards with Blount and Leuniger.

A week later I met Cohen at a club dinner, given by a distinguished man of letters. There were present notabilities of every sort—literary, dramatic, artistic—but the author of *Gubernator* was the lion of the evening. He rose undeniably to the situation, and roared as much as was demanded of him. His shrill, uncertain voice, pitched in a loud excited key, shot this way and that across the table. His strange, flexible face, with the full, prominent lips, glowed and quivered with animation. Surely this was his hour of triumph.

He had recognised me at once, and after dinner came round to me, his shoulders in his ears as usual, holding out his hand with a beaming smile. He talked of Cambridge, of one or two mutual acquaintances, without embarrassment. He could not have been less abashed if he had wound up his career at the University amid the cheers of an enthusiastic Senate House.

When the party broke up he came over to me again and suggested that I should go back with him to his rooms. He had never had much opinion of me, as he had been at no pains to

conceal, and I concluded that he was in a mood for unbosoming himself. But it seemed that I was wrong, and we walked back to Great Russell Street,[8] where he had two large, untidy rooms, almost in silence. He told me that he was living away from his family, an unexpected legacy from an uncle having given him independence.

"So the Fates aren't doing it by halves?" I remarked, in answer to this communication.

"Oh, no," he replied, with a certain moody irony, staring hard at me over his cigar.

"Do you know what success means?" he asked suddenly, and in the question I seemed to hear Cohen the *poseur,* always at the elbow of, and not always to be distinguished from, Cohen stark-nakedly revealed.

"Ah, no, indeed."

"It means—inundation by the second-rate."

"What does the fellow want?" I cried, uncertain as to the extent of his seriousness.

"I never," he said, "was a believer in the half-loaf theory."

"It strikes me, Cohen, that your loaf looks uncommonly like a whole one, as loaves go on this unsatisfactory planet."

He burst into a laugh.

"Nothing," he said presently, "can alter the relations of things—their permanent, essential relations. . . . 'They *shall* know, they *shall* understand, they *shall* feel what I am.' That is what I used to say to myself in the old days. I suppose, now, 'they' do know, more or less, and what of that?"

"I should say the difference from your point of view was a very great one. But you always chose to cry for the moon."

"Well," he said, quietly looking up, "it's the only thing worth having."

I was struck afresh by the man's insatiable demands, which looked at times like a passionate striving after perfection, yet went side by side with the crudest vanity, the most vulgar desire for recognition.

I rose soon after his last remark, which was delivered with a simplicity and an air of conviction which made one cease to suspect the mountebank;[9] we shook hands and bade one another good-night.

I never saw Cohen again.

Ten days after our renewal of acquaintance he sent a bullet through his brain, which, it was believed, must have caused instantaneous death. That small section of the public which interests itself in books discussed the matter for three days, and the jury returned the usual verdict. I have confessed that I was astonished, that I was wholly unprepared by my knowledge of Cohen for the catastrophe. Yet now and then an inkling of his motive, a dim, fleeting sense of what may have prompted him to the deed, has stolen in upon me.

In his hour of victory the sense of defeat had been strongest. Is it, then, possible that, amid the warring elements of that discordant nature, the battling forces of that ill-starred, ill-compounded entity, there lurked, clear-eyed and ever-watchful, a baffled idealist?

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of the colleges of Cambridge University. "Cohen": a stereotypically Jewish name; also Hebrew for "priest."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A farce by comic playwright W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911) in which the eponymous hero pretends to be dead in order to avoid paying his debts.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: High class (*bourgeois*) and low class (*canaille*).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The passage is from Robert Browning's "Caliban upon Setebos" (see above, p. 443).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Snobs.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: An affluent residential district in West London.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Matthew 7:16: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Location of the British Museum in London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Quack, charlatan.Return to reference 9

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
1861–1941

One of the most famous and beloved writers of his time, Rabindranath Tagore has many claims to fame: he was the first—and to date, the only—Indian writer to win the Nobel prize for literature; he is the author of not one but two national anthems—for India and Sri Lanka; and he was an outspoken proponent of anticolonialist politics and international peace. Tagore first came to be known in India as the member of a prominent and well-educated family, and then as a talented and prolific writer. As a result of his travels in England, his work came to the attention of modernist authors such as W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, who took great interest in disseminating his poetry. Tagore then went on to become an important political voice during the period of decolonization. But Tagore's work is not exclusively literary or even political: in addition to his prodigious output as a writer of poetry, short stories, and novels, he also wrote plays and composed songs, was an innovative and committed educator who founded his own school, a painter, and an enthusiastic traveler who visited at least twenty-four countries between 1912 and 1932.

Tagore grew up without much formal education, although tutors occasionally supplemented the teaching of his older brothers and sister-in-law. The family effort was remarkably successful: Tagore published his first poem "Abhilash" ("Desire") when he was thirteen, and his first major work at sixteen. (In this latter project, he

temporarily succeeded in passing off one of these compositions as the lost work of a fictional seventeenth-century poet.) Despite being Pirali Brahmans (a traditionally stigmatized group), Tagore's family was central to the Bengali Renaissance, a political, philosophical, and literary movement that played an important role in the rise of anticolonialist and nationalist thought in India. Literary, theatrical, and musical events—both Indian and Western—often took place in his home. Tagore went to England in his late teens to study law, but he soon left school to immerse himself in British literary culture, with an emphasis on Shakespeare as well as English, Irish, and Scottish folk songs. He returned to India committed to reconciling European and Bengali literary traditions.

In 1883, Tagore married ten-year-old Bhabataraini, the uneducated daughter of an employee. (Child marriages were a common practice in India at this time.) Upon her marriage, she took the name Mrinalini. They eventually had five children, two of whom died in childhood. Mrinalini died in 1902.

The works included in this anthology are not Tagore's earliest productions, but they are among the first to be translated into English (by the author) and to be read by European and American audiences. *Gitanjali*, from which song 35 is taken, was central to his being awarded the Nobel Prize. The short stories are among the most popular and well known, both in India and in Britain. They take up themes that are typical of his work, having to do with the ordinary lives of ordinary people, particularly those living in the countryside. What is not represented in this selection is Tagore's nuanced relationship to anticolonialist and antinationalist politics. Throughout his life he was deeply committed to unity: between Muslims and Hindus as well as between nations. This commitment did occasionally create rifts: after initially supporting Mohandas Gandhi's "Swadeshi" (or independence) movement, for example, he later came to see it as divisive and so withdrew his support.

The depth of Tagore's political commitment was also evident when he renounced his knighthood, awarded by King George V in 1915. After the 1919 Massacre of Amritsar in which British troops

fired on a peaceful protest, killing many hundreds of people and wounding many more, Tagore wrote to the viceroy, Lord Chelmsford: "The time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring in their incongruous context of humiliation, and I for my part wish to stand, shorn of all special distinctions, by the side of those of my countrymen who for their so-called insignificance are liable to suffer a degradation not fit for human beings."

Gitanjali[1]

35

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

1910

Endnotes

- Note 1: Song offeringsReturn to reference 1

The Cabuliwallah[1]

My five years' old daughter Mini cannot live without chattering. I really believe that in all her life she has not wasted a minute in silence. Her mother is often vexed at this, and would stop her prattle, but I would not. To see Mini quiet is unnatural, and I cannot bear it long. And so my own talk with her is always lively.

One morning, for instance, when I was in the midst of the seventeenth chapter of my new novel, my little Mini stole into the room, and putting her hand into mine, said: "Father! Ramdayal the door-keeper calls a crow a krow! He doesn't know anything, does he?"

Before I could explain to her the differences of language in this world, she was embarked on the full tide of another subject. "What do you think, Father? Bhola says there is an elephant in the clouds, blowing water out of his trunk, and that is why it rains!"

And then, darting off anew, while I sat still making ready some reply to this last saying, "Father! what relation is Mother to you?"

"My dear little sister in the law!" I murmured involuntarily to myself, but with a grave face contrived to answer: "Go and play with Bhola, Mini! I am busy!"

The window of my room overlooks the road. The child had seated herself at my feet near my table, and was playing softly, drumming on her knees. I was hard at work on my seventeenth chapter, where Protrap Singh, the hero, had just caught Kanchanlata, the heroine, in his arms, and was about to escape with her by the third story window of the castle, when all of a sudden Mini left her play, and ran to the window, crying, "A Cabuliwallah! a Cabuliwallah!" Sure enough in the street below was a Cabuliwallah, passing slowly along. He wore the loose soiled clothing of his people, with a tall turban; there was a bag on his back, and he carried boxes of grapes in his hand.

I cannot tell what were my daughter's feelings at the sight of this man, but she began to call him loudly. "Ah!" I thought, "he will come in, and my seventeenth chapter will never be finished!" At which exact moment the Cabuliwallah turned, and looked up at the child. When she saw this, overcome by terror, she fled to her mother's protection, and disappeared. She had a blind belief that inside the bag, which the big man carried, there were perhaps two or three other children like herself. The pedlar meanwhile entered my doorway, and greeted me with a smiling face.

So precarious was the position of my hero and my heroine, that my first impulse was to stop and buy something, since the man had been called. I made some small purchases, and a conversation began about Abdurrahman, the Russians, the English, and the Frontier Policy.[2]

As he was about to leave, he asked: "And where is the little girl, sir?"

And I, thinking that Mini must get rid of her false fear, had her brought out.

She stood by my chair, and looked at the Cabuliwallah and his bag. He offered her nuts and raisins, but she would not be tempted, and only clung the closer to me, with all her doubts increased.

This was their first meeting.

One morning, however, not many days later, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Cabuliwallah at her feet. In all her life, it appeared, my small daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father. And already the corner of her little *sari*[3] was stuffed with almonds and raisins, the gift of her visitor. "Why did you give her those?" I said, and taking out an eight-anna bit, I handed it to him. The man accepted the money without demur, and slipped it into his pocket.

Alas, on my return an hour later, I found the unfortunate coin had made twice its own worth of trouble! For the Cabuliwallah had given it to Mini, and her mother catching sight of the bright round

object, had pounced on the child with: "Where did you get that eight-anna bit?"

"The Cabuliwallah gave it me," said Mini cheerfully.

"The Cabuliwallah gave it you!" cried her mother much shocked. "Oh, Mini! how could you take it from him?"

I, entering at the moment, saved her from impending disaster, and proceeded to make my own inquiries.

It was not the first or second time, I found, that the two had met. The Cabuliwallah had overcome the child's first terror by a judicious bribery of nuts and almonds, and the two were now great friends.

They had many quaint jokes, which afforded them much amusement. Seated in front of him, looking down on his gigantic frame in all her tiny dignity, Mini would ripple her face with laughter, and begin: "O Cabuliwallah, Cabuliwallah, what have you got in your bag?"

And he would reply, in the nasal accents of the mountaineer: "An elephant!" Not much cause for merriment, perhaps; but how they both enjoyed the witticism! And for me, this child's talk with a grown-up man had always in it something strangely fascinating.

Then the Cabuliwallah, not to be behindhand, would take his turn: "Well, little one, and when are you going to the father-in-law's house?"[4]

Now most small Bengali maidens have heard long ago about the father-in-law's house; but we, being a little new-fangled, had kept these things from our child, and Mini at this question must have been a trifle bewildered. But she would not show it, and with ready tact replied: "Are *you* going there?"

Amongst men of the Cabuliwallah's class, however, it is well known that the words *father-in-law's house* have a double meaning. It is a euphemism for *jail*, the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves. In this sense would the sturdy pedlar take my daughter's question. "Ah," he would say, shaking his fist at an invisible policeman, "I will thrash my father-in-law!" Hearing this,

and picturing the poor discomfited relative, Mini would go off into peals of laughter, in which her formidable friend would join.

These were autumn mornings, the very time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, never stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it, and at the sight of a foreigner in the streets, I would fall to weaving a network of dreams,—the mountains, the glens, and the forests of his distant home, with his cottage in its setting, and the free and independent life of far-away wilds. Perhaps the scenes of travel conjure themselves up before me, and pass and repass in my imagination all the more vividly, because I lead such a vegetable existence, that a call to travel would fall upon me like a thunderbolt. In the presence of this Cabuliwallah, I was immediately transported to the foot of arid mountain peaks, with narrow little defiles twisting in and out amongst their towering heights. I could see the string of camels bearing the merchandise, and the company of turbaned merchants, carrying some of their queer old firearms, and some of their spears, journeying downward towards the plains. I could see—but at some such point Mini's mother would intervene, imploring me to "beware of that man."

Mini's mother is unfortunately a very timid lady. Whenever she hears a noise in the street, or sees people coming towards the house, she always jumps to the conclusion that they are either thieves, or drunkards, or snakes, or tigers, or malaria or cockroaches, or caterpillars, or an English sailor. Even after all these years of experience, she is not able to overcome her terror. So she was full of doubts about the Cabuliwallah, and used to beg me to keep a watchful eye on him.

I tried to laugh her fear gently away, but then she would turn round on me seriously, and ask me solemn questions.

Were children never kidnapped?

Was it, then, not true that there was slavery in Cabul?

Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to carry off a tiny child?

I urged that, though not impossible, it was highly improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. As it was indefinite, however, it did not seem right to forbid the man the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked.

Once a year in the middle of January Rahmun, the Cabuliwallah, was in the habit of returning to his country, and as the time approached he would be very busy, going from house to house collecting his debts. This year, however, he could always find time to come and see Mini. It would have seemed to an outsider that there was some conspiracy between the two, for when he could not come in the morning, he would appear in the evening.

Even to me it was a little startling now and then, in the corner of a dark room, suddenly to surprise this tall, loose-garmented, much bebagged man; but when Mini would run in smiling, with her, "O! Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" and the two friends, so far apart in age, would subside into their old laughter and their old jokes, I felt reassured.

One morning, a few days before he had made up his mind to go, I was correcting my proof sheets in my study. It was chilly weather. Through the window the rays of the sun touched my feet, and the slight warmth was very welcome. It was almost eight o'clock, and the early pedestrians were returning home, with their heads covered. All at once, I heard an uproar in the street, and, looking out, saw Rahmun being led away bound between two policemen, and behind them a crowd of curious boys. There were blood-stains on the clothes of the Cabuliwallah, and one of the policemen carried a knife. Hurrying out, I stopped them, and enquired what it all meant. Partly from one, partly from another, I gathered that a certain neighbour had owed the pedlar something for a Rampuri shawl, but had falsely denied having bought it, and that in the course of the quarrel, Rahmun had struck him. Now in the heat of his excitement, the prisoner began calling his enemy all sorts of names, when suddenly in a verandah of my house appeared my little Mini, with her usual exclamation: "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" Rahmun's face lighted up as he turned to her. He had no bag under

his arm to-day, so she could not discuss the elephant with him. She at once therefore proceeded to the next question: "Are you going to the father-in-law's house?" Rahmun laughed and said: "Just where I am going, little one!" Then seeing that the reply did not amuse the child, he held up his fettered hands. "Ah," he said, "I would have thrashed that old father-in-law, but my hands are bound!"

On a charge of murderous assault, Rahmun was sentenced to some years' imprisonment.

Time passed away, and he was not remembered. The accustomed work in the accustomed place was ours, and the thought of the once-free mountaineer spending his years in prison seldom or never occurred to us. Even my light-hearted Mini, I am ashamed to say, forgot her old friend. New companions filled her life. As she grew older, she spent more of her time with girls. So much time indeed did she spend with them that she came no more, as she used to do, to her father's room. I was scarcely on speaking terms with her.

Years had passed away. It was once more autumn and we had made arrangements for our Mini's marriage. It was to take place during the Puja Holidays.[5] With Durga returning to Kailas, the light of our home also was to depart to her husband's house, and leave her father's in the shadow.

The morning was bright. After the rains, there was a sense of ablution in the air, and the sun-rays looked like pure gold. So bright were they that they gave a beautiful radiance even to the sordid brick walls of our Calcutta lanes. Since early dawn to-day the wedding-pipes had been sounding, and at each beat my own heart throbbed. The wail of the tune, Bhairavi, seemed to intensify my pain at the approaching separation. My Mini was to be married to-night.

From early morning noise and bustle had pervaded the house. In the courtyard the canopy had to be slung on its bamboo poles; the chandeliers with their tinkling sound must be hung in each room and verandah. There was no end of hurry and excitement. I was sitting in my study, looking through the accounts, when some one entered,

saluting respectfully, and stood before me. It was Rahmun the Cabuliwallah. At first I did not recognise him. He had no bag, nor the long hair, nor the same vigour that he used to have. But he smiled, and I knew him again.

"When did you come, Rahmun?" I asked him.

"Last evening," he said, "I was released from jail."

The words struck harsh upon my ears. I had never before talked with one who had wounded his fellow, and my heart shrank within itself, when I realised this, for I felt that the day would have been better-omened had he not turned up.

"There are ceremonies going on," I said, "and I am busy. Could you perhaps come another day?"

At once he turned to go; but as he reached the door he hesitated, and said: "May I not see the little one, sir, for a moment?" It was his belief that Mini was still the same. He had pictured her running to him as she used, calling "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!" He had imagined too that they would laugh and talk together, just as of old. In fact, in memory of former days he had brought, carefully wrapped up in paper, a few almonds and raisins and grapes, obtained somehow from a countryman, for his own little fund was dispersed.

I said again: "There is a ceremony in the house, and you will not be able to see any one to-day."

The man's face fell. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, said "Good morning," and went out.

I felt a little sorry, and would have called him back, but I found he was returning of his own accord. He came close up to me holding out his offerings and said: "I brought these few things, sir, for the little one. Will you give them to her?"

I took them and was going to pay him, but he caught my hand and said: "You are very kind, sir! Keep me in your recollection. Do not offer me money!—You have a little girl, I too have one like her in my own home. I think of her, and bring fruits to your child, not to make a profit for myself."

Saying this, he put his hand inside his big loose robe, and brought out a small and dirty piece of paper. With great care he unfolded this, and smoothed it out with both hands on my table. It bore the impression of a little hand. Not a photograph. Not a drawing. The impression of an ink-smeared hand laid flat on the paper. This touch of his own little daughter had been always on his heart, as he had come year after year to Calcutta, to sell his wares in the streets.

Tears came to my eyes. I forgot that he was a poor Cabuli fruit-seller, while I was—but no, what was I more than he? He also was a father.

That impression of the hand of his little *Pārbati*[6] in her distant mountain home reminded me of my own little Mini.

I sent for Mini immediately from the inner apartment. Many difficulties were raised, but I would not listen. Clad in the red silk of her wedding-day, with the sandal paste on her forehead, and adorned as a young bride, Mini came, and stood bashfully before me.

The Cabuliwallah looked a little staggered at the apparition. He could not revive their old friendship. At last he smiled and said: "Little one, are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

But Mini now understood the meaning of the word "father-in-law," and she could not reply to him as of old. She flushed up at the question, and stood before him with her bride-like face turned down.

I remembered the day when the Cabuliwallah and my Mini had first met, and I felt sad. When she had gone, Rahmun heaved a deep sigh, and sat down on the floor. The idea had suddenly come to him that his daughter too must have grown in this long time, and that he would have to make friends with her anew. Assuredly he would not find her, as he used to know her. And besides, what might not have happened to her in these eight years?

The marriage-pipes sounded, and the mild autumn sun streamed round us. But Rahmun sat in the little Calcutta lane, and saw before him the barren mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a bank-note, and gave it to him, saying: "Go back to your own daughter, Rahmun, in your own country, and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child!"

Having made this present, I had to curtail some of the festivities. I could not have the electric lights I had intended, nor the military band, and the ladies of the house were despondent at it. But to me the wedding feast was all the brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father met again with his only child.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Also "Kabuliwala": someone who comes from Kabul, Afghanistan.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Abdurrahman Pasha was a powerful political leader in what is now northern Iraq; "the Russians": throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Russia and Great Britain were fierce rivals for dominance in Afghanistan as well as Central and Southeast Asia; "the Frontier Policy" is most likely a reference to British incursions into Afghanistan in the 1870s and 1880s. When the people of Kabul rebelled against British rule, the (British) government of India responded with a punitive expedition into the southern Afghan city of Kandahar. In many ways, the political and military conflicts to which Tagore alludes in this story set the stage for recent conflicts in the region.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Traditional Indian garment for women consisting of a long piece of draped silk or cotton.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Cabuliwallah assumes that, upon marrying, the little girl will follow tradition and move in with her husband's family.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ten-day Hindu festival marking the victory of the goddess Durga over Mahishasura.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Literally "daughter of the mountain."Return to reference 6

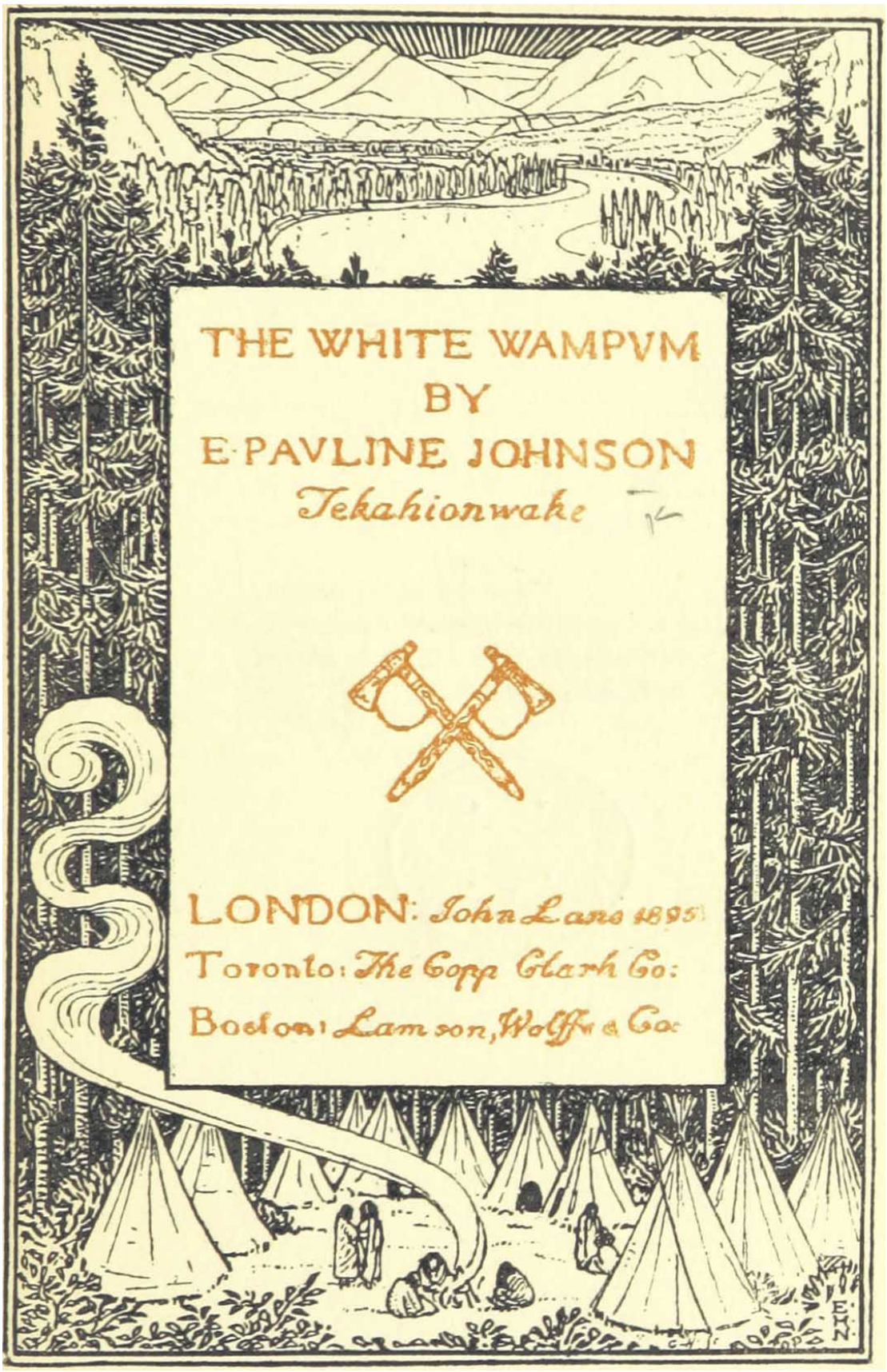
E. PAULINE JOHNSON/TEKAHIONWAKE
1861–1913

E. Pauline Johnson—also known by her stage and pen name of Tekahionwake (Dageh-eeon-wageh)—is one of the most famous and popular Canadian poets of her generation. Born in 1861 on the Six Nations Reserve in southern Ontario, she was the daughter of an English-born mother, Emily Howells Johnson, and a Mohawk and European father, George Johnson—tribal chief and Crown interpreter for the Six Nations. Although intermarriage between Indigenous peoples and Europeans was sometimes stigmatized by both groups, George Johnson's position as an intermediary between the Mohawk, the British, and the Government of Canada eased potential difficulties; the family socialized freely with both Indigenous and Anglo-Canadian communities. Johnson grew up understanding (though not speaking) the Mohawk language of Kanyen'kéha, and hearing the stories of her paternal grandfather, Chief John Smoke Johnson. She was educated at the Anglican Brantford Central Collegiate.

Johnson started writing in her teens and publishing in her early twenties. After her father's death left her family impoverished, she began reciting her poetry and stories on stage. During her lifetime her reputation rested as much on her role as a performer as on her published writing. Her highly successful performances brought together Johnson's Mohawk and Anglo Canadian identities: she often

wore Native dress for the first half of the evening, and then European dress for the second. As Veronica Strong-Boag and Carole Gerson point out, Johnson made "no effort to replicate the actual clothing of any specific Native group" when she performed. But she did often wear the ceremonial rug that had been used when her father made Queen Victoria's son, Prince Arthur of Connaught, an Iroquois chief in 1869, as well as "fur pelts, Iroquois silver medallions, wampum belts, and her father's hunting knife." She toured Canada, the United States, and England.

Johnson's poetry is both lyrical and political. It describes in vivid and moving detail the beauty and peace of nature as well as the pleasures of canoeing or walking through the fields and forests of her homeland. It addresses European abuse and exploitation of Indigenous peoples. And it is committed to a vision of Canada as British. In the late nineteenth century when Johnson was writing, Canada was officially a self-ruling "dominion," but it was still under the protection and ultimate authority of the British government. Johnson's was one of many Mohawk families whose loyalty to the British against the rebels in the American Revolution had been rewarded after the war with land grants in Canada. For many of such people, Great Britain remained an ultimate authority to which they turned when dissatisfied with local governmental decision-making.


THE WHITE WAMPVM
BY
E·PAVLINE JOHNSON
Tekahionwake
LONDON: John Lane 1895
Toronto: The Copp Clark Co:
Boston: Lamson, Wolffe & Co:
E·H·N·

Title page of *The White Wampum*, Johnson's first collection of poetry, which was published in London in 1895.

Johnson was especially outspoken on Indigenous women's issues, but she spoke out forcefully against the systematic marginalization and impoverishment of all Native peoples. As she wrote in her essay, "A Glimpse at the Grand River Indians," "A starving man is necessarily a degraded man; hunger will slay principle and virtue more effectively than anything else in the world, and one grows very indifferent to honour and nobility when absolute starvation gnaws out his body and he sees the good he rightfully owns being swallowed by another."

Johnson's poetry was popular during her lifetime and continues to be part of the standard curriculum in many Canadian schools. Her profile has also been raised in recent years by Margaret Atwood's *Pauline* (2013), an operetta based on Johnson's life and work.

Brant: A Memorial Ode

"Young Canada" with mighty force sweeps on,
To gain in power and strength before the dawn
That brings another era, when the sun
Shall rise again, but only shine upon
Her Indian graves and Indian memories.
For as the carmine in the twilight skies
Will fade as night comes on, so fades the race
That unto Might and therefore Right gives place.
And as white clouds float hurriedly and high
Across the crimson of a sunset sky
Altho' their depths are foamy as the snow
Their beauty lies in their vermillion glow.
So, Canada, thy plumes were hardly won
Without allegiance from thy Indian son.
Thy glories, like the cloud, enhance their charm
With red reflections from the Mohawk's arm.
Then meet we as one common brotherhood
In peace and love, with purpose understood
To lift a lasting tribute to the name
Of Brant[1]—who linked his own with Britain's fame.
Who bade his people leave their Valley Home
Where nature in her fairest aspects shone,
Where rolls the Mohawk River and the land
Is blest with every good from Heaven's hand,[2]
To sweep the tide of home affections back
And love the land where waves the Union Jack.°
What tho that home no longer ours? Today
The Six red nations[3] have their Canada.
And rest we here, no cause for us to rise
To seek protection under other skies.

Encircling us an arm both true and brave
Extends from far across the great salt wave.
Tho but a woman's hand 'tis firm, and strong
Enough to guard us from all fear of wrong,
A hand on which all British subjects lean—
The loving hand of England's noble Queen.

1886

Endnotes

- Note 1: Chief Joseph Brant led Iroquois supporters of the British in the fight to suppress the American rebels in the American War for Independence. After the war, the "Mohawk Loyalists" were rewarded for their loyalty with land in Canada.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Chief Brant led his followers from the Mohawk River in New York State to the Grand River reserve in Ontario.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Six Nations of the Iroquois are the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Cayuga, Onandaga, and Tuscarora.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *British flag*Return to reference °

The Song My Paddle Sings

West wind blow from your prairie nest?
Blow from the mountains, blow from the west.
The sail is idle, the sailor too;
O! wind of the west, we wait for you.
Blow, blow!
I have wooed you so,
But never a favour you bestow.
You rock your cradle the hills between,
But scorn to notice my white lateen.°

I stow the sail, unship the mast:[1]
I wooed you long but my wooing's past;
My paddle will lull you into rest.
O! drowsy wind of the drowsy west,
Sleep, sleep,
By your mountain steep,
Or down where the prairie grasses sweep!
Now fold in slumber your laggard wings,
For soft is the song my paddle sings.

August is laughing across the sky,
Laughing while paddle, canoe and I,
Drift, drift,
Where the hills uplift
On either side of the current swift.

The river rolls in its rocky bed;
My paddle is plying its way ahead;
Dip, dip,
While the waters flip
In foam as over their breast we slip.

And oh, the river runs swifter now;
The eddies circle about my bow.
Swirl, swirl!
How the ripples curl
In many a dangerous pool awhirl!

And forward far the rapids roar,
Fretting their margin for evermore.
Dash, dash,
With a mighty crash,
They seethe, and boil, and bound, and splash.

Be strong, O paddle! be brave, canoe!
The reckless waves you must plunge into.
Reel, reel.
On your trembling keel,
But never a fear my craft will feel.

We've raced the rapid, we're far ahead!
The river slips through its silent bed.
Sway, sway,
As the bubbles spray
And fall in tinkling tunes away.

And up on the hills against the sky,
A fir tree rocking its lullaby,
Swings, swings,
Its emerald wings,
Swelling the song that my paddle sings.

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Remove the mast (which held the sail).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *triangular sail*Return to reference °

Lullaby of the Iroquois

Little brown baby-bird, lapped in your nest,
  Wrapped in your nest,
  Strapped in your nest,
Your straight little cradle-board rocks you to rest;
  Its hands are your nest;
  Its bands are your nest;
It swings from the down-bending branch of the oak;
You watch the camp flame, and the curling grey
  smoke;
But, oh, for your pretty black eyes sleep is best,—
Little brown baby of mine, go to rest.

Little brown baby-bird swinging to sleep,
  Winging to sleep,
  Singing to sleep,
Your wonder-black eyes that so wide open keep,
  Shielding their sleep,
  Unyielding to sleep,
The heron is homing, the plover is still,
The night-owl calls from his haunt on the hill,
Afar the fox barks, afar the stars peep,—
Little brown baby of mine, go to sleep.

1896

Canadian Born

We first saw light in Canada, the land beloved of God;
We are the pulse of Canada, its marrow and its blood:
And we, the men of Canada, can face the world and brag
That we were born in Canada beneath the British flag.

Few of us have the blood of kings, few are of courtly birth,
But few are vagabonds or rogues of doubtful name and worth;
And all have one credential that entitles us to brag—
That we were born in Canada beneath the British flag.

We've yet to make our money, we've yet to make our fame,
But we have gold and glory in our clean colonial name;
And every man's a millionaire if only he can brag
That he was born in Canada beneath the British flag.
No title and no coronet is half so proudly worn
As that which we inherited as men Canadian born.
We count no man so noble as the one who makes the brag
That he was born in Canada beneath the British flag.

The Dutch may have their Holland, the Spaniard have his Spain,

The Yankee to the south of us must south of us
remain;
For not a man dare lift a hand against the men who
brag
That they were born in Canada beneath the British
flag.

1900

From A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction

Every race in the world enjoys its own peculiar characteristics, but it scarcely follows that every individual of a nation must possess these prescribed singularities, or otherwise forfeit in the eyes of the world their nationality. Individual personality is one of the most charming things to be met with, either in a flesh and blood existence, or upon the pages of fiction, and it matters little to what race an author's heroine belongs, if he makes her character distinct, unique and natural.

The American book heroine of today is vari-coloured as to personality and action. The author does not consider it necessary to the development of her character, and the plot of the story to insist upon her having American-coloured eyes, an American carriage, an American voice, American motives, and an American mode of dying; he allows her to evolve an individuality ungoverned by nationalisms —but the outcome of impulse and nature and a general womanishness.

Not so the Indian girl in modern fiction, the author permits her character no such spontaneity, she must not be one of womankind at large, neither must she have an originality, a singularity that is not definitely "Indian." I quote "Indian" as there seems to be an impression amongst authors that such a thing as tribal distinction does not exist amongst the North American aborigines.

The term "Indian" signifies about as much as the term "European," but I cannot recall ever having read a story where the heroine was described as "a European." The Indian girl we meet in cold type, however, is rarely distressed by having to belong to any tribe, or to reflect any tribal characteristics. She is merely a wholesome sort of mixture of any band existing between the Mic Macs of Gaspe and the Kwaw-Kewlths of British Columbia,[1] yet

strange to say, that notwithstanding the numerous tribes, with their aggregate numbers reaching more than 122,000 souls in Canada alone, our Canadian authors can cull from this huge revenue of character, but one Indian girl, and stranger still that this lonely little heroine never had a prototype in breathing flesh-and-blood existence!

It is a deplorable fact, but there is only one of her. The story-writer who can create a new kind of Indian girl, or better still portray a "real live" Indian girl who will do something in Canadian literature that has never been done, but once. The general author gives the reader the impression that he has concocted the plot, created his characters, arranged his action, and at the last moment has been seized with the idea that the regulation Indian maiden will make a very harmonious background whereon to paint his pen picture, that, he, never having met this interesting individual, stretches forth his hand to his library shelves, grasps the first Canadian novelist he sees, reads up his subject, and duplicates it in his own work.

After a half dozen writers have done this, the reader might as well leave the tale unread as far as the interest touches upon the Indian character, for an unvarying experience tells him that this convenient personage will repeat herself with monotonous accuracy. He knows what she did and how she died in other romances by other romancers, and she will do and die likewise in his (she always does die, and one feels relieved that it is so, for she is too unhealthy and too unnatural to live).

The rendition of herself and her doings gains no variety in the pens of manifold authors, and the last thing that they will ever think of will be to study "The Indian Girl" from life, for the being we read of is the offspring of the writer's imagination and never existed outside the book covers that her name decorates. Yes, there is only one of her, and her name is "Winona."[2]

Once or twice she has borne another appellation, but it always has a "Winona" sound about it. Even Charles Mair, in that masterpiece of Canadian-Indian romances, "Tecumseh," could not resist "Winona."[3]

We meet her as a Shawnee, as a Sioux, as a Huron, and then, her tribe unnamed, in the vicinity of Brockville.[4]

She is never dignified by being permitted to own a surname, although, extraordinary to note, her father is always a chief, and had he ever existed, would doubtless have been as conservative as his contemporaries about the usual significance that his people attach to family name and lineage.

In addition to this most glaring error this surnameless creation is possessed with a suicidal mania. Her unhappy, self-sacrificing life becomes such a burden to both herself and the author that this is the only means by which they can extricate themselves from a lamentable tangle, though, as a matter of fact suicide is an evil positively unknown among Indians. To-day there may be rare instances where a man crazed by liquor might destroy his own life, but in the periods from whence "Winona's" character is sketched self-destruction was unheard of. This seems to be a fallacy which the best American writers have fallen a prey to. Even Helen Hunt Jackson, in her powerful and beautiful romance of "Ramona," has weakened her work deplorably by having no less than three Indians suicide while maddened by their national wrongs and personal grief.[5]

The hardest fortune that the Indian girl of fiction meets with is the inevitable doom that shadows her love affairs. She is always desperately in love with the young white hero, who in turn is grateful to her for services rendered the garrison in general and himself in particular during red days of war. In short, she is so much wrapped up in him that she is treacherous to her own people, tells falsehoods to her father and the other chiefs of her tribe, and otherwise makes herself detestable and dishonourable. Of course, this white hero never marries her! Will some critic who understands human nature, and particularly the nature of authors, please tell the reading public why marriage with the Indian girl is so despised in books and so general in real life? Will this good farseeing critic also tell us why the book-made Indian makes all the love advances to the white gentleman, though the real wild Indian girl (by the way, we are never given any stories of educated girls, though there are many

such throughout Canada) is the most retiring, reticent, noncommittal being in existence!

***

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Now "Mi'kmaq," from eastern Canada; the West Coast Kwakwaka'wakw were sometimes called by the name of a constituent member nation—here, the Kwaw-Kewlths, or the Kwagulth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "Winona" is the name of Hiawatha's mother in Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*. Traditionally, it is a name members of the Lakota (Sioux) tribe give to their oldest daughters.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Charles Mair's historical drama *Tecumseh* (1886) was set during the War of 1812. "Winona" is the name of one of the play's "Indian Maidens."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A city that was settled by Iroquois and then Oswegatchie people, loyal to the British.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jackson's *Ramona* (1884) was a best seller that described the federal government's mistreatment of Indigenous peoples in what is now southern California. Its heroine, Ramona, is Scottish Native American.Return to reference 5

RUDYARD KIPLING
1865–1936

Like many children born to upper- or middle-class Britons living in India in the nineteenth century, Rudyard Kipling was sent to Great Britain at the age of six to begin his education. For the next six years, he was desperately unhappy; his parents had chosen to board him in a rigidly Calvinistic home, and he was treated with considerable cruelty. His parents finally removed him when he was twelve and sent him to a private school, where his experience was far better. His views in later life were deeply affected by the English schoolboy code of honor and duty, especially when it involved loyalty to a group or team. At seventeen he rejoined his parents in India, where his father taught sculpture at the Bombay School of Art. By the time he returned to England seven years later, the poems and stories he had written while working as a newspaper reporter in India had brought him early fame. In 1892 he married an American woman, Caroline Starr Balestier; they lived in Brattleboro, Vermont, until a fierce quarrel with his brother-in-law drove him back to England in 1896; he settled on a country estate. Kipling seems to have been the first English author to own an automobile—an appropriate distinction, because he was intrigued by all kinds of machinery and feats of engineering. In this, as in many tastes, he differed markedly from his contemporaries in the 1890s, the aesthetes. Kipling was also the first English author to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature (1907).

During his seven years in India in the 1880s, Kipling gained a rich experience of colonial life, which he presented in his stories and poems. His first volume of stories, *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888), explores some of the psychological and moral problems of the Anglo Indians and their relationship with the people they had colonized. In his two volumes of the *Jungle Book* (1894, 1895) he draws on the Indian scene to create a world of jungle animals. At times, Kipling demonstrates his interest in Indian culture, as in his complex novel *Kim* (1901), where he describes the contemplative life of the Indian *lama*, or monk, with great sympathy. Kipling is also unusual among proponents of empire for his willingness to admit some of its costs: the British are often described as selfish and ignorant adventurers. At the same time, his conviction of the desirability of imperial aggression, and the superiority of British technology, political structures, and culture is largely unshakeable. Thus, even the *lama* in *Kim* is made to seem dependent on the protection and superior knowledge of the British imperialists.

In his poems Kipling also draws on the Indian scene, most commonly as it is viewed through the eyes of the men sent out from England to garrison the country and fight off invaders on the northwest frontiers. They rarely seem to question the imperial mission, but these poems about ordinary British soldiers in India also contain little by way of flag-waving celebrations. The soldier who speaks in "The Widow at Windsor" (1892) is simply bewildered by the events in which he has taken part. Kipling develops a new subject in the working-class imperial soldier (a subject, we should note, who frequently gives voice to deeply racist attitudes), and thus a new way to portray modern social experience.

The common man's perspective, expressed in the accent of the native-born Londoner or "Cockney," was one of the qualities that gained Kipling an immediate audience for his *Barrack-Room Ballads* (1890, 1892). The other was his mastery of swinging verse rhythms. Like Tennyson, Kipling knew how to make poems that call to be set to music, verses such as "Mandalay" (1890) or "Gentlemen-Rankers" (1892), with its memorable refrain: "We're poor little lambs who've

lost our way, / Baa! Baa! Baa!" Much of Kipling's poetry is best appreciated with the melodies and ambience of the music hall in mind.

In recent years Kipling's stories have received more attention than his poems. By portraying the British community in India and its relationship with the people it ruled, Kipling created a rich and various fictional world that reflects on England's imperialism as lived by the officers of the empire in all their peculiar social relationships. "The Man Who Would Be King" (1888) presents an intriguing approach to the topic. The narrator, a newspaper editor, tells us of his dealings with a couple of "Loafers." Peachey Carnehan and Daniel Dravot have no official positions in India but are quick to exploit any opportunities their European status may afford them; this pair of rogues heads out to the mountainous region of Kafiristan, intent on establishing their own dynasty. An action-packed tale of adventure in faraway places, the story also invites us to think critically about the general project of empire—about the assumptions it holds, the methods it employs, and the human cost of its endeavors—even if it stops short of outright condemnation.

After leaving India, Kipling gradually turned to English subjects in his fiction, but the cataclysm of World War I did much to diminish his output. As chair of the Imperial War Graves Commission, he played a difficult and important public role, responsible for (among other things) choosing the words to be inscribed on countless monuments and memorials across the globe. Kipling's task was all the more poignant because the body of his only son, who had died in the battle of Loos (1915), was never found. A deeply melancholy autobiography, *Something of Myself*, was published in 1937, the year after Kipling's death.

The Man Who Would Be King[1]

"Brother to a Prince and fellow to a beggar if he be found worthy."[2]

The law, as quoted, lays down a fair conduct of life, and one not easy to follow. I have been fellow to a beggar again and again under circumstances which prevented either of us finding out whether the other was worthy. I have still to be brother to a Prince, though I once came near to kinship with what might have been a veritable King and was promised the reversion of[3] a Kingdom—army, law-courts, revenue and policy all complete. But, to-day, I greatly fear that my King is dead, and if I want a crown I must go and hunt it for myself.

The beginning of everything was in a railway train upon the road to Mhow from Ajmir.[4] There had been a Deficit in the Budget, which necessitated traveling, not Second-class, which is only half as dear as First-class, but by Intermediate, which is very awful indeed. There are no cushions in the Intermediate class, and the population are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty, or Loafer,[5] which is amusing though intoxicated. Intermediates do not patronize refreshment-rooms. They carry their food in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the native sweetmeat-sellers, and drink the roadside water. That is why in the hot weather Intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon.

My particular Intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a huge gentleman in shirt-sleeves entered, and, following the custom of Intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for whiskey. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated,

and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food. "If India was filled with men like you and me, not knowing more than the crows where they'd get their next day's rations, it isn't seventy millions of revenue the land would be paying—it's seven hundred millions," said he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to agree with him. We talked politics—the politics of Loaferdom that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off[6]—and we talked postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, which is the turning-off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. My friend had no money beyond eight annas which he wanted[7] for dinner, and I had no money at all, owing to the hitch in the Budget before mentioned. Further, I was going into a wilderness where, though I should resume touch with the Treasury, there were no telegraph offices. I was, therefore, unable to help him in any way.

"We might threaten a Station-master, and make him send a wire on tick,"[8] said my friend, "but that'd mean inquiries for you and for me, and I've got my hands full these days. Did you say you are traveling back along this line within any days?"

"Within ten," I said.

"Can't you make it eight?" said he. "Mine is rather urgent business."

"I can send your telegram within ten days if that will serve you," I said.

"I couldn't trust the wire to fetch him now I think of it. It's this way. He leaves Delhi on the 23d for Bombay. That means he'll be running through Ajmir about the night of the 23d."

"But I'm going into the Indian Desert," I explained.

"Well *and* good," said he. "You'll be changing at Marwar Junction to get into Jodhpore territory—you must do that—and he'll be coming through Marwar Junction in the early morning of the 24th by the Bombay Mail. Can you be at Marwar Junction on that time? 'Twon't be inconveniencing you because I know that there's precious

few pickings to be got out of these Central India States—even though you pretend to be correspondent of the *Backwoodsman*."[9]

"Have you ever tried that trick?" I asked.

"Again and again, but the Residents[1] find you out, and then you get escorted to the Border before you've time to get your knife into them. But about my friend here. I *must* give him a word o' mouth to tell him what's come to me or else he won't know where to go. I would take it more than kind of you if you was to come out of Central India in time to catch him at Marwar Junction, and say to him:—'He has gone South for the week.' He'll know what that means. He's a big man with a red beard, and a great swell[2] he is. You'll find him sleeping like a gentleman with all his luggage round him in a Second-class compartment. But don't you be afraid. Slip down the window, and say:—'He has gone South for the week,' and he'll tumble.[3] It's only cutting your time of stay in those parts by two days. I ask you as a stranger—going to the West,"[4] he said, with emphasis.

"Where have *you* come from?" said I.

"From the East," said he, "and I am hoping that you will give him the message on the Square[5]—for the sake of my Mother as well as your own."

Englishmen are not usually softened by appeals to the memory of their mothers, but for certain reasons, which will be fully apparent, I saw fit to agree.

"It's more than a little matter," said he, "and that's why I ask you to do it—and now I know that I can depend on you doing it. A Second-class carriage at Marwar Junction, and a red-haired man asleep in it. You'll be sure to remember. I get out at the next station, and I must hold on there till he comes or sends me what I want."

"I'll give the message if I catch him," I said, "and for the sake of your Mother as well as mine I'll give you a word of advice. Don't try to run the Central India States just now as the correspondent of the *Backwoodsman.* There's a real one knocking about here, and it might lead to trouble."

"Thank you," said he, simply, "and when will the swine be gone? I can't starve because he's ruining my work. I wanted to get hold of the Degumber Rajah down here about his father's widow, and give him a jump."

"What did he do to his father's widow, then?"

"Filled her up with red pepper and slippered her to death as she hung from a beam. I found that out myself, and I'm the only man that would dare going into the State to get hush-money for it. They'll try to poison me, same as they did in Chortumna when I went on the loot there. But you'll give the man at Marwar Junction my message?"

He got out at a little roadside station, and I reflected. I had heard, more than once, of men personating correspondents of newspapers and bleeding small Native States with threats of exposure, but I had never met any of the caste before. They lead a hard life, and generally die with great suddenness. The Native States have a wholesome horror of English newspapers, which may throw light on their peculiar methods of government, and do their best to choke correspondents with champagne, or drive them out of their mind with four-in-hand barouches.[6] They do not understand that nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of Native States so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to the other. Native States were created by Providence in order to supply picturesque scenery, tigers, and tall-writing.[7] They are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the Railway and the Telegraph on one side, and, on the other, the days of Harun-al-Raschid.[8] When I left the train I did business with divers Kings, and in eight days passed through many changes of life. Sometimes I wore dress-clothes and consorted with Princes and Politicals,[9] drinking from crystal and eating from silver. Sometimes I lay out upon the ground and devoured what I could get, from a plate made of a flapjack, and drank the running water, and slept under the same rug as my servant. It was all in the day's work.

Then I headed for the Great Indian Desert upon the proper date, as I had promised, and the night Mail set me down at Marwar Junction, where a funny little, happy-go-lucky, native-managed railway runs to Jodhpore. The Bombay Mail from Delhi makes a short halt at Marwar. She arrived as I got in, and I had just time to hurry to her platform and go down the carriages. There was only one Second-class on the train. I slipped the window, and looked down upon a flaming red beard, half covered by a railway rug. That was my man, fast asleep, and I dug him gently in the ribs. He woke with a grunt, and I saw his face in the light of the lamps. It was a great and shining face.

"Tickets again?" said he.

"No," said I. "I am to tell you that he is gone South for the week. He is gone South for the week!"

The train had begun to move out. The red man rubbed his eyes. "He has gone South for the week," he repeated. "Now that's just like his impidence. Did he say that I was to give you anything?—'Cause I won't."

"He didn't," I said, and dropped away, and watched the red lights die out in the dark. It was horribly cold, because the wind was blowing off the sands. I climbed into my own train—not an Intermediate Carriage this time—and went to sleep.

If the man with the beard had given me a rupee I should have kept it as a memento of a rather curious affair. But the consciousness of having done my duty was my only reward.

Later on I reflected that two gentlemen like my friends could not do any good if they foregathered and personated correspondents of newspapers, and might, if they "stuck up"[1] one of the little rat-trap states of Central India or Southern Rajputana, get themselves into serious difficulties. I therefore took some trouble to describe them as accurately as I could remember to people who would be interested in deporting them; and succeeded, so I was later informed, in having them headed back from Degumber borders.

Then I became respectable, and returned to an Office where there were no Kings and no incidents except the daily manufacture

of a newspaper. A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline. Zenana-mission ladies[2] arrive, and beg that the Editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back-slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; Colonels who have been overpassed for commands sit down and sketch the outline of a series of ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles on Seniority *versus* Selection; missionaries wish to know why they have not been permitted to escape from their regular vehicles of abuse and swear at a brother missionary under special patronage of the editorial We; stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain that they cannot pay for their advertisements, but on their return from New Zealand or Tahiti will do so with interest; inventors of patent punkah[3]-pulling machines, carriage couplings and unbreakable swords and axle-trees call with specifications in their pockets and hours at their disposal; tea-companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses with the office pens; secretaries of ball-committees clamour to have the glories of their last dance more fully expounded; strange ladies rustle in and say:—"I want a hundred lady's cards printed *at once*, please," which is manifestly part of an Editor's duty; and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped the Grand Trunk Road[4] makes it his business to ask for employment as a proof-reader. And, all the time, the telephone-bell is ringing madly, and Kings are being killed on the Continent, and Empires are saying—"You're another," and Mister Gladstone is calling down brimstone upon the British Dominions,[5] and the little black copy-boys are whining, *"kaapi chay-ha-yeh"* (copy wanted) like tired bees, and most of the paper is as blank as Modred's shield.[6]

But that is the amusing part of the year. There are other six months wherein none ever come to call, and the thermometer walks inch by inch up to the top of the glass, and the office is darkened to just above reading-light, and the press machines are red-hot of touch, and nobody writes anything but accounts of amusements in the Hill-stations[7] or obituary notices. Then the telephone becomes a tinkling terror, because it tells you of the sudden deaths of men and women that you knew intimately, and the prickly-heat covers you as

with a garment, and you sit down and write:—"A slight increase of sickness is reported from the Khuda Janta Khan[8] District. The outbreak is purely sporadic in its nature, and, thanks to the energetic efforts of the District authorities, is now almost at an end. It is, however, with deep regret we record the death, etc."

Then the sickness really breaks out, and the less recording and reporting the better for the peace of the subscribers. But the Empires and the Kings continue to divert themselves as selfishly as before, and the Foreman thinks that a daily paper really ought to come out once in twenty-four hours, and all the people at the Hill-stations in the middle of their amusements say:—"Good gracious! Why can't the paper be sparkling? I'm sure there's plenty going on up here."

That is the dark half of the moon, and, as the advertisements say, "must be experienced to be appreciated."

It was in that season, and a remarkably evil season, that the paper began running the last issue of the week on Saturday night, which is to say, Sunday morning, after the custom of a London paper. This was a great convenience, for immediately after the paper was put to bed,[9] the dawn would lower the thermometer from 96° to almost 84° for half an hour, and in that chill—you have no idea how cold is 84° on the grass until you begin to pray for it—a very tired man could set off to sleep ere the heat roused him.

One Saturday night it was my pleasant duty to put the paper to bed alone. A King or courtier or a courtesan or a community was going to die or get a new Constitution, or do something that was important on the other side of the world, and the paper was to be held open till the latest possible minute in order to catch the telegram. It was a pitchy black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the *loo*, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that was only pretence. It was a shade cooler in the press-room than the office, so I sat there, while the type clicked and clicked and the

night-jars hooted at the windows, and the all but naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the *loo* dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, was aware of the inconvenience the delay was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make tension, but, as the clock hands crept up to three o'clock and the machines spun their fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud.

Then the roar and rattle of the wheels shivered the quiet into little bits. I rose to go away, but two men in white clothes stood in front of me. The first one said:—"It's him!" The second said:—"So it is!" And they both laughed almost as loudly as the machinery roared, and mopped their foreheads. "We see there was a light burning across the road and we were sleeping in that ditch there for coolness, and I said to my friend here, 'The office is open. Let's come along and speak to him as turned us back from the Degumber State,' " said the smaller of the two. He was the man I had met in the Mhow train, and his fellow was the red-bearded man of Marwar Junction. There was no mistaking the eyebrows of the one or the beard of the other.

I was not pleased, because I wished to go to sleep, not to squabble with loafers. "What do you want?" I asked.

"Half an hour's talk with you cool and comfortable, in the office," said the red-bearded man. "We'd *like* some drink—the Contrack doesn't begin yet, Peachey, so you needn't look—but what we really want is advice. We don't want money. We ask you as a favour, because you did us a bad turn about Degumber."

I led from the press-room to the stifling office with the maps on the walls, and the red-haired man rubbed his hands. "That's something like," said he. "This was the proper shop to come to. Now,

Sir, let me introduce to you Brother[1] Peachey Carnehan, that's him, and Brother Daniel Dravot, that is *me*, and the less said about our professions the better, for we have been most things in our time. Soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof-reader, street-preacher, and correspondents of the *Backwoodsman* when we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan is sober, and so am I. Look at us first and see that's sure. It will save you cutting into my talk. We'll take one of your cigars apiece, and you shall see us light."

I watched the test. The men were absolutely sober, so I gave them each a tepid peg.[2]

"Well *and* good," said Carnehan of the eyebrows, wiping the froth from his moustache. "Let me talk now, Dan. We have been all over India, mostly on foot. We have been boiler-fitters, engine-drivers, petty contractors, and all that, and we have decided that India isn't big enough for such as us."

They certainly were too big for the office. Dravot's beard seemed to fill half the room and Carnehan's shoulders the other half, as they sat on the big table. Carnehan continued: "The country isn't half worked out because they that governs it won't let you touch it. They spend all their blessed time in governing it, and you can't lift a spade, nor chip a rock, nor look for oil, nor anything like that without all the Government saying—'Leave it alone and let us govern.' Therefore, such as it is, we will let it alone, and go away to some other place where a man isn't crowded and can come to his own. We are not little men, and there is nothing that we are afraid of except Drink, and we have signed a Contrack on that. *Therefore*, we are going away to be Kings."

"Kings in our own right," muttered Dravot.

"Yes, of course," I said. "You've been tramping in the sun, and it's a very warm night, and hadn't you better sleep over the notion? Come to-morrow."

"Neither drunk nor sunstruck," said Dravot. "We have slept over the notion half a year, and require to see Books and Atlases, and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can Sar-a-*whack*.[3] They call it Kafiristan.[4] By my

reckoning it's the top right-hand corner of Afghanistan, not more than three hundred miles from Pesha-wur.[5] They have two and thirty heathen idols there, and we'll be the thirty-third. It's a mountainous country, and the women of those parts are very beautiful."

"But that is provided against in the Contrack," said Carnehan. "Neither Women nor Liquor, Daniel."

"And that's all we know, except that no one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight, a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King. We shall go to those parts and say to any King we find—'D'you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish a Dy-nasty."

"You'll be cut to pieces before you're fifty miles across the Border," I said. "You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to that country. It's one mass of mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn't do anything."

"That's more like," said Carnehan: "If you could think us a little more mad we would be more pleased. We have come to you to know about this country, to read a book about it, and to be shown maps. We want you to tell us that we are fools and to show us your books." He turned to the bookcases.

"Are you at all in earnest?" I said.

"A little," said Dravot, sweetly. "As big a map as you have got, even if it's all blank where Kafiristan is, and any books you've got. We can read, though we aren't very educated."

I uncased the big thirty-two-miles-to-the-inch map of India, and two smaller Frontier maps, hauled down volume INF-KAN of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and the men consulted them.

"See here!" said Dravot, his thumb on the map. "Up to Jagdallak, Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Roberts's Army.[6] We'll have to turn off to the right at Jagdallak through Laghmann territory. Then we get among the hills—fourteen thousand feet—

fifteen thousand—it will be cold work there, but it don't look very far on the map."

I handed him Wood on the *Sources of the Oxus.*[7] Carnehan was deep in the *Encyclopaedia.*

"They're a mixed lot," said Dravot, reflectively; "and it won't help us to know the names of their tribes. The more tribes the more they'll fight, and the better for us. From Jagdallak to Ashang. H'mm!"

"But all the information about the country is as sketchy and inaccurate as can be," I protested. "No one knows anything about it really. Here's the file of the *United Services' Institute.* Read what Bellew says."

"Blow Bellew!" said Carnehan. "Dan, they're an all-fired lot of heathens, but this book here says they think they're related to us English."

I smoked while the men pored over Raverty, Wood, the maps, and the *Encyclopaedia.*

"There is no use your waiting," said Dravot, politely. "It's about four o'clock now. We'll go before six o'clock if you want to sleep, and we won't steal any of the papers. Don't you sit up. We're two harmless lunatics and if you come, to-morrow evening, down to the Serai[8] we'll say good-bye to you."

"You *are* two fools," I answered. "You'll be turned back at the Frontier or cut up the minute you set foot in Afghanistan. Do you want any money or a recommendation downcountry? I can help you to the chance of work next week."

"Next week we shall be hard at work ourselves, thank you," said Dravot. "It isn't so easy being a King as it looks. When we've got our Kingdom in going order we'll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it."

"Would two lunatics make a Contrack like that?" said Carnehan, with subdued pride, showing me a greasy half-sheet of note-paper on which was written the following. I copied it, then and there, as a curiosity:

This Contract between me and you persuing witnesseth in the name of God—Amen and so forth.

(One) *That me and you will settle this matter together:* i.e., *to be Kings of Kafiristan.*

(Two) *That you and me will not, while this matter is being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any Woman, black, white or brown, so as to get mixed up with one or the other harmful.*

(Three) *That we conduct ourselves with dignity and discretion and if one of us gets into trouble the other will stay by him.*

Signed by you and me this day.
Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan.
Daniel Dravot.
Both Gentlemen at Large.

"There was no need for the last article," said Carnehan, blushing modestly; "but it looks regular. Now you know the sort of men that loafers are—we *are* loafers, Dan, until we get out of India—and *do* you think that we would sign a Contrack like that unless we was in earnest? We have kept away from the two things that make life worth having."

"You won't enjoy your lives much longer if you are going to try this idiotic adventure. Don't set the office on fire," I said, "and go away before nine o'clock."

I left them still poring over the maps and making notes on the back of the "Contrack." "Be sure to come down to the Serai to-morrow," were their parting words.

The Kumharsen Serai is the great foursquare sink of humanity where the strings of camels and horses from the North load and unload. All the nationalities of Central Asia may be found there, and most of the folk of India proper. Balkh and Bokhara there meet Bengal and Bombay, and try to draw eye-teeth. You can buy ponies, turquoises, Persian pussy-cats, saddle-bags, fat-tailed sheep and

musk in the Kumharsen Serai, and get many strange things for nothing. In the afternoon I went down there to see whether my friends intended to keep their word or were lying about drunk.

A priest attired in fragments of ribbons and rags stalked up to me, gravely twisting a child's paper whirligig.[9] Behind was his servant bending under the load of a crate of mud toys. The two were loading up two camels, and the inhabitants of the Serai watched them with shrieks of laughter.

"The priest is mad," said a horse-dealer to me. "He is going up to Kabul to sell toys to the Amir.[1] He will either be raised to honor or have his head cut off. He came in here this morning and has been behaving madly ever since."

"The witless are under the protection of God," stammered a flat-cheeked Usbeg[2] in broken Hindi. "They foretell future events."

"Would they could have foretold that my caravan would have been cut up by the Shinwaris almost within shadow of the Pass!"[3] grunted the Eusufzai agent of a Rajputana trading-house whose goods had been feloniously diverted into the hands of other robbers just across the Border, and whose misfortunes were the laughing-stock of the bazar. "Ohé, priest, whence come you and whither do you go?"

"From Roum[4] have I come," shouted the priest, waving his whirligig; "from Roum, blown by the breath of a hundred devils across the sea! O thieves, robbers, liars, the blessing of Pir Khan on pigs, dogs, and perjurers! Who will take the Protected of God to the North to sell charms that are never still to the Amir? The camels shall not gall,[5] the sons shall not fall sick, and the wives shall remain faithful while they are away, of the men who give me place in their caravan. Who will assist me to slipper the King of the Roos[6] with a golden slipper with a silver heel? The protection of Pir Khan be upon his labors!" He spread out the skirts of his gaberdine and pirouetted between the lines of tethered horses.

"There starts a caravan from Peshawur to Kabul in twenty days, *Huzrut*,"[7] said the Eusufzai trader. "My camels go therewith. Do thou

also go and bring us good-luck."

"I will go even now!" shouted the priest. "I will depart upon my winged camels, and be at Peshawur in a day! Ho! Hazar[8] Mir Khan," he yelled to his servant, "drive out the camels, but let me first mount my own."

He leaped on the back of his beast as it knelt, and, turning round to me, cried:—"Come thou also, Sahib, a little along the road, and I will sell thee a charm—an amulet that shall make thee King of Kafiristan."

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed the two camels out of the Serai till we reached open road and the priest halted.

"What d' you think o' that?" said he in English. "Carnehan can't talk their patter, so I've made him my servant. He makes a handsome servant. 'Tisn't for nothing that I've been knocking about the country for fourteen years. Didn't I do that talk neat? We'll hitch on to a caravan at Peshawur till we get to Jagdallak, and then we'll see if we can get donkeys for our camels, and strike into Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the Amir, O Lor! Put your hand under the camel-bags and tell me what you feel."

I felt the butt of a Martini,[9] and another and another.

"Twenty of 'em," said Dravot, placidly. "Twenty of 'em, and ammunition to correspond, under the whirligigs and the mud dolls."

"Heaven help you if you are caught with those things!" I said. "A Martini is worth her weight in silver among the Pathans."[1]

"Fifteen hundred rupees of capital—every rupee we could beg, borrow, or steal—are invested on these two camels," said Dravot. "We won't get caught. We're going through the Khaiber with a regular caravan. Who'd touch a poor mad priest?"

"Have you got everything you want?" I asked, overcome with astonishment.

"Not yet, but we shall soon. Give us a memento of your kindness, *Brother.* You did me a service yesterday, and that time in Marwar. Half my Kingdom shall you have, as the saying is." I slipped a small charm compass from my watch-chain and handed it up to the priest.

"Good-bye," said Dravot, giving me hand cautiously. "It's the last time we'll shake hands with an Englishman these many days. Shake hands with him, Carnehan," he cried, as the second camel passed me.

Carnehan leaned down and shook hands. Then the camels passed away along the dusty road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises. The scene in Serai attested that they were complete to the native mind. There was just the chance, therefore, that Carnehan and Dravot would be able to wander through Afghanistan without detection. But, beyond, they would find death, certain and awful death.

Ten days later a native friend of mine, giving me the news of the day from Peshawur, wound up his letter with:—"There has been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H.[2] the Amir of Bokhara. He passed through Peshawur and associated himself to the Second Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. The merchants are pleased, because through superstition they imagine that such mad fellows bring good-fortune."

The two, then, were beyond the Border. I would have prayed for them, but, that night, a real King died in Europe, and demanded an obituary notice.

The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night-issue, and a strained waiting for something to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the Office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference.

I passed over to the press-room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger

than it had been two years before, and I felt the heat more acutely. At three o'clock I cried, "Print off," and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. I could hardly see whether he walked or crawled—this rag-wrapped, whining cripple who addressed me by name, crying that he was come back. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!"

I went back to the office, the man following with groans of pain, and I turned up the lamp.

"Don't you know me?" he gasped, dropping into a chair, and he turned his drawn face, surmounted by a shock of grey hair, to the light.

I looked at him intently. Once before had I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an inch-broad black band, but for the life of me I could not tell where.

"I don't know you," I said, handing him the whiskey. "What can I do for you?"

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat.

"I've come back," he repeated; "and I was the King of Kafiristan—me and Dravot—crowned Kings we was! In this office we settled it—you setting there and giving us the books. I am Peachey—Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan, and you've been setting here ever since—O Lord!"

I was more than a little astonished, and expressed my feelings accordingly.

"It's true," said Carnehan, with a dry cackle, nursing his feet, which were wrapped in rags. "True as gospel. Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads—me and Dravot—poor Dan—oh, poor, poor Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!"

"Take the whiskey," I said, "and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the border on your camels, Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his servant. Do you remember that?"

"I ain't mad—yet, but I shall be that way soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes and don't say anything."

I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon the back was a ragged, red, diamond-shaped scar.

"No, don't look there. Look at *me*," said Carnehan.

"That comes afterward, but for the Lord's sake don't distrack me. We left with that caravan, me and Dravot playing all sorts of antics to amuse the people we were with. Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings when all the people was cooking their dinners—cooking their dinners, and . . . what did they do then? They lit little fires with sparks that went into Dravot's beard, and we all laughed—fit to die. Little red fires they was, going into Dravot's big red beard—so funny." His eyes left mine and he smiled foolishly.

"You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan," I said, at a venture, "after you had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan."

"No, we didn't neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak, because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn't good enough for our two camels—mine and Dravot's. When we left the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too, and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs[3] didn't allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. He burned half his beard, and slung a sheep-skin over his shoulder, and shaved his head into patterns. He shaved mine, too, and made me wear outrageous things to look like a heathen. That was in a most mountaineous country, and our camels couldn't go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall and black, and coming home I saw them fight like wild goats—there are lots of goats in Kafiristan. And these mountains, they never keep still, no more than goats. Always fighting they are, and don't let you sleep at night."

"Take some more whiskey," I said, very slowly. "What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no further because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?"

"What did which do? There was a party called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig that you can sell to the Amir—No; they was two for three ha'pence, those whirligigs, or I am much mistaken and woful sore. And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot—'For the Lord's sake, let's get out of this before our heads are chopped off,' and with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the boxes with the guns and the ammunition, till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing,—'Sell me four mules.' Says the first man,—'If you are rich enough to buy, you are rich enough to rob;' but before ever he could put his hand to his knife, Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into those bitter cold mountaineous parts, and never a road broader than the back of your hand."

He paused for a moment, while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed.

"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. The country was mountaineous and the mules were most contrary, and the inhabitants was dispersed and solitary. They went up and up, and down and down, and that other party, Carnehan, was imploring of Dravot not to sing and whistle so loud, for fear of bringing down the tremenjus avalanches. But Dravot says that if a King couldn't sing it wasn't worth being King, and whacked the mules over the rump, and never took no heed for ten cold days. We came to a big level valley all among the mountains, and the

mules were near dead, so we killed them, not having anything in special for them or us to eat. We sat upon the boxes, and played odd and even[4] with the cartridges that was jolted out.

"Then ten men with bows and arrows ran down that valley, chasing twenty men with bows and arrows, and the row was tremenjus. They was fair men—fairer than you or me—with yellow hair and remarkable well built.[5] Says Dravot, unpacking the guns —'This is the beginning of the business. We'll fight for the ten men,' and with that he fires two rifles at the twenty men, and drops one of them at two hundred yards from the rock where we was sitting. The other men began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits on the boxes picking them off at all ranges, up and down the valley. Then we goes up to the ten men that had run across the snow too, and they fires a footy[6] little arrow at us. Dravot he shoots above their heads and they all falls down flat. Then he walks over and kicks them, and then he lifts them up and shakes hands all round to make them friendly like. He calls them and gives them the boxes to carry, and waves his hand for all the world as though he was King already. They takes the boxes and him across the valley and up the hill into a pine wood on the top, where there was half a dozen big stone idols. Dravot he goes to the biggest—a fellow they call Imbra—and lays a rifle and a cartridge at his feet, rubbing his nose respectful with his own nose, patting him on the head, and saluting in front of it. He turns round to the men and nods his head, and says,—'That's all right. I'm in the know too, and all these old jim-jams[7] are my friends.' Then he opens his mouth and points down it, and when the first man brings him food, he says—'No;' and when the second man brings him food, he says—'No;' but when one of the old priests and the boss of the village brings him food, he says—'Yes;' very haughty, and eats it slow. That was how we came to our first village, without any trouble, just as though we had tumbled from the skies. But we tumbled from one of those damned rope-bridges, you see, and you couldn't expect a man to laugh much after that."

"Take some more whiskey and go on," I said. "That was the first village you came into. How did you get to be King?"

"I wasn't King," said Carnehan. "Dravot he was the King, and a handsome man he looked with the gold crown on his head and all. Him and the other party stayed in that village, and every morning Dravot sat by the side of old Imbra, and the people came and worshipped. That was Dravot's order. Then a lot of men came into the valley, and Carnehan and Dravot picks them off with the rifles before they knew where they was, and runs down into the valley and up again the other side, and finds another village, same as the first one, and the people all falls down flat on their faces, and Dravot says,—'Now what is the trouble between you two villages?' and the people points to a woman, as fair as you or me, that was carried off, and Dravot takes her back to the first village and counts up the dead —eight there was. For each dead man Dravot pours a little milk on the ground and waves his arms like a whirligig and 'That's all right,' says he. Then he and Carnehan takes the big boss of each village by the arm and walks them down into the valley, and shows them how to scratch a line with a spear right down the valley, and gives each a sod of turf from both sides o' the line. Then all the people comes down and shouts like the devil and all, and Dravot says,—'Go and dig the land, and be fruitful and multiply,'[8] which they did, though they didn't understand. Then we asks the names of things in their lingo—bread and water and fire and idols and such, and Dravot leads the priest of each village up to the idol, and says he must sit there and judge the people, and if anything goes wrong he is to be shot.

"Next week they was all turning up the land in the valley as quiet as bees and much prettier, and the priests heard all the complaints and told Dravot in dumb show what it was about. 'That's just the beginning,' says Dravot. 'They think we're Gods.' He and Carnehan picks out twenty good men and shows them how to click off a rifle, and form fours, and advance in line, and they was very pleased to do so, and clever to see the hang of it. Then he takes out his pipe and his baccy-pouch and leaves one at one village and one at the other, and off we two goes to see what was to be done in the next valley. That was all rock, and there was a little village there, and

Carnehan says,—'Send 'em to the old valley to plant,' and takes 'em there and gives 'em some land that wasn't took before. They were a poor lot, and we blooded 'em with a kid[9] before letting 'em into the new Kingdom. That was to impress the people, and then they settled down quiet, and Carnehan went back to Dravot, who had got into another valley, all snow and ice and most mountaineous. There was no people there, and the Army got afraid, so Dravot shoots one of them, and goes on till he finds some people in a village, and the Army explains that unless the people wants to be killed they had better not shoot their little matchlocks;[1] for they had matchlocks. We makes friends with the priest and I stays there alone with two of the Army, teaching the men how to drill, and a thundering big Chief comes across the snow with kettle-drums and horns twanging, because he heard there was a new God kicking about. Carnehan sights for the brown[2] of the men half a mile across the snow and wings one of them. Then he sends a message to the Chief that, unless he wished to be killed, he must come and shake hands with me and leave his arms behind. The Chief comes alone first, and Carnehan shakes hands with him and whirls his arms about, same as Dravot used, and very much surprised that Chief was, and strokes my eyebrows. Then Carnehan goes alone to the Chief, and asks him in dumb show if he had an enemy he hated. 'I have,' says the Chief. So Carnehan weeds out the pick of his men, and sets the two of the Army to show them drill, and at the end of two weeks the men can manoeuvre about as well as Volunteers. So he marches with the Chief to a great big plain on the top of a mountain, and the Chief's men rushes into a village and takes it; we three Martinis firing into the brown of the enemy. So we took that village too, and I gives the Chief a rag from my coat and says, 'Occupy till I come;'[3] which was scriptural. By way of a reminder, when me and the Army was eighteen hundred yards away, I drops a bullet near him standing on the snow, and all the people falls flat on their faces. Then I sends a letter to Dravot, wherever he be by land or by sea."

At the risk of throwing the creature out of train I interrupted, —"How could you write a letter up yonder?"

"The letter?—Oh!—The letter! Keep looking at me between the eyes, please. It was a string-talk letter, that we'd learned the way of it from a blind beggar in the Punjab."

I remember that there had once come to the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cipher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds; and tried to teach me his method, but failed.

"I sent that letter to Dravot," said Carnehan; "and told him to come back because this Kingdom was growing too big for me to handle, and then I struck for the first valley, to see how the priests were working. They called the village we took along with the Chief, Bashkai, and the first village we took, Er-Heb. The priests at Er-Heb was doing all right, but they had a lot of pending cases about land to show me, and some men from another village had been firing arrows at night. I went out and looked for that village and fired four rounds at it from a thousand yards. That used all the cartridges I cared to spend, and I waited for Dravot, who had been away two or three months, and I kept my people quiet.

"One morning I heard the devil's own noise of drums and horns, and Dan Dravot marches down the hill with his Army and a tail of hundreds of men, and, which was the most amazing—a great gold crown on his head. 'My Gord, Carnehan,' says Daniel, 'this is a tremenjus business, and we've got the whole country as far as it's worth having. I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis,[4] and you're my younger brother and a God too! It's the biggest thing we've ever seen. I've been marching and fighting for six weeks with the Army, and every footy[5] little village for fifty miles has come in rejoiceful; and more than that, I've got the key of the whole show, as you'll see, and I've got a crown for you! I told 'em to make two of 'em at a place called Shu, where the gold lies in the rock like suet in mutton. Gold I've seen, and turquoise I've kicked out of the cliffs, and there's garnets in the sands of the river, and here's a chunk of

amber that a man brought me. Call up all the priests and, here, take your crown.'

"One of the men opens a black hair bag and I slips the crown on. It was too small and too heavy, but I wore it for the glory. Hammered gold it was—five pound weight, like a hoop of a barrel.

" 'Peachey,' says Dravot, 'we don't want to fight no more. The Craft's[6] the trick, so help me!' and he brings forward that same Chief that I left at Bashkai—Billy Fish we called him afterward, because he was so like Billy Fish that drove the big tank-engine at Mach on the Bolan[7] in the old days. 'Shake hands with him,' says Dravot, and I shook hands and nearly dropped, for Billy Fish gave me the Grip.[8] I said nothing, but tried him with the Fellow Craft Grip. He answers, all right, and I tried the Master's Grip, but that was a slip. 'A Fellow Craft he is!' I says to Dan. 'Does he know the word?' 'He does,' says Dan, 'and all the priests know. It's a miracle! The Chiefs and the priests can work a Fellow Craft Lodge in a way that's very like ours, and they've cut the marks on the rocks, but they don't know the Third Degree, and they've come to find out. It's Gord's Truth. I've known these long years that the Afghans knew up to the Fellow Craft Degree, but this is a miracle. A God and a Grand-Master of the Craft am I, and a Lodge in the Third Degree I will open, and we'll raise the head priests and the Chiefs of the villages.'

" 'It's against all the law,' I says, 'holding a Lodge without warrant from any one; and we never held office in any Lodge.'

" 'It's a master-stroke of policy,' says Dravot. 'It means running the country as easy as a four-wheeled bogy[9] on a down grade. We can't stop to inquire now, or they'll turn against us. I've forty Chiefs at my heel, and passed and raised according to their merit they shall be. Billet these men on the villages and see that we run up a Lodge of some kind. The temple of Imbra will do for the Lodge-room. The women must make aprons as you show them. I'll hold a levee[1] of Chiefs to-night and Lodge to-morrow.'

"I was fair run off my legs, but I wasn't such a fool as not to see what a pull this Craft business gave us. I showed the priests' families how to make aprons of the degrees, but for Dravot's apron the blue

border and marks was made of turquoise lumps on white hide, not cloth. We took a great square stone in the temple for the Master's chair, and little stones for the officers' chairs, and painted the black pavement with white squares, and did what we could to make things regular.

"At the levee which was held that night on the hillside with big bonfires, Dravot gives out that him and me were Gods and sons of Alexander, and Past Grand-Masters in the Craft, and was come to make Kafiristan a country where every man should eat in peace and drink in quiet, and specially obey us. Then the Chiefs come round to shake hands, and they was so hairy and white and fair it was just shaking hands with old friends. We gave them names according as they was like men we had known in India—Billy Fish, Holly Wilworth, Pikky Kergan that was Bazar-master when I was at Mhow, and so on and so on.

"*The* most amazing miracle was at Lodge next night. One of the old priests was watching us continuous, and I felt uneasy, for I knew we'd have to fudge the Ritual, and I didn't know what the men knew. The old priest was a stranger come in from beyond the village of Bashkai. The minute Dravot puts on the Master's apron that the girls had made for him, the priest fetches a whoop and a howl, and tries to overturn the stone that Dravot was sitting on. 'It's all up now,' I says. 'That comes of meddling with the Craft without warrant!' Dravot never winked an eye, not when ten priests took and tilted over the Grand-Master's chair—which was to say the stone of Imbra. The priest begins rubbing the bottom end of it to clear away the black dirt, and presently he shows all the other priests the Master's Mark, same as was on Dravot's apron, cut into the stone. Not even the priests of the temple of Imbra knew it was there. The old chap falls flat on his face at Dravot's feet and kisses 'em. 'Luck again,' says Dravot, across the Lodge to me, 'they say it's the missing Mark that no one could understand the why of. We're more than safe now.' Then he bangs the butt of his gun for a gavel and says:—'By virtue of the authority vested in me by my own right hand and the help of Peachey, I declare myself Grand-Master of all

Freemasonry in Kafiristan in this the Mother Lodge o' the country, and King of Kafiristan equally with Peachey!' At that he puts on his crown and I puts on mine—I was doing Senior Warden—and we opens the Lodge in most ample form. It was a amazing miracle! The priests moved in Lodge through the first two degrees almost without telling, as if the memory was coming back to them. After that, Peachey and Dravot raised such as was worthy—high priests and Chiefs of far-off villages. Billy Fish was the first, and I can tell you we scared the soul out of him. It was not in any way according to Ritual, but it served our turn. We didn't raise more than ten of the biggest men, because we didn't want to make the Degree common. And they was clamoring to be raised.

" 'In another six months,' says Dravot, 'we'll hold another Communication[2] and see how you are working.' Then he asks them about their villages, and learns that they was fighting one against the other and were fair sick and tired of it. And when they wasn't doing that they was fighting with the Mohammedans. 'You can fight those when they come into our country,' says Dravot. 'Tell off[3] every tenth man of your tribes for a Frontier guard, and send two hundred at a time to this valley to be drilled. Nobody is going to be shot or speared any more so long as he does well, and I know that you won't cheat me because you're white people—sons of Alexander—and not like common, black Mohammedans. You are *my* people and by God,' says he, running off into English at the end—'I'll make a damned fine Nation of you, or I'll die in the making!'

"I can't tell all we did for the next six months because Dravot did a lot I couldn't see the hang off, and he learned their lingo in a way I never could. My work was to help the people plough, and now and again go out with some of the Army and see what the other villages were doing, and make 'em throw rope-bridges across the ravines which cut up the country horrid. Dravot was very kind to me, but when he walked up and down in the pine wood pulling that bloody red beard of his with both fists I knew he was thinking plans I could not advise him about, and I just waited for orders.

"But Dravot never showed me disrespect before the people. They were afraid of me and the Army, but they loved Dan. He was the best of friends with the priests and the Chiefs; but any one could come across the hills with a complaint and Dravot would hear him out fair, and call four priests together and say what was to be done. He used to call in Billy Fish from Bashkai, and Pikky Kergan from Shu, and an old Chief we called Kafuzelum—it was like enough to his real name—and hold councils with 'em when there was any fighting to be done in small villages. That was his Council of War, and the four priests of Bashkai, Shu, Khawak, and Madora was his Privy Council. Between the lot of 'em they sent me, with forty men and twenty rifles, and sixty men carrying turquoises, into the Ghorband country to buy those hand-made Martini rifles, that come out of the Amir's workshops at Kabul, from one of the Amir's Herati regiments that would have sold the very teeth out of their mouths for turquoises.

"I stayed in Ghorband a month, and gave the Governor there the pick of my baskets for hush-money, and bribed the Colonel of the regiment some more, and, between the two and the tribes-people, we got more than a hundred handmade Martinis, a hundred good Kohat Jezails[4] that'll throw to six hundred yards, and forty man-loads of very bad ammunition for the rifles. I came back with what I had, and distributed 'em among the men that the Chiefs sent to me to drill. Dravot was too busy to attend to those things, but the old Army that we first made helped me, and we turned out five hundred men that could drill, and two hundred that knew how to hold arms pretty straight. Even those cork-screwed, hand-made guns was a miracle to them. Dravot talked big about powder-shops and factories, walking up and down in the pine wood when the winter was coming on.

" 'I won't make a Nation,' says he. 'I'll make an Empire! These men aren't n*****s; they're English! Look at their eyes—look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit, on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes,[5] or something like it, and they've grown to be English. I'll take a census in the spring if the priests don't get frightened. There must be a fair two million of 'em

in these hills. The villages are full o' little children. Two million people —two hundred and fifty thousand fighting men—and all English! They only want the rifles and a little drilling. Two hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to cut in on Russia's right flank when she tries for India! Peachey, man,' he says, chewing his beard in great hunks, 'we shall be Emperors—Emperors of the Earth! Rajah Brooke will be a suckling[6] to us. I'll treat with the Viceroy[7] on equal terms. I'll ask him to send me twelve picked English—twelve that I know of—to help us govern a bit. There's Mackray, Sergeant-pensioner at Segowli —many's the good dinner he's given me, and his wife a pair of trousers. There's Donldn, the Warder of Tounghoo Jail; there's hundreds that I could lay my hand on if I was in India. The Viceroy shall do it for me. I'll send a man through in the spring for those men, and I'll write for a dispensation from the Grand-Lodge for what I've done as Grand-Master. That—and all the Sniders[8] that'll be thrown out when the native troops in India take up the Martini. They'll be worn smooth, but they'll do for fighting in these hills. Twelve English, a hundred thousand Sniders run through the Amir's country in driblets—I'd be content with twenty thousand in one year —and we'd be an Empire. When everything was shipshape, I'd hand over the crown—this crown I'm wearing now—to Queen Victoria on my knees, and she'd say: "Rise up, Sir Daniel Dravot." Oh, it's big! It's big, I tell you! But there's so much to be done in every place— Bashkai, Khawak, Shu, and everywhere else.'

" 'What is it?' I says. 'There are no more men coming in to be drilled this autumn. Look at those fat, black clouds. They're bringing the snow.'

" 'It isn't that,' says Daniel, putting his hand very hard on my shoulder; 'and I don't wish to say anything that's against you, for no other living man would have followed me and made me what I am as you have done. You're a first-class Commander-in-Chief, and the people know you; but—it's a big country, and somehow you can't help me, Peachey, in the way I want to be helped.'

" 'Go to your blasted priests, then!' I said, and I was sorry when I made that remark, but it did hurt me sore to find Daniel talking so

superior when I'd drilled all the men, and done all he told me.

" 'Don't let's quarrel, Peachey,' says Daniel, without cursing. 'You're a King, too, and the half of this Kingdom is yours; but can't you see, Peachey, we want cleverer men than us now—three or four of 'em, that we can scatter about for our Deputies. It's a hugeous great State, and I can't always tell the right thing to do, and I haven't time for all I want to do, and here's the winter coming on and all.' He put half his beard into his mouth, and it was as red as the gold of his crown.

" 'I'm sorry, Daniel,' says I. 'I've done all I could. I've drilled the men and shown the people how to stack their oats better; and I've brought in those tinware rifles from Ghorband—but I know what you're driving at. I take it Kings always feel oppressed that way.'

" 'There's another thing too,' says Dravot, walking up and down. 'The winter's coming and these people won't be giving much trouble and if they do we can't move about. I want a wife.'

" 'For Gord's sake leave the women alone!' I says. 'We've both got all the work we can, though I *am* a fool. Remember the Contrack, and keep clear o' women.'

" 'The Contrack only lasted till such time as we was Kings; and Kings we have been these months past,' says Dravot, weighing his crown in his hand. 'You go get a wife too, Peachey—a nice, strappin', plump girl that'll keep you warm in the winter. They're prettier than English girls, and we can take the pick of 'em. Boil 'em once or twice in hot water, and they'll come as fair as chicken and ham.'

" 'Don't tempt me!' I says. 'I will not have any dealings with a woman not till we are a dam' side more settled than we are now. I've been doing the work o' two men, and you've been doing the work o' three. Let's lie off a bit, and see if we can get some better tobacco from Afghan country and run in some good liquor; but no women.'

" 'Who's talking o' *women?*' says Dravot. 'I said *wife*—a Queen to breed a King's son for the King. A Queen out of the strongest tribe, that'll make them your blood-brothers, and that'll lie by your side

and tell you all the people thinks about you and their own affairs. That's what I want.'

" 'Do you remember that Bengali woman I kept at Mogul Serai when I was a plate-layer?'[9] says I. 'A fat lot o' good she was to me. She taught me the lingo and one or two other things; but what happened? She ran away with the Station-master's servant and half my month's pay. Then she turned up at Dadur Junction in tow of a half-caste, and had the impidence to say I was her husband—all among the drivers in the running-shed!'

" 'We've done with that,' says Dravot. 'These women are whiter than you or me, and a Queen I will have for the winter months.'

" 'For the last time o' asking, Dan, do *not*,' I says. 'It'll only bring us harm. The Bible says that Kings ain't to waste their strength on women,[1] 'specially when they've got a new raw Kingdom to work over.'

" 'For the last time of answering, I will,' said Dravot, and he went away through the pine-trees looking like a big red devil. The low sun hit his crown and beard on one side and the two blazed like hot coals.

"But getting a wife was not as easy as Dan thought. He put it before the Council, and there was no answer till Billy Fish said that he'd better ask the girls. Dravot damned them all round. 'What's wrong with me?' he shouts, standing by the idol Imbra. 'Am I a dog or am I not enough of a man for your wenches? Haven't I put the shadow of my hand over this country? Who stopped the last Afghan raid?' It was me really, but Dravot was too angry to remember. 'Who brought your guns? Who repaired the bridges? Who's the Grand-Master of the sign cut in the stone?' and he thumped his hand on the block that he used to sit on in Lodge, and at Council, which opened like Lodge always. Billy Fish said nothing, and no more did the others. 'Keep your hair on, Dan,' said I; 'and ask the girls. That's how it's done at Home, and these people are quite English.'

" 'The marriage of the King is a matter of State,' says Dan, in a white-hot rage, for he could feel, I hope, that he was going against

his better mind. He walked out of the Council-room, and the others sat still, looking at the ground.

" 'Billy Fish,' says I to the Chief of Bashkai, 'what's the difficulty here? A straight answer to a true friend,' 'You know,' says Billy Fish. 'How should a man tell you who know everything? How can daughters of men marry Gods or Devils? It's not proper.'

"I remembered something like that in the Bible;[2] but if, after seeing us as long as they had, they still believed we were Gods, it wasn't for me to undeceive them.

" 'A God can do anything,' says I. 'If the King is fond of a girl he'll not let her die.' 'She'll have to,' said Billy Fish. 'There are all sorts of Gods and Devils in these mountains, and now and again a girl marries one of them and isn't seen any more. Besides, you two know the Mark cut in the stone. Only the Gods know that. We thought you were men till you showed the sign of the Master.'

"I wished then that we had explained about the loss of the genuine secrets of a Master-Mason at the first go-off; but I said nothing. All that night there was a blowing of horns in a little dark temple half-way down the hill, and I heard a girl crying fit to die. One of the priests told us that she was being prepared to marry the King.

" 'I'll have no nonsense of that kind,' says Dan. 'I don't want to interfere with your customs, but I'll take my own wife.' 'The girl's a little bit afraid,' says the priest. 'She thinks she's going to die, and they are a-heartening of her up down in the temple.'

" 'Hearten her very tender, then,' says Dravot, 'or I'll hearten you with the butt of a gun so that you'll never want to be heartened again.' He licked his lips, did Dan, and stayed up walking about more than half the night, thinking of the wife that he was going to get in the morning. I wasn't any means comfortable, for I knew that dealings with a woman in foreign parts, though you was a crowned King twenty times over, could not but be risky. I got up very early in the morning while Dravot was asleep, and I saw the priests talking together in whispers, and the Chiefs talking together too, and they looked at me out of the corners of their eyes.

" 'What is up, Fish?' I says to the Bashkai man, who was wrapped up in his furs and looking splendid to behold.

" 'I can't rightly say,' says he; 'but if you can induce the King to drop all this nonsense about marriage, you'll be doing him and me and yourself a great service.'

" 'That I do believe,' says I. 'But sure, you know, Billy, as well as me, having fought against and for us, that the King and me are nothing more than two of the finest men that God Almighty ever made. Nothing more, I do assure you.'

" 'That may be,' says Billy Fish, 'and yet I should be sorry if it was.' He sinks his head upon his great fur cloak for a minute and thinks. 'King,' says he, 'be you man or God or Devil, I'll stick by you to-day. I have twenty of my men with me, and they will follow me. We'll go to Bashkai until the storm blows over.'

"A little snow had fallen in the night, and everything was white except the greasy fat clouds that blew down and down from the north. Dravot came out with his crown on his head, swinging his arms and stamping his feet, and looking more pleased than Punch.[3]

" 'For the last time, drop it, Dan,' says I, in a whisper. 'Billy Fish here says that there will be a row.'

" 'A row among my people!' says Dravot. 'Not much. Peachey, you're a fool not to get a wife too. Where's the girl?' says he, with a voice as loud as the braying of a jackass. 'Call up all the Chiefs and priests, and let the Emperor see if his wife suits him.'

"There was no need to call any one. They were all there leaning on their guns and spears round the clearing in the centre of the pine wood. A deputation of priests went down to the little temple to bring up the girl, and the horns blew up fit to wake the dead. Billy Fish saunters round and gets as close to Daniel as he could, and behind him stood his twenty men with matchlocks. Not a man of them under six feet. I was next to Dravot, and behind me was twenty men of the regular Army. Up comes the girl, and a strapping wench she was, covered with silver and turquoises, but white as death, and looking back every minute at the priests.

" 'She'll do,' said Dan, looking her over. 'What's to be afraid of, lass? Come and kiss me.' He puts his arm round her. She shuts her eyes, gives a bit of a squeak, and down goes her face in the side of Dan's flaming red beard.

" 'The slut's bitten me!' says he, clapping his hand to his neck, and, sure enough, his hand was red with blood. Billy Fish and two of his matchlock-men catches hold of Dan by the shoulders and drags him into the Bashkai lot, while the priests howl in their lingo, —'Neither God nor Devil, but a man!' I was all taken aback, for a priest cut at me in front, and the Army behind began firing into the Bashkai men.

" 'God A-mighty!' says Dan. 'What is the meaning o' this?'

" 'Come back! Come away!' says Billy Fish. 'Ruin and Mutiny is the matter. We'll break for Bashkai if we can.'

"I tried to give some sort of orders to my men—the men o' the regular Army—but it was no use, so I fired into the brown of 'em with an English Martini and drilled three beggars in a line. The valley was full of shouting, howling creatures, and every soul was shrieking, 'Not a God nor a Devil, but only a man!' The Bashkai troops stuck to Billy Fish all they were worth, but their matchlocks wasn't half as good as the Kabul breech-loaders, and four of them dropped. Dan was bellowing like a bull, for he was very wrathy; and Billy Fish had a hard job to prevent him running out at the crowd.

" 'We can't stand,' says Billy Fish. 'Make a run for it down the valley! The whole place is against us.' The matchlock-men ran, and we went down the valley in spite of Dravot's protestations. He was swearing horribly and crying out that he was a King. The priests rolled great stones on us, and the regular Army fired hard, and there wasn't more than six men, not counting Dan, Billy Fish, and Me, that came down to the bottom of the valley alive.

"Then they stopped firing and the horns in the temple blew again. 'Come away—for Gord's sake come away!' says Billy Fish. 'They'll send runners out to all the villages before ever we get to Bashkai. I can protect you there, but I can't do anything now.'

"My own notion is that Dan began to go mad in his head from that hour. He stared up and down like a stuck pig. Then he was all for walking back alone and killing the priests with his bare hands; which he could have done. 'An Emperor am I,' says Daniel, 'and next year I shall be a Knight of the Queen.'

" 'All right, Dan,' says I; 'but come along now while there's time.'

" 'It's your fault,' says he, 'for not looking after your Army better. There was mutiny in the midst and you didn't know—you damned engine-driving, plate-laying, missionary's-pass-hunting hound!' He sat upon a rock and called me every foul name he could lay tongue to. I was too heart-sick to care, though it was all his foolishness that brought the smash.

" 'I'm sorry, Dan,' says I, 'but there's no accounting for natives. This business is our Fifty-Seven.[4] Maybe we'll make something out of it yet, when we've got to Bashkai.'

" 'Let's get to Bashkai, then,' says Dan, 'and, by God, when I come back here again I'll sweep the valley so there isn't a bug in a blanket left!'

"We walked all that day, and all that night Dan was stumping up and down on the snow, chewing his beard and muttering to himself.

" 'There's no hope o' getting clear,' said Billy Fish. 'The priests will have sent runners to the villages to say that you are only men. Why didn't you stick on as Gods till things was more settled? I'm a dead man,' says Billy Fish, and he throws himself down on the snow and begins to pray to his Gods.

"Next morning we was in a cruel bad country—all up and down, no level ground at all, and no food either. The six Bashkai men looked at Billy Fish hungry-wise as if they wanted to ask something, but they said never a word. At noon we came to the top of a flat mountain all covered with snow, and when we climbed up into it, behold, there was an Army in position waiting in the middle!

" 'The runners have been very quick,' says Billy Fish, with a little bit of a laugh. 'They are waiting for us.'

"Three or four men began to fire from the enemy's side, and a chance shot took Daniel in the calf of the leg. That brought him to

his senses. He looks across the snow at the Army, and sees the rifles that we had brought into the country.

" 'We're done for,' says he. 'They are Englishmen, these people,—and it's my blasted nonsense that has brought you to this. Get back, Billy Fish, and take your men away; you've done what you could, and now cut for it. Carnehan,' says he, 'shake hands with me and go along with Billy. Maybe they won't kill you. I'll go and meet 'em alone. It's me that did it. Me, the King!'

" 'Go!' says I. 'Go to Hell, Dan. I'm with you here. Billy Fish, you clear out, and we two will meet those folk.'

" 'I'm a Chief,' says Billy Fish, quite quiet. 'I stay with you. My men can go.'

"The Bashkai fellows didn't wait for a second word, but ran off, and Dan and me and Billy Fish walked across to where the drums were drumming and the horns were horning. It was cold—awful cold. I've got that cold in the back of my head now. There's a lump of it there."

The punkah-coolies[5] had gone to sleep. Two kerosene lamps were blazing in the office, and the perspiration poured down my face and splashed on the blotter as I leaned forward. Carnehan was shivering, and I feared that his mind might go. I wiped my face, took a fresh grip of the piteously mangled hands, and said: "What happened after that?"

The momentary shift of my eyes had broken the clear current.

"What was you pleased to say?" whined Carnehan. "They took them without any sound. Not a little whisper all along the snow, not though the King knocked down the first man that set hand on him—not though old Peachey fired his last cartridge into the brown of 'em. Not a single solitary sound did those swines make. They just closed up tight, and I tell you their furs stunk. There was a man called Billy Fish, a good friend of us all, and they cut his throat, Sir, then and there, like a pig; and the King kicks up the bloody snow and says: —'We've had a dashed fine run for our money. What's coming next?' But Peachey, Peachey Taliaferro, I tell you, Sir, in confidence as betwixt two friends, he lost his head, Sir. No, he didn't neither. The

King lost his head, so he did, all along o' one of those cunning rope-bridges. Kindly let me have the paper-cutter, Sir. It tilted this way. They marched him a mile across that snow to a rope-bridge over a ravine with a river at the bottom. You may have seen such. They prodded him behind like an ox. 'Damn your eyes!' says the King. 'D'you suppose I can't die like a gentleman?' He turns to Peachey—Peachey that was crying like a child. 'I've brought you to this, Peachey,' says he. 'Brought you out of your happy life to be killed in Kafiristan, where you was late Commander-in-Chief of the Emperor's forces. Say you forgive me, Peachey.' 'I do,' says Peachey. 'Fully and freely do I forgive you, Dan.' 'Shake hands, Peachey,' says he. 'I'm going now.' Out he goes, looking neither right nor left, and when he was plumb in the middle of those dizzy dancing ropes, 'Cut, you beggars,' he shouts; and they cut, and old Dan fell, turning round and round and round twenty thousand miles, for he took half an hour to fall till he struck the water, and I could see his body caught on a rock with the gold crown close beside.

"But do you know what they did to Peachey between two pine trees? They crucified him, Sir, as Peachey's hand will show. They used wooden pegs for his hands and his feet; and he didn't die. He hung there and screamed, and they took him down next day, and said it was a miracle that he wasn't dead. They took him down—poor old Peachey that hadn't done them any harm—that hadn't done them any . . ."

He rocked to and fro and wept bitterly, wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred hands and moaning like a child for some ten minutes.

"They was cruel enough to feed him up in the temple, because they said he was more of a God than old Daniel that was a man. Then they turned him out on the snow, and told him to go home, and Peachey came home in about a year, begging along the roads quite safe; for Daniel Dravot he walked before and said:—'Come along, Peachey. It's a big thing we're doing.' The mountains they danced at night, and the mountains they tried to fall on Peachey's head, but Dan he held up his hand, and Peachey came along bent

double. He never let go of Dan's hand, and he never let go of Dan's head. They gave it to him as a present in the temple, to remind him not to come again, and though the crown was pure gold, and Peachey was starving, never would Peachey sell the same. You knew Dravot, Sir! You knew Right Worshipful Brother Dravot! Look at him now!"

He fumbled in the mass of rags round his bent waist; brought out a black horsehair bag embroidered with silver thread; and shook therefrom on to my table—the dried, withered head of Daniel Dravot! The morning sun that had long been paling the lamps struck the red beard and blind, sunken eyes; struck, too, a heavy circlet of gold studded with raw turquoises, that Carnehan placed tenderly on the battered temples.

"You behold now," said Carnehan, "the Emperor in his habit as he lived[6]—the King of Kafiristan with his crown upon his head. Poor old Daniel that was a monarch once!"

I shuddered, for, in spite of defacements manifold, I recognized the head of the man of Marwar Junction. Carnehan rose to go. I attempted to stop him. He was not fit to walk abroad. "Let me take away the whiskey, and give me a little money," he gasped. "I was a King once. I'll go to the Deputy Commissioner and ask to set in the Poorhouse till I get my health. No, thank you, I can't wait till you get a carriage for me. I've urgent private affairs—in the south—at Marwar."

He shambled out of the office and departed in the direction of the Deputy Commissioner's house. That day at noon I had occasion to go down the blinding hot Mall, and I saw a crooked man crawling along the white dust of the roadside, his hat in his hand, quavering dolorously after the fashion of street-singers at Home. There was not a soul in sight, and he was out of all possible earshot of the houses. And he sang through his nose, turning his head from right to left:

"The Son of Man goes forth to war,
A golden crown to gain;

His blood-red banner streams afar—
Who follows in his train?”[7]

I waited to hear no more, but put the poor wretch into my carriage and drove him off to the nearest missionary for eventual transfer to the Asylum. He repeated the hymn twice while he was with me, whom he did not in the least recognize, and I left him singing it to the missionary.

Two days later I inquired after his welfare of the Superintendent of the Asylum.

“He was admitted suffering from sunstroke. He died early yesterday morning,” said the Superintendent. “Is it true that he was half an hour bareheaded in the sun at midday?”

“Yes,” said I, “but do you happen to know if he had anything upon him by any chance when he died?”

“Not to my knowledge,” said the Superintendent.

And there the matter rests.

1888

Endnotes

- Note 1: Kipling based his story on the true-life exploits of an American adventurer, Josiah Harlan, who awarded himself the title of prince after occupying a region in the Hindu Kush in the late 1830s.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Meant to suggest the principles of Freemasonry, a secret fraternal society that developed from the masons’ guild in medieval Britain. By Victorian times it had grown to a prominent organization, whose members were bound to help each other in times of distress. Kipling was a member.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Right to inherit.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: These, and the other places mentioned at the beginning of the story, are in northern India.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A European in India with no official attachment or position.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the unfinished side of a wall.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Needed. "Annas": there are sixteen annas in a rupee, the basic monetary unit of India.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: On credit.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This fictitious newspaper appears to be based on the Allahabad *Pioneer*, for which Kipling worked as a roving correspondent. The Central India States were quasi-independent "Native States," as they were also known, presided over by Indian royalty.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: British political officers appointed to oversee affairs at the courts of Indian rulers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Fashionable man.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Catch on, understand.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This phrase and the following one are from the code of the Freemasons.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Honestly.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fashionable four-wheeled carriages.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tall tales.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The caliph of Baghdad (763–809), who figures in many tales of the *Arabian Nights.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, residents: British government officials.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Fraudulently extorted money from. "Foregathered": met.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Female missionaries doing work among Indian women, who were customarily confined to a part of the house called the "Zenana."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Large swinging fan, usually worked by hand.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Major road connecting Calcutta and Delhi.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Places under British control. William Ewart Gladstone (1809–1898), leader of the Liberal Party from 1868 to 1875 and 1880 to 1894, and four times prime minister; he strongly opposed overseas expansion. “Brimstone”: that is, fire and brimstone, the supposed torments of hell.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In British legend the shield of King Arthur’s traitorous nephew was blank because he had done no deeds of valor.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Official outposts in the northern hills, to which many British people in India would retire during the hottest months.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: “God Knows Town”; that is, Nowheresville.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The final preparations were made for printing the newspaper.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A title meant to recall the Freemason connection.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A drink.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A reference to Sir James Brooke (1803–1868), “the White Rajah of Sarawak,” who, in return for helping the rajah of Sarawak, in Borneo, put down a rebellion, succeeded him after his death, and established a dynasty.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A real place, in the Hindu Kush.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Peshawar, a large city in present-day Pakistan.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In the Second Afghan War (1878–80), a force under the command of General Frederick Roberts made a three-hundred-mile forced march through the area.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A river whose sources are in the area.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Place or building for the accommodation of travelers and their pack animals.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Pinwheel.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The ruler of Afghanistan, based in the city of Kabul.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Person from Uzbekistan.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The Khyber or Khaiber Pass, running thirty-three miles through the mountains. Then on the northwest frontier of British India, it now links Afghanistan and Pakistan.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Turkey.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Become sore.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Czar of Russia.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Presence (an honorary form of address).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Get ready.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Rifle issued to British infantry.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The principal tribe in Afghanistan.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: His Highness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Non-Muslims.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A game in which a player guesses the number of objects that another player is holding.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: There was a legend that Alexander the Great had left a Greek colony in the area in the 4th century B.C.E.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Paltry, insignificant.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Knickknacks.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: God's command to Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, a kid goat, a fake religious ritual.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Primitive muskets.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A hunting term, meaning to fire into the middle of a group of game birds rather than aiming at a particular one.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Jesus's parable of the talents, a nobleman gives each of his servants a coin to invest with those instructions (Luke 19:13).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Legendary Assyrian queen.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Worthless.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Freemasonry.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: The Bolan Pass, which was brought under British control in 1879 during the Second Afghan War.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Freemason handshake.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Railway truck.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Gathering.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Freemasonry an official Lodge meeting, in which all members have a part.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Count off.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Afghan muskets.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Of the twelve original Hebrew tribes mentioned in the Bible, ten were lost by assimilating with neighboring peoples.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Infant.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Head of the British administration in India. Rajah Brooke: see p. 929, n. 3.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Older rifles being replaced by Martinis.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Layer of railway track.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: "Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings" (Proverbs 31:3).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: "That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose" (Genesis 6:2).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Common expression: the character in the Punch-and-Judy puppet show has a fixed grin and is delighted with his evil deeds.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The year 1857 saw the beginning of a two-year rebellion of Indian troops of the British East India Company and peasantry against the British; known at the time as the "Indian Mutiny," this is now referred to as the First War of Indian Independence.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Servants who operate punkahs, or fans.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Allusion to Hamlet's description of his father's ghost: "My father, in his habit as he lived" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

3.4.126).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: A well-known hymn, by Reginald Heber (1783–1826), corrected in later editions to the actual words of the first line: “The Son of God goes forth to war.”Return to reference 7

Danny Deever

"What are the bugles blowin' for?" said Files-on-Parade.[1]
"To turn you out, to turn you out," the Colour-Sergeant[2] said.
"What makes you look so white, so white?" said Files-on-Parade.
"I'm dreadin' what I've got to watch," the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're hangin' Danny Deever, you can hear the Dead March play,
The regiment's in 'ollow square[3]—they're hangin' him today;
They've taken of his buttons off an' cut his stripes[4] away,
An they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What makes the rear rank breathe so 'ard?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's bitter cold, it's bitter cold," the Colour-Sergeant said.
"What makes that front-rank man fall down?" said Files-on-Parade.
"A touch o' sun, a touch o' sun," the Colour-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, they are marchin' of 'im round,
They 'ave 'alted Danny Deever by 'is coffin on the ground;
An' 'e'll swing in 'arf a minute for a sneakin' shootin' hound—
O they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'!

" 'Is cot was right-'and cot to mine," said Files-on-Parade.
" 'E's sleepin' out an' far tonight," the Colour-Sergeant said.
"I've drunk 'is beer a score o' times," said Files-on-Parade.
" 'E's drinkin bitter beer[5] alone," the Colour-Sergeant said.
They are hangin' Danny Deever, you must mark 'im to 'is place,
For 'e shot a comrade sleepin'—you must look 'im in the face;
Nine 'undred of 'is county[6] an' the Regiment's disgrace,
While they're hangin' Danny Deever in the mornin'.

"What's that so black agin the sun?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's Danny fightin' 'ard for life," the Colour-Sergeant said.
"What's that that whimpers over'ead?" said Files-on-Parade.
"It's Danny's soul that's passin' now," the Colour-Sergeant said.
For they're done with Danny Deever, you can 'ear the quickstep play,
The regiment's in column, an' they're marchin' us away;
Ho! the young recruits are shakin', an' they'll want their beer today,

After hangin’ Danny Deever in the mornin’.

1890

Endnotes

- Note 1: Army private. “Files” here should be spoken as two syllables (*fy-ulls*).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: High-ranking noncommissioned officer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ceremonial formation in which the troops line four sides of a parade square, facing inward. “ ’Ollow”: hollow. London Cockney speech often drops the *h* from words that start with this letter.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Chevrons denoting rank, worn by corporals and sergeants on the sleeves of their tunics.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Or simply “bitter,” a favorite variety of beer drunk in English pubs. The word *bitter* thus becomes a grim pun.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: English regiments often bear the name of a particular county from which most of its members have been recruited (for example, the Lancashire Fusiliers).Return to reference 6

The Widow at Windsor

'Ave you 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor
  With a hairy[1] gold crown on 'er 'ead?
She 'as ships on the foam—she 'as millions at 'ome,
  An' she pays us poor beggars in red.[2]
    (Ow, poor beggars in red!)
There's 'er nick[3] on the cavalry 'orses,
  There's 'er mark[4] on the medical stores—
An' 'er troopers° you'll find with a fair wind be'ind
  That takes us to various wars.
    (Poor beggars!—barbarious wars!)
      Then 'ere's to the Widow at Windsor,
        An' 'ere's to the stores an' the guns,
      The men an' the 'orses what makes up the forces
          O' Missis Victorier's sons.
      (Poor beggars! Victorier's sons!)

Walk wide o' the Widow at Windsor,
  For 'alf o' Creation she owns:
We 'ave bought 'er the same with the sword an' the flame,
  An' we've salted it down with our bones.
    (Poor beggars!—it's blue with our bones!)
Hands off o' the sons o' the widow,
  Hands off o' the goods in 'er shop,
For the kings must come down an' the emperors frown
  When the Widow at Windsor says "Stop!"
    (Poor beggars!—we're sent to say "Stop!")
      Then 'ere's to the Lodge o' the Widow,

From the Pole to the Tropics it runs—
To the Lodge that we tile with the rank an' the file,
An' open in form with the guns.[5]
(Poor beggars!—it's always they guns!)

We 'ave 'eard o' the Widow at Windsor,
It's safest to leave 'er alone:
For 'er sentries we stand by the sea an' the land
Wherever the bugles are blown.[6]
(Poor beggars!—an' don't we get blown!)
Take 'old o' the Wings o' the Mornin',[7]
An' flop round the earth till you're dead;
But you won't get away from the tune that they play
To the bloomin' old rag° over'ead.
(Poor beggars!—it's 'ot over'ead!)
Then 'ere's to the sons o' the Widow,
Wherever, 'owever they roam.
'Ere's all they desire, an' if they require
A speedy return to their 'ome.
(Poor beggars!—they'll never see 'ome!)

1892

Endnotes

- Note 1: Airy, lofty. London Cockney speech often drops the *h* from words that start with this letter and sometimes adds an *h* to the beginning of words that start with a vowel.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British military uniforms were bright red.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A nick on one of their hoofs identified army horses as property of the Crown.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The queen's mark: "V.R.I." (*Victoria Regina et Imperatrix*, "Victoria Queen and Empress").Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Here, as in "The Man Who Would Be King," Kipling employs terms and concepts from Freemasonry (see p. 923, n. 1). Victoria's "Lodge" (her Masonic branch, or district) traverses the globe ("From the Pole to the Tropics"); the soldiers patrol its perimeters (to "tile" is to guard the door of a Masonic lodge), and gunfire stands in for the Masons' formal opening ceremonies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Allusion to "Pro Rege Nostro" (1892), a poem by W. E. Henley (1849–1903).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Psalms 139:9.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *troopships*Return to reference °
- °: *the flag*Return to reference °

Recessional[1]

1897

God of our fathers, known of old—
  Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
  Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—
The Captains and the Kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,
  An humble and a contrite heart.[2]
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away—
  On dune and headland sinks the fire[3]—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
  Is one with Nineveh and Tyre![4]
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
  Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—
Such boasting as the Gentiles use
  Or lesser breeds without the Law[5]—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube° and iron shard[6]—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!

1897 1897, 1899

Endnotes

- Note 1: A hymn sung as the clergy and choir leave a church in procession at the end of a service. Kipling's hymn was written on the occasion of the Jubilee celebrations honoring the sixtieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign, celebrations that had prompted a good deal of boasting in the press about the greatness of her empire. "Recessional" was first published in the London *Times*, and Kipling refused to accept any payment for its publication, then or later. After World War I the poem's refrain —"Lest we forget"—gained additional poignancy: it was employed as an epitaph on countless war memorials.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with Psalms 51:17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Bonfires were lit on high ground all over Britain on the night of the Jubilee.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Once capitals of great empires. The ruins of Nineveh, in Assyria, were discovered buried in desert sands by British archaeologists in the 1850s. Tyre, in Phoenicia, had dwindled into a small Lebanese town.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Compare with Romans 2:14: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Compare with Psalms 20:7: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *cannon, rifle*Return to reference °

The White Man's Burden[1]

Take up the White Man's burden—
  Send forth the best ye breed—
Go bind your sons to exile
  To serve your captives' need;
To wait in heavy harness,
  On fluttered folk and wild—
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
  Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
  And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
  An hundred times made plain,
To seek another's profit,
  And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  The savage wars of peace—
Fill full the mouth of Famine
  And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
  The end for others sought,
Watch Sloth and heathen Folly
  Bring all your hope to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  No tawdry rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper[2]—
  The tale of common things.

The ports ye shall not enter,
  The roads ye shall not tread,
Go make them with your living,
  And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden—
  And reap his old reward:
The blame of those ye better,
  The hate of those ye guard—
The cry of hosts ye humour
  (Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—
'Why brought ye us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?'[3]

Take up the White Man's burden—
  Ye dare not stoop to less—
Nor call too loud on Freedom
  To cloak your weariness;
By all ye cry or whisper,
  By all ye leave or do,
The silent, sullen peoples
  Shall weigh your Gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden—
Have done with childish days—
The lightly proffered laurel,[4]
  The easy, ungrudged praise.
Comes now, to search your manhood
  Through all the thankless years,
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
  The judgment of your peers!

1899

Endnotes

- Note 1: This poem was conceived for Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, but Kipling abandoned it in favor of "Recessional." He returned to the poem when disagreements between Spain and the United States over Spanish colonial rule in Cuba and elsewhere sparked the Spanish-American War in 1898. In its revised form the poem reacts to resistance in the Philippines to the United States' assumption of colonial power.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Street sweeper, who in India would belong to the lowest caste.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Compare with Exodus 16:2–3. When the Israelites were hungry in the wilderness, they criticized Moses and Aaron for taking them from what they saw as the relative comfort of Egyptian slavery.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A symbol of military distinction in the triumphs celebrated by victorious Roman generals (later, Roman emperors wore a laurel crown as part of their official regalia).Return to reference 4

If—

If you can keep your head when all about you
  Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
  But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
  Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
  And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your
  master;
  If you can think—and not make thoughts your
  aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
  And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
  Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
  And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
  And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,[1]
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
  And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
  To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
  Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
  Or walk with Kings—nor° lose the common touch,

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

1910

Endnotes

- Note 1: A game, played with coins, that combines skill (tossing a coin as close as possible to a fixed mark) and luck (flipping coins and keeping those that come up heads).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *and not*Return to reference °

MOHANDAS GANDHI
1869–1948

It might seem strange to conclude a collection of Victorian literature with the work of one of the best-known and most important anti-colonial activists of modern times. Mohandas Gandhi is famous for leading massive nonviolent campaigns against British rule in India. As a result, Gandhi might seem to be "Victorian" only insofar as he is anti-Victorian. To some extent, this is precisely why we have chosen to include a sample from his early work: if this volume tells a story, Gandhi's work helps indicate what happened next—the dismantling of the British Empire. At the same time, Gandhi's relationship to Victorian literature and culture is more nuanced and complicated than such an account might suggest. He did not simply reject British or Victorian culture; particularly in *Hind Swaraj*, he explicitly identifies what he learned from it.

Hind Swaraj, or "Indian Home Rule," as Gandhi translated it, is an early statement explaining the theory behind his claims for Indian independence. Written in 1909 while Gandhi was traveling back from England to South Africa (where he spent his early career), it makes clear his reasons for wishing to reclaim India from the British. The problem he identifies with the Raj is not their military or governmental power, however, but instead what most Britons would call *modernization*: "India is being ground down not under the English heel," he writes, "but under that of modern civilisation. It is groaning under the monster's terrible weight." In making this claim,

Gandhi was explicitly agreeing with several British writers, some of whom he cites in the bibliography with which the essay concludes: John Ruskin, Robert Sherard, Edward Carpenter, William Morris, Annie Besant, and others. Like many of them, Gandhi critiqued what he called "machinery," here embodied in the railways, lawyers, doctors, and other nonspiritual solutions to what he regarded as spiritual problems. As he insists, "civilisation" is not identical to technological advancement; it is instead "that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions." Rather than improving the nation, therefore, British "[r]ailways, lawyers and doctors have impoverished the country, so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined." This is a claim with which several other writers in this volume would have agreed, though the country they saw being ruined was not India but England. However influenced *Hind Swaraj* may have been by European writers and thinkers, it is both a product of Indian thought and oriented toward an Indian audience. As Gandhi explained in the preface to the first English edition, for example, he wrote it in the form of a dialogue because "the Gujarati language readily lends itself to such treatment. . . . Had I written for English readers in the first instance, the subject would have been handled in a different manner."

Gandhi was born and raised in a Hindu family in western India. He was trained in the law at the Inner Temple, London. After two years of practice in India, he moved to South Africa to represent an Indian merchant in a lawsuit. He stayed for twenty-one years, working as a lawyer and as a political organizer and activist. Gandhi returned to India in 1915, a moment of heightened political tensions. The Rowlatt Acts, which allowed the Raj to imprison those suspected of sedition without trial; the Massacre of Amritsar, in which British-led soldiers wounded and killed hundreds of peaceful demonstrators; the enactment of martial law: all these events inflamed the nation. Despite some initial hesitation, by 1920, Gandhi was organizing national boycotts of British goods and institutions. His commitment

to nonviolence was profound: he repeatedly called off protests when violence broke out or used his own fasts as a powerful tool to quell political infighting.

Despite his best efforts to prevent it, the price of Indian independence in 1947 was Partition, the horrifyingly bloody separation of Hindus and Muslims into the nations of India and Pakistan. The boundaries the British drew between the two nations were highly arbitrary—as was the decision to separate the Indian subcontinent along religious lines. The effect was to reinforce antagonisms that might have been mitigated or even overcome, and that had, until recently, been relatively dormant. Even in the wake of this devastating event, however, Gandhi found ways to be politically effective: his fasts helped end rioting in Calcutta in 1947 and in Delhi in 1948. Throughout his life and work, his goal was spiritual renewal, tolerance, and justice. Gandhi was assassinated in 1948 on his way to an evening prayer meeting in Delhi.

From Hind Swaraj[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Sanskrit, home- or self-rule. For Gandhi, it specifically referred to Indian independence from foreign rule.Return to reference 1

From *Chapter IX. The Condition of India*

RAILWAYS

***

EDITOR: Railways, lawyers and doctors have impoverished the country, so much so that, if we do not wake up in time, we shall be ruined.

READER: I do now, indeed, fear that we are not likely to agree at all. You are attacking the very institutions which we have hitherto considered to be good.

EDITOR: It is necessary to exercise patience. The true inwardness of the evils of civilisation you will understand with difficulty. Doctors assure us that a consumptive clings to life even when he is about to die. Consumption does not produce apparent hurt—it even produces a seductive colour about a patient's face, so as to induce the belief that all is well. Civilisation is such a disease, and we have to be very wary.

READER: Very well, then, I shall hear you on the railways.

EDITOR: It must be manifest to you that, but for the railways, the English could not have such a hold on India as they have. The railways, too, have spread the bubonic plague. Without them, masses could not move from place to place. They are the carriers of plague germs. Formerly we had natural segregation. Railways have also increased the frequency of famines,[2] because, owing to facility of means of locomotion, people sell out their grain, and it is sent to the dearest markets. People become careless, and so the pressure of famine increases. They accentuate the evil nature of man. Bad men fulfil their evil designs with greater rapidity. The holy places of India have become unholy. Formerly, people went to these places with very great difficulty. Generally, therefore, only the real devotees visited such places. Now a days, rogues visit them in order to practise their roguery.

READER: You have given a one-sided account. Good men can visit these places as well as bad men. Why do they not take the fullest advantage of the railways?

EDITOR: Good travels at a snail's pace—it can, therefore, have little to do with the railways. Those who want to do good are not selfish, they are not in a hurry, they know that to impregnate people with good requires a long time. But evil has wings. To build a house takes time. Its destruction takes none. So the railways can become a distributing agency for the evil only. It may be a debatable matter whether railways spread famines, but it is beyond dispute that they propagate evil.

READER: Be that as it may, all the disadvantages of railways are more than counterbalanced by the fact that it is due to them that we see in India the new spirit of nationalism.

EDITOR: I hold this to be a mistake. The English have taught us that we were not one nation before, and that it will require centuries before we become one nation. This is without foundation. We were one nation before they came to India.[3] One thought inspired us. Our mode of life was the same. It was because we were one nation that they were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently they divided us.

READER: This requires an explanation.

EDITOR: I do not wish to suggest that because we were one nation we had no differences, but it is submitted that our leading men travelled throughout India either on foot or in bullock-carts. They learned one another's languages, and there was no aloofness between them. What do you think could have been the intention of those far-seeing ancestors of ours who established Shevethindu Rameshwar in the South, Juggernaut in the South-East, and Hardwar[4] in the North as places of pilgrimage? You will admit they were no fools. They knew that worship of God could have been performed just as well at home. They taught us that those whose hearts were aglow with righteousness had the Ganges in their own homes. But they saw that India was one undivided land so made by nature. They, therefore, argued that it must be one nation. Arguing

thus, they established holy places in various parts of India, and fired the people with an idea of nationality in a manner unknown in other parts of the world. Any two Indians are one as no two Englishmen are. Only you and I and others who consider ourselves civilised and superior persons imagine that we are many nations. It was after the advent of railways that we began to believe in distinctions, and you are at liberty now to say that it is through the railways that we are beginning to abolish those distinctions. An opium-eater may argue the advantage of opium-eating from the fact that he began to understand the evil of the opium habit after having eaten it. I would ask you to consider well what I have said on the railways.

***

Endnotes

- Note 2: Both contemporary observers and recent historians agree with this assessment.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The British often claimed to have welded the many confederacies, sultanates, and empires of the Indian subcontinent into a single entity. Here, Gandhi is claiming that an Indian identity existed well before the incursions of the British East India Company.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A city on the banks of the Ganges, also a site of pilgrimage and worship; “Shevethindu Rameshwar”: a holy place to Hindus in India, site of the Char Dham pilgrimage; “Juggernaut”: the Anglicized name of one of the trinity of supreme deities in Hinduism with a temple located in the southeastern state of Odisha.Return to reference 4

From *Chapter XVII. Passive Resistance*

READER: Is there any historical evidence as to the success of what you have called soul-force or truth-force? No instance seems to have happened of any nation having risen through soul-force. I still think that the evildoers will not cease doing evil without physical punishment.

EDITOR: The poet Tulsidas[1] has said "Of religion, pity or love is the root, as egotism of the body. Therefore, we should not abandon pity so long as we are alive." This appears to me to be a scientific truth. I believe in it as much as I believe in two and two being four. The force of love is the same as the force of the soul or truth. We have evidence of its working at every step. The universe would disappear without the existence of that force. But you ask for historical evidence. It is, therefore, necessary to know what history means. The Gujarati[2] equivalent means: "It so happened." If that is the meaning of history, it is possible to give copious evidence. But, if it means the doings of kings and emperors, there can be no evidence of soul-force or passive resistance in such history. You cannot expect silver-ore in a tin-mine. History, as we know it, is a record of the wars of the world, and so there is a proverb among Englishmen that a nation which has no history, that is, no wars, is a happy nation. How kings played how they became enemies of one another and how they murdered one another is found accurately recorded in history, and, if this were all that had happened in the world it would have been ended long ago. If the story of the universe had commenced with wars, not a man would have been found alive to-day. Those people who have been warred against have disappeared, as, for instance, the natives, of Australia, of whom hardly a man was left alive by the intruders.[3] Mark, please, that these natives did not use soul-force in self-defence, and it does not require much foresight to know that the Australians will share the same fate as their victims. "Those that wield the sword shall perish by the sword." With us, the proverb is that professional swimmers will find a watery grave.

The fact that there are so many men still alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms but on the force of truth or love. Therefore, the greatest and most unimpeachable evidence of the success of this force is to be found in the fact that, in spite of the wars of the world, it still lives on.

Thousands, indeed tens of thousands, depend for their existence on a very active working of this force. Little quarrels of millions of families in their daily lives disappear before the exercise of this force. Hundreds of nations live in peace. History does not, and cannot, take note of this fact. History is really a record of every interruption of the even working of the force of love or of the soul. Two brothers quarrel; one of them repents and reawakens the love that was lying dormant in him; the two again begin to live in peace; nobody takes note of this. But, if the two brothers, through the intervention of solicitors or some other reason, take up arms or go to law—which is another form of the exhibition of brute-force,—their doings would be immediately noticed in the press, they would be the talk of their neighbours, and would probably go down to history. And what is true of families and communities is true of nations. There is no reason to believe that there is one law for families, and another for nations. History, then, is a record of an interruption of the course of nature. Soul-force, being natural, is not noted in history.

READER: According to what you say, it is plain that instances of the kind of passive resistance are not to be found in history. It is necessary to understand this passive resistance more fully. It will be better, therefore, if you enlarge upon it.

EDITOR: Passive resistance is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the government of the day has passed a law which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If, by using violence, I force the government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law, and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.

Everybody admits that sacrifice of self is infinitely superior to sacrifice of others. Moreover, if this kind of force is used in a cause that is unjust, only the person using it suffers. He does not make others suffer for his mistakes. Men have before now done many things which were subsequently found to have been wrong. No man can claim to be absolutely in the right, or that a particular thing is wrong, because he thinks so, but it is wrong for him so long as that is his deliberate judgment. It is, therefore, meet that he should not do that which he knows to be wrong, and suffer the consequence whatever it may be. This is the key to the use of soul-force.

READER: You would then disregard laws—this is rank disloyalty. We have always been considered a law-abiding nation, you seem to be going even beyond the extremists. They say that we must obey the laws that have been passed, but that, if the laws be bad, we must drive out the law-givers even by force.

EDITOR:—Whether I go beyond them or whether I do not is a matter of no consequence to either of us. We simply want to find out what is right, and to act accordingly. The real meaning of the statement that we are a law-abiding nation is that we are passive resisters. When we do not like certain laws, we do not break the heads of law-givers, but we suffer and do not submit to the laws. That we should obey laws whether good or bad is a new-fangled notion. There was no such thing in former days. The people disregarded those laws they did not like, and suffered the penalties for their breach. It is contrary to our manhood, if we obey laws repugnant to our conscience. Such teaching is opposed to religion, and means slavery. If the government were to ask us to go about without any clothing, should we do so? If I were a passive resister, I would say to them that I would have nothing to do with their law. But we have so forgotten ourselves and become so compliant, that we do not mind any degrading law.

A man who has realised his manhood, who fears only God, will fear no-one else. Manmade laws are not necessarily binding on him. Even the government do not expect any such thing from us. They do not say: "You must do such and such a thing," but they say: "If you

do not do it, we will punish you." We are sunk so low, that we fancy that it is our duty and our religion to do what the law lays down. If man will only realise that it is unmanly to obey laws that are unjust, no man's tyranny will enslave him. This is the key to self-rule or home-rule.

It is a superstition and an ungodly thing to believe that an act of a majority binds a minority. Many examples can be given in which acts of majorities will be found to have been wrong, and those of minorities to have been right. All reforms owe their origin to the initiation of minorities in opposition to majorities. If among a band of robbers, a knowledge of robbing is obligatory, is a pious man to accept the obligation? So long as the superstition that men should obey unjust laws exists, so long will their slavery exist. And a passive resister alone can remove such a superstition.

To use brute-force, to use gun-powder is contrary to passive resistance, for it means that we want our opponent to do by force that which we desire but he does not. And, if such a use of force is justifiable, surely he is entitled to do likewise by us. And so we should never come to an agreement. We may simply fancy, like the blind horse moving in a circle round a mill, that we are making progress. Those who believe that they are not bound to obey laws which are repugnant to their conscience have only the remedy of passive resistance open to them. Any other must lead to disaster.

READER: From what you say, I deduce that passive resistance is a splendid weapon of the weak; but that, when they are strong, they may take up arms.

EDITOR: This is gross ignorance. Passive resistance, that is, soul-force, is matchless. It is superior to the force of arms. How then, can it be considered only a weapon of the weak? Physical-force men are strangers to the courage that is requisite in a passive resister. Do you believe that a coward can ever disobey a law that he dislikes? Extremists are considered to be advocates of brute force. Why do they, then, talk about obeying-laws? I do not blame them. They can say nothing else. When they succeed in driving out the English, and they themselves become governors, they will want you and me to

obey their laws. And that is a fitting thing for their constitution. But a passive resister will say he will not obey a law that is against his conscience, even though he may be blown to pieces at the mouth of a cannon.[4]

What do you think? Wherein is courage required—in blowing others to pieces from behind a cannon or with a smiling face to approach a cannon and to be blown to pieces? Who is the true warrior—he who keeps death always as a bosom-friend or he who controls the death of others? Believe me that a man devoid of courage and manhood can never be a passive resister.

This, however, I will admit: that even a man weak in body is capable of offering this resistance. One man can offer it just as well as millions. Both men and women can indulge in it. It does not require the training of an army; it needs no Jiu-jitsu.[5] Control over the mind is alone necessary, and, when that is attained, man is free like the king of the forest, and his very glance withers the enemy.

Passive resistance is an all-sided sword; it can be used anyhow; it blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used. Without drawing a drop of blood, it produces far-reaching results. It never rusts, and cannot be stolen. Competition between passive resisters does not exhaust. The sword of passive resistance does not require a scabbard. It is strange indeed that you should consider such a weapon to be a weapon merely of the weak.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Rambola Dobey (1554–1623), also known as Goswami Tulsidas, a Hindu saint and poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The language spoken by the Gujarati people of Gujarat, an Indian state, and Gandhi's native tongue.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Gandhi is referencing the British genocide of the Indigenous people of Australia. The ravaging effects of European diseases were supplemented by systematic massacres of the local population. It is estimated that by 1920 a population of a quarter million had been reduced to 60,000.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The British suppressed the Indian Rebellion of 1857 with this method.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Japanese martial arts in which combat is conducted with minimal if any weapons.Return to reference 5

From *Chapter XIX. Machinery*

READER: When you speak of driving out Western civilisation, I suppose you will also say that we want no machinery.

EDITOR: By raising this question you have opened the wound I had received. When I read Mr. Dutt's Economic History of India,[1] I wept; and, as I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester[2] has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared.

But I make a mistake. How can Manchester be blamed? We wore Manchester cloth, and that is why Manchester wove it. I was delighted when I read about the bravery of Bengal.[3] There are no cloth-mills in that Presidency. They were, therefore, able to restore the original hand-weaving occupation. It is true, Bengal encourages the mill-industry of Bombay. If Bengal had proclaimed a boycott of *all* machine-made goods, it would have been much better.

Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilisation; it represents a great sin.

The workers in the mills of Bombay have become slaves. The condition of the women working in the mills is shocking. When there were no mills, these women were not starving. If the machinery craze grows in our country, it will become an unhappy land. It may be considered a heresy, but I am bound to say that it were better for us to send money to Manchester and to use flimsy Manchester cloth, than to multiply mills in India. By using Manchester cloth, we would only waste our money, but, by reproducing Manchester in India, we shall keep our money at the price of our blood, because our very moral being will be sapped, and I call in support of my statement the very mill-hands as witnesses. And those who have amassed wealth out of factories are not likely to be better than other rich men. It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller[4] would be better than the American Rockefeller. Impoverished India can

become free, but it will be hard for an India made rich through immorality to regain its freedom. I fear we will have to admit that moneyed men support British rule; their interest is bound up with its stability. Money renders a man helpless. The other thing is as harmful is sexual vice. Both are poison. A snakebite is a lesser poison than these two, because the former merely destroys the body, but the latter destroy body, mind and soul. We need not, therefore, be pleased with the prospect of the growth of the mill-industry.

READER: Are the mills, then, to be closed down?

EDITOR: That is difficult. It is no easy task to do away with a thing that is established. We, therefore, say that the non-beginning of a thing is supreme wisdom. We cannot condemn mill-owners; we can but pity them. It would be too much to expect them to give up their mills, but we may implore them not to increase them. If they would be good, they would gradually contract their business. They can establish in thousands of households the ancient and sacred handlooms, and they can buy out the cloth that may be thus woven. Whether the mill-owners do this or not, people can cease to use machine-made goods.

READER: You have so far spoken about machine-made cloth, but there are innumerable machine-made things. We have either to import them or to introduce machinery into our country.

EDITOR: Indeed, our gods even are made in Germany. What need, then, to speak of matches, pins and glassware?[5] My answer can be only one. What did India do before these articles were introduced? Precisely the same should be done to-day. As long as we cannot make pins without machinery, so long will we do without them. The tinsel splendour of glassware we will have nothing to do with, and we will make wicks, as of old, with home-grown cotton, and use hand-made earthen saucers for lamps. So doing, we shall save our eyes and money, and will support Swadeshi, and so shall we attain Home Rule.

It is not to be conceived that all men will do all these things at one time, or that some men will give up all machine-made things at

once. But, if the thought is sound, we will always find out what we can give up, and will gradually cease to use this. What a few may do, others will copy, and the movement will grow like the cocoanut of the mathematical problem. What the leaders do, the populace will gladly follow. The matter is neither complicated nor difficult. You and I shall not wait until we can carry others with us. Those will be the losers who will not do it; and those who will not do it, although they appreciate the truth, will deserve to be called cowards.

***

1909

Endnotes

- Note 1: Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848–1909) was an Indian civil servant and national leader; his *Economic History of India* argued that both the East India Company and the Raj discouraged Indian manufacture for their own financial and developmental gain.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Center of British industrial textile manufacturing throughout the 19th century.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Lord Curzon and other members of the Bengal presidency partitioned Bengal in 1905, separating the majority-Muslim East from the majority-Hindu West. Political unrest, including boycotts of British goods, surged from 1906 to 1909; the authorities reversed the decision in 1911.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: John D. Rockefeller (1839–1937), business magnate who dominated the oil industry of the early 20th century through his monopoly corporation, Standard Oil.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  Each of these items was used as a key example of technological progress in an important work of political theory. While John

Locke described reason as natural—like light—he described matches, or the cause of light, as the product of human invention. Adam Smith depicted the benefits of specialization by claiming that ten workers could make 48,000 pins a day were they to be employed in differentiated tasks. John Ruskin pointed to the uniformity of glass beads as an index of British technological advancement (although he condemned this advancement in "The Savageness of Gothic Architecture," see p. 476, above).
Return to reference 5

VOLUME F: The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

VOLUME F

ELEVENTH EDITION

The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

The Merry-Go-Round (detail), 1916, Mark Gertler. For more information about this image, see the Image Gallery for this volume.

1914–18: World War I

1922: James Joyce's *Ulysses*; T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

1925: Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*

1929: Stock market crash; Great Depression begins

1939–45: World War II

1947: India and Pakistan become independent nations

1953: Premiere of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

1957–62: Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago become independent nations

1981: Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

1991: Collapse of the Soviet Union

2001: 9/11 attacks destroy World Trade Center in New York

2016: United Kingdom votes to leave European Union

2020: United Kingdom officially withdraws from the European Union. World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a global pandemic.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The roots of modern literature are in the late nineteenth century. The aesthetic movement, with its insistence on "art for art's sake," assaulted middle-class assumptions about the nature and function of art. Rejecting Victorian notions of the artist's moral and educational duties, aestheticism helped widen the breach between writers and the general public, resulting in the "alienation" of the modern artist from society. This alienation is evident in the lives and work of the French symbolists and other late nineteenth-century bohemians who repudiated conventional notions of respectability, and it underlies key works of modern literature, such as James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.*

The growth of public education in England as a result of the Education Act of 1870, which finally made elementary schooling compulsory and universal, led to the rapid emergence of a mass literate population, toward whom a new mass-produced popular literature and new cheap journalism (the "yellow press") were directed. The audience for literature split up into "highbrows," "middlebrows," and "lowbrows," and the segmentation of the reading public, developing with unprecedented speed and to an unprecedented degree, helped widen the gap between popular art and art esteemed only by the sophisticated and the expert. This breach yawned ever wider with the twentieth-century emergence of modernist iconoclasm and avant-garde experiments in literature, music, and the visual arts.

To Queen Victoria's contemporaries, her Jubilee in 1887 and, even more, her Diamond Jubilee in 1897 marked the end of an era. The reaction against middle-class Victorian attitudes that is central to modernism was already under way in the decades before the queen's death in 1901. Samuel Butler attacked the Victorian conceptions of the family, education, and religion in his novel *The Way of All Flesh* (completed in 1884, published posthumously in 1903), the bitterest indictment in English literature of Victorian conventions. And the high

tide of anti-Victorianism was marked by the publication in 1918 of a classic of ironic debunking, Lytton Strachey's collection of biographical essays, *Eminent Victorians*.

A pivotal figure between Victorianism and modernism, Thomas Hardy marked the end of the Victorian period and the dawn of the new age in "The Darkling Thrush," a poem originally titled "By the Century's Deathbed" and postdated December 31, 1900, the last day of the nineteenth century. The poem marks the demise of a century of relative conviction and optimism, and it intimates the beginnings of a new era in its skeptical irresolution and its bleak sense of the modern world as "hard and dry"—favorite adjectives of later writers such as Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme:

> The land's sharp features seemed to be
> The Century's corpse outleant,
> His crypt the cloudy canopy,
> The wind his death-lament.
> The ancient pulse of germ and birth
> Was shrunken hard and dry,
> And every spirit upon earth
> Seemed fervourless as I.

This poem and other works by Hardy, A. E. Housman, and Joseph Conrad exemplify the pessimism of imaginative writing in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. Stoicism—a stiff-upper-lip determination to endure whatever fate may bring—also characterizes the literature written in the transitional period between the Victorian era and modernism, including the work of popular middlebrow authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Rudyard Kipling.

By the dawn of the twentieth century, traditional stabilities of society, religion, and culture seemed to have weakened, the pace of change to be accelerating. The unsettling force of modernity profoundly challenged traditional ways of structuring and making sense of human experience. Because of the rapid pace of social and

technological change; because of the mass dislocation of populations by war, empire, and economic migration; and because of the mixing in close quarters of cultures and classes in rapidly expanding cities, modernity disrupted the old order, upended ethical and social codes, and cast into doubt previously stable assumptions about self, community, the world, and the divine.

Early twentieth-century writers were keenly aware that powerful concepts and vocabularies were emerging in anthropology, psychology, philosophy, and the visual arts that reimagined human identity in radically new ways. Sigmund Freud's seminal book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, was published in 1900; soon psychoanalysis was changing how people saw and described rationality, the self, and personal development. In his prose and poetry, D. H. Lawrence adapted Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex to interpret and represent his relationships with his parents, though Lawrence rejected Freud's negative definition of the unconscious. By the time of his death in 1939, Freud had become, as W. H. Auden wrote in an elegy for him, "a whole climate of opinion / / under whom we conduct our different lives." Also in the early twentieth century, Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890–1915) and other works of anthropology were altering basic conceptions of culture, religion, and myth. Eliot observed that Frazer's work "influenced our generation profoundly," and the critic Lionel Trilling suggested that "perhaps no book has had so decisive an effect upon modern literature as Frazer's." For both anthropologists and modern writers, Western religion was now decentered by being placed in a comparative context as one of numerous related mythologies, with Jesus Christ linked to "primitive" fertility gods thought to die and revive in concert with the seasons. Furthering this challenge to religious doctrine were the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, the nineteenth-century German philosopher who declared the death of God, repudiated Christianity, and offered instead a harshly tragic conception of life: people look "deeply into the true nature of things" and realize "that no action of theirs can work any change," but they nevertheless laugh and stoically affirm their fate. W. B. Yeats, who remarks in a 1902 letter that his eyes are exhausted from reading

"that strong enchanter," greets death and destruction in a Nietzschean spirit of tragic exultation.

These profound changes in modern intellectual history coincided with changes of a more mundane sort, for everyday life was also undergoing rapid transformation during the first years of the twentieth century. The use of electricity was spreading, cinema and radio were proliferating, and new pharmaceuticals such as aspirin were being developed. As labor was increasingly managed and rationalized, as more and more people crowded into cities, as modern communication and transportation compressed global space and accelerated time, literature could not stand still, and modern writers sought to create forms that could register these profound alterations in human experience. This was a period of scientific revolution, as exemplified in physics by the German Max Planck's quantum theory (1900) and Planck's countryman Albert Einstein's theory of relativity (1905). Their Anglo-American contemporary T. S. Eliot reflects the increasing dominance of science when he argues that the poet surrenders to tradition and thus extinguishes rather than expresses personality: "It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science," he claims, adding that "the mind of the poet is the shred of platinum" that catalyzes change but itself remains "inert, neutral, and unchanged" ("Tradition and the Individual Talent").

The early twentieth century also brought countless advances in technology: the first wireless communication across the Atlantic occurred in 1901, the Wright brothers flew the first airplane in 1903, and Henry Ford introduced the first mass-produced car, the Model T or "Tin Lizzie," in 1908. Not that modern writers unequivocally embraced such changes. Although some like H. G. Wells were optimistic about technological progress, many modern writers were paradoxically repulsed by aspects of modernization. Mass-produced appliances and products, such as the "gramophone" and canned goods ("tins"), are objects of revulsion in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, for example. Because scientific materialism and positivism, according to which empirical explanations could be found for everything, were weakening the influence of organized religion, many writers looked

to literature as an alternative. Finding his "simple-minded" Protestantism spoiled by science, Yeats says in his autobiography, he "made a new religion, almost an infallible church of poetic tradition." Whether or not they welcomed the demise of tradition, habit, and certitude in favor of the new, modern writers articulated the effects of modernity's relentless change, loss, and destabilization. "Things fall apart," Yeats wrote, "the centre cannot hold." In *Four Quartets* Eliot describes his quest for the "still point of the turning world." The modernist drive to "make it new"—in Ezra Pound's famous slogan—thus arises in part out of an often ambivalent consciousness of the relentless mutations brought by modernization.

The position of women, too, was rapidly changing during this period. The Married Woman's Property Act of 1882 allowed wives to own property in their own right, and universities began to admit women during the latter part of the century. Since the days of Mary Wollstonecraft, women in Great Britain had been arguing and lobbying for the right to vote, but in the first decades of the twentieth century, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel encouraged "suffragettes," as they were known, to take a more militant approach, which included boycotts, bombings, and hunger strikes. The long fight for women's suffrage was finally won in 1918 for women aged thirty and over, and in 1928 for women aged twenty-one and over. These shifts in attitudes toward women, in the roles women played in the national life, and in the relations between the sexes, are reflected in a variety of ways in the literature of the period.

Britain's twentieth-century political history begins with the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), fought by the British to establish political and economic control over the Boer republics (self-governing states) of the Dutch-descended South African Afrikaners. It was an imperial war against which many British intellectuals protested and one that the British in the end were slightly ashamed of having won. The war spanned the reign of Queen Victoria, who died in 1901, and Edward VII, who held the throne from 1901 to 1910. This latter decade is known as the Edwardian period, and the king stamped his extroverted and self-indulgent character upon it. The wealthy made

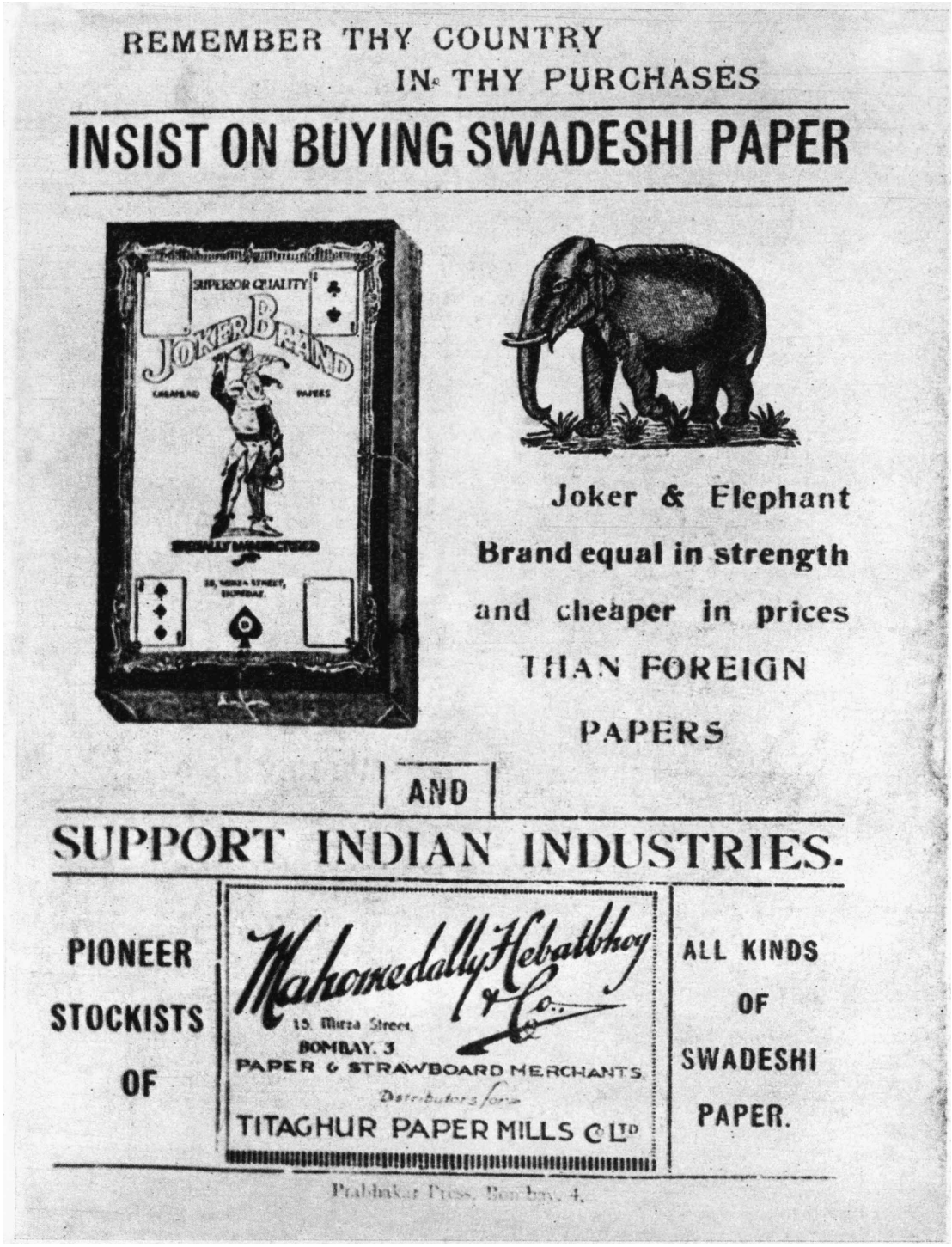
it a vulgar age of conspicuous enjoyment, but most writers and artists kept well away from involvement in high society; in general this period had no equivalent to Queen Victoria's friendship with Tennyson. The alienation of artists and intellectuals from political rulers and middle-class society was proceeding apace. From 1910 (when George V came to the throne) until World War I broke out in August 1914, Britain achieved a temporary equilibrium between Victorian earnestness and Edwardian flashiness; in retrospect the Georgian period seems peculiarly golden, the last phase of assurance and stability before the old order throughout Europe broke up in violence. Yet even still, under the surface, there was restlessness and experimentation. The age of Rupert Brooke's idyllic sonnets on the English countryside was also the age of T. S. Eliot's first experiments in a radically new kind of poetry, James Joyce's and Virginia Woolf's in radically new forms of fiction.

Women's Suffrage. Emmeline Pankhurst being arrested at a demonstration outside Buckingham Palace, London, January 5, 1914. A leader in Britain of the movement for women's right to vote, she and other militant suffragettes were repeatedly jailed. During their hunger strikes they were force-fed.

Edwardian as a term applied to English cultural history suggests a period in which the social and economic stabilities of the Victorian age—country houses with numerous servants, a flourishing and confident middle class, a strict hierarchy of social classes—remained unimpaired, though on the level of ideas a sense of change and liberation existed. Georgian refers largely to the lull before the storm

of World War I. That war, as the bitterly skeptical and antiheroic work of Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, and other war poets makes clear, produced major shifts in attitude toward Western myths of progress and civilization. The postwar disillusion of the 1920s resulted, in part, from the sense of utter social and political collapse during a war in which unprecedented millions were killed.

By the beginning of World War I, nearly a quarter of the Earth's surface and more than a quarter of the world's population were under British dominion, including the vast African territories mostly acquired in the late nineteenth century. Some of the colonies in the empire were settler nations with large European populations, such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and in 1907 the empire granted them the new status of dominions, recognizing their relative control over internal affairs. Over time these largely independent nations came to be known as the British Commonwealth, an association of self-governing countries. These nations, like post-apartheid South Africa, have in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries contended with the oppressive legacies of settler society, including the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands and the kidnapping and re-education of Indigenous children in residential schooling systems. Internationally acclaimed literary voices from these dominions span early-century New Zealander Katherine Mansfield to the late-century and twenty-first-century Keri Hulme, Australian Les Murray, and Canadians Alice Munro, Margaret Atwood, and Anne Carson. The other colonies in the British Empire consisted primarily of non-White indigenous populations stripped of their political power, but nationalist movements were gaining strength in the early years of the century—as when, in 1906, the Congress movement in India first demanded *swaraj* ("self-rule"), soon to become the mantra of Indian nationalism. In Britain imperialist and anti-imperialist sentiments often met head-on in Parliament and the press, the debate involving writers as far apart as Rudyard Kipling, coiner of the phrase "White Man's Burden," E. M. Forster, and Rabindranath Tagore, the first Asian writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.



Indian Nationalist Movement Flyer. The movement for home rule, known as Swadeshi, encouraged the development of local industries to support Indian economic and political independence. Nationalists urged the boycott of English goods and the cultivation of Indigenous paper and cotton mills.

A steadily rising Irish nationalism resulted in increasingly violent protests against the cultural, economic, and political subordination of Ireland to the British Crown and government. During the Easter Rising of 1916, Irish rebels in Dublin staged a revolt against British rule, and by executing fifteen Irish leaders, the British inadvertently intensified the drive for independence, finally achieved in 1921–22 when the southern counties were declared the Irish Free State. (The six counties of Northern Ireland remained, however, part of Great Britain.) No one can fully understand Yeats or Joyce without some awareness of the Irish struggle for independence and the way in which the Irish literary revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (with Yeats at the forefront) reflected a determination to achieve a vigorous national life culturally even if the road seemed blocked politically.

Reconciliation Pole, University of British Columbia (unceded territory of the Musqueam people). A memorial to the native children forcibly separated from their families and placed in Canadian residential schools. The pole was created by Jim Hart, a Canadian artist as well as a master carver and hereditary chief within the Haida nation. It was erected in 2017 in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,

which brought to light the poor, often abusive conditions of the residential schools.

Depression and unemployment in the early 1930s, followed by the rise of Hitler and the shadow of fascism and Nazism over Europe, with its threat of another war, deeply affected the emerging poets and novelists of the time. Feminism, pacifism, and liberal attitudes regarding sexuality and gender relations were espoused by some members of the Bloomsbury Group, named after the London district where its adherents congregated, including the writers Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster, as well as the economist John Maynard Keynes. But many other prominent literary figures of this older generation, such as Eliot, Lawrence, Wyndham Lewis, Yeats, and Pound, turned to the political right. Meanwhile, the impotence of capitalist governments in the face of fascism combined with economic dislocation to turn the majority of young intellectuals (and not only intellectuals) to the political left in the 1930s—the so-called red decade, because only the left seemed to offer any solution in various forms of socialism, communism, and liberalism. The early poetry of W. H. Auden and his contemporaries cried out for "the death of the old gang" (in Auden's phrase) and a clean sweep politically and economically, while in Spain the right-wing army's rebellion against the left-wing republican government, which started in the summer of 1936 and soon led to full-scale civil war, was regarded as a rehearsal for an inevitable second international conflict and thus further emphasized the inadequacy of politicians. Yet, though the younger writers of the period expressed the up-to-date, radical political views of the left, they were less technically inventive than the first-generation modernists, such as Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf. The outbreak of World War II in September 1939—following shortly after Hitler's pact with the Soviet Union, which so shocked and disillusioned many of the young left-wing writers that they subsequently moved politically to the center—marked the sudden end of the red decade. What was from the beginning expected to be a long and costly war brought inevitable exhaustion. The diminution of British political

power, its secondary status in relation to the United States as a player in the Cold War, led to a painful reappraisal of Britain's place in the world, even as countries that had lost the war—West Germany and Japan—were, in economic terms, winning the peace that followed.

The Easter Rising. Dublin buildings destroyed during the Easter Rising of 1916. In revolt against British rule of Ireland, rebels took over key positions on April 24 until the British crushed the insurrection a week later and then executed fifteen leaders. (See Yeats's "Easter, 1916," p. 227.)

The aftermath of World War II coincided with the decline of the British Empire, which had for over a century expropriated enormous quantities of land, raw materials, and labor from its widely scattered overseas territories. India won its independence in 1947, but under the Mountbatten Plan was partitioned along religious lines. India and

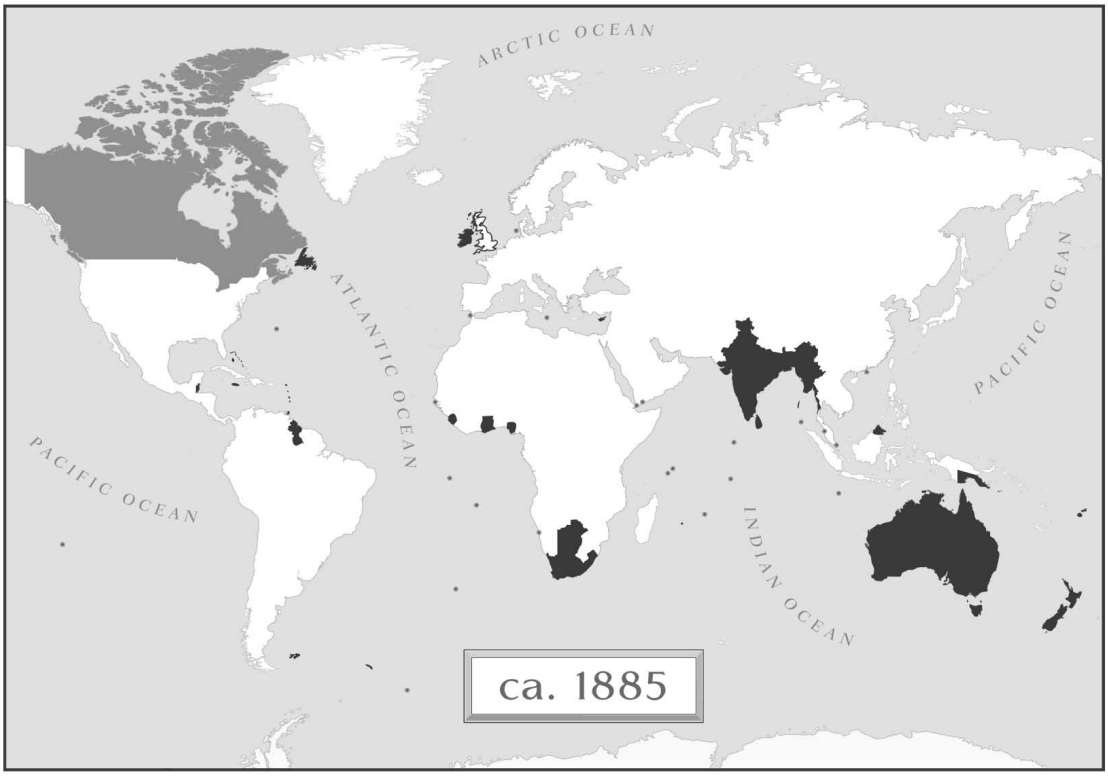
the newly formed Muslim state of Pakistan were formed under the crucible of violence as millions of Hindus and Muslims were forced to migrate across newly imagined national borders. The postwar wave of decolonization that began in South Asia spread to Africa and the Caribbean: in 1957 Ghana was the first nation in sub-Saharan Africa to become independent, unleashing an unstoppable wave of liberation from British rule that freed Nigeria in 1960, Sierra Leone in 1961, Uganda in 1962, and Kenya in 1963; in the Caribbean, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, Barbados and Guyana in 1966, and Saint Lucia in 1979. India and Pakistan elected to remain within a newly expanded and reconceived British Commonwealth, but other former colonies did not. The Irish Republic withdrew from the Commonwealth in 1949; the Republic of South Africa, in 1961. Postwar decolonization coincided with and encouraged the efflorescence of postcolonial writing that would bring about the most dramatic geographic shift in literature in English since its inception. Writers from Britain's former colonies published influential and innovative novels, plays, and poems, hybridizing their local traditions and varieties of English with those of the empire. The names of the Nobel Prize winners Wole Soyinka, Nadine Gordimer, Derek Walcott, V. S. Naipaul, J. M. Coetzee, Doris Lessing, Alice Munro, and Abdulrazak Gurnah were added to the annals of literature in English.

The political independence of Britain's former colonies did not solve the economic woes brought on by imperial policy's systematic underdevelopment of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. Many citizens of postcolonial nations immigrated to postwar England for educational and job opportunities, but were not always greeted warmly, as Louise Bennett wryly suggests in her poem "Colonization in Reverse." Although people of color were residing in Britain long before 1948, the first large waves of migration took place that year after the passage of the British Nationality Act. Caribbean migrants journeyed to and settled in "the motherland," the first group on the *Empire Windrush* that sailed from Jamaica to Tilbury Docks, near London. Migrants followed from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Africa, and other regions of the "New Commonwealth." Even as immigration laws became more restrictive in the late 1960s, relatives of earlier

migrants and refugees from these and other nations continued to arrive, transforming Britain into an increasingly multiracial society and energizing British arts and literature. But people of Caribbean, African, and South Asian origin, who brought distinctive vernaculars and cultural traditions with them, painfully discovered that their official status as British subjects often did not mean that they were welcomed as full-fledged members of British society. Many experienced racial discrimination in jobs and housing, and bigotry sometimes erupted into violent attacks on them, such as race riots in Nottingham and London's Notting Hill in 1958. Conservative Member of Parliament Enoch Powell delivered his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968, foreseeing deadly interracial strife and warning against further immigration. The collision between the Anglo-Saxon conception of Englishness and the emerging multiracial reality of British society prompted a large-scale, ongoing rethinking of national identity in Britain. Among the new arrivals were many who journeyed to Britain to study in the late 1940s and 1950s and eventually became prominent writers, such as Bennett, Naipaul, Soyinka, Kamau (then Edward) Brathwaite, and Chinua Achebe. In the 1970s and 1980s a younger generation of Black and Asian British writers emerged—some born in the United Kingdom, some in the former empire—including Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Grace Nichols, and Caryl Phillips, and in the 1990s and the first decade of the new millennium, Zadie Smith, Bernardine Evaristo, and Patience Agbabi.

Decolonization. Dancers celebrate on the eve of Ghana's creation and independence in March 1957. After India and Pakistan won independence from Britain in 1947, Ghana was the first sub-Saharan nation to gain its freedom, beginning a wave of decolonization that swept through most of Britain's remaining colonies.

Extent of the BRITISH EMPIRE, the Late Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries



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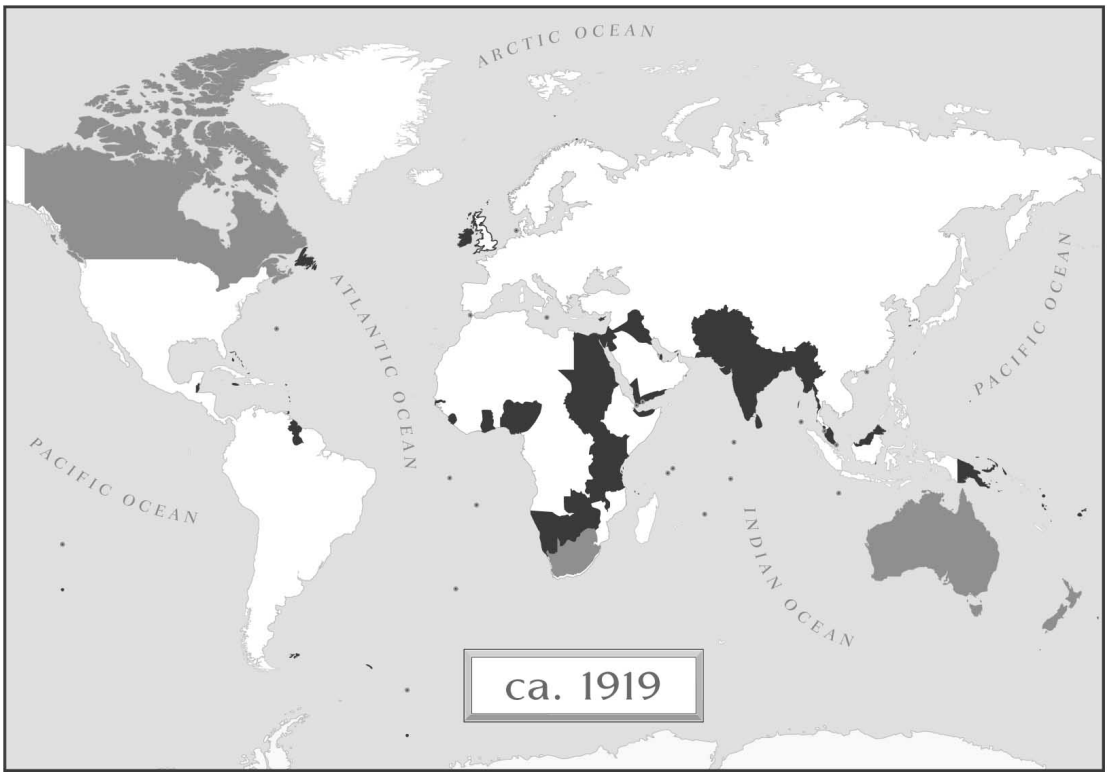
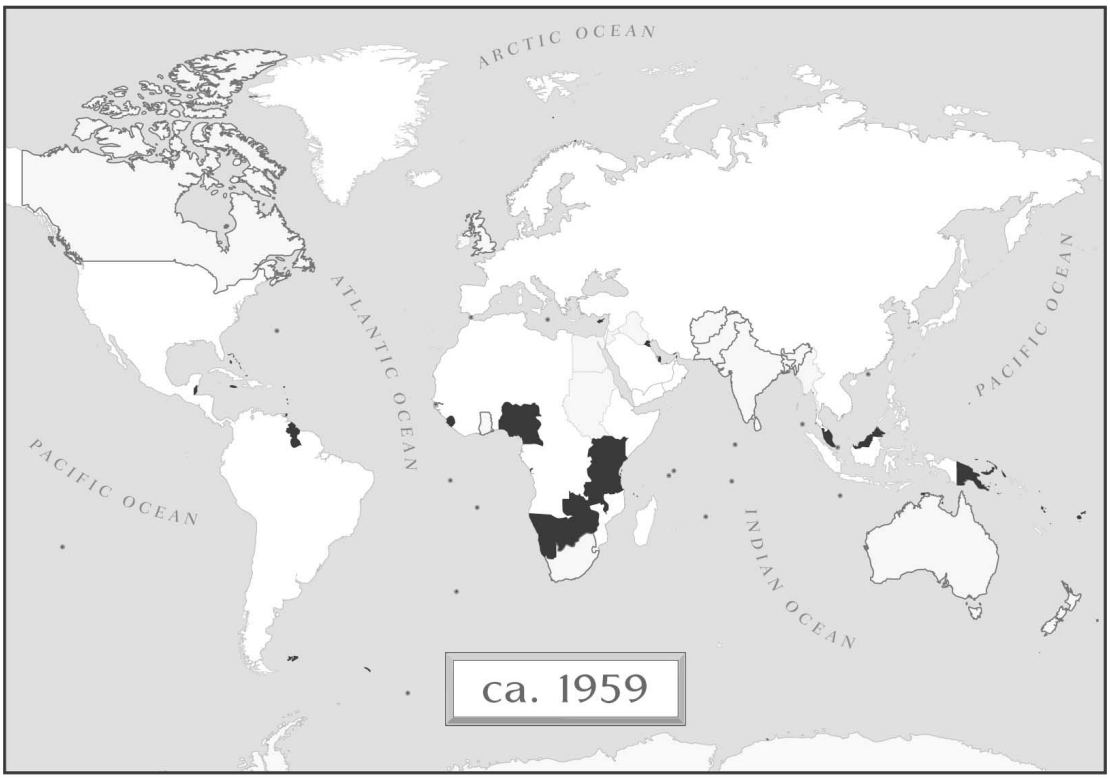
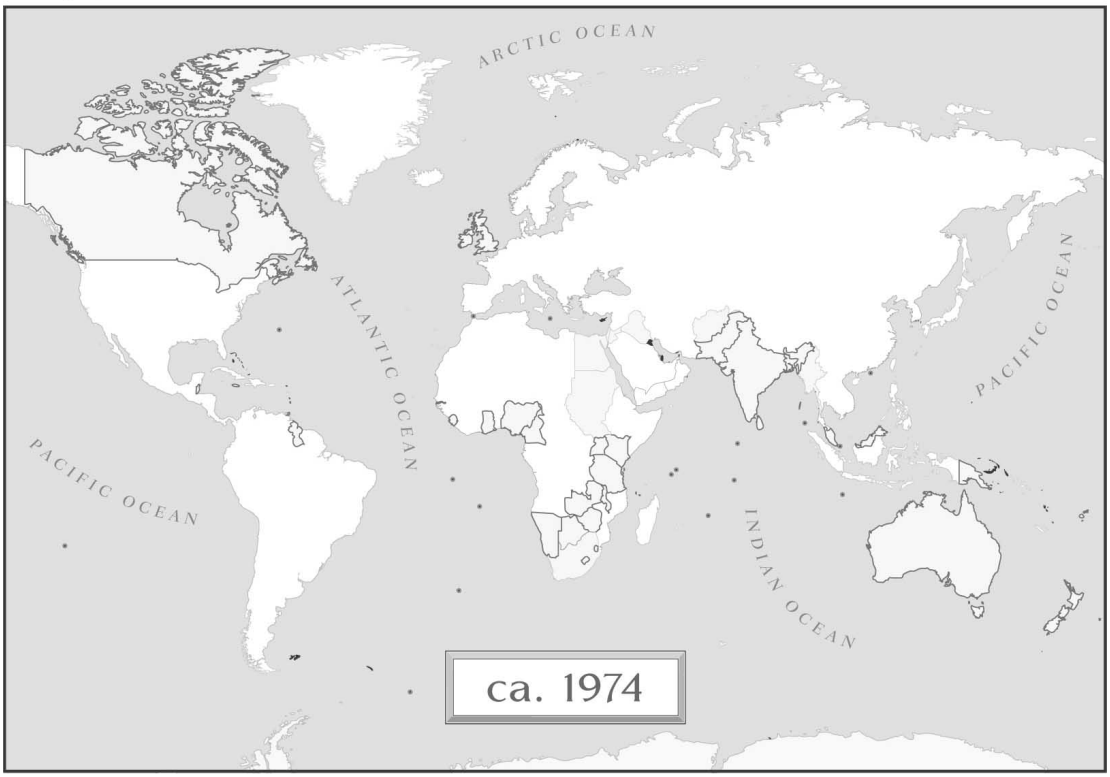




This page: Colonies Commonwealth nations Former colonies



Britain and other European powers greatly expanded their rule during the "Scramble for Africa," from 1881 to 1914. The White

settler colonies, such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, were recognized as self-governing dominions in the early twentieth century. By the beginning of World War I, the British Empire included nearly a quarter of the world's population and total land area. After World War II, the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, followed by Ghana in 1957, began a wave of decolonization that spread across South Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. By 1965 the number of people under British rule outside the United Kingdom had fallen from over 500 million to 5 million. After independence, many of these nations became members of the Commonwealth, an association of sovereign states under the symbolic leadership of the British monarch.

Immigration. Caribbean immigrants arriving by ship in Southampton, England, July 1, 1962. The waves of largely economic immigrants from the British Empire and the

Commonwealth in the 1950s and 1960s created a multiracial Britain, which included substantial Caribbean, African, and Asian minorities.

London, as the capital of the empire, had long dominated the culture as well as the politics and the economy of the British Isles. London spoke for Britain in the impeccable southern English intonations of the radio announcers of the state-owned British Broadcasting Corporation (known as the BBC), but from the end of World War II this changed. Regional dialects and multicultural accents were admitted to the airwaves. Regional radio and television stations sprang up. In the 1940s and 1950s the BBC broadcast a weekly program called "Caribbean Voices," produced by Una Marson, and which, broadcast through the Overseas Service, proved an important stimulus to Caribbean anglophone writing both in London and in the West Indies. The Arts Council, which had subsidized the nation's drama, literature, music, painting, and plastic arts from London, delegated much of its grant-giving responsibility to regional arts councils. This gave a new confidence to writers and artists outside London—the Beatles were launched from Liverpool—and has since contributed to a notable renaissance of regional literature.

From the 1960s, London ceased to be virtually the sole cultural stage of the United Kingdom, and though its Parliament remained the sole political stage until 1999 (the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont notwithstanding), successive governments came under increasing pressure from the regions and the wider world. After decades of predominantly Labour governments, Margaret Thatcher led the Conservatives to power in the general election of 1979, becoming thereby the country's first woman to hold the office of prime minister, an office she was to occupy for twelve years—the longest tenure for any British prime minister in the twentieth century. Pursuing a vision of a "new," more productive Britain, she curbed the power of the unions and began to dismantle the "welfare state," privatizing nationalized industries and utilities in the interests of an aggressive free-market economy. Initially her policies seemed to

have a bracing effect on a nation still sunk in postwar, postimperial torpor, but writers such as Ian McEwan, Hanif Kureishi, and Caryl Churchill, as well as filmmakers such as Derek Jarman, protested that Conservative reforms widened the gaps between rich and poor, Black and White, north and south, and between the constituent parts of the United Kingdom.

From the late 1960s, after the failure of peaceful protests, the Irish Republican Army waged a bloody campaign for a united Ireland and against continued British rule in Northern Ireland. The mainly Roman Catholic IRA was met by violent suppression by the British Army and reprisals by Protestant Unionists, who sought to keep Northern Ireland a part of the United Kingdom. In the 1990s, politics finally took precedence over armed struggle in the Republican movement. In 1998 the Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, led to elections for a Northern Ireland Assembly, which convened for the first time in 1999, and the leaders of the main Catholic and Protestant parties were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Thatcher was deposed by her own party in 1990, but the Conservatives were not routed until the election of 1997. The electorate's message was clear, and Tony Blair, the new Labour prime minister, moved to restore the run-down National Health Service and system of state education. Honoring other of his campaign pledges, he offered Scotland its own parliament and Wales its own assembly, each with tax-raising powers and a substantial budget for the operation of its social services, and each holding its first elections in 1999. Blair and his Labour party successor Gordon Brown faced increasing skepticism over their justification for joining forces with the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and over their handling of the economy. In 2010, David Cameron, the first Conservative prime minister in thirteen years, headed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, the first formal coalition government since World War II. He instituted controversial austerity measures to reduce the budget deficit. In 2016, after losing the referendum he introduced on the United Kingdom's continued membership in the European Union, he resigned and was succeeded

by Theresa May, who, after multiple failed attempts to implement a parliamentary-approved “Brexit” plan, resigned the office of Prime Minister in 2019. May was succeeded by Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and Rishi Sunak, who took office in October 2022. The United Kingdom officially withdrew from the European Union on January 31, 2020.

POETRY

The years leading up to World War I saw the start of a poetic revolution. The imagist movement, influenced by the philosopher-poet T. E. Hulme's insistence on hard, clear, precise images, arose in reaction to what it saw as Romantic fuzziness and facile emotionalism in poetry. (Like other modernists, the imagists somewhat oversimplified the nineteenth-century aesthetic against which they defined their own artistic ideal, while minimizing underlying continuities.) The movement developed initially in London, where the American modernist poet Ezra Pound was living, and quickly migrated across the Atlantic; its early members included Hulme, Pound, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Amy Lowell, Richard Aldington, John Gould Fletcher, and F. S. Flint. As Flint explained in March 1913 in an article, partly dictated by Pound, imagists insisted on "direct treatment of the 'thing,' whether subjective or objective," on the avoidance of all words "that did not contribute to the presentation," and on a freer metrical movement than a strict adherence to the "sequence of a metronome" could allow. Inveighing in manifestos against Victorian discursiveness, the imagists wrote short, sharply etched, descriptive lyrics, but they lacked a technique for the production of longer and more complex poems.

Brexit. A journalist displays the *London Evening Standard* in a television broadcast outside the Bank of England on June 24, 2016. The day before, a narrow majority had voted for a British exit, or "Brexit," from the European Union. Britain had been a member of the European community since 1973, but anti-immigration feeling and skepticism toward European governance helped propel the Brexit vote.

Other new ideas about poetry helped provide this technique, many of them associated with another American in London, T. S. Eliot. Sir Herbert Grierson's 1912 edition of John Donne's poems both reflected and encouraged a new enthusiasm for seventeenth-century Metaphysical poetry. The revived interest in Metaphysical "wit" brought with it a desire on the part of pioneering poets to introduce into their work a much higher degree of intellectual complexity than had been found among the Victorians or the Georgians. The full subtlety of French symbolist poetry also now came to be appreciated; it had been admired in the 1890s, but more for its dreamy suggestiveness than for its imagistic precision and complexity. At the same time, modernist writers wanted to bring

poetic language and rhythms closer to those of conversation, or at least they wanted to spice the formalities of poetic utterance with echoes of the colloquial and even the slangy. Irony, which made possible several levels of discourse simultaneously, and wit, with the use of puns (banished from serious poetry for more than two hundred years), helped achieve that union of thought and passion that Eliot, in his review of Grierson's anthology of Metaphysical poetry (1921), saw as characteristic of the Metaphysicals and wished to bring back into poetry. A new critical movement and a new creative movement in poetry went hand in hand, with Eliot the high priest of both. He extended the scope of imagism by bringing the English Metaphysicals and the French symbolists (as well as the English Jacobean dramatists) to the rescue, thus adding new possibilities of complexity and allusiveness to the criteria of concreteness and precision stressed by the imagists. Eliot also introduced into modern English and American poetry the kind of irony achieved by shifting suddenly from the formal to the colloquial, or by alluding obliquely to objects or ideas that contrasted sharply with the surface meaning of the poem. Nor were Eliot and the imagists alone in their efforts to reinvent poetry. By 1912 D. H. Lawrence had begun writing poems freer in form and emotion, wanting to unshackle verse from the constraints of the "gem-like" lyric and to approach even the "insurgent naked throb of the instant moment." From 1915 the self-declared "Anglo-Mongrel" Mina Loy "mongrelized" the diction of English-language poetry and desentimentalized Anglo-American love poetry. Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay incorporated patois into his early poetry, which memorably captured village and street life in the British colony. Thus between, say, 1911 (the first year covered by Edward Marsh's anthologies of Georgian poetry) and 1922 (the year of the publication of *The Waste Land*), a major revolution occurred in English—and for that matter American—poetic theory and practice, one that would determine the way in which many poets think about their art to this day.

This modernist revolution was by no means an isolated literary phenomenon. Writers on both sides of the English Channel were

influenced by the French impressionist, postimpressionist, and cubist painters' radical reexamination of the nature of reality. The influence of Italian futurism was likewise strong on the painter and writer Wyndham Lewis, whose short-lived journal *Blast* was meant to be as shocking in its visual design as in its violent rhetoric. Mina Loy shared the futurist fascination with modernity and speed, while repudiating its misogyny and jingoism, as evidenced by her "Feminist Manifesto." Pound wrote books about the French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and the American composer George Antheil, and indeed the jagged rhythms and wrenching dissonances of modern music influenced a range of writers. Wilfred Owen wrote in 1918: "I suppose I am doing in poetry what the advanced composers are doing in music"; and Eliot, while writing *The Waste Land* three years later, was so impressed by a performance of the composer Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*) that he stood up at the end and cheered.

The posthumous 1918 publication by Robert Bridges of Gerard Manley Hopkins's poetry encouraged experimentation in language and rhythms, as evidenced by the verse's influence on Eliot, Auden, and the Welshman Dylan Thomas. Hopkins combined precision of the individual image with a complex ordering of images and a new kind of metrical patterning he named "sprung rhythm," in which the stresses of a line could be more freely distributed.

Meanwhile Yeats's remarkable oeuvre, stretching across the whole modern period, reflected varying developments of the age yet maintained an unmistakably individual accent. Beginning with the ideas of the aesthetes, turning to a tougher and sparer ironic language without losing its characteristic verbal magic, working out its author's idiosyncratic notions of symbolism, developing in its full maturity into a richly symbolic and Metaphysical poetry with its own curiously haunting cadences and with imagery both shockingly realistic and movingly suggestive, Yeats's work encapsulates a history of English poetry between 1890 and 1939.

In his poem "Remembering the 'Thirties," Donald Davie declared: "A neutral tone is nowadays preferred." That tone—Auden's coolly

clinical tone—dominated the poetry of the decade. The young poets of the early 1930s—Auden, Stephen Spender, C. Day-Lewis, Louis MacNeice—were the first generation to grow up in the shadow of the first-generation modern poets. Hopkins's attention to sonorities, Hardy's experiments in stanzaic patterns, Yeats's ambivalent meditations on public themes, Eliot's satiric treatment of a mechanized and urbanized world, and Owen's slant-rhymed enactments of pity influenced Auden and the other poets in his circle. But these younger poets also had to distinguish themselves from the still-living eminences in poetry, and they did so by writing poems more low-pitched and ironic than Yeats's, for example, or more individually responsive to and active in the social world than Eliot's. Stevie Smith's poetry, though largely independent of the period style, shared its progressive politics, conversational idiom, and ironic (if often whimsical) tone, as well as an interest in adapting oral forms such as ballads, folk songs, and even nursery rhymes.

As World War II began, the Auden group's neutral tone gave way to an increasingly direct and humane voice, as in Auden's own work, and to the vehemence of what came to be known as the New Apocalypse. The poets of this movement, most notably Dylan Thomas, owed something of their imagistic audacity and rhetorical violence to the French surrealists, whose poetry was introduced to English readers in translations and in *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (1936) by David Gascoyne, one of the New Apocalypse poets. Many of the surrealists, such as Salvador Dalí and André Breton, were both poets and painters, and in their verbal as well as their visual art they sought to express, often by free association, the operation of the unconscious mind.

With the coming of the 1950s, however, the pendulum swung back. A new generation of poets, including Donald Davie, Thom Gunn, and Philip Larkin, reacted against what seemed to them the verbal excesses and extravagances of Dylan Thomas and Edith Sitwell, as well as the arcane myths and knotty allusiveness of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound. "The Movement," as this new group came to be called, aimed once again for a neutral tone, a purity of diction, in which to render an unpretentious fidelity to mundane experience.

Larkin, its most notable exponent, rejected the intimidating gestures of an imported modernism in favor of a more civil and accessible "native" tradition that went back to Hardy, Housman, and the Georgian pastoralists of the 1910s.

Not everyone in England followed the lead of Larkin and the Movement, some rejecting the Movement's notion of a limited, rationalist, polished poetics. In the late 1950s and the 1960s, Ted Hughes began to write poems in which predators and victims in the natural world suggest the violence and irrationality of modern history, particularly the carnage of World War I, in which his father had fought. Geoffrey Hill also saw a rationalist humanism as inadequate to the ethical and religious challenges of twentieth-century war, genocide, and atrocity, which he evoked in a strenuous language built on the traditions of high modernism and Metaphysical poetry.

Since the 1980s, the spectrum of Britain's poets has become more diverse in class, ethnicity, gender, and region than ever before, introducing a range of voices into the English literary tradition. Born in the northern English district of West Yorkshire, Tony Harrison and Simon Armitage brought the local vernacular rhythms into contact with traditional English and classical verse. The daughter of an Irish mother, Carol Ann Duffy was raised in Scotland in a left-wing, working-class Catholic family and grew up amid Irish, Scottish, and Standardized varieties of English; this youthful experience helped equip her to speak in the different voices that characterize her feminist monologues.

Post–World War II Ireland—both north and south—was among the most productive spaces for poetry in the second half of the twentieth century. Born just two and a half weeks after Yeats died, Seamus Heaney, his most celebrated successor, responded to the horrors of sectarian bloodshed in Northern Ireland with subtlety and acute ethical sensitivity in poems that drew on both Irish genres and sonorities as well as the English literary tradition of Wordsworth, Hopkins, and Ted Hughes. Paul Muldoon, one of Heaney's former students in Belfast, has also written about the "troubles" in Northern

Ireland but through eerily distorted fixed forms and multiple screens of irony, combining experimental zaniness with formal reserve. A native of the Irish Republic, Eavan Boland made a space within the largely male tradition of Irish verse—with its standard, mythical emblems of femininity—for Irish women's historical experiences of suffering and survival.

The massive postwar change in the geographical contours of poetry written in English involved, in part, the emergence of new voices and styles from the "Old Commonwealth," or dominions, such as Canada and Australia. Self-conscious about being at the margins of the former empire, Les Murray fashions a brash, playful, overbrimming poetry that mines the British and classical traditions while remaking them in what he styles his "redneck" Australian manner. Anne Carson continues Canadian poetry's dialogue with its British literary origins, imaginatively transporting, for example, the Victorian writers Charlotte and Emily Brontë into a Canadian landscape, but she also illustrates a heightened interest in American poetry and popular culture, bringing into the literary mix influences that range from ancient Greek poetry to Ezra Pound and Sylvia Plath, television and video. Deliberately Canadian and feminist, Margaret Atwood writes out of the "inescapable doubleness," isolation, and alienation she ascribes to Canadian writing: "We are all immigrants to this place," she says, "even if we were born here."

From postcolonial regions came some of the most important innovations in the language and thematic reach of poetry in English. Born under British rule and educated in colonial schools that repressed or denigrated Native languages and traditions, these postcolonial poets grew up with an acute awareness of the riches of their own cultural inheritances, as well as a deep knowledge of the British literary canon. They expanded the range of possibilities in English-language poetry by hybridizing traditions of the British Isles with their images and speech rhythms, creoles, and genres. Some of these writers, such as the Nobel laureate Derek Walcott, the most eminent West Indian poet, drew largely on British, American, and classical European models, though Walcott creolized the rhythms, diction, and sensibility of English-language poetry. "I have Dutch,

nigger, and English in me," declares the mulatto hero of "The Schooner *Flight*," "and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation." Other poets emphasized even more strongly their African Caribbean inheritances in speech and culture. When colonial prejudices still branded West Indian English, or Creole, as a backward language, a "corruption" of English, the African Jamaican poets McKay and Louise Bennett claimed its wit, vibrancy, and proverbial richness for poetry. In the late 1960s the Barbadian Kamau (then Edward) Brathwaite revalued the linguistic, musical, and mythic survivals of Africa in the Caribbean—resources long repressed because of colonial attitudes. He also combined these sources with a pronounced emphasis on the technological media of composition, whether it be paper, tape recording, or computer. In poetry as well as fiction, Nigeria was the most prolific anglophone African nation around the time of independence, which was said to be the "golden age" of letters in sub-Saharan Africa. Wole Soyinka, later the first Black African to win the Nobel Prize, stretched English syntax and figurative language in poems dense with Yoruba-inspired wordplay and myth. At the same time, poets from India were bringing its great variety of Indigenous cultures into English-language poetry. A. K. Ramanujan's sharply etched poems interfused Anglo-modernist principles with the south Indian legacies of Tamil and Kannada poetry. All of these poets responded with emotional ambivalence and linguistic versatility to the experience of living after colonialism, between non-Western traditions and globalist modernity, in a period of explosive change in the relation between Western and "Native" cultures.

A century that began with a springtime of poetic innovation drew to its close with the full flowering of older poets such as Walcott, Hill, and Heaney, and the twenty-first century opened with welcome signs of fresh growth in English-language poetry, including new books by Paul Muldoon, elected Oxford Professor of Poetry from 1999 to 2004; Carol Ann Duffy, appointed poet laureate from 2009 to 2019 (the first woman and first Scot to hold the position); and Simon Armitage, elected Oxford Professor of Poetry from 2015 to 2019.

FICTION

Novels—"loose baggy monsters," in Henry James's phrase—can be, can do, can include anything at all. The form defies prescriptions and limits. Yet its variety converges on persistent issues such as the construction of the self within society, the reproduction of the real world, and the temporality of human experience and of narrative. The novel's flexibility and porousness, its omnivorousness and multivoicedness, have enabled writers to take advantage of modernity's global dislocation and mixture of peoples. And while doing so, the novel meets the challenges to the imagination of mass death and world war, of the relentless and rapid mutations in modern cultures and societies, in evolving knowledge and beliefs.

The twentieth century's novels may be divided roughly into three main subperiods: high modernism through the 1920s, celebrating personal and textual inwardness, complexity, and difficulty; the reaction against modernism, involving a return to social realism, moralism, and assorted documentary endeavors, in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s; and the period after the collapse of the British Empire (especially from the time of the countercultural revolution of the 1960s), in which the fictional claims of various realisms—urban, proletarian, provincial English (for example, northern), regional (for example, Scottish and Irish), immigrant, postcolonial, feminist, LGBTQ+—are asserted alongside, but also through, a continuing self-consciousness about language and form and meaning that is, in effect, the enduring legacy of modernism. By the end of the century, modernism had given way to the striking pluralism of postmodernism and postcolonialism. Yet the roots of the late-century panoramic mix of voices and styles lay in the early part of the century, when writers on the margins of "Englishness"—a Pole, Joseph Conrad; an Irishman, James Joyce; an American, Henry James; an Englishwoman, Virginia Woolf; and a working-class Englishman, D. H. Lawrence—were the most instrumental inventors of the modernist "English" novel.

The high modernists wrote in the wake of the First World War's shattering of confidence in the old certainties about the deity and the Christian faith, about the person, knowledge, materialism, history, the old grand narratives, which had, more or less, sustained the Western novel through the nineteenth century. They boldly ventured into this general shaking of belief in the novel's founding assumptions—that the world, things, and selves were knowable, that language was a reliably revelatory instrument, that the author's story gave history meaning and moral shape, that narratives should fall into ethically instructive beginnings, middles, and endings. Trying to be true to the new skepticisms and hesitations, the modernists also attempted to construct credible new alternatives to the old belief systems.

The once-prevailing nineteenth-century notions of ordinary reality came under serious attack. In her famous essay "Modern Fiction" (1919, revised 1925), Virginia Woolf explicitly assaulted the "materialism" of the realistic Edwardian heirs of Victorian naturalist confidence, Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, and John Galsworthy. For Woolf, as for other modernists, what was knowable, and thus representable, could not be thought of as some given, fixed, transcribable essence. Reality existed, rather, only as it was perceived. Hence the introduction of the impressionistic, flawed, even utterly unreliable narrator—a substitute for the classic nineteenth-century authoritative narrating voice, usually the voice of the author or some close stand-in. Even a relatively reliable narrator, such as Conrad's Marlow, the main narrating voice of *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, dramatized the struggle to know, penetrate, and interpret reality, with his large rhetoric of the invisible, inaudible, impossible, unintelligible, and thus unsayable. The real was offered, then, as refracted and reflected in the novel's representative consciousness. "Look within," Woolf urged the novelist. Reality and its truth had gone inward.

Woolf's subject would be "an ordinary mind on an ordinary day." The life that mattered most would now be mental life. And so the modernist novel turned resolutely inward, its concern being now with

consciousness—a flow of reflections, momentary impressions, disjunctive bits of recall and half-memory, simultaneously revealing both the past and the way the past is repressed. Psychoanalysis helped to enable this concentration: to narrate the reality of persons as the life of the mind in all its complexity and inner tumult—consciousness, unconsciousness, id, libido, and so on. And the apparent truths of this inward life were, of course, utterly tricky, scattered, fragmentary, spotty, now illuminated, now twilit, now quite occluded. For Woolf, Joyce's *Ulysses* was a prime expression of this desired impressionistic agenda: "he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain."

The characters of Joyce and Woolf are caught, then, as they are immersed in the so-called stream of consciousness; and some version of an interior flow of thought becomes the main modernist access to "character." The reader overhears the characters speaking, so to say, from within their particular consciousnesses, but not always directly. The modernists felt free also to enter their characters' minds, to speak as though on their behalf, in the technique known as "free indirect style" (*style indirect libre* in French).

A marked feature of the new fictional selfhood was a fraught condition of existential loneliness. Conrad's Lord Jim, Joyce's Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, Lawrence's Paul Morel and Birkin, and Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway were people on their own, individuals bereft of the old props (Church, Bible, ideological consensus), and so doomed to make their own puzzled way through life's labyrinths without much confidence in belief, in the knowable solidity of the world, and above all in language as a tool of knowledge about self and other. Jacob of Woolf's *Jacob's Room* remains stubbornly unknowable to his closest friends and loved ones, above all to his novelist. The walls and cupboards of Rhoda's room in *The Waves*, also by Woolf, bend disconcertingly around her bed; she tries in vain to restore her sense of the solidity of things by touching the bottom bed rail with her toes; her mind "pours" out of her; the very boundaries of her self

soften, slip, dissolve. The old conclusive plots—everything resolved on the novel's last page, on the model of the detective story—gave place to irresolute open endings: the unending vista of the last paragraph in Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*; the jump from third-person narration to a fragmentary diary at the conclusion of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; the melancholy of regret and unfulfilled desire at the end of Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Novelists built modern myths on the dry bones of the old Christian ones. In his review of *Ulysses* ("*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," 1923), T. S. Eliot famously praised the novel for replacing the old "narrative method" by a new "mythical method": Joyce's Irish Jew, Bloom, is mythicized as a modern Ulysses, his day's odyssey often ironically reviving episodes in Homer's *Odyssey*. This manipulation of "a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" was, Eliot thought, "a step toward making the modern world possible for art," much in keeping with the new anthropology and psychology as well as with what Yeats was doing in verse. In Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, Stephen Dedalus's last name sets up (sometimes ironic) parallels between the mythical Greek past and the aspirations of a contemporary young Irishman. Modernism's private mythmaking could, of course, take worrying turns. The "religion of the blood" that D. H. Lawrence celebrated led directly to the fascist sympathies of his *Aaron's Rod* and the revived Aztec blood cult of *The Plumed Serpent*.

Language and textuality, reading and writing, were now central to these highly metafictional novels, which are often about writers and artists, and surrogates for artists, such as Woolf's Mrs. Ramsay with her dinners and Mrs. Dalloway with her party, producers of what Woolf called the "unpublished works of women." But this self-reflexivity was not necessarily consoling—Mrs. Flanders's vision blurs and an inkblot spreads across the postcard we find her writing in the opening page of *Jacob's Room*. Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, perhaps the greatest modernist example of language gone rampant, taxes even its most dedicated readers and verges on unreadability for others.

The skeptical modernist linguistic turn, the rejection of materialist externality and of the Victorians' realist project, left ineradicable traces on later fiction, but modernism's revolutions were not absolute or permanent. *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were influential but also unrepeatable. And even within the greatest modernist fictions, the worldly and the material, political and moral questions never dried up. Woolf and Joyce, for example, celebrate the perplexities of urban life in London and Dublin, and, indeed, modernist fiction is largely an art of the great city. Lawrence was preoccupied with the condition of England, industrialism, provincial life. Satire was one of modernism's recurrent notes. So it was not odd for the right-wing novelists who came through in the 1920s, such as Wyndham Lewis and Evelyn Waugh, to resort to the social subject and the satiric stance, nor for their left-leaning contemporaries such as Graham Greene and George Orwell—who came to be seen as even more characteristic of the red decade of the 1930s—to engage with the human condition in ways that Dickens or Balzac, let alone Bennett Wells Galsworthy, would have recognized as not all that distant from their own spirit.

Despite the turn to documentary realism in the 1930s, the modernist emphasis on linguistic self-consciousness did not disappear. Instead, the new writers politicized the modern novel's linguistic self-consciousness: they deployed the discourse of the unemployed or of the West Midlands' proletariat, for example, for political ends. The comically chaotic meeting of English and German languages in Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* is central to the fiction's dire warning about Anglo-German politics; Newspeak in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is the culmination of the author's nearly two decades of politically motivated engagement with the ways of English speakers at home and abroad. In this politicized aftermath of the modernist experiment, novelists such as Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* satirically engage the socio-politico-moral matter of the 1930s in part through reflections on the corruptions of language.

Where World War I was a great engine of modernism, endorsing the chaos of shattered belief, the fragility of language and of the human subject, the Spanish Civil War and then World War II confirmed the English novel in its return to registering the social scene and the historical event. World War II provoked whole series of more or less realist fictions, including Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy, as well as powerful single works such as Graham Greene's *Ministry of Fear* and Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. The new fictions of the post–World War II period spoke with the satirical energies of the young demobilized officer class (Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* set the disgruntled tone), and of the ordinary provincial citizen finding a fictional voice yet again in the new Welfare State atmosphere of the 1950s, as in Alan Sillitoe's proletarian Nottingham novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*.

Questing for new moral foundations for the post-Holocaust nuclear age, William Golding published the first of many intense post-Christian moral fables with *The Lord of the Flies*, and Iris Murdoch released the first of many novels of moral philosophy with *Under the Net*, both in 1954. Murdoch espoused the "sovereignty of good" and the importance of the novel's loving devotion to "the otherness of the other person." Murdoch and Golding were consciously retrospective (as were the contemporary Roman Catholic novelists Greene, Waugh, and Muriel Spark) in their investment in moral form. But even such firmly grounded determinations could not calm the anxieties of belatedness and a lack of grand purpose in the absence of British imperial influence over global affairs.

Some younger novelists, such as Ian McEwan and Martin Amis (son of Kingsley), became obsessed with Germany (the now prosperous old foe) and with the lingering ghosts of the Hitler era—and not least after 1989, when the Berlin Wall came down and wartime European horrors stirred into vivid focus. Whereas Conrad, E. M. Forster (*A Passage to India*), and Jean Rhys (*Wide Sargasso Sea*) had been harshly accusatory about Britain's overseas behavior, now nostalgia for old imperial days shrouded the pages of Lawrence Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* and Paul Scott's *Raj Quartet* and *Staying*

On. Observers of English fiction worried that the only tasks left for it were to ruminate over past history and rehash old stories. The modernist Joycean strategy of resurrecting ancient narratives to revitalize present consciousness had given way to a fear that the postmodern novelist was condemned to a disabled career of parroting old stuff. *On est parlé*, "one is spoken," rather than speaking for oneself, thinks the main character of Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot*, reflecting with dismay on this dilemma. Ventriloquial reproduction of old voices became Peter Ackroyd's trademark. Worries about being merely possessed by the past came to seem central to late twentieth-century English fiction, as in A. S. Byatt's *Possession*, which is about the magnetism of past (Victorian) writers and writings.

Yet this was also a time for the spectacular emergence of many robust voices, particularly from historically marginalized groups—writers for whom the perceived enervation at the English center represented an opportunity for telling their untold stories. After a sensational trial in 1960, the ban on D. H. Lawrence's erotically explicit *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was finally lifted, ensuring greater freedom in the narrative exploration of sexuality. Relaxing views on gender roles, the influx of women into the workplace, and the collapse of the grand patriarchal narratives also gave impetus to feminist revisionary narratives of history, and to the remaking of narrative technique as more fluid and free. In the 1980s and 1990s, prominent and inventive women's voices included those of Jeanette Winterson, celebrator of women's arts and queer bodiliness, and Angela Carter, feminist neomythographer, reviser of fairy tales, rewriter of the Marquis de Sade, espouser of raucous and rebellious heroines. In the 2010s, Rachel Cusk took the novel into new areas of candor and circumspection with her *Outline* trilogy. Among the chorus of voices seeking to express experiences once held taboo with new intimacy and vividness were those of uncloseted gay writers, such as Alan Hollinghurst, pioneer of the openly homosexual literary novel of the post–World War II period, and Adam Mars-Jones, short-story chronicler of the HIV/AIDS crisis. The literary

counterpart for political decolonization within the British Isles was the emergence of a multitude of regional and national voices outside the south of England, many deploying a vigorously local idiom, such as the Scottish novelist Irvine Welsh and the Irish writer Roddy Doyle, who reached mass international audiences through 1990s film versions of their novels *Trainspotting* (Welsh) and *The Commitments* (Doyle). Hilary Mantel, who grew up in a working-class Irish Catholic immigrant family in the north of England, brought an acute sensitivity to the outsider's perspective, even when writing historical fiction about the Tudor court, as in her novels *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012).

Not to be outdone, postcolonial novelists were simultaneously claiming for literature in English untold histories, hybrid identities, and vibrantly creolized vocabularies. A major phase in the huge geographic shift in the center of gravity of English-language fiction occurred during the postwar decolonization of much of South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, when Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) was published, just two years before Nigerian independence. Retelling the story of colonial incursion from an Indigenous viewpoint, Achebe's influential novel intricately represents an African community before and after the arrival of Whites, in a language made up of English and Igbo words, encompassed by a narrative that enmeshes African proverbs and oral tales with English realism and modernist reflexivity. A few years later and on the eve of his natal island's independence, the Trinidad-born writer V. S. Naipaul published his first major novel, *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961), one of many works that powerfully develops the potential of a translucent realist fiction to explore issues such as migrant identities, cross-cultural mimicry, and the spaces of colonialism. The Indian-born Salman Rushdie, more restive than Naipaul in relation to Englishness and English literary traditions, has exuberantly championed hybrid narrative forms made out of the fresh convergence of modern European fiction and "Third World" orality, magical realism, and polyglossia. In novels such as *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Rushdie wryly offer

a "chutnification of history" in South Asia and in an Asianized England. The colonies where English literature had once been a means of imposing imperial models of "civilization" now gave rise to novelists who, ironically, outstripped in lively imagination, cultural energy, and narrative inventiveness their counterparts from the seat of the empire. A younger generation of novelists who published their groundbreaking work after the turn of the millennium, including the Indian Kiran Desai, the Jamaican Marlon James, and the Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, have ensured the continued vibrancy of the novel into the twenty-first century.

White fiction writers from the colonies and dominions, many of them women, and many of them resident in England, such as Katherine Mansfield, Doris Lessing, and Jean Rhys, had long brought fresh perspectives to the novel from the outposts of empire, each of these eminent writers sharply etching a feminist critique of women's lives diminished by subordination to the colonial order. South Africa, not least because of its fraught racial and political history, can count among its progeny some of the most celebrated fiction writers of the late twentieth century. Nadine Gordimer extended the potential of an ethical narrative realism to probe the fierce moral challenges of apartheid and its aftermath, whereas J. M. Coetzee has used self-reflexively postmodern and allegorical forms to inquire into the tangled complexities and vexed complicities of White South African experience.

Even as the categories of "British" and "postcolonial" continue to describe accurately much of the literature in this volume, the propensity of writers to migrate and make their homes across multiple regions has only grown in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. In turn, major novelists like the Japanese-born, English-bred Kazuo Ishiguro can expect their books to be translated into multiple languages outside of English within several years if not months of publishing in English. Such working conditions, in addition to the broader influence of globalization in governing the world's economic markets, has led to the rise of the category "global Anglophone novel." Far from being placeless, the

global Anglophone novel is preoccupied by narratives of displacement or multiple placement and conditions, such as climate change and refugeeism, which are transnational in nature. Exemplary novels, like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* or David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, array multiple geographies, histories, and even sometimes languages within their pages. Many writers associated with the global Anglophone novel grew to prominence as immigrant or second-generation writers of British multicultural fiction. These include the chronicler of transatlantic slavery, Caryl Phillips, from Saint Kitts; the skeptic of cultural assimilation, Abdulrazak Gurnah, born in Tanzania but a resident of Canterbury, England; and comedic stylists Hanif Kureishi and Zadie Smith, both born on the peripheries of London, Kureishi to a Pakistani father and English mother, Smith to a Jamaican mother and English father. Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) helped establish a paradigm for the vibrantly cross-cultural and interethnic novel. These and other "British" novelists of color give voice to new and emergent experiences of migration and cross-racial encounter. They take clear advantage of the novel's productive polymorphousness with little anxiety about belatedness, no fright over parroting, and no reservations about mixing elite and popular culture.

DRAMA

Late Victorians from one perspective, Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw can also be seen as early moderns, forerunners of the twentieth century's renovators of dramatic form. The wit of Wilde's drawing-room comedies is combative and generative of paradoxes, but beneath the glitter of his verbal play are serious—if heavily coded—reflections on social, political, and feminist issues. Shaw brought still another kind of wit into drama—not Wilde's lighthearted sparkle but the provocative paradox that was meant to tease and disturb, to challenge the complacency of the audience. Over time the desire to unsettle, to shock, even to alienate the audience became one hallmark of modern drama.

Wilde and Shaw were both born in Ireland, and it was in Dublin that the century's first major theatrical movement originated. To nourish Irish poetic drama and foster the Irish literary renaissance, Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory founded the Irish Literary Theatre in 1899, with Yeats's early nationalist play *The Countess Cathleen* as its first production. In 1902 the Irish Literary Theatre was able to maintain a permanent all-Irish company and changed its name to the Irish National Theatre, which moved in 1904 to the Abbey Theatre, by which name it has been known ever since. J. M. Synge brought the speech and imagination of Irish country people into theater, but the Abbey's 1907 staging of his play *The Playboy of the Western World* so offended orthodox religious and nationalist sentiment that the audience rioted. While defending Synge and other pioneers of Irish drama, Yeats continued to write his own plays, which drew themes from old Irish legend and which, after 1913, stylized and ritualized theatrical performance on the model of Japanese Noh drama. In the 1920s, Sean O'Casey brought new vitality to the Abbey Theatre, using the Easter Rising and Irish civil war as a background for controversial plays (one of which again sparked riots) that combined tragic melodrama, humor of character, and irony of circumstance. In England, T. S. Eliot attempted with

considerable success to revive a ritual poetic drama with his *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), though his later attempts to combine religious symbolism with the chatter of entertaining society comedy, as in *The Cocktail Party* (1950), were uneven.

Despite the achievements of Yeats, Synge, O'Casey, and Eliot, it cannot be said of Irish and British drama, as it can of poetry and fiction in the first half of the century, that a technical revolution changed the whole course of literary history. The major innovations in drama in the first half of the twentieth century were on the Continent. German expressionist drama developed out of the dark, psychological focus of the later plays of the Swedish dramatist August Strindberg (1849–1912). Another worldwide influence was the "epic" drama of the leftist German dramatist Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956): to foster ideological awareness, he rejected the idea that the audience should identify with a play's characters and become engrossed in its plot; instead, the playwright should break the illusion of reality through the alienation effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*) and foreground the play's theatrical constructedness and historical specificity. The French dramatist Antonin Artaud (1896–1948) also defied realism and rationalism, but unlike Brecht, his theory of the theater of cruelty sought a transformative, mystical communion with the audience through incantations and sounds, physical gestures and strange scenery. Another French dramatist, the Romanian-born Eugène Ionesco (1909–1994), helped inaugurate the theater of the absurd just after World War II, in plays that enact people's hopeless efforts to communicate and that comically intimate a tragic vision of life devoid of meaning or purpose. In such Continental drama the influences of symbolism (on the later Strindberg), Marxism (on Brecht), and surrealism (on Artaud and Ionesco) contributed to the shattering of naturalistic convention in drama, making the theater a space where linear plot gave way to fractured scenes and circular action, transparent conversation was displaced by misunderstanding and verbal opacity, a predictable and knowable universe was unsettled by eruptions of the irrational and the absurd.

In Britain, the impact of these Continental innovations was delayed by a conservative theater establishment until the late 1950s and 1960s, when they converged with the countercultural revolution to transform the nature of English-language theater. Meanwhile the person who played the most significant role in the Anglophone absorption of modernist experiment was the Irishman Samuel Beckett. He changed the history of drama with his first produced play, written in French in 1948 and translated by the author as *Waiting for Godot* (premiered in Paris in 1953, in London in 1955). The play astonishingly did away with plot altogether ("Nothing happens—twice," as one critic put it), as did *Endgame* (1958) and Beckett's later plays, such as *Not I* (1973) and *That Time* (1976). In the shadow of the mass death of World War II, the plotlessness, the minimal characterization and setting, the absurdist intimation of an existential darkness without redemption, and the tragicomic melding of anxiety, circular wordplay, and slapstick action in Beckett's plays gave impetus to a seismic shift in British writing for the theater.

The epicenter of the new developments in British drama was the Royal Court Theatre, symbolically located a little away from London's West End "Theatre land" (the rough equivalent of Broadway in New York). From 1956 the Royal Court was the home of the English Stage Company. Together they provided a venue and a vision that provoked and enabled a new wave of writers. John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), the hit of the ESC's first season (significantly helped by the play's television broadcast), offered the audience "lessons in feeling" through a searing depiction of class-based indignation, emotional cruelty, and directionless angst, all in a surprisingly nonmetropolitan setting. At the Royal Court, the working-class naturalism of the so-called kitchen-sink dramatists and other "angry young men" of the 1950s, such as Arnold Wesker, author of the trilogy *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958), also broke with the genteel proprieties and narrowly upper-class set designs that, in one unadventurous drawing-room comedy after another, had dominated the British stage for decades. The political consciousness of the new theater was still more evident in John Arden's plays

produced expressly for the Royal Court, such as *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* (1959), which, in the stylized setting of an isolated mining town, explores colonial oppression, communal guilt for wartime atrocities, and pacifism. By the later 1960s, the influence of the counterculture on British theater was unavoidable. Joe Orton challenged bourgeois sentiment in a series of classically precise, blackly comic, and sexually ambiguous parodies—for example, his farce *What the Butler Saw* (1969).

While plays of social and political critique were one response to the postwar period, Beckett and the "theater of the absurd" inspired another group of Royal Court writers to refocus theater on language, symbolism, and existential realities. Informed by kitchen-sink naturalism and absurdism, Harold Pinter's "comedies of menace" map out a social trajectory from his early study of working-class stress and inarticulate anxiety, *The Room* (1957), through the film-noirish dark farce of *The Dumb Waiter* (1960) and the emotional power plays of *The Caretaker* (1960), to the savagely comic study of middle-class escape from working-class moral attitudes in *The Homecoming* (1965). Later plays reflect on patrician suspicion and betrayal, though in the 1980s his work acquired a more overtly political voice. Though less bleak than Pinter, Tom Stoppard is no less indebted to Beckett's wordplay, skewed conversations, and theatrical technique, as evidenced by *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967) and other plays, many of which embed within themselves earlier literary works (such as *Godot* and *Hamlet*) and thus offer virtuoso postmodernist reflections on art, language, and performance. This enjoyment and exploitation of self-conscious theatricality arises partly out of the desire to show theater as different from film and television and is also apparent in the 1970s productions of another playwright: the liturgical stylization of Peter Shaffer's *Equus* (1973) and the bleak mental landscape of his Antonio Salieri in *Amadeus* (1979) emphasize the stage as battleground and site of struggle (an effect lost in their naturalistic film versions). Stoppard's time shifts and memory lapses in *Travesties* (1974) allow a nonnaturalistic study of the role of memory

and imagination in the creative process, a theme he returns to in *Arcadia* (1993), a double-exposure account of a Romantic poet and his modern critical commentators occupying the same physical space but never reaching intellectual common ground. *Leopoldstadt* (2020) spans fifty years and several generations of a Viennese Jewish family as they descend from joyous prosperity to grief, exile, and partial amnesia in the wake of the Holocaust. Stoppard's most personal work remains resolutely intellectual and intertextual, building on the plays of Austrian playwright Arthur Schnitzler.

Legal reform intensified the postwar ferment in British theater. Following the Theatres Act of 1843, writers for the public stage had been required to submit their playscripts to the Lord Chamberlain's office for state censorship, but in 1968 a new Theatres Act abolished that office. With this new freedom from conservative moral attitudes and taste, Howard Brenton, Howard Barker, Edward Bond, and David Hare were able to write challenging studies of violence, social deprivation, and political and sexual aggression, often using mythical settings and epic stories to construct austere tableaux of power and oppression. Bond's *Lear* (1971) typifies his ambitious combination of soaring lyrical language and alienatingly realistic violence. Directors such as Peter Brook took advantage of the new freedom in plays that emphasized, as had Artaud's "theater of cruelty," physical gesture, bodily movement, and ritualized spectacle. The post-1968 liberalization also encouraged the emergence of new theater groups addressing specific political agendas, many of them inspired by Brecht's "epic" theater's discontinuous, distancing, and socially critical style. Companies such as Monstrous Regiment, Gay Sweatshop, Joint Stock, and John McGrath's 7:84 worked collaboratively with dramatists who were invited to help devise and develop shows. Increasingly in the 1970s, published plays were either transcriptions of the first production or "blueprints for the alchemy of live performance" (Micheline Wandor). In Ireland, the founding of the Field Day Theatre Company in 1980 by the well-established playwright Brian Friel and actor Stephen Rea had similar motives of collaborative cultural catalysis. Their first production,

Friel's *Translations* (1980), exploring linguistic colonialism and the fragility of cultural identity in nineteenth-century Ireland, achieved huge international success.

This ethos of collaboration and group development helped foster the first major cohort of women dramatists to break through onto mainstream stages. Working with Joint Stock and Monstrous Regiment in the late 1970s on plays such as the gender-bending anticolonial *Cloud Nine* (1979), Caryl Churchill developed plays out of workshops exploring gender, class, and colonialism. She carefully transcribes and overlaps the speech of her characters to create a seamlessly interlocking web of discourse, a streamlined version of the ebb and flow of normal speech. In *Top Girls* (1982) and *Serious Money* (1987), plays that anatomize the market-driven and ruthlessly competitive ethos of the 1980s, she explores modern society with wit and detachment. Pam Gems studies the social and sexual politics of misogyny and feminism in her campy theatrical explorations of strong women—*Queen Cristina* (1977), *Piaf* (1978), *Camille* (1984)—while Sarah Daniels reinterprets the naturalism of kitchen-sink drama by adding to it the linguistic stylization of Churchill.

Massive strides in the diversification of English-language theater occurred during the era of decolonization, when two eminent poets, Derek Walcott and Wole Soyinka, helped breathe new life into Anglophone drama. As early as the 1950s, Derek Walcott was writing and directing plays about Caribbean history and experience, re-creating in his drama a West Indian "oral culture, of chants, jokes, folk-songs, and fables," at a time when theater in the Caribbean tended to imitate European themes and styles. After moving to Trinidad in 1958, he founded what came to be known as the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, and for much of the next twenty years devoted himself to directing and writing plays that included *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, first produced in 1967, in which Eurocentric and Afrocentric visions of Caribbean identity collide. Since then, a notable breakthrough in Caribbean theater has been the collaborative work of the Sistren Theatre Collective in Jamaica, which, following the

lead of Louise Bennett and other West Indian poets, draws on women's personal histories in dramatic performances that make vivid use of Jamaican speech, expression, and rhythm. Meanwhile in Africa, Wole Soyinka, who had been involved with the Royal Court Theatre in the late 1950s when Brecht's influence was first being absorbed, returned to Nigeria in the year of its independence to write and direct plays that fused Euromodernist dramatic techniques with conventions from Yoruba popular and traditional drama. His *Death and the King's Horseman*, which premiered in Nigeria in 1975, represents a tragic confrontation between colonial officials and the guardians of Yoruba rituals and beliefs. While Soyinka has been a towering presence in sub-Saharan Africa, other playwrights, such as the fellow Nigerian Femi Osofisan and the South African Athol Fugard, have used the stage to probe issues of class, race, and the often violent legacy of colonialism. In England, playwrights of Caribbean, African, and Asian origin or descent, such as Mustapha Matura, Winsome Pinnock, and Hanif Kureishi, the latter of whom is best known internationally for his screenplays *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1988), *My Son the Fanatic* (1998), *The Mother* (2004), *Venus* (2006), *Weddings and Beheadings* (2007), and *Le Week-End* (2013), have revitalized British drama with a host of new vocabularies, new techniques, and new theories of identity in a world marked by interconnection and inequality. The century that began with its first great dramatic movement in Ireland was followed by a century that began with English-language drama more diverse in its accents and styles, more international in its bearings and vision, than ever before.

The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1899, 1902 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*	
	1900 Max Planck, quantum theory
	1901 First wireless communication across the Atlantic
	1901–10 Reign of Edward VII
	1902 End of the Anglo-Boer War
	1903 Henry Ford introduces the first mass-produced car. Wright Brothers make the first successful airplane flight

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1905 Albert Einstein, theory of special relativity. Impressionist exhibition, London
1910 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*	1910 Postimpressionist exhibition, London
	1910–36 Reign of George V
1913 Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste"	
1914 James Joyce, *Dubliners.* Thomas Hardy, *Satires of Circumstance*	1914–18 World War I
1914–15 *Blast*	
1916 Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*	1916 Easter Rising in Dublin
1917 T. S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1918 Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems*	1918 Armistice. Franchise Act grants vote to women ages thirty and over
	1919 Massacre of Amritsar (Jallianwala Bagh) in British-colonized India; Rabindranath Tagore renounces knighthood
1920 D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love.* Wilfred Owen, *Poems*	1920 Treaty of Versailles. League of Nations formed
1921 William Butler Yeats, *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* 1922 Katherine Mansfield, *The Garden Party and Other Stories.* Joyce, *Ulysses.* Eliot, *The Waste Land*	1921–22 Formation of Irish Free State with Northern Ireland (Ulster) remaining part of Great Britain
1924 E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*	
1925 Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1927 Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*	
1928 Yeats, *The Tower*	1928 Women ages twenty-one and over granted voting rights
1929 Woolf, *A Room of One's Own.* Robert Graves, *Goodbye to All That*	1929 Stock market crash; Great Depression begins
	1933 Hitler comes to power in Germany
1935 Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*	
	1936 Edward VIII succeeds George V, but abdicates in favor of his brother, crowned as George VI
	1936–39 Spanish Civil War
1937 David Jones, *In Parenthesis*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1939 Joyce, *Finnegans Wake.* Yeats, *Last Poems and Two Plays*	1939–45 World War II
1940 W. H. Auden, *Another Time*	1940 Fall of France. Battle of Britain
	1941–45 The Holocaust
1943 Eliot, *Four Quartets*	
1945 Auden, *Collected Poems.* George Orwell, *Animal Farm*	1945 First atomic bombs dropped, on Japan
1946 Dylan Thomas, *Deaths and Entrances*	
	1947 India and Pakistan become independent nations
	1948 *Empire Windrush* brings West Indians to UK

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1949 Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*	
	1950 Apartheid laws passed in South Africa
1953 Premiere of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*	
	1956 Suez crisis
	1957 Ghana becomes independent
1958 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*	
	1960 Nigeria becomes independent
	1961 Berlin Wall erected
1962 Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*	1962 Cuban missile crisis. Uganda, Jamaica, Trinidad and

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	Tobago become independent
1964 Philip Larkin, *The Whitsun Weddings*	
	1965 U.S. troops land in South Vietnam
1966 Nadine Gordimer, *The Late Bourgeois World.* Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.* Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*	1966 Barbados and Guyana become independent 1967 UK Sexual Offences Act decriminalizes sex between men older than twenty-one
	1969 *Apollo* moon landing
1971 V. S. Naipaul, *In a Free State*	1971 Indo-Pakistan War, leading to creation of Bangladesh
	1972 Britain enters European Common Market
	1973 U.S. troops leave Vietnam

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1975 Seamus Heaney, *North.* Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman*	
	1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran; the shah flees. Soviets invade Afghanistan
	1979–90 Margaret Thatcher is British prime minister
1980 J. M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians*	1980–88 Iran-Iraq War
1981 Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children.* Brian Friel, *Translations*	1981 HIV/AIDS first diagnosed
1982 Caryl Churchill, *Top Girls*	1982 Falklands War
1985 Production of Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette.* Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
1988 Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*	
1989 Kazuo Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day*	1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall. Tiananmen Square, Beijing, demonstration and massacre
1990 Derek Walcott, *Omeros*	
1991 Caryl Phillips, *Cambridge*	1991 Collapse of the Soviet Union
1992 Thom Gunn, *The Man with Night Sweats*	
1993 Stoppard, *Arcadia*	
	1994 Democracy comes to South Africa
1997 Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*	1997 Labour party victory in the UK ends eighteen years of Conservative government

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
	1998 British handover of Hong Kong to China. Northern Ireland Assembly established
1999 Carol Ann Duffy, *The World's Wife*	
2000 Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*	
	2001 September 11 attacks destroy World Trade Center
2002 Paul Muldoon, *Moy Sand and Gravel*	2002 Euro becomes sole currency in most of European Union
	2003 Invasion of Iraq led by the United States and the UK
	2005 Bombings of London transport system
2006 Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss*	

TEXTS	CONTEXTS
2009 Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall*	2010 David Cameron is first Conservative party prime minister in 13 years
2013 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*	2013 The Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act passes in England and Wales
	2016 UK votes to leave European Union. David Cameron resigns, replaced by Theresa May
2019 Bernadine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other*	2020 UK withdraws from the European Union. World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a global pandemic

THOMAS HARDY
1840–1928

Thomas Hardy was born in the Dorset hamlet of Higher Bockhampton, in that area of southwest England that he was to make the "Wessex" of his fiction and poetry. The son of a stonemason, the young Hardy was kept mostly at home, where he closely observed and came to love the surrounding countryside, the rhythms of the seasons and the songs, stories, and folk beliefs of a still predominantly oral culture. He attended local schools until the age of sixteen, when he was apprenticed to a Dorchester architect in whose office he remained for six years. In 1862 he moved to London and found a position as a draftsman in the office of Arthur Blomfield, a leading architect of Gothic-style buildings. Meanwhile, as Hardy was completing his general education informally through his eclectic reading, he began to study and write poetry. His first novel, seen as an attack on upper-class pretensions, was rejected by publishers in 1868, though one of the readers, George Meredith, advised Hardy to write another work of fiction, with a more complicated plot. The result was the sensational novel *Desperate Remedies* (1871), which was followed by a tale of rural life, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). The serialization of his next two novels, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1872–73) and *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), provided him with sufficient income to abandon architecture for literature. He continued to write novels until the sexual frankness and irreligiousness of his last novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895), resulted in

a hostile critical reception, including reviews headed "Jude the Obscene" and "Hardy the Degenerate." Financial security finally enabled Hardy to make his long-desired return to poetry. Straddling the Victorian and modern periods, he published all his novels in the nineteenth century, and all but the first of his poetry collections, *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* (1898), in the twentieth. His remarkable epic drama of the Napoleonic Wars, *The Dynasts*, came out in three parts between 1903 and 1908, and he continued to write verse until his death, at age eighty-seven.

In Hardy's fiction, set in the predominantly rural "Wessex," acutely observed and richly detailed, the forces of nature outside and inside individuals combine to shape human destiny. Against a background of immemorial agricultural labor, with ancient monuments such as Stonehenge or a Roman amphitheater reminding us of the past, he presents characters at the mercy of elements beyond their control: their emotions or sexual impulses, and the barriers of social class and restrictions of social mores. Men and women in Hardy's fiction are rarely masters of their fates; walking long distances across a landscape that dwarfs them, they may be subjected to the indifferent forces that manipulate their behavior and their relations with others. They can achieve dignity, however, through endurance, heroism, or simple strength of character. Most of his fiction is tragic or at least tragicomic, observing humanity with a mixture of cold detachment and searching empathy, and exploring the bitter ironies of life with an almost malevolent staging of coincidence to emphasize the disparity between human desire and ambition, on the one hand, and, on the other, what fate—often determined by the character's very nature—has in store. One of the darkest of Hardy's novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), is the story of an intelligent and sensitive young woman, daughter of a poor family, who is driven to murder, and thus to death by hanging, by a painfully ironic concatenation of events and circumstances. Published in the same year as *Tess*, the story anthologized here, "On the Western Circuit," similarly has at its center a young country woman deceived by a sophisticated city

man; her "ruin" (see also Hardy's poem "The Ruined Maid") leads—contrary to the good intentions of the three protagonists, and again as the result of bitter irony—to *his* ruin and a lifetime of misery for all concerned.

Hardy denied that he was a pessimist, calling himself a "meliorist"—that is, one who believes that the world can be made better by human effort. But there is little sign of meliorism in either his fiction or his poetry. A number of his poems, such as the one he wrote about the *Titanic* disaster, "The Convergence of the Twain," illustrate the perversity of fate, the disastrous or ironic coincidence of events. Other poems go beyond this mood to present, with quiet gravity and a carefully controlled elegiac feeling, some aspect of human sorrow, loss, frustration, or regret, always grounded in a particular, fully realized situation. "Hap" shows Hardy in the characteristic mood of complaining about the irony of human destiny in a universe ruled by chance, while "The Walk" (one of a group of poems written after the death of his first wife in 1912) gives, with remarkable power, concrete embodiment to a sense of loss.

Hardy's verse, like his prose, often has a self-taught air about it; both can seem, on first reading, roughly hewn. He said he wanted to avoid "the jewelled line," and like many modern and contemporary poets, he sought instead what he called "dissonances, and other irregularities" in his art, because they convey more authenticity and spontaneity. "Art is a disproportioning . . . of realities," he declared. While adhering to the metered line, Hardy roughens prosody and contorts syntax, and he creates irregular and complex stanza forms. His diction includes archaisms and deliberately awkward coinages (for example, "Powerfuller" and "unblooms" in "Hap"). He distorts, vigorously revises, and sometimes forces together conventions of traditional genres such as the sonnet, the ballad, the love poem, the war poem, and the elegy. Though rooted in the Victorian period, Hardy thus looks ahead to the dislocations of poetic form carried out by subsequent poets of the twentieth century.

The sadness in Hardy—his skepticism about the existence of a benevolent God, his sense of the waste and frustration involved in

human life, his insistent irony when faced with moral or metaphysical questions—is part of the late Victorian mood, found also, say, in A. E. Housman's poetry and, earlier, in Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, published when Hardy was eighteen. Although his attitudes toward the sacred remained tangled and vexed, what has been termed "the disappearance of God" affected him more deeply than it did many of his contemporaries, not least because as a young man he seriously considered becoming a Church of England priest. Yet his characteristic themes and attitudes cannot be viewed simply as the reaction to the scientific and philosophical developments (Darwin's theory of evolution, for example) that we see in many forms in late nineteenth-century literature. The favorite poetic mood of both Tennyson and Matthew Arnold was also elegiac (e.g., in Tennyson's "Break, Break, Break" and Arnold's "Dover Beach"), but the mood of Hardy's poetry differs from Victorian sorrow; it is sterner, more skeptical, as though braced by a long look at the worst. It is this sternness, this ruggedness of his poetry, together with its verbal and emotional integrity, its formal variety and tonal complexity, its quietly searching individual accent and even occasional playfulness, that helped bring about the steady rise in Hardy's reputation as a poet. Ezra Pound remarked in a 1934 letter: "Nobody has taught me anything about writing since Thomas Hardy died." W. H. Auden begins an essay with this testament to the effect of Hardy's verse: "I cannot write objectively about Thomas Hardy because I was once in love with him." And Hardy appears as the major figure—with more poems than either Yeats or Eliot—in Philip Larkin's influential *Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse* (1973).

On the Western Circuit[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  When first published in magazine form in England and America in 1891, "On the Western Circuit" was altered to minimize its illicit sexuality. References to Anna's seduction and pregnancy were eliminated, and Mrs. Harnham was made a widow rather than a wife. When Hardy published the story in his collection *Life's Little Ironies* (1894), he restored it to its original form. The Western Circuit was the subdivision of England's High Court of Justice with jurisdiction over the southwestern counties. In Hardy's literary landscape Melchester is Salisbury, which has a particularly beautiful cathedral.
  Return to reference 1

I

The man who played the disturbing part in the two quiet feminine lives hereunder depicted—no great man, in any sense, by the way—first had knowledge of them on an October evening, in the city of Melchester. He had been standing in the Close,[2] vainly endeavouring to gain amid the darkness a glimpse of the most homogeneous pile of mediæval architecture in England, which towered and tapered from the damp and level sward[3] in front of him. While he stood the presence of the Cathedral walls was revealed rather by the ear than by the eyes; he could not see them, but they reflected sharply a roar of sound which entered the Close by a street leading from the city square, and, falling upon the building, was flung back upon him.

He postponed till the morrow his attempt to examine the deserted edifice, and turned his attention to the noise. It was compounded of steam barrel-organs, the clanging of gongs, the ringing of hand-bells, the clack of rattles, and the undistinguishable shouts of men. A lurid light hung in the air in the direction of the tumult. Thitherward he went, passing under the arched gateway, along a straight street, and into the square.

He might have searched Europe over for a greater contrast between juxtaposed scenes. The spectacle was that of the eighth chasm of the Inferno as to colour and flame, and, as to mirth, a development of the Homeric heaven. A smoky glare, of the complexion of brass-filings, ascended from the fiery tongues of innumerable naphtha lamps affixed to booths, stalls, and other temporary erections which crowded the spacious market-square. In front of this irradiation scores of human figures, more or less in profile, were darting athwart and across, up, down, and around, like gnats against a sunset.

Their motions were so rhythmical that they seemed to be moved by machinery. And it presently appeared that they were moved by machinery indeed; the figures being those of the patrons of swings, see-saws, flying-leaps, above all of the three steam roundabouts[4]

which occupied the centre of the position. It was from the latter that the din of steam-organs came.

Throbbing humanity in full light was, on second thoughts, better than architecture in the dark. The young man, lighting a short pipe, and putting his hat on one side and one hand in his pocket, to throw himself into harmony with his new environment, drew near to the largest and most patronized of the steam circuses, as the roundabouts were called by their owners. This was one of brilliant finish, and it was now in full revolution. The musical instrument around which and to whose tones the riders revolved, directed its trumpet-mouths of brass upon the young man, and the long plate-glass mirrors set at angles, which revolved with the machine, flashed the gyrating personages and hobby-horses kaleidoscopically into his eyes.

It could now be seen that he was unlike the majority of the crowd. A gentlemanly young fellow, one of the species found in large towns only, and London particularly, built on delicate lines, well, though not fashionably dressed, he appeared to belong to the professional class; he had nothing square or practical about his look, much that was curvilinear and sensuous. Indeed, some would have called him a man not altogether typical of the middle-class male of a century wherein sordid ambition is the master-passion that seems to be taking the time-honoured place of love.

The revolving figures passed before his eyes with an unexpected and quiet grace in a throng whose natural movements did not suggest gracefulness or quietude as a rule. By some contrivance there was imparted to each of the hobby-horses a motion which was really the triumph and perfection of roundabout inventiveness—a galloping rise and fall, so timed that, of each pair of steeds, one was on the spring while the other was on the pitch. The riders were quite fascinated by these equine undulations in this most delightful holiday-game of our times. There were riders as young as six, and as old as sixty years, with every age between. At first it was difficult to catch a personality, but by and by the observer’s eyes centred on the prettiest girl out of the several pretty ones revolving.

It was not that one with the light frock and light hat whom he had been at first attracted by; no, it was the one with the black cape, grey skirt, light gloves and—no, not even she, but the one behind her; she with the crimson skirt, dark jacket, brown hat and brown gloves. Unmistakably that was the prettiest girl.

Having finally selected her, this idle spectator studied her as well as he was able during each of her brief transits across his visual field. She was absolutely unconscious of everything save the act of riding: her features were rapt in an ecstatic dreaminess; for the moment she did not know her age or her history or her lineaments, much less her troubles. He himself was full of vague latter-day glooms and popular melancholies, and it was a refreshing sensation to behold this young thing then and there, absolutely as happy as if she were in a Paradise.

Dreading the moment when the inexorable stoker, grimily lurking behind the glittering rococo-work,[5] should decide that this set of riders had had their pennyworth, and bring the whole concern of steam-engine, horses, mirrors, trumpets, drums, cymbals, and such-like to pause and silence, he waited for her every reappearance, glancing indifferently over the intervening forms, including the two plainer girls, the old woman and child, the two youngsters, the newly-married couple, the old man with a clay pipe, the sparkish youth with a ring, the young ladies in the chariot, the pair of journeyman[6] carpenters, and others, till his select country beauty followed on again in her place. He had never seen a fairer product of nature, and at each round she made a deeper mark in his sentiments. The stoppage then came, and the sighs of the riders were audible.

He moved round to the place at which he reckoned she would alight; but she retained her seat. The empty saddles began to refill, and she plainly was deciding to have another turn. The young man drew up to the side of her steed, and pleasantly asked her if she had enjoyed her ride.

'O yes!' she said, with dancing eyes. 'It has been quite unlike anything I have ever felt in my life before!'

It was not difficult to fall into conversation with her. Unreserved—too unreserved—by nature, she was not experienced enough to be reserved by art, and after a little coaxing she answered his remarks readily. She had come to live in Melchester from a village on the Great Plain,[7] and this was the first time that she had ever seen a steam-circus; she could not understand how such wonderful machines were made. She had come to the city on the invitation of Mrs Harnham, who had taken her into her household to train her as a servant, if she showed any aptitude. Mrs Harnham was a young lady who before she married had been Miss Edith White, living in the country near the speaker's cottage; she was now very kind to her through knowing her in childhood so well. She was even taking the trouble to educate her. Mrs Harnham was the only friend she had in the world, and being without children had wished to have her near her in preference to anybody else, though she had only lately come; allowed her to do almost as she liked, and to have a holiday whenever she asked for it. The husband of this kind young lady was a rich wine-merchant of the town, but Mrs Harnham did not care much about him. In the daytime you could see the house from where they were talking. She, the speaker, liked Melchester better than the lonely country, and she was going to have a new hat for next Sunday that was to cost fifteen and ninepence.[8]

Then she inquired of her acquaintance where he lived, and he told her in London, that ancient and smoky city, where everybody lived who lived at all, and died because they could not live there. He came into Wessex two or three times a year for professional reasons; he had arrived from Wintoncester yesterday, and was going on into the next county in a day or two. For one thing he did like the country better than the town, and it was because it contained such girls as herself.

Then the pleasure-machine started again, and, to the light-hearted girl, the figure of the handsome young man, the market-square with its lights and crowd, the houses beyond, and the world at large, began moving round as before, countermoving in the revolving mirrors on her right hand, she being as it were the fixed

point in an undulating, dazzling, lurid universe, in which loomed forward most prominently of all the form of her late interlocutor. Each time that she approached the half of her orbit that lay nearest him they gazed at each other with smiles, and with that unmistakable expression which means so little at the moment, yet so often leads up to passion, heart-ache, union, disunion, devotion, overpopulation, drudgery, content, resignation, despair.

When the horses slowed anew he stepped to her side and proposed another heat. 'Hang the expense for once,' he said. 'I'll pay!'

She laughed till the tears came.

'Why do you laugh, dear?' said he.

'Because—you are so genteel that you must have plenty of money, and only say that for fun!' she returned.

'Ha-ha!' laughed the young man in unison, and gallantly producing his money she was enabled to whirl on again.

As he stood smiling there in the motley crowd, with his pipe in his hand, and clad in the rough pea-jacket and wideawake[9] that he had put on for his stroll, who would have supposed him to be Charles Bradford Raye, Esquire, stuff-gownsman,[1] educated at Wintoncester, called to the Bar at Lincoln's-Inn[2] now going the Western Circuit, merely detained in Melchester by a small arbitration after his brethren had moved on to the next county-town?

Endnotes

- Note 2: Closed yard surrounding a church.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Grassy surface of ground.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Carousels.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Florid ornamentation. "Stoker": man who stokes the furnace powering the "steam circus."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Craftsman who has completed an apprenticeship but not yet attained mastership of his craft or guild.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: In Hardy's Wessex the Salisbury Plain, a large plateau on which stands Stonehenge.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Approximately one dollar.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Soft felt hat.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A junior counsel, who wears a gown of "stuff," or thin wool, rather than silk; qualified to plead cases in court but not appointed to a senior position.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: One of the four London Inns of Court, at which lawyers must be trained to qualify for the bar and to which they afterward must belong to practice law. "Wintoncester": Winchester College, the oldest English public school (the equivalent in the American system of an elite private secondary boarding school).Return to reference 2

II

The square was overlooked from its remoter corner by the house of which the young girl had spoken, a dignified residence of considerable size, having several windows on each floor. Inside one of these, on the first floor, the apartment being a large drawing-room, sat a lady, in appearance from twenty-eight to thirty years of age. The blinds were still undrawn, and the lady was absently surveying the weird scene without, her cheek resting on her hand. The room was unlit from within, but enough of the glare from the marketplace entered it to reveal the lady's face. She was what is called an interesting creature rather than a handsome woman; dark-eyed, thoughtful, and with sensitive lips.

A man sauntered into the room from behind and came forward.

'O, Edith, I didn't see you,' he said. 'Why are you sitting here in the dark?'

'I am looking at the fair,' replied the lady in a languid voice.

'Oh? Horrid nuisance every year! I wish it could be put a stop to.'

'I like it.'

'H'm. There's no accounting for taste.'

For a moment he gazed from the window with her, for politeness sake, and then went out again.

In a few minutes she rang.

'Hasn't Anna come in?' asked Mrs Harnham.

'No m'm.'

'She ought to be in by this time. I meant her to go for ten minutes only.'

'Shall I go and look for her, m'm?' said the house-maid alertly.

'No. It is not necessary: she is a good girl and will come soon.'

However, when the servant had gone Mrs Harnham arose, went up to her room, cloaked and bonneted herself, and proceeded downstairs, where she found her husband.

'I want to see the fair,' she said; 'and I am going to look for Anna. I have made myself responsible for her, and must see she comes to

no harm. She ought to be indoors. Will you come with me?'

'Oh, she's all right. I saw her on one of those whirligig things, talking to her young man as I came in. But I'll go if you wish, though I'd rather go a hundred miles the other way.'

'Then please do so. I shall come to no harm alone.'

She left the house and entered the crowd which thronged the market-place, where she soon discovered Anna, seated on the revolving horse. As soon as it stopped Mrs Harnham advanced and said severely, 'Anna, how can you be such a wild girl? You were only to be out for ten minutes.'

Anna looked blank, and the young man, who had dropped into the background, came to help her alight.

'Please don't blame her,' he said politely. 'It is my fault that she has stayed. She looked so graceful on the horse that I induced her to go round again. I assure you that she has been quite safe.'

'In that case I'll leave her in your hands,' said Mrs Harnham, turning to retrace her steps.

But this for the moment it was not so easy to do. Something had attracted the crowd to a spot in their rear, and the wine-merchant's wife, caught by its sway, found herself pressed against Anna's acquaintance without power to move away. Their faces were within a few inches of each other, his breath fanned her cheek as well as Anna's. They could do no other than smile at the accident; but neither spoke, and each waited passively. Mrs Harnham then felt a man's hand clasping her fingers, and from the look of consciousness on the young fellow's face she knew the hand to be his: she also knew that from the position of the girl he had no other thought than that the imprisoned hand was Anna's. What prompted her to refrain from undeceiving him she could hardly tell. Not content with holding the hand, he playfully slipped two of his fingers inside her glove, against her palm. Thus matters continued till the pressure lessened; but several minutes passed before the crowd thinned sufficiently to allow Mrs Harnham to withdraw.

'How did they get to know each other, I wonder?' she mused as she retreated. 'Anna is really very forward—and he very wicked and

nice.'

She was so gently stirred with the stranger's manner and voice, with the tenderness of his idle touch, that instead of re-entering the house she turned back again and observed the pair from a screened nook. Really she argued (being little less impulsive than Anna herself) it was very excusable in Anna to encourage him, however she might have contrived to make his acquaintance; he was so gentlemanly, so fascinating, had such beautiful eyes. The thought that he was several years her junior produced a reasonless sigh.

At length the couple turned from the roundabout towards the door of Mrs Harnham's house, and the young man could be heard saying that he would accompany her home. Anna, then, had found a lover, apparently a very devoted one. Mrs Harnham was quite interested in him. When they drew near the door of the wine-merchant's house, a comparatively deserted spot by this time, they stood invisible for a little while in the shadow of a wall, where they separated, Anna going on to the entrance, and her acquaintance returning across the square.

'Anna,' said Mrs Harnham, coming up. 'I've been looking at you! That young man kissed you at parting, I am almost sure.'

'Well,' stammered Anna; 'he said, if I didn't mind—it would do me no harm, and, and, him a great deal of good!'

'Ah, I thought so! And he was a stranger till tonight?'

'Yes ma'am.'

'Yet I warrant you told him your name and everything about yourself?'

'He asked me.'

'But he didn't tell you his?'

'Yes ma'am, he did!' cried Anna victoriously. 'It is Charles Bradford, of London.'

'Well, if he's respectable, of course I've nothing to say against your knowing him,' remarked her mistress, prepossessed, in spite of general principles, in the young man's favour. 'But I must reconsider all that, if he attempts to renew your acquaintance. A country-bred girl like you, who has never lived in Melchester till this month, who

had hardly ever seen a black-coated man till you came here, to be so sharp as to capture a young Londoner like him!'

'I didn't capture him. I didn't do anything,' said Anna, in confusion.

When she was indoors and alone Mrs Harnham thought what a well-bred and chivalrous young man Anna's companion had seemed. There had been a magic in his wooing touch of her hand; and she wondered how he had come to be attracted by the girl.

The next morning the emotional Edith Harnham went to the usual weekday service in Melchester cathedral. In crossing the Close through the fog she again perceived him who had interested her the previous evening, gazing up thoughtfully at the high-piled architecture of the nave: and as soon as she had taken her seat he entered and sat down in a stall opposite hers.

He did not particularly heed her; but Mrs Harnham was continually occupying her eyes with him, and wondered more than ever what had attracted him in her unfledged maid-servant. The mistress was almost as unaccustomed as the maiden herself to the end-of-the-age young man, or she might have wondered less. Raye, having looked about him awhile, left abruptly, without regard to the service that was proceeding; and Mrs Harnham—lonely, impressionable creature that she was—took no further interest in praising the Lord. She wished she had married a London man who knew the subtleties of lovemaking as they were evidently known to him who had mistakenly caressed her hand.

III

The calendar at Melchester had been light, occupying the court only a few hours; and the assizes[3] at Casterbridge, the next county-town on the Western Circuit, having no business for Raye, he had not gone thither. At the next town after that they did not open till the following Monday, trials to begin on Tuesday morning. In the natural order of things Raye would have arrived at the latter place on Monday afternoon; but it was not till the middle of Wednesday that his gown and grey wig, curled in tiers, in the best fashion of Assyrian bas-reliefs,[4] were seen blowing and bobbing behind him as he hastily walked up the High Street from his lodgings. But though he entered the assize building there was nothing for him to do, and sitting at the blue baize table in the well of the court, he mended pens with a mind far away from the case in progress. Thoughts of unpremeditated conduct, of which a week earlier he would not have believed himself capable, threw him into a mood of dissatisfied depression.

He had contrived to see again the pretty rural maiden Anna, the day after the fair, had walked out of the city with her to the earthworks[5] of Old Melchester, and feeling a violent fancy for her, had remained in Melchester all Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday; by persuasion obtaining walks and meetings with the girl six or seven times during the interval; had in brief won her, body and soul.

He supposed it must have been owing to the seclusion in which he had lived of late in town that he had given way so unrestrainedly to a passion for an artless creature whose inexperience had, from the first, led her to place herself unreservedly in his hands. Much he deplored trifling with her feelings for the sake of a passing desire; and he could only hope that she might not live to suffer on his account.

She had begged him to come to her again; entreated him; wept. He had promised that he would do so, and he meant to carry out that promise. He could not desert her now. Awkward as such unintentional connections were, the interspace of a hundred miles—

which to a girl of her limited capabilities was like a thousand—would effectually hinder this summer fancy from greatly encumbering his life; while thought of her simple love might do him the negative good of keeping him from idle pleasures in town when he wished to work hard. His circuit journeys would take him to Melchester three or four times a year; and then he could always see her.

The pseudonym, or rather partial name, that he had given her as his before knowing how far the acquaintance was going to carry him, had been spoken on the spur of the moment, without any ulterior intention whatever. He had not afterwards disturbed Anna's error, but on leaving her he had felt bound to give her an address at a stationer's not far from his chambers, at which she might write to him under the initials 'C. B.'

In due time Raye returned to his London abode, having called at Melchester on his way and spent a few additional hours with his fascinating child of nature. In town he lived monotonously every day. Often he and his rooms were enclosed by a tawny fog from all the world besides, and when he lighted the gas to read or write by, his situation seemed so unnatural that he would look into the fire and think of that trusting girl at Melchester again and again. Often, oppressed by absurd fondness for her, he would enter the dim religious nave of the Law Courts by the north door, elbow other juniors habited like himself, and like him unretained; edge himself into this or that crowded court where a sensational case was going on, just as if he were in it, though the police officers at the door knew as well as he knew himself that he had no more concern with the business in hand than the patient idlers at the gallery-door outside, who had waited to enter since eight in the morning because, like him, they belonged to the classes that live on expectation. But he would do these things to no purpose, and think how greatly the characters in such scenes contrasted with the pink and breezy Anna.

An unexpected feature in that peasant maiden's conduct was that she had not as yet written to him, though he had told her she might do so if she wished. Surely a young creature had never before been

so reticent in such circumstances. At length he sent her a brief line, positively requesting her to write. There was no answer by the return post, but the day after a letter in a neat feminine hand, and bearing the Melchester post-mark, was handed to him by the stationer.

The fact alone of its arrival was sufficient to satisfy his imaginative sentiment. He was not anxious to open the epistle, and in truth did not begin to read it for nearly half-an-hour, anticipating readily its terms of passionate retrospect and tender adjuration. When at last he turned his feet to the fireplace and unfolded the sheet, he was surprised and pleased to find that neither extravagance nor vulgarity was there. It was the most charming little missive he had ever received from woman. To be sure the language was simple and the ideas were slight; but it was so self-possessed; so purely that of a young girl who felt her womanhood to be enough for her dignity that he read it through twice. Four sides were filled, and a few lines written across, after the fashion of former days; the paper, too, was common, and not of the latest shade and surface. But what of those things? He had received letters from women who were fairly called ladies, but never so sensible, so human a letter as this. He could not single out any one sentence and say it was at all remarkable or clever; the *ensemble* of the letter it was which won him; and beyond the one request that he would write or come to her again soon there was nothing to show her sense of a claim upon him.

To write again and develop a correspondence was the last thing Raye would have preconceived as his conduct in such a situation; yet he did send a short, encouraging line or two, signed with his pseudonym, in which he asked for another letter, and cheeringly promised that he would try to see her again on some near day, and would never forget how much they had been to each other during their short acquaintance.

Endnotes

- Note 3: Sessions of the superior court. “Calendar”: list of cases to be tried.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sculptural style in which the form that projects from the surrounding surface is low and flat.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Banks of earth constructed as fortifications in ancient times.Return to reference 5

IV

To return now to the moment at which Anna, at Melchester, had received Raye's letter.

It had been put into her own hand by the postman on his morning rounds. She flushed down to her neck on receipt of it, and turned it over and over. 'It is mine?' she said.

'Why, yes, can't you see it is?' said the postman, smiling as he guessed the nature of the document and the cause of the confusion.

'O yes, of course!' replied Anna, looking at the letter, forcedly tittering, and blushing still more.

Her look of embarrassment did not leave her with the postman's departure. She opened the envelope, kissed its contents, put away the letter in her pocket, and remained musing till her eyes filled with tears.

A few minutes later she carried up a cup of tea to Mrs Harnham in her bedchamber. Anna's mistress looked at her, and said: 'How dismal you seem this morning, Anna. What's the matter?'

'I'm not dismal, I'm glad; only I—' She stopped to stifle a sob.

'Well?'

'I've got a letter—and what good is it to me, if I can't read a word in it!'

'Why, I'll read it, child, if necessary.'

'But this is from somebody—I don't want anybody to read it but myself!' Anna murmured.

'I shall not tell anybody. Is it from that young man?'

'I think so.' Anna slowly produced the letter, saying: 'Then will you read it to me, ma'am?'

This was the secret of Anna's embarrassment and flutterings. She could neither read nor write. She had grown up under the care of an aunt by marriage, at one of the lonely hamlets on the Great Mid-Wessex Plain where, even in days of national education, there had been no school within a distance of two miles. Her aunt was an ignorant woman; there had been nobody to investigate Anna's

circumstances, nobody to care about her learning the rudiments; though, as often in such cases, she had been well fed and clothed and not unkindly treated. Since she had come to live at Melchester with Mrs Harnham, the latter, who took a kindly interest in the girl, had taught her to speak correctly, in which accomplishment Anna showed considerable readiness, as is not unusual with the illiterate; and soon became quite fluent in the use of her mistress's phraseology. Mrs Harnham also insisted upon her getting a spelling and copy book, and beginning to practise in these. Anna was slower in this branch of her education, and meanwhile here was the letter.

Edith Harnham's large dark eyes expressed some interest in the contents, though, in her character of mere interpreter, she threw into her tone as much as she could of mechanical passiveness. She read the short epistle on to its concluding sentence, which idly requested Anna to send him a tender answer.

'Now—you'll do it for me, won't you, dear mistress?' said Anna eagerly. 'And you'll do it as well as ever you can, please? Because I couldn't bear him to think I am not able to do it myself. I should sink into the earth with shame if he knew that!'

From some words in the letter Mrs Harnham was led to ask questions, and the answers she received confirmed her suspicions. Deep concern filled Edith's heart at perceiving how the girl had committed her happiness to the issue of this new-sprung attachment. She blamed herself for not interfering in a flirtation which had resulted so seriously for the poor little creature in her charge; though at the time of seeing the pair together she had a feeling that it was hardly within her province to nip young affection in the bud. However, what was done could not be undone, and it behoved her now, as Anna's only protector, to help her as much as she could. To Anna's eager request that she, Mrs Harnham, should compose and write the answer to this young London man's letter, she felt bound to accede, to keep alive his attachment to the girl if possible; though in other circumstances she might have suggested the cook as an amanuensis.[6]

A tender reply was thereupon concocted, and set down in Edith Harnham's hand. This letter it had been which Raye had received and delighted in. Written in the presence of Anna it certainly was, and on Anna's humble notepaper, and in a measure indited by the young girl; but the life, the spirit, the individuality, were Edith Harnham's.

'Won't you at least put your name yourself?' she said. 'You can manage to write that by this time?'

'No, no,' said Anna, shrinking back. 'I should do it so bad. He'd be ashamed of me, and never see me again!'

The note, so prettily requesting another from him, had, as we have seen, power enough in its pages to bring one. He declared it to be such a pleasure to hear from her that she must write every week. The same process of manufacture was accordingly repeated by Anna and her mistress, and continued for several weeks in succession; each letter being penned and suggested by Edith, the girl standing by; the answer read and commented on by Edith, Anna standing by and listening again.

Late on a winter evening, after the dispatch of the sixth letter, Mrs Harnham was sitting alone by the remains of her fire. Her husband had retired to bed, and she had fallen into that fixity of musing which takes no count of hour or temperature. The state of mind had been brought about in Edith by a strange thing which she had done that day. For the first time since Raye's visit Anna had gone to stay over a night or two with her cottage friends on the Plain, and in her absence had arrived, out of its time, a letter from Raye. To this Edith had replied on her own responsibility, from the depths of her own heart, without waiting for her maid's collaboration. The luxury of writing to him what would be known to no consciousness but his was great, and she had indulged herself therein.

Why was it a luxury?

Edith Harnham led a lonely life. Influenced by the belief of the British parent that a bad marriage with its aversions is better than free womanhood with its interests, dignity, and leisure, she had

consented to marry the elderly wine-merchant as a *pis aller*,[7] at the age of seven-and-twenty—some three years before this date—to find afterwards that she had made a mistake. That contract had left her still a woman whose deeper nature had never been stirred.

She was now clearly realising that she had become possessed to the bottom of her soul with the image of a man to whom she was hardly so much as a name. From the first he had attracted her by his looks and voice; by his tender touch; and, with these as generators, the writing of letter after letter and the reading of their soft answers had insensibly developed on her side an emotion which fanned his; till there had resulted a magnetic reciprocity between the correspondents, notwithstanding that one of them wrote in a character not her own. That he had been able to seduce another woman in two days was his crowning though unrecognised fascination for her as the she-animal.

They were her own impassioned and pent-up ideas—lowered to monosyllabic phraseology in order to keep up the disguise—that Edith put into letters signed with another name, much to the shallow Anna's delight, who, unassisted, could not for the world have conceived such pretty fancies for winning him, even had she been able to write them. Edith found that it was these, her own foisted-in sentiments, to which the young barrister mainly responded. The few sentences occasionally added from Anna's own lips made apparently no impression upon him.

The letter-writing in her absence Anna never discovered; but on her return the next morning she declared she wished to see her lover about something at once, and begged Mrs Harnham to ask him to come.

There was a strange anxiety in her manner which did not escape Mrs Harnham, and ultimately resolved itself into a flood of tears. Sinking down at Edith's knees, she made confession that the result of her relations with her lover it would soon become necessary to disclose.

Edith Harnham was generous enough to be very far from inclined to cast Anna adrift at this conjuncture. No true woman ever is so

inclined from her own personal point of view, however prompt she may be in taking such steps to safeguard those dear to her. Although she had written to Raye so short a time previously, she instantly penned another Anna-note hinting clearly though delicately the state of affairs.

Raye replied by a hasty line to say how much he was concerned at her news: he felt that he must run down to see her almost immediately.

But a week later the girl came to her mistress's room with another note, which on being read informed her that after all he could not find time for the journey. Anna was broken with grief; but by Mrs Harnham's counsel strictly refrained from hurling at him the reproaches and bitterness customary from young women so situated. One thing was imperative: to keep the young man's romantic interest in her alive. Rather therefore did Edith, in the name of her *protégée*, request him on no account to be distressed about the looming event, and not to inconvenience himself to hasten down. She desired above everything to be no weight upon him in his career, no clog upon his high activities. She had wished him to know what had befallen: he was to dismiss it again from his mind. Only he must write tenderly as ever, and when he should come again on the spring circuit it would be soon enough to discuss what had better be done.

It may well be supposed that Anna's own feelings had not been quite in accord with these generous expressions; but the mistress's judgment had ruled, and Anna had acquiesced. 'All I want is that *niceness* you can so well put into your letters, my dear, dear mistress, and that I can't for the life o' me make up out of my own head; though I mean the same thing and feel it exactly when you've written it down!'

When the letter had been sent off, and Edith Harnham was left alone, she bowed herself on the back of her chair and wept.

'I wish his child was mine—I wish it was!' she murmured. 'Yet how can I say such a wicked thing!'

Endnotes

- Note 6: Secretary.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Last resort (French).Return to reference 7

V

The letter moved Raye considerably when it reached him. The intelligence itself had affected him less than her unexpected manner of treating him in relation to it. The absence of any word of reproach, the devotion to his interests, the self-sacrifice apparent in every line, all made up a nobility of character that he had never dreamt of finding in womankind.

'God forgive me!' he said tremulously. 'I have been a wicked wretch. I did not know she was such a treasure as this!'

He reassured her instantly; declaring that he would not of course desert her, that he would provide a home for her somewhere. Meanwhile she was to stay where she was as long as her mistress would allow her.

But a misfortune supervened in this direction. Whether an inkling of Anna's circumstances reached the knowledge of Mrs Harnham's husband or not cannot be said, but the girl was compelled, in spite of Edith's entreaties, to leave the house. By her own choice she decided to go back for a while to the cottage on the Plain. This arrangement led to a consultation as to how the correspondence should be carried on; and in the girl's inability to continue personally what had been begun in her name, and in the difficulty of their acting in concert as heretofore, she requested Mrs Harnham—the only well-to-do friend she had in the world—to receive the letters and reply to them off-hand, sending them on afterwards to herself on the Plain, where she might at least get some neighbour to read them to her, if a trustworthy one could be met with. Anna and her box then departed for the Plain.

Thus it befell that Edith Harnham found herself in the strange position of having to correspond, under no supervision by the real woman, with a man not her husband, in terms which were virtually those of a wife, concerning a corporeal condition that was not Edith's at all; the man being one for whom, mainly through the sympathies involved in playing this part, she secretly cherished a predilection, subtle and imaginative truly, but strong and absorbing. She opened

each letter, read it as if intended for herself, and replied from the promptings of her own heart and no other.

Throughout this correspondence, carried on in the girl's absence, the high-strung Edith Harnham lived in the ecstasy of fancy; the vicarious intimacy engendered such a flow of passionateness as was never exceeded. For conscience' sake Edith at first sent on each of his letters to Anna, and even rough copies of her replies; but later on these so-called copies were much abridged, and many letters on both sides were not sent on at all.

Though sensuous, and, superficially at least, infested with the self-indulgent vices of artificial society, there was a substratum of honesty and fairness in Raye's character. He had really a tender regard for the country girl, and it grew more tender than ever when he found her apparently capable of expressing the deepest sensibilities in the simplest words. He meditated, he wavered; and finally resolved to consult his sister, a maiden lady much older than himself, of lively sympathies and good intent. In making this confidence he showed her some of the letters.

'She seems fairly educated,' Miss Raye observed. 'And bright in ideas. She expresses herself with a taste that must be innate.'

'Yes. She writes very prettily, doesn't she, thanks to these elementary schools?'

'One is drawn out towards her, in spite of one's self, poor thing.'

The upshot of the discussion was that though he had not been directly advised to do it, Raye wrote, in his real name, what he would never have decided to write on his own responsibility; namely that he could not live without her, and would come down in the spring and shelve her looming difficulty by marrying her.

This bold acceptance of the situation was made known to Anna by Mrs Harnham driving out immediately to the cottage on the Plain. Anna jumped for joy like a little child. And poor, crude directions for answering appropriately were given to Edith Harnham, who on her return to the city carried them out with warm intensifications.

'O!' she groaned, as she threw down the pen. 'Anna—poor good little fool—hasn't intelligence enough to appreciate him! How should

she? While I—don't bear his child!'

It was now February. The correspondence had continued altogether for four months; and the next letter from Raye contained incidentally a statement of his position and prospects. He said that in offering to wed her he had, at first, contemplated the step of retiring from a profession which hitherto had brought him very slight emolument, and which, to speak plainly, he had thought might be difficult of practice after his union with her. But the unexpected mines of brightness and warmth that her letters had disclosed to be lurking in her sweet nature had led him to abandon that somewhat sad prospect. He felt sure that, with her powers of development, after a little private training in the social forms of London under his supervision, and a little help from a governess if necessary, she would make as good a professional man's wife as could be desired, even if he should rise to the woolsack.[8] Many a Lord Chancellor's wife had been less intuitively a lady than she had shown herself to be in her lines to him.

'O—poor fellow, poor fellow!' mourned Edith Harnham.

Her distress now raged as high as her infatuation. It was she who had wrought him to this pitch—to a marriage which meant his ruin; yet she could not, in mercy to her maid, do anything to hinder his plan. Anna was coming to Melchester that week, but she could hardly show the girl this last reply from the young man; it told too much of the second individuality that had usurped the place of the first.

Anna came, and her mistress took her into her own room for privacy. Anna began by saying with some anxiety that she was glad the wedding was so near.

'O Anna!' replied Mrs Harnham. 'I think we must tell him all—that I have been doing your writing for you?—lest he should not know it till after you become his wife, and it might lead to dissension and recriminations—'

'O mis'ess, dear mis'ess—please don't tell him now!' cried Anna in distress. 'If you were to do it, perhaps he would not marry me; and what should I do then? It would be terrible what would come to me!

And I am getting on with my writing, too. I have brought with me the copybook you were so good as to give me, and I practise every day, and though it is so, so hard, I shall do it well at last, I believe, if I keep on trying.'

Edith looked at the copybook. The copies had been set by herself, and such progress as the girl had made was in the way of grotesque facsimile of her mistress's hand. But even if Edith's flowing calligraphy were reproduced the inspiration would be another thing.

'You do it so beautifully,' continued Anna, 'and say all that I want to say so much better than I could say it, that I do hope you won't leave me in the lurch just now!'

'Very well,' replied the other. 'But I—but I thought I ought not to go on!'

'Why?'

Her strong desire to confide her sentiments led Edith to answer truly:

'Because of its effect upon me.'

'But it *can't* have any!'

'Why, child?'

'Because you are married already!' said Anna with lucid simplicity.

'Of course it can't,' said her mistress hastily; yet glad, despite her conscience, that two or three out-pourings still remained to her. 'But you must concentrate your attention on writing your name as I write it here.'

Endnotes

- Note 8: Seat of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords, formerly made of a sack of wool.Return to reference 8

VI

Soon Raye wrote about the wedding. Having decided to make the best of what he feared was a piece of romantic folly, he had acquired more zest for the grand experiment. He wished the ceremony to be in London, for greater privacy. Edith Harnham would have preferred it at Melchester; Anna was passive. His reasoning prevailed, and Mrs Harnham threw herself with mournful zeal into the preparations for Anna's departure. In a last desperate feeling that she must at every hazard be in at the death of her dream, and see once again the man who by a species of telepathy had exercised such an influence on her, she offered to go up with Anna and be with her through the ceremony—'to see the end of her,' as her mistress put it with forced gaiety; an offer which the girl gratefully accepted; for she had no other friend capable of playing the part of companion and witness, in the presence of a gentlemanly bridegroom, in such a way as not to hasten an opinion that he had made an irremediable social blunder.

It was a muddy morning in March when Raye alighted from a four-wheel cab at the door of a registry-office in the S.W. district of London, and carefully handed down Anna and her companion Mrs Harnham. Anna looked attractive in the somewhat fashionable clothes which Mrs Harnham had helped her to buy, though not quite so attractive as, an innocent child, she had appeared in her country gown on the back of the wooden horse at Melchester Fair.

Mrs Harnham had come up this morning by an early train, and a young man—a friend of Raye's—having met them at the door, all four entered the registry-office together. Till an hour before this time Raye had never known the wine-merchant's wife, except at that first casual encounter, and in the flutter of the performance before them he had little opportunity for more than a brief acquaintance. The contract of marriage at a registry is soon got through; but somehow, during its progress, Raye discovered a strange and secret gravitation between himself and Anna's friend.

The formalities of the wedding—or rather ratification of a previous union—being concluded, the four went in one cab to Raye's lodgings, newly taken in a new suburb in preference to a house, the rent of which he could ill afford just then. Here Anna cut the little cake which Raye had bought at a pastry-cook's on his way home from Lincoln's Inn the night before. But she did not do much besides. Raye's friend was obliged to depart almost immediately, and when he had left the only ones virtually present were Edith and Raye, who exchanged ideas with much animation. The conversation was indeed theirs only, Anna being as a domestic animal who humbly heard but understood not. Raye seemed startled in awakening to this fact, and began to feel dissatisfied with her inadequacy.

At last, more disappointed than he cared to own, he said, 'Mrs Harnham, my darling is so flurried that she doesn't know what she is doing or saying. I see that after this event a little quietude will be necessary before she gives tongue to that tender philosophy which she used to treat me to in her letters.'

They had planned to start early that afternoon for Knollsea, to spend the few opening days of their married life there, and as the hour for departure was drawing near Raye asked his wife if she would go to the writing-desk in the next room and scribble a little note to his sister, who had been unable to attend through indisposition, informing her that the ceremony was over, thanking her for her little present, and hoping to know her well now that she was the writer's sister as well as Charles's.

'Say it in the pretty poetical way you know so well how to adopt,' he added, 'for I want you particularly to win her, and both of you to be dear friends.'

Anna looked uneasy, but departed to her task, Raye remaining to talk to their guest. Anna was a long while absent, and her husband suddenly rose and went to her.

He found her still bending over the writing-table, with tears brimming up in her eyes; and he looked down upon the sheet of note-paper with some interest, to discover with what tact she had

expressed her good-will in the delicate circumstances. To his surprise she had progressed but a few lines, in the characters and spelling of a child of eight, and with the ideas of a goose.

'Anna,' he said, staring; 'what's this?'

'It only means—that I can't do it any better!' she answered, through her tears.

'Eh? Nonsense!'

'I can't!' she insisted, with miserable, sobbing hardihood. 'I—I—didn't write those letters, Charles! I only told *her* what to write! And not always that! But I am learning, O so fast, my dear, dear husband! And you'll forgive me, won't you, for not telling you before?' She slid to her knees, abjectly clasped his waist and laid her face against him.

He stood a few moments, raised her, abruptly turned, and shut the door upon her, rejoining Edith in the drawing-room. She saw that something untoward had been discovered, and their eyes remained fixed on each other.

'Do I guess rightly?' he asked, with wan quietude. '*You* were her scribe through all this?'

'It was necessary,' said Edith.

'Did she dictate every word you ever wrote to me?'

'Not every word.'

'In fact, very little?'

'Very little.'

'You wrote a great part of those pages every week from your own conceptions, though in her name!'

'Yes.'

'Perhaps you wrote many of the letters when you were alone, without communication with her?'

'I did.'

He turned to the bookcase, and leant with his hand over his face; and Edith, seeing his distress, became white as a sheet.

'You have deceived me—ruined me!' he murmured.

‘O, don’t say it!’ she cried in her anguish, jumping up and putting her hand on his shoulder. ‘I can’t bear that!’

‘Delighting me deceptively! Why did you do it—*why* did you!’

‘I began doing it in kindness to her! How could I do otherwise than try to save such a simple girl from misery? But I admit that I continued it for pleasure to myself.’

Raye looked up. ‘Why did it give you pleasure?’ he asked.

‘I must not tell,’ said she.

He continued to regard her, and saw that her lips suddenly began to quiver under his scrutiny, and her eyes to fill and droop. She started aside, and said that she must go to the station to catch the return train: could a cab be called immediately?

But Raye went up to her, and took her unresisting hand. ‘Well, to think of such a thing as this!’ he said. ‘Why, you and I are friends—lovers—devoted lovers—by correspondence!’

‘Yes; I suppose.’

‘More.’

‘More?’

‘Plainly more. It is no use blinking that. Legally I have married her—God help us both!—in soul and spirit I have married you, and no other woman in the world!’

‘Hush!’

‘But I will not hush! Why should you try to disguise the full truth, when you have already owned half of it? Yes, it is between you and me that the bond is—not between me and her! Now I’ll say no more. But, O my cruel one, I think I have one claim upon you!’

She did not say what, and he drew her towards him, and bent over her. ‘If it was all pure invention in those letters,’ he said emphatically, ‘give me your cheek only. If you meant what you said, let it be lips. It is for the first and last time, remember!’

She put up her mouth, and he kissed her long. ‘You forgive me?’ she said, crying.

‘Yes.’

‘But you are ruined!’

'What matter!' he said, shrugging his shoulders. 'It serves me right!'

She withdrew, wiped her eyes, entered and bade good-bye to Anna, who had not expected her to go so soon, and was still wrestling with the letter. Raye followed Edith downstairs, and in three minutes she was in a hansom[9] driving to the Waterloo station.

He went back to his wife. 'Never mind the letter, Anna, to-day,' he said gently. 'Put on your things. We, too, must be off shortly.'

The simple girl, upheld by the sense that she was indeed married, showed her delight at finding that he was as kind as ever after the disclosure. She did not know that before his eyes he beheld as it were a galley, in which he, the fastidious urban, was chained to work for the remainder of his life, with her, the unlettered peasant, chained to his side.

Edith travelled back to Melchester that day with a face that showed the very stupor of grief, her lips still tingling from the desperate pressure of his kiss. The end of her impassioned dream had come. When at dusk she reached the Melchester station her husband was there to meet her, but in his perfunctoriness and her preoccupation they did not see each other, and she went out of the station alone.

She walked mechanically homewards without calling a fly.[1] Entering, she could not bear the silence of the house, and went up in the dark to where Anna had slept, where she remained thinking awhile. She then returned to the drawing-room, and not knowing what she did, crouched down upon the floor.

'I have ruined him!' she kept repeating. 'I have ruined him; because I would not deal treacherously towards her!'

In the course of half an hour a figure opened the door of the apartment.

'Ah—who's that?' she said, starting up, for it was dark.

'Your husband—who should it be?' said the worthy merchant.

'Ah—my husband!—I forgot I had a husband!' she whispered to herself.

‘I missed you at the station,’ he continued. ‘Did you see Anna safely tied up? I hope so, for ’twas time.’

‘Yes—Anna is married.’

Simultaneously with Edith’s journey home Anna and her husband were sitting at the opposite windows of a second-class carriage which sped along to Knollsea. In his hand was a pocket-book full of creased sheets closely written over. Unfolding them one after another he read them in silence, and sighed.

‘What are you doing, dear Charles?’ she said timidly from the other window, and drew nearer to him as if he were a god.

‘Reading over all those sweet letters to me signed “Anna,” ’ he replied with dreary resignation.

1891

Endnotes

- Note 9: A horse-drawn carriage with two wheels.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Carriage.Return to reference 1

Hap[1]

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: 'Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!'

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .
These purblind Doomsters[2] had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

18661898

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, chance (as also "Casualty," line 11).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Half-blind judges.Return to reference 2

Neutral Tones

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of° God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
—They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles of years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

18671898

Notes

- °: *rebuked by*Return to reference °

Drummer Hodge

1

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined—just as found:
His landmark is a kopje-crest
That breaks the veldt[1] around;
And foreign constellations[2] west°
Each night above his mound.

2

Young Hodge the Drummer never knew—
Fresh from his Wessex home—
The meaning of the broad Karoo,[3]
The Bush,[4] the dusty loam,
And why uprose to nightly view
Strange stars amid the gloam.

3

Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge for ever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally.

1899, 1901

Endnotes

- Note 1: South African Dutch (Afrikaans) word for a plain or prairie. "Kopje-crest": small hill (Afrikaans). The poem is a

lament for an English soldier killed in the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902).Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Those visible only in the Southern Hemisphere.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A dry tableland region in South Africa (usually spelled “Karroo”).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: British colonial word for an uncleared area of land.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *set*Return to reference °

The Darkling[1] Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate[2]
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems[3] scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh°
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,[4]
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

1900, 1901

Endnotes

- Note 1: In the dark.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Gate leading to a small wood or thicket.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Twining stems of shrubs.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Leaning out (of its coffin); that is, the 19th century was dead. This poem was dated December 31, 1900.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *near*Return to reference °

The Ruined Maid

'O 'Melia,[1] my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?'—
'O didn't you know I'd been ruined?' said she.

—'You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;[2]
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!'—
'Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined,' said she.

—'At home in the barton° you said "thee" and "thou",
And "thik oon", and "theäs oon", and "t'other"; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee° for high compa-ny!'—
'Some polish is gained with one's ruin,' said she.

—'Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!'—
'We never do work when we're ruined,' said she.

—'You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock;° but at present you seem
To know not of megrims° or melancho-ly!'—
'True. One's pretty lively when ruined,' said she.

—‘I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
20 And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!’—
‘My dear—a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain’t ruined,’ said she.

18661901

Endnotes

- Note 1: Diminutive form of Amelia.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Digging up a species of thick-rooted weed.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *farmyard*Return to reference °
- °: *thee*Return to reference °
- °: *sigh*Return to reference °
- °: *low spirits*Return to reference °

Channel Firing[1]

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel[2] window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgement-day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
The worms drew back into the mounds,

The glebe cow[3] drooled. Till God called, 'No;
It's gunnery practise out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

'All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters[4]
They do no more for Christès[5] sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

'That this is not the judgement-hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening. . . .

'Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need).'

So down we lay again. 'I wonder,

Will the world ever saner be,'
Said one, 'than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!'

And many a skeleton shook his head.
'Instead of preaching forty year,'
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,
'I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer.'

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.[6]

19141914

Endnotes

- Note 1: Written in April 1914, when Anglo-German naval rivalry was growing steadily more acute; the title refers to gunnery practice in the English Channel. Four months later (August 4), World War I broke out.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Part of church nearest to the altar.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, cow on a small plot of land belonging to a church (a "glebe" is a small field).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See the Mad Hatter in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The archaic spelling and pronunciation suggest a ballad note of doom.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The sound of guns preparing for war across the Channel reaches Alfred's ("Stourton") Tower (near Stourton in Dorset), commemorating King Alfred's defeat of a Danish invasion in 878; also the site of King Arthur's court at Camelot (supposedly near Glastonbury) and the famous prehistoric stone circle of Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain.Return to reference 6

The Convergence of the Twain

(*Lines on the loss of the* Titanic)[1]

1

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

2

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine[2] fires,
Cold currents thrid,[3] and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

3

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

4

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

5

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear

And query: 'What does this vaingloriousness down here?' . . . section#6.doc-section

6

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will[4] that stirs and urges everything

7

Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

8

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

9

Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

10

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon° twin halves of one august° event,

11

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said 'Now!' And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

19121912, 1914

Endnotes

- Note 1: The *Titanic* was the largest and most luxurious ocean liner of the day. Considered unsinkable, it sank with great loss of life on April 15, 1912, on the ship's maiden voyage, from Southampton to the United States, after colliding with an iceberg. "Twain": two.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, destructive. The salamander was supposed to be able to survive fire.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A variant form of the verb *thread.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The force (blind, but slowly gaining consciousness throughout history) that drives the world, according to Hardy's philosophy.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *soon* Return to reference °
- °: *important*Return to reference °

Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?

'Ah, are you digging on my grave
My loved one?—planting rue?'[1]
—'No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
"That I should not be true." '

'Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?'
—'Ah, no; they sit and think, "What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin." '[°]

'But some one digs upon my grave?
My enemy?—prodding sly?'
—'Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie.'

'Then, who is digging on my grave?
Say—since I have not guessed!'
—'O it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog, who still lives near,
And much I hope my movements here
Have not disturbed your rest?'

'Ah, yes! *You* dig upon my grave . . .
Why flashed it not on me
That one true heart was left behind!

What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity!'

'Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place.'

1914

Endnotes

- Note 1: A yellow-flowered herb, traditionally an emblem of sorrow (*rue* is also an archaic word for "sorrow").Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *trap*Return to reference °

Under the Waterfall

‘Whenever I plunge my arm, like this,
In a basin of water, I never miss
The sweet sharp sense of a fugitive day
Fetched back from its thickening shroud of gray.
Hence the only prime
And real love-rhyme
That I know by heart,
And that leaves no smart,
Is the purl° of a little valley fall
About three spans wide and two spans tall
Over a table of solid rock,
And into a scoop of the self-same block;
The purl of a runlet that never ceases
In stir of kingdoms, in wars, in peaces;
With a hollow boiling voice it speaks
And has spoken since hills were turfless peaks.’

‘And why gives this the only prime
Idea to you of a real love-rhyme?
And why does plunging your arm in a bowl
Full of spring water, bring throbs to your soul?’

‘Well, under the fall, in a crease of the stone,
Though where precisely none ever has known,
Jammed darkly, nothing to show how prized,
And by now with its smoothness opalized,
Is a drinking-glass:
For, down that pass
My lover and I
Walked under a sky
Of blue with a leaf-wove awning of green,

In the burn of August, to paint the scene,
And we placed our basket of fruit and wine
By the runlet's rim, where we sat to dine;
And when we had drunk from the glass together,
Arched by the oak-copse from the weather,
I held the vessel to rinse in the fall,
Where it slipped, and sank, and was past recall,
Though we stooped and plumbed the little abyss
With long bared arms. There the glass still is.
And, as said, if I thrust my arm below
Cold water in basin or bowl, a throe°
From the past awakens a sense of that time,
And the glass we used, and the cascade's rhyme.
The basin seems the pool, and its edge
The hard smooth face of the brook-side ledge,
And the leafy pattern of china-ware
The hanging plants that were bathing there.

'By night, by day, when it shines or lours,
There lies intact that chalice of ours,
And its presence adds to the rhyme of love
Persistently sung by the fall above.
No lip has touched it since his and mine
In turns therefrom sipped lovers' wine.'

1914

Notes

- °: *rippling flow*Return to reference °
- °: *violent pang*Return to reference °

The Walk

You did not walk with me
Of late to the hill-top tree
    By the gated ways,
    As in earlier days;
    You were weak and lame,
    So you never came,
And I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day
Just in the former way:
    Surveyed around
    The familiar ground
    By myself again:
    What difference, then?
Only that underlying sense
Of the look of a room on returning thence.

1912–131914

The Voice

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,
Standing as when I drew near to the town
Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,
Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
Travelling across the wet mead° to me here,
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,°
Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,°
And the woman calling.

Dec. 19121914

Notes

- °: *meadow*Return to reference °
- °: *inattention*Return to reference °
- °: *northward*Return to reference °

During Wind and Rain

They sing their dearest songs—
He, she, all of them—yea,
Treble and tenor and bass,
  And one to play;
With the candles mooning° each face. . . .
  Ah, no; the years O!
How the sick leaves reel down in throngs!

They clear the creeping moss—
Elders and juniors—aye,
Making the pathways neat
  And the garden gay;
And they build a shady seat. . . .
  Ah, no; the years, the years;
See, the white storm-birds wing across.

They are blithely breakfasting all—
Men and maidens—yea,
Under the summer tree,
  With a glimpse of the bay,
While pet fowl come to the knee. . . .
  Ah, no; the years O!
And the rotten rose is ript from the wall.

They change to a high new house,
He, she, all of them—aye,
Clocks and carpets and chairs
  On the lawn all day,
And brightest things that are theirs. . . .
  Ah, no; the years, the years;
Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.

Notes

- °: *lighting*Return to reference °

In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'[1]

1

Only a man harrowing clods
  In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
  Half asleep as they stalk.

2

Only thin smoke without flame
  From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
  Though Dynasties pass.

3

Yonder a maid and her wight[°]
  Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
  Ere their story die.

19151916, 1917

Endnotes

- Note 1: See "Thou art my battle axe and weapon of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations" (Jeremiah 51:20). The poem was written during World War I.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *man*Return to reference °

He Never Expected Much

[*or*]

A CONSIDERATION

(A reflection) On my Eighty-Sixth Birthday

Well, World, you have kept faith with me,
Kept faith with me;
Upon the whole you have proved to be
Much as you said you were.
Since as a child I used to lie
Upon the leaze° and watch the sky,
Never, I own, expected I
That life would all be fair.

'Twas then you said, and since have said,
Times since have said,
In that mysterious voice you shed
From clouds and hills around:
'Many have loved me desperately,
Many with smooth serenity,
While some have shown contempt of me
Till they dropped underground.

'I do not promise overmuch,
Child; overmuch;
Just neutral-tinted haps° and such,'
You said to minds like mine.
Wise warning for your credit's sake!
Which I for one failed not to take,
And hence could stem such strain and ache
As each year might assign.

19261928

Notes

- °: *pasture*Return to reference °
- °: *happenings*Return to reference °

JOSEPH CONRAD
1857–1924

Joseph Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski in Poland (then under Russian rule), son of a Polish patriot who suffered exile in Russia for his Polish nationalist activities and died in 1869, leaving Conrad to be brought up by a maternal uncle. At the age of fifteen he amazed his family and friends by announcing his passionate desire to go to sea; he was eventually allowed to go to Marseilles, France, in 1874, and from there he made a number of voyages on French merchant ships to Martinique and other islands in the Caribbean. In 1878 he signed on an English ship that brought him to the east coast English port of Lowestoft, where (still as an ordinary seaman) he joined the crew of a small coasting vessel plying between Lowestoft and Newcastle. In six voyages between these two ports he learned English. Thus launched on a career in the British merchant service, Conrad sailed on a variety of British ships to East Asia, Australia, India, South America, and Africa, eventually gaining his master's certificate in 1886, the year he became a naturalized British subject. He received his first command in 1888, and in 1890 took a steamboat up the Congo River in nightmarish circumstances (described in *Heart of Darkness*, 1899) that permanently afflicted his health and his imagination.

In the early 1890s he was already thinking of turning some of his Malayan experiences into English fiction, and in 1892–93, when serving as first mate on the *Torrens* sailing from London to Adelaide,

he revealed to a sympathetic passenger that he had begun a novel (*Almayer's Folly*), while on the return journey he impressed the young novelist John Galsworthy, who was on board, with his conversation. Conrad found it difficult to obtain a command, and this disappointment, together with the interest aroused by *Almayer's Folly* when it was published in 1895, helped turn him away from the sea to a career as a writer. He settled in London and in 1896 married an Englishwoman. This son of a Polish patriot turned merchant seaman turned writer was henceforth—after twenty years at sea—an English novelist.

In his travels through the Asian, African, and Caribbean landscapes that eventually made their way into his fiction, Conrad witnessed at close range the workings of European empires, including the British, French, Belgian, Dutch, and German, that at the time controlled most of the earth's surface and were extracting from it vast quantities of raw materials and profiting from forced or cheap labor. In the essay "Geography and Some Explorers," Conrad describes the imperial exploitation he observed in Africa as "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human conscience and geographical exploration." What he saw of the uses and abuses of imperial power helped make him deeply skeptical. Marlow, the intermediate narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, reflects: "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it. . . ." And yet in this novella, the ideas at the back of colonialism's ruthless greed and violence are hardly shown to redeem anything at all.

Conrad's questioning of the ethics of empire, perhaps harkening back to his childhood experience as a Pole under Russian occupation, is part of his many-faceted exploration of the ethical ambiguities in human experience. In his great novel *Lord Jim* (1900), which like *Heart of Darkness* uses the device of an intermediate narrator (again, it is Marlow), he probes the meaning of a gross failure of duty on the part of a romantic and idealistic young sailor,

and by presenting the hero's history from a series of different points of view, he sustains the ethical questioning to the end. By deploying intermediate narrators and multiple points of view in his fiction, Conrad suggests the complexity of experience and the difficulty of judging human actions.

Although Conrad's plots and exotic settings recall imperial romance and Victorian tales of adventure, he helped develop modern narrative strategies—frame narration, fragmented perspective, flashbacks and flash-forwards, psychologically laden symbolism—that disrupt chronology, render meaning indeterminate, reveal unconscious drives, blur boundaries between civilization and barbarism, and radically cast in doubt epistemological and ethical certainties. Another indication of Conrad's modernist proclivities is the alienation of his characters. Many of his works expose the difficulty of true communion, while also paradoxically exposing how communication is sometimes unexpectedly forced on us, often with someone who may be on the surface our moral opposite, so that we are compelled into a mysterious recognition of our opposite as our true self. Other stories and novels—and Conrad wrote prolifically despite his late start—explore the ways in which the codes we live by are tested in moments of crisis, revealing either their inadequacy or our own. Imagination can corrupt (as with Lord Jim) or save (as in *The Shadow-Line*, 1917), and a total lack of it can either see a person through (Captain MacWhirr in *Typhoon*, 1902) or render a person comically ridiculous (Captain Mitchell in *Nostromo*, 1904). Set in an imaginary Latin American republic, *Nostromo* subtly studies the corrupting effects of politics and "material interests" on personal relationships. Conrad wrote two other political novels—*The Secret Agent* (1906) and *Under Western Eyes* (1911). The latter is a story of Dostoyevskian power about a Russian student who becomes involuntarily associated with anti-government violence in czarist Russia and is maneuvered by circumstances into a position where, although a government spy, he has to pretend to be a revolutionary among revolutionaries. Having to pretend consistently to be the opposite of what he is, this character, like others in Conrad's fiction,

is alienated, trapped, unable to communicate. Conrad was as much a pessimist as Hardy, but Conrad aesthetically embodied his pessimism in subtler ways.

He was also a great master of English prose, an astonishing fact given that English was his third language, after Polish and French; that he was twenty-one before he learned English; and that to the end of his life he spoke English with a strong foreign accent. He approached English's linguistic and literary conventions aslant, but the seeming handicap of his foreignness helped him bring to the English novel a fresh geopolitical understanding, a formal seriousness, and a psychological depth, all of which opened up new possibilities for imaginative literature in English, as indicated by his profound, if vexed, influence on later writers as different from himself as the Nigerian Chinua Achebe and the Anglo-Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul.

Preface to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*[1]

[THE TASK OF THE ARTIST]

A work that aspires, however humbly, to the condition of art should carry its justification in every line. And art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential—their one illuminating and convincing quality—the very truth of their existence. The artist, then, like the thinker or the scientist, seeks the truth and makes his appeal. Impressed by the aspect of the world the thinker plunges into ideas, the scientist into facts—whence, presently, emerging they make their appeal to those qualities of our being that fit us best for the hazardous enterprise of living. They speak authoritatively to our common-sense, to our intelligence, to our desire of peace or to our desire of unrest; not seldom to our prejudices, sometimes to our fears, often to our egoism—but always to our credulity. And their words are heard with reverence, for their concern is with weighty matters: with the cultivation of our minds and the proper care of our bodies, with the attainment of our ambitions, with the perfection of the means and the glorification of our precious aims.

It is otherwise with the artist.

Confronted by the same enigmatical spectacle the artist descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal. His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities—like

the vulnerable body within a steel armour. His appeal is less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring—and sooner forgotten. Yet its effect endures forever. The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom; to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition—and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.

It is only some such train of thought, or rather of feeling, that can in a measure explain the aim of the attempt, made in the tale which follows,[2] to present an unrestful episode in the obscure lives of a few individuals out of all the disregarded multitude of the bewildered, the simple and the voiceless. For, if any part of truth dwells in the belief confessed above, it becomes evident that there is not a place of splendour or a dark corner of the earth that does not deserve, if only a passing glance of wonder and pity. The motive then, may be held to justify the matter of the work; but this preface, which is simply an avowal of endeavour, cannot end here—for the avowal is not yet complete.

Fiction—if it at all aspires to be art—appeals to temperament. And in truth it must be, like painting, like music, like all art, the appeal of one temperament to all the other innumerable temperaments whose subtle and resistless power endows passing events with their true meaning, and creates the moral, the emotional atmosphere of the place and time. Such an appeal to be effective must be an impression conveyed through the senses; and, in fact, it cannot be made in any other way, because temperament, whether individual or collective, is not amenable to persuasion. All art,

therefore, appeals primarily to the senses, and the artistic aim when expressing itself in written words must also make its appeal through the senses, if its high desire is to reach the secret spring of responsive emotions. It must strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music—which is the art of arts. And it is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour, and that the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words: of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage.

The sincere endeavour to accomplish that creative task, to go as far on that road as his strength will carry him, to go undeterred by faltering, weariness or reproach, is the only valid justification for the worker in prose. And if his conscience is clear, his answer to those who in the fulness of a wisdom which looks for immediate profit, demand specifically to be edified, consoled, amused; who demand to be promptly improved, or encouraged, or frightened, or shocked, or charmed, must run thus:—My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see.* That—and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand—and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.

To snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life, is only the beginning of the task. The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth—disclose its inspiring secret: the stress and passion within the core of each convincing

moment. In a single-minded attempt of that kind, if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world.

It is evident that he who, rightly or wrongly, holds by the convictions expressed above cannot be faithful to any one of the temporary formulas of his craft. The enduring part of them—the truth which each only imperfectly veils—should abide with him as the most precious of his possessions, but they all: Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, even the unofficial sentimentalism (which like the poor, is exceedingly difficult to get rid of),[3] all these gods must, after a short period of fellowship, abandon him—even on the very threshold of the temple—to the stammerings of his conscience and to the outspoken consciousness of the difficulties of his work. In that uneasy solitude the supreme cry of Art for Art itself, loses the exciting ring of its apparent immorality. It sounds far off. It has ceased to be a cry, and is heard only as a whisper, often incomprehensible, but at times and faintly encouraging.

Sometimes, stretched at ease in the shade of a roadside tree, we watch the motions of a labourer in a distant field, and after a time, begin to wonder languidly as to what the fellow may be at. We watch the movements of his body, the waving of his arms, we see him bend down, stand up, hesitate, begin again. It may add to the charm of an idle hour to be told the purpose of his exertions. If we know he is trying to lift a stone, to dig a ditch, to uproot a stump, we look with a more real interest at his efforts; we are disposed to condone the jar of his agitation upon the restfulness of the landscape; and even, if in a brotherly frame of mind, we may bring ourselves to forgive his failure. We understood his object, and, after all, the fellow has tried, and perhaps he had not the strength—and perhaps he had not the knowledge. We forgive, go on our way—and forget.

And so it is with the workman of art. Art is long and life is short,[4] and success is very far off. And thus, doubtful of strength to travel so far, we talk a little about the aim—the aim of art, which, like life itself, is inspiring, difficult—obscured by mists. It is not in the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion; it is not in the unveiling of one of those heartless secrets which are called the Laws of Nature. It is not less great, but only more difficult.

To arrest, for the space of a breath, the hands busy about the work of the earth, and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and colour, of sunshine and shadows; to make them pause for a look, for a sigh, for a smile—such is the aim, difficult and evanescent, and reserved only for a very few to achieve. But sometimes, by the deserving and the fortunate, even that task is accomplished. And when it is accomplished—behold!—all the truth of life is there: a moment of vision, a sigh, a smile—and the return to an eternal rest.

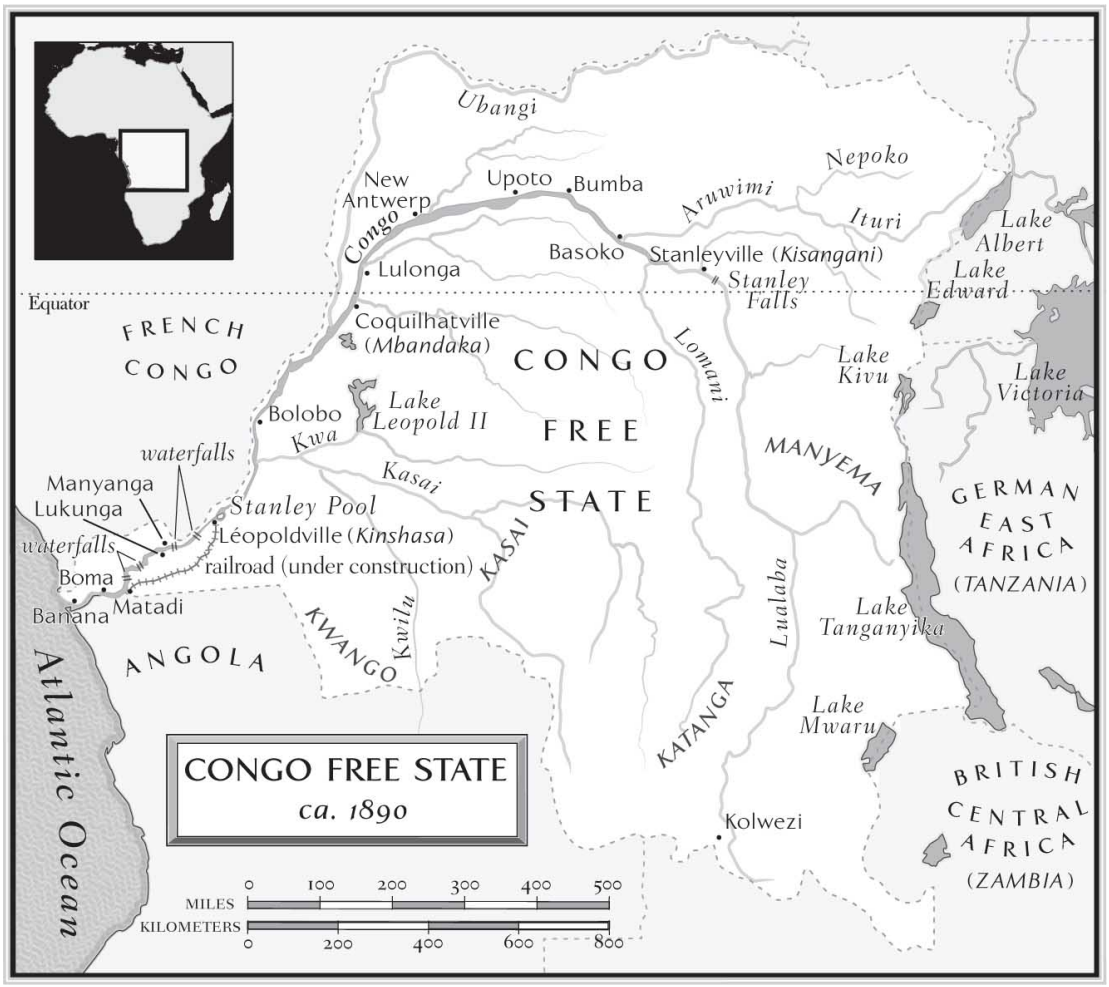
18971898

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Conrad wrote *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* in 1896–97, shortly after his marriage; it was published first in the *New Review*, August–December 1897, and then in book form in 1898. Conrad took particular pleasure in writing the novel and later called it "the story by which, as a creative artist, I stand or fall." A few months after finishing it, feeling that he was now wholly dedicated to writing and had "done with the sea," he wrote this preface, which first appeared in the 1898 edition.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "For the poor always ye have with you" (John 12:8).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: *Ars longa, vita brevis*: a Latin proverb, deriving from a dictum of the Greek physician Hippocrates.Return to reference 4

Heart of Darkness This story is derived from Conrad's experience in Congo in 1890. Like Marlow, the narrator of the story, Conrad had as a child determined one day to visit the heart of Africa. "It was in 1868, when nine years old or thereabouts, that while looking at a map of Africa at the time and putting my finger on the blank space then representing the unsolved mystery of that continent, I said to myself with absolute assurance and an amazing audacity which are no longer in my character now: 'When I grow up I shall go *there*' " (*A Personal Record*, 1912).

Conrad was promised a job as a Congo River pilot through the influence of his distant cousin Marguerite Poradowska, who lived in Brussels and knew important officials of the Belgian company that exploited Congo. At this time Congo, although nominally an independent state, the Congo Free State (État Indépendent du Congo), was virtually the personal property of Leopold II, king of Belgium, who made a fortune out of it. Later, the appalling abuses involved in the naked colonial exploitation that went on in the Congo were exposed to public view, and international criticism compelled the setting up of a committee of inquiry in 1904. From 1885 to 1908, masses of Congolese men were worked to death, women were raped, hands were cut off, villages were looted and burned. What Conrad saw in 1890 shocked him profoundly and shook his view of the moral basis of colonialism, of exploration and trade in newly discovered countries, indeed of civilization in general. "*Heart of Darkness* is experience, too," Conrad wrote in his 1917 "Author's Note," "but it is experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case for the perfectly legitimate, I believe, purpose of bringing it home to the minds and bosoms of the readers." And later he told Edward Garnett: "Before the Congo I was just a mere animal."



Heart of Darkness describes a voyage up the Congo River into the Congo Free State, then ruled by the despotic King Leopold II of Belgium. The river, the second longest in Africa, is compared in the novel to an uncoiled snake with its head in the Atlantic. Making his way upriver, the protagonist, Marlow, must detour overland on a "two-hundred mile tramp" from the Company Station (Matadi) to the Central Station (Kinshasa), before proceeding by river to the Inner Station (Kisangani).

Conrad arrived in Africa in May 1890 and made his way up the Congo River very much as described in *Heart of Darkness.* At Kinshasa (which Conrad spells Kinchassa) on Stanley Pool, which he reached after an exhausting two-hundred-mile trek from Matadi, near the mouth of the river, Conrad was taken aback to learn that the steamer of which he was to be captain had been damaged and

was undergoing repairs. He was sent as supernumerary on another steamer to learn the river. This steamer was sent to Stanley Falls to collect and bring back to Kinshasa one Georges Antoine Klein, an agent of the company who had fallen so gravely ill that he died on board. Conrad himself then fell seriously ill and eventually returned to London in January 1891 without ever having served as a Congo River pilot. The Congo experience permanently impaired his health; it also permanently haunted his imagination. The nightmare atmosphere of *Heart of Darkness* is an accurate reflection of Conrad's response to his traumatic experience.

***Punch* magazine, 1906**. This political cartoon depicts King Leopold of Belgium as a rubber coil wrapped around a Congolese person. Rubber trees and vines were abundant in the Congo, and as demand for rubber grew in Europe, working conditions for

Africans became increasingly coercive and cruel. Punishments for failing to meet demands included limb amputation and the kidnapping of workers' family members.

The theme of the story is partly the "choice of nightmares" facing whites in the Congo—either to become like the commercially minded manager, who sees Africa, its people, and its resources solely as instruments of financial gain, or to become like Kurtz, the self-tortured and corrupted idealist (inspired by Klein). The manager is a "hollow man" (T. S. Eliot used a quotation from this story as one epigraph for his poem "The Hollow Men"); his only objections to Kurtz are commercial, not moral: Kurtz's methods are "unsound" and would therefore lose the company money. At the last Kurtz seems to recognize the moral horror of his having succumbed to the dark temptations that African life posed for the European. "He had summed up—he had judged." But the story also has other levels of meaning, and the counterpointing of Western civilization in Europe with what that civilization has done in Africa (see the concluding interview between Marlow and Kurtz's "intended"—based on an interview between Conrad and the dead Klein's fiancée) illuminates several of these. The story first appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1899 and was revised for book publication in 1902 as part of *Youth: A Narrative, and Two Other Stories.*

Heart of Darkness

1

The *Nellie*, a cruising yawl,[1] swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend,[2] and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.

The Director of Companies was our captain and our host. We four affectionately watched his back as he stood in the bows looking to seaward. On the whole river there was nothing that looked half so nautical. He resembled a pilot, which to a seaman is trustworthiness personified. It was difficult to realise his work was not out there in the luminous estuary, but behind him, within the brooding gloom.

Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation, it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns—and even convictions. The Lawyer—the best of old fellows—had, because of his many years and many virtues, the only cushion on deck, and was lying on the only rug. The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones. Marlow sat cross-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzenmast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow

complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. The Director, satisfied the anchor had good hold, made his way aft and sat down amongst us. We exchanged a few words lazily. Afterwards there was silence on board the yacht. For some reason or other we did not begin that game of dominoes. We felt meditative, and fit for nothing but placid staring. The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marshes was like a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, and draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men.

Forthwith a change came over the waters, and the serenity became less brilliant but more profound. The old river in its broad reach rested unruffled at the decline of day, after ages of good service done to the race that peopled its banks, spread out in the tranquil dignity of a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth. We looked at the venerable stream not in the vivid flush of a short day that comes and departs for ever, but in the august light of abiding memories. And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, "followed the sea" with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it has borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin,[3] knights all, titled and untitled—the great knights-errant of the sea. It had borne all the ships whose names are like jewels flashing in the night of time, from the *Golden Hind*

returning with her round flanks full of treasure, to be visited by the Queen's Highness and thus pass out of the gigantic tale, to the *Erebus* and *Terror*, bound on other conquests—and that never returned. It had known the ships and the men. They had sailed from Deptford, from Greenwich, from Erith—the adventurers and the settlers; kings' ships and the ships of men on 'Change; captains, admirals, the dark "interlopers"[4] of the Eastern trade, and the commissioned "generals" of East India fleets. Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

The sun set; the dusk fell on the stream, and lights began to appear along the shore. The Chapman lighthouse, a three-legged thing erect on a mud-flat, shone strongly. Lights of ships moved in the fairway[5]—a great stir of lights going up and going down. And farther west on the upper reaches the place of the monstrous town was still marked ominously on the sky, a brooding gloom in sunshine, a lurid glare under the stars.

"And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth."

He was the only man of us who still "followed the sea." The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class. He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life. Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them—the ship; and so is their country—the sea. One ship is very much like another, and the sea is always the same. In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance; for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny. For the rest, after his hours

of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing. The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine.

His remark did not seem at all surprising. It was just like Marlow. It was accepted in silence. No one took the trouble to grunt even; and presently he said, very slow:

"I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day. . . . Light came out of this river since—you say Knights? Yes; but it is like a running blaze on a plain, like a flash of lightning in the clouds. We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine—what d'ye call 'em?—trireme[6] in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north; run overland across the Gauls in a hurry; put in charge of one of these craft the legionaries—a wonderful lot of handy men they must have been too—used to build, apparently by the hundred, in a month or two, if we may believe what we read. Imagine him here—the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina—and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages—precious little to eat fit for a civilised man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian wine[7] here, no going ashore. Here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness, like a needle in a bundle of hay—cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death—death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush. They must have been dying like flies here. Oh yes—he did it. Did it very well, too, no doubt, and without thinking much about it either, except afterwards to brag of what he

had gone through in his time, perhaps. They were men enough to face the darkness. And perhaps he was cheered by keeping his eye on a chance of promotion to the fleet at Ravenna[8] by and by, if he had good friends in Rome and survived the awful climate. Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga—perhaps too much dice, you know—coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader, even, to mend his fortunes. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him—all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. There's no initiation either into such mysteries. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination—you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate."

He paused.

"Mind," he began again, lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that, with his legs folded before him, he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower—"Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency. But these chaps were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea

—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . .”

He broke off. Flames glided in the river, small green flames, red flames, white flames, pursuing, overtaking, joining, crossing each other—then separating slowly or hastily. The traffic of the great city went on in the deepening night upon the sleepless river. We looked on, waiting patiently—there was nothing else to do till the end of the flood; but it was only after a long silence, when he said, in a hesitating voice, “I suppose you fellows remember I did once turn fresh-water sailor for a bit,” that we knew we were fated, before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow’s inconclusive experiences.

“I don’t want to bother you much with what happened to me personally,” he began, showing in this remark the weakness of many tellers of tales who seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear; “yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me—and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough too—and pitiful—not extraordinary in any way—not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.

“I had then, as you remember, just returned to London after a lot of Indian Ocean, Pacific, China Seas—a regular dose of the East—six years or so, and I was loafing about, hindering you fellows in your work and invading your homes, just as though I had got a heavenly mission to civilise you. It was very fine for a time, but after a bit I did get tired of resting. Then I began to look for a ship—I should think the hardest work on earth. But the ships wouldn’t even look at me. And I got tired of that game too.

“Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked

particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there. The North Pole was one of these places, I remember. Well, I haven't been there yet, and shall not try now. The glamour's off. Other places were scattered about the Equator, and in every sort of latitude all over the two hemispheres. I have been in some of them, and . . . well, we won't talk about that. But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after.

"True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird—a silly little bird. Then I remembered there was a big concern, a Company for trade on that river. Dash it all! I thought to myself, they can't trade without using some kind of craft on that lot of fresh water—steamboats! Why shouldn't I try to get charge of one? I went on along Fleet Street,[9] but could not shake off the idea. The snake had charmed me.

"You understand it was a Continental concern, that Trading Society; but I have a lot of relations living on the Continent, because it's cheap and not so nasty as it looks, they say.

"I am sorry to own I began to worry them. This was already a fresh departure for me. I was not used to get things that way, you know. I always went my own road and on my own legs where I had a mind to go. I wouldn't have believed it of myself; but, then—you see—I felt somehow I must get there by hook or by crook. So I worried them. The men said, 'My dear fellow,' and did nothing. Then—would you believe it?—I tried the women. I, Charlie Marlow, set the women to work—to get a job. Heavens! Well, you see, the notion drove me. I had an aunt, a dear enthusiastic soul. She wrote:

‘It will be delightful. I am ready to do anything, anything for you. It is a glorious idea. I know the wife of a very high personage in the Administration, and also a man who has lots of influence with,’ etc. etc. She was determined to make no end of fuss to get me appointed skipper of a river steamboat, if such was my fancy.

“I got my appointment—of course; and I got it very quick. It appears the Company had received news that one of their captains had been killed in a scuffle with the natives. This was my chance, and it made me the more anxious to go. It was only months and months afterwards, when I made the attempt to recover what was left of the body, that I heard the original quarrel arose from a misunderstanding about some hens. Yes, two black hens. Fresleven—that was the fellow’s name, a Dane—thought himself wronged somehow in the bargain, so he went ashore and started to hammer the chief of the village with a stick. Oh, it didn’t surprise me in the least to hear this, and at the same time to be told that Fresleven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs. No doubt he was; but he had been a couple of years already out there engaged in the noble cause, you know, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way. Therefore he whacked the old nigger mercilessly, while a big crowd of his people watched him, thunderstruck, till some man—I was told the chief’s son—in desperation at hearing the old chap yell, made a tentative jab with a spear at the white man—and of course it went quite easy between the shoulder-blades. Then the whole population cleared into the forest, expecting all kinds of calamities to happen, while, on the other hand, the steamer Fresleven commanded left also in a bad panic, in charge of the engineer, I believe. Afterwards nobody seemed to trouble much about Fresleven’s remains, till I got out and stepped into his shoes. I couldn’t let it rest, though; but when an opportunity offered at last to meet my predecessor, the grass growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones. They were all there. The supernatural being had not been touched after he fell. And the village was deserted, the huts gaped black, rotting, all askew within the fallen enclosures. A calamity had come to it,

sure enough. The people had vanished. Mad terror had scattered them, men, women, and children, through the bush, and they had never returned. What became of the hens I don't know either. I should think the cause of progress got them, anyhow. However, through this glorious affair I got my appointment, before I had fairly begun to hope for it.

"I flew around like mad to get ready, and before forty-eight hours I was crossing the Channel to show myself to my employers, and sign the contract. In a very few hours I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre. Prejudice no doubt. I had no difficulty in finding the Company's offices. It was the biggest thing in the town, and everybody I met was full of it. They were going to run an over-sea empire, and make no end of coin by trade.

"A narrow and deserted street in deep shadow, high houses, innumerable windows with Venetian blinds, a dead silence, grass sprouting between the stones, imposing carriage archways right and left, immense double doors standing ponderously ajar. I slipped through one of these cracks, went up a swept and ungarnished staircase, as arid as a desert, and opened the first door I came to. Two women, one fat and the other slim, sat on straw-bottomed chairs, knitting black wool. The slim one got up and walked straight at me—still knitting with downcast eyes—and only just as I began to think of getting out of her way, as you would for a somnambulist, stood still, and looked up. Her dress was as plain as an umbrella-cover, and she turned round without a word and preceded me into a waiting-room. I gave my name, and looked about. Deal table in the middle, plain chairs all round the walls, on one end a large shining map, marked with all the colours of a rainbow. There was a vast amount of red—good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there, a deuce of a lot of blue, a little green, smears of orange, and, on the East Coast, a purple patch, to show where the jolly pioneers of progress drink the jolly lager-beer. However, I wasn't going into any of these. I was going into the yellow. Dead in the centre. And the river was there—fascinating—deadly—like a snake. Ough! A door opened, a white-haired

secretarial head, but wearing a compassionate expression, appeared, and a skinny forefinger beckoned me into the sanctuary. Its light was dim, and a heavy writing desk squatted in the middle. From behind that structure came out an impression of pale plumpness in a frockcoat. The great man himself. He was five feet six, I should judge, and had his grip on the handle-end of ever so many millions. He shook hands, I fancy, murmured vaguely, was satisfied with my French. *Bon voyage.*

"In about forty-five seconds I found myself again in the waiting-room with the compassionate secretary, who, full of desolation and sympathy, made me sign some document. I believe I undertook amongst other things not to disclose any trade secrets. Well, I am not going to.

"I began to feel slightly uneasy. You know I am not used to such ceremonies, and there was something ominous in the atmosphere. It was just as though I had been let into some conspiracy—I don't know—something not quite right; and I was glad to get out. In the outer room the two women knitted black wool feverishly. People were arriving, and the younger one was walking back and forth introducing them. The old one sat on her chair. Her flat cloth slippers were propped up on a foot-warmer, and a cat reposed on her lap. She wore a starched white affair on her head, had a wart on one cheek, and silver-rimmed spectacles hung on the tip of her nose. She glanced at me above the glasses. The swift and indifferent placidity of that look troubled me. Two youths with foolish and cheery countenances were being piloted over, and she threw at them the same quick glance of unconcerned wisdom. She seemed to know all about them and about me too. An eerie feeling came over me. She seemed uncanny and fateful. Often far away there I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinising the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. *Ave!* Old knitter of black wool. *Morituri te salutant.*[1] Not many of those she looked at ever saw her again—not half, by a long way.

"There was yet a visit to the doctor. 'A simple formality,' assured me the secretary, with an air of taking an immense part in all my sorrows. Accordingly a young chap wearing his hat over the left eyebrow, some clerk I suppose—there must have been clerks in the business, though the house was as still as a house in a city of the dead—came from somewhere upstairs, and led me forth. He was shabby and careless, with ink-stains on the sleeves of his jacket, and his cravat was large and billowy, under a chin shaped like the toe of an old boot. It was a little too early for the doctor, so I proposed a drink, and thereupon he developed a vein of joviality. As we sat over our vermouths he glorified the Company's business, and by and by I expressed casually my surprise at him not going out there. He became very cool and collected all at once. 'I am not such a fool as I look, quoth Plato to his disciples,' he said sententiously, emptied his glass with great resolution, and we rose.

"The old doctor felt my pulse, evidently thinking of something else the while. 'Good, good for there,' he mumbled, and then with a certain eagerness asked me whether I would let him measure my head. Rather surprised, I said Yes, when he produced a thing like calipers and got the dimensions back and front and every way, taking notes carefully. He was an unshaven little man in a threadbare coat like a gaberdine, with his feet in slippers, and I thought him a harmless fool. 'I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there,' he said. 'And when they come back too?' I asked. 'Oh, I never see them,' he remarked; 'and, moreover, the changes take place inside, you know.' He smiled, as if at some quiet joke. 'So you are going out there. Famous. Interesting too.' He gave me a searching glance, and made another note. 'Ever any madness in your family?' he asked, in a matter-of-fact tone. I felt very annoyed. 'Is that question in the interests of science too?' 'It would be,' he said, without taking notice of my irritation, 'interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals, on the spot, but . . .' 'Are you an alienist?'[2] I interrupted. 'Every doctor should be—a little,' answered that original[3] imperturbably. 'I have a little theory which you Messieurs who go out

there must help me to prove. This is my share in the advantages my country shall reap from the possession of such a magnificent dependency. The mere wealth I leave to others. Pardon my questions, but you are the first Englishman coming under my observation . . .' I hastened to assure him I was not in the least typical. 'If I were,' said I, 'I wouldn't be talking like this with you.' 'What you say is rather profound, and probably erroneous,' he said, with a laugh. 'Avoid irritation more than exposure to the sun. Adieu. How do you English say, eh? Good-bye. Ah! Good-bye. Adieu. In the tropics one must before everything keep calm.' . . . He lifted a warning forefinger. . . . *'Du calme, du calme. Adieu.'*

"One thing more remained to do—say good-bye to my excellent aunt. I found her triumphant. I had a cup of tea—the last decent cup of tea for many days—and in a room that most soothingly looked just as you would expect a lady's drawing-room to look, we had a long quiet chat by the fireside. In the course of these confidences it became quite plain to me I had been represented to the wife of the high dignitary, and goodness knows to how many more people besides, as an exceptional and gifted creature—a piece of good fortune for the Company—a man you don't get hold of every day. Good heavens! and I was going to take charge of a two-penny-halfpenny river-steamboat with a penny whistle attached! It appeared, however, I was also one of the Workers, with a capital—you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet. She talked about 'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,' till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit.

" 'You forget, dear Charlie, that the labourer is worthy of his hire,' she said brightly. It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some

confounded fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over.

"After this I got embraced, told to wear flannel, be sure to write often, and so on—and I left. In the street—I don't know why—a queer feeling came to me that I was an impostor. Odd thing that I, who used to clear out for any part of the world at twenty-four hours' notice, with less thought than most men give to the crossing of a street, had a moment—I won't say of hesitation, but of startled pause, before this commonplace affair. The best way I can explain it to you is by saying that, for a second or two, I felt as though, instead of going to the centre of a continent, I were about to set off for the centre of the earth.

"I left in a French steamer, and she called in every blamed port they have out there, for, as far as I could see, the sole purpose of landing soldiers and custom-house officers. I watched the coast. Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma. There it is before you—smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, Come and find out. This one was almost featureless, as if still in the making, with an aspect of monotonous grimness. The edge of a colossal jungle, so dark green as to be almost black, fringed with white surf, ran straight, like a ruled line, far, far away along a blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist. The sun was fierce, the land seemed to glisten and drip with steam. Here and there greyish-whitish specks showed up clustered inside the white surf, with a flag flying above them perhaps—settlements some centuries old, and still no bigger than pin-heads on the untouched expanse of their background. We pounded along, stopped, landed soldiers; went on, landed custom-house clerks to levy toll in what looked like a God-forsaken wilderness, with a tin shed and a flag-pole lost in it; landed more soldiers—to take care of the custom-house clerks presumably. Some, I heard, got drowned in the surf; but whether they did or not, nobody seemed particularly to care. They were just flung out there, and on we went. Every day the coast

looked the same, as though we had not moved; but we passed various places—trading places—with names like Gran' Bassam, Little Popo; names that seemed to belong to some sordid farce acted in front of a sinister back-cloth. The idleness of a passenger, my isolation amongst all these men with whom I had no point of contact, the oily and languid sea, the uniform sombreness of the coast, seemed to keep me away from the truth of things, within the toil of a mournful and senseless delusion. The voice of the surf heard now and then was a positive pleasure, like the speech of a brother. It was something natural, that had its reason, that had a meaning. Now and then a boat from the shore gave one a momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks—these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there. They were a great comfort to look at. For a time I would feel I belonged still to a world of straightforward facts; but the feeling would not last long. Something would turn up to scare it away. Once, I remember, we came upon a man-of-war anchored off the coast. There wasn't even a shed there, and she was shelling the bush. It appears the French had one of their wars going on thereabouts. Her ensign dropped limp like a rag; the muzzles of the long six-inch guns stuck out all over the low hull; the greasy, slimy swell swung her up lazily and let her down, swaying her thin masts. In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight; and it was not dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives—he called them enemies!—hidden out of sight somewhere.

"We gave her her letters (I heard the men in that lonely ship were dying of fever at the rate of three a day) and went on. We called at some more places with farcical names, where the merry dance of death and trade goes on in a still and earthy atmosphere as of an overheated catacomb; all along the formless coast bordered by dangerous surf, as if Nature herself had tried to ward off intruders; in and out of rivers, streams of death in life, whose banks were rotting into mud, whose waters, thickened into slime, invaded the contorted mangroves,[4] that seemed to writhe at us in the extremity of an impotent despair. Nowhere did we stop long enough to get a particularised impression, but the general sense of vague and oppressive wonder grew upon me. It was like a weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares.

"It was upward of thirty days before I saw the mouth of the big river. We anchored off the seat of the government. But my work would not begin till some two hundred miles farther on. So as soon as I could I made a start for a place thirty miles higher up.

"I had my passage on a little sea-going steamer. Her captain was a Swede, and knowing me for a seaman, invited me on the bridge. He was a young man, lean, fair, and morose, with lanky hair and a shuffling gait. As we left the miserable little wharf, he tossed his head contemptuously at the shore. 'Been living there?' he asked. I said, 'Yes.' 'Fine lot these government chaps—are they not?' he went on, speaking English with great precision and considerable bitterness. 'It is funny what some people will do for a few francs a month. I wonder what becomes of that kind when it goes up country?' I said to him I expected to see that soon. 'So-o-o!' he exclaimed. He shuffled athwart, keeping one eye ahead vigilantly. 'Don't be too sure,' he continued. 'The other day I took up a man who hanged himself on the road. He was a Swede, too.' 'Hanged himself! Why, in God's name?' I cried. He kept on looking out watchfully. 'Who knows? The sun too much for him, or the country perhaps.'

"At last we opened a reach. A rocky cliff appeared, mounds of turned-up earth by the shore, houses on a hill, others with iron

roofs, amongst a waste of excavations, or hanging to the declivity. A continuous noise of the rapids above hovered over this scene of inhabited devastation. A lot of people, mostly black and naked, moved about like ants. A jetty[5] projected into the river. A blinding sunlight drowned all this at times in a sudden recrudescence of glare. "There's your Company's station,' said the Swede, pointing to three wooden barrack-like structures on the rocky slope. 'I will send your things up. Four boxes did you say? So. Farewell.'

"I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass, then found a path leading up the hill. It turned aside for the boulders, and also for an undersized railway truck lying there on its back with its wheels in the air. One was off. The thing looked as dead as the carcass of some animal. I came upon more pieces of decaying machinery, a stack of rusty nails. To the left a clump of trees made a shady spot, where dark things seemed to stir feebly. I blinked, the path was steep. A horn tooted to the right, and I saw the black people run. A heavy and dull detonation shook the ground, a puff of smoke came out of the cliff, and that was all. No change appeared on the face of the rock. They were building a railway. The cliff was not in the way or anything; but this objectless blasting was all the work going on.

"A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. Another report from the cliff made me think suddenly of that ship of war I had seen firing into a continent. It was the same kind of ominous voice; but these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea. All their meagre breasts panted together, the violently dilated nostrils quivered, the eyes stared

stonily uphill. They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages. Behind this raw matter one of the reclaimed, the product of the new forces at work, strolled despondently, carrying a rifle by its middle. He had a uniform jacket with one button off, and seeing a white man on the path, hoisted his weapon to his shoulder with alacrity. This was simple prudence, white men being so much alike at a distance that he could not tell who I might be. He was speedily reassured, and with a large, white, rascally grin, and a glance at his charge, seemed to take me into partnership in his exalted trust. After all, I also was a part of the great cause of these high and just proceedings.

"Instead of going up, I turned and descended to the left. My idea was to let that chain-gang get out of sight before I climbed the hill. You know I am not particularly tender; I've had to strike and to fend off. I've had to resist and to attack sometimes—that's only one way of resisting—without counting the exact cost, according to the demands of such sort of life as I had blundered into. I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! these were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men—men, I tell you. But as I stood on this hillside, I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly. How insidious he could be, too, I was only to find out several months later and a thousand miles farther. For a moment I stood appalled, as though by a warning. Finally I descended the hill, obliquely, towards the trees I had seen.

"I avoided a vast artificial hole somebody had been digging on the slope, the purpose of which I found it impossible to divine. It wasn't a quarry or a sandpit, anyhow. It was just a hole. It might have been connected with the philanthropic desire of giving the criminals something to do. I don't know. Then I nearly fell into a very narrow ravine, almost no more than a scar in the hillside. I discovered that a lot of imported drainage-pipes for the settlement had been tumbled in there. There wasn't one that was not broken. It

was a wanton smash-up. At last I got under the trees. My purpose was to stroll into the shade for a moment; but no sooner within than it seemed to me I had stepped into the gloomy circle of some Inferno. The rapids were near, and an uninterrupted, uniform, headlong, rushing noise filled the mournful stillness of the grove, where not a breath stirred, not a leaf moved, with a mysterious sound—as though the tearing pace of the launched earth had suddenly become audible.

"Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. Another mine on the cliff went off, followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. The work was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die.

"They were dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now—nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air—and nearly as thin. I began to distinguish the gleam of eyes under the trees. Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. The man seemed young—almost a boy—but you know with them it's hard to tell. I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede's ship's biscuits I had in my pocket. The fingers closed slowly on it and held—there was no other movement and no other glance. He had tied a bit of white worsted[6] round his neck—Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge—an ornament—a charm—a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it? It

looked startling round his black neck, this bit of white thread from beyond the seas.

"Near the same tree two more bundles of acute angles sat with their legs drawn up. One, with his chin propped on his knees, stared at nothing, in an intolerable and appalling manner: his brother phantom rested its forehead, as if overcome with a great weariness; and all about others were scattered in every pose of contorted collapse, as in some picture of a massacre or a pestilence. While I stood horror-struck, one of these creatures rose to his hands and knees, and went off on all-fours towards the river to drink. He lapped out of his hand, then sat up in the sunlight, crossing his shins in front of him, and after a time let his woolly head fall on his breastbone.

"I didn't want any more loitering in the shade, and I made haste towards the station. When near the buildings I met a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for a sort of vision. I saw a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca[7] jacket, snowy trousers, a clear necktie, and varnished boots. No hat. Hair parted, brushed, oiled, under a green-lined parasol held in a big white hand. He was amazing, and had a penholder behind his ear.

"I shook hands with this miracle, and I learned he was the Company's chief accountant, and that all the book-keeping was done at this station. He had come out for a moment, he said, 'to get a breath of fresh air.' The expression sounded wonderfully odd, with its suggestion of sedentary desk-life. I wouldn't have mentioned the fellow to you at all, only it was from his lips that I first heard the name of the man who is so indissolubly connected with the memories of that time. Moreover, I respected the fellow. Yes; I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy; but in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone. His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character. He had been out nearly three years; and, later, I could not help asking him how he managed to sport such

linen. He had just the faintest blush, and said modestly, 'I've been teaching one of the native women about the station. It was difficult. She had a distaste for the work.' Thus this man had verily accomplished something. And he was devoted to his books, which were in apple-pie order.

"Everything else in the station was in a muddle,—heads, things, buildings. Strings of dusty niggers with splay feet arrived and departed; a stream of manufactured goods, rubbishy cottons, beads, and brass-wire set into the depths of darkness, and in return came a precious trickle of ivory.

"I had to wait in the station for ten days—an eternity. I lived in a hut in the yard, but to be out of the chaos I would sometimes get into the accountant's office. It was built of horizontal planks, and so badly put together that, as he bent over his high desk, he was barred from neck to heels with narrow strips of sunlight. There was no need to open the big shutter to see. It was hot there too; big flies buzzed fiendishly, and did not sting, but stabbed. I sat generally on the floor, while, of faultless appearance (and even slightly scented), perching on a high stool, he wrote, he wrote. Sometimes he stood up for exercise. When a truckle-bed with a sick man (some invalided agent from up country) was put in there, he exhibited a gentle annoyance. 'The groans of this sick person' he said, 'distract my attention. And without that it is extremely difficult to guard against clerical errors in this climate.'

"One day he remarked, without lifting his head, 'In the interior you will no doubt meet Mr Kurtz.' On my asking who Mr Kurtz was, he said he was a first-class agent; and seeing my disappointment at this information, he added slowly, laying down his pen, 'He is a very remarkable person.' Further questions elicited from him that Mr Kurtz was at present in charge of a trading-post, a very important one, in the true ivory-country, at 'the very bottom of there. Sends in as much ivory as all the others put together . . .' He began to write again. The sick man was too ill to groan. The flies buzzed in a great peace.

"Suddenly there was a growing murmur of voices and a great tramping of feet. A caravan had come in. A violent babble of uncouth sounds burst out on the other side of the planks. All the carriers were speaking together, and in the midst of the uproar the lamentable voice of the chief agent was heard 'giving it up' tearfully for the twentieth time that day. . . . He rose slowly. 'What a frightful row,' he said. He crossed the room gently to look at the sick man, and returning, said to me, 'He does not hear.' 'What! Dead?' I asked, startled. 'No, not yet,' he answered, with great composure. Then, alluding with a toss of the head to the tumult in the station-yard, 'When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages—hate them to the death.' He remained thoughtful for a moment. 'When you see Mr Kurtz,' he went on, 'tell him from me that everything here'—he glanced at the desk—'is very satisfactory. I don't like to write to him—with those messengers of ours you never know who may get hold of your letter—at that Central Station.' He stared at me for a moment with his mild, bulging eyes. 'Oh, he will go far, very far,' he began again. 'He will be a somebody in the Administration before long. They, above—the Council in Europe, you know—mean him to be.'

"He turned to his work. The noise outside had ceased, and presently in going out I stopped at the door. In the steady buzz of flies the homeward-bound agent was lying flushed and insensible; the other, bent over his books, was making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep I could see the still tree-tops of the grove of death.

"Next day I left that station at last, with a caravan of sixty men, for a two-hundred-mile tramp.

"No use telling you much about that. Paths, paths, everywhere; a stamped-in network of paths spreading over the empty land, through long grass, through burnt grass, through thickets, down and up chilly ravines, up and down stony hills ablaze with heat; and a solitude, a solitude, nobody, not a hut. The population had cleared out a long time ago. Well, if a lot of mysterious niggers armed with all kinds of fearful weapons suddenly took to travelling on the road

between Deal and Gravesend, catching the yokels right and left to carry heavy loads for them, I fancy every farm and cottage thereabouts would get empty very soon. Only here the dwellings were gone too. Still, I passed through several abandoned villages. There's something pathetically childish in the ruins of grass walls. Day after day, with the stamp and shuffle of sixty pair of bare feet behind me, each pair under a 60-lb. load. Camp, cook, sleep, strike camp, march. Now and then a carrier dead in harness, at rest in the long grass near the path, with an empty water-gourd and his long staff lying by his side. A great silence around and above. Perhaps on some quiet night the tremor of far-off drums, sinking, swelling, a tremor vast, faint; a sound weird, appealing, suggestive, and wild—and perhaps with as profound a meaning as the sound of bells in a Christian country. Once a white man in an unbuttoned uniform, camping on the path with an armed escort of lank Zanzibaris,[8] very hospitable and festive—not to say drunk. Was looking after the upkeep of the road, he declared. Can't say I saw any road or any upkeep, unless the body of a middle-aged negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead, upon which I absolutely stumbled three miles farther on, may be considered as a permanent improvement. I had a white companion too, not a bad chap, but rather too fleshy and with the exasperating habit of fainting on the hot hillsides, miles away from the least bit of shade and water. Annoying, you know, to hold your own coat like a parasol over a man's head while he is coming-to. I couldn't help asking him once what he meant by coming there at all. 'To make money, of course. What do you think?' he said scornfully. Then he got fever, and had to be carried in a hammock slung under a pole. As he weighed sixteen stone[9] I had no end of rows with the carriers. They jibbed, ran away, sneaked off with their loads in the night—quite a mutiny. So, one evening, I made a speech in English with gestures, not one of which was lost to the sixty pairs of eyes before me, and the next morning I started the hammock off in front all right. An hour afterwards I came upon the whole concern wrecked in a bush—man, hammock, groans, blankets, horrors. The heavy pole had skinned his poor nose. He was very anxious for me

to kill somebody, but there wasn't the shadow of a carrier near. I remembered the old doctor—'It would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals, on the spot.' I felt I was becoming scientifically interesting. However, all that is to no purpose. On the fifteenth day I came in sight of the big river again, and hobbled into the Central Station. It was on a back water surrounded by scrub and forest, with a pretty border of smelly mud on one side, and on the three others enclosed by a crazy fence of rushes. A neglected gap was all the gate it had, and the first glance at the place was enough to let you see the flabby devil was running that show. White men with long staves in their hands appeared languidly from amongst the buildings, strolling up to take a look at me, and then retired out of sight somewhere. One of them, a stout, excitable chap with black moustaches, informed me with great volubility and many digressions, as soon as I told him who I was, that my steamer was at the bottom of the river. I was thunderstruck. What, how, why? Oh, it was 'all right.' The 'manager himself was there. All quite correct. 'Everybody had behaved splendidly! splendidly!'—'You must,' he said in agitation, 'go and see the general manager at once. He is waiting!'

"I did not see the real significance of that wreck at once. I fancy I see it now, but I am not sure—not at all. Certainly the affair was too stupid—when I think of it—to be altogether natural. Still . . . But at the moment it presented itself simply as a confounded nuisance. The steamer was sunk. They had started two days before in a sudden hurry up the river with the manager on board, in charge of some volunteer skipper, and before they had been out three hours they tore the bottom out of her on stones, and she sank near the south bank. I asked myself what I was to do there, now my boat was lost. As a matter of fact, I had plenty to do in fishing my command out of the river. I had to set about it the very next day. That, and the repairs when I brought the pieces to the station, took some months.

"My first interview with the manager was curious. He did not ask me to sit down after my twenty-mile walk that morning. He was

commonplace in complexion, in feature, in manners, and in voice. He was of middle size and of ordinary build. His eyes, of the usual blue, were perhaps remarkably cold, and he certainly could make his glance fall on one as trenchant and heavy as an axe. But even at these times the rest of his person seemed to disclaim the intention. Otherwise there was only an indefinable, faint expression of his lips, something stealthy—a smile—not a smile—I remember it, but I can't explain. It was unconscious, this smile was, though just after he had said something it got intensified for an instant. It came at the end of his speeches like a seal applied on the words to make the meaning of the commonest phrase appear absolutely inscrutable. He was a common trader, from his youth up employed in these parts—nothing more. He was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect. He inspired uneasiness. That was it! Uneasiness. Not a definite mistrust—just uneasiness—nothing more. You have no idea how effective such a . . . a . . . faculty can be. He had no genius for organising, for initiative, or for order even. That was evident in such things as the deplorable state of the station. He had no learning, and no intelligence. His position had come to him—why? Perhaps because he was never ill . . . He had served three terms of three years out there . . . Because triumphant health in the general rout of constitutions is a kind of power in itself. When he went home on leave he rioted on a large scale—pompously. Jack ashore—with a difference—in externals only. This one could gather from his casual talk. He originated nothing, he could keep the routine going—that's all. But he was great. He was great by this little thing that it was impossible to tell what could control such a man. He never gave that secret away. Perhaps there was nothing within him. Such a suspicion made one pause—for out there there were no external checks. Once when various tropical diseases had laid low almost every 'agent' in the station, he was heard to say, 'Men who come out here should have no entrails.' He sealed the utterance with that smile of his, as though it had been a door opening into a darkness he had in his keeping. You fancied you had seen things—but the seal was on. When annoyed at meal-times by the constant quarrels of the white men about precedence, he ordered an immense round table to be

made, for which a special house had to be built. This was the station's mess-room. Where he sat was the first place—the rest were nowhere. One felt this to be his unalterable conviction. He was neither civil nor uncivil. He was quiet. He allowed his 'boy'—an overfed young negro from the coast—to treat the white men, under his very eyes, with provoking insolence.

"He began to speak as soon as he saw me. I had been very long on the road. He could not wait. Had to start without me. The up-river stations had to be relieved. There had been so many delays already that he did not know who was dead and who was alive, and how they got on—and so on, and so on. He paid no attention to my explanations, and, playing with a stick of sealing-wax, repeated several times that the situation was 'very grave, very grave.' There were rumours that a very important station was in jeopardy, and its chief, Mr Kurtz, was ill. Hoped it was not true. Mr Kurtz was . . . I felt weary and irritable. Hang Kurtz, I thought. I interrupted him by saying I had heard of Mr Kurtz on the coast. 'Ah! So they talk of him down there,' he murmured to himself. Then he began again, assuring me Mr Kurtz was the best agent he had, an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company; therefore I could understand his anxiety. He was, he said, 'very, very uneasy.' Certainly he fidgeted on his chair a good deal, exclaimed, 'Ah, Mr Kurtz!' broke the stick of sealing-wax and seemed dumbfounded by the accident. Next thing he wanted to know 'how long it would take to' . . . I interrupted him again. Being hungry, you know, and kept on my feet too, I was getting savage. 'How can I tell?' I said, 'I haven't even seen the wreck yet—some months, no doubt.' All this talk seemed to me so futile. 'Some months,' he said. 'Well, let us say three months before we can make a start. Yes. That ought to do the affair.' I flung out of his hut (he lived all alone in a clay hut with a sort of verandah) muttering to myself my opinion of him. He was a chattering idiot. Afterwards I took it back when it was borne in upon me startlingly with what extreme nicety he had estimated the time requisite for the 'affair.'

"I went to work the next day, turning, so to speak, my back on that station. In that way only it seemed to me I could keep my hold on the redeeming facts of life. Still, one must look about sometimes; and then I saw this station, these men strolling aimlessly about in the sunshine of the yard. I asked myself sometimes what it all meant. They wandered here and there with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence. The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all, like a whiff from some corpse. By Jove! I've never seen anything so unreal in my life. And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion.

"Oh, these months! Well, never mind. Various things happened. One evening a grass shed full of calico, cotton prints, beads, and I don't know what else, burst into a blaze so suddenly that you would have thought the earth had opened to let an avenging fire consume all that trash. I was smoking my pipe quietly by my dismantled steamer, and saw them all cutting capers in the light, with their arms lifted high, when the stout man with moustaches came tearing down to the river, a tin pail in his hand, assured me that everybody was 'behaving splendidly, splendidly,' dipped about a quart of water and tore back again. I noticed there was a hole in the bottom of his pail.

"I strolled up. There was no hurry. You see the thing had gone off like a box of matches. It had been hopeless from the very first. The flame had leaped high, driven everybody back, lighted up everything—and collapsed. The shed was already a heap of embers glowing fiercely. A nigger was being beaten near by. They said he had caused the fire in some way; be that as it may, he was screeching most horribly. I saw him, later, for several days, sitting in a bit of shade looking very sick and trying to recover himself: afterwards he arose and went out—and the wilderness without a sound took him into its bosom again. As I approached the glow from the dark I found myself at the back of two men, talking. I heard the

name of Kurtz pronounced, then the words, 'take advantage of this unfortunate accident.' One of the men was the manager. I wished him a good evening. 'Did you ever see anything like it—eh? it is incredible,' he said, and walked off. The other man remained. He was a first-class agent, young, gentlemanly, a bit reserved, with a forked little beard and a hooked nose. He was standoffish with the other agents, and they on their side said he was the manager's spy upon them. As to me, I had hardly ever spoken to him before. We got into talk, and by and by we strolled away from the hissing ruins. Then he asked me to his room, which was in the main building of the station. He struck a match, and I perceived that this young aristocrat had not only a silver-mounted dressing-case but also a whole candle all to himself. Just at that time the manager was the only man supposed to have any right to candles. Native mats covered the clay walls; a collection of spears, assegais,[1] shields, knives, was hung up in trophies. The business entrusted to this fellow was the making of bricks—so I had been informed; but there wasn't a fragment of a brick anywhere in the station, and he had been there more than a year—waiting. It seems he could not make bricks without something, I don't know what—straw maybe. Anyway, it could not be found there, and as it was not likely to be sent from Europe, it did not appear clear to me what he was waiting for. An act of special creation perhaps. However, they were all waiting—all the sixteen or twenty pilgrims of them—for something; and upon my word it did not seem an uncongenial occupation, from the way they took it, though the only thing that ever came to them was disease—as far as I could see. They beguiled the time by backbiting and intriguing against each other in a foolish kind of way. There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came of it, of course. It was as unreal as everything else—as the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. They intrigued and slandered and hated each other only on that account—but as to effectually lifting a little finger—oh

no. By heavens! there is something after all in the world allowing one man to steal a horse while another must not look at a halter. Steal a horse straight out. Very well. He has done it. Perhaps he can ride. But there is a way of looking at a halter that would provoke the most charitable of saints into a kick.

"I had no idea why he wanted to be sociable, but as we chatted in there it suddenly occurred to me the fellow was trying to get at something—in fact, pumping me. He alluded constantly to Europe, to the people I was supposed to know there—putting leading questions as to my acquaintances in the sepulchral city, and so on. His little eyes glittered like mica[2] discs—with curiosity—though he tried to keep up a bit of superciliousness. At first I was astonished, but very soon I became awfully curious to see what he would find out from me. I couldn't possibly imagine what I had in me to make it worth his while. It was very pretty to see how he baffled himself, for in truth my body was full only of chills, and my head had nothing in it but that wretched steamboat business. It was evident he took me for a perfectly shameless prevaricator. At last he got angry, and, to conceal a movement of furious annoyance, he yawned. I rose. Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The background was sombre—almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister.

"It arrested me, and he stood by civilly, holding an empty half-pint champagne bottle (medical comforts) with the candle stuck in it. To my question he said Mr Kurtz had painted this—in this very station more than a year ago—while waiting for means to go to his trading-post. 'Tell me, pray,' said I, 'who is this Mr Kurtz?'

" 'The chief of the Inner Station,' he answered in a short tone, looking away. 'Much obliged,' I said, laughing. 'And you are the brickmaker of the Central Station. Every one knows that.' He was silent for a while. 'He is a prodigy,' he said at last. 'He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else. We want,' he began to declaim suddenly, 'for the guidance of the cause entrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide

sympathies, a singleness of purpose.' 'Who says that?' I asked. 'Lots of them,' he replied. 'Some even write that; and so *he* comes here, a special being, as you ought to know.' 'Why ought I to know?' I interrupted, really surprised. He paid no attention. 'Yes. To-day he is chief of the best station, next year he will be assistant-manager, two years more and . . . but I daresay you know what he will be in two years' time. You are of the new gang—the gang of virtue. The same people who sent him specially also recommended you. Oh, don't say no. I've my own eyes to trust.' Light dawned upon me. My dear aunt's influential acquaintances were producing an unexpected effect upon that young man. I nearly burst into a laugh. 'Do you read the Company's confidential correspondence?' I asked. He hadn't a word to say. It was great fun. 'When Mr Kurtz,' I continued severely, 'is General Manager, you won't have the opportunity.'

"He blew the candle out suddenly, and we went outside. The moon had risen. Black figures strolled about listlessly, pouring water on the glow, whence proceeded a sound of hissing; steam ascended in the moonlight; the beaten nigger groaned somewhere. 'What a row the brute makes!' said the indefatigable man with the moustaches, appearing near us. 'Serve him right. Transgression—punishment—bang! Pitiless, pitiless. That's the only way. This will prevent all conflagrations for the future. I was just telling the manager . . .' He noticed my companion, and became crestfallen all at once. 'Not in bed yet,' he said, with a kind of servile heartiness; 'it's so natural. Ha! Danger—agitation.' He vanished. I went on to the river-side, and the other followed me. I heard a scathing murmur at my ear, 'Heap of muffs—go to.' The pilgrims could be seen in knots gesticulating, discussing. Several had still their staves in their hands. I verily believe they took these sticks to bed with them. Beyond the fence the forest stood up spectrally in the moonlight, and through the dim stir, through the faint sounds of that lamentable courtyard, the silence of the land went home to one's very heart—its mystery, its greatness, the amazing reality of its concealed life. The hurt nigger moaned feebly somewhere near by, and then fetched a deep sigh that made me mend my pace away from there. I felt a hand

introducing itself under my arm. 'My dear sir,' said the fellow, 'I don't want to be misunderstood, and especially by you, who will see Mr Kurtz long before I can have that pleasure. I wouldn't like him to get a false idea of my disposition. . . .'

"I let him run on, this papier-mâché Mephistopheles,[3] and it seemed to me that if I tried I could poke my forefinger through him, and would find nothing inside but a little loose dirt, maybe. He, don't you see, had been planning to be assistant-manager by and by under the present man, and I could see that the coming of that Kurtz had upset them both not a little. He talked precipitately, and I did not try to stop him. I had my shoulders against the wreck of my steamer, hauled up on the slope like a carcass of some big river animal. The smell of mud, of primeval mud, by Jove! was in my nostrils, the high stillness of primeval forest was before my eyes; there were shiny patches on the black creek. The moon had spread over everything a thin layer of silver—over the rank grass, over the mud, upon the wall of matted vegetation standing higher than the wall of a temple, over the great river I could see through a sombre gap glittering, glittering, as it flowed broadly by without a murmur. All this was great, expectant, mute, while the man jabbered about himself. I wondered whether the stillness on the face of the immensity looking at us two were meant as an appeal or as a menace. What were we who had strayed in here? Could we handle that dumb thing, or would it handle us? I felt how big, how confoundedly big, was that thing that couldn't talk and perhaps was deaf as well. What was in there? I could see a little ivory coming out from there, and I had heard Mr Kurtz was in there. I had heard enough about it too—God knows! Yet somehow it didn't bring any image with it—no more than if I had been told an angel or a fiend was in there. I believed it in the same way one of you might believe there are inhabitants in the planet Mars. I knew once a Scotch sailmaker who was certain, dead sure, there were people in Mars. If you asked him for some idea how they looked and behaved, he would get shy and mutter something about 'walking on all-fours.' If you as much as smiled, he would—though a man of sixty—offer to

fight you. I would not have gone so far as to fight for Kurtz, but I went for him near enough to a lie. You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies—which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world—what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do. Temperament, I suppose. Well, I went near enough to it by letting the young fool there believe anything he liked to imagine as to my influence in Europe. I became in an instant as much of a pretence as the rest of the bewitched pilgrims. This simply because I had a notion it somehow would be of help to that Kurtz whom at the time I did not see—you understand. He was just a word for me. I did not see the man in the name any more than you do. Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream—making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams. . . ."

He was silent for a while.

". . . No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone. . . ."

He paused again as if reflecting, then added:

"Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know. . . ."

It had become so pitch dark that we listeners could hardly see one another. For a long time already he, sitting apart, had been no more to us than a voice. There was not a word from anybody. The others might have been asleep, but I was awake. I listened, I listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word, that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river.

". . . Yes—I let him run on," Marlow began again, "and think what he pleased about the powers that were behind me. I did! And there was nothing behind me! There was nothing but that wretched, old, mangled steamboat I was leaning against, while he talked fluently about 'the necessity for every man to get on.' 'And when one comes out here, you conceive, it is not to gaze at the moon.' Mr Kurtz was a 'universal genius,' but even a genius would find it easier to work with 'adequate tools—intelligent men.' He did not make bricks—why, there was a physical impossibility in the way—as I was well aware; and if he did secretarial work for the manager, it was because 'no sensible man rejects wantonly the confidence of his superiors.' Did I see it? I saw it. What more did I want? What I really wanted was rivets, by heaven! Rivets. To get on with the work—to stop the hole. Rivets I wanted. There were cases of them down at the coast—cases—piled up—burst—split! You kicked a loose rivet at every second step in that station yard on the hillside. Rivets had rolled into the grove of death. You could fill your pockets with rivets for the trouble of stooping down—and there wasn't one rivet to be found where it was wanted. We had plates that would do, but nothing to fasten them with. And every week the messenger, a lone negro, letter-bag on shoulder and staff in hand, left our station for the coast. And several times a week a coast caravan came in with trade goods—ghastly glazed calico that made you shudder only to look at it, glass beads value about a penny a quart, confounded spotted cotton handkerchiefs. And no rivets. Three carriers could have brought all that was wanted to set that steamboat afloat.

"He was becoming confidential now, but I fancy my unresponsive attitude must have exasperated him at last, for he judged it necessary to inform me he feared neither God nor devil, let alone any mere man. I said I could see that very well, but what I wanted was a certain quantity of rivets—and rivets were what really Mr Kurtz wanted, if he had only known it. Now letters went to the coast every week. . . . 'My dear sir,' he cried, 'I write from dictation.' I demanded rivets. There was a way—for an intelligent man. He changed his manner; became very cold, and suddenly began to talk about a

hippopotamus; wondered whether sleeping on board the steamer (I stuck to my salvage night and day) I wasn't disturbed. There was an old hippo that had the bad habit of getting out on the bank and roaming at night over the station grounds. The pilgrims used to turn out in a body and empty every rifle they could lay hands on at him. Some even had sat up o' nights for him. All this energy was wasted, though. 'That animal has a charmed life,' he said; 'but you can say this only of brutes in this country. No man—you apprehend me?—no man here bears a charmed life.' He stood there for a moment in the moonlight with his delicate hooked nose set a little askew, and his mica eyes glittering without a wink, then, with a curt Good-night, he strode off. I could see he was disturbed and considerably puzzled, which made me feel more hopeful than I had been for days. It was a great comfort to turn from that chap to my influential friend, the battered, twisted, ruined, tinpot steamboat. I clambered on board. She rang under my feet like an empty Huntley & Palmer biscuit-tin kicked along a gutter; she was nothing so solid in make, and rather less pretty in shape, but I had expended enough hard work on her to make me love her. No influential friend would have served me better. She had given me a chance to come out a bit—to find out what I could do. No, I don't like work. I had rather laze about and think of all the fine things that can be done. I don't like work—no man does—but I like what is in the work—the chance to find yourself. Your own reality—for yourself, not for others—what no other man can ever know. They can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means.

"I was not surprised to see somebody sitting aft, on the deck, with his legs dangling over the mud. You see I rather chummed with the few mechanics there were in that station, whom the other pilgrims naturally despised—on account of their imperfect manners, I suppose. This was the foreman—a boiler-maker by trade—a good worker. He was a lank, bony, yellow-faced man, with big intense eyes. His aspect was worried, and his head was as bald as the palm of my hand; but his hair in falling seemed to have stuck to his chin, and had prospered in the new locality, for his beard hung down to

his waist. He was a widower with six young children (he had left them in charge of a sister of his to come out there), and the passion of his life was pigeon-flying. He was an enthusiast and a connoisseur. He would rave about pigeons. After work hours he used sometimes to come over from his hut for a talk about his children and his pigeons; at work, when he had to crawl in the mud under the bottom of the steamboat, he would tie up that beard of his in a kind of white serviette[4] he brought for the purpose. It had loops to go over his ears. In the evening he could be seen squatted on the bank rinsing that wrapper in the creek with great care, then spreading it solemnly on a bush to dry.

"I slapped him on the back and shouted 'We shall have rivets!' He scrambled to his feet exclaiming 'No! Rivets!' as though he couldn't believe his ears. Then in a low voice, 'You . . . eh?' I don't know why we behaved like lunatics. I put my finger to the side of my nose and nodded mysteriously. 'Good for you!' he cried, snapped his fingers above his head, lifting one foot. I tried a jig. We capered on the iron deck. A frightful clatter came but of that hulk, and the virgin forest on the other bank of the creek sent it back in a thundering roll upon the sleeping station. It must have made some of the pilgrims sit up in their hovels. A dark figure obscured the lighted doorway of the manager's hut, vanished, then, a second or so after, the doorway itself vanished too. We stopped, and the silence driven away by the stamping of our feet flowed back again from the recesses of the land. The great wall of vegetation, an exuberant and entangled mass of trunks, branches, leaves, boughs, festoons, motionless in the moonlight, was like a rioting invasion of soundless life, a rolling wave of plants, piled up, crested, ready to topple over the creek, to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence. And it moved not. A deadened burst of mighty splashes and snorts reached us from afar, as though an ichthyosaurus[5] had been taking a bath of glitter in the great river. 'After all,' said the boiler-maker in a reasonable tone, 'why shouldn't we get the rivets?' Why not, indeed! I did not know of any reason why we shouldn't. 'They'll come in three weeks,' I said confidently.

"But they didn't. Instead of rivets there came an invasion, an infliction, a visitation. It came in sections during the next three weeks, each section headed by a donkey carrying a white man in new clothes and tan shoes, bowing from that elevation right and left to the impressed pilgrims. A quarrelsome band of footsore sulky niggers trod on the heels of the donkey; a lot of tents, campstools, tin boxes, white cases, brown bales would be shot down in the courtyard, and the air of mystery would deepen a little over the muddle of the station. Five such instalments came, with their absurd air of disorderly flight with the loot of innumerable outfit shops and provision stores, that, one would think, they were lugging, after a raid, into the wilderness for equitable division. It was an inextricable mess of things decent in themselves but that human folly made look like the spoils of thieving.

"This devoted band called itself the Eldorado[6] Exploring Expedition, and I believe they were sworn to secrecy. Their talk, however, was the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage; there was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world. To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe. Who paid the expenses of the noble enterprise I don't know; but the uncle of our manager was leader of that lot.

"In exterior he resembled a butcher in a poor neighbourhood, and his eyes had a look of sleepy cunning. He carried his fat paunch with ostentation on his short legs, and during the time his gang infested the station spoke to no one but his nephew. You could see these two roaming about all day long with their heads close together in an everlasting confab.[7]

"I had given up worrying myself about the rivets. One's capacity for that kind of folly is more limited than you would suppose. I said Hang!—and let things slide. I had plenty of time for meditation, and now and then I would give some thought to Kurtz. I wasn't very

interested in him. No. Still, I was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, would climb to the top after all, and how he would set about his work when there.”

Endnotes

- Note 1: Two-masted boat.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: River port on the south bank of the Thames twenty-four miles east (downriver) of London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Sir John Franklin (1786–1847), Arctic explorer who in 1845 commanded an expedition consisting of the ships *Erebus* and *Terror* in search of the Northwest Passage. The ships never returned. Sir Francis Drake (ca. 1540–1596), Elizabethan naval hero and explorer, sailed around the world on his ship *The Golden Hind.* Upon his return to England in 1580, Queen Elizabeth knighted Drake aboard his ship, loaded with captured Spanish treasure.
  Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  Private ships muscling in on the monopoly of the East India Company, which was founded in 1600, lost its trading monopoly in 1813, and transferred its governmental functions to the Crown in 1858. Deptford, on the south bank of the Thames, on the eastern edge of London, was once an important dockyard. Greenwich is on the south bank of the Thames immediately east of Deptford. Erith is eight miles farther east. “ ’Change”: the Stock Exchange.
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Navigable part of a river, through which ships enter and depart.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ancient Greek and Roman galley with three ranks of oars.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Wine from a famed wine-making district in Campania (Italy).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A city in northern Italy once directly on the Adriatic Sea and an important naval station in Roman times. It is now about six miles from the sea, connected with it by a canal.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Street in central London.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: "Hail! . . . Those who are about to die salute you" (Latin). The Roman gladiators' salute to the emperor on entering the arena.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Doctor who treats mental diseases. (The term has now been replaced by *psychiatrist.*)Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Eccentric person.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Tropical evergreen trees or shrubs with roots and stems forming dense thickets along riverbanks.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Wharf or pier.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fine wool fabric.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Made from the wool of a South American animal by that name.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Natives of Zanzibar, an island off the east coast of Africa, once part of the sultanate of Zanzibar and a British protectorate, now part of the independent state of Tanzania. Zanzibaris were used as mercenaries throughout Africa.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: One stone equals 14 pounds. The man weighed 224 pounds.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Slender iron-tipped spears.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Glassy mineral.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In German legend, a name for the demon to whom Faust sold his soul.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Table napkin.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Large prehistoric marine creature.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fabled land of gold (*el dorado*; "the gilded" [Spanish]) imagined by the Spanish conquistadors to exist in South America.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Confabulation, talk.Return to reference 7

2

"One evening as I was lying flat on the deck of my steamboat, I heard voices approaching—and there were the nephew and the uncle strolling along the bank. I laid my head on my arm again, and had nearly lost myself in a doze, when somebody said in my ear, as it were: 'I am as harmless as a little child, but I don't like to be dictated to. Am I the manager—or am I not? I was ordered to send him there. It's incredible.' . . . I became aware that the two were standing on the shore alongside the forepart of the steamboat, just below my head. I did not move; it did not occur to me to move: I was sleepy. 'It *is* unpleasant,' grunted the uncle. 'He has asked the Administration to be sent there,' said the other, 'with the idea of showing what he could do; and I was instructed accordingly. Look at the influence that man must have. Is it not frightful?' They both agreed it was frightful, then made several bizarre remarks: 'Make rain and fine weather—one man—the Council—by the nose'—bits of absurd sentences that got the better of my drowsiness, so that I had pretty near the whole of my wits about me when the uncle said, 'The climate may do away with this difficulty for you. Is he alone there?' 'Yes,' answered the manager; 'he sent his assistant down the river with a note to me in these terms: "Clear this poor devil out of the country, and don't bother sending more of that sort. I had rather be alone than have the kind of men you can dispose of with me." It was more than a year ago. Can you imagine such impudence?' 'Anything since then?' asked the other hoarsely. 'Ivory,' jerked the nephew; 'lots of it—prime sort—lots—most annoying, from him.' 'And with that?' questioned the heavy rumble. 'Invoice,' was the reply fired out, so to speak. Then silence. They had been talking about Kurtz.

"I was broad awake by this time, but, lying perfectly at ease, remained still, having no inducement to change my position. 'How did that ivory come all this way?' growled the elder man, who seemed very vexed. The other explained that it had come with a fleet of canoes in charge of an English half-caste clerk Kurtz had with him; that Kurtz had apparently intended to return himself, the

station being by that time bare of goods and stores, but after coming three hundred miles, had suddenly decided to go back, which he started to do alone in a small dugout with four paddlers, leaving the half-caste to continue down the river with the ivory. The two fellows there seemed astounded at anybody attempting such a thing. They were at a loss for an adequate motive. As for me, I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time. It was a distinct glimpse: the dugout, four paddling savages, and the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, on relief, on thoughts of home—perhaps; setting his face towards the depths of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station. I did not know the motive. Perhaps he was just simply a fine fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake. His name, you understand, had not been pronounced once. He was 'that man.' The half-caste, who, as far as I could see, had conducted a difficult trip with great prudence and pluck, was invariably alluded to as 'that scoundrel.' The 'scoundrel' had reported that the 'man' had been very ill—had recovered imperfectly. . . . The two below me moved away then a few paces, and stroked back and forth at some little distance. I heard: 'Military post—doctor—two hundred miles—quite alone now—unavoidable delays—nine months—no news—strange rumours.' They approached again, just as the manager was saying, 'No one, as far as I know, unless a species of wandering trader—a pestilential fellow, snapping ivory from the natives.' Who was it they were talking about now? I gathered in snatches that this was some man supposed to be in Kurtz's district, and of whom the manager did not approve. 'We will not be free from unfair competition till one of these fellows is hanged for an example,' he said. 'Certainly,' grunted the other; 'get him hanged! Why not? Anything—anything can be done in this country. That's what I say; nobody here, you understand, *here*, can endanger your position. And why? You stand the climate—you outlast them all. The danger is in Europe; but there before I left I took care to—' They moved off and whispered, then their voices rose again. 'The extraordinary series of delays is not my fault. I did my possible.'[8] The fat man sighed, 'Very sad.' 'And the pestiferous absurdity of his talk,'

continued the other; 'he bothered me enough when he was here. "Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanising, improving, instructing." Conceive you—that ass! And he wants to be manager! No, it's—' Here he got choked by excessive indignation, and I lifted my head the least bit. I was surprised to see how near they were—right under me. I could have spat upon their hats. They were looking on the ground, absorbed in thought. The manager was switching his leg with a slender twig: his sagacious relative lifted his head. 'You have been well since you came out this time?' he asked. The other gave a start. 'Who? I? Oh! Like a charm—like a charm. But the rest—oh, my goodness! All sick. They die so quick, too, that I haven't the time to send them out of the country—it's incredible!' 'H'm. Just so,' grunted the uncle. 'Ah! my boy, trust to this—I say, trust to this.' I saw him extend his short flipper of an arm for a gesture that took in the forest, the creek, the mud, the river—seemed to beckon with a dishonouring flourish before the sunlit face of the land a treacherous appeal to the lurking death, to the hidden evil, to the profound darkness of its heart. It was so startling that I leaped to my feet and looked back at the edge of the forest, as though I had expected an answer of some sort to that black display of confidence. You know the foolish notions that come to one sometimes. The high stillness confronted these two figures with its ominous patience, waiting for the passing away of a fantastic invasion.

"They swore aloud together—out of sheer fright, I believe—then, pretending not to know anything of my existence, turned back to the station. The sun was low; and leaning forward side by side, they seemed to be tugging painfully uphill their two ridiculous shadows of unequal length, that trailed behind them slowly over the tall grass without bending a single blade.

"In a few days the Eldorado Expedition went into the patient wilderness, that closed upon it as the sea closes over a diver. Long afterwards the news came that all the donkeys were dead. I know nothing as to the fate of the less valuable animals. They, no doubt,

like the rest of us, found what they deserved. I did not inquire. I was then rather excited at the prospect of meeting Kurtz very soon. When I say very soon I mean it comparatively. It was just two months from the day we left the creek when we came to the bank below Kurtz's station.

"Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands; you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert, and butted all day long against shoals, trying to find the channel, till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once—somewhere—far away—in another existence perhaps. There were moments when one's past came back to one, as it will sometimes when you have not a moment to spare to yourself; but it came in the shape of an unrestful and noisy dream, remembered with wonder amongst the overwhelming realities of this strange world of plants, and water, and silence. And this stillness of life did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention. It looked at you with a vengeful aspect. I got used to it afterwards; I did not see it any more; I had no time. I had to keep guessing at the channel; I had to discern, mostly by inspiration, the signs of hidden banks; I watched for sunken stones; I was learning to clap my teeth smartly before my heart flew out, when I shaved by a fluke some infernal sly old snag that would have ripped the life out of the tin-pot steamboat and drowned all the pilgrims; I had to keep a look-out for the signs of dead wood we could cut up in the night for next day's steaming. When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it

all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes for—what is it? half a crown a tumble—"

"Try to be civil, Marlow," growled a voice, and I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself.

"I beg your pardon. I forgot the heartache which makes up the rest of the price. And indeed what does the price matter, if the trick be well done? You do your tricks very well. And I didn't do badly either, since I managed not to sink that steamboat on my first trip. It's a wonder to me yet. Imagine a blindfolded man set to drive a van over a bad road. I sweated and shivered over that business considerably, I can tell you. After all, for a seaman, to scrape the bottom of the thing that's supposed to float all the time under his care is the unpardonable sin. No one may know of it, but you never forget the thump—eh? A blow on the very heart. You remember it, you dream of it, you wake up at night and think of it—years after—and go hot and cold all over. I don't pretend to say that steamboat floated all the time. More than once she had to wade for a bit, with twenty cannibals splashing around and pushing. We had enlisted some of these chaps on the way for a crew. Fine fellows—cannibals—in their place. They were men one could work with, and I am grateful to them. And, after all, they did not eat each other before my face: they had brought along a provision of hippo-meat which went rotten, and made the mystery of the wilderness stink in my nostrils. Phoo! I can sniff it now. I had the manager on board and three or four pilgrims with their staves—all complete. Sometimes we came upon a station close by the bank, clinging to the skirts of the unknown, and the white men rushing out of a tumble-down hovel, with great gestures of joy and surprise and welcome, seemed very strange—had the appearance of being held there captive by a spell. The word 'ivory' would ring in the air for a while—and on we went again into the silence, along empty reaches, round the still bends, between the high walls of our winding way, reverberating in hollow claps the ponderous beat of the stern-wheel. Trees, trees, millions of trees, massive, immense, running up high; and at their foot, hugging

the bank against the stream, crept the little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico. It made you feel very small, very lost, and yet it was not altogether depressing, that feeling. After all, if you were small, the grimy beetle crawled on—which was just what you wanted it to do. Where the pilgrims imagined it crawled to I don't know. To some place where they expected to get something, I bet! For me it crawled towards Kurtz—exclusively; but when the steam-pipes started leaking we crawled very slow. The reaches opened before us and closed behind, as if the forest had stepped leisurely across the water to bar the way for our return. We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness. It was very quiet there. At night sometimes the roll of drums behind the curtain of trees would run up the river and remain sustained faintly, as if hovering in the air high over our heads, till the first break of day. Whether it meant war, peace, or prayer we could not tell. The dawns were heralded by the descent of a chill stillness; the woodcutters slept, their fires burned low; the snapping of a twig would make you start. We were wanderers on a prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil. But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse. We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember, because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign—and no memories.

"The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage—who can tell?—but truth—truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder—the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff—with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags—rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row—is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced. Of course, a fool, what with sheer fright and fine sentiments, is always safe. Who's that grunting? You wonder I didn't go ashore for a howl and a dance? Well, no—I didn't. Fine sentiments, you say? Fine sentiments be hanged! I had no time. I had to mess about with white-lead and strips of woollen blanket helping to put bandages on those leaky steam-pipes—I tell you. I had to watch the steering, and circumvent those snags, and get the tin-pot along by hook or by crook. There was surface-truth enough in these things to save a wiser man. And between whiles I had to look after the savage who was fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying

as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap. He squinted at the steam-gauge and at the water-gauge with an evident effort of intrepidity—and he had filed teeth too, the poor devil, and the wool of his pate shaved into queer patterns, and three ornamental scars on each of his cheeks. He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank, instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge. He was useful because he had been instructed; and what he knew was this—that should the water in that transparent thing disappear, the evil spirit inside the boiler would get angry through the greatness of his thirst, and take a terrible vengeance. So he sweated and fired up and watched the glass fearfully (with an impromptu charm, made of rags, tied to his arm, and a piece of polished bone, as big as a watch, stuck flatways through his lower lip), while the wooded banks slipped past us slowly, the short noise was left behind, the interminable miles of silence—and we crept on, towards Kurtz. But the snags were thick, the water was treacherous and shallow, the boiler seemed indeed to have a sulky devil in it, and thus neither that fireman nor I had any time to peer into our creepy thoughts.

"Some fifty miles below the Inner Station we came upon a hut of reeds, an inclined and melancholy pole, with the unrecognisable tatters of what had been a flag of some sort flying from it, and a neatly stacked wood-pile. This was unexpected. We came to the bank, and on the stack of firewood found a flat piece of board with some faded pencil-writing on it. When deciphered it said: 'Wood for you. Hurry up. Approach cautiously.' There was a signature, but it was illegible—not Kurtz—a much longer word. Hurry up. Where? Up the river? 'Approach cautiously.' We had not done so. But the warning could not have been meant for the place where it could be only found after approach. Something was wrong above. But what—and how much? That was the question. We commented adversely upon the imbecility of that telegraphic style. The bush around said nothing, and would not let us look very far, either. A torn curtain of

red twill hung in the doorway of the hut, and flapped sadly in our faces. The dwelling was dismantled; but we could see a white man had lived there not very long ago. There remained a rude table—a plank on two posts; a heap of rubbish reposed in a dark corner, and by the door I picked up a book. It had lost its covers, and the pages had been thumbed into a state of extremely dirty softness; but the back had been lovingly stitched afresh with white cotton thread, which looked clean yet. It was an extraordinary find. Its title was, *An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship*, by a man Towser, Towson—some such name—Master in His Majesty's Navy. The matter looked dreary reading enough, with illustrative diagrams and repulsive tables of figures, and the copy was sixty years old. I handled this amazing antiquity with the greatest possible tenderness, lest it should dissolve in my hands. Within, Towson or Towser was inquiring earnestly into the breaking strain of ships' chains and tackle, and other such matters. Not a very enthralling book; but at the first glance you could see there a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work, which made these humble pages, thought out so many years ago, luminous with another than a professional light. The simple old sailor, with his talk of chains and purchases, made me forget the jungle and the pilgrims in a delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real. Such a book being there was wonderful enough; but still more astounding were the notes pencilled in the margin, and plainly referring to the text. I couldn't believe my eyes! They were in cipher! Yes, it looked like cipher. Fancy a man lugging with him a book of that description into this nowhere and studying it—and making notes—in cipher at that! It was an extravagant mystery.

"I had been dimly aware for some time of a worrying noise, and when I lifted my eyes I saw the wood-pile was gone, and the manager, aided by all the pilgrims, was shouting at me from the river-side. I slipped the book into my pocket. I assure you to leave off reading was like tearing myself away from the shelter of an old and solid friendship.

"I started the lame engine ahead. 'It must be this miserable trader—this intruder,' exclaimed the manager, looking back malevolently at the place we had left. 'He must be English,' I said. 'It will not save him from getting into trouble if he is not careful,' muttered the manager darkly. I observed with assumed innocence that no man was safe from trouble in this world.

"The current was more rapid now, the steamer seemed at her last gasp, the stern-wheel flopped languidly, and I caught myself listening on tiptoe for the next beat of the float,[9] for in sober truth I expected the wretched thing to give up every moment. It was like watching the last flickers of a life. But still we crawled. Sometimes I would pick out a tree a little way ahead to measure our progress towards Kurtz by, but I lost it invariably before we got abreast. To keep the eyes so long on one thing was too much for human patience. The manager displayed a beautiful resignation. I fretted and fumed and took to arguing with myself whether or no I would talk openly with Kurtz; but before I could come to any conclusion it occurred to me that my speech or my silence, indeed any action of mine, would be a mere futility. What did it matter what any one knew or ignored? What did it matter who was manager? One gets sometimes such a flash of insight. The essentials of this affair lay deep under the surface, beyond my reach, and beyond my power of meddling.

"Towards the evening of the second day we judged ourselves about eight miles from Kurtz's station. I wanted to push on; but the manager looked grave, and told me the navigation up there was so dangerous that it would be advisable, the sun being very low already, to wait where we were till next morning. Moreover, he pointed out that if the warning to approach cautiously were to be followed, we must approach in daylight—not at dusk, or in the dark. This was sensible enough. Eight miles meant nearly three hours' steaming for us, and I could also see suspicious ripples at the upper end of the reach. Nevertheless, I was annoyed beyond expression at the delay, and most unreasonably too, since one night more could not matter much after so many months. As we had plenty of wood,

and caution was the word, I brought up in the middle of the stream. The reach was narrow, straight, with high sides like a railway cutting. The dusk came gliding into it long before the sun had set. The current ran smooth and swift, but a dumb immobility sat on the banks. The living trees, lashed together by the creepers and every living bush of the undergrowth, might have been changed into stone, even to the slenderest twig, to the lightest leaf. It was not sleep—it seemed unnatural, like a state of trance. Not the faintest sound of any kind could be heard. You looked on amazed, and began to suspect yourself of being deaf—then the night came suddenly, and struck you blind as well. About three in the morning some large fish leaped, and the loud splash made me jump as though a gun had been fired. When the sun rose there was a white fog, very warm and clammy, and more blinding than the night. It did not shift or drive; it was just there, standing all round you like something solid. At eight or nine, perhaps, it lifted as a shutter lifts. We had a glimpse of the towering multitude of trees, of the immense matted jungle, with the blazing little ball of the sun hanging over it—all perfectly still—and then the white shutter came down again, smoothly, as if sliding in greased grooves. I ordered the chain, which we had begun to heave in, to be paid out again. Before it stopped running with a muffled rattle, a cry, a very loud cry, as of infinite desolation, soared slowly in the opaque air. It ceased. A complaining clamour, modulated in savage discords, filled our ears. The sheer unexpectedness of it made my hair stir under my cap. I don’t know how it struck the others: to me it seemed as though the mist itself had screamed, so suddenly, and apparently from all sides at once, did this tumultuous and mournful uproar arise. It culminated in a hurried outbreak of almost intolerably excessive shrieking, which stopped short, leaving us stiffened in a variety of silly attitudes, and obstinately listening to the nearly as appalling and excessive silence. ‘Good God! What is the meaning—?’ stammered at my elbow one of the pilgrims—a little fat man, with sandy hair and red whiskers, who wore side-spring boots, and pink pyjamas tucked into his socks. Two others remained open-mouthed a whole minute, then dashed into the little cabin, to rush out incontinently and stand

darting scared glances, with Winchesters at 'ready' in their hands. What we could see was just the steamer we were on, her outlines blurred as though she had been on the point of dissolving, and a misty strip of water, perhaps two feet broad, around her—and that was all. The rest of the world was nowhere, as far as our eyes and ears were concerned. Just nowhere. Gone, disappeared; swept off without leaving a whisper or a shadow behind.

"I went forward, and ordered the chain to be hauled in short, so as to be ready to trip the anchor and move the steamboat at once if necessary. 'Will they attack?' whispered an awed voice. 'We will all be butchered in this fog,' murmured another. The faces twitched with the strain, the hands trembled slightly, the eyes forgot to wink. It was very curious to see the contrast of expressions of the white men and of the black fellows of our crew, who were as much strangers to that part of the river as we, though their homes were only eight hundred miles away. The whites, of course greatly discomposed, had besides a curious look of being painfully shocked by such an outrageous row. The others had an alert, naturally interested expression; but their faces were essentially quiet, even those of the one or two who grinned as they hauled at the chain. Several exchanged short, grunting phrases, which seemed to settle the matter to their satisfaction. Their headman, a young, broad-chested black, severely draped in dark-blue fringed cloths, with fierce nostrils and his hair all done up artfully in oily ringlets, stood near me. 'Aha!' I said, just for good fellowship's sake. 'Catch 'im,' he snapped, with a bloodshot widening of his eyes and a flash of sharp teeth—'catch 'im. Give 'im to us.' 'To you, eh?' I asked; 'what would you do with them?' 'Eat 'im!' he said curtly, and, leaning his elbow on the rail, looked out into the fog in a dignified and profoundly pensive attitude. I would no doubt have been properly horrified, had it not occurred to me that he and his chaps must be very hungry: that they must have been growing increasingly hungry for at least this month past. They had been engaged for six months (I don't think a single one of them had any clear idea of time, as we at the end of countless ages have. They still belonged to the beginnings of time—

had no inherited experience to teach them, as it were), and of course, as long as there was a piece of paper written over in accordance with some farcical law or other made down the river, it didn't enter anybody's head to trouble how they would live. Certainly they had brought with them some rotten hippo-meat, which couldn't have lasted very long, anyway, even if the pilgrims hadn't, in the midst of a shocking hullabaloo, thrown a considerable quantity of it overboard. It looked like a high-handed proceeding; but it was really a case of legitimate self-defence. You can't breathe dead hippo waking, sleeping, and eating, and at the same time keep your precarious grip on existence. Besides that, they had given them every week three pieces of brass wire, each about nine inches long; and the theory was they were to buy their provisions with that currency in river-side villages. You can see how *that* worked. There were either no villages, or the people were hostile, or the director, who like the rest of us fed out of tins, with an occasional old he-goat thrown in, didn't want to stop the steamer for some more or less recondite reasons. So, unless they swallowed the wire itself, or made loops of it to snare the fishes with, I don't see what good their extravagant salary could be to them. I must say it was paid with a regularity worthy of a large and honourable trading company. For the rest, the only thing to eat—though it didn't look eatable in the least—I saw in their possession was a few lumps of some stuff like half-cooked dough, of a dirty lavender colour, they kept wrapped in leaves, and now and then swallowed a piece of, but so small that it seemed done more for the look of the thing than for any serious purpose of sustenance. Why in the name of all the gnawing devils of hunger they didn't go for us—they were thirty to five—and have a good tuck-in for once, amazes me now when I think of it. They were big powerful men, with not much capacity to weigh the consequences, with courage, with strength, even yet, though their skins were no longer glossy and their muscles no longer hard. And I saw that something restraining, one of those human secrets that baffle probability, had come into play there. I looked at them with a swift quickening of interest—not because it occurred to me I might be eaten by them before very long, though I own to you that just

then I perceived—in a new light, as it were—how unwholesome the pilgrims looked, and I hoped, yes, I positively hoped, that my aspect was not so—what shall I say?—so—unappetising: a touch of fantastic vanity which fitted well with the dream-sensation that pervaded all my days at that time. Perhaps I had a little fever too. One can't live with one's finger everlastingly on one's pulse. I had often 'a little fever,' or a little touch of other things—the playful paw-strokes of the wilderness, the preliminary trifling before the more serious onslaught which came in due course. Yes; I looked at them as you would on any human being, with a curiosity of their impulses, motives, capacities, weaknesses, when brought to the test of an inexorable physical necessity. Restraint! What possible restraint? Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear—or some kind of primitive honour? No fear can stand up to hunger, no patience can wear it out, disgust simply does not exist where hunger is; and as to superstition, beliefs, and what you may call principles, they are less than chaff in a breeze. Don't you know the devilry of lingering starvation, its exasperating torment, its black thoughts, its sombre and brooding ferocity? Well, I do. It takes a man all his inborn strength to fight hunger properly. It's really easier to face bereavement, dishonour, and the perdition of one's soul—than this kind of prolonged hunger. Sad, but true. And these chaps too had no earthly reason for any kind of scruple. Restraint! I would just as soon have expected restraint from a hyena prowling amongst the corpses of a battlefield. But there was the fact facing me—the fact dazzling, to be seen, like the foam on the depths of the sea, like a ripple on an unfathomable enigma, a mystery greater—when I thought of it—than the curious, inexplicable note of desperate grief in this savage clamour that had swept by us on the river-bank, behind the blind whiteness of the fog.

"Two pilgrims were quarrelling in hurried whispers as to which bank. 'Left.' 'No, no; how can you? Right, right, of course.' 'It is very serious,' said the manager's voice behind me; 'I would be desolated if anything should happen to Mr Kurtz before we came up.' I looked at him, and had not the slightest doubt he was sincere. He was just

the kind of man who would wish to preserve appearances. That was his restraint. But when he muttered something about going on at once, I did not even take the trouble to answer him. I knew, and he knew, that it was impossible. Were we to let go our hold of the bottom, we would be absolutely in the air—in space. We wouldn't be able to tell where we were going to—whether up or down stream, or across—till we fetched against one bank or the other—and then we wouldn't know at first which it was. Of course I made no move. I had no mind for a smash-up. You couldn't imagine a more deadly place for a shipwreck. Whether drowned at once or not, we were sure to perish speedily in one way or another. 'I authorise you to take all the risks,' he said, after a short silence. 'I refuse to take any,' I said shortly; which was just the answer he expected, though its tone might have surprised him. 'Well, I must defer to your judgment. You are captain,' he said, with marked civility. I turned my shoulder to him in sign of my appreciation, and looked into the fog. How long would it last? It was the most hopeless lookout. The approach to this Kurtz grubbing for ivory in the wretched bush was beset by as many dangers as though he had been an enchanted princess sleeping in a fabulous castle. 'Will they attack, do you think?' asked the manager, in a confidential tone.

"I did not think they would attack, for several obvious reasons. The thick fog was one. If they left the bank in their canoes they would get lost in it, as we would be if we attempted to move. Still, I had also judged the jungle of both banks quite impenetrable—and yet eyes were in it, eyes that had seen us. The river-side bushes were certainly very thick; but the undergrowth behind was evidently penetrable. However, during the short lift I had seen no canoes anywhere in the reach—certainly not abreast of the steamer. But what made the idea of attack inconceivable to me was the nature of the noise—of the cries we had heard. They had not the fierce character boding of immediate hostile intention. Unexpected, wild, and violent as they had been, they had given me an irresistible impression of sorrow. The glimpse of the steamboat had for some reason filled those savages with unrestrained grief. The danger, if

any, I expounded, was from our proximity to a great human passion let loose. Even extreme grief may ultimately vent itself in violence—but more generally takes the form of apathy. . . .

"You should have seen the pilgrims stare! They had no heart to grin, or even to revile me; but I believe they thought me gone mad—with fright, maybe. I delivered a regular lecture. My dear boys, it was no good bothering. Keep a look-out? Well, you may guess I watched the fog for the signs of lifting as a cat watches a mouse; but for anything else our eyes were of no more use to us than if we had been buried miles deep in a heap of cotton-wool. It felt like it too—choking, warm, stifling. Besides, all I said, though it sounded extravagant, was absolutely true to fact. What we afterwards alluded to as an attack was really an attempt at repulse. The action was very far from being aggressive—it was not even defensive, in the usual sense: it was undertaken under the stress of desperation, and in its essence was purely protective.

"It developed itself, I should say, two hours after the fog lifted, and its commencement was at a spot, roughly speaking, about a mile and a half below Kurtz's station. We had just floundered and flopped round a bend, when I saw an islet, a mere grassy hummock of bright green, in the middle of the stream. It was the only thing of the kind; but as we opened the reach more, I perceived it was the head of a long sandbank, or rather of a chain of shallow patches stretching down the middle of the river. They were discoloured, just awash, and the whole lot was seen just under the water, exactly as a man's backbone is seen running down the middle of his back under the skin. Now, as far as I did see, I could go to the right or to the left of this. I didn't know either channel, of course. The banks looked pretty well alike, the depth appeared the same; but as I had been informed the station was on the west side, I naturally headed for the western passage.

"No sooner had we fairly entered it than I became aware it was much narrower than I had supposed. To the left of us there was the long uninterrupted shoal,[1] and to the right a high steep bank heavily overgrown with bushes. Above the bush the trees stood in serried

ranks. The twigs overhung the current thickly, and from distance to distance a large limb of some tree projected rigidly over the stream. It was then well on in the afternoon, the face of the forest was gloomy, and a broad strip of shadow had already fallen on the water. In this shadow we steamed up—very slowly, as you may imagine. I sheered her well inshore—the water being deepest near the bank, as the sounding-pole informed me.

"One of my hungry and forbearing friends was sounding in the bows just below me. This steamboat was exactly like a decked scow. On the deck there were two little teak-wood houses, with doors and windows. The boiler was in the fore-end, and the machinery right astern. Over the whole there was a light roof, supported on stanchions. The funnel projected through that roof, and in front of the funnel a small cabin built of light planks served for a pilot-house. It contained a couch, two camp-stools, a loaded Martini-Henry[2] leaning in one corner, a tiny table, and the steering-wheel. It had a wide door in front and a broad shutter at each side. All these were always thrown open, of course. I spent my days perched up there on the extreme fore-end of that roof, before the door. At night I slept, or tried to, on the couch. An athletic black belonging to some coast tribe, and educated by my poor predecessor, was the helmsman. He sported a pair of brass earrings, wore a blue cloth wrapper from the waist to the ankles, and thought all the world of himself. He was the most unstable kind of fool I had ever seen. He steered with no end of a swagger while you were by; but if he lost sight of you, he became instantly the prey of an abject funk, and would let that cripple of a steamboat get the upper hand of him in a minute.

"I was looking down at the sounding-pole, and feeling much annoyed to see at each try a little more of it stick out of that river, when I saw my poleman give up the business suddenly, and stretch himself flat on the deck, without even taking the trouble to haul his pole in. He kept hold on it though, and it trailed in the water. At the same time the fireman, whom I could also see below me, sat down abruptly before his furnace and ducked his head. I was amazed. Then I had to look at the river mighty quick, because there was a

snag in the fairway. Sticks, little sticks, were flying about—thick; they were whizzing before my nose, dropping below me, striking behind me against my pilot-house. All this time the river, the shore, the woods, were very quiet—perfectly quiet. I could only hear the heavy splashing thump of the stern-wheel and the patter of these things. We cleared the snag clumsily. Arrows, by Jove! We were being shot at! I stepped in quickly to close the shutter on the landside. That fool-helmsman, his hands on the spokes, was lifting his knees high, stamping his feet, champing his mouth, like a reined-in horse. Confound him! And we were staggering within ten feet of the bank. I had to lean right out to swing the heavy shutter, and I saw a face amongst the leaves on the level with my own, looking at me very fierce and steady; and then suddenly, as though a veil had been removed from my eyes, I made out, deep in the tangled gloom, naked breasts, arms, legs, glaring eyes—the bush was swarming with human limbs in movement, glistening, of bronze colour. The twigs shook, swayed, and rustled, the arrows flew out of them, and then the shutter came to. 'Steer her straight,' I said to the helmsman. He held his head rigid, face forward; but his eyes rolled, he kept on lifting and setting down his feet gently, his mouth foamed a little. 'Keep quiet!' I said in a fury. I might just as well have ordered a tree not to sway in the wind. I darted out. Below me there was a great scuffle of feet on the iron deck; confused exclamations; a voice screamed, 'Can you turn back?' I caught sight of a V-shaped ripple on the water ahead. What? Another snag! A fusillade burst out under my feet. The pilgrims had opened with their Winchesters, and were simply squirting lead into that bush. A deuce of a lot of smoke came up and drove slowly forward. I swore at it. Now I couldn't see the ripple or the snag either. I stood in the doorway, peering, and the arrows came in swarms. They might have been poisoned, but they looked as though they wouldn't kill a cat. The bush began to howl. Our wood-cutters raised a warlike whoop; the report of a rifle just at my back deafened me. I glanced over my shoulder, and the pilot-house was yet full of noise and smoke when I made a dash at the wheel. The fool-nigger had dropped everything, to throw the shutter open and let off that Martini-Henry. He stood before the wide

opening, glaring, and I yelled at him to come back, while I straightened the sudden twist out of that steamboat. There was no room to turn even if I had wanted to, the snag was somewhere very near ahead in that confounded smoke, there was no time to lose, so I just crowded her into the bank—right into the bank, where I knew the water was deep.

"We tore slowly along the overhanging bushes in a whirl of broken twigs and flying leaves. The fusillade below stopped short, as I had foreseen it would when the squirts got empty. I threw my head back to a glinting whizz that traversed the pilot-house, in at one shutter-hole and out at the other. Looking past that mad helmsman, who was shaking the empty rifle and yelling at the shore, I saw vague forms of men running bent double, leaping, gliding, distinct, incomplete, evanescent. Something big appeared in the air before the shutter, the rifle went overboard, and the man stepped back swiftly, looked at me over his shoulder in an extraordinary, profound, familiar manner, and fell upon my feet. The side of his head hit the wheel twice, and the end of what appeared a long cane clattered round and knocked over a little camp-stool. It looked as though after wrenching that thing from somebody ashore he had lost his balance in the effort. The thin smoke had blown away, we were clear of the snag, and looking ahead I could see that in another hundred yards or so I would be free to sheer off, away from the bank; but my feet felt so very warm and wet that I had to look down. The man had rolled on his back and stared straight up at me; both his hands clutched that cane. It was the shaft of a spear that, either thrown or lunged through the opening, had caught him in the side just below the ribs; the blade had gone in out of sight, after making a frightful gash; my shoes were full; a pool of blood lay very still, gleaming dark-red under the wheel; his eyes shone with an amazing lustre. The fusillade burst out again. He looked at me anxiously, gripping the spear like something precious, with an air of being afraid I would try to take it away from him. I had to make an effort to free my eyes from his gaze and attend to the steering. With one hand I felt above my head for the line of the steam whistle, and

jerked out screech after screech hurriedly. The tumult of angry and warlike yells was checked instantly, and then from the depths of the woods went out such a tremulous and prolonged wail of mournful fear and utter despair as may be imagined to follow the flight of the last hope from the earth. There was a great commotion in the bush; the shower of arrows stopped, a few dropping shots rang out sharply—then silence, in which the languid beat of the stern-wheel came plainly to my ears. I put the helm hard a-starboard at the moment when the pilgrim in pink pyjamas, very hot and agitated, appeared in the doorway. 'The manager sends me—' he began in an official tone, and stopped short. 'Good God!' he said, glaring at the wounded man.

"We two whites stood over him, and his lustrous and inquiring glance enveloped us both. I declare it looked as though he would presently put to us some question in an understandable language; but he died without uttering a sound, without moving a limb, without twitching a muscle. Only in the very last moment, as though in response to some sign we could not see, to some whisper we could not hear, he frowned heavily, and that frown gave to his black death-mask an inconceivably sombre, brooding, and menacing expression. The lustre of inquiring glance faded swiftly into vacant glassiness. 'Can you steer?' I asked the agent eagerly. He looked very dubious; but I made a grab at his arm, and he understood at once I meant him to steer whether or no. To tell you the truth, I was morbidly anxious to change my shoes and socks. 'He is dead,' murmured the fellow, immensely impressed. 'No doubt about it,' said I, tugging like mad at the shoe-laces. 'And by the way, I suppose Mr Kurtz is dead as well by this time.'

"For the moment that was the dominant thought. There was a sense of extreme disappointment, as though I had found out I had been striving after something altogether without a substance. I couldn't have been more disgusted if I had travelled all this way for the sole purpose of talking with Mr Kurtz. Talking with . . . I flung one shoe overboard, and became aware that that was exactly what I had been looking forward to—a talk with Kurtz. I made the strange

discovery that I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing. I didn't say to myself, 'Now I will never see him,' or 'Now I will never shake him by the hand,' but, 'Now I will never hear him.' The man presented himself as a voice. Not of course that I did not connect him with some sort of action. Hadn't I been told in all the tones of jealousy and admiration that he had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together? That was not the point. The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words—the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness.

"The other shoe went flying unto the devil-god of that river. I thought, By Jove! it's all over. We are too late; he has vanished—the gift has vanished, by means of some spear, arrow, or club. I will never hear that chap speak after all—and my sorrow had a startling extravagance of emotion, even such as I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush. I couldn't have felt more of lonely desolation somehow, had I been robbed of a belief or had missed my destiny in life. . . . Why do you sigh in this beastly way, somebody? Absurd? Well, absurd. Good Lord! mustn't a man ever—Here, give me some tobacco." . . .

There was a pause of profound stillness, then a match flared, and Marlow's lean face appeared, worn, hollow, with downward folds and dropped eyelids, with an aspect of concentrated attention; and as he took vigorous draws at his pipe, it seemed to retreat and advance out of the night in the regular flicker of the tiny flame. The match went out.

"Absurd!" he cried. "This is the worst of trying to tell . . . Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and temperature normal—you hear—normal from year's end to year's end. And you say, Absurd! Absurd

be—exploded! Absurd! My dear boys, what can you expect from a man who out of sheer nervousness had just flung overboard a pair of new shoes? Now I think of it, it is amazing I did not shed tears. I am, upon the whole, proud of my fortitude. I was cut to the quick at the idea of having lost the inestimable privilege of listening to the gifted Kurtz. Of course I was wrong. The privilege was waiting for me. Oh yes, I heard more than enough. And I was right, too. A voice. He was very little more than a voice. And I heard—him—it—this voice—other voices—all of them were so little more than voices—and the memory of that time itself lingers around me, impalpable, like a dying vibration of one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without any kind of sense. Voices, voices—even the girl herself—now—"

He was silent for a long time.

"I laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie," he began suddenly. "Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it—completely. They—the women I mean—are out of it—should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse. Oh, she had to be out of it. You should have heard the disinterred body of Mr Kurtz saying, 'My Intended.' You would have perceived directly then how completely she was out of it. And the lofty frontal bone of Mr Kurtz! They say the hair goes on growing sometimes, but this—ah—specimen was impressively bald. The wilderness had patted him on the head, and, behold, it was like a ball—an ivory ball; it had caressed him, and—lo!—he had withered; it had taken him, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite. Ivory? I should think so. Heaps of it, stacks of it. The old mud shanty was bursting with it. You would think there was not a single tusk left either above or below the ground in the whole country. 'Mostly fossil,' the manager had remarked disparagingly. It was no more fossil than I am; but they call it fossil when it is dug up. It appears these niggers do bury the tusks sometimes—but evidently they couldn't bury this parcel deep

enough to save the gifted Mr Kurtz from his fate. We filled the steamboat with it, and had to pile a lot on the deck. Thus he could see and enjoy as long as he could see, because the appreciation of this favour had remained with him to the last. You should have heard him say, 'My ivory.' Oh yes, I heard him. 'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my—' everything belonged to him. It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places. Everything belonged to him—but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. That was the reflection that made you creepy all over. It was impossible—it was not good for one either—trying to imagine. He had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land—I mean literally. You can't understand. How could you?—with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ready to cheer you or to fall on you, stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman, in the holy terror of scandal and gallows and lunatic asylums—how can you imagine what particular region of the first ages a man's untrammelled feet may take him into by the way of solitude—utter solitude without a policeman—by the way of silence—utter silence, where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion? These little things make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness. Of course you may be too much of a fool to go wrong—too dull even to know you are being assaulted by the powers of darkness. I take it, no fool ever made a bargain for his soul with the devil: the fool is too much of a fool, or the devil too much of a devil—I don't know which. Or you may be such a thunderingly exalted creature as to be altogether deaf and blind to anything but heavenly sights and sounds. Then the earth for you is only a standing place—and whether to be like this is your loss or your gain I won't pretend to say. But most of us are neither one nor the other. The earth for us is a place to live in, where we must put up with sights, with sounds, with smells, too, by Jove!—breathe dead hippo, so to speak, and not be contaminated.

And there, don't you see? your strength comes in, the faith in your ability for the digging of unostentatious holes to bury the stuff in—your power of devotion, not to yourself, but to an obscure, back-breaking business. And that's difficult enough. Mind, I am not trying to excuse or even explain—I am trying to account to myself for—for—Mr Kurtz—for the shade of Mr Kurtz. This initiated wraith from the back of Nowhere honoured me with its amazing confidence before it vanished altogether. This was because it could speak English to me. The original Kurtz had been educated partly in England, and—as he was good enough to say himself—his sympathies were in the right place. His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz; and by and by I learned that, most appropriately, the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs had entrusted him with the making of a report, for its future guidance. And he had written it too. I've seen it. I've read it. It was eloquent, vibrating with eloquence, but too high-strung, I think. Seventeen pages of close writing he had found time for! But this must have been before his—let us say—nerves went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which—as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times—were offered up to him—do you understand?—to Mr Kurtz himself. But it was a beautiful piece of writing. The opening paragraph, however, in the light of later information, strikes me now as ominous. He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, 'must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings—we approach them with the might as of a deity,' and so on, and so on. 'By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded,' etc. etc. From that point he soared and took me with him. The peroration was magnificent, though difficult to remember, you know. It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence. It made me tingle with enthusiasm. This was the unbounded power of eloquence—of words—of burning noble words. There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page, scrawled evidently much

later, in an unsteady hand, may be regarded as the exposition of a method. It was very simple, and at the end of that moving appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: 'Exterminate all the brutes!' The curious part was that he had apparently forgotten all about that valuable postscriptum, because, later on, when he in a sense came to himself, he repeatedly entreated me to take good care of 'my pamphlet' (he called it), as it was sure to have in the future a good influence upon his career. I had full information about all these things, and, besides, as it turned out, I was to have the care of his memory. I've done enough for it to give me the indisputable right to lay it, if I choose, for an everlasting rest in the dust-bin of progress, amongst all the sweepings and, figuratively speaking, all the dead cats of civilisation. But then, you see, I can't choose. He won't be forgotten. Whatever he was, he was not common. He had the power to charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witchdance in his honour; he could also fill the small souls of the pilgrims with bitter misgivings: he had one devoted friend at least, and he had conquered one soul in the world that was neither rudimentary nor tainted with self-seeking. No; I can't forget him, though I am not prepared to affirm the fellow was exactly worth the life we lost in getting to him. I missed my late helmsman awfully—I missed him even while his body was still lying in the pilot-house. Perhaps you will think it passing strange this regret for a savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara. Well, don't you see, he had done something, he had steered; for months I had him at my back—a help—an instrument. It was a kind of partnership. He steered for me—I had to look after him, I worried about his deficiencies, and thus a subtle bond had been created, of which I only became aware when it was suddenly broken. And the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory—like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment.

"Poor fool! If he had only left that shutter alone. He had no restraint, no restraint—just like Kurtz—a tree swayed by the wind. As

soon as I had put on a dry pair of slippers, I dragged him out, after first jerking the spear out of his side, which operation I confess I performed with my eyes shut tight. His heels leaped together over the little doorstep; his shoulders were pressed to my breast; I hugged him from behind desperately. Oh! he was heavy, heavy; heavier than any man on earth, I should imagine. Then without more ado I tipped him overboard. The current snatched him as though he had been a wisp of grass, and I saw the body roll over twice before I lost sight of it for ever. All the pilgrims and the manager were then congregated on the awning-deck about the pilot-house, chattering at each other like a flock of excited magpies, and there was a scandalised murmur at my heartless promptitude. What they wanted to keep that body hanging about for I can't guess. Embalm it, maybe. But I had also heard another, and a very ominous, murmur on the deck below. My friends the wood-cutters were likewise scandalised, and with a better show of reason—though I admit that the reason itself was quite inadmissible. Oh, quite! I had made up my mind that if my late helmsman was to be eaten, the fishes alone should have him. He had been a very second-rate helmsman while alive, but now he was dead he might have become a first-class temptation, and possibly cause some startling trouble. Besides, I was anxious to take the wheel, the man in pink pyjamas showing himself a hopeless duffer at the business.

"This I did directly the simple funeral was over. We were going half-speed, keeping right in the middle of the stream, and I listened to the talk about me. They had given up Kurtz, they had given up the station; Kurtz was dead, and the station had been burnt—and so on—and so on. The red-haired pilgrim was beside himself with the thought that at least this poor Kurtz had been properly revenged. 'Say! We must have made a glorious slaughter of them in the bush. Eh? What do you think? Say?' He positively danced, the bloodthirsty little gingery beggar.[3] And he had nearly fainted when he saw the wounded man! I could not help saying, 'You made a glorious lot of smoke, anyhow.' I had seen, from the way the tops of the bushes rustled and flew, that almost all the shots had gone too high. You

can’t hit anything unless you take aim and fire from the shoulder; but these chaps fired from the hip with their eyes shut. The retreat, I maintained—and I was right—was caused by the screeching of the steam-whistle. Upon this they forgot Kurtz, and began to howl at me with indignant protests.

“The manager stood by the wheel murmuring confidentially about the necessity of getting well away down the river before dark at all events, when I saw in the distance a clearing on the river-side and the outlines of some sort of building. ‘What’s this?’ I asked. He clapped his hands in wonder. ‘The station!’ he cried. I edged in at once, still going half-speed.

“Through my glasses I saw the slope of a hill interspersed with rare trees and perfectly free from undergrowth. A long decaying building on the summit was half buried in the high grass; the large holes in the peaked roof gaped black from afar; the jungle and the woods made a background. There was no enclosure or fence of any kind; but there had been one apparently, for near the house half a dozen slim posts remained in a row, roughly trimmed, and with their upper ends ornamented with round carved balls. The rails, or whatever there had been between, had disappeared. Of course the forest surrounded all that. The river-bank was clear, and on the water side I saw a white man under a hat like a cart-wheel beckoning persistently with his whole arm. Examining the edge of the forest above and below, I was almost certain I could see movements—human forms gliding here and there. I steamed past prudently, then stopped the engines and let her drift down. The man on the shore began to shout, urging us to land. ‘We have been attacked,’ screamed the manager. ‘I know—I know. It’s all right,’ yelled back the other, as cheerful as you please. ‘Come along. It’s all right. I am glad.’

“His aspect reminded me of something I had seen—something funny I had seen somewhere. As I manœuvred to get alongside, I was asking myself, ‘What does this fellow look like?’ Suddenly I got it. He looked like a harlequin.[4] His clothes had been made of some stuff that was brown holland[5] probably, but it was covered with

patches all over, with bright patches, blue, red, and yellow—patches on the back, patches on the front, patches on elbows, on knees; coloured binding round his jacket, scarlet edging at the bottom of his trousers; and the sunshine made him look extremely gay and wonderfully neat withal, because you could see how beautifully all this patching had been done. A beardless, boyish face, very fair, no features to speak of, nose peeling, little blue eyes, smiles and frowns chasing each other over that open countenance like sunshine and shadow on a wind-swept plain. 'Look out, captain!' he cried; 'there's a snag lodged in here last night.' What! Another snag? I confess I swore shamefully. I had nearly holed my cripple, to finish off that charming trip. The harlequin on the bank turned his little pug nose up to me. 'You English?' he asked, all smiles. 'Are you?' I shouted from the wheel. The smiles vanished, and he shook his head as if sorry for my disappointment. Then he brightened up. 'Never mind!' he cried encouragingly. 'Are we in time?' I asked. 'He is up there,' he replied, with a toss of the head up the hill, and becoming gloomy all of a sudden. His face was like the autumn sky, overcast one moment and bright the next.

"When the manager, escorted by the pilgrims, all of them armed to the teeth, had gone to the house, this chap came on board. 'I say, I don't like this. These natives are in the bush,' I said. He assured me earnestly it was all right. 'They are simple people,' he added; 'well, I am glad you came. It took me all my time to keep them off.' 'But you said it was all right,' I cried. 'Oh, they meant no harm,' he said; and as I stared he corrected himself, 'Not exactly.' Then vivaciously, 'My faith, your pilot-house wants a clean up!' In the next breath he advised me to keep enough steam on the boiler to blow the whistle in case of any trouble. 'One good screech will do more for you than all your rifles. They are simple people,' he repeated. He rattled away at such a rate he quite overwhelmed me. He seemed to be trying to make up for lots of silence, and actually hinted, laughing, that such was the case. 'Don't you talk with Mr Kurtz?' I said. 'You don't talk with that man—you listen to him,' he exclaimed with severe exaltation. 'But now—' He waved his arm, and in the

twinkling of an eye was in the uttermost depths of despondency. In a moment he came up again with a jump, possessed himself of both my hands, shook them continuously, while he gabbled: 'Brother sailor . . . honour . . . pleasure . . . delight . . . introduce myself . . . Russian . . . son of an arch-priest . . . Government of Tambov . . . What? Tobacco! English tobacco; the excellent English tobacco! Now, that's brotherly. Smoke? Where's a sailor that does not smoke?'

"The pipe soothed him, and gradually I made out he had run away from school, had gone to sea in a Russian ship; ran away again; served some time in English ships; was now reconciled with the arch-priest. He made a point of that. 'But when one is young one must see things, gather experience, ideas; enlarge the mind.' 'Here!' I interrupted. 'You can never tell! Here I met Mr Kurtz,' he said, youthfully solemn and reproachful. I held my tongue after that. It appears he had persuaded a Dutch trading-house on the coast to fit him out with stores and goods, and had started for the interior with a light heart, and no more idea of what would happen to him than a baby. He had been wandering about that river for nearly two years alone, cut off from everybody and everything. 'I am not so young as I look. I am twenty-five,' he said. 'At first old Van Shuyten would tell me to go to the devil,' he narrated with keen enjoyment; 'but I stuck to him, and talked and talked, till at last he got afraid I would talk the hind-leg off his favourite dog, so he gave me some cheap things and a few guns, and told me he hoped he would never see my face again. Good old Dutchman, Van Shuyten. I sent him one small lot of ivory a year ago, so that he can't call me a little thief when I get back. I hope he got it. And for the rest I don't care. I had some wood stacked for you. That was my old house. Did you see?'

"I gave him Towson's book. He made as though he would kiss me, but restrained himself. 'The only book I had left, and I thought I had lost it,' he said, looking at it ecstatically. 'So many accidents happen to a man going about alone, you know. Canoes get upset sometimes—and sometimes you've got to clear out so quick when the people get angry.' He thumbed the pages. 'You made notes in Russian?' I asked. He nodded. 'I thought they were written in cipher,'

I said. He laughed, then became serious. ‘I had lots of trouble to keep these people off,’ he said. ‘Did they want to kill you?’ I asked. ‘Oh no!’ he cried, and checked himself. ‘Why did they attack us?’ I pursued. He hesitated, then said shamefacedly, ‘They don’t want him to go.’ ‘Don’t they?’ I said curiously. He nodded a nod full of mystery and wisdom. ‘I tell you,’ he cried, ‘this man has enlarged my mind.’ He opened his arms wide, staring at me with his little blue eyes that were perfectly round.”

Endnotes

- Note 8:
  Literal rendering of the French *J’ai fait mon possible* (I have done all I could). Conrad sprinkles the conversation of his Belgian characters with Gallicisms to remind us that their words, though reported in English, were spoken in French. Other examples are “a species of wandering trader” (above), “Conceive you” (below), “I would be desolated” (p. 100).
  Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Automatic water-level regulator opening and closing a water-supply valve.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Sandbank.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Rifle combining the seven-grooved barrel of the Scottish gun maker A. Henry with the block-action breech mechanism introduced by the Swiss inventor F. Martini.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Little redheaded rascal.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Character from Italian comedy traditionally dressed in multicolored clothes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Coarse linen fabric.Return to reference 5

3

"I looked at him, lost in astonishment. There he was before me, in motley, as though he had absconded from a troupe of mimes, enthusiastic, fabulous. His very existence was improbable, inexplicable, and altogether bewildering. He was an insoluble problem. It was inconceivable how he had existed, how he had succeeded in getting so far, how he had managed to remain—why he did not instantly disappear. 'I went a little farther,' he said, 'then still a little farther—till I had gone so far that I don't know how I'll ever get back. Never mind. Plenty time. I can manage. You take Kurtz away quick—quick—I tell you.' The glamour of youth enveloped his particoloured rags, his destitution, his loneliness, the essential desolation of his futile wanderings. For months—for years—his life hadn't been worth a day's purchase; and there he was gallantly, thoughtlessly alive, to all appearance indestructible solely by the virtue of his few years and of his unreflecting audacity. I was seduced into something like admiration—like envy. Glamour urged him on, glamour kept him unscathed. He surely wanted nothing from the wilderness but space to breathe in and to push on through. His need was to exist, and to move onwards at the greatest possible risk, and with a maximum of privation. If the absolutely pure, uncalculating, unpractical spirit of adventure had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this be-patched youth. I almost envied him the possession of this modest and clear flame. It seemed to have consumed all thought of self so completely, that, even while he was talking to you, you forgot that it was he—the man before your eyes—who had gone through these things. I did not envy him his devotion to Kurtz, though. He had not meditated over it. It came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism. I must say that to me it appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far.

"They had come together unavoidably, like two ships becalmed near each other, and lay rubbing sides at last. I suppose Kurtz wanted an audience, because on a certain occasion, when

encamped in the forest, they had talked all night, or more probably Kurtz had talked. 'We talked of everything,' he said, quite transported at the recollection. 'I forgot there was such a thing as sleep. The night did not seem to last an hour. Everything! Everything! . . . Of love too.' 'Ah, he talked to you of love!' I said, much amused. 'It isn't what you think,' he cried, almost passionately. 'It was in general. He made me see things—things.'

"He threw his arms up. We were on deck at the time, and the head-man of my wood-cutters, lounging near by, turned upon him his heavy and glittering eyes. I looked around, and I don't know why, but I assure you that never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness. 'And, ever since, you have been with him, of course?' I said.

"On the contrary. It appears their intercourse had been very much broken by various causes. He had, as he informed me proudly, managed to nurse Kurtz through two illnesses (he alluded to it as you would to some risky feat), but as a rule Kurtz wandered alone, far in the depths of the forest. 'Very often coming to this station, I had to wait days and days before he would turn up,' he said. 'Ah, it was worth waiting for!—sometimes.' 'What was he doing? exploring or what?' I asked. 'Oh yes, of course'; he had discovered lots of villages, a lake too—he did not know exactly in what direction; it was dangerous to inquire too much—but mostly his expeditions had been for ivory. 'But he had no goods to trade with by that time,' I objected. 'There's a good lot of cartridges left even yet,' he answered, looking away. 'To speak plainly, he raided the country,' I said. He nodded. 'Not alone, surely!' He muttered something about the villages round that lake. 'Kurtz got the tribe to follow him, did he?' I suggested. He fidgeted a little. 'They adored him,' he said. The tone of these words was so extraordinary that I looked at him searchingly. It was curious to see his mingled eagerness and reluctance to speak of Kurtz. The man filled his life, occupied his thoughts, swayed his emotions. 'What can you expect?' he burst out;

‘he came to them with thunder and lightning, you know—and they had never seen anything like it—and very terrible. He could be very terrible. You can’t judge Mr Kurtz as you would an ordinary man. No, no, no! Now—just to give you an idea—I don’t mind telling you, he wanted to shoot me too one day—but I don’t judge him.’ ‘Shoot you!’ I cried. ‘What for?’ ‘Well, I had a small lot of ivory the chief of that village near my house gave me. You see I used to shoot game for them. Well, he wanted it, and wouldn’t hear reason. He declared he would shoot me unless I gave him the ivory and then cleared out of the country, because he could do so, and had a fancy for it, and there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased. And it was true too. I gave him the ivory. What did I care! But I didn’t clear out. No, no. I couldn’t leave him. I had to be careful, of course, till we got friendly again for a time. He had his second illness then. Afterwards I had to keep out of the way; but I didn’t mind. He was living for the most part in those villages on the lake. When he came down to the river, sometimes he would take to me, and sometimes it was better for me to be careful. This man suffered too much. He hated all this, and somehow he couldn’t get away. When I had a chance I begged him to try and leave while there was time; I offered to go back with him. And he would say yes, and then he would remain; go off on another ivory hunt; disappear for weeks; forget himself amongst these people—forget himself—you know.’ ‘Why! he’s mad,’ I said. He protested indignantly. Mr Kurtz couldn’t be mad. If I had heard him talk, only two days ago, I wouldn’t dare hint at such a thing. . . . I had taken up my binoculars while we talked, and was looking at the shore, sweeping the limit of the forest at each side and at the back of the house. The consciousness of there being people in that bush, so silent, so quiet—as silent and quiet as the ruined house on the hill—made me uneasy. There was no sign on the face of nature of this amazing tale that was not so much told as suggested to me in desolate exclamations, completed by shrugs, in interrupted phrases, in hints ending in deep sighs. The woods were unmoved, like a mask—heavy, like the closed door of a prison—they looked with their air of hidden knowledge, of patient expectation, of unapproachable

silence. The Russian was explaining to me that it was only lately that Mr Kurtz had come down to the river, bringing along with him all the fighting men of that lake tribe. He had been absent for several months—getting himself adored, I suppose—and had come down unexpectedly, with the intention to all appearance of making a raid either across the river or down stream. Evidently the appetite for more ivory had got the better of the—what shall I say?—less material aspirations. However, he had got much worse suddenly. 'I heard he was lying helpless, and so I came up—took my chance,' said the Russian. 'Oh, he is bad, very bad.' I directed my glass to the house. There were no signs of life, but there was the ruined roof, the long mud wall peeping above the grass, with three little square window-holes, no two of the same size; all this brought within reach of my hand, as it were. And then I made a brusque movement, and one of the remaining posts of that vanished fence leaped up in the field of my glass. You remember I told you I had been struck at the distance by certain attempts at ornamentation, rather remarkable in the ruinous aspect of the place. Now I had suddenly a nearer view, and its first result was to make me throw my head back as if before a blow. Then I went carefully from post to post with my glass, and I saw my mistake. These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing—food for thought and also for the vultures if there had been any looking down from the sky; but at all events for such ants as were industrious enough to ascend the pole. They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out, was facing my way. I was not so shocked as you may think. The start back I had given was really nothing but a movement of surprise. I had expected to see a knob of wood there, you know. I returned deliberately to the first I had seen—and there it was, black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids—a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of the teeth, was smiling too, smiling continuously at some endless and jocose dream of that eternal slumber.

"I am not disclosing any trade secrets. In fact the manager said afterwards that Mr Kurtz's methods had ruined the district. I have no opinion on that point, but I want you clearly to understand that there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads being there. They only show that Mr Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter which, when the pressing need arose, could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can't say. I think the knowledge came to him at last—only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude—and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core. . . . I put down the glass, and the head that had appeared near enough to be spoken to seemed at once to have leaped away from me into inaccessible distance.

"The admirer of Mr Kurtz was a bit crestfallen. In a hurried, indistinct voice he began to assure me he had not dared to take these—say, symbols—down. He was not afraid of the natives; they would not stir till Mr Kurtz gave the word. His ascendancy was extraordinary. The camps of these people surrounded the place, and the chiefs came every day to see him. They would crawl . . . 'I don't want to know anything of the ceremonies used when approaching Mr Kurtz,' I shouted. Curious, this feeling that came over me that such details would be more intolerable than those heads drying on the stakes under Mr Kurtz's windows. After all, that was only a savage sight, while I seemed at one bound to have been transported into some lightless region of subtle horrors, where pure, uncomplicated savagery was a positive relief, being something that had a right to exist—obviously—in the sunshine. The young man looked at me with surprise. I suppose it did not occur to him that Mr Kurtz was no idol of mine. He forgot I hadn't heard any of these splendid monologues on, what was it? on love, justice, conduct of

life—or what not. If it had come to crawling before Mr Kurtz, he crawled as much as the veriest savage of them all. I had no idea of the conditions, he said: these heads were the heads of rebels. I shocked him excessively by laughing. Rebels! What would be the next definition I was to hear? There had been enemies, criminals, workers—and these were rebels. Those rebellious heads looked very subdued to me on their sticks. 'You don't know how such a life tries a man like Kurtz,' cried Kurtz's last disciple. 'Well, and you?' I said. 'I! I! I am a simple man. I have no great thoughts. I want nothing from anybody. How can you compare me to . . . ?' His feelings were too much for speech, and suddenly he broke down. 'I don't understand,' he groaned. 'I've been doing my best to keep him alive, and that's enough. I had no hand in all this. I have no abilities. There hasn't been a drop of medicine or a mouthful of invalid food for months here. He was shamefully abandoned. A man like this, with such ideas. Shamefully! Shamefully! I—I—haven't slept for the last ten nights. . . .'

"His voice lost itself in the calm of the evening. The long shadows of the forest had slipped down hill while we talked, had gone far beyond the ruined hovel, beyond the symbolic row of stakes. All this was in the gloom, while we down there were yet in the sunshine, and the stretch of the river abreast of the clearing glittered in a still and dazzling splendour, with a murky and overshadowed bend above and below. Not a living soul was seen on the shore. The bushes did not rustle.

"Suddenly round the corner of the house a group of men appeared, as though they had come up from the ground. They waded waist-deep in the grass, in a compact body, bearing an improvised stretcher in their midst. Instantly, in the emptiness of the landscape, a cry arose whose shrillness pierced the still air like a sharp arrow flying straight to the very heart of the land; and, as if by enchantment, streams of human beings—of naked human beings—with spears in their hands, with bows, with shields, with wild glances and savage movements, were poured into the clearing by the dark-

faced and pensive forest. The bushes shook, the grass swayed for a time, and then everything stood still in attentive immobility.

" 'Now, if he does not say the right thing to them we are all done for,' said the Russian at my elbow. The knot of men with the stretcher had stopped too, half-way to the steamer, as if petrified. I saw the man on the stretcher sit up, lank and with an uplifted arm, above the shoulders of the bearers. 'Let us hope that the man who can talk so well of love in general will find some particular reason to spare us this time,' I said. I resented bitterly the absurd danger of our situation, as if to be at the mercy of that atrocious phantom had been a dishonouring necessity. I could not hear a sound, but through my glasses I saw the thin arm extended commandingly, the lower jaw moving, the eyes of that apparition shining darkly far in its bony head that nodded with grotesque jerks. Kurtz—Kurtz—that means 'short' in German—don't it? Well, the name was as true as everything else in his life—and death. He looked at least seven feet long. His covering had fallen off, and his body emerged from it pitiful and appalling as from a winding-sheet. I could see the cage of his ribs all astir, the bones of his arm waving. It was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze. I saw him open his mouth wide—it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him. A deep voice reached me faintly. He must have been shouting. He fell back suddenly. The stretcher shook as the bearers staggered forward again, and almost at the same time I noticed that the crowd of savages was vanishing without any perceptible movement of retreat, as if the forest that had ejected these beings so suddenly had drawn them in again as the breath is drawn in a long aspiration.

"Some of the pilgrims behind the stretcher carried his arms—two shot-guns, a heavy rifle, and a light revolver-carbine—the thunderbolts of that pitiful Jupiter. The manager bent over him murmuring as he walked beside his head. They laid him down in one of the little cabins—just a room for a bedplace and a camp-stool or

two, you know. We had brought his belated correspondence, and a lot of torn envelopes and open letters littered his bed. His hand roamed feebly amongst these papers. I was struck by the fire of his eyes and the composed languor of his expression. It was not so much the exhaustion of disease. He did not seem in pain. This shadow looked satiated and calm, as though for the moment it had had its fill of all the emotions.

"He rustled one of the letters, and looking straight in my face said, 'I am glad.' Somebody had been writing to him about me. These special recommendations were turning up again. The volume of tone he emitted without effort, almost without the trouble of moving his lips, amazed me. A voice! a voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of a whisper. However, he had enough strength in him—factitious no doubt—to very nearly make an end of us, as you shall hear directly.

"The manager appeared silently in the doorway; I stepped out at once and he drew the curtain after me. The Russian, eyed curiously by the pilgrims, was staring at the shore. I followed the direction of his glance.

"Dark human shapes could be made out in the distance, flitting indistinctly against the gloomy border of the forest, and near the river two bronze figures, leaning on tall spears, stood in the sunlight under fantastic head-dresses of spotted skins, warlike and still in statuesque repose. And from right to left along the lighted shore moved a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman.

"She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her

deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul.

"She came abreast of the steamer, stood still, and faced us. Her long shadow fell to the water's edge. Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve. She stood looking at us without a stir, and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose. A whole minute passed, and then she made a step forward. There was a low jingle, a glint of yellow metal, a sway of fringed draperies, and she stopped as if her heart had failed her. The young fellow by my side growled. The pilgrims murmured at my back. She looked at us all as if her life had depended upon the unswerving steadiness of her glance. Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around on the river, gathering the steamer into a shadowy embrace. A formidable silence hung over the scene.

"She turned away slowly, walked on, following the bank, and passed into the bushes to the left. Once only her eyes gleamed back at us in the dusk of the thickets before she disappeared.

" 'If she had offered to come aboard I really think I would have tried to shoot her,' said the man of patches nervously. 'I had been risking my life every day for the last fortnight to keep her out of the house. She got in one day and kicked up a row about those miserable rags I picked up in the storeroom to mend my clothes with. I wasn't decent. At least it must have been that, for she talked like a fury to Kurtz for an hour, pointing at me now and then. I don't understand the dialect of this tribe. Luckily for me, I fancy Kurtz felt too ill that day to care, or there would have been mischief. I don't understand. . . . No—it's too much for me. Ah, well, it's all over now.'

"At this moment I heard Kurtz's deep voice behind the curtain: 'Save me!—save the ivory, you mean. Don't tell me. Save *me*! Why, I've had to save you. You are interrupting my plans now. Sick! Sick! Not so sick as you would like to believe. Never mind. I'll carry my ideas out yet—I will return. I'll show you what can be done. You with your little peddling notions—you are interfering with me. I will return. I . . .'

"The manager came out. He did me the honour to take me under the arm and lead me aside. 'He is very low, very low,' he said. He considered it necessary to sigh, but neglected to be consistently sorrowful. 'We have done all we could for him—haven't we? But there is no disguising the fact, Mr Kurtz has done more harm than good to the Company. He did not see the time was not ripe for vigorous action. Cautiously, cautiously—that's my principle. We must be cautious yet. The district is closed to us for a time. Deplorable! Upon the whole, the trade will suffer. I don't deny there is a remarkable quantity of ivory—mostly fossil. We must save it, at all events—but look how precarious the position is—and why? Because the method is unsound.' 'Do you,' said I, looking at the shore, 'call it "unsound method"?' 'Without doubt,' he exclaimed hotly, 'Don't you?' . . . 'No method at all,' I murmured after a while. 'Exactly,' he exulted. 'I anticipated this. Shows a complete want of judgment. It is my duty to point it out in the proper quarter.' 'Oh,' said I, 'that fellow—what's his name?—the brickmaker, will make a readable report for you.' He appeared confounded for a moment. It seemed to me I had never breathed an atmosphere so vile, and I turned mentally to Kurtz for relief—positively for relief. 'Nevertheless, I think Mr Kurtz is a remarkable man,' I said with emphasis. He started, dropped on me a cold heavy glance, said very quietly, 'He *was*,' and turned his back on me. My hour of favour was over; I found myself lumped along with Kurtz as a partisan of methods for which the time was not ripe: I was unsound! Ah! but it was something to have at least a choice of nightmares.

"I had turned to the wilderness really, not to Mr Kurtz, who, I was ready to admit, was as good as buried. And for a moment it

seemed to me as if I also were buried in a vast grave full of unspeakable secrets. I felt an intolerable weight oppressing my breast, the smell of the damp earth, the unseen presence of victorious corruption, the darkness of an impenetrable night. . . . The Russian tapped me on the shoulder. I heard him mumbling and stammering something about 'brother seaman—couldn't conceal—knowledge of matters that would affect Mr Kurtz's reputation.' I waited. For him evidently Mr Kurtz was not in his grave; I suspect that for him Mr Kurtz was one of the immortals. 'Well!' said I at last, 'speak out. As it happens, I am Mr Kurtz's friend—in a way.'

"He stated with a good deal of formality that had we not been 'of the same profession,' he would have kept the matter to himself without regard to consequences. He suspected 'there was an active ill-will towards him on the part of these white men that—' 'You are right,' I said, remembering a certain conversation I had overheard. 'The manager thinks you ought to be hanged.' He showed a concern at this intelligence which amused me at first. 'I had better get out of the way quietly,' he said earnestly. 'I can do no more for Kurtz now, and they would soon find some excuse. What's to stop them? There's a military post three hundred miles from here.' 'Well, upon my word,' said I, 'perhaps you had better go if you have any friends amongst the savages near by.' 'Plenty,' he said. 'They are simple people—and I want nothing, you know.' He stood biting his lip, then: 'I don't want any harm to happen to these whites here, but of course I was thinking of Mr Kurtz's reputation—but you are a brother seaman and—' 'All right,' said I, after a time. 'Mr Kurtz's reputation is safe with me.' I did not know how truly I spoke.

"He informed me, lowering his voice, that it was Kurtz who had ordered the attack to be made on the steamer. 'He hated sometimes the idea of being taken away—and then again . . . But I don't understand these matters. I am a simple man. He thought it would scare you away—that you would give it up, thinking him dead. I could not stop him. Oh, I had an awful time of it this last month.' 'Very well,' I said. 'He is all right now.' 'Ye-e-es,' he muttered, not very convinced apparently. 'Thanks,' said I; 'I shall keep my eyes

open.' 'But quiet—eh?' he urged anxiously. 'It would be awful for his reputation if anybody here—' I promised a complete discretion with great gravity. 'I have a canoe and three black fellows waiting not very far. I am off. Could you give me a few Martini-Henry cartridges?' I could, and did, with proper secrecy. He helped himself, with a wink at me, to a handful of my tobacco. 'Between sailors—you know—good English tobacco.' At the door of the pilot-house he turned round—'I say, haven't you a pair of shoes you could spare?' He raised one leg. 'Look.' The soles were tied with knotted strings sandal-wise under his bare feet. I rooted out an old pair, at which he looked with admiration before tucking it under his left arm. One of his pockets (bright red) was bulging with cartridges, from the other (dark blue) peeped 'Towson's Inquiry,' etc. etc. He seemed to think himself excellently well equipped for a renewed encounter with the wilderness. 'Ah! I'll never, never meet such a man again. You ought to have heard him recite poetry—his own too it was, he told me. Poetry!' He rolled his eyes at the recollection of these delights. 'Oh, he enlarged my mind!' 'Good-bye,' said I. He shook hands and vanished in the night. Sometimes I ask myself whether I had ever really seen him—whether it was possible to meet such a phenomenon! . . .

"When I woke up shortly after midnight his warning came to my mind with its hint of danger that seemed, in the starred darkness, real enough to make me get up for the purpose of having a look round. On the hill a big fire burned, illuminating fitfully a crooked corner of the station-house. One of the agents with a picket of a few of our blacks, armed for the purpose, was keeping guard over the ivory; but deep within the forest, red gleams that wavered, that seemed to sink and rise from the ground amongst confused columnar shapes of intense blackness, showed the exact position of the camp where Mr Kurtz's adorers were keeping their uneasy vigil. The monotonous beating of a big drum filled the air with muffled shocks and a lingering vibration. A steady droning sound of many men chanting each to himself some weird incantation came out from the black, flat wall of the woods as the humming of bees comes out

of a hive, and had a strange narcotic effect upon my half-awake senses. I believe I dozed off leaning over the rail, till an abrupt burst of yells, an overwhelming outbreak of a pent-up and mysterious frenzy, woke me up in a bewildered wonder. It was cut short all at once, and the low droning went on with an effect of audible and soothing silence. I glanced casually into the little cabin. A light was burning within, but Mr Kurtz was not there.

"I think I would have raised an outcry if I had believed my eyes. But I didn't believe them at first—the thing seemed so impossible. The fact is I was completely unnerved by a sheer blank fright, pure abstract terror, unconnected with any distinct shape of physical danger. What made this emotion so overpowering was—how shall I define it?—the moral shock I received, as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me unexpectedly. This lasted of course the merest fraction of a second, and then the usual sense of commonplace, deadly danger, the possibility of a sudden onslaught and massacre, or something of the kind, which I saw impending, was positively welcome and composing. It pacified me, in fact, so much, that I did not raise an alarm.

"There was an agent buttoned up inside an ulster[6] and sleeping on a chair on deck within three feet of me. The yells had not awakened him; he snored very slightly; I left him to his slumbers and leaped ashore. I did not betray Mr Kurtz—it was ordered I should never betray him—it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice. I was anxious to deal with this shadow by myself alone—and to this day I don't know why I was so jealous of sharing with any one the peculiar blackness of that experience.

"As soon as I got on the bank I saw a trail—a broad trail through the grass. I remember the exultation with which I said to myself, 'He can't walk—he is crawling on all-fours—I've got him.' The grass was wet with dew. I strode rapidly with clenched fists. I fancy I had some vague notion of falling upon him and giving him a drubbing. I don't know. I had some imbecile thoughts. The knitting old woman with the cat obtruded herself upon my memory as a most improper

person to be sitting at the other end of such an affair. I saw a row of pilgrims squirting lead in the air out of Winchesters held to the hip. I thought I would never get back to the steamer, and imagined myself living alone and unarmed in the woods to an advanced age. Such silly things—you know. And I remember I confounded the beat of the drum with the beating of my heart, and was pleased at its calm regularity.

"I kept to the track though—then stopped to listen. The night was very clear; a dark blue space, sparkling with dew and starlight, in which black things stood very still. I thought I could see a kind of motion ahead of me. I was strangely cocksure of everything that night. I actually left the track and ran in a wide semicircle (I verily believe chuckling to myself) so as to get in front of that stir, of that motion I had seen—if indeed I had seen anything. I was circumventing Kurtz as though it had been a boyish game.

"I came upon him, and, if he had not heard me coming, I would have fallen over him too, but he got up in time. He rose, unsteady, long, pale, indistinct, like a vapour exhaled by the earth, and swayed slightly, misty and silent before me; while at my back the fires loomed between the trees, and the murmur of many voices issued from the forest. I had cut him off cleverly; but when actually confronting him I seemed to come to my senses, I saw the danger in its right proportion. It was by no means over yet. Suppose he began to shout? Though he could hardly stand, there was still plenty of vigour in his voice. 'Go away—hide yourself,' he said, in that profound tone. It was very awful. I glanced back. We were within thirty yards of the nearest fire. A black figure stood up, strode on long black legs, waving long black arms, across the glow. It had horns—antelope horns, I think—on its head. Some sorcerer, some witch-man no doubt: it looked fiend-like enough. 'Do you know what you are doing?' I whispered. 'Perfectly,' he answered, raising his voice for that single word: it sounded to me far off and yet loud, like a hail through a speaking-trumpet. If he makes a row we are lost, I thought to myself. This clearly was not a case for fisticuffs, even apart from the very natural aversion I had to beat that Shadow—this

wandering and tormented thing. ‘You will be lost,’ I said—‘utterly lost.’ One gets sometimes such a flash of inspiration, you know. I did say the right thing, though indeed he could not have been more irretrievably lost than he was at this very moment, when the foundations of our intimacy were being laid—to endure—to endure—even to the end—even beyond.

" ‘I had immense plans,’ he muttered irresolutely. ‘Yes,’ said I; ‘but if you try to shout I’ll smash your head with—’ There was not a stick or a stone near. ‘I will throttle you for good,’ I corrected myself. ‘I was on the threshold of great things,’ he pleaded, in a voice of longing, with a wistfulness of tone that made my blood run cold. ‘And now for this stupid scoundrel—’ ‘Your success in Europe is assured in any case,’ I affirmed steadily. I did not want to have the throttling of him, you understand—and indeed it would have been very little use for any practical purpose. I tried to break the spell—the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness—that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. This alone, I was convinced, had driven him out to the edge of the forest, to the bush, towards the gleam of fires, the throb of drums, the drone of weird incantations; this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations. And, don’t you see, the terror of the position was not in being knocked on the head—though I had a very lively sense of that danger too—but in this, that I had to deal with a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him—himself—his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air. I’ve been telling you what we said—repeating the phrases we pronounced—but what’s the good? They were common everyday words—the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that? They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of

words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares. Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man. And I wasn't arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear—concentrated, it is true, upon himself with horrible intensity, yet clear; and therein was my only chance—barring, of course, the killing him there and then, which wasn't so good, on account of unavoidable noise. But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had—for my sins, I suppose, to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself too. I saw it—I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself. I kept my head pretty well; but when I had him at last stretched on the couch, I wiped my forehead, while my legs shook under me as though I had carried half a ton on my back down that hill. And yet I had only supported him, his bony arm clasped round my neck—and he was not much heavier than a child.

"When next day we left at noon, the crowd, of whose presence behind the curtain of trees I had been acutely conscious all the time, flowed out of the woods again, filled the clearing, covered the slope with a mass of naked, breathing, quivering, bronze bodies. I steamed up a bit, then swung downstream, and two thousand eyes followed the evolutions of the splashing, thumping, fierce river-demon beating the water with its terrible tail and breathing black smoke into the air. In front of the first rank, along the river, three men, plastered with bright red earth from head to foot, strutted to and fro restlessly. When we came abreast again, they faced the river, stamped their feet, nodded their horned heads, swayed their scarlet bodies; they shook towards the fierce river-demon a bunch of black feathers, a mangy skin with a pendent tail—something that looked like a dried gourd; they shouted periodically together strings of amazing words that resembled no sounds of human language; and

the deep murmurs of the crowd, interrupted suddenly, were like the responses of some satanic litany.

"We had carried Kurtz into the pilot-house: there was more air there. Lying on the couch, he stared through the open shutter. There was an eddy in the mass of human bodies, and the woman with helmeted head and tawny cheeks rushed out to the very brink of the stream. She put out her hands, shouted something, and all that wild mob took up the shout in a roaring chorus of articulated, rapid, breathless utterance.

" 'Do you understand this?' I asked.

"He kept on looking out past me with fiery, longing eyes, with a mingled expression of wistfulness and hate. He made no answer, but I saw a smile, a smile of indefinable meaning, appear on his colourless lips that a moment after twitched convulsively. 'Do I not?' he said slowly, gasping, as if the words had been torn out of him by a supernatural power.

"I pulled the string of the whistle, and I did this because I saw the pilgrims on deck getting out their rifles with an air of anticipating a jolly lark. At the sudden screech there was a movement of abject terror through that wedged mass of bodies. 'Don't! don't you frighten them away,' cried some one on deck disconsolately. I pulled the string time after time. They broke and ran, they leaped, they crouched, they swerved, they dodged the flying terror of the sound. The three red chaps had fallen flat, face down on the shore, as though they had been shot dead. Only the barbarous and superb woman did not so much as flinch, and stretched tragically her bare arms after us over the sombre and glittering river.

"And then that imbecile crowd down on the deck started their little fun, and I could see nothing more for smoke.

"The brown current ran swiftly out of the heart of darkness, bearing us down towards the sea with twice the speed of our upward progress; and Kurtz's life was running swiftly too, ebbing, ebbing out of his heart into the sea of inexorable time. The manager was very placid, he had no vital anxieties now, he took us both in with a comprehensive and satisfied glance: the 'affair' had come off

as well as could be wished. I saw the time approaching when I would be left alone of the party of 'unsound method.' The pilgrims looked upon me with disfavour. I was, so to speak, numbered with the dead. It is strange how I accepted this unforeseen partnership, this choice of nightmares forced upon me in the tenebrous land invaded by these mean and greedy phantoms.

"Kurtz discoursed. A voice! a voice! It rang deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart. Oh, he struggled! he struggled! The wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now—images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously round his unextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas—these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments. The shade of the original Kurtz frequented the bedside of the hollow sham, whose fate it was to be buried presently in the mould of primeval earth. But both the diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries it had penetrated fought for the possession of that soul satiated with primitive emotions, avid of lying fame, of sham distinction, of all the appearances of success and power.

"Sometimes he was contemptibly childish. He desired to have kings meet him at railway stations on his return from some ghastly Nowhere, where he intended to accomplish great things. 'You show them you have in you something that is really profitable, and then there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability,' he would say. 'Of course you must take care of the motives—right motives—always.' The long reaches that were like one and the same reach, monotonous bends that were exactly alike, slipped past the steamer with their multitude of secular[7] trees looking patiently after this grimy fragment of another world, the forerunner of change, of conquest, of trade, of massacres, of blessings. I looked ahead—piloting. 'Close the shutter,' said Kurtz suddenly one day; 'I can't bear to look at this.' I did so. There was a silence. 'Oh, but I will wring your heart yet!' he cried at the invisible wilderness.

"We broke down—as I had expected—and had to lie up for repairs at the head of an island. This delay was the first thing that shook Kurtz's confidence. One morning he gave me a packet of papers and a photograph—the lot tied together with a shoe-string. 'Keep this for me,' he said. 'This noxious fool' (meaning the manager) 'is capable of prying into my boxes when I am not looking.' In the afternoon I saw him. He was lying on his back with closed eyes, and I withdrew quietly, but I heard him mutter, 'Live rightly, die, die . . .' I listened. There was nothing more. Was he rehearsing some speech in his sleep, or was it a fragment of a phrase from some newspaper article? He had been writing for the papers and meant to do so again, 'for the furthering of my ideas. It's a duty.'

"His was an impenetrable darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines. But I had not much time to give him, because I was helping the engine-driver to take to pieces the leaky cylinders, to straighten a bent connecting-rod, and in other such matters. I lived in an infernal mess of rust, filings, nuts, bolts, spanners, hammers, ratchet-drills—things I abominate, because I don't get on with them. I tended the little forge we fortunately had aboard; I toiled wearily in a wretched scrap-heap—unless I had the shakes too bad to stand.

"One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, 'I am lying here in the dark waiting for death.' The light was within a foot of his eyes. I forced myself to murmur, 'Oh, nonsense!' and stood over him as if transfixed.

"Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror—of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a

whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath:

" 'The horror! The horror!'

"I blew the candle out and left the cabin. The pilgrims were dining in the mess-room, and I took my place opposite the manager, who lifted his eyes to give me a questioning glance, which I successfully ignored. He leaned back, serene, with that peculiar smile of his sealing the unexpressed depths of his meanness. A continuous shower of small flies streamed upon the lamp, upon the cloth, upon our hands and faces. Suddenly the manager's boy put his insolent black head in the doorway, and said in a tone of scathing contempt:

" 'Mistah Kurtz—he dead.'

"All the pilgrims rushed out to see. I remained, and went on with my dinner. I believe I was considered brutally callous. However, I did not eat much. There was a lamp in there—light, don't you know—and outside it was so beastly, beastly dark. I went no more near the remarkable man who had pronounced a judgement upon the adventures of his soul on this earth. The voice was gone. What else had been there? But I am of course aware that next day the pilgrims buried something in a muddy hole.

"And then they very nearly buried me.

"However, as you see, I did not go to join Kurtz there and then. I did not. I remained to dream the nightmare out to the end, and to show my loyalty to Kurtz once more. Destiny. My destiny! Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself—that comes too late—a crop of unextinguishable regrets. I have wrestled with death. It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable greyness, with nothing underfoot, with nothing around, without spectators, without clamour, without glory, without the great desire of victory, without the great fear of defeat, in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary. If such is the form of ultimate wisdom, then life is a greater riddle

than some of us think it to be. I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up—he had judged. 'The horror!' He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth—the strange commingling of desire and hate. And it is not my own extremity I remember best—a vision of greyness without form filled with physical pain, and a careless contempt for the evanescence of all things—even of this pain itself. No! It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through. True, he had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible. Perhaps! I like to think my summing-up would not have been a word of careless contempt. Better his cry—much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond, when a long time after I heard once more, not his own voice, but the echo of his magnificent eloquence thrown to me from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal.

"No, they did not bury me, though there is a period of time which I remember mistily, with a shuddering wonder, like a passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire. I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from

each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces, so full of stupid importance. I daresay I was not very well at that time. I tottered about the streets—there were various affairs to settle—grinning bitterly at perfectly respectable persons. I admit my behaviour was inexcusable, but then my temperature was seldom normal in these days. My dear aunt's endeavours to 'nurse up my strength' seemed altogether beside the mark. It was not my strength that wanted nursing, it was my imagination that wanted soothing. I kept the bundle of papers given me by Kurtz, not knowing exactly what to do with it. His mother had died lately, watched over, as I was told, by his Intended. A clean-shaven man, with an official manner and wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, called on me one day and made inquiries, at first circuitous, afterwards suavely pressing, about what he was pleased to denominate certain 'documents.' I was not surprised, because I had had two rows with the manager on the subject out there. I had refused to give up the smallest scrap out of that package, and I took the same attitude with the spectacled man. He became darkly menacing at last, and with much heat argued that the Company had the right to every bit of information about its 'territories.' And, said he, 'Mr Kurtz's knowledge of unexplored regions must have been necessarily extensive and peculiar—owing to his great abilities and to the deplorable circumstances in which he had been placed: therefore—' I assured him Mr Kurtz's knowledge, however extensive, did not bear upon the problems of commerce or administration. He invoked then the name of science. 'It would be an incalculable loss if,' etc. etc. I offered him the report on the 'Suppression of Savage Customs,' with

the postscriptum torn off. He took it up eagerly, but ended by sniffing at it with an air of contempt. 'This is not what we had a right to expect,' he remarked. 'Expect nothing else,' I said. 'There are only private letters.' He withdrew upon some threat of legal proceedings, and I saw him no more; but another fellow, calling himself Kurtz's cousin, appeared two days later, and was anxious to hear all the details about his dear relative's last moments. Incidentally he gave me to understand that Kurtz had been essentially a great musician. 'There was the making of an immense success,' said the man, who was an organist, I believe, with lank grey hair flowing over a greasy coat-collar. I had no reason to doubt his statement; and to this day I am unable to say what was Kurtz's profession, whether he ever had any—which was the greatest of his talents. I had taken him for a painter who wrote for the papers, or else for a journalist who could paint—but even the cousin (who took snuff during the interview) could not tell me what he had been—exactly. He was a universal genius—on that point I agreed with the old chap, who thereupon blew his nose noisily into a large cotton handkerchief and withdrew in senile agitation, bearing off some family letters and memoranda without importance. Ultimately a journalist anxious to know something of the fate of his 'dear colleague' turned up. This visitor informed me Kurtz's proper sphere ought to have been politics 'on the popular side.' He had furry straight eyebrows, bristly hair cropped short, an eyeglass on a broad ribbon, and, becoming expansive, confessed his opinion that Kurtz really couldn't write a bit —'but heavens! how that man could talk! He electrified large meetings. He had faith—don't you see?—he had the faith. He could get himself to believe anything—anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party.' 'What party?' I asked. 'Any party,' answered the other. 'He was an—an—extremist.' Did I not think so? I assented. Did I know, he asked, with a sudden flash of curiosity, 'what it was that had induced him to go out there?' 'Yes,' said I, and forthwith handed him the famous Report for publication, if he thought fit. He glanced through it hurriedly, mumbling all the time, judged 'it would do,' and took himself off with this plunder.

"Thus I was left at last with a slim packet of letters and the girl's portrait. She struck me as beautiful—I mean she had a beautiful expression. I know that the sunlight can be made to lie too, yet one felt that no manipulation of light and pose could have conveyed the delicate shade of truthfulness upon those features. She seemed ready to listen without mental reservation, without suspicion, without a thought for herself. I concluded I would go and give her back her portrait and those letters myself. Curiosity? Yes; and also some other feeling perhaps. All that had been Kurtz's had passed out of my hands: his soul, his body, his station, his plans, his ivory, his career. There remained only his memory and his Intended—and I wanted to give that up too to the past, in a way—to surrender personally all that remained of him with me to that oblivion which is the last word of our common fate. I don't defend myself. I had no clear perception of what it was I really wanted. Perhaps it was an impulse of unconscious loyalty, or the fulfilment of one of those ironic necessities that lurk in the facts of human existence. I don't know. I can't tell. But I went.

"I thought his memory was like the other memories of the dead that accumulate in every man's life—a vague impress on the brain of shadows that had fallen on it in their swift and final passage; but before the high and ponderous door, between the tall houses of a street as still and decorous as a well-kept alley in a cemetery, I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind. He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had ever lived—a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night, and draped nobly in the folds of a gorgeous eloquence. The vision seemed to enter the house with me—the stretcher, the phantom-bearers, the wild crowd of obedient worshippers, the gloom of the forests, the glitter of the reach between the murky bends, the beat of the drum, regular and muffled like the beating of a heart—the heart of a conquering darkness. It was a moment of triumph for the wilderness, an invading and vengeful rush which, it seemed to me, I would have to

keep back alone for the salvation of another soul. And the memory of what I had heard him say afar there, with the horned shapes stirring at my back, in the glow of fires, within the patient woods, those broken phrases came back to me, were heard again in their ominous and terrifying simplicity. I remembered his abject pleading, his abject threats, the colossal scale of his vile desires, the meanness, the torment, the tempestuous anguish of his soul. And later on I seemed to see his collected languid manner, when he said one day, 'This lot of ivory now is really mine. The Company did not pay for it. I collected it myself at a very great personal risk. I am afraid they will try to claim it as theirs though. H'm. It is a difficult case. What do you think I ought to do—resist? Eh? I want no more than justice.' . . . He wanted no more than justice—no more than justice. I rang the bell before a mahogany door on the first floor, and while I waited he seemed to stare at me out of the glossy panel—stare with that wide and immense stare embracing, condemning, loathing all the universe. I seemed to hear the whispered cry, 'The horror! The horror!'

"The dusk was falling. I had to wait in a lofty drawing-room with three long windows from floor to ceiling that were like three luminous and bedraped columns. The bent gilt legs and backs of the furniture shone in indistinct curves. The tall marble fireplace had a cold and monumental whiteness. A grand piano stood massively in a corner; with dark gleams on the flat surfaces like a sombre and polished sarcophagus. A high door opened—closed. I rose.

"She came forward, all in black, with a pale head, floating towards me in the dusk. She was in mourning. It was more than a year since his death, more than a year since the news came; she seemed as though she would remember and mourn for ever. She took both my hands in hers and murmured, 'I had heard you were coming.' I noticed she was not very young—I mean not girlish. She had a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering. The room seemed to have grown darker, as if all the sad light of the cloudy evening had taken refuge on her forehead. This fair hair, this pale visage, this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from

which the dark eyes looked out at me. Their glance was guileless, profound, confident, and trustful. She carried her sorrowful head as though she were proud of that sorrow, as though she would say, I—I alone know how to mourn for him as he deserves. But while we were still shaking hands, such a look of awful desolation came upon her face that I perceived she was one of those creatures that are not the playthings of Time. For her he had died only yesterday. And, by Jove! the impression was so powerful that for me too he seemed to have died only yesterday—nay, this very minute. I saw her and him in the same instant of time—his death and her sorrow—I saw her sorrow in the very moment of his death. Do you understand? I saw them together—I heard them together. She had said, with a deep catch of the breath, 'I have survived'; while my strained ears seemed to hear distinctly, mingled with her tone of despairing regret, the summing-up whisper of his eternal condemnation. I asked myself what I was doing there, with a sensation of panic in my heart as though I had blundered into a place of cruel and absurd mysteries not fit for a human being to behold. She motioned me to a chair. We sat down. I laid the packet gently on the little table, and she put her hand over it. . . . 'You knew him well,' she murmured, after a moment of mourning silence.

" 'Intimacy grows quickly out there,' I said. 'I knew him as well as it is possible for one man to know another.'

" 'And you admired him,' she said. 'It was impossible to know him and not to admire him. Was it?'

" 'He was a remarkable man,' I said unsteadily. Then before the appealing fixity of her gaze, that seemed to watch for more words on my lips, I went on, 'It was impossible not to—'

" 'Love him,' she finished eagerly, silencing me into an appalled dumbness. 'How true! how true! But when you think that no one knew him so well as I! I had all his noble confidence. I knew him best.'

" 'You knew him best,' I repeated. And perhaps she did. But with every word spoken the room was growing darker, and only her

forehead, smooth and white, remained illumined by the unextinguishable light of belief and love.

" 'You were his friend,' she went on. 'His friend,' she repeated, a little louder. 'You must have been, if he had given you this, and sent you to me. I feel I can speak to you—and oh! I must speak. I want you—you who have heard his last words—to know I have been worthy of him. . . . It is not pride. . . . Yes! I am proud to know I understood him better than any one on earth—he told me so himself. And since his mother died I have had no one—no one—to—to—'

"I listened. The darkness deepened. I was not even sure whether he had given me the right bundle. I rather suspect he wanted me to take care of another batch of his papers which, after his death, I saw the manager examining under the lamp. And the girl talked, easing her pain in the certitude of my sympathy; she talked as thirsty men drink. I had heard that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people. He wasn't rich enough or something. And indeed I don't know whether he had not been a pauper all his life. He had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there.

" '. . . Who was not his friend who had heard him speak once?' she was saying. 'He drew men towards him by what was best in them.' She looked at me with intensity. 'It is the gift of the great,' she went on, and the sound of her low voice seemed to have the accompaniment of all the other sounds, full of mystery, desolation, and sorrow, I had ever heard—the ripple of the river, the soughing of the trees swayed by the wind, the murmurs of the crowds, the faint ring of incomprehensible words cried from afar, the whisper of a voice speaking from beyond the threshold of an eternal darkness. 'But you have heard him! You know!' she cried.

" 'Yes, I know,' I said with something like despair in my heart, but bowing my head before the faith that was in her, before that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness, in the triumphant darkness from which I could not have defended her—from which I could not even defend myself.

" 'What a loss to me—to us!'—she corrected herself with beautiful generosity; then added in a murmur, 'To the world.' By the last gleams of twilight I could see the glitter of her eyes, full of tears—of tears that would not fall.

" 'I have been very happy—very fortunate—very proud,' she went on. 'Too fortunate. Too happy for a little while. And now I am unhappy for—for life.'

"She stood up; her fair hair seemed to catch all the remaining light in a glimmer of gold. I rose too.

" 'And of all this,' she went on mournfully, 'of all his promise, and of all his greatness, of his generous mind, of his noble heart, nothing remains—nothing but a memory. You and I—'

" 'We shall always remember him,' I said hastily.

" 'No!' she cried. 'It is impossible that all this should be lost—that such a life should be sacrificed to leave nothing—but sorrow. You know what vast plans he had. I knew of them too—I could not perhaps understand—but others knew of them. Something must remain. His words, at least, have not died.'

" 'His words will remain,' I said.

" 'And his example,' she whispered to herself. 'Men looked up to him—his goodness shone in every act. His example—'

" 'True,' I said; 'his example too. Yes, his example. I forgot that.'

" 'But I do not. I cannot—I cannot believe—not yet. I cannot believe that I shall never see him again, that nobody will see him again, never, never, never.'

"She put out her arms as if after a retreating figure, stretching them black and with clasped pale hands across the fading and narrow sheen of the window. Never see him! I saw him clearly enough then. I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live, and I shall see her too, a tragic and familiar Shade, resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness. She said suddenly very low, 'He died as he lived.'

" 'His end,' said I, with dull anger stirring in me, 'was in every way worthy of his life.'

" 'And I was not with him,' she murmured. My anger subsided before a feeling of infinite pity.

" 'Everything that could be done—' I mumbled.

" 'Ah, but I believed in him more than any one on earth—more than his own mother, more than—himself. He needed me! Me! I would have treasured every sigh, every word, every sign, every glance.'

"I felt like a chill grip on my chest. 'Don't,' I said, in a muffled voice.

" 'Forgive me. I—I—have mourned so long in silence—in silence. . . . You were with him—to the last? I think of his loneliness. Nobody near to understand him as I would have understood. Perhaps no one to hear. . . .'

" 'To the very end,' I said shakily. 'I heard his very last words. . . .' I stopped in a fright.

" 'Repeat them,' she murmured in a heart-broken tone. 'I want—I want—something—something—to—to live with.'

"I was on the point of crying at her, 'Don't you hear them?' The dusk was repeating them in a persistent whisper all around us, in a whisper that seemed to swell menacingly like the first whisper of a rising wind. 'The horror! The horror!'

" 'His last word—to live with,' she insisted. 'Don't you understand I loved him—I loved him—I loved him!'

"I pulled myself together and spoke slowly.

" 'The last word he pronounced was—your name.'

"I heard a light sigh and then my heart stood still, stopped dead short by an exulting and terrible cry, by the cry of inconceivable triumph and of unspeakable pain. 'I knew it—I was sure!' . . . She knew. She was sure. I heard her weeping; she had hidden her face in her hands. It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape, that the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened. The heavens do not fall for such a trifle. Would they have fallen, I wonder, if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which

was his due? Hadn't he said he wanted only justice? But I couldn't. I could not tell her. It would have been too dark—too dark altogether. . . ."[8]

Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha. Nobody moved for a time. "We have lost the first of the ebb," said the Director suddenly. I raised my head. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky—seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness.

1898–991899, 1902

Endnotes

- Note 6: Long overcoat.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Centuries old.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  Writing to William Blackwood (editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, where the story first appeared) in May 1902, Conrad referred to "the last pages of Heart of Darkness where the interview of the man and the girl locks in—as it were—the whole 30,000 words of narrative description into one suggestive view of a whole phase of life, and makes of that story something quite on another plane than an anecdote of a man who went mad in the Centre of Africa" (Joseph Conrad, *Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum*, ed. William Blackburn, 1958).
  Return to reference 8

On the Representation of Africa

Heart of Darkness drew on Joseph Conrad's personal experiences in Congo and on his encounters with Europeans working in the ivory and rubber trades. These trades, so essential to the accumulation of Belgian imperial wealth in Congo and European wealth in Africa more broadly, resulted in atrocities committed against African peoples. Conrad morally condemned the abuse of "native populations," but did not seem to question the superiority of European peoples to African ones. His representation of Africa in *Heart of Darkness* as a dark and backward place contains within it the prevailing attitude of his time, but the novella also channels those attitudes into a set of images that has shaped the depiction of Africa and Africans in English-language literature for over a century.

For Conrad, Africa was a theater in which various kinds of European dramas unfolded: the crisis of imperialism as a so-called civilizing mission; the moral and psychic destruction of Kurtz as an officer of empire; and the difficult decision Marlow makes to keep the truth of Kurtz's fate from his fiancée. Marlow shares these dark secrets with a group of Englishmen and Europeans aboard the *Nellie*, and this small group can be viewed as a version of Conrad's imagined audience of White readers. Such audiences were ready to criticize and even reject the imperial project, but they, like Conrad, were not particularly attuned to the lives, customs, languages, and cultures of African peoples.

This section gathers select responses to the representation of Africa in the West by major novelists who have contended with Conrad's legacy. The first features a 2003 newspaper interview with Chinua Achebe by Black British novelist Caryl Phillips (see Philips's headnote and a story by him later in this volume). Achebe is a towering figure in African literature and the author of *Things Fall Apart*, a 1958 novel about the destruction of precolonial Igbo culture upon the arrival of British missionaries. Achebe published a

controversial essay on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* called "The Image of Africa" (1978) in which he argued that Conrad's inability to think outside the European construction of Africa constituted a damning failure of his literary talents. Phillips approaches Achebe as an admirer of his novels, but a skeptic of his strong condemnation of Conrad's artistry. That skepticism shapes the debate that unfolds between him and Achebe while also giving a full and fair airing to Achebe's views of the racism inherent in representations of Africa and Africans within *Heart of Darkness*.

The second selection, a transcription of a 2009 TED talk by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (see the headnote to her later in this volume), does not mention Conrad by name, but reflects on the negative impact of monolithic literary representations of a diverse continent. Adichie acknowledges the economic and political struggles within African nations, but she rejects the image of Africa as uniformly impoverished, perennially embattled, and populated by alien peoples. She attributes this distorted representation of Africa to the capacity of Western literature to overpower stories from less globally influential literary cultures. Adichie powerfully notes that the representation of Africa that readers have inherited from the canon of Western literature is not a representation to pass on to future generations.

CARYL PHILLIPS

From Out of Africa[1]

Chinua Achebe[2] leans forward to make his point. He raises a gentle finger in the manner of a benevolent schoolmaster. "But you have to understand. Art is more than just good sentences; this is what makes this situation tragic. The man is a capable artist and as such I expect better from him. I mean, what is his point in that book? Art is not intended to put people down. If so, then art would ultimately discredit itself."

Achebe does not take his eyes from me, and I stare back at him. The face is familiar and marked with the heavy lines of ageing that one would expect to find on a 72-year-old man's face. But Achebe's lines are graceful whorls which suggest wisdom. He leans back now and looks beyond me and through the window at the snowy landscape.

We are sitting in his one-storey house in upstate New York, deep in the wooded campus of Bard College. For the past 13 years, Achebe has been a professor at this well-known liberal arts college, which has had writers such as Mary McCarthy and Norman Mailer[3] on the faculty. His house is decorated with African art and artifacts, but the landscape and the climate could not be further removed from Nigeria and the world of Achebe's fiction and non-fiction. As though tiring of the wintry landscape, Achebe turns and returns to our conversation.

"The man would appear to be obsessed with 'that' word."

"Nigger."

Achebe nods.

"He has an admiration of the white skin. It is the whiteness that he likes, and he is obsessed with the physicality of the negro."

Again Achebe falls silent, but this time he lowers his eyes as though suddenly overcome with fatigue. I continue to look at him, the father of African literature in the English language and undoubtedly one of the most important writers of the second half of the 20th century. What I find difficult to fathom is just why Conrad's short novel, *Heart of Darkness*, should exercise such a hold on him?

Achebe has taught term-long university courses dedicated to this one slim volume first published in 1902. As long ago as February 1975, while a visiting professor at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Achebe delivered a public lecture entitled "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*." The lecture has since come to be recognised as one of the most important and influential treatises in post-colonial literary discourse. However, the problem is I disagree with Achebe's response to the novel, and have never viewed Conrad—as Achebe states in his lecture—as simply "a thoroughgoing racist." Yet, at the same time, I hold Achebe in the highest possible esteem, and therefore, a two-hour drive up the Hudson River Valley into deepest upstate New York would seem a small price to pay to resolve this conundrum.

Achebe's lecture quickly establishes his belief that Conrad deliberately sets Africa up as "the other world" so that he might examine Europe. According to Achebe, Africa is presented to the reader as "the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilisation, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality."

Achebe sees Conrad mocking both the African landscape and the African people. The story begins on the "good" River Thames which, in the past, "has been one of the dark places of the earth." The story soon takes us to the "bad" River Congo, presently one of those "dark places." It is a body of water upon which the steamer toils "along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy."

According to Achebe, Conrad's long and famously hypnotic sentences are mere "trickery," designed to induce a hypnotic stupor in the reader. Achebe drafts in the support of "the eagle-eyed English critic FR Leavis,"[4] who many years ago noted Conrad's

"adjectival insistence upon inexpressible and incomprehensible mystery" whose cumulative effect is to suggest that poor Africa is inexplicable.

But it is when Achebe turns to Conrad's treatment of African humanity that he is most disparaging of Conrad's vision. He quotes from the moment in the novel when the Europeans on the steamer encounter real live Africans in the flesh:

"We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you—and you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend."

These people are "ugly," but what is even more disturbing is that they are in some way also human. A half-page later, Conrad focuses on one particular African, who, according to Achebe, is rare, for he is not presented as "just limbs or rolling eyes." The problem is that the African man is, most disturbingly, not "in his place."

"And between whiles I had to look after the savage who was a fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and, upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind legs."

Those critics who have defended *Heart of Darkness* against charges of racism have often pointed to both the methodology of narration and Conrad's anti-colonial purpose. The narrator of the novel is Marlow, who is simply retelling a story that was told to him by a shadowy second figure. However, in his lecture Achebe makes it

clear he is not fooled by this narrative gamesmanship, or the claims of those who would argue that the complex polyphony of the storytelling is Conrad's way of trying to deliberately distance himself from the views of his characters.

". . . If Conrad's intention is to draw a cordon sanitaire between himself and the moral and psychological malaise of his narrator, his care seems to me to be totally wasted because he neglects to hint, clearly and adequately, at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characters. It would not have been beyond Conrad's power to make that provision if he had thought it necessary. Conrad seems to me to approve of Marlow . . ."

Achebe is, however, aware of Conrad's ambivalence towards the colonising mission, and he concedes that the novel is, in part, an attempt to examine what happens when Europeans come into contact with this particular form of economic and social exploitation. In the lecture he remembers that a student in Scotland once informed him that Africa is "merely a setting for the disintegration of the mind of Mr Kurtz," which is an argument that many teachers and critics, let alone students, have utilised to defend the novel. But to read the book in this way is to further stir Achebe's outrage.

"Africa as setting and backdrop, which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognisable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind?"

Achebe has no problem with a novel that seeks to question both European ambivalence towards the colonising mission and her own "system" of civilisation. What he has a huge problem with is a novelist—in fact, an artist—who attempts to resolve these important questions by denying Africa and Africans their full and complex humanity.

* * *

However, despite Achebe's compelling "evidence," I am still finding it difficult to dismiss this man and his short novel. Are we to throw all racists out of the canon? Are we, as Achebe suggests, to ignore the period in which novels are written and demand that the artist rise above the prejudices of his times? As much as I respect the man sitting before me, something does not ring true. We both agree that Conrad was not the originator of this disturbing image of Africa and Africans. And we both appear to agree that Conrad had the perception to see that this encounter with Africa exposed the fissures and instabilities in so-called European civilisation. Further, we both agree that in order to expose European fragility, Conrad pandered to a certain stereotype of African barbarity that, at the time, was accepted as the norm. Finally, we both agree that this stereotype is still with us today. Achebe speaks quickly, as though a thought has suddenly struck him.

"You see, those who say that Conrad is on my side because he is against colonial rule do not understand that I know who is on my side. And where is the proof that he is on my side? A few statements about it not being a very nice thing to exploit people who have flat noses? This is his defence against imperial control? If so it is not enough. It is simply not enough. If you are going to be on my side what is required is a better argument. Ultimately you have to admit that Africans are people. You cannot diminish a people's humanity and defend them."

I feel as though I am walking around an impregnable fortress. However, I am losing interest in the problem of breaching the ramparts and becoming more concerned with the aesthetics of its construction.

"Which European or American writers do you feel have best represented the continent of Africa and African people?"

Achebe looks at me for a long while and then slowly begins to shake his head.

"This is difficult. Not many."

I suggest Graham Greene.[5]

"Yes, perhaps. Graham Greene would be one because he knew his limitations. He didn't want to explain Africans to the world. He made limited claims and wasn't attempting to be too profound. After all, we can't be too profound about somebody whose history and language and culture is beyond our own."

"But you're not suggesting that outsiders should not write about other cultures?"

"No, no. This identification with the other is what a great writer brings to the art of story-making. We should welcome the rendering of our stories by others, because a visitor can sometimes see what the owner of the house has ignored. But they must visit with respect and not be concerned with the colour of skin, or the shape of nose, or the condition of the technology in the house."

It is now my turn to stare out of the window at the six-foot snow drifts and the bare, rickety arms of the trees. The light is beginning to fade and soon I will have to leave. I avert my eyes and turn to face my host.

"Chinua, I think Conrad offends you because he was a disrespectful visitor."

"I am an African. What interests me is what I learn in Conrad about myself. To use me as a symbol may be bright or clever, but if it reduces my humanity by the smallest fraction I don't like it."

"Conrad does present Africans as having 'rudimentary' souls."

Achebe draws himself upright.

"Yes, you will notice that the European traders have 'tainted' souls, Marlow has a 'pure' soul, but I am to accept that mine is 'rudimentary'?" He shakes his head. "Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a very short-lived period of ambivalence about the certainty of this colonising mission, and *Heart of Darkness* falls into this period. But you cannot compromise my humanity in order that you explore your own ambiguity. I cannot accept that. My humanity is not to be debated, nor is it to be used simply to illustrate European problems."

The realisation hits me with force. I am not an African. Were I an African I suspect I would feel the same way as my host. But I was

raised in Europe, and although I have learned to reject the stereotypically reductive images of Africa and Africans, I am undeniably interested in the break-up of a European mind and the health of European civilisation. I feel momentarily ashamed that I might have become caught up with this theme and subsequently overlooked how offensive this novel might be to a man such as Chinua Achebe and to millions of other Africans. Achebe is right; to the African reader the price of Conrad's eloquent denunciation of colonisation is the recycling of racist notions of the "dark" continent and her people. Those of us who are not from Africa may be prepared to pay this price, but this price is far too high for Achebe. However lofty Conrad's mission, he has, in keeping with times past and present, compromised African humanity in order to examine the European psyche. Achebe's response is understandably personal.

"Conrad's presentation of me is my problem and I have a responsibility to deal with it, you understand?" I nod. "I don't come from a 'half-made' society as your 'friend' Naipaul[6] would say. We're not 'half-made' people, we're a very old people. We've seen lots of problems in the past. We've dealt with these problems in Africa, and we're older than the problems. Drought, famine, disease, this is not the first time that we're dealing with these things in Africa."

He takes a deep breath. Beyond him, and through the window, the blanket of night begins to descend over the woods.

"You know," he continues, "I think that to some extent it is how you must feel about your 'friend'. You take it to heart because a man with such talent should not behave in this way. My people, we say one palm nut does not get lost in the fire, for you must know where it is. But if you have 20 you may lose sight of some and they will get burned, but you have others. Well, as you know, we have very few who have the talent and who are in the right place, and to lose even one is a tragedy. We cannot afford to lose such artists. It is sheer cussedness to wilfully turn and walk away from the truth, and for what? Really, for what? I expect a great artist, a man who has explored, a man who is interested in Africa, not to make life more

difficult for us. Why do this? Why make our lives more difficult? In this sense Conrad is a disappointment."

2003

Endnotes

- Note 1: Also the title of the memoir, published in 1937, by Isak Dinesen (1885–1962) that chronicles her time living on a coffee plantation in British East Africa (modern-day Kenya).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Nigerian novelist, poet, and critic (1930–2013).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: American novelist and journalist (1923–2007). "Mary McCarthy": American writer and critic (1912–1989).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: English literary critic (1895–1978); he taught at Cambridge and was influential in shaping the teaching of English literature at the university level.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: English writer and journalist (1904–1991).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: V. S. Naipaul, Trinidadian-born writer of South Asian descent (1932–2018).Return to reference 6

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

The Danger of a Single Story[1]

I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story." I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria. My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader. And what I read were British and American children's books.

I was also an early writer. And when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading. All my characters were white and blue-eyed. They played in the snow. They ate apples. And they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out. Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow. We ate mangoes. And we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to.

My characters also drank a lot of ginger beer because the characters in the British books I read drank ginger beer. Never mind that I had no idea what ginger beer was. (*Laughter*) And for many years afterwards, I would have a desperate desire to taste ginger beer. But that is another story.

What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books, by their very nature, had to have foreigners in them, and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I

discovered African books. There weren't many of them available. And they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.

But because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye[2] I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized.

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So the year I turned eight we got a new house boy. His name was Fide.[3] The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Then one Saturday we went to his village to visit. And his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket, made of dyed raffia,[4] that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them is how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was nineteen. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she

could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. (*Laughter*) She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning, pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa. A single story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her, in any way. No possibility of feelings more complex than pity. No possibility of a connection as human equals.

I must say that before I went to the U.S. I didn't consciously identify as African. But in the U.S. whenever Africa came up people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity. And in many ways I think of myself now as African. Although I still get quite irritable when Africa is referred to as a country. The most recent example being my otherwise wonderful flight from Lagos[5] two days ago, in which there was an announcement on the Virgin flight about the charity work in "India, Africa and other countries."

So after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves, and waiting to be saved, by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family.

This single story of Africa ultimately comes, I think, from Western literature. Now, here is a quote from the writing of a London merchant called John Locke,[6] who sailed to west Africa in 1561, and kept a fascinating account of his voyage. After referring to the black Africans as "beasts who have no houses," he writes, "They are also people without heads, having their mouth and eyes in their breasts."

Now, I've laughed every time I've read this. And one must admire the imagination of John Locke. But what is important about his writing is that it represents the beginning of a tradition of telling African stories in the West. A tradition of Sub-Saharan Africa as a place of negatives, of difference, of darkness, of people who, in the words of the wonderful poet, Rudyard Kipling, are "half devil, half child."

And so I began to realize that my American roommate must have, throughout her life, seen and heard different versions of this single story, as had a professor, who once told me that my novel was not "authentically African." Now, I was quite willing to contend that there were a number of things wrong with the novel, that it had failed in a number of places. But I had not quite imagined that it had failed at achieving something called African authenticity. In fact I did not know what African authenticity was. The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were not authentically African.

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time, was tense. And there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleecing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara,[7] watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself. So that is how to create a single story,

show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo[8] word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti[9] writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story, and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have and entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story.

I recently spoke at a university where a student told me that it was such a shame that Nigerian men were physical abusers like the father character in my novel. I told him that I had just read a novel called *American Psycho*—[1] and that it was such a shame that young Americans were serial murderers. Now, obviously I said this in a fit of mild irritation.

I would never have occurred to me to think that just because I had read a novel in which a character was a serial killer that he was somehow representative of all Americans. And now, this is not because I am a better person than that student, but, because of America's cultural and economic power, I had many stories of America. I had read Tyler and Updike and Steinbeck and Gaitskill.[2] I did not have a single story of America.

When I learned, some years ago, that writers were expected to have had really unhappy childhoods to be successful, I began to think about how I could invent horrible things my parents had done

to me. (*Laughter*) But the truth is that I had a very happy childhood, full of laughter and love, in a very close-knit family.

But I also had grandfathers who died in refugee camps. My cousin Polle died because he could not get adequate healthcare. One of my closest friends, Okoloma, died in a plane crash because our firetrucks did not have water. I grew up under repressive military governments that devalued education, so that sometimes my parents were not paid their salaries. And so, as a child, I saw jam disappear from the breakfast table, then margarine disappeared, then bread became too expensive, then milk became rationed. And most of all, a kind of normalized political fear invaded our lives.

All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience, and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Of course, Africa is a continent full of catastrophes. There are immense ones, such as the horrific rapes in Congo. And depressing ones, such as the fact that 5,000 people apply for one job vacancy in Nigeria. But there are other stories that are not about catastrophe. And it is very important, it is just as important, to talk about them.

I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

So what if before my Mexican trip I had followed the immigration debate from both sides, the U.S. and the Mexican? What if my mother had told us that Fide's family was poor and hardworking? What if we had an African television network that broadcast diverse African stories all over the world? What the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories."

What if my roommate knew about my Nigerian publisher, Mukta Bakaray, a remarkable man who left his job in a bank to follow his dream and start a publishing house? Now, the conventional wisdom was that Nigerians don't read literature. He disagreed. He felt that people who could read, would read, if you made literature affordable and available to them.

Shortly after he published my first novel I went to a TV station in Lagos to do an interview. And a woman who worked there as a messenger came up to me and said, "I really liked your novel. I didn't like the ending. Now you must write a sequel, and this is what will happen . . ." (*Laughter*) And she went on to tell me what to write in the sequel. Now I was not only charmed, I was very moved. Here was a woman, part of the ordinary masses of Nigerians, who were not supposed to be readers. She had not only read the book, but she had taken ownership of it and felt justified in telling me what to write in the sequel.

Now, what if my roommate knew about my friend Fumi Onda, a fearless woman who hosts a TV show in Lagos, and is determined to tell the stories that we prefer to forget? What if my roommate knew about the heart procedure that was performed in the Lagos hospital last week? What if my roommate knew about contemporary Nigerian music? Talented people singing in English and Pidgin, and Igbo and Yoruba and Ijo, mixing influences from Jay-Z to Fela to Bob Marley to their grandfathers. What if my roommate knew about the female lawyer who recently went to court in Nigeria to challenge a ridiculous law that required women to get their husband's consent before renewing their passports? What if my roommate knew about Nollywood, full of innovative people making films despite great technical odds? Films so popular that they really are the best example of Nigerians consuming what they produce. What if my roommate knew about my wonderfully ambitious hair braider, who has just started her own business selling hair extensions? Or about the millions of other Nigerians who start businesses and sometimes fail, but continue to nurse ambition?

Every time I am home I am confronted with the usual sources of irritation for most Nigerians: our failed infrastructure, our failed government. But also by the incredible resilience of people who thrive despite the government, rather than because of it. I teach writing workshops in Lagos every summer. And it is amazing to me how many people apply, how many people are eager to write, to tell stories.

My Nigerian publisher and I have just started a non-profit called Farafina Trust. And we have big dreams of building libraries and refurbishing libraries that already exist, and providing books for state schools that don't have anything in their libraries, and also of organizing lots and lots of workshops, in reading and writing, for all the people who are eager to tell our many stories. Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker[3] wrote this about her southern relatives who had moved to the north. She introduced them to a book about the southern life that they had left behind. "They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained." I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise. Thank you.

2009

Endnotes

- Note 1: This selection is a TED talk that Adichie gave in 2009 about the capacity of a dominant story to perpetuate misconceptions. This talk can be found online by doing a web search for Adichie, The Danger of a Single Story.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Guinean author (1928–1980) of Francophone novels including *L'Enfant Noir* (1953; trans. *The African Child*) and *Le Regard du Roi* (1954; trans. *The Radiance of the King*).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Pronounced Fidé, as if there is an accent over the é.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A fiber made from a type of palm tree.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The largest city in Nigeria; one of the most populous cities in Africa.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Not to be confused with the political philosopher John Locke (1632–1704).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Capital city of Jalisco, Mexico.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Language of the Igbo ethnic group of Nigeria.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The quote is from Bhargouti's essay collection *I Saw Ramallah* (2003), in which the poet (1944–2021) returns to Palestine after thirty years of exile.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A novel by Bret Easton Ellis, published in 1991.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mary Gaitskill (b. 1954), American short-story writer and novelist. Anne Tyler (b. 1941), American novelist. John Updike (1932–2009), American novelist, poet, and critic. John Steinbeck (1902–1968), American novelist.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: African American novelist (b. 1944) and poet best known for *The Color Purple* (1982).Return to reference 3

A. E. HOUSMAN
1859–1936

Alfred Edward Housman was born in Fockbury, Worcestershire (close to the Shropshire border), and attended school at the nearby town of Bromsgrove. He studied classics and philosophy at Oxford and in 1881 shocked his friends and teachers by failing his final examinations (he was at the time in a state of psychological turmoil resulting from his suppressed homosexual love for a fellow student). He obtained a civil service job and pursued his classical studies alone, gradually building up a reputation as a great textual critic of Latin literature. In 1892 he was appointed to the chair of Latin at University College, London, and from 1911 until his death he was professor of Latin at Cambridge.

Housman's classical studies consisted of meticulous, impersonal textual investigations; both his scholarship and his life were reserved and solitary. Yet his feeling for literature ran strong and deep, and in his lecture "The Name and Nature of Poetry" (1933) he says that poetry should be "more physical than intellectual," having a skin-bristling, spine-shivering effect on the reader. His own poetry was limited both in quantity and in range, but—stark, lucid, elegant—it exemplifies the "superior terseness" he prized in verse. Two "slim volumes"—*A Shropshire Lad* (1896) and *Last Poems* (1922)—were all that appeared during his lifetime, and after his death his brother Laurence brought out another small book, *More Poems* (1936).

As a poet Housman aimed not to expand or develop the resources of English poetry but by limitation and concentration to achieve an utterance both compact and moving. He was influenced by Greek and Latin lyric poetry, by the traditional ballad, and by the lyrics of the early nineteenth-century German poet Heinrich Heine. His favorite theme is that of the doomed youth acting out the tragedy of his brief life; the context is agricultural activity in England, with the land bearing visual reminders of humanity's long history. Nature is beautiful but indifferent and is to be enjoyed while we are still able to savor it. Love, friendship, and conviviality cannot last and may well result in betrayal or death, but are likewise to be relished while there is time. Wryly ironic in tone, stoic in temperament, Housman sounds a note of resigned wisdom with quiet poignancy. He avoids self-pity by projecting emotion through an imagined character, notably the "Shropshire lad," so that even the first-person poems seem to be distanced in some degree. At the same time the poems are distinguished from the "gather ye rosebuds" (or carpe diem) tradition by the undertones of fatalism and even doom.

Loveliest of Trees

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

1896

When I Was One-and-Twenty

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue."[°]
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

1896

Notes

- °: *repentance*Return to reference °

To an Athlete Dying Young

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel[1] grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,°
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout°
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead

And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: In ancient Greece and Rome victorious athletes were crowned with laurel wreaths.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *broken*Return to reference °
- °: *crowd*Return to reference °

Terence,[1] This Is Stupid Stuff

"Terence, this is stupid stuff:
You eat your victuals fast enough;
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,
To see the rate you drink your beer.
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
It gives a chap the belly-ache.
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;
It sleeps well, the hornèd head:
We poor lads, 'tis our turn now
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.
Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme
Your friends to death before their time
Moping melancholy mad:
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad."

Why, if 'tis dancing you would be,
There's brisker pipes than poetry.
Say, for what were hop-yards meant,
Or why was Burton built on Trent?[2]
Oh many, a peer[3] of England brews
Livelier liquor than the Muse,
And malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man.[4]
Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink
For fellows whom it hurts to think:
Look into the pewter pot
To see the world as the world's not.
And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past:
The mischief is that 'twill not last.
Oh I have been to Ludlow[5] Fair

And left my necktie God knows where,
And carried half-way home, or near,
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer:
Then the world seemed none so bad,
And I myself a sterling lad;
And down in lovely muck I've lain,
Happy till I woke again.
Then I saw the morning sky:
Heigho, the tale was all a lie;
The world, it was the old world yet,
I was I, my things were wet,
And nothing now remained to do
But begin the game anew.

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill,
And while the sun and moon endure
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
I'd face it as a wise man would,
And train for ill and not for good.
'Tis true the stuff I bring for sale
Is not so brisk a brew as ale:
Out of a stem that scored° the hand
I wrung it in a weary land.
But take it: if the smack is sour,
The better for the embittered hour;
It should do good to heart and head
When your soul is in my soul's stead;
And I will friend you, if I may,
In the dark and cloudy day.

There was a king reigned in the East:
There, when kings will sit to feast,
They get their fill before they think
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.
He gathered all that springs to birth

From the many-venomed earth;
First a little, thence to more,
He sampled all her killing store;
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,
Sate the king when healths went round.
They put arsenic in his meat
And stared aghast to watch him eat;
They poured strychnine in his cup
And shook to see him drink it up:
They shook, they stared as white's their shirt:
Them it was their poison hurt.
—I tell the tale that I heard told.
Mithridates, he died old.[6]

1896

Endnotes

- Note 1: *The Poems of Terence Hearsay* was Housman's intended title for *The Shropshire Lad.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Burton-on-Trent is the most famous of all English brewing towns.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A reference to the "beer barons," brewery magnates raised to the peerage (that is, made nobles).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Milton's promise in *Paradise Lost* (1.17–26) to "justify the ways of God to men."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A market town in Shropshire.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The story of Mithridates, king of Pontus, who made himself immune to poison by taking small doses daily, is told in Pliny's *Natural History.*Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *cut*Return to reference °

Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries[1]

These, in the day when heaven was falling,
  The hour when earth's foundations fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
  And took their wages and are dead.

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
  They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
  And saved the sum of things for pay.

1917, 1922

Endnotes

- Note 1: To honor the heroism of the professional soldiers of the British Regular Army in the First Battle of Ypres (1914), Housman published this poem in *The Times* on the third anniversary of the turning point of that battle, Oct. 31, 1917.Return to reference 1

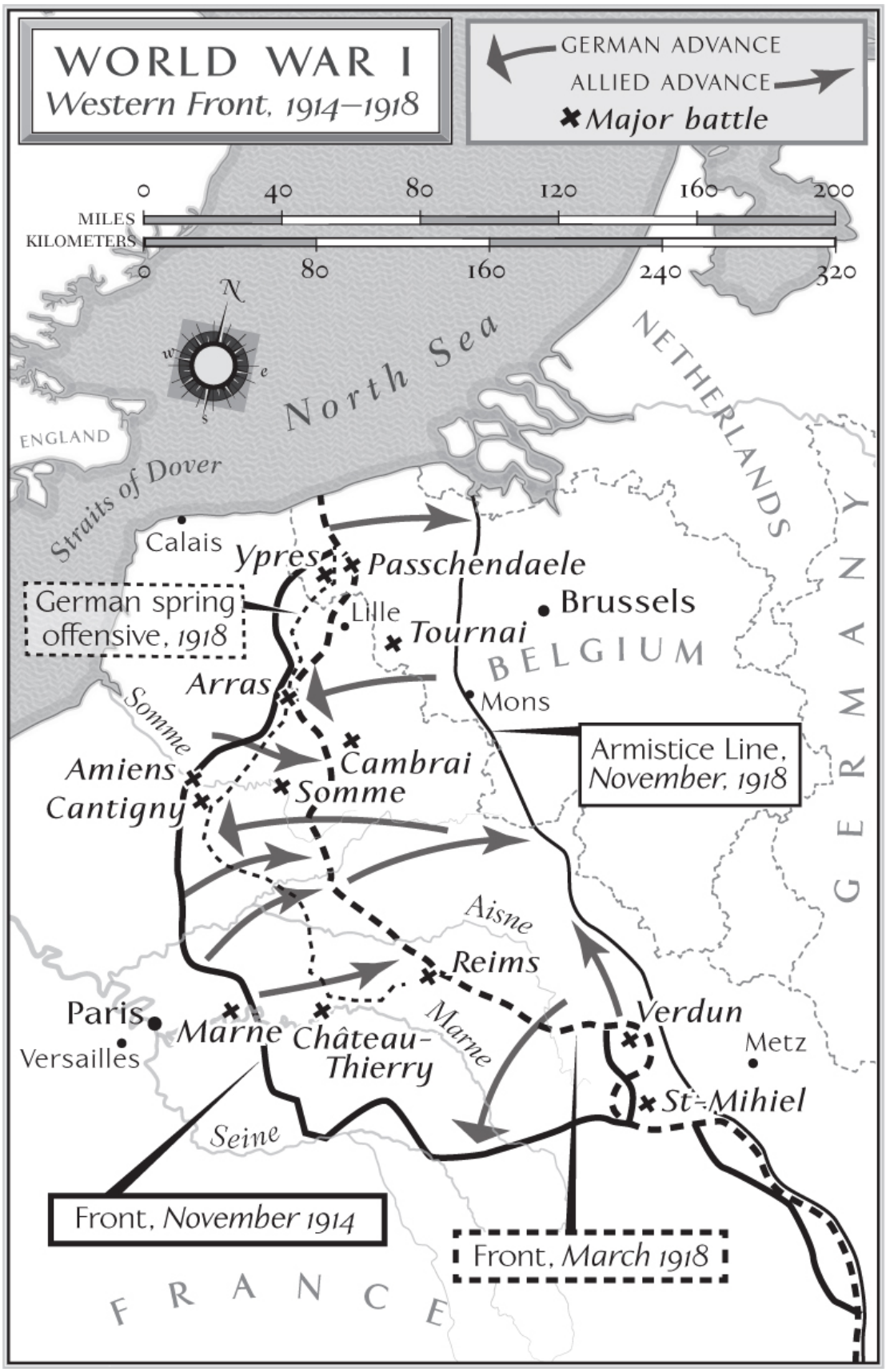
Voices from World War I

The original spark that set off what proved to be the bloodiest and most widespread war that had yet been fought was the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in the Balkan state of Serbia on June 28, 1914. Austria, supported by Germany, used the murder as a pretext for declaring war on Serbia, which in turn was supported by its fellow-Slav country Russia. Because Russia was bound by a treaty obligation to both France and Britain, Russia and France were soon at war with Germany and Austria. The most effective way for Germany to attack France was to go through Belgium, though all the powers had guaranteed Belgian neutrality. The attack on Belgium impelled Britain to declare war on Germany on August 4, but rival imperialisms, an international armaments race, France's desire to regain Alsace-Lorraine (which it had lost to Germany in 1870), and German and Austrian ambitions in the Balkans were some of the many other factors that brought about the four-year conflict, a struggle that shook the world. Turkey sided with Germany and Austria in October 1914, and Bulgaria allied itself with them the following year. Britain and France were joined by Japan late in August 1914, by Italy (although Italy had in 1882 joined the "Triple Alliance" with Germany and Austria directed against France and Russia) in May 1915, and by the United States in April 1917.

(*Left*) British soldiers cross no-man's-land. The terrain has been laid waste by battle. (*Right*) Allied soldiers follow an officer out of a trench, April 7, 1918. German shells burst around them during the Arras and Cambrai offensive on the Western Front in France. The phrase "going over the top" described infantry rising up out of their trenches to attack the enemy. Soldiers were at grave risk as they came into the open and crossed into no-man's-land.

Before the collapse of Germany followed by the armistice of November 11, 1918, some 8,700,000 lives had been lost (including 780,000 British—virtually a whole generation of young men) and the prolonged horrors of trench warfare had seared themselves into the minds of the survivors. For three years the battle line, "the Western Front," was stabilized between northwest France and Switzerland, with both sides dug in and making repeated, costly, and generally useless attempts to advance. The German use of poison gas at the Second Battle of Ypres in 1915, the massive German attack at Verdun in 1916, and the British introduction of tanks on the Somme in the same year failed to produce the breakthrough each side desired. Desolate, war-scarred landscapes with blasted trees and mud everywhere, trenches half-filled with water and infested with rats, miles of protective barbed wire requiring individual "volunteers" to crawl through machine-gun fire and cut it so an advance could begin, long-continued massive bombardments by heavy artillery, and a sense of stalemate that suggested to the soldiers involved that this living hell could go on forever—all this was long kept from the knowledge of the civilians at home, who continued to use the old patriotic slogans and write in old-fashioned romantic terms about glorious cavalry charges and the noble pursuit of heroic ideals. But

those poets who were involved on the front, however romantically they may have felt about the cause when they joined up, soon realized the full horror of war, and this realization affected both their imaginations and their poetic techniques. They had to find a way of expressing the terrible truths they had experienced, and even when they did not express them directly, the underlying knowledge affected the way they wrote.


WORLD WAR I
Western Front, 1914–1918
GERMAN ADVANCE
ALLIED ADVANCE
Major battle
0 40 80 120 160 200
MILES
KILOMETERS
0 80 160 240 320
N
W
E
S
North Sea
NETHERLANDS
ENGLAND
Straits of Dover
Calais
Ypres
Passchendaele
Brussels
German spring offensive, 1918
Lille
Tournai
BELGIUM
Arras
Mons
Somme
Armistice Line, November, 1918
Amiens
Cantigny
Cambrai
Somme
GERMANY
Aisne
Reims
Paris
Versailles
Marne
Château-Thierry
Marne
Verdun
Metz
St-Mihiel
Seine
Front, November 1914
Front, March 1918
FRANCE

The Western Front was the primary site of military conflict during World War I, although the war also extended to Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. Following the outbreak of war in August 1914, Germany opened the front by invading Luxembourg and Belgium, then gaining control of important industrial regions in France. The two sides bogged down for years, erecting fortified trenches along a line that changed little for most of the war. In major offenses along the front, massive infantry advances and artillery bombardments resulted in unprecedented casualties.

The poetry that was in vogue when war broke out, and that some poets continued to write for some years afterward, was named "Georgian" in honor of King George V, who had succeeded Edward VII in 1910. The term was first used of poets when Edward Marsh brought out in 1912 the first of a series of five anthologies called *Georgian Poetry.* The work therein represented an attempt to wall in the garden of English poetry against the disruptive forces of modern civilization. Cultured meditations of the English countryside ("I love the mossy quietness / That grows upon the great stone flags") alternated with self-conscious exercises in the exotic ("When I was but thirteen or so / I went into a golden land, / Chimporazo, Cotopaxi / Took me by the hand"). Sometimes the magical note was authentic, as in many of Walter de la Mare's poems, and sometimes the meditative strain was original and impressive, as in Edward Thomas's poetry. But as World War I went on, with more and more poets killed and the survivors increasingly disillusioned, the whole world on which the Georgian imagination rested came to appear unreal. A patriotic poem such as Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" became a ridiculous anachronism in the face of the realities of trench warfare, and the even more blatantly patriotic note sounded by other Georgian poems (as in John Freeman's "Happy Is England Now," which claimed that "there's not a nobleness of heart, hand, brain / But shines the purer; happiest is England now / In those that fight") seemed obscene. The savage ironies of Siegfried Sassoon's war poems and the combination of pity and irony in Wilfred Owen's work

portrayed a world undreamed of in the golden years from 1910 to 1914.

WOMEN OF BRITAIN
SAY –
"GO!"

"Women of Britain Say—'Go!' " The women in this British recruiting poster from 1915 are represented as having sent off their men to fight for the domestic harmony of home and the idyllic beauty of a countryside glimpsed through the open window.

World War I left throughout Europe a sense that the bases of civilization had been destroyed, that all traditional values had been wiped out. We see this sense reflected in the years immediately after the war in different ways in, for example, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Aldous Huxley's early fiction. But the poets who wrote during the war most directly reflected the impact of the war experience.

RUPERT BROOKE

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915) was educated at Rugby School and at King's College, Cambridge. When World War I began he was commissioned as an officer into the Royal Naval Division and took part in its brief and abortive expedition to Antwerp. On leave in December 1914 he wrote the "war sonnets" that were to make him famous; five months later he died of dysentery and blood poisoning on a troopship destined for Gallipoli.

Brooke was the most popular of the Georgians, pastoral poets who infused nature with nationalist feeling. His early death symbolized the death of a whole generation of patriotic Englishmen. Shortly before then the dean of St. Paul's read "The Soldier" in a sermon from the Cathedral pulpit, and in a 1915 valediction in the London *Times*, Winston Churchill sounded a note that swelled over the following months and years: "Joyous, fearless, versatile, deeply instructed, with classic symmetry of mind and body, he was all that one would wish England's noblest sons to be in days when no sacrifice but the most precious is acceptable, and the most precious is that which is most freely proffered." Brooke's *1914 and Other Poems* was published in June 1915, and during the next decade this and his *Collected Poems* sold three hundred thousand copies.

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;

A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the Eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given,
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

19141915

ROBERT SERVICE

Born in Preston, England, to Scottish parents, Robert Service (1874–1958) lived a life that crossed national borders. He moved to Scotland at the age of five and was educated in Glasgow before moving to Canada in his early twenties. Working on farms and then as a banker in western Canada, he won popular acclaim with his first volume of verse, *Songs of a Sourdough* (1907), including his narrative poems about the Yukon Gold Rush of 1898, "The Shooting of Dan McGrew" and "The Ballad of Sam McGee." These early ballads established his reputation as the "Canadian Kipling" or "Bard of the Yukon," though Service never gave up his British citizenship. Before the First World War, he married a Frenchwoman, Germaine Bourgoin. During the war, he was a war reporter for Canadian newspapers, writing gritty accounts of the suffering on the front. He was also able to observe wounded combatants at close hand while serving as an ambulance driver and stretcher bearer for the American Red Cross. After the war he lived mostly in France.

Service's wartime collection of poetry, *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man* (1916), was dedicated to his brother, killed while fighting in 1916 in the Canadian infantry. These poems show a deep empathy for the lot of the common soldier. The oral, folk style of his poetic ballads is unlike the Keats-inspired (if soured) Romanticism of wartime lyrics by a contemporary like Wilfred Owen. Cast in boisterous rhythms and rhymes, many of them are dramatic monologues voiced in the language of the working-class soldier. In "Only a Boche," Service represents in engrossing detail a French soldier's imagining his way across wartime division into a German soldier's experience. The poem is one of the war's most vivid dramatizations of a soldier's tentative breakthrough into the shared humanity of the enemy other.

Only a Boche[1]

We brought him in from between the lines: we'd
better have let him lie;
For what's the use of risking one's skin for a *tyke*[2]
that's going to die?
What's the use of tearing him loose under a gruelling
fire,
When he's shot in the head, and worse than dead,
and all messed up on the wire?[3]

However, I say, we brought him in. *Diable!*[4] The mud
was bad;
The trench was crooked and greasy and high, and
oh, what a time we had!
And often we slipped, and often we tripped, but
never he made a moan;
And how we were wet with blood and with sweat!
but we carried him in like our own.

Now there he lies in the dug-out dim, awaiting the
ambulance,
And the doctor shrugs his shoulders at him, and
remarks, "he hasn't a chance."
And we squat and smoke at our game of bridge on
the glistening, straw-packed floor,
And above our oaths we can hear his breath deep-
drawn in a kind of snore.

For the dressing station is long and low, and the
candles gutter dim,
And the mean light falls on the cold clay walls and
our faces bristly and grim;

And we flap our cards on the lousy straw, and we laugh and jibe as we play,
And you'd never know that the cursed foe was less than a mile away.
As we con[5] our cards in the rancid gloom, oppressed by that snoring breath,
You'd never dream that our broad roof-beam was swept by the broom of death.

Heigh-ho! My turn for the dummy hand;[6] I rise and I stretch a bit;
The fetid air is making me yawn, and my cigarette's unlit,
So I go to the nearest candle flame, and the man we brought is there,
And his face is white in the shabby light, and I stand at his feet and stare.
Stand for awhile, and quietly stare, for strange though it seems to be,
The dying Boche on the stretcher there has a queer resemblance to me.

It gives one a kind of a turn, you know, to come on a thing like that.
It's just as if I were lying there, with a turban of blood for a hat,
Lying there in a coat grey-green instead of a coat grey-blue,[7]
With one of my eyes all shot away, and my brain half tumbling through;
Lying there with a chest that heaves like a bellows up and down,
And a cheek as white as snow on a grave, and lips that are coffee brown.

And confound him, too! He wears like me on his finger a wedding ring,
And around his neck, as around my own, by a greasy bit of string,
A locket hangs with a woman's face, and I turn it about to see:
Just as I thought . . . on the other side the faces of children three;
Clustered together cherub-like three little laughing girls,
With the usual tiny rosebud mouths and the usual silken curls.
"*Zut!*"[8] I say. "He has beaten me; for me, I have only two,"
And I push the locket beneath his shirt, feeling a little blue.

Oh, it isn't cheerful to see a man, the marvellous work of God,
Crushed in the mutilation mill, crushed to a smeary clod;
Oh, it isn't cheerful to hear him moan; but it isn't that I mind,
It isn't the anguish that goes with him, it's the anguish he leaves behind.
For his going opens a tragic door that gives on a world of pain,
And the death he dies, those who live and love, will die again and again.

So here I am at my cards once more, but it's kind of spoiling my play,
Thinking of those three brats of his so many a mile away.
War is war, and he's only a Boche, and we all of us take our chance;

But all the same I'll be mighty glad when I'm hearing the ambulance.
One foe the less, but all the same I'm heartily glad I'm not
The man who gave him his broken head, the sniper who fired the shot.

No trumps you make it, I think you said? You'll pardon me if I err;
For a moment I thought of other things . . . *Mon Dieu! Quelle vache de guerre*.[9]

1916

Endnotes

- Note 1: A German, especially a soldier (derogatory).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Uncouth fellow.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Barbed wire protecting entrenchments from infantry attack.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Devil! (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Study.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In bridge, a hand of cards displayed for all to see; its holder does not play that round.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: German soldiers wore gray-green uniforms; French soldiers wore gray-blue.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: "Damn!" (French).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: My God! What a cow the war is (French); that is, this war sucks.Return to reference 9

EDWARD THOMAS

Edward Thomas (1878–1917) was born of Welsh parents in London and was educated there and at Lincoln College, Oxford, which he left with a wife, a baby, and high literary ambitions. Despite his chronic depression, which became more marked over the difficult years that followed, he reviewed up to fifteen books a week, published thirty books between 1897 and 1917, and during those twenty years edited sixteen anthologies and editions. His great gifts as a literary critic appeared to best advantage in his reviewing of poetry, and he was the first to salute new stars in the literary firmament such as Robert Frost and Ezra Pound.

Although he had long been conscientiously reviewing poetry, which he regarded as the highest form of literature, he apparently made no serious attempt to write poems until the autumn of 1914. Then, as he faced the stress of deciding whether to enlist, poems began to pour out of him: five between December 3 and 7, and ten more before the end of the month. His friend Frost offered to find him work in the United States, but feelings of patriotism, and the attraction of a salary that would support his growing family, led him to enlist in July 1915. His awareness of the natural world, its richness and beauty, was then intensified by a sense of impending loss and the certainty of death—his own and others'. In the long sentences that make up his verse, he ruminates with great delicacy on beauty and nature, but he also demonstrates an unsentimental toughness. In "Rain," for example, he compares the dead to "Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff." As violence to the natural order of things, war indirectly but persistently shadows Thomas's poems. In January 1917 he was sent to the Western Front and, on Easter Monday, was killed by a shell blast.

Adlestrop[1]

Yes, I remember Adlestrop—
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,
No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Jan. 19151917

Endnotes

- Note 1: A village in Gloucestershire.Return to reference 1

The Owl

Downhill I came, hungry, and yet not starved;
Cold, yet had heat within me that was proof
Against the North wind; tired, yet so that rest
Had seemed the sweetest thing under a roof.

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest,
Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I.
All of the night was quite barred out except
An owl's cry, a most melancholy cry

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill,
No merry note, nor cause of merriment,
But one telling me plain what I escaped
And others could not, that night, as in I went.

And salted° was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird's voice
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.

19151917

Notes

- °: *flavored*Return to reference °

Rain[1]

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been
Since I was born into this solitude.
Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying tonight or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain,
Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
Like me who have no love which this wild rain
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be towards what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

Jan. 19161917

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  See also Thomas's account of an English walking tour, *The Icknield Way* (1913): "In the heavy, black rain falling straight from invisible, dark sky to invisible, dark earth the heat of summer is annihilated, the splendour is dead, the summer is gone. The midnight rain buries it away where it has buried all sound but its own. I am alone in the dark still night, and my ear listens to the rain piping in the gutters and roaring softly in the

trees of the world. Even so will the rain fall darkly upon the grass over the grave when my ears can hear it no more. . . . Black and monotonously sounding is the midnight and solitude of the rain. In a little while or in an age—for it is all one—I shall know the full truth of the words I used to love, I knew not why, in my days of nature, in the days before the rain: 'Blessed are the dead that the rain rains on.' "
Return to reference 1

The Cherry Trees

The cherry trees bend over and are shedding
On the old road where all that passed are dead,
Their petals, strewing the grass as for a wedding
This early May morn when there is none to wed.

May 19161917

As the Team's Head Brass[1]

As the team's head brass flashed out on the turn
The lovers disappeared into the wood.
I sat among the boughs of the fallen elm
That strewed an angle of the fallow,[2] and
Watched the plough narrowing a yellow square
Of charlock.° Every time the horses turned
Instead of treading me down, the ploughman leaned
Upon the handles to say or ask a word,
About the weather, next about the war.
Scraping the share° he faced towards the wood,
And screwed along the furrow till the brass flashed
Once more.
The blizzard felled the elm whose crest
I sat in, by a woodpecker's round hole,
The ploughman said. "When will they take it away?"
"When the war's over." So the talk began—
One minute and an interval of ten,
A minute more and the same interval.
"Have you been out?" "No." "And don't want to,
perhaps?"
"If I could only come back again, I should.
I could spare an arm. I shouldn't want to lose
A leg. If I should lose my head, why, so,
I should want nothing more. . . . Have many gone
From here?" "Yes." "Many lost?" "Yes, a good few.
Only two teams work on the farm this year.
One of my mates is dead. The second day
In France they killed him. It was back in March,
The very night of the blizzard, too. Now if
He had stayed here we should have moved the tree."

"And I should not have sat here. Everything
Would have been different. For it would have been
Another world." "Ay, and a better, though
If we could see all all might seem good." Then
The lovers came out of the wood again:
The horses started and for the last time
I watched the clods crumble and topple over
After the ploughshare and the stumbling team.

May 19161917

Endnotes

- Note 1: Also known as horse brass: a decorative brass medallion or emblem attached to a horse's harness.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Ground plowed and harrowed but left uncropped for a year or more.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *wild mustard*Return to reference °
- °: *plowshare*Return to reference °

MARY BORDEN

Born in Chicago and educated at Vassar College, Mary Borden (1886–1968) lived most of her life in England and Europe. While traveling in India she met her first husband, Douglas Turner, a Scottish missionary, and they settled in London in 1913. There she was part of a literary circle that included Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis. She was also a stone-throwing feminist activist, or "suffragette," for which she was briefly jailed. At the start of World War I, her husband enlisted and Borden volunteered as a nurse. During the war their marriage fell apart, and Borden met her second husband, Louis Spears, an English officer who later became a member of Parliament and diplomat. Having begun the war as a nurse for the French Red Cross, Borden eventually ran French field hospitals near the front line, for which she won British and French military medals for bravery. Having lived in England between the wars and published a spate of novels, she again ran French military hospitals during World War II. But the memories of her close encounters with the gruesome carnage of World War I made the most enduring impression on her literary work.

These memories feature in the sketches, short stories, and poems that make up *The Forbidden Zone* (1929)—an earlier version of which she had tried to publish during the war but could not because of censorship. In prose sketches such as "Belgium," she observes in acute detail the war's fragmentation of lives and its erasing of meaningful social distinctions. "Belgium" begins with the all-engulfing mud that is also the subject of her most innovative poem, "Song of the Mud," originally the middle of a poetic trilogy, "The Somme," published during the war. Few poems capture as vividly the ecological disaster of World War I: the military destruction turned vast tracts of Earth's surface into mud, and many soldiers were swallowed whole by it. In the free-verse repetitions of Borden's poem, the mud becomes a devouring monster that is covering,

spreading, coating, caking, soaking, mixing, crawling, filling, sucking. Her ever-expanding and contracting lines seem to embody the mudlike force of the war’s human and environmental catastrophe.

Belgium[1]

Mud: and a thin rain coming down to make more mud.

Mud: with scraps of iron lying in it and the straggling fragment of a nation, lolling, hanging about in the mud on the edge of disaster.

It is quiet here. The rain and the mud muffle the voice of the war that is growling beyond the horizon. But if you listen you can hear cataracts of iron pouring down channels in the sodden land, and you feel the earth trembling.

Back there is France, just behind the windmill. To the north, the coast; a coast without a port, futile. On our right? That's the road to Ypres.[2] The less said about that road the better: no one goes down it for choice—it's British now. Ahead of us, then? No, you can't get out that way. No, there's no frontier, just a bleeding edge, trenches. That's where the enemy took his last bite, fastened his iron teeth, and stuffed to bursting, stopped devouring Belgium, left this strip, these useless fields, these crumpled dwellings.

Cities? None. Towns? No whole ones. Yes, there are half a dozen villages. But there is plenty of mud, and a thin silent rain falling to make more mud—mud with things lying in it, wheels, broken motors, parts of houses, graves.

This is what is left of Belgium. Come, I'll show you. Here are trees drooping along a canal, ploughed fields, roads leading into sand-dunes, roofless houses. There's a farm, an old woman with a crooked back feeding chickens, a convoy of motor lorries[3] round a barn; they squat like elephants. And here is a village crouching in the mud: the cobblestone street is slippery and smeared with refuse, and there is a yellow cat sitting in a window. This is the headquarters of the Belgian Army. You see those men, lolling in the doorways—uncouth, dishevelled, dirty? They are soldiers. You can read on their heavy jowls, in their stupefied, patient, hopeless eyes, how boring it is to be a hero.

The King[4] is here. His office is in the schoolroom down the street, a little way past the church, just beyond the dung heap. If we wait we may see him. Let's stand with these people in the rain and wait.

A band is going to play to the army. Yes, I told you, this is the army—these stolid men standing aimlessly in the drizzle, and these who come stumbling along the slippery ditches, and those leaning in degraded doorways. They fought their way out of Liége and Namur,[5] followed the King here; they are what is left of plucky little Belgium's heroic army.

And the song of the nation that comes from the horns in the front of the wine shop, the song that sounds like the bleating of sheep, can it help them? Can it deceive them? Can it whisk from their faces the stale despair, and unutterable boredom, and brighten their disappointed eyes? They are so few, and they have nothing to do but stand in the rain waiting. When the band stops they will disappear into the *estaminet*[6] to warm their stomachs with wine and cuddle the round-cheeked girls. What else can they do? The French are on one side of them, the British on the other, and the enemy in front. They cannot go back; to go back is to retreat, and they have been retreating ever since they can remember. They can retreat no farther. This village is where they stop. At one end of it is a pigsty, at the other end is a grave-yard, and all about are flats of mud. Can the noise, the rhythmical beating of the drum, the piping, the hoarse shrieking, help these men, make them believe, make them glad to be heroes? They have nowhere to go now and nothing to do. There is nothing but mud all about, and a soft fine rain coming down to make more mud—mud with a broken fragment of a nation lolling in it, hanging about waiting in it behind the shelter of a disaster that has been accomplished.

Come away, for God's sake—come away. Let's go back to Dunkerque.[7] The King? Didn't you see him? He came out of the schoolhouse some time ago and drove away toward the sand-dunes—a big fair man in uniform. You didn't notice? Never mind. Come away.

1914–181929

Endnotes

- Note 1: Germany invaded and occupied Belgium to gain a positional advantage against France near the beginning of World War I. The occupation, which included widespread violence against civilians, is often referred to as "the Rape of Belgium."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Key Belgian city during the war, between France and Germany's planned course of attack.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Trucks.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Albert I reigned as king of the Belgians from 1909 to 1934. He took personal command of the Belgian army during the war.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Belgian cities fortified against German invasion.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Café (French).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Dunkirk, a city on the northern coast of France.Return to reference 7

The Song of the Mud

This is the song of the mud,
The pale yellow glistening mud that covers the naked hills like satin,
The grey gleaming silvery mud that is spread like enamel over the valleys,
The frothing, squirting, spurting liquid mud that gurgles along the road-beds,
The thick elastic mud that is kneaded and pounded and squeezed under the hoofs of horses,
The invincible, inexhaustible mud of the War Zone.

This is the song of the mud, the uniform of the *poilu*.[1]
His coat is of mud, his poor great flapping coat that is too big for him and too heavy,
His coat that once was blue, and now is grey and stiff with the mud that cakes it.
This is the mud that clothes him—
His trousers and boots are of mud—
And his skin is of mud—
And there is mud in his beard.
His head is crowned with a helmet of mud,
And he wears it—oh, he wears it well!
He wears it as a King wears the ermine[2] that bores him—
He has set a new style in clothing,
He has introduced the *chic*° of mud.

This is the song of the mud that wriggles its way into battle,

The impertinent, the intrusive, the ubiquitous, the unwelcome,
The slimy, inveterate nuisance,
That fills the trenches,
That mixes in with the food of the soldiers,
That spoils the working of motors and crawls into their secret parts,
That spreads itself over the guns,
That sucks the guns down and holds them fast in its slimy, voluminous lips,
That has no respect for destruction and muzzles the bursting of shells,
And slowly, softly, easily,
Soaks up the fire, the noise, soaks up the energy and the courage,
Soaks up the power of armies,
Soaks up the battle—
Just soaks it up and thus stops it.

This is the song of the mud, the obscene, the filthy, the putrid,
The vast liquid grave of our Armies—
It has drowned our men—
Its monstrous distended belly reeks with the undigested dead—
Our men have gone down into it, sinking slowly, and struggling and slowly disappearing.
Our fine men, our brave, strong young men,
Our glowing, red, shouting, brawny men,
Slowly, inch by inch, they have gone down into it.
Into its darkness, its thickness, its silence,
Relentlessly it drew them down, sucking them down,
They have been drowned there in thick, bitter, heaving mud—
It hides them—oh, so many of them!

Under its smooth glistening surface it is hiding them blandly,
There is not a trace of them—
There is no mark where they went down.
The mute, enormous mouth of the mud has closed over them.

This is the song of the mud,
The beautiful, glistening, golden mud that covers the hills like satin;
The mysterious, gleaming, silvery mud that is spread like enamel over the valleys.
Mud, the fantastic disguise of the War Zone;
Mud, the extinguishing mantle of battles;
Mud, the smooth, fluid grave of our soldiers.
This is the song of the mud.

1917

Endnotes

- Note 1: French infantryman (informal term).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The white winter coat of the stoat; a highly valuable fur traditionally associated with royalty.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *stylishness (French)*Return to reference °

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) was educated at Marlborough College and Clare College, Cambridge (which he left without taking a degree). His father came from a prosperous family of Sephardic Jews, his mother from Anglican English gentry. As a young man he divided his time between literary London and the life of a country gentleman. These worlds and the brutally different one of the trenches, in which he found himself in 1914, are memorably described in his classic *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* (1928) and its sequel, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930).

He fought at Mametz Wood and in the Somme Offensive of July 1916 with such conspicuous courage that he acquired the Military Cross and the nickname Mad Jack. After a sniper's bullet went through his chest, however, he was sent back to England at the beginning of April 1917, and he began to take a different view of the war. Eventually, with courage equal to any he had shown in action, he made public a letter he sent to his commanding officer: "I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe that the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it." Sassoon continued: "I am a soldier, convinced that I am acting on behalf of soldiers. I believe that this war, upon which I entered as a war of defence and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest." The military authorities, rather than make a martyr of him, announced that he was suffering from shell shock and sent him to a hospital near Edinburgh, where he met and befriended Wilfred Owen.

Sassoon's public protest may have been smothered, but his poems, with their shock tactics, bitter irony, and masterly use of direct speech (learned from Thomas Hardy), continued to attack the old men of the army, Church, and government, whom he held responsible for the miseries and murder of the young. His poems

satirically play on contrasts between romanticized notions of war and the grim realities. They angrily flaunt the grisly effects of violence: in "The Rear-Guard" a corpse is "a soft unanswering heap" whose "fists of fingers clutched a blackening wound."

Sassoon returned to the Western Front in 1918, was wounded again, and was again sent home. An increasingly reclusive country gentleman, he continued to write poetry, but his style never regained the satiric pungency of the war poems that made him famous. His 1933 marriage ended because of his homosexuality; and after he became a Roman Catholic in 1957, he wrote mainly devotional poems.

‘They’

The Bishop tells us: ‘When the boys come back
They will not be the same; for they’ll have fought
In a just cause: they lead the last attack
On Anti-Christ; their comrades’ blood has bought
New right to breed an honourable race,
They have challenged Death and dared him face to face.’

‘We’re none of us the same!’ the boys reply.
‘For George lost both his legs; and Bill’s stone blind;
Poor Jim’s shot through the lungs and like to die;
And Bert’s gone syphilitic: you’ll not find
A chap who’s served that hasn’t found *some* change.’
And the Bishop said: ‘The ways of God are strange!’

Oct. 31, 19161917

The Rear-Guard

(Hindenburg Line, April 1917)[1]

Groping along the tunnel, step by step,
He winked his prying torch with patching glare
From side to side, and sniffed the unwholesome air.
Tins, boxes, bottles, shapes too vague to know;
A mirror smashed, the mattress from a bed;
And he, exploring fifty feet below
The rosy gloom of battle overhead.

Tripping, he grabbed the wall; saw some one lie
Humped at his feet, half-hidden by a rug,
And stooped to give the sleeper's arm a tug.
'I'm looking for headquarters.' No reply.
'God blast your neck!' (For days he'd had no sleep)
'Get up and guide me through this stinking place.'
Savage, he kicked a soft unanswering heap,
And flashed his beam across the livid face
Terribly glaring up, whose eyes yet wore
Agony dying hard ten days before;
And fists of fingers clutched a blackening wound.

Alone he staggered on until he found
Dawn's ghost that filtered down a shafted stair
To the dazed, muttering creatures underground
Who hear the boom of shells in muffled sound.
At last, with sweat of horror in his hair,
He climbed through darkness to the twilight air,
Unloading hell behind him step by step.

Apr. 22, 19171918

Endnotes

- Note 1: In 1916 Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg (1847–1934) became commander in chief of the German armies and, for a time, blocked the Allied advance in western France with the massive defensive "line" named after him. Its barbed-wire entanglements, deep trenches, and gun emplacements ran from Lens to Rheims.Return to reference 1

The General

‘Good-morning; good-morning!’ the General said
When we met him last week on our way to the line.
Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of ’em dead,
And we’re cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
‘He’s a cheery old card,’ grunted Harry to Jack
As they slogged up to Arras[1] with rifle and pack.

•••

But he did for them both by his plan of attack.

Apr. 19171918

Endnotes

- Note 1: A city in northern France, in the front line through much of the war. The British assault on the Western Front that began on April 9, 1917, was known as the Battle of Arras.Return to reference 1

Glory of Women

You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,
Or wounded in a mentionable place.
You worship decorations; you believe
That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.
You make us shells.[1] You listen with delight,
By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.
You crown our distant ardours while we fight,
And mourn our laurelled[2] memories when we're killed.
You can't believe that British troops 'retire'
When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,
Trampling the terrible corpses—blind with blood.
O German mother dreaming by the fire,
While you are knitting socks to send your son
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.

19171918

Endnotes

- Note 1: Many women were recruited into munitions factories during the war.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In ancient Greece and Rome, victorious generals were crowned with laurel wreaths.Return to reference 2

Everyone Sang

Everyone suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on—on—and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away . . . O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless; the singing will never be done.

Apr. 19191919

On Passing the New Menin Gate[1]

Who will remember, passing through this Gate,
The unheroic Dead who fed the guns?
Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate,—
Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones?
Crudely renewed, the Salient[2] holds its own.
Paid are its dim defenders by this pomp;
Paid, with a pile of peace-complacent stone,
The armies who endured that sullen swamp.

Here was the world's worst wound. And here with pride
'Their name liveth for ever,' the Gateway claims.
Was ever an immolation so belied
As these intolerably nameless names?
Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime
Rise and deride this sepulchre° of crime.

1927–281928

Endnotes

- Note 1: The names of 54,889 men are engraved on this war memorial outside Brussels.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Protruding part of fortifications or, as here, lines of defensive trenches. Salients are particularly vulnerable, being exposed to enemy fire from the front and both sides.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *tomb*Return to reference °

From Memoirs of an Infantry Officer

[THE OPENING OF THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME]

On July [1916] the first the weather, after an early morning mist, was of the kind commonly called heavenly. Down in our frowsty cellar we breakfasted at six, unwashed and apprehensive. Our table, appropriately enough, was an empty ammunition box. At six-forty-five the final bombardment began, and there was nothing for us to do except sit round our candle until the tornado ended. For more than forty minutes the air vibrated and the earth rocked and shuddered. Through the sustained uproar the tap and rattle of machine-guns could be identified; but except for the whistle of bullets no retaliation came our way until a few 5.9[1] shells shook the roof of our dug-out. Barton and I sat speechless, deafened and stupefied by the seismic state of affairs, and when he lit a cigarette the match flame staggered crazily. Afterwards I asked him what he had been thinking about. His reply was 'Carpet slippers and Kettle-holders'. My own mind had been working in much the same style, for during that cannonading cataclysm the following refrain was running in my head:

They come as a boon and a blessing to men,
The Something, the Owl, and the Waverley Pen.

For the life of me I couldn't remember what the first one was called. Was it the Shakespeare? Was it the Dickens? Anyhow it was an advertisement which I'd often seen in smoky railway stations. Then the bombardment lifted and lessened, our vertigo abated, and we looked at one another in dazed relief. Two Brigades of our Division were now going over the top on our right. Our Brigade was to attack 'when the main assault had reached its final objective'. In

our fortunate rôle of privileged spectators Barton and I went up the stairs to see what we could from Kingston Road Trench. We left Jenkins crouching in a corner, where he remained most of the day. His haggard blinking face haunts my memory. He was an example of the paralysing effect which such an experience could produce on a nervous system sensitive to noise, for he was a good officer both before and afterwards. I felt no sympathy for him at the time, but I do now. From the support-trench, which Barton called 'our opera box', I observed as much of the battle as the formation of the country allowed, the rising ground on the right making it impossible to see anything of the attack towards Mametz. A small shiny black note-book contains my pencilled particulars, and nothing will be gained by embroidering them with afterthoughts. I cannot turn my field-glasses on to the past.[2]

7.45. The barrage is now working to the right of Fricourt and beyond. I can see the 21st Division advancing about three-quarters of a mile away on the left and a few Germans coming to meet them, apparently surrendering. Our men in small parties (not extended in line) go steadily on to the German front-line. Brilliant sunshine and a haze of smoke drifting along the landscape. Some Yorkshires[3] a little way below on the left, watching the show and cheering as if at a football match. The noise almost as bad as ever.

9.30. Came back to dug-out and had a shave. 21st Division still going across the open, apparently without casualties. The sunlight flashes on bayonets as the tiny figures move quietly forward and disappear beyond mounds of trench debris. A few runners come back and ammunition parties go across. Trench-mortars are knocking hell out of Sunken Road trench and the ground where the Manchesters[4] will attack soon. Noise not so bad now and very little retaliation.

9.50. Fricourt half-hidden by clouds of drifting smoke, blue, pinkish and grey. Shrapnel bursting in small bluish-white puffs with tiny flashes. The birds seem bewildered; a lark begins to go up and then flies feebly along, thinking better of it. Others flutter above the trench with querulous cries, weak on the wing. I can see seven of

our balloons,[5] on the right. On the left our men still filing across in twenties and thirties. Another huge explosion in Fricourt and a cloud of brown-pink smoke. Some bursts are yellowish.

10.5. I can see the Manchesters down in New Trench, getting ready to go over. Figures filing down the trench. Two of them have gone out to look at our wire gaps![6] Have just eaten my last orange. . . . I am staring at a sunlit picture of Hell, and still the breeze shakes the yellow weeds, and the poppies glow under Crawley Ridge where some shells fell a few minutes ago. Manchesters are sending forward some scouts. A bayonet glitters. A runner comes back across the open to their Battalion Headquarters, close here on the right. 21st Division still trotting along the sky line toward La Boisselle. Barrage going strong to the right of Contalmaison Ridge. Heavy shelling toward Mametz.

19161930

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, 5.9-caliber (5.9-inch diameter).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The extracts that follow are edited versions of actual entries in Sassoon's diary. (See *Siegfried Sassoon: Diaries 1915–1918*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis, 1983, pp. 82–83.)Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Men of a Yorkshire regiment.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Men of the Manchester regiment.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Long cables, tethering such balloons, prevented attacks by low-flying aircraft.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Holes, made by shell fire, in the long coils of barbed wire protecting the trenches.Return to reference 6

IVOR GURNEY

Ivor Bertie Gurney (1890–1937) was born in Gloucester and showed an early aptitude for music. After five years at the King's School, Gloucester, he won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music. He first acquired a modest reputation as a composer. After war broke out in August 1914, he enlisted; his battalion was sent to France the following year, and Gurney experienced the horrors of the Western Front. He was wounded in April 1917, and when in the hospital in Rouen, he sent some of his poems to friends in London. The resultant volume, *Severn and Somme*, was published that year. (The Severn is the English river at the head of whose estuary Gloucester is situated; it appears often in his poetry. The Somme is the northern French river that was the scene of some of the most murderous fighting in the war.) Gurney was returned to the front in time to take part in the grim Passchendaele offensive of the summer of 1917. He suffered the effects of a poison-gas attack on August 22 and was sent home, where he moved from hospital to hospital. He returned to the Royal College of Music to study under the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1958) and continued also to write poetry. His second book of poems, *War's Embers*, appeared in 1919. Gurney, now believed to have had schizophrenia, spent the last fifteen years of his life in psychiatric hospitals.

Gurney was a mere private in the war, unlike officers such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, and his poems recapture with immediacy particular scenes and moments in the trenches. He was influenced by the poetry of Edward Thomas, with whom he shares a limpid directness, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, whose "terrible" sonnets are racked by despair. Though ruminating on traditional subjects such as landscape, nature, and mortality, Gurney dislocates these Georgian conventions through the compression, disharmony, and unredemptive language of his poetry. His "modern" techniques include syntactic contortions, colloquial diction, shifting rhythms and

rhymes, and enjambments that accentuate the jarring experience of war (a body described as “that red wet / Thing” in “To His Love”).

To His Love

He's gone, and all our plans
Are useless indeed.
We'll walk no more on Cotswold[1]
Where the sheep feed
Quietly and take no heed.

His body that was so quick
Is not as you
Knew it, on Severn river°
Under the blue
Driving our small boat through.

You would not know him now . . .
But still he died
Nobly, so cover him over
With violets of pride
Purple from Severn side.

Cover him, cover him soon!
And with thick-set
Masses of memoried flowers—
Hide that red wet
Thing I must somehow forget.

1919

Endnotes

- Note 1: Range of hills in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, in south central England.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *a British river*Return to reference °

The Silent One

Who died on the wires,[1] and hung there, one of two —
Who for his hours of life had chattered through
Infinite lovely chatter of Bucks[2] accent:
Yet faced unbroken wires; stepped over, and went
A noble fool, faithful to his stripes—and ended.
But I weak, hungry, and willing only for the chance
Of line—to fight in the line, lay down under unbroken
Wires, and saw the flashes and kept unshaken,
Till the politest voice—a finicking accent, said:
"Do you think you might crawl through there: there's a hole."
Darkness, shot at: I smiled, as politely replied—
"I'm afraid not, Sir." There was no hole no way to be seen
Nothing but chance of death, after tearing of clothes.
Kept flat, and watched the darkness, hearing bullets whizzing—
And thought of music—and swore deep heart's deep oaths
(Polite to God) and retreated and came on again,
Again retreated—and a second time faced the screen.

1954

Endnotes

- Note 1: The barbed wire protecting the front from infantry attack.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Buckinghamshire, in southern England.Return to reference 2

ISAAC ROSENBERG

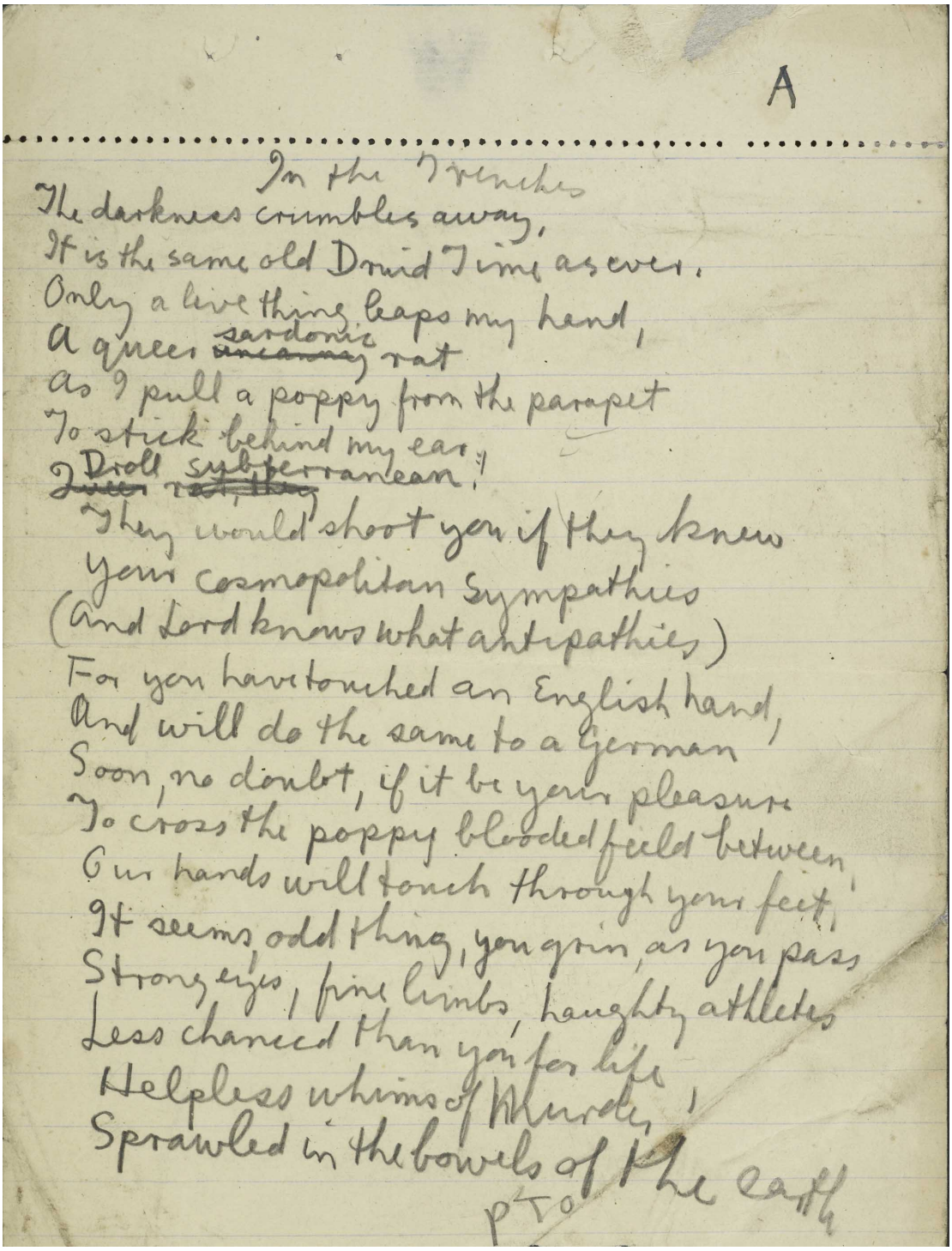
Isaac Rosenberg (1890–1918) was born in Bristol to a poor Jewish family that moved to London in 1897. There, at Stepney, he attended elementary schools until the age of fourteen, when he became apprenticed as an engraver in a firm of art publishers and attended evening classes at the Art School of Birkbeck College. His first ambition was to be a painter, and in 1911, when his apprenticeship was over, a group of three Jewish women provided the means for his studying at the Slade School of Art. His interest in writing poetry steadily developed, and with his sister's encouragement he circulated copies of his poems among members of London's literary set and gained a certain reputation, though neither his poetry nor his painting won him any material success. In 1912 he brought out *Night and Day*, the first of three pamphlets of poetry published at his own expense. The other two were *Youth* (1915) and *Moses, A Play* (1916).

In 1915 Rosenberg enlisted in the army, and he was killed in action on April 1, 1918. After his death his reputation steadily grew as an unusually interesting and original poet, who, though he did not live to maturity, nevertheless broke new ground in imagery, rhythms, and the handling of dramatic effects. His poetry strangely amalgamates acerbic irony (the sardonic grin of a rat in "Break of Day in the Trenches") with lush, resonant, even biblical diction and imagery ("shrieking iron and flame / Hurled through still heavens"). The fierce apprehension of the physical reality of war, the exclamatory directness of the language, and the vivid sense of involvement distinguish his poems. Perhaps Rosenberg's working-class background had something to do with this vividness: like Ivor Gurney and David Jones, he served in the ranks.

Break of Day in the Trenches

The darkness crumbles away.
It is the same old druid[1] Time as ever,
Only a live thing leaps my hand,
A queer sardonic rat,
As I pull the parapet's[2] poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.
What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver—what heart aghast?
Poppies whose roots are in man's veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe—
Just a little white with the dust.

June 19161922


A

In the Trenches

The darkness crumbles away,
It is the same old Druid Time as ever.
Only a live thing leaps my hand,
a queer ~~uncanny~~ sardonic rat
as I pull a poppy from the parapet
To stick behind my ear.
~~Droll rat, they~~ Droll subterranean!
They would shoot you if they knew
your cosmopolitan sympathies
(and Lord knows what antipathies)
For you have touched an English hand,
And will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the poppy bloodied field between.
Our hands will touch through your feet.
It seems odd thing, you grin, as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life
Helpless whims of Nature,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth

P.T.O.

"Break of Day in the Trenches." Rosenberg wrote poems on scraps of paper he found while fighting in World War I. His manuscript papers still have mud on them from the trenches. This early draft page of one of the war's most famous poems includes words and lines that Rosenberg subsequently revised or

omitted. Rosenberg changed, for example, “queer uncanny rat” to “queer sardonic rat” and deleted the line “(and Lord knows what antipathies),” which once rhymed with the rat’s “cosmopolitan sympathies.”

Endnotes

- Note 1: Ancient Celtic priest.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Wall protecting a trench.Return to reference 2

Louse Hunting

Nudes—stark and glistening,
Yelling in lurid glee. Grinning faces
And raging limbs
Whirl over the floor one fire.
For a shirt verminously busy
Yon soldier tore from his throat, with oaths
Godhead might shrink at, but not the lice.
And soon the shirt was aflare
Over the candle he'd lit while we lay.

Then we all sprang up and stript
To hunt the verminous brood.
Soon like a demons' pantomime
The place was raging.
See the silhouettes agape,
See the gibbering shadows
Mixed with the battled arms on the wall.
See gargantuan hooked fingers
Pluck in supreme flesh
To smutch° supreme littleness.
See the merry limbs in hot Highland fling[1]
Because some wizard vermin
Charmed from the quiet this revel
When our ears were half lulled
By the dark music
Blown from Sleep's trumpet.

19171922

Endnotes

- Note 1: In wild Scottish dance.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *blacken, besmirch*Return to reference °

Returning, We Hear the Larks

Sombre the night is.
And though we have our lives, we know
What sinister threat lurks there.

Dragging these anguished limbs, we only know
This poison-blasted track opens on our camp—
On a little safe sleep.

But hark! joy—joy—strange joy.
Lo! heights of night ringing with unseen larks.
Music showering on our upturned list'ning faces.

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song—
But song only dropped,
Like a blind man's dreams on the sand
By dangerous tides,
Like a girl's dark hair for she dreams no ruin lies there,
Or her kisses where a serpent hides.

19171922

Dead Man’s Dump

The plunging limbers[1] over the shattered track
Racketed with their rusty freight,
Stuck out like many crowns of thorns,
And the rusty stakes like sceptres old
To stay the flood of brutish men
Upon our brothers dear.

The wheels lurched over sprawled dead
But pained them not, though their bones crunched,
Their shut mouths made no moan.
They lie there huddled, friend and foeman,
Man born of man, and born of woman,
And shells go crying over them
From night till night and now.

Earth has waited for them,
All the time of their growth
Fretting for their decay:
Now she has them at last!
In the strength of their strength
Suspended—stopped and held.

What fierce imaginings their dark souls lit?
Earth! have they gone into you?
Somewhere they must have gone,
And flung on your hard back
Is their soul’s sack,
Emptied of God-ancestralled essences.
Who hurled them out? Who hurled?

None saw their spirits’ shadow shake the grass,

Or stood aside for the half-used life to pass
Out of those doomed nostrils and the doomed
mouth,
When the swift iron burning bee
Drained the wild honey of their youth.

What of us who, flung on the shrieking pyre,
Walk, our usual thoughts untouched,
Our lucky limbs as on ichor[2] fed,
Immortal seeming ever?
Perhaps when the flames beat loud on us,
A fear may choke in our veins
And the startled blood may stop.

The air is loud with death,
The dark air spurts with fire,
The explosions ceaseless are.
Timelessly now, some minutes past,
These dead strode time with vigorous life,
Till the shrapnel called "An end!"
But not to all. In bleeding pangs
Some borne on stretchers dreamed of home,
Dear things, war-blotted from their hearts.

A man's brains splattered on
A stretcher-bearer's face;
His shook shoulders slipped their load,
But when they bent to look again
The drowning soul was sunk too deep
For human tenderness.

They left this dead with the older dead,
Stretched at the crossroads.

Burnt black by strange decay
Their sinister faces lie;

The lid over each eye,
The grass and coloured clay
More motion have than they,
Joined to the great sunk silences.

Here is one not long dead;
His dark hearing caught our far wheels,
And the choked soul stretched weak hands
To reach the living word the far wheels said,
The blood-dazed intelligence beating for light,
Crying through the suspense of the far torturing wheels
Swift for the end to break,
Or the wheels to break,
Cried as the tide of the world broke over his sight.

Will they come? Will they ever come?
Even as the mixed hoofs of the mules,
The quivering-bellied mules,
And the rushing wheels all mixed
With his tortured upturned sight.
So we crashed round the bend,
We heard his weak scream,
We heard his very last sound,
And our wheels grazed his dead face.

19171922

Endnotes

- Note 1: Two-wheeled carts, here carrying barbed wire.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In Greek mythology, the ethereal fluid that flowed in the veins of the gods.Return to reference 2

WILFRED OWEN

Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) was brought up in the backstreets of Birkenhead and Shrewsbury, and on leaving school he took up a post as lay assistant to a country vicar. Removed from the influence of a devout mother, he became increasingly critical of the Church's role in society. His letters and poems of this period show an emerging awareness of the poor's sufferings and the first stirrings of the compassion that was to characterize his later poems about the Western Front. In 1913 he broke with the vicar and went to teach English in France.

For more than a year after the outbreak of war, Owen could not decide whether he ought to enlist. Finally he did, and from January to May 1917 he fought as an officer in the Battle of the Somme. Then, suffering from shell shock, he was sent to a hospital near Edinburgh, where he had the good fortune to meet Siegfried Sassoon, whose first fiercely realistic war poems had just appeared. The influence of Sassoon's satiric realism was a useful tonic to Owen's lush, Keatsian Romanticism. Throughout his months in the hospital, Owen suffered from the horrendous nightmares symptomatic of shell shock. The experience of battle, banished from his waking mind, erupted into his dreams and then into poems haunted with obsessive images of blinded eyes ("Dulce et Decorum Est") and the mouth of hell ("Miners" and "Strange Meeting"). The distinctive music of such later poems owes much of its power to Owen's mastery of alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, half-rhyme, and the pararhyme that he pioneered. This last technique, the rhyming of two words with identical or similar consonants but differing, stressed vowels (such as *groined / groaned, killed / cold, hall / hell*), of which the second is usually the lower in pitch, produces effects of dissonance, failure, and unfulfillment that subtly reinforce his themes.

Echoing Dante, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, and the Bible, Owen puts literary and religious language into jarring new relationships with the absurdities of modern war experience. He recuperates but distorts the conventions of pastoral elegy, relocating them to scenes of terror, extreme pain, and irredeemable mass death.

In the year of life left to him after leaving the hospital in November 1917, Owen matured rapidly. Success as a soldier, marked by the award of the Military Cross, and as a poet, which had won him the recognition of his peers, gave him a new confidence. He wrote eloquently of the tragedy of young men killed in battle. In his later elegies a disciplined sensuality and a passionate intelligence find their fullest, most moving, and most memorable expression.

Owen was killed in action a week before the war ended.

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
—Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.°
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.°

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Sept.–Oct. 19171920

Notes

- °: *prayers*Return to reference °
- °: *counties*Return to reference °

Apologia Pro Poemate Meo[1]

I, too, saw God through mud,—
The mud that cracked on cheeks when wretches smiled.
War brought more glory to their eyes than blood,
And gave their laughs more glee than shakes a child.

Merry it was to laugh there—
Where death becomes absurd and life absurder.
For power was on us as we slashed bones bare
Not to feel sickness or remorse of murder.

I, too, have dropped off Fear—
Behind the barrage, dead as my platoon,
And sailed my spirit surging light and clear
Past the entanglement where hopes lay strewn;

And witnessed exultation—[2]
Faces that used to curse me, scowl for scowl,
Shine and lift up with passion of oblation,[3]
Seraphic° for an hour; though they were foul.

I have made fellowships—
Untold of happy lovers in old song.
For love is not the binding of fair lips
With the soft silk of eyes that look and long,

By Joy, whose ribbon slips,—
But wound with war's hard wire whose stakes are strong;
Bound with the bandage of the arm that drips;

Knit in the webbing of the rifle-thong.

I have perceived much beauty
In the hoarse oaths that kept our courage straight;
Heard music in the silentness of duty;
Found peace where shell-storms spouted reddest spate.

Nevertheless, except you share
With them in hell the sorrowful dark of hell,
Whose world is but the trembling of a flare
And heaven but as the highway for a shell,

You shall not hear their mirth:
You shall not come to think them well content
By any jest of mine. These men are worth
Your tears. You are not worth their merriment.

Nov.–Dec. 19171920

Endnotes

- Note 1: This Latin title, meaning "Apology for My Poem," may have been prompted by that of Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, "Apology for His Life." Here an apology is a written vindication rather than a remorseful account.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*: "Poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted. . . . It exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sacrifice offered to God.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *ecstatic*Return to reference °

Miners[1]

There was a whispering in my hearth,
A sigh of the coal,
Grown wistful of a former earth
It might recall.

I listened for a tale of leaves
And smothered ferns,
Frond-forests, and the low sly lives
Before the fauns.

My fire might show steam-phantoms simmer
From Time's old cauldron,
Before the birds made nests in summer,
Or men had children.

But the coals were murmuring of their mine,
And moans down there
Of boys that slept wry sleep, and men
Writhing for air.

And I saw white bones in the cinder-shard,
Bones without number.
Many the muscled bodies charred,
And few remember.

I thought of all that worked dark pits
Of war,[2] and died
Digging the rock where Death reputes
Peace lies indeed.

Comforted years will sit soft-chaired,

In rooms of amber;
The years will stretch their hands, well-cheered
By our life's ember;

The centuries will burn rich loads
With which we groaned,
Whose warmth shall lull their dreaming lids,
While songs are crooned;
But they will not dream of us poor lads,
Left in the ground.

Jan. 19181931

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wrote a poem on the Colliery Disaster [of Jan. 12, 1918, at Halmerend]: but I get mixed up with the War at the end. It is short, but oh! sour [Owen's Jan. 14 letter to his mother]. The explosion killed about 150 miners.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Miners who dug tunnels under no-man's-land in which to detonate mines beneath the enemy trenches.Return to reference 2

Dulce Et Decorum Est[1]

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines[2] that dropped behind.

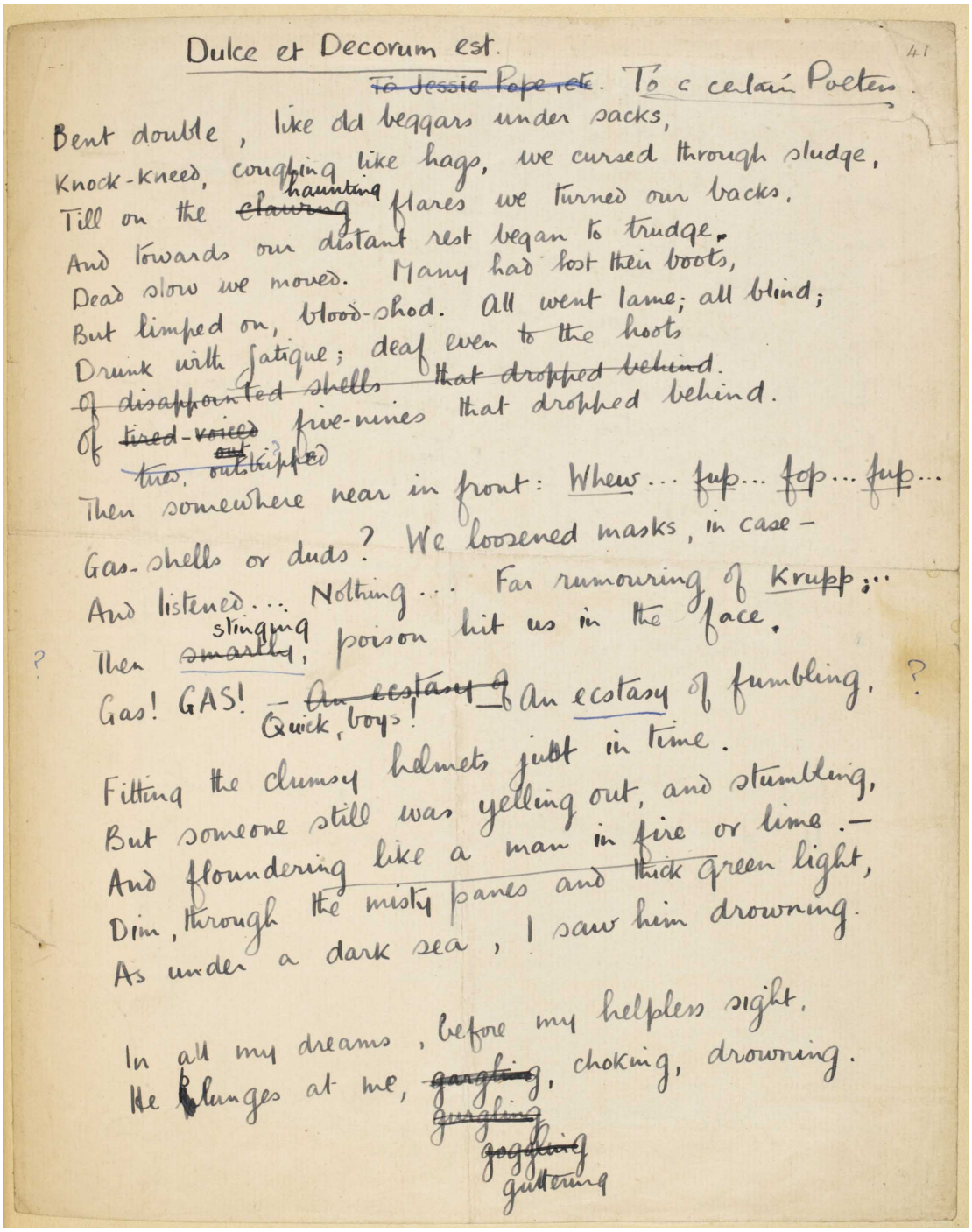
Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .
Dim, through the misty panes[3] and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend,[4] you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,

The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Oct. 1917–Mar. 19181920



Dulce et Decorum est. 41

~~To Jessie Pope etc~~. To c celain Poeten.

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the ~~clawing~~ haunting flares we turned our backs.
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Dead slow we moved. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
~~Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.~~
Of ~~tired-voiced~~ ~~out~~ five-nines that dropped behind.
~~two outstripped~~

Then somewhere near in front: Whew... fup... fop... fup...
Gas-shells or duds? We loosened masks, in case –
And listened.... Nothing... Far rumouring of Krupp;...
Then ~~smarting~~ stinging, poison hit us in the face.
Gas! GAS! – ~~An ecstasy of~~ Quick, boys! An ecstasy of fumbling.
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time.
But someone still was yelling out, and stumbling,
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.–
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a dark sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, ~~gargling~~ ~~gurgling~~ ~~gogglin~~ guttering, choking, drowning.

"Dulce et Decorum est." This manuscript draft page of Owen's famous poem includes four lines at the beginning of the second

stanza that introduce the horrific gas attack. The poem becomes more powerful when, in its final version, Owen deletes this transitional material, confronting the reader with the terror-stricken cry "Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!" Owen tries out several different participles to describe the gassed soldier before settling on "guttering."

Endnotes

- Note 1: The famous Latin tag [from Horace, *Odes* 3.2.13] means, of course, *It is sweet and meet to die for one's country. Sweet!* And *decorous!* [Owen's Oct. 16, 1917, letter to his mother].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, 5.9-caliber shells.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Of the gas mask's celluloid window.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Jessie Pope, to whom the poem was originally to have been dedicated, published jingoistic war poems urging young men to enlist.Return to reference 4

Strange Meeting[1]

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel,[2] long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.°

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,—
By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."
"None," said that other, "save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.[3]
Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.

They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells.
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint,[4]
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess[5] of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.

"I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . ."

May [?] 19181920

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  See Shelley, *The Revolt of Islam*, lines 1828–32:

  > And one whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside,
  > With quivering lips and humid eyes;—and all
  > Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide
  > Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
  > In a strange land.

  The speaker of Owen's poem imagines his victim a poet like himself.

Return to reference 1

- Note 2: See Sassoon's "The Rear-Guard" (p. 156).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity [Owen's draft preface to his poems].Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," line 203 of William Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1807).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Luck, as in the phrase *bad cess to you* (may evil befall you), and muck or excrement, as in the word *cesspool.*Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *grooved*Return to reference °

Futility

Move him into the sun—
Gently its touch awoke him once,
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.
Always it woke him, even in France,
Until this morning and this snow.
If anything might rouse him now
The kind old sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds—
Woke once the clays of a cold star.
Are limbs, so dear achieved, are sides
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?
Was it for this the clay grew tall?
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil
To break earth’s sleep at all?

May 19181920

Disabled

He sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark,
And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey,
Legless, sewn short at elbow. Through the park
Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn,
Voices of play and pleasure after day,
Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him.

•••

About this time Town used to swing so gay
When glow-lamps budded in the light blue trees,
And girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim,—
In the old times, before he threw away his knees.
Now he will never feel again how slim
Girls' waists are, or how warm their subtle hands.
All of them touch him like some queer disease.

•••

There was an artist silly for his face,
For it was younger than his youth, last year.
Now, he is old; his back will never brace;
He's lost his colour very far from here,
Poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry,
And half his lifetime lapsed in the hot race
And leap of purple spurted from his thigh.

•••

One time he liked a blood-smear down his leg,

After the matches, carried shoulder-high.[1]
It was after football, when he'd drunk a peg,[2]
He thought he'd better join.—He wonders why.
Someone had said he'd look a god in kilts,
That's why; and maybe, too, to please his Meg,
Aye, that was it, to please the giddy jilts[3]
He asked to join. He didn't have to beg;
Smiling they wrote his lie: aged nineteen years.[4]
Germans he scarcely thought of; all their guilt,
And Austria's, did not move him. And no fears
Of Fear came yet. He thought of jewelled hilts
For daggers in plaid socks;[5] of smart salutes;
And care of arms; and leave; and pay arrears;
Esprit de corps;[6] and hints for young recruits.
And soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers.

•••

Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.
Only a solemn man who brought him fruits
Thanked him; and then enquired about his soul.

•••

Now, he will spend a few sick years in institutes,
And do what things the rules consider wise,
And take whatever pity they may dole.
Tonight he noticed how the women's eyes
Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.
How cold and late it is! Why don't they come
And put him into bed? Why don't they come?

Oct. 1917–July 19181920

Endnotes

- Note 1: See Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young" (p. 139, lines 1–4).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Slang for a drink, usually brandy and soda.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Capricious women.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The recruiting officers entered on his enlistment form his lie that he was nineteen years old and, therefore, above the minimum age for military service.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Kilted Scottish Highlanders used to carry a small ornamental dagger in the top of a stocking.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Regard for the honor and interests of an organization or, as here, a military unit (French). "Pay arrears": back pay.Return to reference 6

From Owen's Letters to His Mother

16 January 1917

* * *

I can see no excuse for deceiving you about these last 4 days. I have suffered seventh hell.

I have not been at the front.

I have been in front of it.

I held an advanced post, that is, a 'dug-out' in the middle of No Man's Land.

We had a march of 3 miles over shelled road then nearly 3 along a flooded trench. After that we came to where the trenches had been blown flat out and had to go over the top. It was of course dark, too dark, and the ground was not mud, not sloppy mud, but an octopus of sucking clay, 3, 4, and 5 feet deep, relieved only by craters full of water. Men have been known to drown in them. Many stuck in the mud & only got on by leaving their waders, equipment, and in some cases their clothes.

High explosives were dropping all around out, and machine guns spluttered every few minutes. But it was so dark that even the German flares did not reveal us.

Three quarters dead, I mean each of us 3/4 dead, we reached the dug-out, and relieved the wretches therein. I then had to go forth and find another dugout for a still more advanced post where I left 18 bombers. I was responsible for other posts on the left but there was a junior officer in charge.

My dug-out held 25 men tight packed. Water filled it to a depth of 1 or 2 feet, leaving say 4 feet of air.

One entrance had been blown in & blocked.

So far, the other remained.

The Germans knew we were staying there and decided we shouldn't.

Those fifty hours were the agony of my happy life.

Every ten minutes on Sunday afternoon seemed an hour.

I nearly broke down and let myself drown in the water that was now slowly rising over my knees.

Towards 6 o'clock, when, I suppose, you would be going to church, the shelling grew less intense and less accurate: so that I was mercifully helped to do my duty and crawl, wade, climb and flounder over No Man's Land to visit my other post. It took me half an hour to move about 150 yards.

I was chiefly annoyed by our own machine guns from behind. The seeng-seeng-seeng of the bullets reminded me of Mary's canary. On the whole I can support[1] the canary better.

In the Platoon on my left the sentries over the dug-out were blown to nothing. One of these poor fellows was my first servant whom I rejected. If I had kept him he would have lived, for servants don't do Sentry Duty. I kept my own sentries half way down the stairs during the more terrific bombardment. In spite of this one lad was blown down and, I am afraid, blinded.[2]

31 December 1917

Last year, at this time, (it is just midnight, and now is the intolerable instant of the Change) last year I lay awake in a windy tent in the middle of a vast, dreadful encampment. It seemed neither France nor England, but a kind of paddock where the beasts are kept a few days before the shambles.[3] I heard the revelling of the Scotch troops, who are now dead, and who knew they would be dead. I thought of this present night, and whether I should indeed—whether we should indeed—whether you would indeed—but I thought neither long nor deeply, for I am a master of elision.

But chiefly I thought of the very strange look on all faces in that c an incomprehensible look, which a man will never see in England,

though wars should be in England; nor can it be seen in any battle. But only in Étaples.[4]

It was not despair, or terror, it was more terrible than terror, for it was a blindfold look, and without expression, like a dead rabbit's.

It will never be painted, and no actor will ever seize it. And to describe it, I think I must go back and be with them.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Tolerate. Mary: Owen's sister.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: This incident prompted Owen's poem "The Sentry."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Slaughterhouse.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Until 1914, a fishing port of 5,800 inhabitants, Étaples and its surrounding hills housed 100,000 soldiers on their way to and from the front in 1917.Return to reference 4

Preface[1]

This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them.

Nor is it about deeds, or lands, nor anything about glory, honour, might, majesty, dominion, or power, except War.[2]

Above all I am not concerned with Poetry.

My subject is War, and the pity of War.

The Poetry is in the pity.

Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful.

(If I thought the letter of this book would last, I might have used proper names; but if the spirit of it survives—survives Prussia[3]—my ambition and those names will have achieved fresher fields than Flanders.[4] . . .)

19181920

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In May 1918 Wilfred Owen was posted in Ripon, North Yorkshire, England, and was preparing a book of his war poems. Around this time he drafted this unfinished preface, which was published posthumously, along with most of his poems, in *Poems* (1920), edited by his friend the poet Siegfried Sassoon. The text is reprinted from *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* (1985), ed. Jon Stallworthy.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See Jude 1:25: "To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and

ever.”Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Dominant region of the German Empire until the end of World War I.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In western Belgium, site of the front line. The Canadian poet John McCrae (1872–1918) memorialized one devastating 1915 battle in his famous poem “In Flanders Fields.”Return to reference 4

MAY WEDDERBURN CANNAN

Born and educated in Oxford, May Wedderburn Cannan (1893–1973) was the daughter of the secretary to the delegates (or chief executive) of the Oxford University Press. At eighteen, she joined the Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment, and when England entered the war three years later, she was active in the Red Cross mobilization, setting up a hospital in a local school. During the early part of the war, she worked at Oxford University Press, continued her volunteer nursing, and spent a month as a volunteer worker in a soldiers' canteen in Rouen, France. In 1918 she joined the War Office in Paris to work in intelligence. Her fiancé, Bevil Quiller-Couch, survived the devastating Battle of the Somme and the remainder of the war, only to die of pneumonia several months after the armistice. Cannan later worked at King's College, London, and at the Athenaeum Club as assistant librarian. She wrote three books of poems—*In War Time* (1917), *The Splendid Days* (1919), and *The House of Hope* (1923)—as well as a novel, *The Lonely Generation* (1934). Her unfinished autobiography, *Grey Ghosts and Voices*, was published posthumously in 1976.

"Rouen," with its echoes of G. K. Chesterton's incantatory "Tarantella" (beginning "Do you remember an Inn, / Miranda?"), voices emotions closer to those of Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" than to any given expression by the other soldier poets in this section. In 1917, however, Cannan and Brooke spoke for what was then the majority. As she noted in her autobiography: "Siegfried Sassoon wrote to the Press from France saying that the war was now a war of conquest and without justification, and declared himself to be a conscientious objector. . . . A saying went round, 'Went to the war with Rupert Brooke and came home with Siegfried Sassoon.' " Her own poems pose an alternative to protest and despair: "I had much admired some of Sassoon's verse but I was not coming home with him. Someone must go on writing for those who

were still convinced of the right of the cause for which they had taken up arms.”

Rouen

26 April–25 May 1915

Early morning over Rouen, hopeful, high, courageous morning,
And the laughter of adventure and the steepness of the stair,
And the dawn across the river, and the wind across the bridges,
And the empty littered station and the tired people there.

Can you recall those mornings and the hurry of awakening,
And the long-forgotten wonder if we should miss the way,
And the unfamiliar faces, and the coming of provisions,
And the freshness and the glory of the labour of the day?

Hot noontide over Rouen, and the sun upon the city,
Sun and dust unceasing, and the glare of cloudless skies,
And the voices of the Indians and the endless stream of soldiers,
And the clicking of the tatties,[1] and the buzzing of the flies.

Can you recall those noontides and the reek of steam and coffee,

Heavy-laden noontides with the evening's peace to win,
And the little piles of Woodbines,[2] and the sticky soda bottles,
And the crushes[3] in the "Parlour," and the letters coming in?

Quiet night-time over Rouen, and the station full of soldiers,
All the youth and pride of England from the ends of all the earth;
And the rifles piled together, and the creaking of the sword-belts,
And the faces bent above them, and the gay, heart-breaking mirth.

Can I forget the passage from the cool white-bedded Aid Post
Past the long sun-blistered coaches of the khaki Red Cross train
To the truck train full of wounded, and the weariness and laughter,
And "Good-bye, and thank-you, Sister,"[4] and the empty yards again?

Can you recall the parcels that we made them for the railroad,
Crammed and bulging parcels held together by their string,
And the voices of the sergeants who called the Drafts[5] together,
And the agony and splendour when they stood to save the King?[6]

Can you forget their passing, the cheering and the waving,

The little group of people at the doorway of the shed,
The sudden awful silence when the last train swung to darkness,
And the lonely desolation, and the mocking stars o'erhead?

Can you recall the midnights, and the footsteps of night watchers,
Men who came from darkness and went back to dark again,
And the shadows on the rail-lines and the all-inglorious labour,
And the promise of the daylight firing blue the window-pane?

Can you recall the passing through the kitchen door to morning,
Morning very still and solemn breaking slowly on the town,
And the early coastways engines that had met the ships at daybreak,
And the Drafts just out from England, and the day shift coming down?

Can you forget returning slowly, stumbling on the cobbles,
And the white-decked Red Cross barges dropping seawards for the tide,
And the search for English papers, and the blessed cool of water,
And the peace of half-closed shutters that shut out the world outside?

Can I forget the evenings and the sunsets on the island,

And the tall black ships at anchor far below our balcony,
And the distant call of bugles, and the white wine in the glasses,
And the long line of the street lamps, stretching Eastwards to the sea?

. . . When the world slips slow to darkness, when the office fire burns lower,
My heart goes out to Rouen, Rouen all the world away;
When other men remember I remember our Adventure
And the trains that go from Rouen at the ending of the day.

1916

Endnotes

- Note 1: Screens or mats hung in a doorway and kept wet to cool and freshen the air.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Popular brand of cheap cigarette.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Crowded social gatherings.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Nurse.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Groups of soldiers.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, to sing the British national anthem, "God Save the King."Return to reference 6

ROBERT GRAVES

Robert von Ranke Graves (1895–1985) was born in London of partly Anglo-Irish and partly German descent—his great-uncle was the distinguished German historian Leopold von Ranke. He left Charterhouse School to go immediately into the army, serving in World War I until he was invalided out in 1917. After the war he went to Oxford, took a B.Litt. degree, and in 1929 published *Goodbye to All That*, a vivid account of his experiences in the war, including his almost dying from severe chest wounds. His autobiography, as he put it, "paid my debts and enabled me to set up in Majorca as a writer." He lived on that Spanish island with the American poet Laura Riding—his muse and mentor—until in 1936 the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War forced them to leave. Their relationship soon ended, and after World War II he returned to Majorca, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Graves began as a Georgian poet, but he was a Georgian with a difference. The mingling of the colloquial and the visionary in his vocabulary, the accent of conversation underlying the regular rhythms of his stanzas, the tension between a Romantic indulgence in emotion and a cool appraisal of its significance—these are qualities found even in his early poetry. His best work combines the ironic and the imaginative in a highly individual manner, and he is also capable of a down-to-earth poetry, often mocking in tone and dealing with simple domestic facts or even the more annoying of personal relationships. He admired Thomas Hardy but chided Yeats, Pound, and Eliot for their obscurity and slovenliness, preferring that poetry be lucid, orderly, and civil.

Graves made his living by his prose, which is extensive and varied and includes, in addition to *Goodbye to All That*, a number of historical novels in which characters and events from the classical or biblical past are reconstructed in a modern idiom: the most notable of his historical novels are *I, Claudius* (1934), *Claudius the God*

(1934), and *King Jesus* (1946). In *The White Goddess* (1948), a study of mythology drawn from a variety of sources and devoted to what he considered the female inspirational principle, Graves argued that only a return to goddess worship and an abandonment of patriarchal for matriarchal society could help modern poetry recover its lost force, clarity, and mythic wisdom.

From Goodbye to All That

[THE ATTACK ON HIGH WOOD]

Next evening, July 19th, we were relieved and told that we would be attacking High Wood,[1] which could be seen a thousand yards away to the right at the top of a slope. High Wood, which the French called 'Raven Wood', formed part of the main German battle-line that ran along the ridge, with Delville Wood not far off on the German left. Two British brigades had already attempted it; in both cases a counter-attack drove them out again. The Royal Welch[2] were now reduced by casualties to about four hundred strong, including transport, stretcher-bearers, cooks and other non-combatants. I took command of 'B' Company.

The German batteries were handing out heavy stuff, six- and eight-inch, and so much of it that we decided to move back fifty yards at a rush. As we did so, an eight-inch shell burst three paces behind me. I heard the explosion, and felt as though I had been punched rather hard between the shoulder-blades, but without any pain. I took the punch merely for the shock of the explosion; but blood trickled into my eye and, turning faint, I called to Moodie: 'I've been hit.' Then I fell. A minute or two before I had got two very small wounds on my left hand; and in exactly the same position as the two that drew blood from my right hand during the preliminary bombardment at Loos.[3] This I took as a lucky sign, and for further security repeated to myself a line of Nietzsche's, in French translation:

Non, tu ne me peus pas tuer![4]

One piece of shell went through my left thigh, high up, near the groin; I must have been at the full stretch of my stride to escape emasculation. The wound over the eye was made by a little chip of

marble, possibly from one of the Bazentin[5] cemetery headstones. [Later, I had it cut out, but a smaller piece has since risen to the surface under my right eyebrow, where I keep it for a souvenir.] This, and a finger-wound which split the bone, probably came from another shell bursting in front of me. But a piece of shell had also gone in two inches below the point of my right shoulder-blade and came out through my chest two inches above the right nipple.

My memory of what happened then is vague. Apparently Dr Dunn came up through the barrage with a stretcher-party, dressed my wound, and got me down to the old German dressing-station at the north end of Mametz Wood.[6] I remember being put on the stretcher, and winking at the stretcher-bearer sergeant who had just said: 'Old Gravy's got it, all right!' They laid my stretcher in a corner of the dressing-station, where I remained unconscious for more than twenty-four hours.

Late that night, Colonel Crawshay came back from High Wood and visited the dressing-station; he saw me lying in the corner, and they told him I was done for. The next morning, July 21st, clearing away the dead, they found me still breathing and put me on an ambulance for Heilly, the nearest field hospital. The pain of being jolted down the Happy Valley, with a shell hole at every three or four yards of the road, woke me up. I remember screaming. But back on the better roads I became unconscious again. That morning, Crawshay wrote the usual formal letters of condolence to the next-of-kin of the six or seven officers who had been killed. This was his letter to my mother:

22.7.16

Dear Mrs Graves,

I very much regret to have to write and tell you your son has died of wounds. He was very gallant, and was doing so well and is a great loss.

He was hit by a shell and very badly wounded, and died on the way down to the base I believe. He was not in bad pain,

and our doctor managed to get across and attend to him at once.

We have had a very hard time, and our casualties have been large. Believe me you have all our sympathy in your loss, and we have lost a very gallant soldier.

Please write to me if I can tell you or do anything.

Yours sincerely,
C. Crawshay, Lt.-Col.

Then he made out the official casualty list—a long one, because only eighty men were left in the battalion—and reported me 'died of wounds'. Heilly lay on the railway; close to the station stood the hospital tents with the red cross prominently painted on the roofs, to discourage air-bombing. Fine July weather made the tents insufferably hot. I was semi-conscious now, and aware of my lung-wound through a shortness of breath. It amused me to watch the little bubbles of blood, like scarlet soap-bubbles, which my breath made in escaping through the opening of the wound. The doctor came over to my bed. I felt sorry for him; he looked as though he had not slept for days.

I asked him: 'Can I have a drink?'

'Would you like some tea?'

I whispered: 'Not with condensed milk.'

He said, most apologetically: 'I'm afraid there's no fresh milk.'

Tears of disappointment pricked my eyes; I expected better of a hospital behind the lines.

'Will you have some water?'

'Not if it's boiled.'

'It is boiled. And I'm afraid I can't give you anything alcoholic in your present condition.'

'Some fruit then?'

'I have seen no fruit for days.'

Yet a few minutes later he returned with two rather unripe greengages.[7] In whispers I promised him a whole orchard when I

recovered.

The nights of the 22nd and 23rd were horrible. Early on the morning of the 24th, when the doctor came round the ward, I said: 'You must send me away from here. This heat will kill me.' It was beating on my head through the canvas.

'Stick it out. Your best chance is to lie here and not to be moved. You'd not reach the Base alive.'

'Let me risk the move. I'll be all right, you'll see.'

Half an hour later he returned. 'Well, you're having it your way. I've just got orders to evacuate every case in the hospital. Apparently the Guards have been in it up at Delville Wood, and they'll all be coming down tonight.' I did not fear that I would die, now—it was enough to be honourably wounded and bound for home.

A brigade-major, wounded in the leg, who lay in the next bed, gave me news of the battalion. He looked at my label and said: 'I see you're in the Second Royal Welch. I watched your High Wood show through field-glasses. The way your battalion shook out into artillery formation, company by company—with each section of four or five men in file at fifty yards interval and distance—going down into the hollow and up the slope through the barrage, was the most beautiful bit of parade-ground drill I've ever seen. Your company officers must have been superb.' Yet one company at least had started without a single officer. When I asked whether they had held the wood, he told me: 'They hung on to the near end. I believe what happened was that the Public Schools Battalion came away at dark; and so did most of the Scotsmen. Your chaps were left there more or less alone for some time. They steadied themselves by singing. Afterwards the chaplain—R.C.[8] of course—Father McCabe, brought the Scotsmen back. Being Glasgow Catholics, they would follow a priest where they wouldn't follow an officer. The centre of the wood was impossible for either the Germans or your fellows to hold—a terrific concentration of artillery on it. The trees were splintered to matchwood. Late that night a brigade of the Seventh Division relieved the survivors; it included your First Battalion.'

1929, 1957

Endnotes

- Note 1: The battle for High Wood, one of the bloodiest fights of the Somme Offensive, began on July 14, 1916, and was won by the British on September 15, 1916.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Royal Welch Fusiliers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Battle of Loos, September 1915.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: No, you cannot kill me. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), German philosopher.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Battle of Bazentin Ridge, July 14–17, 1916, part of the Somme Offensive.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Recently captured by the British.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Type of plum.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Roman Catholic.Return to reference 8

Recalling War

Entrance and exit wounds are silvered clean,
The track aches only when the rain reminds.
The one-legged man forgets his leg of wood,
The one-armed man his jointed wooden arm.
The blinded man sees with his ears and hands
As much or more than once with both his eyes.
Their war was fought these twenty years ago
And now assumes the nature-look of time,
As when the morning traveller turns and views
His wild night-stumbling carved into a hill.

What, then, was war? No mere discord of flags
But an infection of the common sky
That sagged ominously upon the earth
Even when the season was the airiest May.
Down pressed the sky, and we, oppressed, thrust out
Boastful tongue, clenched fist and valiant yard.
Natural infirmities were out of mode,
For Death was young again: patron alone
Of healthy dying, premature fate-spasm.

Fear made fine bed-fellows. Sick with delight
At life's discovered transitoriness,
Our youth became all-flesh and waived the mind.
Never was such antiqueness of romance,
Such tasty honey oozing from the heart.
And old importances came swimming back—
Wine, meat, log-fires, a roof over the head,
A weapon at the thigh, surgeons at call.
Even there was a use again for God—

A word of rage in lack of meat, wine, fire,
In ache of wounds beyond all surgeoning.

War was return of earth to ugly earth,
War was foundering° of sublimities,
Extinction of each happy art and faith
By which the world had still kept head in air,
Protesting logic or protesting love,
Until the unendurable moment struck—
The inward scream, the duty to run mad.

And we recall the merry ways of guns—
Nibbling the walls of factory and church
Like a child, piecrust; felling groves of trees
Like a child, dandelions with a switch.
Machine-guns rattle toy-like from a hill,
Down in a row the brave tin-soldiers fall:
A sight to be recalled in elder days
When learnedly the future we devote
To yet more boastful visions of despair.

19351938

Notes

- °: *collapsing*Return to reference °

DAVID JONES

David Jones (1895–1974) was born in Brockley, Kent, the son of a Welsh father and an English mother. He studied at the Camberwell School of Art before joining the army in January 1915; he served as a private soldier until the end of World War I—service that provided the material for his modern epic of war, *In Parenthesis.* He attended Westminster Art School after the war and subsequently made a name for himself as an illustrator, engraver, and watercolorist. In 1921 he joined the Roman Catholic Church and a few months later began working with the Catholic stone carver and engraver Eric Gill. Jones's Welsh and English origins, his visual sensitivity as an artist, and his interest in Catholic liturgy and ritual can be seen in his literary work, which includes the obscure but powerful long religious poem *The Anathémata* (1952) and *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* (1973).

In Parenthesis, Jones's first literary work, was published in 1937 and won the Hawthornden Prize. Its seven parts, combining prose and poetry, evoke the activities of a British infantry unit from its training in England to its participation in the Somme Offensive of July 1916. The work proceeds chronologically, beginning with a battalion parade in England before embarkation for France, moving to the preparation for the offensive, and concluding when the protagonist Private John Ball's platoon is destroyed. Far from a straightforward narrative, since every contemporary detail is associated with the heroic past, the poem echoes in carefully patterned moments Shakespeare's history plays, Malory's accounts of Arthurian quests, Welsh epics of heroic and futile battles, the Bible, and Catholic liturgy. Even so, *In Parenthesis* avoids the traditional epic concentration on high-ranking heroes and builds its narrative around ordinary characters, both English and Welsh. Identified with historical or mythological figures, they—Mr. Jenkins, Sergeant Snell, Corporal Quilter, Lance-Corporal Lewis, and John

Ball, who is wounded in the leg, as Jones was at the First Battle of the Somme—are presented in vivid silhouettes and sudden stabs of personal memory.

Begun a decade after the armistice, *In Parenthesis* could not have been written when Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon wrote their war poems. Jones profits from the ways in which James Joyce's *Ulysses* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* drew on mythology and ritual and thus gained depth and scope. He has combined the pity for and irony of the soldier that we see in Owen with the distanced, more elaborately illustrated, less immediately personal style of Eliot's long poem. And like Eliot, he introduces notes to help the reader follow the mythological and literary references. Unique among the soldier poets, Jones combines the immediacy of war poetry with high modernism's strategies of formal discontinuity and rich allusiveness. The poem conveys the texture of war experience through comic or sardonic references to popular soldiers' songs, to follies and vices and vanities and every kind of trivial behavior. At the same time the poem is multilayered and densely textured, its complex allusions to history, ritual, and heroic myth infusing the characters and the war with mysterious meaning.

The extracts printed here are, first, from Jones's preface, in which he explains his intention and method, and, second, from part 7, describing events during and after the attack. At the beginning of the last section quoted, Ball is wounded and crawling toward the rear through the mingled bodies of British and German soldiers. In his fevered imagination he sees the Queen of the Woods distributing flowers to the dead. He wonders whether he can continue carrying his rifle, which he finally leaves under an oak tree. (At the end of the medieval French epic *Chanson de Roland* [*Song of Roland*], the dying Roland tries in vain to shatter his sword, Durendal, to prevent its being taken as a trophy by the Saracens; he finally puts it under his body.) In the end Ball lies still under the oak beside a dead German and a dead Englishman, hearing the reserves coming forward to continue the battle.

From In Parenthesis

From *Preface*

This writing has to do with some things I saw, felt, & was part of. The period covered begins early in December 1915 and ends early in July 1916. The first date corresponds to my going to France. The latter roughly marks a change in the character of our lives in the Infantry on the West Front. From then onward things hardened into a more relentless, mechanical affair, took on a more sinister aspect. The wholesale slaughter of the later years, the conscripted levies filling the gaps in every file of four, knocked the bottom out of the intimate, continuing, domestic life of small contingents of men, within whose structure Roland could find, and, for a reasonable while, enjoy, his Oliver.[1] In the earlier months there was a certain attractive amateurishness, and elbowroom for idiosyncrasy that connected one with a less exacting past. The period of the individual rifle-man, of the "old sweat" of the Boer campaign, the "Bairns-father"[2] war, seemed to terminate with the Somme battle. There were, of course, glimpses of it long after—all through in fact—but it seemed never quite the same. * * *

My companions in the war were mostly Londoners with an admixture of Welshmen, so that the mind and folk-life of those two differing racial groups are an essential ingredient to my theme. Nothing could be more representative. These came from London. Those from Wales. Together they bore in their bodies the genuine tradition of the Island of Britain, from Bendigeid Vran to Jingle and Marie Lloyd. These were the children of Doll Tearsheet. Those are before Caractacus[3] was. Both speak in parables, the wit of both is quick, both are natural poets; yet no two groups could well be more dissimilar. It was curious to know them harnessed together, and together caught in the toils of "good order and military discipline"; to see them shape together to the remains of an antique regimental tradition, to see them react to the few things that united us—the same jargon, the same prejudice against "other arms" and against the Staff, the same discomforts, the same grievances, the same

maims, the same deep fears, the same pathetic jokes; to watch them, oneself part of them, respond to the war landscape; for I think the day by day in the Waste Land, the sudden violences and the long stillnesses, the sharp contours and unformed voids of that mysterious existence, profoundly affected the imaginations of those who suffered it. It was a place of enchantment. It is perhaps best described in Malory,[4] book iv, chapter 15—that landscape spoke "with a grimly voice."

I suppose at no time did one so much live with a consciousness of the past, the very remote, and the more immediate and trivial past, both superficially and more subtly. No one, I suppose, however much not given to association, could see infantry in tin-hats, with ground-sheets over their shoulders, with sharpened pine-stakes in their hands, and not recall

> . . . or may we cram,
> Within this wooden O . . . [5]

But there were deeper complexities of sight and sound to make ever present

> the pibble pabble in Pompey's camp.[6]

Every man's speech and habit of mind were a perpetual showing: now of Napier's expedition, now of the Legions at the Wall, now of "train-band captain," now of Jack Cade, of John Ball, of the commons in arms. Now of *High Germany*, of *Dolly Gray*, of Bullcalf, Wart and Poins; of Jingo largenesses, of things as small as the Kingdom of Elmet; of Wellington's raw shire recruits, of ancient border antipathies, of our contemporary, less intimate, larger unities, of *John Barleycorn*, of "sweet Sally Frampton." Now of Coel Hên—of the Celtic cycle that lies, a subterranean influence as a deep water troubling, under every tump[7] in this Island, like Merlin[8] complaining under his big rock.[9]

* * *

This writing is called *In Parenthesis* because I have written it in a kind of space between—I don't know between quite what—but as you turn aside to do something; and because for us amateur soldiers (and especially for the writer, who was not only amateur, but grotesquely incompetent, a knocker-over of piles, a parade's despair) the war itself was a parenthesis—how glad we thought we were to step outside its brackets at the end of '18—and also because our curious type of existence here is altogether in parenthesis.

D. J.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Roland's close friend and companion-at-arms in the medieval French epic *Chanson de Roland* (*Song of Roland*).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Bruce Bairnsfather (1888–1959), English cartoonist and journalist, best known for his sketches of life in the trenches during World War I.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Caractacus or Caradoc, king of the Silures in the west of Britain during the reign of Roman emperor Claudius. He was taken to Rome as a prisoner in 51 C.E., but was pardoned by Claudius, who was impressed by his nobility of spirit. Bendigeid Vran, hero in Welsh heroic legend. Alfred Jingle, character in Dickens's *Pickwick Papers.* Marie Lloyd (real name Matilda Alice Victoria Wood), English music-hall comedienne. Doll Tearsheet, prostitute in Shakespeare's *2 Henry IV.*
  Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Sir Thomas Malory, author of *Morte Darthur.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shakespeare's *Henry V*, prologue, lines 12–13. The "wooden O" is the stage of the theater.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See *Henry V* 4.1.71.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Mound or tumulus.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The powerful enchanter of the Arthurian legends.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  The mass of references here provide a wide area of historical and literary association, beginning with *Henry V* and going on to refer to Sir William Napier, who fought in the Peninsular War and later wrote a famous history of that campaign; to the Roman legions who manned the Great Wall built by the Romans in Britain; to Jack Cade, who led an unsuccessful popular revolt against the misrule of Henry VI in 1450, and John Ball, a leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381; to a number of English ballads and popular songs and to characters in *Henry IV*; to the ancient British kingdom of Elmet in southwest Yorkshire, finally overthrown by Anglo-Saxon invaders early in the 7th century; to Wellington's "raw shire recruits," who helped win the Battle of Waterloo; and concluding with a reference to the old Celtic British myths that lie beneath everything.
  Return to reference 9

From *Part 7: The Five Unmistakable Marks*[1]

Gododdin I demand thy support.
It is our duty to sing: a meeting
place has been found.[2]

* * *

The gentle slopes are green to remind you
of South English places, only far wider and flatter spread and
grooved and
harrowed criss-cross whitely and the disturbed subsoil heaped up
albescent.[3]

Across upon this undulated board of verdure[4] chequered bright
when you look to left and right
small, drab, bundled pawns severally make effort
moved in tenuous line
and if you looked behind—the next wave came slowly, as successive
surfs creep
in to dissipate on flat shore;
and to your front, stretched long laterally,
and receded deeply,
the dark wood.

And now the gradient runs more flatly toward the separate scarred
saplings,
where they make fringe for the interior thicket and you take notice.
There between the thinning uprights
at the margin
straggle tangled oak and flayed sheeny beech-bole, and fragile birch
whose silver queenery is draggled and ungraced
and June shoots lopt
and fresh stalks bled
runs the Jerry[5] trench.

And cork-screw stapled trip-wire
to snare among the briars
and iron warp with bramble weft[6]
with meadow-sweet and lady-smock
for a fair camouflage.

Mr Jenkins half inclined his head to them—he walked just barely in
advance
of his platoon and immediately to the left of Private Ball.
He makes the conventional sign
and there is the deeply inward effort of spent men who would make
response
for him,
and take it at the double.
He sinks on one knee
and now on the other,
his upper body tilts in rigid inclination
this way and back;
weighted lanyard[7] runs out to full tether,
swings like a pendulum
and the clock run down.
Lurched over, jerked iron saucer over tilted brow,
clampt unkindly over lip and chin
nor no ventaille[8] to this darkening
and masked face lifts to grope the air
and so disconsolate;
enfeebled fingering at a paltry strap—
buckle holds,
holds him blind against the morning.
Then stretch still where weeds pattern the chalk predella[9]—
where it rises to his wire[1]—and Sergeant T. Quilter takes over.

* * *

It’s difficult with the weight of the rifle.
Leave it—under the oak.
Leave it for a salvage-bloke[2]
let it lie bruised for a monument
dispense the authenticated fragments to the faithful.
It’s the thunder-besom for us
it’s the bright bough borne
it’s the tensioned yew for a Genoese jammed arbalest[3] and a scarlet square for a mounted *mareschal*,[4] it’s that county-mob back to back.[5] Majuba mountain and Mons Cherubim[6] and spreaded mats for Sydney Street East,[7] and come to Bisley for a Silver Dish.[8] It’s R.S.M. O’Grady[9] says, it’s the soldier’s best friend if you care for the working parts and let us be ’aving those springs released smartly in Company billets on wet forenoons and clickerty-click and one up the spout and you men must really cultivate the habit of treating this weapon with the very greatest care and there should be a healthy rivalry among you—it should be a matter of very proper pride and

Marry it man! Marry it!
Cherish her, she’s your very own.

Coax it man coax it—it’s delicately and ingeniously made—it’s an instrument of precision—it costs us tax-payers, money—I want you men to remember that.

Fondle it like a granny—talk to it—consider it as you would a friend—and when you ground these arms she’s not a rooky’s gas-pipe for greenhorns to tarnish.[1]

You’ve known her hot and cold.
You would choose her from among many.
You know her by her bias, and by her exact error at 300, and by the deep scar at the small, by the fair flaw in the grain, above the lower sling-swivel—
but leave it under the oak.

* * *

The secret princes between the leaning trees have diadems given them.

Life the leveller hugs her impudent equality—she may proceed at once to less discriminating zones.

The Queen of the Woods has cut bright boughs of various flowering.

These knew her influential eyes. Her awarding hands can pluck for each their fragile prize.

She speaks to them according to precedence. She knows what's due to this elect society. She can choose twelve gentle-men. She knows who is most lord between the high trees and on the open down.

Some she gives white berries
some she gives brown
Emil has a curious crown it's
made of golden saxifrage.
Fatty wears sweet-briar,
he will reign with her for a thousand years.

For Balder she reaches high to fetch his.

Ulrich smiles for his myrtle wand.

That swine Lillywhite has daisies to his chain—you'd hardly credit it.

She plaits torques[2] of equal splendour for Mr Jenkins and Billy Crower.

Hansel with Gronwy share dog-violets for a palm, where they lie in serious embrace beneath the twisted tripod.

Siôn gets St John's Wort—that's fair enough.

Dai Great-coat,[3] she can't find him anywhere—she calls both high and low, she had a very special one for him.

Among this July noblesse she is mindful of December wood—when the trees of the forest beat against each other because of him.

She carries to Aneirin-in-the-nullah[4] a rowan[5] sprig, or the glory of Guenedota.[6] You couldn't hear what she said to him, because she was careful for the Disciplines of the Wars.

At the gate of the wood you try a last adjustment, but slung so, it's an impediment, it's of detriment to your hopes, you had best be rid of it—the sagging webbing and all and what's left of your two fifty[7]—but it were wise to hold on to your mask.

You're clumsy in your feebleness, you implicate your tin-hat rim with the slack sling of it.

Let it lie for the dews to rust it, or ought you to decently cover the working parts.

Its dark barrel, where you leave it under the oak, reflects the solemn star that rises urgently from Cliff Trench.

It's a beautiful doll for us
it's the Last Reputable Arm.

But leave it—under the oak.
leave it for a Cook's tourist to the Devastated Areas and crawl as far as you can and wait for the bearers.[8]

1937

Endnotes

- Note 1: Carroll's *Hunting of the Snark*, Fit the 2nd verse 15 [*Jones's note*]. Lewis Carroll's mock-heroic nonsense poem concerns the hunting of the elusive animal Snark, which may be known by "five unmistakable marks." A reference to the five wounds of the crucified Christ may also be intended.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  From *Y Gododdin*, early Welsh epical poem attributed to Aneirin (6th century); commemorates raid of 300 Welsh of Gododdin (the territory of the Otadini located near the Firth of Forth) into English kingdom of Deira. Describes the ruin of this 300 in battle at Catraeth (perhaps Catterick in Yorkshire). Three men alone escaped death, including the poet, who laments his friends [*Jones's note*].

Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Becoming white.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Green vegetation.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: German (British army slang in both world wars).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Warp and weft are the horizontal and vertical threads of woven cloth.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Short cord (here "weighted" by a whistle).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hinged visor of a helmet.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A platform or shelf below or behind an altar.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The approach to the German trenches here rose slightly, in low chalk ridges [*Jones's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Man (slang).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A powerful medieval crossbow.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Marshal (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Gloucestershire Regiment, during an action near Alexandria, in 1801, about-turned their rear rank and engaged the enemy back to back [*Jones's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The British were defeated by the Boers on Majuba Hill on February 27, 1881. The "Angels of Mons" were angels (varying in number from two to a platoon) widely believed to have helped the British repel an attack at Mons by superior German forces on August 23, 1914.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In what became known as the Siege or Battle of Sydney Street, Winston Churchill, when he was home secretary in 1911, directed military operations in London against a group of anarchists. "It is said that in 'The Battle of Sydney Street' under Mr. Churchill's Home Secretaryship mats were spread on the pavement for troops firing from the prone position" [*Jones's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: At Bisley marksmen compete annually in rifle shooting for trophies such as "a Silver Dish."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: "R.S.M.": regimental sergeant major. "R.S.M. O'Grady;" according to Jones's note, "refers to mythological personage

figuring in Army exercises, the precise describing of which would be tedious. Anyway these exercises were supposed to foster alertness in dull minds—and were a curious blend of the parlour game and military drill."Return to reference 9

- Note 1: I have employed here only such ideas as were common to the form of speech affected by Instructors in Musketry [*Jones's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Collars, like those of gold worn by warriors of *Y Gododdin.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Character whose first name is the familiar Welsh form of David, alluding to a figure in Malory's *Morte Darthur*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A river, stream, or riverbed.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Also called mountain ash, a tree with magical properties in Celtic folklore.Return to reference 5
- Note 6:
  The northwest parts of Wales. The last king of Wales, Llywelyn, was killed there in 1282. Jones refers to his death in another note on this part of Wales. He adds: "His [Llywelyn's] contemporary, Gruffydd ap yr Ynad Côch, sang of his death: 'The voice of lamentation is heard in everyplace . . . the course of nature is changed . . . the trees of the forest furiously rush against each other.' "
  Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Two hundred and fifty rounds of ammunition.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  This may appear to be an anachronism, but I remember in 1917 discussing with a friend the possibilities of tourist activity if peace ever came. I remember we went into details and wondered if the unexploded projectile lying near us would go up under a holiday-maker, and how people would stand up to be photographed on our parapets. I recall feeling very angry about this, as you do if you think of strangers ever occupying a house you live in, and which has, for you, particular associations [*Jones's note*].

Return to reference 8

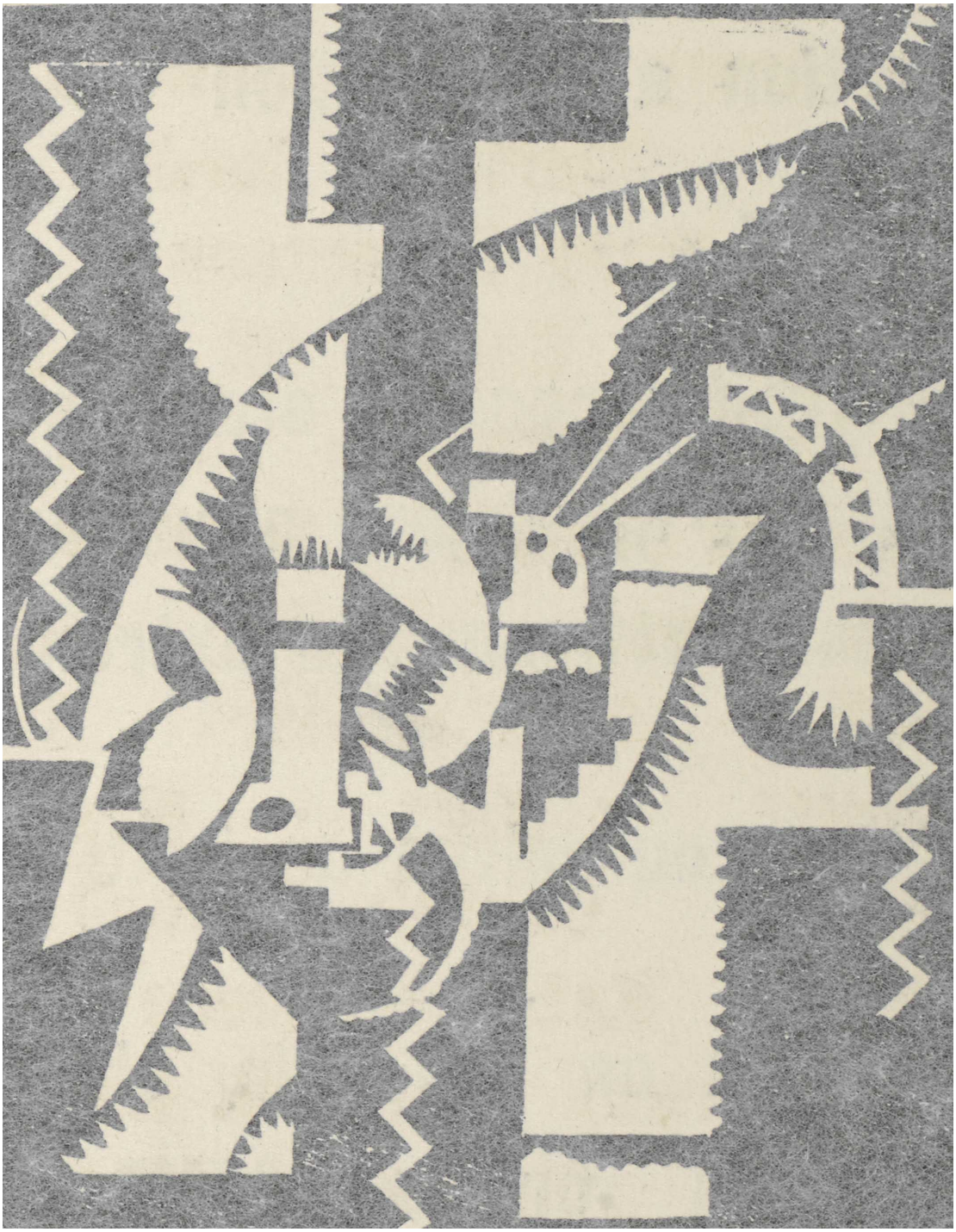
Modernist Manifestos

At the beginning of the twentieth century, traditions and boundaries of many kinds were under assault across the Western world. Rapid developments in science and technology were transforming the texture of everyday life and conceptions of the universe; psychology, anthropology, and philosophy were challenging old ways of conceiving the human mind and religion; empire, migration, and city life were forcing together peoples of diverse origins. This dizzying pace of change, this break with tradition, this eruption of modernity can also be seen in the cutting-edge art and literature of the time. Avant-garde modernism caught fire in Europe in the decade before World War I. The Spanish expatriate artist Pablo Picasso's landmark cubist painting of 1907, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (see the color insert), shattered centuries of artistic convention. Two years later the Italian poet F. T. Marinetti published his first futurist manifesto in the French journal *Le Figaro*, blasting the dead weight of "museums, libraries, and academies" while glorifying "the beauty of speed." Written from 1911 to 1913, the Russian-born composer Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*) marked such a daring departure from harmonic and rhythmic traditions in Western classical music that its first performance, in Paris, sparked a riot. Like Picasso, Marinetti, and Stravinsky, other avant-garde modernists—advocates of radical newness in the arts—exploded conventions in music, painting, fiction, poetry, and other genres, opening up new formal and thematic possibilities for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In just a few years modernism's rebellious energies and convention-defying activities swept through the major European cities, from Moscow and Milan to Munich, Paris, and London. Some of the leading modernists published manifestos, public declarations explaining, justifying, and promoting their ambitions and revolutionary views. They were not the first artists to adapt the

manifesto from the political sphere, but they used manifestos widely and vociferously, trumpeting iconoclastic ideas in terms that were meant not only to rally but also, in some cases, to shock. These documents were so influential that they have become an integral part of the history of modernism.

London, where the startling impact of cubism and futurism was felt almost immediately, became a central site in the formation of anglophone modernism. London's publishing opportunities and literary ferment attracted an array of visiting and expatriate writers. The American poet Ezra Pound arrived there in 1908, at twenty-three, and soon ignited London's literary avant-garde, his apartment in Kensington a magnet for like-minded innovators. He befriended the English philosopher-poet T. E. Hulme, who led an avant-garde literary group. Like the cubists and futurists, these modernists advocated a radical break with artistic convention. In lectures Hulme influentially denounced Romanticism as so much moaning and whining, and proposed a "hard, dry" literature in its stead—a notion Pound echoed in his call for "harder and saner" verse, "like granite." After T. S. Eliot came to England in 1914, astonishing Pound by his having "modernized himself *on his own*," Eliot also composed essays marked by Hulme's influence. Aggressively asserting new form and subject matter while holding up the standard of classic texts, the modernists repudiated what they saw as the slushy, self-indulgent literature of the nineteenth century—"blurry, messy," and "sentimentalistic," in Pound's words. This desire to break decisively with Romanticism and Victorianism—often realized more in theory than in practice—became a recurrent feature in their public declarations. The 1914 manifesto of the journal *Blast* thunders, "**BLAST** / years **1837** to **1900**": like other avant-garde statements of intentions, this one damns the middle class for perpetuating Victorian taste and conventional moral attitudes.



Newcastle, 1914, by Edward Wadsworth. This work appeared as an illustration in the first issue of the journal *Blast*. The vorticist fascination with machines and abstraction, influenced by the Italian futurists, is seen in this woodcut, named after the English industrial city.

The agitations, declarations, and poetic experiments of Hulme, Pound, and others resulted in the formation of imagism. Leaders of this London-born movement advocated clear and immediate images, exact and efficient diction, inventive and musical rhythms. The imagist poem was to be brief and stripped down, presenting an image in as few words as possible without commenting on it. In his lecture "Romanticism and Classicism" Hulme said the poet must render "the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind." Having arranged for the nascent movement to be announced by the English poet and critic F. S. Flint in a brief article/interview entitled "Imagisme" (spelled in the French manner), Pound demanded, through Flint's introductory synopsis of imagism's precepts, "Direct treatment of the 'thing,' whether subjective or objective." The principles of imagism and Pound's further recommendations in "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" had a profound transatlantic influence long after the movement had petered out.

The American poet H.D. (then called Hilda Doolittle) arrived in London in 1911, just in time to become a major figure in the imagist movement. Her poems, written under the influence of ancient Greek lyrical fragments, so impressed Pound that he sent them, signed "H.D. Imagiste" at his insistence, to Harriet Monroe, the founding editor of *Poetry*, a Chicago clearinghouse for modern verse. He told Monroe that H.D.'s poems were "modern" and "laconic," though classical in subject: "Objective—no slither; direct—no excessive use of adjectives, no metaphors that won't permit examination. It's straight talk, straight as the Greek!" Eventually H.D. and Pound wrote ambitious long poems that broke the mold of the imagist lyric, but even in their more capacious work, imagist compression, immediacy, and juxtaposition remained generative principles.

As early as 1914 Pound was tiring of imagism as static and insufficiently rigorous. Together with the London-based English painter and writer Wyndham Lewis, he helped found a new modernist movement in the arts, vorticism, which emphasized dynamism of content. Pound conceived the vortex—an image of whirling, intensifying, encompassing energy—as the movement's emblem. Like imagism, vorticism lasted for only a few years. Its most

raucous embodiment was the 1914 vorticist manifesto in Wyndham Lewis's journal *Blast*, and its main aesthetic achievements were Lewis's paintings and the London-based French artist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's sculptures.

The *Blast* manifesto is clearly influenced by Continental modernism, most visibly Italian futurism in the experimental layout and the fire-breathing rhetoric of destruction: the vorticists blast conventions, dull people, and middle-class attitudes. The English-born poet Mina Loy became closely involved with the leaders of the futurist movement, including Marinetti, while in Florence from 1906 to 1916. She was excited by futurism's embrace of modernity and its violent rebuke of tradition, but her typographically experimental "Feminist Manifesto" and her sexually defiant poetry also mark a break with the movement's misogyny and jingoism. Marinetti, Pound, and Lewis—despite their progressive prewar views on many social and artistic matters—later embraced fascism, believing it would help advance their cultural ideals.

Modernist manifestos take on a variety of different forms. Some are individual statements, such as Hulme's lecture "Romanticism and Classicism." Others are meant to be declarations on behalf of an emergent group or movement, such as "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" or the *Blast* manifesto. Occasionally, and paradoxically, a manifesto is a nonpublic declaration, unpublished in the author's lifetime, as in the case of Loy's "Feminist Manifesto." Although the manifesto is not an art form in the same sense as a poem or painting is, manifestos became an important literary genre in the modernist era, and some are more than mere declarations of doctrine. The vorticist manifesto and Loy's "Feminist Manifesto," for example, cross poetry with poster art, creatively manipulating words on the page for maximum effect. In their jagged typography, wild energy, and radical individualism turned to a collective purpose, these modernist manifestos helped advance and now exemplify elements of innovative art through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

T. E. HULME

Although he published only six poems during his brief life, T. E. Hulme (1883–1917), English poet, philosopher, and critic, was one of the strongest intellectual forces behind the development of modernism. In this essay, probably composed in either 1911 or 1912 and probably delivered as a lecture in 1912, Hulme prophesies a "dry, hard, classical verse" that exhibits precision, clarity, and freshness. He sharply repudiates the "spilt religion" of Romanticism, responsible for vagueness in the arts. Hulme sees human beings as limited and capable of improvement only through the influence of tradition. These ideas were an important influence on the thought and poetry of T. S. Eliot. Hulme's views of conventional language, the visual image, and verbal exactitude also shaped the imagism and vorticism of Ezra Pound and others.

Hulme was born in Staffordshire, England, and attended St. John's College, Cambridge, from which he was expelled for rebellious behavior in 1904 without finishing his degree. He lived mainly in London, where, befriending Pound and other poets and artists, he became a central figure of the prewar avant-garde. A critic of pacifism, Hulme enlisted as a private in the army when World War I broke out in 1914, and was killed in battle in 1917. First published posthumously in *Speculations* (1924), this essay is excerpted from *The Collected Writings of T. E. Hulme* (1994), ed. Karen Csengeri.

From Romanticism and Classicism

I want to maintain that after a hundred years of romanticism, we are in for a classical revival, and that the particular weapon of this new classical spirit, when it works in verse, will be fancy. * * *

I know that in using the words 'classic' and 'romantic' I am doing a dangerous thing. They represent five or six different kinds of antitheses, and while I may be using them in one sense you may be interpreting them in another. In this present connection I am using them in a perfectly precise and limited sense. I ought really to have coined a couple of new words, but I prefer to use the ones I have used, as I then conform to the practice of the group of polemical writers who make most use of them at the present day, and have almost succeeded in making them political catchwords. I mean Maurras, Lasserre and all the group connected with *l' Action Française.*[1]

At the present time this is the particular group with which the distinction is most vital. Because it has become a party symbol. If you asked a man of a certain set whether he preferred the classics or the romantics, you could deduce from that what his politics were.

The best way of gliding into a proper definition of my terms would be to start with a set of people who are prepared to fight about it—for in them you will have no vagueness. (Other people take the infamous attitude of the person with catholic tastes who says he likes both.)

About a year ago, a man whose name I think was Fauchois gave a lecture at the Odéon on Racine,[2] in the course of which he made some disparaging remarks about his dullness, lack of invention and the rest of it. This caused an immediate riot: fights took place all over the house; several people were arrested and imprisoned, and the rest of the series of lectures took place with hundreds of gendarmes[3] and detectives scattered all over the place. These

people interrupted because the classical ideal is a living thing to them and Racine is the great classic. That is what I call a real vital interest in literature. They regard romanticism as an awful disease from which France had just recovered.

The thing is complicated in their case by the fact that it was romanticism that made the revolution.[4] They hate the revolution, so they hate romanticism.

I make no apology for dragging in politics here; romanticism both in England and France is associated with certain political views, and it is in taking a concrete example of the working out of a principle in action that you can get its best definition.

What was the positive principle behind all the other principles of '89? I am talking here of the revolution in as far as it was an idea; I leave out material causes—they only produce the forces. The barriers which could easily have resisted or guided these forces had been previously rotted away by ideas. This always seems to be the case in successful changes; the privileged class is beaten only when it has lost faith in itself, when it has itself been penetrated with the ideas which are working against it.

It was not the rights of man—that was a good solid practical war-cry. The thing which created enthusiasm, which made the revolution practically a new religion, was something more positive than that. People of all classes, people who stood to lose by it, were in a positive ferment about the idea of liberty. There must have been some idea which enabled them to think that something positive could come out of so essentially negative a thing. There was, and here I get my definition of romanticism. They had been taught by Rousseau[5] that man was by nature good, that it was only bad laws and customs that had suppressed him. Remove all these and the infinite possibilities of man would have a chance. This is what made them think that something positive could come out of disorder, this is what created the religious enthusiasm. Here is the root of all romanticism: that man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities; and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction

of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will get Progress.

One can define the classical quite clearly as the exact opposite to this. Man is an extraordinarily fixed and limited animal whose nature is absolutely constant. It is only by tradition and organisation that anything decent can be got out of him.

* * *

Put shortly, these are the two views, then. One, that man is intrinsically good, spoilt by circumstance; and the other that he is intrinsically limited, but disciplined by order and tradition to something fairly decent. To the one party man's nature is like a well, to the other like a bucket. The view which regards man as a well, a reservoir full of possibilities, I call the romantic; the one which regards him as a very finite and fixed creature, I call the classical.

One may note here that the Church has always taken the classical view since the defeat of the Pelagian heresy[6] and the adoption of the sane classical dogma of original sin.

It would be a mistake to identify the classical view with that of materialism. On the contrary it is absolutely identical with the normal religious attitude. I should put it in this way: That part of the fixed nature of man is the belief in the Deity. This should be as fixed and true for every man as belief in the existence of matter and in the objective world. It is parallel to appetite, the instinct of sex, and all the other fixed qualities. Now at certain times, by the use of either force or rhetoric, these instincts have been suppressed—in Florence under Savonarola, in Geneva under Calvin, and here under the Roundheads.[7] The inevitable result of such a process is that the repressed instinct bursts out in some abnormal direction. So with religion. By the perverted rhetoric of Rationalism, your natural instincts are suppressed and you are converted into an agnostic. Just as in the case of the other instincts, Nature has her revenge. The instincts that find their right and proper outlet in religion must come out in some other way. You don't believe in a God, so you begin to

believe that man is a god. You don't believe in Heaven, so you begin to believe in a heaven on earth. In other words, you get romanticism. The concepts that are right and proper in their own sphere are spread over, and so mess up, falsify and blur the clear outlines of human experience. It is like pouring a pot of treacle[8] over the dinner table. Romanticism then, and this is the best definition I can give of it, is spilt religion.

I must now shirk the difficulty of saying exactly what I mean by romantic and classical in verse. I can only say that it means the result of these two attitudes towards the cosmos, towards man, in so far as it gets reflected in verse. The romantic, because he thinks man infinite, must always be talking about the infinite; and as there is always the bitter contrast between what you think you ought to be able to do and what man actually can, it always tends, in its later stages at any rate, to be gloomy. I really can't go any further than to say it is the reflection of these two temperaments, and point out examples of the different spirits. On the one hand I would take such diverse people as Horace, most of the Elizabethans and the writers of the Augustan age, and on the other side Lamartine, Hugo, parts of Keats, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Swinburne.[9]

* * *

What I mean by classical in verse, then, is this. That even in the most imaginative flights there is always a holding back, a reservation. The classical poet never forgets this finiteness, this limit of man. He remembers always that he is mixed up with earth. He may jump, but he always returns back; he never flies away into the circumambient gas.

You might say if you wished that the whole of the romantic attitude seems to crystallise in verse round metaphors of flight. Hugo is always flying, flying over abysses, flying up into the eternal gases. The word infinite in every other line.

In the classical attitude you never seem to swing right along to the infinite nothing. If you say an extravagant thing which does

exceed the limits inside which you know man to be fastened, yet there is always conveyed in some way at the end an impression of yourself standing outside it, and not quite believing it, or consciously putting it forward as a flourish. You never go blindly into an atmosphere more than the truth, an atmosphere too rarefied for man to breathe for long. You are always faithful to the conception of a limit. It is a question of pitch; in romantic verse you move at a certain pitch of rhetoric which you know, man being what he is, to be a little high-falutin. The kind of thing you get in Hugo or Swinburne. In the coming classical reaction that will feel just wrong.

* * *

I object even to the best of the romantics. I object still more to the receptive attitude.[1] I object to the sloppiness which doesn't consider that a poem is a poem unless it is moaning or whining about something or other. I always think in this connection of the last line of a poem of John Webster's which ends with a request I cordially endorse:

'End your moan and come away.'[2]

The thing has got so bad now that a poem which is all dry and hard, a properly classical poem, would not be considered poetry at all. How many people now can lay their hands on their hearts and say they like either Horace or Pope? They feel a kind of chill when they read them.

The dry hardness which you get in the classics is absolutely repugnant to them. Poetry that isn't damp isn't poetry at all. They cannot see that accurate description is a legitimate object of verse. Verse to them always means a bringing in of some of the emotions that are grouped round the word infinite.

The essence of poetry to most people is that it must lead them to a beyond of some kind. Verse strictly confined to the earthly and the definite (Keats is full of it) might seem to them to be excellent writing, excellent craftsmanship, but not poetry. So much has

romanticism debauched us, that, without some form of vagueness, we deny the highest.

In the classic it is always the light of ordinary day, never the light that never was on land or sea. It is always perfectly human and never exaggerated: man is always man and never a god.

But the awful result of romanticism is that, accustomed to this strange light, you can never live without it. Its effect on you is that of a drug.

* * *

It is essential to prove that beauty may be in small, dry things.

The great aim is accurate, precise and definite description. The first thing is to recognise how extraordinarily difficult this is. It is no mere matter of carefulness; you have to use language, and language is by its very nature a communal thing; that is, it expresses never the exact thing but a compromise—that which is common to you, me and everybody. But each man sees a little differently, and to get out clearly and exactly what he does see, he must have a terrific struggle with language, whether it be with words or the technique of other arts. Language has its own special nature, its own conventions and communal ideas. It is only by a concentrated effort of the mind that you can hold it fixed to your own purpose. I always think that the fundamental process at the back of all the arts might be represented by the following metaphor. You know what I call architect's curves—flat pieces of wood with all different kinds of curvature. By a suitable selection from these you can draw approximately any curve you like. The artist I take to be the man who simply can't bear the idea of that 'approximately'. He will get the exact curve of what he sees whether it be an object or an idea in the mind. I shall here have to change my metaphor a little to get the process in his mind. Suppose that instead of your curved pieces of wood you have a springy piece of steel of the same types of curvature as the wood. Now the state of tension or concentration of mind, if he is doing anything really good in this struggle against the

ingrained habit of the technique, may be represented by a man employing all his fingers to bend the steel out of its own curve and into the exact curve which you want. Something different to what it would assume naturally.

* * *

This is the point I aim at, then, in my argument. I prophesy that a period of dry, hard, classical verse is coming. I have met the preliminary objection founded on the bad romantic aesthetic that in such verse, from which the infinite is excluded, you cannot have the essence of poetry at all.

* * *

Poetry * * * is a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily. It always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process. It chooses fresh epithets and fresh metaphors, not so much because they are new, and we are tired of the old, but because the old cease to convey a physical thing and become abstract counters. A poet says a ship 'coursed the seas' to get a physical image, instead of the counter word 'sailed'. Visual meanings can only be transferred by the new bowl of metaphor; prose is an old pot that lets them leak out. Images in verse are not mere decoration, but the very essence of an intuitive language. Verse is a pedestrian taking you over the ground, prose—a train which delivers you at a destination.

* * *

The point is that exactly the same activity is at work as in the highest verse. That is the avoidance of conventional language in order to get the exact curve of the thing.

* * *

A powerfully imaginative mind seizes and combines at the same instant all the important ideas of its poem or picture, and while it works with one of them, it is at the same instant working with and modifying all in their relation to it and never losing sight of their bearings on each other—as the motion of a snake's body goes through all parts at once and its volition acts at the same instant in coils which go contrary ways.

A romantic movement must have an end of the very nature of the thing. It may be deplored, but it can't be helped—wonder must cease to be wonder.

I guard myself here from all the consequences of the analogy, but it expresses at any rate the inevitableness of the process. A literature of wonder must have an end as inevitably as a strange land loses its strangeness when one lives in it. Think of the lost ecstasy of the Elizabethans. 'Oh my America, my new found land,'[3] think of what it meant to them and of what it means to us. Wonder can only be the attitude of a man passing from one stage to another, it can never be a permanently fixed thing.

1911–121924

Endnotes

- Note 1: Charles Maurras (1868–1952) and Pierre Lasserre (1867–1930) were intellectuals associated with *l'Action Française*, a reactionary political movement that denigrated Romanticism and supported the Catholic Church as a force for order. (T. S. Eliot also fell under the movement's influence.)Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Jean Racine (1639–1699), French tragic playwright associated with classicism. The riot occurred at a lecture delivered by French playwright René Fauchois (1882–1962) at the Odéon Theater, Paris, on November 3, 1910.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Police officers (French).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The French Revolution (1789–99).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Swiss-born French writer and philosopher whose ideas greatly influenced the leaders of the French Revolution and the development of Romanticism.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Controversial Church doctrine denying the transmission of original sin, named after the theologian Pelagius (ca. 354–after 418).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Puritan members of the Parliamentary Party during the English Civil War (1642–51), named for their short haircuts. Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498), Dominican monk who denounced the extravagance of the Renaissance. John Calvin (1509–1564), Protestant theologian who stressed the predestination and the depravity of humankind.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Molasses (British).Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  Horace (65–8 B.C.E.), Roman poet. "The Elizabethans": English poets and playwrights (such as Shakespeare) writing during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558–1603). "The Augustan age": the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when English writers such as John Dryden (1631–1700) and Alexander Pope (1688–1744) embraced a classicism likened to the Augustan Age of Rome. Alphonse Lamartine (1790–1869), French poet and politician. Victor Hugo (1802–1885), French poet and novelist. John Keats (1795–1821), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834), George Gordon (Lord) Byron (1788–1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909), English poets.
  Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Elsewhere in the essay, Hulme claims that every sort of verse has an accompanying receptive attitude by which readers come to expect certain qualities from poetry. These receptive attitudes, he explains, sometimes outlast the poetry from which they develop.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: From *The Duchess of Malfi* (1623) 4.2, by the English dramatist John Webster (ca. 1580–ca. 1625).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Line 27 of John Donne's "To His Mistress Going to Bed."Return to reference 3

F. S. FLINT AND EZRA POUND

In the March 1913 issue of *Poetry* magazine, the English poet and translator F. S. Flint published an article summarizing an interview with an unidentified "imagiste"—surely Pound. The article, partly dictated and rewritten by Pound, famously states the three principles of imagism—directness, economy, musical rhythm—which Pound later said he and the poets H.D. and Richard Aldington had agreed on in 1912. Flint's prefatory piece was followed in the same issue by Pound's manifesto, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste." There Pound defines the image and issues injunctions and admonitions to help poets strip their verse of unnecessary rhetoric and abstraction. Poets, he argues, should write direct, musically cadenced, image-grounded verse.

Born in London, F. S. Flint (1885–1960) worked in the British civil service, translated poetry (mostly French), and eventually published volumes of his own imagist poetry. Ezra Pound (1885–1972) was born in Hailey, Idaho, and was educated at the University of Pennsylvania and Hamilton College. During his twelve years in London, from 1908 to 1920, where he became closely associated with W. B. Yeats and T. E. Hulme, he was the most vigorous entrepreneur of literary modernism, helping James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and other writers launch their careers. In London he also began producing material for his major work, the massive poem *The Cantos.* Living briefly in Paris and then for twenty years in Italy as an ardent supporter of the fascist regime, he was arrested for treason in 1945, having made Rome Radio broadcasts against the U.S. war effort. He spent twelve years, from 1946 to 1958, in a Washington, D.C., asylum for the criminally insane before returning to Italy, where he fell into an almost complete public silence until the end of his life.

Imagisme[1]

Some curiosity has been aroused concerning *Imagisme*, and as I was unable to find anything definite about it in print, I sought out an *imagiste*, with intent to discover whether the group itself knew anything about the "movement." I gleaned these facts.

The *imagistes* admitted that they were contemporaries of the Post Impressionists and the Futurists; but they had nothing in common with these schools. They had not published a manifesto. They were not a revolutionary school; their only endeavor was to write in accordance with the best tradition, as they found it in the best writers of all time,—in Sappho, Catullus, Villon.[2] They seemed to be absolutely intolerant of all poetry that was not written in such endeavor, ignorance of the best tradition forming no excuse. They had a few rules, drawn up for their own satisfaction only, and they had not published them. They were:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.

2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.

3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

By these standards they judged all poetry, and found most of it wanting. They held also a certain 'Doctrine of the Image,' which they had not committed to writing; they said that it did not concern the public, and would provoke useless discussion.

The devices whereby they persuaded approaching poetasters to attend their instruction were:

1. They showed him his own thought already splendidly expressed in some classic (and the school musters altogether a most formidable erudition).

2. They re-wrote his verses before his eyes, using about ten words to his fifty.

Even their opponents admit of them—ruefully—"At least they do keep bad poets from writing!"

I found among them an earnestness that is amazing to one accustomed to the usual London air of poetic dilettantism. They consider that Art is all science, all religion, philosophy and metaphysic. It is true that *snobisme* may be urged against them; but it is at least *snobisme* in its most dynamic form, with a great deal of sound sense and energy behind it; and they are stricter with themselves than with any outsider.

F. S. Flint

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In response to many requests for information regarding *Imagism* and the *Imagistes*, we publish this note by Mr. Flint, supplementing it with further exemplification by Mr. Pound. It will be seen from these that *Imagism* is not necessarily associated with Hellenic subjects, or with *vers libre* as a prescribed form [*"Editor's Note" from original*]. "*Vers libre*": free verse (French).
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: François Villon (1431–after 1463), French poet. Sappho (fl. ca. 610–ca. 580 B.C.E.), Greek poet. Catullus (ca. 84–ca. 54 B.C.E.), Roman poet.Return to reference 2

A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste

An “Image” is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. I use the term “complex” rather in the technical sense employed by the newer psychologists, such as Hart,[1] though we might not agree absolutely in our application.

It is the presentation of such a “complex” instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.

It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works.

All this, however, some may consider open to debate. The immediate necessity is to tabulate A LIST OF DONT’S for those beginning to write verses. But I can not put all of them into Mosaic negative.[2]

To begin with, consider the three rules recorded by Mr. Flint, not as dogma—never consider anything as dogma—but as the result of long contemplation, which, even if it is some one else’s contemplation, may be worth consideration.

Pay no attention to the criticism of men who have never themselves written a notable work. Consider the discrepancies between the actual writing of the Greek poets and dramatists, and the theories of the Graeco-Roman grammarians, concocted to explain their metres.

Language

Use no superflous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something.

Don’t use such an expression as “dim lands of *peace.*” It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer’s not realizing that the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol.

Go in fear of abstractions. Don't retell in mediocre verse what has already been done in good prose. Don't think any intelligent person is going to be deceived when you try to shirk all the difficulties of the unspeakably difficult art of good prose by chopping your composition into line lengths.

What the expert is tired of today the public will be tired of tomorrow.

Don't imagine that the art of poetry is any simpler than the art of music, or that you can please the expert before you have spent at least as much effort on the art of verse as the average piano teacher spends on the art of music.

Be influenced by as many great artists as you can, but have the decency either to acknowledge the debt outright, or to try to conceal it.

Don't allow "influence" to mean merely that you mop up the particular decorative vocabulary of some one or two poets whom you happen to admire. A Turkish war correspondent was recently caught red-handed babbling in his dispatches of "dove-gray" hills, or else it was "pearl-pale," I can not remember.

Use either no ornament or good ornament.

Rhythm and Rhyme

Let the candidate fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement; e.g., Saxon charms, Hebridean Folk Songs, the verse of Dante, and the lyrics of Shakespeare—if he can dissociate the vocabulary from the cadence. Let him dissect the lyrics of Goethe[3] coldly into their component sound values, syllables long and short, stressed and unstressed, into vowels and consonants.

It is not necessary that a poem should rely on its music, but if it does rely on its music that music must be such as will delight the expert.

Let the neophyte know assonance and alliteration, rhyme immediate and delayed, simple and polyphonic, as a musician would

expect to know harmony and counterpoint and all the minutiae of his craft. No time is too great to give to these matters or to any one of them, even if the artist seldom have need of them.

Don't imagine that a thing will "go" in verse just because it's too dull to go in prose.

Don't be "viewy"—leave that to the writers of pretty little philosophic essays. Don't be descriptive; remember that the painter can describe a landscape much better than you can, and that he has to know a deal more about it.

When Shakespeare talks of the "Dawn in russet mantle clad"[4] he presents something which the painter does not present. There is in this line of his nothing that one can call description; he presents.

Consider the way of the scientists rather than the way of an advertising agent for a new soap.

The scientist does not expect to be acclaimed as a great scientist until he has *discovered* something. He begins by learning what has been discovered already. He goes from that point onward. He does not bank on being a charming fellow personally. He does not expect his friends to applaud the results of his freshman class work. Freshmen in poetry are unfortunately not confined to a definite and recognizable class room. They are "all over the shop." Is it any wonder "the public is indifferent to poetry?"

Don't chop your stuff into separate *iambs.* Don't make each line stop dead at the end, and then begin every next line with a heave. Let the beginning of the next line catch the rise of the rhythm wave, unless you want a definite longish pause.

In short, behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music. The same laws govern, and you are bound by no others.

Naturally, your rhythmic structure should not destroy the shape of your words, or their natural sound, or their meaning. It is improbable that, at the start, you will be able to get a rhythm-structure strong enough to affect them very much, though you may fall a victim to all sorts of false stopping due to line ends and caesurae.

The musician can rely on pitch and the volume of the orchestra. You can not. The term harmony is misapplied to poetry; it refers to simultaneous sounds of different pitch. There is, however, in the best verse a sort of residue of sound which remains in the ear of the hearer and acts more or less as an organ-base. A rhyme must have in it some slight element of surprise if it is to give pleasure; it need not be bizarre or curious, but it must be well used if used at all.

Vide further Vildrac and Duhamel's notes on rhyme in "*Technique Poetique.*"[5]

That part of your poetry which strikes upon the imaginative *eye* of the reader will lose nothing by translation into a foreign tongue; that which appeals to the ear can reach only those who take it in the original.

Consider the definiteness of Dante's presentation, as compared with Milton's rhetoric. Read as much of Wordsworth[6] as does not seem too unutterably dull.

If you want the gist of the matter go to Sappho, Catullus, Villon, Heine when he is in the vein, Gautier when he is not too frigid; or, if you have not the tongues, seek out the leisurely Chaucer.[7] Good prose will do you no harm, and there is good discipline to be had by trying to write it.

Translation is likewise good training, if you find that your original matter "wobbles" when you try to rewrite it. The meaning of the poem to be translated can not "wobble."

If you are using a symmetrical form, don't put in what you want to say and then fill up the remaining vacuums with slush.

Don't mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another. This is usually only the result of being too lazy to find the exact word. To this clause there are possibly exceptions.

The first three simple proscriptions[8] will throw out nine-tenths of all the bad poetry now accepted as standard and classic; and will prevent you from many a crime of production.

". . . *Mais d'abord il faut etre un poete*,"[9] as MM. Duhamel and Vildrac have said at the end of their little book, "*Notes sur la*

Technique Poetique"; but in an American one takes that at least for granted, otherwise why does one get born upon that august continent!

Ezra Pound

1913

Endnotes

- Note 1: British psychologist Bernard Hart (1879–1966) discusses "the complex" in *The Psychology of Insanity* (1912), a book that helped popularize psychoanalysis.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Reference to the Ten Commandments delivered to Moses (Exodus 20).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), German Romantic poet, playwright, and novelist.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From Horatio's speech in the opening scene of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "But look, the morn in russet mantle clad / Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill" (1.1.147–48).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Charles Vildrac (1882–1971), French poet, playwright, and critic, and Georges Duhamel (1884–1966), French novelist and critic, cowrote *Notes sur la Technique Poétique* (1910). "Vide": consider (Latin).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: John Milton (1608–1674) and William Wordsworth (1770–1850), English poets.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1342–1400), English poet. Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), German poet. Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), French poet.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Noted by Mr. Flint [*Pound's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: But first it is necessary to be a poet (French).Return to reference 9

AN IMAGIST CLUSTER: T. E. HULME, EZRA POUND, H.D.

At the inception of imagism in London, its key proponents included the English poet-philosopher Hulme and the expatriate American poets Ezra Pound and H.D. The paths of these three writers were densely interconnected at this juncture. In his poetry volume *Ripostes* (1912), Pound published an appendix of five poems, "The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme," prefaced by a note that printed the term *imagistes* for the first time. That year, in a London teashop, Pound had announced to the English poet Richard Aldington and the American poet H.D. that they were "imagistes," and two years later he included their and his work in the first anthology of such poetry, *Des Imagistes.* Although the movement began in London, with a French-styled name, the American poet Amy Lowell (1874–1925), derided by Pound for watering down its principles, helped disseminate its ideas in the United States, where she publicized and promoted the form in anthologies, lectures, and readings.

In spare, hard-edged poems, the imagists sought to turn verse away from what they saw as the slack sentimentality, fuzzy abstraction, explanatory excess, and metrical predictability of Victorian poetry. Imagism owed a debt to the symbolism of Yeats and nineteenth-century French poets, but it shifted the emphasis from the musical to the visual, the mysterious to the actual, the ambiguously suggestive symbol to the clear-cut natural image. Adherents looked to models from East Asia (haiku for Pound's "In a Station in the Metro") and classical Europe (Greek verse for H.D.'s "Oread"). Their poetry is compressed, achieving a maximum effect with a minimum of words. It is often centered in a single figurative juxtaposition, conjoining tenor and vehicle without explanation. And

it typically relies not on strict meters but on informal rhythms or cadences.

H.D. (1886–1961) was born Hilda Doolittle in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and educated at Bryn Mawr College. In 1911 she went to Europe for what she thought would be a brief visit but became a lifelong stay, mainly in England and in Switzerland. After her initial imagist phase she wrote more expansive works, including the three long, meditative poems that make up *Trilogy* (1973), precipitated by the experience of the London bombings in World War II.

T. E. HULME: Autumn

A touch of cold in the Autumn night—
I walked abroad,
And saw the ruddy moon lean over a hedge
Like a red-faced farmer.
I did not stop to speak, but nodded,
And round about were the wistful stars
With white faces like town children.

1912

EZRA POUND: In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.[1]

1913, 1916

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Pound describes this poem's genesis in *Gaudier-Brzeska* (1916): "Three years ago in Paris I got out of a 'metro' train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child's face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion. And that evening . . . I was still trying and I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation . . . not in speech, but in little splotches of colour. . . . The 'one-image poem' is a form of super-position, that is to say, it is one idea getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it. . . . Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following *hokku*-like sentence."
  "Hokku": another term for haiku.
  Return to reference 1

H.D.: Oread[1]

Whirl up, sea—
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash your great pines
On our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.

1914

Endnotes

- Note 1: Greek nymph of the mountains.Return to reference 1

H.D.: Sea Rose

Rose, harsh rose,
marred and with stint of petals,
meagre flower, thin,
sparse of leaf,

more precious
than a wet rose,
single on a stem—
you are caught in the drift.

Stunted, with small leaf,
you are flung on the sands,
you are lifted
in the crisp sand
that drives in the wind.

Can the spice-rose
drip such acrid fragrance
hardened in a leaf?

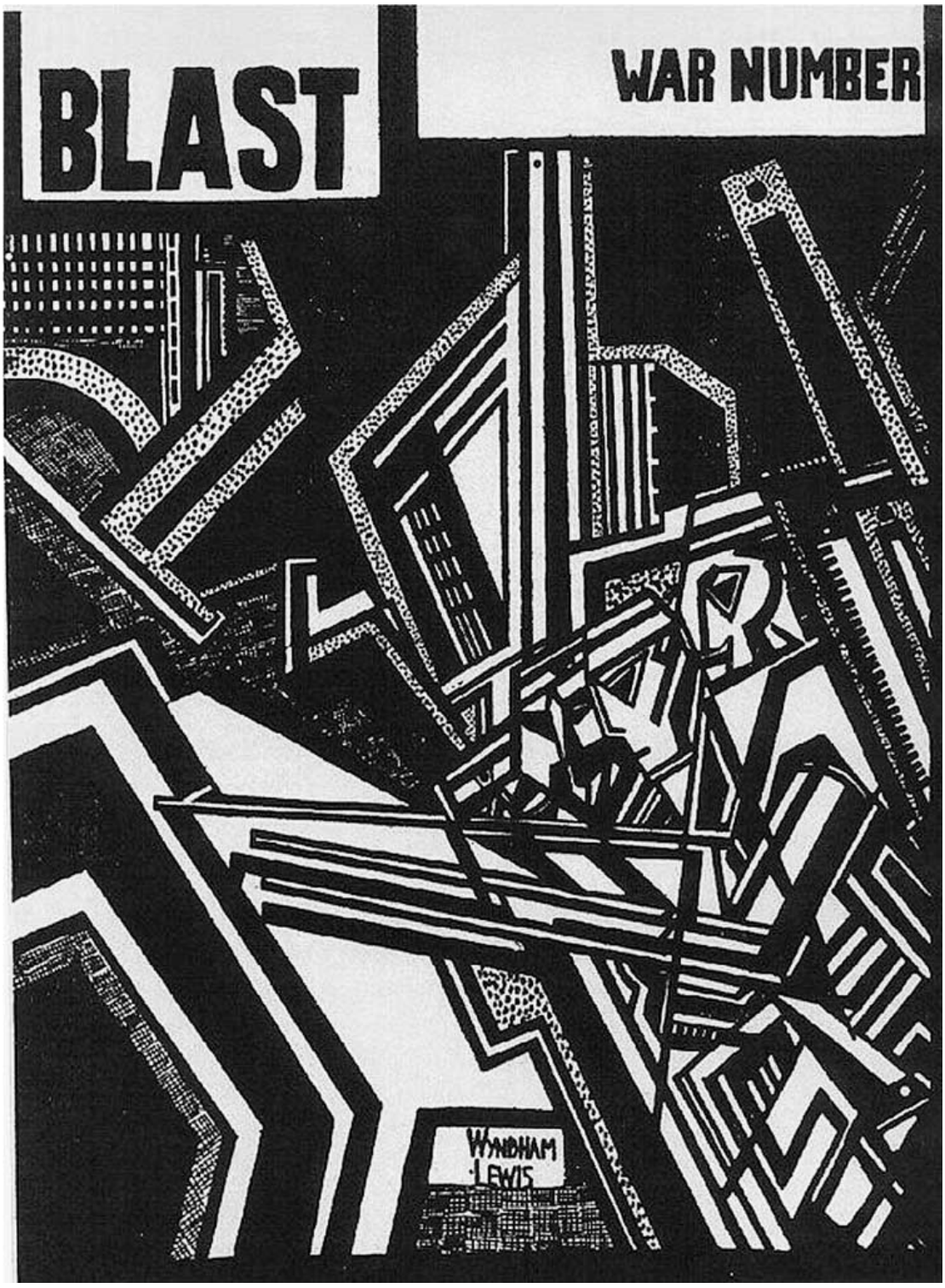
1916

BLAST

The journal *Blast* was published only twice—on June 20, 1914, though released on July 2, one month before Great Britain entered World War I, and a year later, during the war that would bring its short life to an end. But its initial preface and two-part manifesto, printed in the first pages of the first number and excerpted below, are among the most important documents in the history of modernism. They rhetorically and typographically embody the violent iconoclasm of vorticism, an avant-garde movement in the literary and visual arts centered in London. The English writer and painter Wyndham Lewis founded and edited *Blast*, whose title, he said, "means the blowing away of dead ideas and worn-out notions" (it also suggests *fire*, *explosion*, and *damn!*). He drafted much of the vorticist manifesto and fashioned its shocking visual design, likening *Blast* to a "battering ram." Ezra Pound became a vorticist after abandoning imagism, because he felt that the *vortex*, "the point of maximum energy," offered a more dynamic model for art than the static image of the imagists. The French sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891–1915), killed in World War I and memorialized both in the "War Number" of *Blast* and in Pound's book named for him, was another key vorticist leader. In the pages of *Blast* 1 and 2, artworks by Lewis, Gaudier-Brzeska, and other visual artists appeared alongside writings by Lewis, Pound, T. S. Eliot, and other avant-gardists.

The vorticist manifesto, signed by Lewis, Pound, and Gaudier-Brzeska, among others, reflects the London modernists' competitive anxiety about European avant-garde movements such as cubism and especially futurism. Under the charismatic leadership of F. T. Marinetti, the futurists celebrated speed, modernization, and the machine, while calling for the destruction of the museums, the libraries, and all such bastions of the past. The vorticists—in lists of things and people to "**BLAST**" and "**BLESS,**" which they compiled at

group meetings—similarly blast convention, standardization, the middle class, even the "years **1837** to **1900**." And yet despite their cosmopolitan enthusiasms, the vorticists also assert their independence, repeatedly criticizing the futurists. For all their antipathy toward England, they also "**BLESS**" it, revaluing, for example, English mobility (via the sea) and inventiveness (as the engine of the Industrial Revolution).



Cover, *Blast 2*, 1915. The second and final issue of the journal *Blast* featured a woodcut, *Before Antwerp*, by the vorticist artist Wyndham Lewis. Vorticism embraced machine-age modernity, as evident in this woodcut's sharp angles, geometric forms, and

dynamic movement. The mechanistic soldiers tilt forward to suggest their forward march, juxtaposed against abstract urban architecture.

Wyndham Lewis (1882–1957) studied for several years at London's Slade School of Art before exploring the avant-garde visual arts in Paris. On returning to London in 1909, he began to write fiction and exhibit his paintings. During World War I he served as an artillery officer and then as a war artist, and afterward he continued to paint and publish essays, poetry, and fiction, including his first novel, *Tarr* (1918). Like Ezra Pound, he alienated many friends when he subsequently supported fascism.

The excerpts below are taken from *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex*, No. 1 (1914).

Long Live the Vortex!

Long live the great art vortex sprung up in the centre of this town![1]

We stand for the Reality of the Present—not for the sentimental Future, or the sacripant[2] Past.

We want to leave Nature and Men alone.

We do not want to make people wear Futurist Patches, or fuss men to take to pink and sky-blue trousers.[3]

We are not their wives or tailors.

The only way Humanity can help artists is to remain independent and work unconsciously.

WE NEED THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMANITY— their stupidity, animalism and dreams.

We believe in no perfectibility except our own.

Intrinsic beauty is in the Interpreter and Seer, not in the object or content.

We do not want to change the appearance of the world, because we are not Naturalists, Impressionists or Futurists (the latest form of Impressionism),[4] and do not depend on the appearance of the world for our art.

WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE , and to feel its crude energy flowing through us.

It may be said that great artists in England are always revolutionary, just as in France any really great artist had a strong traditional vein.

Blast sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that could reach the Public in no other way.

Blast will be popular, essentially. It will not appeal to any particular class, but to the fundamental and popular

instincts in every class and description of people, TO THE INDIVIDUAL . The moment a man feels or realizes himself as an artist, he ceases to belong to any milieu or time. Blast is created for this timeless, fundamental Artist that exists in everybody.

The Man in the Street and the Gentleman are equally ignored.

Popular art does not mean the art of the poor people, as it is usually supposed to. It means the art of the individuals.

Education (art education and general education) tends to destroy the creative instinct. Therefore it is in times when education has been non-existant that art chiefly flourished.

But it is nothing to do with "the People."

It is a mere accident that that is the most favourable time for the individual to appear.

To make the rich of the community shed their education skin, to destroy politeness, standardization and academic, that is civilized, vision, is the task we have set ourselves.

We want to make in England not a popular art, not a revival of lost folk art, or a romantic fostering of such unactual conditions, but to make individuals, wherever found.

We wil l convert the King[5] if possible.

A VORTICIST KING! WHY NOT?

DO YOU THINK LLOYD GEORGE[6] HAS THE VORTEX IN HIM?

MAY WE HOPE FOR ART FROM LADY MOND?[7]

We are against the glorification of "the People," as we are against snobbery. It is not necessary to be an outcast bohemian, to be unkempt or poor, any more than it is necessary to be rich or handsome, to be an artist. Art is nothing to do with the coat you wear. A top-hat can well hold the Sixtine. A cheap cap could hide the image of Kephren.[8]

AUTOMOBILISM (Marinetteism)[9] bores us. We don't want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars, anymore than about knives and forks, elephants or gas-pipes.

Elephants are VERY BIG . Motor cars go quickly.

Wilde gushed twenty years ago about the beauty of machinery. Gissing,[1] in his romantic delight with modern l odging houses was futurist in this sense.

The futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture of the aesthete of 1890 and the realist of 1870.

The "Poor" are detestable animals! They are only picturesque and amusing for the sentimentalist or the romantic! The "Rich" are bores without a single exception, *en tant que riches!*[2]

We want those simple and great people found everywhere.

Blast presents an art of Individuals.

Endnotes

- Note 1: London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Boastful of valor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The futurists celebrated the technology, power, and dynamism of the modern age and sought to break with the past and traditional forms.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Naturalism, a late-nineteenth-century school of realism, claimed that all human life was governed by natural laws. Impressionism emphasized the subjectivity of perspective over any inherent quality in a represented object.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: George V ascended the British throne in 1910 and remained the king until 1936.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: David Lloyd George (1863–1945), British politician, prime minister 1916–22.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Wife of wealthy industrialist Sir Robert Mond, and a prominent member of fashionable London society.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Ancient Egyptian pharaoh buried in one of the great pyramids at Giza. "The Sixtine": the Sistine Chapel, in the Vatican.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), Italian writer and founder of futurism, glorified war and technology and invented a "drama of objects" in which human actors play no parts.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  George Gissing (1837–1903), naturalist English novelist. Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), Irish writer and critic; in his 1891 essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism," he writes: "All unintellectual labour, all monotonous, dull labour, all labour that deals with dreadful things, and involves unpleasant conditions, must be done by machinery. . . . *At present machinery competes against man. Under proper conditions machinery will serve man.*"
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Insofar as they are rich (French).Return to reference 2

6

BLAST

years 1837 to 1900[1]

Curse abysmal inexcusable middle-class
(also Aristocracy and Proletariat).

BLAST

pasty shadow cast by gigantic Boehm[2]

(Imagined at introduction of BOURGEOIS VICTORIAN
VISTAS).

WRING THE NECK OF all sick inventions born in that progressive white wake.

BLAST their weeping whiskers—hirsute[3]

RHETORIC of EUNUCH and STYLIST—
SENTIMENTAL HYGIENICS
ROUSSEAUISMS[4] **(wild Nature cranks)**
FRATERNIZING WITH MONKEYS
DIABOLICS—raptures and roses

of the erotic bookshelves
culminating in
PURGATORY OF PUTNEY.[5]

CHAOS OF ENOCH ARDENS
laughing Jennys
Ladies with Pains
good-for-nothing
Guineveres.[6]

SNOBBISH BORROVIAN running after
GIPSY KINGS and ESPADAS[7]
bowing the knee to
wild Mother Nature,
her feminine contours,
Unimaginative insult to
MAN.

DAMN

all those to-day who have taken on that Rotten Menagerie,
and still crack their whips and tumble in Piccadilly Circus,
as though London were a provincial town.

WE WHISPER IN YOUR EAR A GREAT SECRET.

LONDON IS NOT A PROVINCIAL TOWN.

We will allow Wonder Zoos. But we do not want the

GLOOMY VICTORIAN CIRCUS[8] **in Piccadilly Circus.**

IT IS PICCADILLY'S CIRCUS!

NOT MEANT FOR MENAGERIES trundling

out of Sixties DICKENSIAN CLOWNS,

CORELLI LADY RIDERS,[9]
TROUPS OF PERFORMING GIPSIES (who complain besides that 1/6 a night does not pay fare back to Clapham).[1]

BLAST[2]

The Post Office Frank Brangwyn Robertson Nicol

Rev. Pennyfeather (Bells) Galloway Kyle (Cluster of Grapes)

Bishop of London and all his posterity

Galsworthy Dean Inge Croce Matthews Rev Meyer Seymour Hicks

Lionel Cust C. B. Fry Bergson Abdul Bahai
Hawtrey Edward Elgar Sardlea
Filson Young Marie Gorelli Geddes
Codliver Oil St. Loe Strachey Lyceum Club
Rhabindraneth Tagore Lord Glenconner of Glen
Weiniger Norman Angel Ad. Mahon
Mr. and Mrs. Dearmer Beecham Ella
A. C. Benson (Pills, Opera, Thomas) Sydney Webb
British Academy Messrs. Chapell
Countess of Warwick George Edwards
Willie Ferraro Captain Cook R. J. Campbell
Clan Thesiger Martin Harvey William Archer
George Grossmith R. H. Benson
Annie Besant Chenil Clan Meynell
Father Vaughan Joseph Holbrooke Clan Strachey

1914

Endnotes

- Note 1: Queen Victoria reigned from 1837 to 1901. This sixth list of items in the "BLAST" section comes last, before the "BLESS" section.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Joseph Edgar Boehm (1834–1890) sculpted a colossal marble statue of Queen Victoria.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hairy.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), Swiss-born French philosopher who argued that humans are good and

noble in their natural state, before society and civilization corrupt them.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A middle-class London suburb.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In late medieval romance, King Arthur's queen in Camelot; also, the title character in two narrative poems by the English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892). "Enoch Arden" (1864) is another narrative poem by Tennyson, rejected here for its sentimentalism. Jenny is the title character of another sentimental poem (1870), by the English poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Swords (Spanish). "Borrovian": from George Henry Borrow (1803–1881), English writer of popular gypsy romances, such as *The Zincali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain* (1843).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: "Circus": here, traveling entertainment act with animals and acrobats; also British traffic circle (for example, Piccadilly Circus in central London). "Wonder Zoos": traveling exhibition of exotic animals.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Marie Corelli, pseudonym of Mary Mackay (1855–1924), best-selling (and royal favorite) English writer of romances and religious novels in which she aimed to reform social ills. "Dickensian clowns": from the novels of English writer Charles Dickens (1812–1870).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Suburban district of London. "1/6": 18d, or a shilling and sixpence, then equivalent to about thirty-five cents.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Those blasted here range from individuals, such as Charles Burgess Fry, England's star cricket player and a tireless self-promoter, to things mocked seemingly for the thrill of doing so, such as codliver oil. Blasted, too, are institutions or members of the national, literary, or cultural establishment (for example, the post office, a much-lauded model of Victorian efficiency, and the British Academy, established in 1902 by Royal Charter as the national institute for humanities and social sciences), including various clergy and public leaders (for example, bishop of

London; William Ralph Inge, dean of St. Paul's Cathedral; the Reverends Pennyfeather and Meyer; R. J. Campbell, English Congregationalist minister in the City Temple of London, and a Pantheist; Cardinal Herbert Vaughan, archbishop of Westminster and superior of the Catholic Missionary Society; Norman Angell, pacifist British economist; Arthur Christopher Benson, schoolmaster at Eton College, author of Edward VII's coronation ode). Critics unfriendly to the avant-garde are also included (for example, William Archer, drama critic for the *Nation*; Sir William Robertson Nicoll, biblical editor and sometime literary critic; Lionel Cust, director of the National Portrait Gallery and contributor to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, etc.). Also ridiculed are artists and writers whom the vorticists believed were meager talents in spite of their popularity (for example, painter Frank Brangwyn, poet Ella Wheeler Wilcox, actors George Grossmith and Seymour Hicks, composers Joseph Holbrooke and Edward Elgar, etc.), as well as those associated with fads (for example, Sir Abdul Baha Bahai, leader of the Baha'i faith) or idealistic social reform (for example, author Marie Corelli; Sidney Webb, a leader of the Fabian Socialist organization; Annie Besant, theosophist and suffragist). Some names (for example, Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore) are misspelled. For a detailed discussion of the cursing and blessing in *Blast*, see William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* (1972).
Return to reference 2

MINA LOY

Mina Loy (1882–1966) was born in London to a Protestant mother and a Jewish father. She began her artistic career in the visual arts, but she later became an experimental poet, writing lyrics and long poems that created a stir because of their literary, linguistic, and sexual iconoclasm. Among them were the scandalous "Songs to Joannes," in which she risks de-idealizing and desentimentalizing sex while freeing poetry of conventional diction, syntax, and punctuation. From 1899 to 1916 she lived and worked mostly in Munich, Paris, and especially Florence. She moved to New York in 1916 and to Paris in 1923, then settled in the United States in 1936.

Loy composed this manifesto, which she considered a rough draft and never published, in November 1914 and sent it to her friend Mabel Dodge (1879–1962), American author and celebrated patron of the arts. In the decade before Loy wrote it, feminist activism had intensified in England, particularly the militant civil disobedience of Christabel Pankhurst and other suffragettes in the Women's Social and Political Union. Loy's piece, which bears fruitful comparison with the masculine *Blast* manifesto published a few months earlier, was partly the result of Loy's quarrels with the Italian futurists, with whom she was closely associated despite the movement's misogyny. In the manifesto Loy tries to harness for feminism the radicalism and individualism of the avant-garde, calling for nothing less than a revolution in gender relations. She abandons the suffragette movement's central issue of equality and insists instead on an adversarial model of gender, claiming that women should not look to men for a standard of value but should find it within themselves. First published in the posthumous collection *The Last Lunar Baedeker* (1982), the manifesto is reprinted from *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* (1996); both volumes were edited by Roger L. Conover.

Feminist Manifesto

The feminist movement as at present instituted is
Inadequate
Women if you want to realise yourselves—you are on the eve of a devastating psychological upheaval—all your pet illu- sions must be unmasked—the lies of centuries have got to go— are you prepared for the Wrench—? There is no half- measure—NO scratching on the surface of the rubbish heap of tradition, will bring about Reform, the only method is Absolute Demolition

Cease to place your confidence in economic legislation, vice-crusades & uniform education—you are glossing over Reality. Professional & commercial careers are opening up for you—Is that all you want?
And if you honestly desire to find your level without prejudice—be Brave & deny at the outset-that pathetic clap-trap war cry
Woman is the equal of man—

for

She is NOT!

The man who lives a life in which his activities conform to a social code which is a protectorate of the feminine element———is no longer masculine
The women who adapt themselves to a theoretical valuation of their sex as a relative impersonality , are not yet Feminine

Leave off looking to men to find out what you are not —seek within yourselves to find out what you are
As conditions are at present constituted—you have the choice between Parasitism, & Prostitution—or Negation

Men & women are enemies, with the enmity of the exploited for the parasite, the parasite for the exploited—at present they are at the mercy of the advantage that each can take of the others sexual dependence—. The only point at which the interests of the sexes merge—is the sexual embrace.

The first illusion it is to your interest to demolish is the division of women into two classes the mistress, & the mother ever well-balanced & developed woman knows that is not true, Nature has endowed the complete woman with a faculty for expressing herself through all her functions—there are no restrictions the woman who is so incompletely evolved as to be un-self-conscious in sex, will prove a restrictive influence on the temperamental expansion of the next generation; the woman who is a poor mistress will be an incompetent mother—an inferior mentality —&' will enjoy an inadequate apprehension of Life .

To obtain results you must make sacrifices & the first & greatest sacrifice you have to make is of your "virtue" The fictitious value of woman as identified with her physical purity—is too easy a stand-by ——rendering her lethargic in the acquisition of intrinsic merits of character by which she could obtain a concrete value— therefore, the first self- enforced law for the female sex, as a protection against the man made bogey of virtue—which is the principle instrument of her subjection, would be the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty—.

The value of man is assessed entirely according to his use or interest to the community, the value of woman, depends entirely on chance, her success or insuccess in manoeuvering a man into taking the life-long responsibility of her—

The advantages of marriage of too ridiculously ample—compared to all other trades—for under modern conditions a woman can accept preposterously luxurious support from a man (with-out return of any sort—even offspring)—as a thank offering for her virginity
The woman who has not succeeded in striking that advantageous bargain—is prohibited from any but surreptitious re-action to Life-stimuli—& entirely debarred maternity.
Every woman has a right to maternity—
Every woman of superior intelligence should realize her race-responsibility, in producing children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex—

Each child of a superior woman should be the result of a definite period of psychic development in her life—& not necessarily of a possibly irksome & outworn continuance of an alliance—spontaneously adapted for vital creation in the beginning but not necessarily harmoniously balanced as the parties to it—follow their individual lines of personal evolution—
For the harmony of the race, each individual should be the expression of an easy & ample interpenetration of the male & female temperaments—free of stress
Woman must become more responsible for the child than man—
Women must destroy in themselves, the desire to be loved—

The feeling that it is a personal insult when a man transfers his attentions from her to another woman
The desire for comfortable protection instead of an intelligent curiosity & courage in meeting & resisting the pressure of life sex or so called love must be reduced to its initial element, honour, grief,

sentimentality, pride & consequently jealousy must be detached from it.
Woman for her happiness must retain her deceptive fragility of appearance, combined with indomitable will, irreducible courage, & abundant health the outcome of sound nerves— Another great illusion that woman must use all her introspective clear-sightedness & unbiassed bravery to destroy—for the sake of her self respect the impurity of sex the realisation in defiance of superstition that there is nothing impure in sex—except in the mental attitude to it—will constitute an incalculable & wider social regeneration than it is possible for our generation to imagine.

19141982

From Songs to Joannes[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: Loy's pseudonym for her difficult lover, the Italian poet Giovanni Papini (1881–1956).Return to reference 1

I

Spawn of Fantasies
Silting the appraisable
Pig Cupid his rosy snout
Rooting garbage
"Once upon a time"
Pulls a weed white star-topped
Among wild oats sown in mucous-membrane

I would an eye in a Bengal light[2]
Eternity in a sky-rocket
Constellations in an ocean
Whose rivers run no fresher
Than a trickle of saliva

These are suspect places

I must live in my lantern
Trimming subliminal flicker
Virginal to the bellows
Of Experience Coloured glass

Endnotes

- Note 2: Flare used for signaling or illumination.Return to reference 2

III

We might have coupled
In the bed-ridden monopoly of a moment
Or broken flesh with one another
At the profane communion table
Where wine is spill'd on promiscuous lips

We might have given birth to a butterfly
With the daily news
Printed in blood on its wings

XIV

Today
Everlasting passing apparent imperceptible
To you
I bring the nascent virginity of
—Myself for the moment

No love or the other thing
Only the impact of lighted bodies
Knocking sparks off each other
In chaos

XXVI

Shedding our petty pruderies
From slit eyes

We sidle up
To Nature
— — — that irate pornographist

1915–17

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS
1865–1939

William Butler Yeats was born to an Anglo-Irish family in Dublin. His father, J. B. Yeats, had abandoned law to take up painting, at which he made a somewhat precarious living. His mother came from the Pollexfen family that lived near Sligo, in the west of Ireland, where Yeats spent much of his childhood. The Yeatses moved to London in 1874, then returned to Dublin in 1880. Yeats attended first high school and then art school, which he soon left to concentrate on poetry.

Yeats's father was a religious skeptic, but he believed in the "religion of art." Yeats, religious by temperament but unable to believe in Christian orthodoxy, sought all his life to compensate for his lost religion. This search led him to various kinds of mysticism, to folklore, theosophy, spiritualism, and neoplatonism. He said he "made a new religion, almost an infallible church of poetic tradition."

Yeats's childhood and young manhood were spent between Dublin, London, and Sligo, and each of these places contributed something to his poetic development. In London in the 1890s he met the important poets of the day, founded the Irish Literary Society, and acquired late-Romantic, Pre-Raphaelite ideas of poetry: he believed, in this early stage of his career, that a poet's language should be dreamy, evocative, and ethereal. From the countryside around Sligo he gained a knowledge of the life of the peasantry and of their folklore. In Dublin, where he founded the National Literary

Society, he was influenced by Irish nationalism and, although often disagreeing with those who wished to use literature for political ends, he nevertheless came to see his poetry as contributing to the rejuvenation of Irish culture.

Yeats's poetry began in the tradition of self-conscious Romanticism, strongly influenced by the English poets Edmund Spenser, Percy Shelley, and, a little later, William Blake, whose works he edited. About the same time, he was writing poems (for example, "The Stolen Child") derived from his Sligo experience, with quietly precise nature imagery, Irish place-names, and themes from Irish folklore. A little later he drew on the great stories of the heroic age of Irish history and translations of Gaelic poetry into "that dialect which gets from Gaelic its syntax and keeps its still partly Tudor vocabulary." The heroic legends of ancient Ireland and the folk traditions of the modern Irish countryside helped brace his early dreamlike imagery. "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"—"my first lyric with anything in its rhythm of my own music," said Yeats—is both a Romantic evocation of escape into dream, art, and the imagination, and a specifically Irish reverie on freedom and self-reliance.

Yeats vigorously hybridizes Irish and English traditions, and eventually draws into this potent intercultural mix East and South Asian cultural resources, including Japanese Noh theater and Indian meditative practices. Resolutely Irish, he imaginatively reclaims a land colonized by the British; imposes Irish rhythms, images, genres, and syntax on English-language poetry; and revives native myths, place-names, and consciousness. Yet he is also cosmopolitan, insisting on the transnationalism of the collective storehouse of images he calls "Spiritus Mundi" or "Anima Mundi," spending much of his life in England, and cross-pollinating forms, ideas, and images from Ireland and England, Europe and Asia.

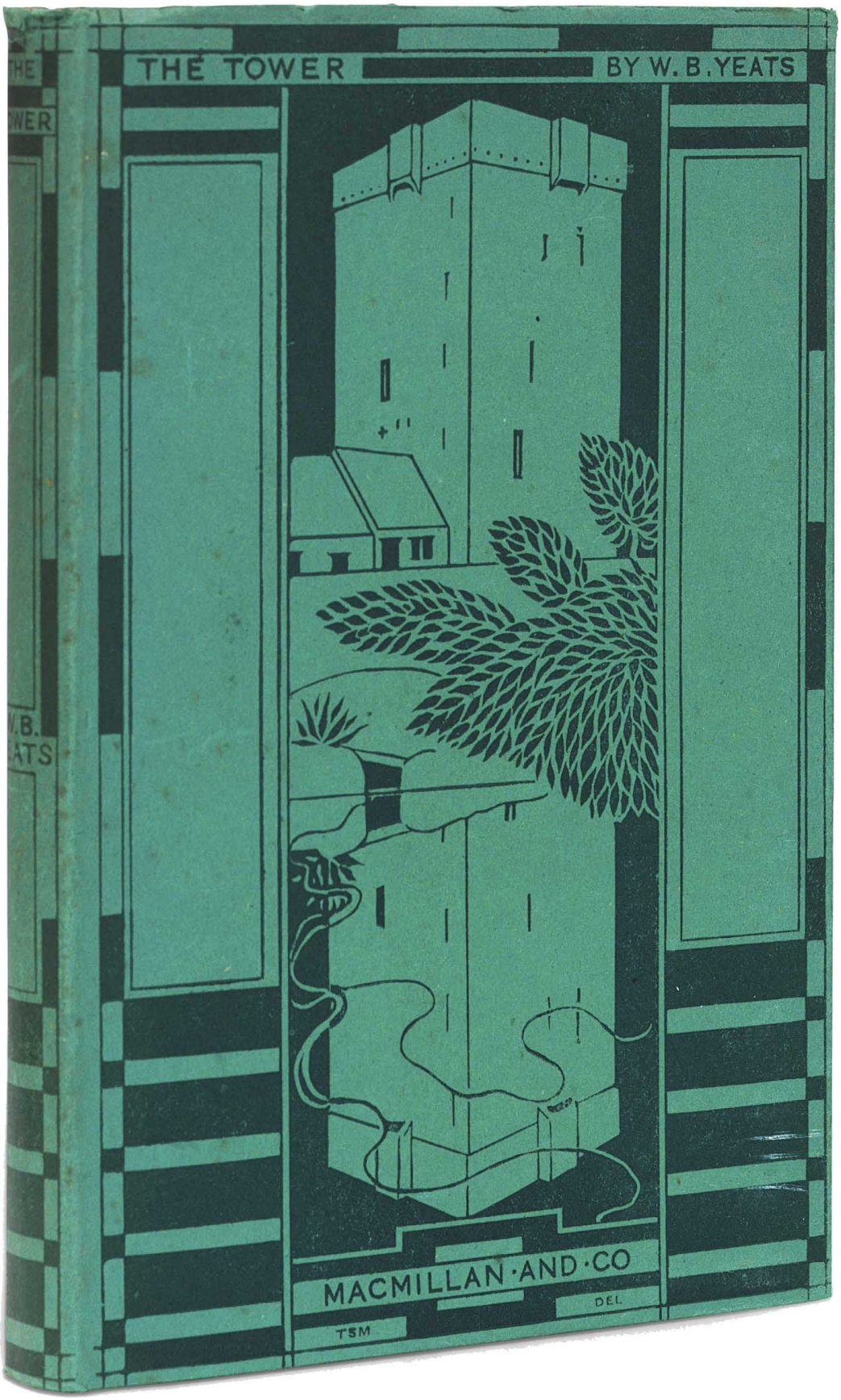
Irish nationalism first sent Yeats in search of a consistently simpler and more popular style, to express the elemental facts about Irish life and aspirations. This led him to the concrete image, as did translations from Gaelic folk songs, in which "nothing . . . was abstract, nothing worn-out." But other forces were also working on

him. In 1902 a friend gave him the works of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, to which he responded with great excitement, and it would seem that, in persuading the passive love poet to get off his knees, Nietzsche's books intensified his search for a more active stance, a more vigorous style. At the start of the twentieth century, Yeats wearied of his early languid aesthetic, declaring his intentions, in a 1901 letter, to make "everything hard and clear" and, in another of 1904, to leave behind "sentiment and sentimental sadness." He wished for poems that did not reach for disembodied beauty but that could "carry the normal, passionate, reasoning self, the personality as a whole." In poems of his middle period, such as "Adam's Curse" and "A Coat," Yeats combines the colloquial with the formal, enacting in his more austere diction, casual rhythms, and passionate syntax his will to leave behind the poetic "embroideries" of his youth and walk "naked." The American poet Ezra Pound, who spent winters from 1913 to 1916 with Yeats in a stone cottage in Sussex, strengthened Yeats's resolve to develop a less mannered, more stripped-down style.

In 1889 Yeats had met the beautiful actor and Irish nationalist Maud Gonne, with whom he was desperately in love for many years, but who persistently refused to marry him. She became the subject of many of his early love poems, and in later poems, such as "No Second Troy" and "A Prayer for My Daughter," he expresses anger over her self-sacrifice to political activism. He had also met Augusta, Lady Gregory, an Anglo-Irish writer and promoter of Irish literature, in 1896, and Yeats spent many holidays at her aristocratic country house, Coole Park. Disliking the moneygrubbing and prudery of the middle classes, as indicated in "September 1913," he looked for his ideal characters either below, to peasants and beggars, or above, to the aristocracy, for each of these had their own traditions and lived according to them. Under Lady Gregory's influence, Yeats began to organize the Irish dramatic movement in 1899 and, with her help, founded the Abbey Theatre in 1904. His active participation in theatrical production—confronting political censorship, economic problems of paying carpenters and actors, and other aspects of "theatre business, management of men"—also helped toughen his

style, as he demonstrates in "The Fascination of What's Difficult." Yeats's long-cherished hope had been to "bring the halves together"—Protestant and Catholic—through a literature infused with Ireland's ancient myths and cultural riches before the divisions between rival Christianities. But in a string of national controversies, he ran afoul of both the Roman Catholic middle class and the Anglo-Irish Protestant ascendancy, and at last, bitterly turning his back on Ireland, moved to England.

Then came the Easter Rising of 1916, led by men and women he had long known, some of whom were executed or imprisoned by the British. Persuaded by Gonne (whose estranged husband was one of the executed leaders) that "tragic dignity had returned to Ireland," Yeats returned. His culturally nationalist work had helped inspire the poet revolutionaries, and so he asked himself, as he put it in the late poem "Man and the Echo," did his work "send out / Certain men the English shot?" Yeats's nationalism and antinationalism, his divided loyalties to Ireland and to England, find powerfully ambivalent expression in "Easter, 1916" and other poems. Throughout his poetry he brilliantly mediates between contending aspects of himself—late-Romantic visionary and astringent modern skeptic, Irish patriot and irreverent antinationalist, shrewd man of action and esoteric dreamer. As he said: "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry." Conceiving consciousness as conflict, he fashioned a kind of poetry that could embody the contradictory feelings and ideas of his endless inner debate.


THE TOWER
BY W. B. YEATS
MACMILLAN·AND·CO
TSM
DEL.

The Tower. Yeats commissioned the artist Thomas Sturge Moore to create the cover of his collection *The Tower* (1928). He praised Moore's stylized gold and green woodcut design for its visual accuracy and symbolic potency in depicting Thoor Ballylee.

To mark his recommitment to Ireland, Yeats refurbished and renamed Thoor (Castle) Ballylee, the Norman tower on Lady Gregory's land, in which he lived off and on, and which became, along with its inner winding stair, a central symbol in his later poetry. In 1922 he was appointed a senator of the recently established Irish Free State, and he served until 1928, playing an active part not only in promoting the arts but also in mediating general political affairs, in which he supported the views of the minority Protestant landed class. At the same time, he was continuing his esoteric studies. He married Georgie (changed by Yeats to George) Hyde Lees in 1917, when he was fifty-two, and she proved so sympathetic to his imaginative needs that the automatic writing she produced for several years (believed by Yeats to have been dictated by spirits) gave him the elements of a symbolic system that he later worked out in his book *A Vision* (1925, 1937). The system was a theory of the movements of history and of the different types of personality, each movement and type being related to a different phase of the moon. At the center of the symbolic system were the interpenetrating cones, or "gyres," that represented the movement through major cycles of history and across antitheses of human personality.

He compressed and embodied his personal mythology in visionary poems of great scope, linguistic force, and incantatory power, such as "The Second Coming" and "Leda and the Swan." In poems of the 1920s and 1930s, winding stairs, spinning tops, "gyres," spirals of all kinds, are important symbols, serving as a means of resolving some of the contraries that had arrested him from the beginning—paradoxes of time and eternity, change and continuity, spirit and the body, life and art. If his earliest poetry was sometimes static, a beautifully stitched tapestry laden with symbols of inner states, his late poetry became more dynamic, its propulsive syntax and

muscular rhythms more suited to his themes of lust, rage, and the body. He had once screened these out of his verse as unpoetic, along with war, violence, "the mire of human veins." Now he embraced the mortal world intensely. In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," the self defies the soul's injunction to leave the world behind: "I am content to live it all again / And yet again, if it be life to pitch / Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch." Yeats no longer sought transcendence of the human, but instead aimed for the active interpenetration of the corporeal and the visionary. In his Nietzsche-inspired poems of "tragic joy," such as "Lapis Lazuli," he affirmed ruin and destruction as necessary to imaginative creation.

One key to Yeats's greatness is that there are many different Yeatses: a hard-nosed skeptic and an esoteric idealist, a nativist and a cosmopolitan, an Irish nationalist and an ironic antinationalist, a Romantic brooding on loss and unrequited desire and a modernist mocking idealism, nostalgia, and contemporary society. Similarly, in his poetic innovations and consolidations, he is both a conservative and a radical. That is, he is a literary traditionalist, working within such inherited genres as love poetry, the elegy, the self-elegy, the sonnet, and the occasional poem on public themes. But he is also a restless innovator who disrupts generic conventions, breaking up the coherence of the sonnet, de-idealizing the dead mourned in elegies, and bringing into public poems an intense personal ambivalence. In matters of form, too, he rhymes but often in off-rhyme, uses standard meters but bunches or scatters their stresses, employs an elegant syntax that nevertheless has the passionate urgency of colloquial speech; his diction, tone, enjambments, and stanzas intermix ceremony with contortion, controlled artifice with wayward unpredictability. A difficulty in reading Yeats—but also one of the great rewards—is comprehending his many-sidedness.

Like Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Windham Lewis, Yeats was attracted to right-wing politics, and in the 1930s he was briefly drawn to fascism. His late interest in authoritarian politics arose in part from his desire for a feudal, aristocratic society that, unlike middle-class culture, in his view, might allow the imagination to flourish, and in part from his anticolonialism, since he thought a fascist Spain, for

example, would "weaken the British Empire." But eventually he was appalled by all political ideologies, and the grim prophecy of "The Second Coming" seemed to him increasingly apt.

Written in a rugged, colloquial, and concrete language, Yeats's last poems have a controlled yet startling wildness. His return to life, to "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart," is one of the most impressive final phases of any poet's career. In one of his last letters he wrote: "When I try to put all into a phrase I say, 'Man can embody truth but he cannot know it.' . . . The abstract is not life and everywhere draws out its contradictions. You can refute Hegel but not the Saint or the Song of Sixpence." He died in southern France just before the beginning of World War II. His grave is, as his poem directed, near Sligo, "under Ben Bulben." He left behind a body of verse that, in variety and power, has been an enduring influence for English-language poets around the globe, from W. H. Auden and Seamus Heaney to Derek Walcott and A. K. Ramanujan.

The Stolen Child[1]

Where dips the rocky highland
Of Sleuth Wood[2] in the lake,
There lies a leafy island
Where flapping herons wake
The drowsy water-rats;
There we've hid our faery vats,
Full of berries
And of reddest stolen cherries.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wave of moonlight glosses
The dim grey sands with light,
Far off by furthest Rosses
We foot it all the night,
Weaving olden dances,
Mingling hands and mingling glances
Till the moon has taken flight;
To and fro we leap
And chase the frothy bubbles,
While the world is full of troubles
And is anxious in its sleep.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Where the wandering water gushes
From the hills above Glen-Car,
In pools among the rushes
That scarce could bathe a star,
We seek for slumbering trout
And whispering in their ears
Give them unquiet dreams;
Leaning softly out
From ferns that drop their tears
Over the young streams.
Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand.

Away with us he's going,
The solemn-eyed:
He'll hear no more the lowing
Of the calves on the warm hillside
Or the kettle on the hob
Sing peace into his breast,
Or see the brown mice bob
Round and round the oatmeal-chest.
For he comes, the human child,
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
From a world more full of weeping than he can understand.

1886, 1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, a child stolen by fairies to be their companion, as in Irish folklore.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: This and other places mentioned in the poem are in County Sligo, in the west of Ireland, where Yeats spent much of his childhood.Return to reference 2

Down by the Salley Gardens[1]

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;°
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

1889

Endnotes

- Note 1: Originally titled "An Old Song Resung," with Yeats's footnote: "This is an attempt to reconstruct an old song from three lines imperfectly remembered by an old peasant woman in the village of Ballysodare, Sligo, who often sings them to herself." "Salley": a variant of *sallow*, a species of willow tree.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *dams*Return to reference °

The Rose of the World[1]

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,
Troy[2] passed away in one high funeral gleam,
And Usna's children died.[3]

We and the labouring world are passing by:
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,
Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat;
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet.

1892, 1895

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Platonic idea of eternal beauty. "I notice upon reading these poems for the first time for several years that the quality symbolized as The Rose differs from the Intellectual Beauty of Shelley and of Spenser in that I have imagined it as suffering with man and not as something pursued and seen from afar" [Yeats, in 1925]. Yeats wrote this poem to Maud Gonne.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Ancient city destroyed by the Greeks, according to legend, after the abduction of the beautiful Helen.Return to

reference 2

- Note 3: In Old Irish legend the Ulster warrior Naoise, son of Usna or Usnach (pronounced *Úskna*), eloped with the beautiful Deirdre, whom King Conchubar of Ulster had intended to marry, and with his two brothers took her to Scotland. Eventually Conchubar lured the four of them back to Ireland and killed the three brothers.Return to reference 3

The Lake Isle of Innisfree[1]

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles[2] made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

18901890, 1892

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Inis Fraoigh (Heather Island) is a small island in Lough Gill, near Sligo, in the west of Ireland. In his autobiography Yeats writes: "I had still the ambition, formed in Sligo in my teens, of living in imitation of Thoreau on Innisfree . . . and when walking through

Fleet Street [in London] very homesick I heard a little tinkle of water and saw a fountain in a shop-window which balanced a little ball upon its jet, and began to remember lake water. From the sudden remembrance came my poem *Innisfree*, my first lyric with anything in its rhythm of my own music."
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Stakes interwoven with twigs or branches.Return to reference 2

The Sorrow of Love

The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;[1]

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

18911892, 1925

Endnotes

- Note 1: Odysseus (whom the Romans called Ulysses) is the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*, which describes how, after having fought in the siege of Troy, he wandered for ten years before reaching his home, the Greek island of Ithaca. Priam was king of Troy at the time of the siege and was killed when the Greeks captured the city.Return to reference 1

When You Are Old[1]

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,[2]
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

18911892, 1899

Endnotes

- Note 1: A poem suggested by a sonnet by the French poet Pierre de Ronsard (1524–1585); it begins: "Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle" (When you are quite old, in the evening by candlelight).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, of the fireplace grate.Return to reference 2

Who Goes with Fergus?[1]

Who will go drive with Fergus now,
And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
And dance upon the level shore?
Young man, lift up your russet brow,
And lift your tender eyelids, maid,
And brood on hopes and fear no more.

And no more turn aside and brood
Upon love's bitter mystery;
For Fergus rules the brazen cars,°
And rules the shadows of the wood,
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all dishevelled wandering stars.

1893

Endnotes

- Note 1: In a late version of this Irish heroic legend, Fergus, "king of the proud Red Branch Kings," gave up his throne voluntarily to King Conchubar of Ulster to learn by dreaming and meditating the bitter wisdom of the poet and philosopher.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *bronze chariots*Return to reference °

The Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland

He stood among a crowd at Drumahair;[1]
His heart hung all upon a silken dress,
And he had known at last some tenderness,
Before earth took him to her stony care;
But when a man poured fish into a pile,
It seemed they raised their little silver heads,
And sang what gold morning or evening sheds
Upon a woven world-forgotten isle
Where people love beside the ravelled[2] seas;
That Time can never mar a lover's vows
Under that woven changeless roof of boughs:
The singing shook him out of his new ease.

He wandered by the sands of Lissadell;
His mind ran all on money cares and fears,
And he had known at last some prudent years
Before they heaped his grave under the hill;
But while he passed before a plashy place,
A lug-worm with its grey and muddy mouth
Sang that somewhere to north or west or south
There dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race
Under the golden or the silver skies;
That if a dancer stayed his hungry foot
It seemed the sun and moon were in the fruit:
And at that singing he was no more wise.

He mused beside the well of Scanavin,
He mused upon his mockers: without fail
His sudden vengeance were a country tale,
When earthy night had drunk his body in;
But one small knot-grass growing by the pool

Sang where—unnecessary cruel voice—
Old silence bids its chosen race rejoice,
Whatever ravelled waters rise and fall
Or stormy silver fret the gold of day,
And midnight there enfold them like a fleece
And lover there by lover be at peace.
The tale drove his fine angry mood away.

He slept under the hill of Lugnagall;
And might have known at last unhaunted sleep
Under that cold and vapour-turbaned steep,
Now that the earth had taken man and all:
Did not the worms that spired about his bones
Proclaim with that unwearied, reedy cry
That God has laid His fingers on the sky,
That from those fingers glittering summer runs
Upon the dancer by the dreamless wave.
Why should those lovers that no lovers miss
Dream, until God burn Nature with a kiss?
The man has found no comfort in the grave.

1891, 1930

Endnotes

- Note 1: This and other place-names in the poem refer to locations in County Sligo.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tangled; here, turbulent.Return to reference 2

Adam's Curse[1]

We sat together at one summer's end,
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
And you and I,[2] and talked of poetry.
I said, "A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
Better go down upon your marrow-bones
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
For to articulate sweet sounds together
Is to work harder than all these, and yet
Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
The martyrs call the world."

And thereupon
That beautiful mild woman for whose sake
There's many a one shall find out all heartache
On finding that her voice is sweet and low
Replied, "To be born woman is to know—
Although they do not talk of it at school—
That we must labour to be beautiful."

I said, "It's certain there is no fine thing
Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.
There have been lovers who thought love should be
So much compounded of high courtesy
That they would sigh and quote with learned looks
Precedents out of beautiful old books;
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough."

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
We saw the last embers of daylight die,
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
That you were beautiful, and that I strove
To love you in the old high way of love;
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

Nov. 19021902, 1922

Endnotes

- Note 1: When Adam was evicted from the Garden of Eden, God cursed him with a life of toil and labor (Genesis 3:17–19).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The two women in the poem are modeled on Maud Gonne and her sister, Kathleen Pilcher (1868–1919).Return to reference 2

No Second Troy

Why should I blame her[1] that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?[2]

Dec. 19081910

Endnotes

- Note 1: Maud Gonne, whose revolutionary activities are at issue in the poem.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Helen of Troy was the legendary cause of the Trojan War and thus of Troy's destruction.Return to reference 2

The Fascination of What's Difficult[1]

The fascination of what's difficult
Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent
Spontaneous joy and natural content
Out of my heart. There's something ails our colt[2]
That must, as if it had not holy blood
Nor on Olympus[3] leaped from cloud to cloud,
Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat and jolt
As though it dragged road metal. My curse on plays
That have to be set up in fifty ways,
On the day's war with every knave and dolt,
Theatre business, management of men.
I swear before the dawn comes round again
I'll find the stable and pull out the bolt.

Sept. 1909–Mar. 19101910

Endnotes

- Note 1: Written when Yeats was director-manager of the Abbey Theatre. "Subject. To complain of the fascination of what's difficult. It spoils spontaneity and pleasure, and wastes time. Repeat the line ending difficult three times and rhyme on bolt, exalt, colt, jolt" [*Yeats's diary for September 1909*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pegasus, in Greek mythology a winged horse associated with poetry.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A mountain in Greece; the home of the gods.Return to reference 3

A Coat

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it,
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked.

19121914

September 1913

What need you,[1] being come to sense,
But fumble in a greasy till°
And add the halfpence to the pence
And prayer to shivering prayer, until
You have dried the marrow from the bone;
For men were born to pray and save:
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary[2] in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind,
The names that stilled your childish play,
They have gone about the world like wind,
But little time had they to pray
For whom the hangman's rope was spun,
And what, God help us, could they save?
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese[3] spread
The grey wing upon every tide,
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,[4]
All that delirium of the brave?
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again,
And call those exiles as they were
In all their loneliness and pain,
You'd cry, "Some woman's yellow hair

Has maddened every mother's son":
They weighed so lightly what they gave.
But let them be, they're dead and gone,
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

Sept. 19131913

Endnotes

- Note 1: Members of the new, largely Roman Catholic middle class. When the art dealer Hugh Lane (d. 1915) offered to give his collection of French impressionist paintings to the city of Dublin, provided they were permanently housed in a suitable gallery, Yeats became angry over fierce public opposition to funding the project.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: John O'Leary (1830–1907), Irish nationalist, who, after five years' imprisonment and fifteen years' exile, returned to Dublin in 1885; he rallied the young Yeats to the cause of literary nationalism.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Popular name for the Irish who, because of the penal laws against Catholics (1695–1727), were forced to flee to the Continent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763–1798), one of the chief founders of the United Irishmen (an Irish nationalist organization) and leader of the 1798 Irish Rising, committed suicide in prison. Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763–1798), British officer who, after being dismissed from the army for disloyal activities, joined the United Irishmen, helped lead the 1798 Irish Rising, and died in prison. Robert Emmet (1778–1803), a leader of the abortive 1803 Irish Nationalist Revolt, was hanged for treason.
  Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *cash register*Return to reference °

Easter, 1916[1]

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley[2] is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?[3]
This man had kept a school
And rode our wingèd horse;[4]
This other his helper and friend[5]
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,

So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.[6]
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come

On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.[7]
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly[8] and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

May–Sept. 19161916, 1920

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  During the Easter Rising of 1916, Irish nationalists revolted against the British government and proclaimed an Irish Republic. Nearly sixteen hundred Irish Volunteers and two hundred members of the Citizen Army seized buildings and a park in Dublin. The rebellion began on Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, and was crushed in six days. Over the next two weeks fifteen of the leaders were executed by firing squad. Yeats knew the chief nationalist leaders personally.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The multicolored clothes of a jester.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Constance Gore-Booth (1868–1927), afterward Countess Markievicz, took a prominent role in the uprising. Her death sentence was reduced to imprisonment. The other rebel leaders to whom Yeats refers were executed.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Padraic Pearse (1879–1916), founder of a boys' school in Dublin and poet—hence the "winged horse," or Pegasus, the horse of the Muses.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Thomas MacDonagh (1878–1916), poet and dramatist.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Major John MacBride (1865–1916), Irish revolutionary and estranged husband of Maud Gonne.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In 1914 the English government had passed Home Rule for Ireland into law, but because of World War I had suspended it, promising to implement it later.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: James Connolly (1870–1916), a trade-union organizer and military commander of the rebellion.Return to reference 8

The Wild Swans at Coole[1]

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count[2]
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,

By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

Oct. 1916[30] 1917

Endnotes

- Note 1: Coole Park, in County Galway, was the estate of the Irish playwright Lady Augusta Gregory (1852–1932).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Yeats made his first long visit to Coole in 1897; from then on he spent summers there, often staying into the fall.Return to reference 2

An Irish Airman Foresees His Death[1]

I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above;
Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love;
My country is Kiltartan Cross,[2]
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,
No likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before.
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.

19191920

Endnotes

- Note 1: Robert Gregory (1881–1918), the only child of Yeats's close friend and patroness Augusta, Lady Gregory, was killed on the Italian front as a member of the British Royal Flying Corps.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Crossroads village in County Galway, near Coole Park.Return to reference 2

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre[1]
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.[2]

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming![3] Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*[4]
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem[5] to be born?

Jan. 19191920, 1921

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Yeats's term (pronounced with a hard "g") for a spiraling motion in the shape of a cone. He envisions the two-thousand-year

cycle of the Christian age as spiraling toward its end and the next historical cycle as beginning after a violent reversal: "the end of an age, which always receives the revelation of the character of the next age, is represented by the coming of one gyre to its place of greatest expansion and of the other to that of its greatest contraction" [*Yeats's note*].
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The poem was written in January 1919, in the aftermath of World War I and the Russian Revolution and on the eve of the Anglo-Irish War.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Christ's second coming is heralded by the coming of the Beast of the Apocalypse, or Antichrist (1 John 2:18).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: World spirit, or universal spirit (Latin); that is, Yeats said, "a general storehouse of images," a collective unconscious or memory, in which the human race preserves its past memories.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jesus's birthplace.Return to reference 5

A Prayer for My Daughter

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on.[1] There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood[2] and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind,
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool[3]
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,[4]

Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-leggèd smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of Plenty[5] is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned
By those that are not entirely beautiful;
Yet many, that have played the fool
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise,
And many a poor man that has roved,
Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet° be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Not but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate
May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman[6] born

Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

Feb.–June 19191919, 1921

Endnotes

- Note 1: Yeats's daughter and first child, Anne Butler Yeats, was born on February 26, 1919, in Dublin and brought home to Yeats's refitted Norman tower of Thoor Ballylee in Galway.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lady Gregory's wood at Coole, only a few miles from Thoor Ballylee.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Menelaus, Helen's husband. Her abduction by Paris precipitated the Trojan War.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Venus, born from the sea, was the Roman goddess of love; her husband, Vulcan, was the lame god of fire and metalwork (line 29).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Greek mythology, the goat's horn that suckled the god Zeus flowed with nectar and ambrosia; the cornucopia thus became a symbol of plenty.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Maud Gonne.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *small songbird*Return to reference °

Leda and the Swan[1]

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower[2]
And Agamemnon dead.
Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

Sept. 19231924, 1928

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In Greek mythology the god Zeus, in the form of a swan, raped Leda, a mortal. Helen, Clytemnestra, Castor, and Pollux were the children of this union. Yeats saw Leda's rape as the beginning of a new age, analogous with the dove's annunciation to Mary of Jesus's conception: "I imagine the annunciation that founded Greece as made to Leda, remembering that they showed in a Spartan temple, strung up to the roof as a holy relic, an

unhatched egg of hers, and that from one of her eggs came love and from the other war" (*A Vision*).
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, the destruction of Troy, caused by Helen's abduction by Paris. Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek army that besieged Troy, was murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, the other daughter of Leda and the swan.Return to reference 2

Sailing to Byzantium[1]

1

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

2

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing,[2] and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

3

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,[3]
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,[4]
And be the singing-masters of my soul.

Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

4

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;[5]
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Sept. 19261927

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Yeats wrote in *A Vision*: "I think that if I could be given a month of Antiquity and leave to spend it where I chose, I would spend it in Byzantium [now Istanbul] a little before Justinian opened St. Sophia and closed the Academy of Plato [in the 6th century C.E.]. . . . I think that in early Byzantium, maybe never before or since in recorded history, religious, aesthetic and practical life were one, that architect and artificers . . . spoke to the multitude and the few alike. The painter, the mosaic worker, the worker in gold and silver, the illuminator of sacred books, were almost impersonal, almost perhaps without the consciousness of individual design, absorbed in their subject-matter and that the vision of a whole people."
  Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The poet William Blake (1757–1827) saw the soul of his dead brother rising to heaven, "clapping his hands for joy."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The mosaics in Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, in Ravenna, Italy, depict rows of Christian saints on a gold background; Yeats saw them in 1907.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, whirl in a spiral.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: I have read somewhere that in the Emperor's palace at Byzantium was a tree made of gold and silver, and artificial birds that sang [*Yeats's note*].Return to reference 5

Among School Children

1

I walk through the long schoolroom questioning;
A kind old nun in a white hood replies;
The children learn to cipher° and to sing,
To study reading-books and history,
To cut and sew, be neat in everything
In the best modern way—the children's eyes
In momentary wonder stare upon
A sixty-year-old smiling public man.[1]

2

I dream of a Ledaean[2] body, bent
Above a sinking fire, a tale that she
Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event
That changed some childish day to tragedy—
Told, and it seemed that our two natures blent
Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,
Or else, to alter Plato's parable,
Into the yolk and white of the one shell.[3]

3

And thinking of that fit of grief or rage
I look upon one child or t'other there
And wonder if she stood so at that age—
For even daughters of the swan can share

Something of every paddler's heritage—
And had that colour upon cheek or hair,
And thereupon my heart is driven wild:
She stands before me as a living child.

4

Her present image floats into the mind—
Did Quattrocento finger[4] fashion it
Hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind
And took a mess of shadows for its meat?
And I though never of Ledaean kind
Had pretty plumage once—enough of that,
Better to smile on all that smile, and show
There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

5

What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap
Honey of generation had betrayed,
And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape
As recollection or the drug decide,[5]
Would think her son, did she but see that shape
With sixty or more winters on its head,
A compensation for the pang of his birth,
Or the uncertainty of his setting forth?

6

Plato thought nature but a spume that plays
Upon a ghostly paradigm of things;[6]
Solider Aristotle played the taws
Upon the bottom of a king of kings;[7]

World-famous golden-thighed Pythagoras[8]
Fingered upon a fiddle-stick or strings
What a star sang and careless Muses heard:
Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird.

7

Both nuns and mothers worship images,
But those the candles light are not as those
That animate a mother's reveries,
But keep a marble or a bronze repose.
And yet they too break hearts—O Presences
That passion, piety or affection knows,
And that all heavenly glory symbolise—
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

8

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
O chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?°
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

June 19261927

Endnotes

- Note 1: Yeats, as part of his work in the Irish Senate, visited a Montessori school in Waterford in 1926.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A body like Leda's. Yeats associated her daughter, Helen of Troy, with Maud Gonne.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the *Symposium*, by the Greek philosopher Plato (ca. 428–ca. 348 B.C.E.), Aristophanes argues that "the primeval man" was both male and female but was divided (like an egg separated into yolk and white); the resulting two beings come together in love to become one again.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, the skill of a 15th-century Italian painter.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: I have taken the "honey of generation" from Porphyry's essay on "The Cave of Nymphs" [*Yeats's note*]. Porphyry (ca. 234–ca. 305 C.E.) was a Neo-platonic philosopher.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: As he explained in the famed "Allegory of the Cave" in his *Republic*, Plato thought nature merely an image of an ideal world that exists elsewhere.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Plato's student Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) was "solider" because he regarded this world as the authentic one. He tutored Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.E.), the "king of kings," and disciplined him with the "taws," or leather strap.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Greek philosopher (ca. 580–500 B.C.E), known for his doctrine of the harmony of the spheres and his discovery of the mathematical basis of musical intervals. His disciples, the Pythagoreans, venerated their master as a god with a golden thigh.Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *do arithmeticReturn to reference °*
- °: *trunkReturn to reference °*

A Dialogue of Self and Soul[1]

1

My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair;
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
Fix every wandering thought upon
That quarter where all thought is done:
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?

My Self. The consecrated blade upon my knees
Is Sato's ancient blade, still as it was,
Still razor-keen, still like a looking-glass
Unspotted by the centuries;
That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn
From some court-lady's dress and round
The wooden scabbard bound and wound,
Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn.

My Soul. Why should the imagination of a man
Long past his prime remember things that are
Emblematical of love and war?
Think of ancestral night that can,
If but imagination scorn the earth
And intellect its wandering
To this and that and t'other thing,
Deliver from the crime of death and birth.

My Self. Montashigi, third of his family, fashioned it
Five hundred years ago, about it lie

Flowers from I know not what embroidery—
Heart's purple—and all these I set
For emblems of the day against the tower
Emblematical of the night,
And claim as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.

My Soul. Such fullness in that quarter overflows
And falls into the basin of the mind
That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,
For intellect no longer knows
Is from the *Ought*, or *Knower* from the *Known*—
That is to say, ascends to Heaven;
Only the dead can be forgiven;
But when I think of that my tongue's a stone.

2

My Self. A living man is blind and drinks his drop.
What matter if the ditches are impure?
What matter if I live it all once more?
Endure that toil of growing up;
The ignominy of boyhood; the distress
Of boyhood changing into man;
The unfinished man and his pain
Brought face to face with his own clumsiness;

The finished man among his enemies?—
How in the name of Heaven can he escape
That defiling and disfigured shape
The mirror of malicious eyes
Casts upon his eyes until at last
He thinks that shape must be his shape?
And what's the good of an escape
If honour find him in the wintry blast?

I am content to live it all again
And yet again, if it be life to pitch
Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,
A blind man battering blind men;
Or into that most fecund ditch of all,
The folly that man does
Or must suffer, if he woos
A proud woman not kindred of his soul.

I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.

July–Dec. 19271929

Endnotes

- Note 1: In a letter of October 2, 1923, Yeats wrote: "I am writing a new tower poem 'Sword and Tower,' which is a choice of rebirth rather than deliverance from birth. I make my Japanese sword and its silk covering my symbol of life." Junzo Sato, a friend, had given him the ceremonial sword in 1920.Return to reference 1

Byzantium[1]

The unpurged images of day recede;
The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song
After great cathedral gong;
A starlit or a moonlit dome[2] disdains
All that man is,
All mere complexities,
The fury and the mire° of human veins.

Before me floats an image, man or shade,
Shade more than man, more image than a shade;
For Hades' bobbin[3] bound in mummy-cloth
May unwind the winding path;[4]
A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
Breathless mouths may summon;
I hail the superhuman;
I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.[5]

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
More miracle than bird or handiwork,
Planted on the starlit golden bough,
Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
In glory of changeless metal
Common bird or petal
And all complexities of mire or blood.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
Flames that no faggot° feeds, nor steel has lit,
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
Where blood-begotten spirits come

And all complexities of fury leave,
Dying into a dance,
An agony of trance,
An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,[6]
Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
The golden smithies of the Emperor!
Marbles of the dancing floor
Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget,
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea.

Sept. 19301932

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  On October 4, 1930, Yeats sent his friend Sturge Moore a copy of this poem, saying: "The poem originates from a criticism of yours. You objected to the last verse of 'Sailing to Byzantium' because a bird made by a goldsmith was just as natural as anything else. That showed me that the idea needed exposition." The previous April, Yeats had noted in his diary: "Subject for a poem": "Describe Byzantium as it is in the system towards the end of the first Christian millennium. A walking mummy. Flames at the street corners where the soul is purified, birds of hammered gold singing in the golden trees, in the harbour [dolphins] offering their backs to the wailing dead that they may carry them to Paradise."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Of the great church of St. Sophia.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Spool. Hades was the Greek god of the underworld, the realm of the dead.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: That is, the spool of people’s fate, which spins their destiny and which is wound like a mummy, may be unwound and lead to the timeless world of pure spirit.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: On Roman tombstones the cock is a herald of rebirth, thus of the continuing cycle of human life.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In ancient mythology dolphins were thought to carry the souls of the dead to the Isles of the Blessed.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *deep mud*Return to reference °
- °: *bundle of sticks*Return to reference °

Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop[1]

I met the Bishop on the road
And much said he and I.
"Those breasts are flat and fallen now
Those veins must soon be dry;
Live in a heavenly mansion,
Not in some foul sty."

"Fair and foul are near of kin,
And fair needs foul," I cried.
"My friends are gone, but that's a truth
Nor grave nor bed denied,
Learned in bodily lowliness
And in the heart's pride.

"A woman can be proud and stiff
When on love intent;
But Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent."

Nov. 19311932

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of a series of poems about an old woman partly modeled on Cracked Mary, an old woman who lived near Lady Gregory.Return to reference 1

Lapis Lazuli

(For Harry Clifton)[1]

I have heard that hysterical women say
They are sick of the palette and fiddle-bow,
Of poets that are always gay,
For everybody knows or else should know
That if nothing drastic is done[2]
Aeroplane and Zeppelin[3] will come out,
Pitch like King Billy[4] bomb-balls in
Until the town lie beaten flat.

All perform their tragic play,
There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,
That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;
Yet they, should the last scene be there,
The great stage curtain about to drop,
If worthy their prominent part in the play,
Do not break up their lines to weep.
They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;
Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.
All men have aimed at, found and lost;
Black out; Heaven blazing into the head:
Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.
Though Hamlet rambles and Lear rages,
And all the drop scenes drop at once
Upon a hundred thousand stages,
It cannot grow by an inch or an ounce.

On their own feet they came, or on shipboard,
Camel-back, horse-back, ass-back, mule-back,

Old civilisations put to the sword.
Then they and their wisdom went to rack:
No handiwork of Callimachus[5]
Who handled marble as if it were bronze,
Made draperies that seemed to rise
When sea-wind swept the corner, stands;
His long lamp chimney shaped like the stem
Of a slender palm, stood but a day;
All things fall and are built again
And those that build them again are gay.

Two Chinamen, behind them a third,
Are carved in Lapis Lazuli,
Over them flies a long-legged bird
A symbol of longevity;
The third, doubtless a serving-man,
Carries a musical instrument.

Every discolouration of the stone,
Every accidental crack or dent
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,
Or lofty slope where it still snows
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch
Sweetens the little half-way house
Those Chinamen climb towards, and I
Delight to imagine them seated there;
There, on the mountain and the sky,
On all the tragic scene they stare.
One asks for mournful melodies;
Accomplished fingers begin to play.
Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

July 19361938

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The English writer Harry Clifton (1908–1978) gave Yeats for his seventieth birthday a piece of lapis lazuli, a deep blue stone, "carved by some Chinese sculptor into the semblance of a mountain with temple, trees, paths, and an ascetic and pupil about to climb the mountain. Ascetic, pupil, hard stone, eternal theme of the sensual east. The heroic cry in the midst of despair. But no, I am wrong, the east has its solutions always and therefore knows nothing of tragedy. It is we, not the east, that must raise the heroic cry" [*Yeats to Dorothy Wellesley, July 6, 1935*].
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Because Europe was (in 1936) close to war.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: German zeppelins, or airships, bombed London during World War I.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: King William III (William of Orange), who defeated the army of King James II at the Battle of the Boyne, in Ireland, in 1690. In a popular ballad, "King William he threw his bomb-balls in, / And set them on fire."Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  Athenian sculptor (5th century B.C.E.), supposedly the originator of the Corinthian column and of the use of the running drill to imitate folds in drapery in statues. Yeats wrote of him: "With Callimachus pure Ionic revives again . . . and upon the only example of his work known to us, a marble chair, a Persian is represented, and may one not discover a Persian symbol in that bronze lamp, shaped like a palm . . . ? But he was an archaistic workman, and those who set him to work brought back public life to an older form" (*A Vision*).
  Return to reference 5

Under Ben Bulben[1]

1

Swear by what the Sages spoke
Round the Mareotic Lake[2]
That the Witch of Atlas knew,
Spoke and set the cocks a-crow.
Swear by those horsemen, by those women,
Complexion and form prove superhuman,[3]
That pale, long visaged company
That airs an immortality
Completeness of their passions won;
Now they ride the wintry dawn
Where Ben Bulben sets the scene.

Here's the gist of what they mean.

2

Many times man lives and dies
Between his two eternities,
That of race and that of soul,
And ancient Ireland knew it all.
Whether man dies in his bed
Or the rifle knocks him dead,
A brief parting from those dear
Is the worst man has to fear.
Though grave-diggers' toil is long,
Sharp their spades, their muscle strong,
They but thrust their buried men
Back in the human mind again.

3

You that Mitchel's prayer have heard
"Send war in our time, O Lord!"[4]
Know that when all words are said
And a man is fighting mad,
Something drops from eyes long blind
He completes his partial mind,
For an instant stands at ease,
Laughs aloud, his heart at peace,
Even the wisest man grows tense
With some sort of violence
Before he can accomplish fate,
Know his work or choose his mate.

4

Poet and sculptor do the work
Nor let the modish painter shirk
What his great forefathers did,
Bring the soul of man to God,
Make him fill the cradles right.
Measurement began our might:
Forms a stark Egyptian thought,
Forms that gentler Phidias[5] wrought.

Michael Angelo left a proof
On the Sistine Chapel roof,
Where but half-awakened Adam
Can disturb globe-trotting Madam
Till her bowels are in heat,
Proof that there's a purpose set
Before the secret working mind:
Profane perfection of mankind.

Quattrocento[6] put in paint,
On backgrounds for a God or Saint,
Gardens where a soul's at ease;
Where everything that meets the eye
Flowers and grass and cloudless sky
Resemble forms that are, or seem
When sleepers wake and yet still dream,
And when it's vanished still declare,
With only bed and bedstead there,
That Heavens had opened.

Gyres[7] run on;
When that greater dream had gone
Calvert and Wilson, Blake and Claude[8]
Prepared a rest for the people of God,
Palmer's[9] Phrase, but after that
Confusion fell upon our thought.

5

Irish poets learn your trade
Sing whatever is well made,
Scorn the sort now growing up
All out of shape from toe to top,
Their unremembering hearts and heads
Base-born products of base beds.
Sing the peasantry, and then
Hard-riding country gentlemen,
The holiness of monks, and after
Porter-drinkers'[1] randy laughter;
Sing the lords and ladies gay
That were beaten into the clay
Through seven heroic centuries;[2]
Cast your mind on other days
That we in coming days may be

Still the indomitable Irishry.

6

Under bare Ben Bulben's head
In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid,
An ancestor was rector there[3]
Long years ago; a church stands near,
By the road an ancient Cross.
No marble, no conventional phrase,
On limestone quarried near the spot
By his command these words are cut:

Cast a cold eye
On life, on death.
Horseman, pass by!

Sept. 19381939

Endnotes

- Note 1: A mountain near Sligo; Yeats's grave is in sight of it, in Drumcliff churchyard.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Lake Mareotis, near Alexandria, Egypt, was an ancient center of Christian Neoplatonism and of neo-Pythagorean philosophy. The lake is mentioned in Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "The Witch of Atlas." In an essay on Shelley, Yeats interprets the witch as a symbol of timeless, absolute beauty; passing in a boat by this and another lake, she "sees all human life shadowed upon its waters . . . and because she can see the reality of things she is described as journeying 'in the calm depths' of 'the wide lake' we journey over unpiloted."
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Superhuman beings or fairies, like the Sidhe, believed to ride through the countryside near Ben Bulben.Return to

reference 3

- Note 4: From *Jail Journal*, by the Irish nationalist John Mitchel (1815–1875).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Greek sculptor (fl. ca. 490–430 B.C.E.).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Fifteenth-century Italian art.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Yeats's term for conelike spirals or cycles of history.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Edward Calvert (1799–1883), English visionary artist and follower of William Blake (1757–1827), English mystical poet and artist. Richard Wilson (1714–1782), English landscape painter and disciple of Claude Lorraine (1600–1682), French artist.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Samuel Palmer (1805–1881), English landscape painter who admired Blake.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Drinkers of dark brown bitter beer.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Since the Norman conquest of Ireland, in the 12th century.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Yeats's great-grandfather, the Reverend John Yeats (1774–1846), was rector of Drumcliff Church, Sligo.Return to reference 3

Man and the Echo

Man. In a cleft that's christened Alt
Under broken stone I halt
At the bottom of a pit
That broad noon has never lit,
And shout a secret to the stone.
All that I have said and done,
Now that I am old and ill,
Turns into a question till
I lie awake night after night
And never get the answers right.
Did that play of mine[1] send out
Certain men the English shot?
Did words of mine put too great strain
On that woman's reeling brain?[2]
Could my spoken words have checked
That whereby a house[3] lay wrecked?
And all seems evil until I
Sleepless would lie down and die.

Echo. Lie down and die.

Man. That were to shirk
The spiritual intellect's great work
And shirk it in vain. There is no release
In a bodkin[4] or disease,
Nor can there be a work so great
As that which cleans man's dirty slate.
While man can still his body keep
Wine or love drug him to sleep,
Waking he thanks the Lord that he
Has body and its stupidity,

But body gone he sleeps no more
And till his intellect grows sure
That all's arranged in one clear view
Pursues the thoughts that I pursue,
Then stands in judgment on his soul,
And, all work done, dismisses all
Out of intellect and sight
And sinks at last into the night.

Echo. Into the night.

Man. O rocky voice
Shall we in that great night rejoice?
What do we know but that we face
One another in this place?
But hush, for I have lost the theme
Its joy or night seem but a dream;
Up there some hawk or owl has struck
Dropping out of sky or rock,
A stricken rabbit is crying out
And its cry distracts my thought.

19381939

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, a nationalist play Yeats wrote with Lady Gregory and in which Maud Gonne played the title role in 1902. It helped inspire the Easter Rising of 1916.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Margot Ruddock (1907–1951), a young poet with whom Yeats had a brief affair in the 1930s and to whom he offered financial support when she suffered a nervous breakdown.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Coole Park, Lady Gregory's home, in disrepair after her death in 1932.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Dagger. See *Hamlet* 3.1.77–78: "When he himself might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin."Return to reference 4

The Circus Animals' Desertion

1

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,
I sought it daily for six weeks or so.
Maybe at last being but a broken man,
I must be satisfied with my heart, although
Winter and summer till old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,
Lion and woman and the Lord knows what.[1]

2

What can I but enumerate old themes,
First that sea-rider Oisin[2] led by the nose
Through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams,
Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose,
Themes of the embittered heart, or so it seems,
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows;
But what cared I that set him on to ride,
I, starved for the bosom of his fairy bride.

And then a counter-truth filled out its play,
"The Countess Cathleen"[3] was the name I gave it,
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away,
But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it.
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
This dream itself had all my thought and love.

And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchulain fought the ungovernable sea;[4]
Heart mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me:
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
Players and painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of.

3

Those masterful images because complete
Grew in pure mind but out of what began?
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

1939

Endnotes

- Note 1: Yeats refers to the ancient Irish heroes of his early work ("Those stilted boys"), the gilded carriage of his play *The Unicorn from the Stars* (1908), and the lion in several of his poems, including "The Second Coming."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the long title poem of Yeats's first successful book, *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems* (1889), the legendary poet warrior Oisin (pronounced *Ushēēn*) is enchanted by the beautiful fairy woman Niamh (pronounced *Neeve*), who leads him to the Islands of Delight, of Many Fears, and of Forgetfulness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A play (published in 1892) about an Irish countess (an idealized version of Maud Gonne) who sells her soul to the devil

to buy food for the starving Irish poor but is taken up to heaven (for God "Looks always on the motive, not the deed").Return to reference 3

- Note 4: In Yeats's play *On Baile's Strand* (1904), the legendary warrior Cuchulain (pronounced *CuHOOlin* by Yeats, *KooHULLin* in Irish), crazed by his discovery that he has killed his son, fights with the sea.Return to reference 4

From Introduction
[A General Introduction for My Work][1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: Written in 1937 and originally printed as "A General Introduction for My Work" in *Essays and Introductions* (1961), the text is excerpted from *Later Essays*, ed. William H. O'Donnell (1994), vol. 5 of *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats.*Return to reference 1

I. The First Principle

A poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedies, whatever it be, remorse, lost love or mere loneliness; he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria. Dante and Milton had mythologies, Shakespeare the characters of English history, of traditional romance; even when the poet seems most himself, when Raleigh and gives potentates the lie,[2] or Shelley 'a nerve o'er which do creep the else unfelt oppressions of mankind',[3] or Byron when 'the heart wears out the breast as the sword wears out the sheath',[4] he is never the bundle of accident and incoherence that sits down to breakfast; he has been re-born as an idea, something intended, complete. A novelist might describe his accidence, his incoherence, he must not, he is more type than man, more passion than type. He is Lear, Romeo, Oedipus, Tiresias; he has stepped out of a play and even the woman he loves is Rosalind, Cleopatra, never The Dark Lady.[5] He is part of his own phantasmagoria and we adore him because nature has grown intelligible, and by so doing a part of our creative power. 'When mind is lost in the light of the Self', says the Prashna Upanishad,[6] 'it dreams no more; still in the body it is lost in happiness.' 'A wise man seeks in Self', says the Chāndôgya Upanishad, 'those that are alive and those that are dead and gets what the world cannot give.' The world knows nothing because it has made nothing, we know everything because we have made everything.

Endnotes

- Note 2: From "The Lie," by the English writer and explorer Sir Walter Ralegh (1552–1618): "Tell potentates, they live / Acting by others' action; / Not loved unless they give, / Not strong but by a faction: / If potentates' reply, / Give potentates the lie."Return to reference 2

- Note 3: From "Julian and Maddalo," by the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See "So, we'll go no more a roving," by the English poet George Gordon, Lord Byron.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The woman to whom many of Shakespeare's de-idealizing sonnets are addressed. The rest of the names refer to characters in Shakespeare's plays and in Sophocles' ancient Greek drama *Oedipus the King*.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: One of a series of ancient philosophical dialogues in Sanskrit. From *Ten Principal Upanishads* (1937), translated by Yeats and the Indian monk Shri Purohit Swami (1882–1941).Return to reference 6

II. Subject-Matter

* * *

I am convinced that in two or three generations it will become generally known that the mechanical theory[7] has no reality, that the natural and supernatural are knit together, that to escape a dangerous fanaticism we must study a new science; at that moment Europeans may find something attractive in a Christ posed against a background not of Judaism but of Druidism, not shut off in dead history, but flowing, concrete, phenomenal.

I was born into this faith, have lived in it, and shall die in it; my Christ, a legitimate deduction from the Creed of St Patrick[8] as I think, is that Unity of Being Dante compared to a perfectly proportioned human body, Blake's 'Imagination',[9] what the Upanishads have named 'Self': nor is this unity distant and therefore intellectually understandable, but imminent,[1] differing from man to man and age to age, taking upon itself pain and ugliness, 'eye of newt, and leg of frog'.[2]

Subconscious preoccupation with this theme brought me *A Vision*,[3] its harsh geometry an incomplete interpretation. The 'Irishry' have preserved their ancient 'deposit' through wars which, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, became wars of extermination; no people, Lecky said at the opening of his *Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*,[4] have undergone greater persecution, nor did that persecution altogether cease up to our own day. No people hate as we do in whom that past is always alive; there are moments when hatred poisons my life and I accuse myself of effeminacy because I have not given it adequate expression. It is not enough to have put it into the mouth of a rambling peasant poet. Then I remind myself that, though mine is the first English marriage I know of in the direct line, all my family names are English and that I owe my soul to Shakespeare, to Spenser and to Blake, perhaps to William Morris,[5] and to the English language in which I think, speak and

write, that everything I love has come to me through English; my hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate. I am like the Tibetan monk who dreams at his initiation that he is eaten by a wild beast and learns on waking that he himself is eater and eaten. This is Irish hatred and solitude, the hatred of human life that made Swift write *Gulliver*[6] and the epitaph upon his tomb, that can still make us wag between extremes and doubt our sanity.

Again and again I am asked why I do not write in Gaelic; some four or five years ago I was invited to dinner by a London society and found myself among London journalists, Indian students and foreign political refugees. An Indian paper says it was a dinner in my honour, I hope not; I have forgotten though I have a clear memory of my own angry mind. I should have spoken as men are expected to speak at public dinners; I should have paid and been paid conventional compliments; then they would speak of the refugees, from that on all would be lively and topical, foreign tyranny would be arraigned, England seem even to those confused Indians the protector of liberty; I grew angrier and angrier; Wordsworth, that typical Englishman, had published his famous sonnet to François Dominique Toussaint, a Santo Domingo negro:

> There's not a breathing of the common wind
> That will forget thee[7]

in the year when Emmet conspired and died, and he remembered that rebellion as little as the half hanging and the pitch cap that preceded it by half a dozen years.[8] That there might be no topical speeches I denounced the oppression of the people of India; being a man of letters, not a politician, I told how they had been forced to learn everything, even their own Sanscrit, through the vehicle of English till the first discoverers of wisdom had become bywords for vague abstract facility. I begged the Indian writers present to remember that no man can think or write with music and vigour except in his mother tongue. I turned a friendly audience hostile, yet when I think of that scene I am unrepentant and angry.

I could no more have written in Gaelic than can those Indians write in English; Gaelic is my national language, but it is not my mother tongue.

Endnotes

- Note 7: Theory explaining the universe in strictly naturalistic, Newtonian terms.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From the second paragraph of "The Confession of St. Patrick, or His Epistle to the Irish," by the 5th-century saint, the apostle of Ireland.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In *Jerusalem* the English poet William Blake (1757–1827) describes imagination as the "Divine body of the lord Jesus." Yeats's ideas about the Unity of Being are drawn from his reading of Dante's *Il Convito.*Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In manuscript Yeats wrote "imanent" (a misspelling of "immanent"), but he allowed "imminent" to stand in the typescript.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Yeats's paraphrase of the ingredients of the witches' cauldron in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 4.1.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Yeats's mystical writings (1925, 1937), in which he sketches out and schematizes many of his theories.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, by the Irish historian William Edward Hartpole Lecky (1838–1903).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: English poet and textile designer (1834–1896). Edmund Spenser (1552–1599), English poet who, in addition to poetic works such as *The Faerie Queene*, wrote a treatise proposing the extermination of the Irish.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: *Gulliver's Travels*, by the Irish satirist Jonathan Swift (1667–1745). Yeats's poem "Swift's Epitaph," a loose translation of the Latin on Swift's tomb, claims that "Swift has sailed into his rest; / Savage indignation there / Cannot lacerate his breast."Return to reference 6

- Note 7: From "To Toussaint L'Ouverture," by the English poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850). L'Ouverture (1743–1803) died in prison after rebelling against France's rule in Haiti.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Paper caps filled with burning pitch were used for torture during the martial law preceding and following the Irish Rising of 1798. Robert Emmet (1778–1803), Irish nationalist executed after the Irish rebellion of 1803.Return to reference 8

III. Style and Attitude

Style is almost unconscious. I know what I have tried to do, little what I have done. Contemporary lyric poems, even those that moved me—'The Stream's Secret', 'Dolores'[9]—seemed too long, but an Irish preference for a swift current might be mere indolence, yet Burns may have felt the same when he read Thomson and Cowper.[1] The English mind is meditative, rich, deliberate; it may remember the Thames[2] valley. I planned to write short lyrics or poetic drama where every speech [would] be short and concentrated, knit by dramatic tension, and I did so with more confidence because young English poets were at that time writing out of emotion at the moment of crisis, though their old slow-moving meditation returned almost at once. Then, and in this English poetry has followed my lead, I tried to make the language of poetry coincide with that of passionate, normal speech. I wanted to write in whatever language comes most naturally when we soliloquise, as I do all day long, upon the events of our own lives or of any life where we can see ourselves for the moment. I sometimes compare myself with the mad old slum women I hear denouncing and remembering; 'how dare you,' I heard one say of some imaginary suitor, 'and you without health or a home'. If I spoke my thoughts aloud they might be as angry and as wild. It was a long time before I had made a language to my liking; I began to make it when I discovered some twenty years ago that I must seek, not as Wordsworth thought words in common use,[3] but a powerful and passionate syntax, and a complete coincidence between period and stanza. Because I need a passionate syntax for passionate subject-matter I compel myself to accept those traditional metres that have developed with the language. Ezra Pound, Turner, Lawrence, wrote admirable free verse, I could not.[4] I would lose myself, become joyless like those mad old women. The translators of the Bible, Sir Thomas Browne,[5] certain translators from the Greek when translators still bothered about rhythm, created a form midway between prose and verse that seems natural to impersonal meditation; but all that is personal soon rots; it

must be packed in ice or salt. Once when I was in delirium from pneumonia I dictated a letter to George Moore[6] telling him to eat salt because it was a symbol of eternity; the delirium passed, I had no memory of that letter, but I must have meant what I now mean. If I wrote of personal love or sorrow in free verse, or in any rhythm that left it unchanged, amid all its accident, I would be full of self-contempt because of my egotism and indiscretion, and I foresee the boredom of my reader. I must choose a traditional stanza, even what I alter must seem traditional. I commit my emotion to shepherds, herdsmen, camel-drivers, learned men, Milton's or Shelley's Platonist, that tower Palmer drew.[7] Talk to me of originality and I will turn on you with rage. I am a crowd, I am a lonely man, I am nothing. Ancient salt is best packing. The heroes of Shakespeare convey to us through their looks, or through the metaphorical patterns of their speech, the sudden enlargement of their vision, their ecstasy at the approach of death, 'She should have died hereafter', 'Of many million kisses, the poor last', 'Absent thee from felicity awhile'; they have become God or Mother Goddess, the pelican, 'My baby at my breast',[8] but all must be cold; no actress has ever sobbed when she played Cleopatra, even the shallow brain of a producer has never thought of such a thing. The supernatural is present, cold winds blow across our hands, upon our faces, the thermometer falls, and because of that cold we are hated by journalists and groundlings. There may be in this or that detail painful tragedy, but in the whole work none. I have heard Lady Gregory say, rejecting some play in the modern manner sent to the Abbey Theatre, 'Tragedy must be a joy to the man who dies.' Nor is it any different with lyrics, songs, narrative poems; neither scholars nor the populace have sung or read anything generation after generation because of its pain. The maid of honour whose tragedy they sing must be lifted out of history with timeless pattern, she is one of the four Maries,[9] the rhythm is old and familiar, imagination must dance, must be carried beyond feeling into the aboriginal ice. Is ice the correct word? I once boasted, copying the phrase from a

letter of my father's, that I would write a poem 'cold and passionate as the dawn'.[1]

When I wrote in blank verse I was dissatisfied; my vaguely mediaeval *Countess Cathleen* fitted the measure, but our Heroic Age went better, or so I fancied, in the ballad metre of *The Green Helmet*.[2] There was something in what I felt about Deirdre, about Cuchulain,[3] that rejected the Renaissance and its characteristic metres, and this was a principal reason why I created in dance plays the form that varies blank verse with lyric metres. When I speak blank verse and analyse my feelings I stand at a moment of history when instinct, its traditional songs and dances, its general agreement, is of the past. I have been cast up out of the whale's belly though I still remember the sound and sway that came from beyond its ribs,[4] and, like the Queen in Paul Fort's ballad,[5] I smell of the fish of the sea. The contrapuntal structure of the verse, to employ a term adopted by Robert Bridges,[6] combines the past and present. If I repeat the first line of *Paradise Lost* so as to emphasise its five feet I am among the folk singers, 'Of mán's first dísobédience ánd the frúit', but speak it as I should I cross it with another emphasis, that of passionate prose, 'Of mán's first disobédience and the frúit', or 'Of mán's fírst dísobedience and the frúit', the folk song is still there, but a ghostly voice, an unvariable possibility, an unconscious norm. What moves me and my hearer is a vivid speech that has no laws except that it must not exorcise the ghostly voice. I am awake and asleep, at my moment of revelation, self-possessed in self-surrender; there is no rhyme, no echo of the beaten drum, the dancing foot, that would overset my balance. When I was a boy I wrote a poem upon dancing that had one good line: 'They snatch with their hands at the sleep of the skies.' If I sat down and thought for a year I would discover that but for certain syllabic limitations, a rejection or acceptance of certain elisions, I must wake or sleep.

The Countess Cathleen could speak a blank verse which I had loosened, almost put out of joint, for her need, because I thought of her as mediaeval and thereby connected her with the general

European movement. For Deirdre and Cuchulain and all the other figures of Irish legend are still in the whale's belly.

Endnotes

- Note 9: Long poems by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882) and Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909), respectively.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: James Thomson (1700–1748) and William Cowper (1731–1800), poets most famous for their long poems. Robert Burns (1759–1796), Scottish poet of short lyrics.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: River that runs through London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In the preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth says that poetry should be written in "language really used by men."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936), Yeats included free verse by the American poet Ezra Pound (1885–1972), the English poet Walter Turner (1889–1946), and the English poet and novelist D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: English physician and author (1605–1682) with an elaborate prose style.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Irish novelist (1852–1933).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The English artist Samuel Palmer (1805–1881) drew *The Lonely Tower* (1879) as an illustration of Milton's poem about the pensive man, "Il Penseroso" (1645), in which a scholar in a "high lonely tower" is dedicated to uncovering Plato's insights; in Shelley's "Prince Athanase," the idealistic hero searches for love.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: From *Macbeth* 5.4, *Anthony and Cleopatra* 4.15, *Hamlet* 5.2, respectively. "Pelican": thought to feed its babies with its blood and thus often a symbol of self-sacrifice.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587), was served by four women named Mary.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: From "The Fisherman" (1916): "Before I am old / I shall have written him one / Poem maybe as cold / And passionate as the dawn."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: *The Countess Cathleen* (1892, later revised) is written in blank verse; *The Green Helmet* (1910), in iambic heptameter, which resembles the meter of a ballad (alternating between four- and three-stress lines).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The warrior hero of the Irish mythological Ulster Cycle; he also appears in Yeats's "dance" plays, derived from Japanese Noh drama. "Deirdre": in the Ulster Cycle, woman chosen to be queen of Ulster before she elopes with Naoise (pronounced *Neesha*).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Jonah 2:10: "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: "La Reine à la Mer" ("The Queen of the Sea," 1894–96), by the French poet Paul Fort (1872–1960).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: English poet (1844–1930), who stressed the poetic tension of the counterpoint between regular meters and the rhythm of poetry as actually spoken.Return to reference 6

IV. Whither?

The young English poets reject dream and personal emotion; they have thought out opinions that join them to this or that political party; they employ an intricate psychology, action in character, not as in the ballads character in action, and all consider that they have a right to the same close attention that men pay to the mathematician and the metaphysician. One of the more distinguished has just explained that man has hitherto slept but must now awake.[7] They are determined to express the factory, the metropolis, that they may be modern. Young men teaching school in some picturesque cathedral town, or settled for life in Capri or in Sicily, defend their type of metaphor by saying that it comes naturally to a man who travels to his work by Tube.[8] I am indebted to a man of this school who went through my work at my request, crossing out all conventional metaphors,[9] but they seem to me to have rejected also those dream associations which were the whole art of Mallarmé.[1] He had topped a previous wave. As they express not what the Upanishads call 'that ancient Self' but individual intellect, they have the right to choose the man in the Tube because of his objective importance. They attempt to kill the whale, push the Renaissance higher yet, out-think Leonardo;[2] their verse kills the folk ghost and yet would remain verse. I am joined to the 'Irishry' and I expect a counter-Renaissance. No doubt it is part of the game to push that Renaissance; I make no complaint; I am accustomed to the geometrical arrangement of history in *A Vision*, but I go deeper than 'custom' for my convictions. When I stand upon O'Connell Bridge[3] in the half-light and notice that discordant architecture, all those electric signs, where modern heterogeneity has taken physical form, a vague hatred comes up out of my own dark and I am certain that wherever in Europe there are minds strong enough to lead others the same vague hatred rises; in four or five or in less generations this hatred will have issued in violence and imposed some kind of rule of kindred. I cannot know the nature of that rule, for its opposite fills the light; all I can do to bring it nearer is to

intensify my hatred. I am no Nationalist, except in Ireland for passing reasons; State and Nation are the work of intellect, and when you consider what comes before and after them they are, as Victor Hugo said of something or other, not worth the blade of grass God gives for the nest of the linnet.[4]

19371961

Endnotes

- Note 7: Perhaps W. H. Auden (1907–1973) or C. Day-Lewis (1904–1972).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: London's underground railway. Lewis taught in the spa town of Cheltenham in the early 1930s. D. H. Lawrence lived in Capri and Sicily in the early 1920s.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Ezra Pound did this ca. 1910.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), French poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Italian artist and inventor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Over Dublin's river Liffey.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Small finch. Victor Hugo (1802–1885), French writer.Return to reference 4

E. M. FORSTER
1879–1970

Born in London, Edward Morgan Forster was an infant when his father, an architect of Welsh extraction, died of consumption. An only child, Forster was raised by his paternal great-aunt and his mother, a member of a family distinguished over several generations for its evangelical religion and its philanthropic reformist activities. He was educated at Tonbridge School (the "Sawston" of his novel *The Longest Journey*), where he suffered from the cruelty of his classmates and other tribulations of being a day boy at a boarding school. As a student at King's College, Cambridge, he found an intellectual companionship that influenced his entire life. The friends he made were to become, with Forster, members of the Bloomsbury Group—so called because some of its prominent figures lived in the Bloomsbury district of London—which included the writers Lytton Strachey and Virginia Woolf, the art historians Clive Bell and Roger Fry, and the economist John Maynard Keynes. Forster's main interest was always in personal relations, the "little society" we make for ourselves with our friends. He cast a wary eye on society at large, his point of view being that of the independent liberal, suspicious of political slogans and catchwords, critical of Victorian attitudes and British imperialism.

After graduating from Cambridge, Forster visited Greece and spent some time in Italy in 1901, and this experience influenced him permanently; throughout his life he tended to set Greek and Italian

peasant life in symbolic contrast to the stuffy and repressed life of middle-class England. Both Greek mythology and Italian Renaissance art opened up to him a world of vital exuberance, and most of his work is concerned with ways of discovering such a quality in personal relationships amid the complexities and distortions of modern life. He began writing as a contributor to the newly founded liberal *Independent Review* in 1903, and in 1905 published his first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, a tragicomic projection of conflicts between refined English gentility and coarse Italian vitality.

Forster's second novel, *The Longest Journey* (1907), examines the differences between living and dead relationships with much incidental satire of English public-school education and English notions of respectability. *A Room with a View* (1908) explores the nature of love with a great deal of subtlety, using (as with his first novel) Italy as a liberating agent for the British tourists whom he also satirizes. *Howards End* (1910) involves a conflict between two families, one interested in art and literature and the other only in money and business, and probes the relation between inward feeling and outward action, between the kinds of reality in which people live. "Only connect!" exclaims one of the characters. "Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will soon be at its height." But no one knew better than Forster that this is more easily said than done and that false or premature connections, connections made by rule and not achieved through total realization of the personality, can destroy and corrupt.

A pacifist, Forster refused to fight in World War I and instead served in the International Red Cross in Egypt. In Alexandria he had his first significant sexual relationship, with Mohammed el Adl, an Egyptian tram conductor; he feared social disapproval less there than in England, where, not long after Oscar Wilde's infamous prosecution for homosexual offenses, he hid his personal life from public scrutiny.

He traveled to India in 1912 and 1922, and in his last (for Forster published no more fiction during his life) and best-known novel, *A Passage to India* (1924), he takes the fraught relations between

British and colonized Indians in the subcontinent as a background for the most searching and complex of all his explorations of the possibilities and limitations, the promises and pitfalls, of human relationships. Published posthumously was another novel, *Maurice*, written more than fifty years before and circulated privately during his life, in which he tried to define and do justice to homosexual love, which had played an important part in his life. In addition to fiction Forster wrote critical, autobiographical, and descriptive prose, notably *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), which, as a discussion of the techniques of fiction by a practicing novelist, has become a minor classic of criticism.

"The Machine Stops," a short story set in a dystopian future, concerns the relationship between a mother and her son who are separated by physical and philosophical distance. Included in Forster's collection *The Eternal Moment and Other Stories* (1928), this work may seem like a generic outlier in the author's oeuvre, but it is suffused with his signature skepticism of technological modernization as a solution to the problems of alienation and loneliness. The worldviews of the characters pit received knowledge against immediate experience and recall the divisions between exhaustion and vitality, material wealth and spiritual richness, that structure Forster's novels. Written as a criticism of the utopian tales of H. G. Wells, "The Machine Stops" poses classic questions about whether new technologies serve as tools for human liberation or inadvertent forms of imprisonment. While a meditation on the crises of modernity in Forster's own time, the story enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in 2020 for presenting a world that uncannily resembled life in lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Machine Stops

Part 1. The Air-Ship

Imagine, if you can, a small room, hexagonal in shape, like the cell of a bee. It is lighted neither by window nor by lamp, yet it is filled with a soft radiance. There are no apertures for ventilation, yet the air is fresh. There are no musical instruments, and yet, at the moment that my meditation opens, this room is throbbing with melodious sounds. An arm-chair is in the centre, by its side a reading-desk—that is all the furniture. And in the arm-chair there sits a swaddled lump of flesh—a woman, about five feet high, with a face as white as a fungus. It is to her that the little room belongs.

An electric bell rang.

The woman touched a switch and the music was silent.

"I suppose I must see who it is," she thought, and set her chair in motion. The chair, like the music, was worked by machinery, and it rolled her to the other side of the room, where the bell still rang importunately.

"Who is it?" she called. Her voice was irritable, for she had been interrupted often since the music began. She knew several thousand people; in certain directions human intercourse had advanced enormously.

But when she listened into the receiver, her white face wrinkled into smiles, and she said:

"Very well. Let us talk, I will isolate myself. I do not expect anything important will happen for the next five minutes—for I can give you fully five minutes, Kuno. Then I must deliver my lecture on 'Music during the Australian Period.' "

She touched the isolation knob, so that no one else could speak to her. Then she touched the lighting apparatus, and the little room was plunged into darkness.

"Be quick!" she called, her irritation returning. "Be quick, Kuno; here I am in the dark wasting my time."

But it was fully fifteen seconds before the round plate that she held in her hands began to glow. A faint blue light shot across it,

darkening to purple, and presently she could see the image of her son, who lived on the other side of the earth, and he could see her.

"Kuno, how slow you are."

He smiled gravely.

"I really believe you enjoy dawdling."

"I have called you before, mother, but you were always busy or isolated. I have something particular to say."

"What is it, dearest boy? Be quick. Why could you not send it by pneumatic post?"[1]

"Because I prefer saying such a thing. I want——"

"Well?"

"I want you to come and see me."

Vashti watched his face in the blue plate.

"But I can see you!" she exclaimed. "What more do you want?"

"I want to see you not through the Machine," said Kuno. "I want to speak to you not through the wearisome Machine."

"Oh, hush!" said his mother, vaguely shocked. "You mustn't say anything against the Machine."

"Why not?"

"One mustn't."

"You talk as if a god had made the Machine," cried the other. "I believe that you pray to it when you are unhappy. Men made it, do not forget that. Great men, but men. The Machine is much, but it is not everything. I see something like you in this plate, but I do not see you. I hear something like you through this telephone, but I do not hear you. That is why I want you to come. Come and stop with me. Pay me a visit, so that we can meet face to face, and talk about the hopes that are in my mind."

She replied that she could scarcely spare the time for a visit.

"The air-ship barely takes two days to fly between me and you."

"I dislike air-ships."

"Why?"

"I dislike seeing the horrible brown earth, and the sea, and the stars when it is dark. I get no ideas in an air-ship."

"I do not get them anywhere else."

"What kind of ideas can the air give you?"

He paused for an instant.

"Do you not know four big stars that form an oblong, and three stars close together in the middle of the oblong, and hanging from these stars, three other stars?"

"No, I do not. I dislike the stars. But did they give you an idea? How interesting; tell me."

"I had an idea that they were like a man."

"I do not understand."

"The four big stars are the man's shoulders and his knees. The three stars in the middle are like the belts that men wore once, and the three stars hanging are like a sword."[2]

"A sword?"

"Men carried swords about with them, to kill animals and other men."

"It does not strike me as a very good idea, but it is certainly original. When did it come to you first?"

"In the air-ship——" He broke off, and she fancied that he looked sad. She could not be sure, for the Machine did not transmit *nuances* of expression. It only gave a general idea of people—an idea that was good enough for all practical purposes, Vashti thought. The imponderable bloom, declared by a discredited philosophy to be the actual essence of intercourse, was rightly ignored by the Machine, just as the inponderable bloom of the grape was ignored by the manufacturers of artificial fruit. Something 'good enough' had long since been accepted by our race.

"The truth is," he continued, "that I want to see these stars again. They are curious stars. I want to see them not from the air-ship, but from the surface of the earth, as our ancestors did, thousands of years ago. I want to visit the surface of the earth."

She was shocked again.

"Mother, you must come, if only to explain to me what is the harm of visiting the surface of the earth."

"No harm," she replied, controlling herself. "But no advantage. The surface of the earth is only dust and mud, no life remains on it, and you would need a respirator, or the cold of the outer air would kill you. One dies immediately in the outer air."

"I know; of course I shall take all precautions."

"And besides———"

"Well?"

She considered, and chose her words with care. Her son had a queer temper, and she wished to dissuade him from the expedition.

"It is contrary to the spirit of the age," she asserted.

"Do you mean by that, contrary to the Machine?"

"In a sense, but——"

His image in the blue plate faded.

"Kuno!"

He had isolated himself.

For a moment Vashti felt lonely.

Then she generated the light, and the sight of her room, flooded with radiance and studded with electric buttons, revived her. There were buttons and switches everywhere—buttons to call for food, for music, for clothing. There was the hot-bath button, by pressure of which a basin of (imitation) marble rose out of the floor, filled to the brim with a warm deodorized liquid. There was the cold-bath button. There was the button that produced literature. And there were of course the buttons by which she communicated with her friends. The room, though it contained nothing, was in touch with all that she cared for in the world.

Vashti's next move was to turn off the isolation-switch, and all the accumulations of the last three minutes burst upon her. The room was filled with the noise of bells, and speaking-tubes. What was the new food like? Could she recommend it? Had she had any ideas lately? Might one tell her one's own ideas? Would she make an engagement to visit the public nurseries at an early date?—say this day month.

To most of these questions she replied with irritation—a growing quality in that accelerated age. She said that the new food was horrible. That she could not visit the public nurseries through press of engagements. That she had no ideas of her own but had just been told one—that four stars and three in the middle were like a man: she doubted there was much in it. Then she switched off her correspondents, for it was time to deliver her lecture on Australian music.

The clumsy system of public gatherings had been long since abandoned; neither Vashti nor her audience stirred from their rooms. Seated in her arm-chair she spoke, while they in their arm-chairs heard her, fairly well, and saw her, fairly well. She opened with a humorous account of music in the pre-Mongolian epoch, and went on to describe the great outburst of song that followed the Chinese conquest. Remote and primæval as were the methods of I-San-So and the Brisbane school, she yet felt (she said) that study of them might repay the musician of today: they had freshness; they had, above all, ideas.

Her lecture, which lasted ten minutes, was well received, and at its conclusion she and many of her audience listened to a lecture on the sea; there were ideas to be got from the sea; the speaker had donned a respirator and visited it lately. Then she fed, talked to many friends, had a bath, talked again, and summoned her bed.

The bed was not to her liking. It was too large, and she had a feeling for a small bed. Complaint was useless, for beds were of the same dimension all over the world, and to have had an alternative size would have involved vast alterations in the Machine. Vashti isolated herself—it was necessary, for neither day nor night existed under the ground—and reviewed all that had happened since she had summoned the bed last. Ideas? Scarcely any. Events—was Kuno's invitation an event?

By her side, on the little reading-desk, was a survival from the ages of litter—one book. This was the Book of the Machine. In it were instructions against every possible contingency. If she was hot or cold or dyspeptic or at a loss for a word, she went to the book,

and it told her which button to press. The Central Committee published it. In accordance with a growing habit, it was richly bound.

Sitting up in the bed, she took it reverently in her hands. She glanced round the glowing room as if some one might be watching her. Then, half ashamed, half joyful, she murmured "O Machine! O Machine!" and raised the volume to her lips. Thrice she kissed it, thrice inclined her head, thrice she felt the delirium of acquiescence. Her ritual performed, she turned to page 1367, which gave the times of the departure of the air-ships from the island in the southern hemisphere, under whose soil she lived, to the island in the northern hemisphere, whereunder lived her son.

She thought, "I have not the time."

She made the room dark and slept; she awoke and made the room light; she ate and exchanged ideas with her friends, and listened to music and attended lectures; she made the room dark and slept. Above her, beneath her, and around her, the Machine hummed eternally; she did not notice the noise, for she had been born with it in her ears. The earth, carrying her, hummed as it sped through silence, turning her now to the invisible sun, now to the invisible stars. She awoke and made the room light.

"Kuno!"

"I will not talk to you," he answered, "until you come."

"Have you been on the surface of the earth since we spoke last?"

His image faded.

Again she consulted the book. She became very nervous and lay back in her chair palpitating. Think of her as without teeth or hair. Presently she directed the chair to the wall, and pressed an unfamiliar button. The wall swung apart slowly. Through the opening she saw a tunnel that curved slightly, so that its goal was not visible. Should she go to see her son, here was the beginning of the journey.

Of course she knew all about the communication-system. There was nothing mysterious in it. She would summon a car and it would fly with her down the tunnel until it reached the lift that communicated with the air-ship station: the system had been in use

for many, many years, long before the universal establishment of the Machine. And of course she had studied the civilization that had immediately preceded her own—the civilization that had mistaken the functions of the system, and had used it for bringing people to things, instead of for bringing things to people. Those funny old days, when men went for change of air instead of changing the air in their rooms! And yet—she was frightened of the tunnel: she had not seen it since her last child was born. It curved—but not quite as she remembered; it was brilliant—but not quite as brilliant as a lecturer had suggested. Vashti was seized with the terrors of direct experience. She shrank back into the room, and the wall closed up again.

"Kuno," she said, "I cannot come to see you. I am not well."

Immediately an enormous apparatus fell on to her out of the ceiling, a thermometer was automatically inserted between her lips, a stethoscope was automatically laid upon her heart. She lay powerless. Cool pads soothed her forehead. Kuno had telegraphed to her doctor.

So the human passions still blundered up and down in the Machine. Vashti drank the medicine that the doctor projected into her mouth, and the machinery retired into the ceiling. The voice of Kuno was heard asking how she felt.

"Better." Then with irritation: "But why do you not come to me instead?"

"Because I cannot leave this place."

"Why?"

"Because, any moment, something tremendous may happen."

"Have you been on the surface of the earth yet?"

"Not yet."

"Then what is it?"

"I will not tell you through the Machine."

She resumed her life.

But she thought of Kuno as a baby, his birth, his removal to the public nurseries, her one visit to him there, his visits to her—visits

which stopped when the Machine had assigned him a room on the other side of the earth. "Parents, duties of," said the book of the Machine, "cease at the moment of birth. P. 422327483." True, but there was something special about Kuno—indeed there had been something special about all her children—and, after all, she must brave the journey if he desired it. And "something tremendous might happen." What did that mean? The nonsense of a youthful man, no doubt, but she must go. Again she pressed the unfamiliar button, again the wall swung back, and she saw the tunnel that curved out of sight. Clasping the Book, she rose, tottered on to the platform, and summoned the car. Her room closed behind her: the journey to the northern hemisphere had begun.

Of course it was perfectly easy. The car approached and in it she found arm-chairs exactly like her own. When she signalled, it stopped, and she tottered into the lift. One other passenger was in the lift, the first fellow creature she had seen face to face for months. Few travelled in these days, for, thanks to the advance of science, the earth was exactly alike all over. Rapid intercourse, from which the previous civilization had hoped so much, had ended by defeating itself. What was the good of going to Pekin when it was just like Shrewsbury?[3] Why return to Shrewsbury when it would be just like Pekin? Men seldom moved their bodies; all unrest was concentrated in the soul.

The air-ship service was a relic from the former age. It was kept up, because it was easier to keep it up than to stop it or to diminish it, but it now far exceeded the wants of the population. Vessel after vessel would rise from the vomitories of Rye or of Christchurch[4] (I use the antique names), would sail into the crowded sky, and would draw up at the wharves of the south—empty. So nicely adjusted was the system, so independent of meteorology, that the sky, whether calm or cloudy, resembled a vast kaleidoscope whereon the same patterns periodically recurred. The ship on which Vashti sailed started now at sunset, now at dawn. But always, as it passed above Rheims, it would neighbour the ship that served between Helsingfors and the Brazils, and, every third time it surmounted the Alps, the

fleet of Palermo[5] would cross its track behind. Night and day, wind and storm, tide and earthquake, impeded man no longer. He had harnessed Leviathan.[6] All the old literature, with its praise of Nature, and its fear of Nature, rang false as the prattle of a child.

Yet as Vashti saw the vast flank of the ship, stained with exposure to the outer air, her horror of direct experience returned. It was not quite like the air-ship in the cinematophote. For one thing it smelt—not strongly or unpleasantly, but it did smell, and with her eyes shut she should have known that a new thing was close to her. Then she had to walk to it from the lift, had to submit to glances from the other passengers. The man in front dropped his Book—no great matter, but it disquieted them all. In the rooms, if the Book was dropped, the floor raised it mechanically, but the gangway to the air-ship was not so prepared, and the sacred volume lay motionless. They stopped—the thing was unforeseen—and the man, instead of picking up his property, felt the muscles of his arm to see how they had failed him. Then some one actually said with direct utterance: "We shall be late"—and they trooped on board, Vashti treading on the pages as she did so.

Inside, her anxiety increased. The arrangements were old-fashioned and rough. There was even a female attendant, to whom she would have to announce her wants during the voyage. Of course a revolving platform ran the length of the boat, but she was expected to walk from it to her cabin. Some cabins were better than others, and she did not get the best. She thought the attendant had been unfair, and spasms of rage shook her. The glass valves had closed, she could not go back. She saw, at the end of the vestibule, the lift in which she had ascended going quietly up and down, empty. Beneath those corridors of shining tiles were rooms, tier below tier, reaching far into the earth, and in each room there sat a human being, eating, or sleeping, or producing ideas. And buried deep in the hive was her own room. Vashti was afraid.

"O Machine! O Machine!" she murmured, and caressed her Book, and was comforted.

Then the sides of the vestibule seemed to melt together, as do the passages that we see in dreams, the lift vanished, the Book that had been dropped slid to the left and vanished, polished tiles rushed by like a stream of water, there was a slight jar, and the air-ship, issuing from its tunnel, soared above the waters of a tropical ocean.

It was night. For a moment she saw the coast of Sumatra[7] edged by the phosphorescence of waves, and crowned by lighthouses, still sending forth their disregarded beams. These also vanished, and only the stars distracted her. They were not motionless, but swayed to and fro above her head, thronging out of one skylight into another, as if the universe and not the air-ship was careening. And, as often happens on clear nights, they seemed now to be in perspective, now on a plane; now piled tier beyond tier into the infinite heavens, now concealing infinity, a roof limiting for ever the visions of men. In either case they seemed intolerable. "Are we to travel in the dark?" called the passengers angrily, and the attendant, who had been careless, generated the light, and pulled down the blinds of pliable metal. When the air-ships had been built, the desire to look direct at things still lingered in the world. Hence the extraordinary number of skylights and windows, and the proportionate discomfort to those who were civilized and refined. Even in Vashti's cabin one star peeped through a flaw in the blind, and after a few hours' uneasy slumber, she was disturbed by an unfamiliar glow, which was the dawn.

Quick as the ship had sped westwards, the earth had rolled eastwards quicker still, and had dragged back Vashti and her companions towards the sun. Science could prolong the night, but only for a little, and those high hopes of neutralizing the earth's diurnal revolution[8] had passed, together with hopes that were possibly higher. To "keep pace with the sun," or even to outstrip it, had been the aim of the civilization preceding this. Racing aeroplanes had been built for the purpose, capable of enormous speed, and steered by the greatest intellects of the epoch. Round the globe they went, round and round, westward, westward, round and round, amidst humanity's applause. In vain. The globe went

eastward quicker still, horrible accidents occurred, and the Committee of the Machine, at the time rising into prominence, declared the pursuit illegal, unmechanical, and punishable by Homelessness.

Of Homelessness more will be said later.

Doubtless the Committee was right. Yet the attempt to "defeat the sun" aroused the last common interest that our race experienced about the heavenly bodies, or indeed about anything. It was the last time that men were compacted by thinking of a power outside the world. The sun had conquered, yet it was the end of his spiritual dominion. Dawn, midday, twilight, the zodiacal path, touched neither men's lives nor their hearts, and science retreated into the ground, to concentrate herself upon problems that she was certain of solving.

So when Vashti found her cabin invaded by a rosy finger of light, she was annoyed, and tried to adjust the blind. But the blind flew up altogether, and she saw through the skylight small pink clouds, swaying against a background of blue, and as the sun crept higher, its radiance entered direct, brimming down the wall, like a golden sea. It rose and fell with the air-ship's motion, just as waves rise and fall, but it advanced steadily, as a tide advances. Unless she was careful, it would strike her face. A spasm of horror shook her and she rang for the attendant. The attendant too was horrified, but she could do nothing; it was not her place to mend the blind. She could only suggest that the lady should change her cabin, which she accordingly prepared to do.

People were almost exactly alike all over the world, but the attendant of the air-ship, perhaps owing to her exceptional duties, had grown a little out of the common. She had often to address passengers with direct speech, and this had given her a certain roughness and originality of manner. When Vashti swerved away from the sunbeams with a cry, she behaved barbarically—she put out her hand to steady her.

"How dare you!" exclaimed the passenger. "You forget yourself!"

The woman was confused, and apologized for not having let her fall. People never touched one another. The custom had become obsolete, owing to the Machine.

"Where are we now?" asked Vashti haughtily.

"We are over Asia," said the attendant, anxious to be polite.

"Asia?"

"You must excuse my common way of speaking. I have got into the habit of calling places over which I pass by their unmechanical names."

"Oh, I remember Asia. The Mongols came from it."

"Beneath us, in the open air, stood a city that was once called Simla."[9]

"Have you ever heard of the Mongols and of the Brisbane school?"

"No."

"Brisbane also stood in the open air."

"Those mountains to the right—let me show you them." She pushed back a metal blind. The main chain of the Himalayas was revealed. "They were once called the Roof of the World, those mountains."

"What a foolish name!"

"You must remember that, before the dawn of civilization, they seemed to be an impenetrable wall that touched the stars. It was supposed that no one but the gods could exist above their summits. How we have advanced, thanks to the Machine!"

"How we have advanced, thanks to the Machine!" said Vashti.

"How we have advanced, thanks to the Machine!" echoed the passenger who had dropped his Book the night before, and who was standing in the passage.

"And that white stuff in the cracks?—what is it?"

"I have forgotten its name."

"Cover the window, please. These mountains give me no ideas."

The northern aspect of the Himalayas was in deep shadow: on the Indian slope the sun had just prevailed. The forests had been

destroyed during the literature epoch for the purpose of making newspaper-pulp, but the snows were awakening to their morning glory, and clouds still hung on the breasts of Kinchinjunga.[1] In the plain were seen the ruins of cities, with diminished rivers creeping by their walls, and by the sides of these were sometimes the signs of vomitories, marking the cities of to-day. Over the whole prospect air-ships rushed, crossing and intercrossing with incredible *aplomb,* and rising nonchalantly when they desired to escape the perturbations of the lower atmosphere and to traverse the Roof of the World.

"We have indeed advanced, thanks to the Machine," repeated the attendant, and hid the Himalayas behind a metal blind.

The day dragged wearily forward. The passengers sat each in his cabin, avoiding one another with an almost physical repulsion and longing to be once more under the surface of the earth. There were eight or ten of them, mostly young males, sent out from the public nurseries to inhabit the rooms of those who had died in various parts of the earth. The man who had dropped his Book was on the homeward journey. He had been sent to Sumatra for the purpose of propagating the race. Vashti alone was travelling by her private will.

At midday she took a second glance at the earth. The air-ship was crossing another range of mountains, but she could see little, owing to clouds. Masses of black rock hovered below her, and merged indistinctly into grey. Their shapes were fantastic; one of them resembled a prostrate man.

"No ideas here," murmured Vashti, and hid the Caucasus[2] behind a metal blind.

In the evening she looked again. They were crossing a golden sea, in which lay many small islands and one peninsula.

She repeated, "No ideas here," and hid Greece behind a metal blind.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A replacement for the telegraph; large cities like New York experimented with sending messages propelled by compressed air through a series of underground tubes.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The constellation of Orion.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: City in the United Kingdom and birthplace of Charles Darwin. “Pekin”: historical English spelling of the city of Beijing, China.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: City in New Zealand. “Rye”: city in New York, United States.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: City in Italy. “Rheims”: city in France. “Helsingfors”: Swedish name for Helsinki, Finland.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In theology and mythology, a monstrous sea serpent representing chaos; later used as a term for whales or sea monsters in general.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Island in Indonesia.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A planet turning on its axis, with one full turn being a full revolution, or one day.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Former name of Shimla, city in India near the Himalayan mountain range.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Alternate spelling of *Kangchenjunga*, the third-highest mountain in the world; it was thought to be the highest mountain until 1852.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.Return to reference 2

Part II. The Mending Apparatus

By a vestibule, by a lift, by a tubular railway, by a platform, by a sliding door—by reversing all the steps of her departure did Vashti arrive at her son's room, which exactly resembled her own. She might well declare that the visit was superfluous. The buttons, the knobs, the reading-desk with the Book, the temperature, the atmosphere, the illumination—all were exactly the same. And if Kuno himself, flesh of her flesh, stood close beside her at last, what profit was there in that? She was too well-bred to shake him by the hand.

Averting her eyes, she spoke as follows:

"Here I am. I have had the most terrible journey and greatly retarded the development of my soul. It is not worth it, Kuno, it is not worth it. My time is too precious. The sunlight almost touched me, and I have met with the rudest people. I can only stop a few minutes. Say what you want to say, and then I must return."

"I have been threatened with Homelessness," said Kuno.

She looked at him now.

"I have been threatened with Homelessness, and I could not tell you such a thing through the Machine."

Homelessness means death. The victim is exposed to the air, which kills him.

"I have been outside since I spoke to you last. The tremendous thing has happened, and they have discovered me."

"But why shouldn't you go outside?" she exclaimed. "It is perfectly legal, perfectly mechanical, to visit the surface of the earth. I have lately been to a lecture on the sea; there is no objection to that; one simply summons a respirator and gets an Egression-permit. It is not the kind of thing that spiritually-minded people do, and I begged you not to do it, but there is no legal objection to it."

"I did not get an Egression-permit."

"Then how did you get out?"

"I found out a way of my own."

The phrase conveyed no meaning to her, and he had to repeat it.

"A way of your own?" she whispered. "But that would be wrong."

"Why?"

The question shocked her beyond measure.

"You are beginning to worship the Machine," he said coldly. "You think it irreligious of me to have found out a way of my own. It was just what the Committee thought, when they threatened me with Homelessness."

At this she grew angry. "I worship nothing!" she cried. "I am most advanced. I don't think you irreligious, for there is no such thing as religion left. All the fear and the superstition that existed once have been destroyed by the Machine. I only meant that to find out a way of your own was——Besides, there is no new way out."

"So it is always supposed."

"Except through the vomitories, for which one must have an Egression-permit, it is impossible to get out. The Book says so."

"Well, the Book's wrong, for I have been out on my feet."

For Kuno was possessed of a certain physical strength.

By these days it was a demerit to be muscular. Each infant was examined at birth, and all who promised undue strength were destroyed. Humanitarians may protest, but it would have been no true kindness to let an athlete live; he would never have been happy in that state of life to which the Machine had called him; he would have yearned for trees to climb, rivers to bathe in, meadows and hills against which he might measure his body. Man must be adapted to his surroundings, must he not? In the dawn of the world our weakly must be exposed on Mount Taygetus[3] in its twilight our strong will suffer euthanasia, that the Machine may progress, that the Machine may progress, that the Machine may progress eternally.

"You know that we have lost the sense of space. We say 'space is annihilated,' but we have annihilated not space, but the sense thereof. We have lost a part of ourselves. I determined to recover it, and I began by walking up and down the platform of the railway outside my room. Up and down, until I was tired, and so did recapture the meaning of 'Near' and 'Far.' 'Near' is a place to which I can get quickly *on my feet,* not a place to which the train or the air-

ship will take me quickly. 'Far' is a place to which I cannot get quickly on my feet; the vomitory is 'far,' though I could be there in thirty-eight seconds by summoning the train. Man is the measure. That was my first lesson. Man's feet are the measure for distance, his hands are the measure for ownership, his body is the measure for all that is lovable and desirable and strong. Then I went further: it was then that I called to you for the first time, and you would not come.

"This city, as you know, is built deep beneath the surface of the earth, with only the vomitories protruding. Having paced the platform outside my own room, I took the lift to the next platform and paced that also, and so with each in turn, until I came to the topmost, above which begins the earth. All the platforms were exactly alike, and all that I gained by visiting them was to develop my sense of space and my muscles. I think I should have been content with this—it is not a little thing,—but as I walked and brooded, it occurred to me that our cities had been built in the days when men still breathed the outer air, and that there had been ventilation shafts for the workmen. I could think of nothing but these ventilation shafts. Had they been destroyed by all the food-tubes and medicine-tubes and music-tubes that the Machine has evolved lately? Or did traces of them remain? One thing was certain. If I came upon them anywhere, it would be in the railway-tunnels of the topmost story. Everywhere else, all space was accounted for.

"I am telling my story quickly, but don't think that I was not a coward or that your answers never depressed me. It is not the proper thing, it is not mechanical, it is not decent to walk along a railway-tunnel. I did not fear that I might tread upon a live rail and be killed. I feared something far more intangible—doing what was not contemplated by the Machine. Then I said to myself, 'Man is the measure,' and I went, and after many visits I found an opening.

"The tunnels, of course, were lighted. Everything is light, artificial light; darkness is the exception. So when I saw a black gap in the tiles, I knew that it was an exception, and rejoiced. I put in my arm —I could put in no more at first—and waved it round and round in

ecstasy. I loosened another tile, and put in my head, and shouted into the darkness: 'I am coming, I shall do it yet,' and my voice reverberated down endless passages. I seemed to hear the spirits of those dead workmen who had returned each evening to the starlight and to their wives, and all the generations who had lived in the open air called back to me, 'You will do it yet, you are coming.' "

He paused, and, absurd as he was, his last words moved her. For Kuno had lately asked to be a father, and his request had been refused by the Committee. His was not a type that the Machine desired to hand on.

"Then a train passed. It brushed by me, but I thrust my head and arms into the hole. I had done enough for one day, so I crawled back to the platform, went down in the lift, and summoned my bed. Ah what dreams! And again I called you, and again you refused."

She shook her head and said:

"Don't. Don't talk of these terrible things. You make me miserable. You are throwing civilization away."

"But I had got back the sense of space and a man cannot rest then. I determined to get in at the hole and climb the shaft. And so I exercised my arms. Day after day I went through ridiculous movements, until my flesh ached, and I could hang by my hands and hold the pillow of my bed outstretched for many minutes. Then I summoned a respirator, and started.

"It was easy at first. The mortar had somehow rotted, and I soon pushed some more tiles in, and clambered after them into the darkness, and the spirits of the dead comforted me. I don't know what I mean by that. I just say what I felt. I felt, for the first time, that a protest had been lodged against corruption, and that even as the dead were comforting me, so I was comforting the unborn. I felt that humanity existed, and that it existed without clothes. How can I possibly explain this? It was naked, humanity seemed naked, and all these tubes and buttons and machineries neither came into the world with us, nor will they follow us out, nor do they matter supremely while we are here. Had I been strong, I would have torn off every garment I had, and gone out into the outer air

unswaddled. But this is not for me, nor perhaps for my generation. I climbed with my respirator and my hygienic clothes and my dietetic tabloids![4] Better thus than not at all.

"There was a ladder, made of some primæval metal. The light from the railway fell upon its lowest rungs, and I saw that it led straight upwards out of the rubble at the bottom of the shaft. Perhaps our ancestors ran up and down it a dozen times daily, in their building. As I climbed, the rough edges cut through my gloves so that my hands bled. The light helped me for a little, and then came darkness and, worse still, silence which pierced my ears like a sword. The Machine hums! Did you know that? Its hum penetrates our blood, and may even guide our thoughts. Who knows! I was getting beyond its power. Then I thought: 'This silence means that I am doing wrong.' But I heard voices in the silence, and again they strengthened me." He laughed. "I had need of them. The next moment I cracked my head against something."

She sighed.

"I had reached one of those pneumatic stoppers that defend us from the outer air. You may have noticed them on the air-ship. Pitch dark, my feet on the rungs of an invisible ladder, my hands cut; I cannot explain how I lived through this part, but the voices still comforted me, and I felt for fastenings. The stopper, I suppose, was about eight feet across. I passed my hand over it as far as I could reach. It was perfectly smooth. I felt it almost to the centre. Not quite to the centre, for my arm was too short. Then the voice said: 'Jump. It is worth it. There may be a handle in the centre, and you may catch hold of it and so come to us your own way. And if there is no handle, so that you may fall and are dashed to pieces—it is still worth it: you will still come to us your own way.' So I jumped. There was a handle, and——"

He paused. Tears gathered in his mother's eyes. She knew that he was fated. If he did not die to-day he would die to-morrow. There was not room for such a person in the world. And with her pity disgust mingled. She was ashamed at having borne such a son, she who had always been so respectable and so full of ideas. Was he

really the little boy to whom she had taught the use of his stops and buttons, and to whom she had given his first lessons in the Book? The very hair that disfigured his lip showed that he was reverting to some savage type. On atavism the Machine can have no mercy.

"There was a handle, and I did catch it. I hung tranced over the darkness and heard the hum of these workings as the last whisper in a dying dream. All the things I had cared about and all the people I had spoken to through tubes appeared infinitely little. Meanwhile the handle revolved. My weight had set something in motion and I span slowly, and then——

"I cannot describe it. I was lying with my face to the sunshine. Blood poured from my nose and ears and I heard a tremendous roaring. The stopper, with me clinging to it, had simply been blown out of the earth, and the air that we make down here was escaping through the vent into the air above. It burst up like a fountain. I crawled back to it—for the upper air hurts—and, as it were, I took great sips from the edge. My respirator had flown goodness knows where, my clothes were torn. I just lay with my lips close to the hole, and I sipped until the bleeding stopped. You can imagine nothing so curious. This hollow in the grass—I will speak of it in a minute,—the sun shining into it, not brilliantly but through marbled clouds,—the peace, the nonchalance, the sense of space, and, brushing my cheek, the roaring fountain of our artificial air! Soon I spied my respirator, bobbing up and down in the current high above my head, and higher still were many air-ships. But no one ever looks out of air-ships, and in any case they could not have picked me up. There I was, stranded. The sun shone a little way down the shaft, and revealed the topmost rung of the ladder, but it was hopeless trying to reach it. I should either have been tossed up again by the escape, or else have fallen in, and died. I could only lie on the grass, sipping and sipping, and from time to time glancing around me.

"I knew that I was in Wessex,[5] for I had taken care to go to a lecture on the subject before starting. Wessex lies above the room in which we are talking now. It was once an important state. Its kings held all the southern coast from the Andredswald to Cornwall, while

the Wansdyke[6] protected them on the north, running over the high ground. The lecturer was only concerned with the rise of Wessex, so I do not know how long it remained an international power, nor would the knowledge have assisted me. To tell the truth I could do nothing but laugh, during this part. There was I, with a pneumatic stopper by my side and a respirator bobbing over my head, imprisoned, all three of us, in a grass-grown hollow that was edged with fern."

Then he grew grave again.

"Lucky for me that it was a hollow. For the air began to fall back into it and to fill it as water fills a bowl. I could crawl about. Presently I stood. I breathed a mixture, in which the air that hurts predominated whenever I tried to climb the sides. This was not so bad. I had not lost my tabloids and remained ridiculously cheerful, and as for the Machine, I forgot about it altogether. My one aim now was to get to the top, where the ferns were, and to view whatever objects lay beyond.

"I rushed the slope. The new air was still too bitter for me and I came rolling back, after a momentary vision of something grey. The sun grew very feeble, and I remembered that he was in Scorpio[7]—I had been to a lecture on that too. If the sun is in Scorpio and you are in Wessex, it means that you must be as quick as you can, or it will get too dark. (This is the first bit of useful information I have ever got from a lecture, and I expect it will be the last.) It made me try frantically to breathe the new air, and to advance as far as I dared out of my pond. The hollow filled so slowly. At times I thought that the fountain played with less vigour. My respirator seemed to dance nearer the earth; the roar was decreasing."

He broke off.

"I don't think this is interesting you. The rest will interest you even less. There are no ideas in it, and I wish that I had not troubled you to come. We are too different, mother."

She told him to continue.

"It was evening before I climbed the bank. The sun had very nearly slipped out of the sky by this time, and I could not get a good

view. You, who have just crossed the Roof of the World, will not want to hear an account of the little hills that I saw—low colourless hills. But to me they were living and the turf that covered them was a skin, under which their muscles rippled, and I felt that those hills had called with incalculable force to men in the past, and that men had loved them. Now they sleep—perhaps for ever. They commune with humanity in dreams. Happy the man, happy the woman, who awakes the hills of Wessex. For though they sleep, they will never die."

His voice rose passionately.

"Cannot you see, cannot all your lecturers see, that it is we that are dying, and that down here the only thing that really lives is the Machine? We created the Machine, to do our will, but we cannot make it do our will now. It has robbed us of the sense of space and of the sense of touch, it has blurred every human relation and narrowed down love to a carnal act, it has paralysed our bodies and our wills, and now it compels us to worship it. The Machine develops—but not on our lines. The Machine proceeds—but not to our goal. We only exist as the blood corpuscles that course through its arteries, and if it could work without us, it would let us die. Oh, I have no remedy—or, at least, only one—to tell men again and again that I have seen the hills of Wessex as Ælfrid[8] saw them when he overthrew the Danes.

"So the sun set. I forgot to mention that a belt of mist lay between my hill and other hills, and that it was the colour of pearl."

He broke off for the second time.

"Go on," said his mother wearily.

He shook his head.

"Go on. Nothing that you say can distress me now. I am hardened."

"I had meant to tell you the rest, but I cannot: I know that I cannot: good-bye."

Vashti stood irresolute. All her nerves were tingling with his blasphemies. But she was also inquisitive.

"This is unfair," she complained. "You have called me across the world to hear your story, and hear it I will. Tell me—as briefly as possible, for this is a disastrous waste of time—tell me how you returned to civilization."

"Oh—that!" he said, starting. "You would like to hear about civilization. Certainly. Had I got to where my respirator fell down?"

"No—but I understand everything now. You put on your respirator, and managed to walk along the surface of the earth to a vomitory, and there your conduct was reported to the Central Committee."

"By no means."

He passed his hand over his forehead, as if dispelling some strong impression. Then, resuming his narrative, he warmed to it again.

"My respirator fell about sunset. I had mentioned that the fountain seemed feebler, had I not?"

"Yes."

"About sunset, it let the respirator fall. As I said, I had entirely forgotten about the Machine, and I paid no great attention at the time, being occupied with other things. I had my pool of air, into which I could dip when the outer keenness became intolerable, and which would possibly remain for days, provided that no wind sprang up to disperse it. Not until it was too late did I realize what the stoppage of the escape implied. You see—the gap in the tunnel had been mended; the Mending Apparatus; the Mending Apparatus, was after me.

"One other warning I had, but I neglected it. The sky at night was clearer than it had been in the day, and the moon, which was about half the sky behind the sun, shone into the dell at moments quite brightly. I was in my usual place—on the boundary between the two atmospheres—when I thought I saw something dark move across the bottom of the dell, and vanish into the shaft. In my folly, I ran down. I bent over and listened, and I thought I heard a faint scraping noise in the depths.

"At this—but it was too late—I took alarm. I determined to put on my respirator and to walk right out of the dell. But my respirator had gone. I knew exactly where it had fallen—between the stopper and the aperture—and I could even feel the mark that it had made in the turf. It had gone, and I realized that something evil was at work, and I had better escape to the other air, and, if I must die, die running towards the cloud that had been the colour of a pearl. I never started. Out of the shaft—it is too horrible. A worm, a long white worm, had crawled out of the shaft and was gliding over the moonlit grass.

"I screamed. I did everything that I should not have done, I stamped upon the creature instead of flying from it, and it at once curled round the ankle. Then we fought. The worm let me run all over the dell, but edged up my leg as I ran. 'Help!' I cried. (That part is too awful. It belongs to the part that you will never know.) 'Help!' I cried. (Why cannot we suffer in silence?) 'Help!' I cried. Then my feet were wound together, I fell, I was dragged away from the dear ferns and the living hills, and past the great metal stopper (I can tell you this part), and I thought it might save me again if I caught hold of the handle. It also was enwrapped, it also. Oh, the whole dell was full of the things. They were searching it in all directions, they were denuding it, and the white snouts of others peeped out of the hole, ready if needed. Everything that could be moved they brought—brushwood, bundles of fern, everything, and down we all went intertwined into hell. The last things that I saw, ere the stopper closed after us, were certain stars, and I felt that a man of my sort lived in the sky. For I did fight, I fought till the very end, and it was only my head hitting against the ladder that quieted me. I woke up in this room. The worms had vanished. I was surrounded by artificial air, artificial light, artificial peace, and my friends were calling to me down speaking-tubes to know whether I had come across any new ideas lately."

Here his story ended. Discussion of it was impossible, and Vashti turned to go.

"It will end in Homelessness," she said quietly.

"I wish it would," retorted Kuno.

"The Machine has been most merciful."

"I prefer the mercy of God."

"By that superstitious phrase, do you mean that you could live in the outer air?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever seen, round the vomitories, the bones of those who were extruded after the Great Rebellion?"

"Yes."

"They were left where they perished for our edification. A few crawled away, but they perished, too—who can doubt it? And so with the Homeless of our own day. The surface of the earth supports life no longer."

"Indeed."

"Ferns and a little grass may survive, but all higher forms have perished. Has any airship detected them?"

"No."

"Has any lecturer dealt with them?"

"No."

"Then why this obstinacy?"

"Because I have seen them," he exploded.

"Seen *what*?"

"Because I have seen her in the twilight—because she came to my help when I called—because she, too, was entangled by the worms, and, luckier than I, was killed by one of them piercing her throat."

He was mad. Vashti departed, nor, in the troubles that followed, did she ever see his face again.

Endnotes

- Note 3: Highest mountain of the Taygetus mountain range in Greece.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Medicine sold in tablets.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Term for a region in southern Britain that was previously a medieval kingdom.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Early medieval embankment and ditch used for defensive purposes. “Andredswald”: Saxon word for the Andred forest. “Cornwall”: historic kingdom that bordered Wessex.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Astrological zodiac sign. In the common Western zodiac, the sun is in this region of the sky from late October to late November, when the days are shorter.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Ninth-century king of Wessex who defended the region against Danish invaders.Return to reference 8

Part III. The Homeless

During the years that followed Kuno's escapade, two important developments took place in the Machine. On the surface they were revolutionary, but in either case men's minds had been prepared beforehand, and they did but express tendencies that were latent already.

The first of these was the abolition of respirators.

Advanced thinkers, like Vashti, had always held it foolish to visit the surface of the earth. Air-ships might be necessary, but what was the good of going out for mere curiosity and crawling along for a mile or two in a terrestrial motor? The habit was vulgar and perhaps faintly improper: it was unproductive of ideas, and had no connection with the habits that really mattered. So respirators were abolished, and with them, of course, the terrestrial motors, and except for a few lecturers, who complained that they were debarred access to their subject-matter, the development was accepted quietly. Those who still wanted to know what the earth was like had after all only to listen to some gramophone, or to look into some cinematophote. And even the lecturers acquiesced when they found that a lecture on the sea was none the less stimulating when compiled out of other lectures that had already been delivered on the same subject. "Beware of first-hand ideas!" exclaimed one of the most advanced of them. "First-hand ideas do not really exist. They are but the physical impressions produced by love and fear, and on this gross foundation who could erect a philosophy? Let your ideas be second-hand, and if possible tenth-hand, for then they will be far removed from that disturbing element—direct observation. Do not learn anything about this subject of mine—the French Revolution. Learn instead what I think that Enicharmon thought Urizen thought Gutch thought Ho-Yung thought Chi-Bo-Sing thought Lafcadio Hearn thought Carlyle thought Mirabeau said about the French Revolution.[9] Through the medium of these ten great minds, the blood that was shed at Paris and the windows that were broken at Versailles will be clarified to an idea which you may employ most profitably in your

daily lives. But be sure that the intermediates are many and varied, for in history one authority exists to counteract another. Urizen must counteract the scepticism of Ho-Yung and Enicharmon, I must myself counteract the impetuosity of Gutch. You who listen to me are in a better position to judge about the French Revolution than I am. Your descendants will be even in a better position than you, for they will learn what you think I think, and yet another intermediate will be added to the chain. And in time"—his voice rose—"there will come a generation that has got beyond facts, beyond impressions, a generation absolutely colourless, a generation

'seraphically free
From taint of personality,'[1]

which will see the French Revolution not as it happened, nor as they would like it to have happened, but as it would have happened, had it taken place in the days of the Machine."

Tremendous applause greeted this lecture, which did but voice a feeling already latent in the minds of men—a feeling that terrestrial facts must be ignored, and that the abolition of respirators was a positive gain. It was even suggested that air-ships should be abolished too. This was not done, because air-ships had somehow worked themselves into the Machine's system. But year by year they were used less, and mentioned less by thoughtful men.

The second great development was the reestablishment of religion.

This, too, had been voiced in the celebrated lecture. No one could mistake the reverent tone in which the peroration had concluded, and it awakened a responsive echo in the heart of each. Those who had long worshipped silently, now began to talk. They described the strange feeling of peace that came over them when they handled the Book of the Machine, the pleasure that it was to repeat certain numerals out of it, however little meaning those numerals conveyed to the outward ear, the ecstasy of touching a

button, however unimportant, or of ringing an electric bell, however superfluously.

"The Machine," they exclaimed, "feeds us and clothes us and houses us; through it we speak to one another, through it we see one another, in it we have our being. The Machine is the friend of ideas and the enemy of superstition: the Machine is omnipotent, eternal; blessed is the Machine." And before long this allocution was printed on the first page of the Book, and in subsequent editions the ritual swelled into a complicated system of praise and prayer. The word "religion" was sedulously avoided, and in theory the Machine was still the creation and the implement of man. But in practice all, save a few retrogrades, worshipped it as divine. Nor was it worshipped in unity. One believer would be chiefly impressed by the blue optic plates, through which he saw other believers; another by the mending apparatus, which sinful Kuno had compared to worms; another by the lifts, another by the Book. And each would pray to this or to that, and ask it to intercede for him with the Machine as a whole. Persecution—that also was present. It did not break out, for reasons that will be set forward shortly. But it was latent, and all who did not accept the minimum known as "undenominational Mechanism" lived in danger of Homelessness, which means death, as we know.

To attribute these two great developments to the Central Committee, is to take a very narrow view of civilization. The Central Committee announced the developments, it is true, but they were no more the cause of them than were the kings of the imperialistic period the cause of war. Rather did they yield to some invincible pressure, which came no one knew whither, and which, when gratified, was succeeded by some new pressure equally invincible. To such a state of affairs it is convenient to give the name of progress. No one confessed the Machine was out of hand. Year by year it was served with increased efficiency and decreased intelligence. The better a man knew his own duties upon it, the less he understood the duties of his neighbour, and in all the world there was not one who understood the monster as a whole. Those master

brains had perished. They had left full directions, it is true, and their successors had each of them mastered a portion of those directions. But Humanity, in its desire for comfort, had over-reached itself. It had exploited the riches of nature too far. Quietly and complacently, it was sinking into decadence, and progress had come to mean the progress of the Machine.

As for Vashti, her life went peacefully forward until the final disaster. She made her room dark and slept; she awoke and made the room light. She lectured and attended lectures. She exchanged ideas with her innumerable friends and believed she was growing more spiritual. At times a friend was granted Euthanasia, and left his or her room for the homelessness that is beyond all human conception. Vashti did not much mind. After an unsuccessful lecture, she would sometimes ask for Euthanasia herself. But the death-rate was not permitted to exceed the birth-rate, and the Machine had hitherto refused it to her.

The troubles began quietly, long before she was conscious of them.

One day she was astonished at receiving a message from her son. They never communicated, having nothing in common, and she had only heard indirectly that he was still alive, and had been transferred from the northern hemisphere, where he had behaved so mischievously, to the southern—indeed, to a room not far from her own.

"Does he want me to visit him?" she thought. "Never again, never. And I have not the time."

No, it was madness of another kind.

He refused to visualize his face upon the blue plate, and speaking out of the darkness with solemnity said:

"The Machine stops."

"What do you say?"

"The Machine is stopping, I know it, I know the signs."

She burst into a peal of laughter. He heard her and was angry, and they spoke no more.

"Can you imagine anything more absurd?" she cried to a friend. "A man who was my son believes that the Machine is stopping. It would be impious if it was not mad."

"The Machine is stopping?" her friend replied. "What does that mean? The phrase conveys nothing to me."

"Nor to me."

"He does not refer, I suppose, to the trouble there has been lately with the music?"

"Oh no, of course not. Let us talk about music."

"Have you complained to the authorities?"

"Yes, and they say it wants mending, and referred me to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus. I complained of those curious gasping sighs that disfigure the symphonies of the Brisbane school. They sound like some one in pain. The Committee of the Mending Apparatus say that it shall be remedied shortly."

Obscurely worried, she resumed her life. For one thing, the defect in the music irritated her. For another thing, she could not forget Kuno's speech. If he had known that the music was out of repair—he could not know it, for he detested music—if he had known that it was wrong, "the Machine stops" was exactly the venomous sort of remark he would have made. Of course he had made it at a venture, but the coincidence annoyed her, and she spoke with some petulance to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus.

They replied, as before, that the defect would be set right shortly.

"Shortly! At once!" she retorted. "Why should I be worried by imperfect music? Things are always put right at once. If you do not mend it at once, I shall complain to the Central Committee."

"No personal complaints are received by the Central Committee," the Committee of the Mending Apparatus replied.

"Through whom am I to make my complaint, then?"

"Through us."

"I complain then."

"Your complaint shall be forwarded in its turn."

"Have others complained?"

This question was unmechanical, and the Committee of the Mending Apparatus refused to answer it.

"It is too bad!" she exclaimed to another of her friends. "There never was such an unfortunate woman as myself. I can never be sure of my music now. It gets worse and worse each time I summon it."

"I too have my troubles," the friend replied. "Sometimes my ideas are interrupted by a slight jarring noise."

"What is it?"

"I do not know whether it is inside my head, or inside the wall."

"Complain, in either case."

"I have complained, and my complaint will be forwarded in its turn to the Central Committee."

Time passed, and they resented the defects no longer. The defects had not been remedied, but the human tissues in that latter day had become so subservient, that they readily adapted themselves to every caprice of the Machine. The sigh at the crisis of the Brisbane symphony no longer irritated Vashti; she accepted it as part of the melody. The jarring noise, whether in the head or in the wall, was no longer resented by her friend. And so with the mouldy artificial fruit, so with the bath water that began to stink, so with the defective rhymes that the poetry machine had taken to emit. All were bitterly complained of at first, and then acquiesced in and forgotten. Things went from bad to worse unchallenged.

It was otherwise with the failure of the sleeping apparatus. That was a more serious stoppage. There came a day when over the whole world—in Sumatra, in Wessex, in the innumerable cities of Courland[2] and Brazil—the beds, when summoned by their tired owners, failed to appear. It may seem a ludicrous matter, but from it we may date the collapse of humanity. The Committee responsible for the failure was assailed by complainants, whom it referred, as usual, to the Committee of the Mending Apparatus, who in its turn assured them that their complaints would be forwarded to the

Central Committee. But the discontent grew, for mankind was not yet sufficiently adaptable to do without sleeping.

"Some one is meddling with the Machine——" they began.

"Some one is trying to make himself king, to reintroduce the personal element."

"Punish that man with Homelessness."

"To the rescue! Avenge the Machine! Avenge the Machine!"

"War! Kill the man!"

But the Committee of the Mending Apparatus now came forward, and allayed the panic with well-chosen words. It confessed that the Mending Apparatus was itself in need of repair.

The effect of this frank confession was admirable.

"Of course," said a famous lecturer—he of the French Revolution, who gilded each new decay with splendour—"of course we shall not press our complaints now. The Mending Apparatus has treated us so well in the past that we all sympathize with it, and will wait patiently for its recovery. In its own good time it will resume its duties. Meanwhile let us do without our beds, our tabloids, our other little wants. Such, I feel sure, would be the wish of the Machine."

Thousands of miles away his audience applauded. The Machine still linked them. Under the seas, beneath the roots of the mountains, ran the wires through which they saw and heard, the enormous eyes and ears that were their heritage, and the hum of many workings clothed their thoughts in one garment of subserviency. Only the old and the sick remained ungrateful, for it was rumoured that Euthanasia, too, was out of order, and that pain had reappeared among men.

It became difficult to read. A blight entered the atmosphere and dulled its luminosity. At times Vashti could scarcely see across her room. The air, too, was foul. Loud were the complaints, impotent the remedies, heroic the tone of the lecturer as he cried: "Courage! courage! What matter so long as the Machine goes on? To it the darkness and the light are one." And though things improved again after a time, the old brilliancy was never recaptured, and humanity never recovered from its entrance into twilight. There was an

hysterical talk of "measures," of "provisional dictatorship," and the inhabitants of Sumatra were asked to familiarize themselves with the workings of the central power station, the said power station being situated in France. But for the most part panic reigned, and men spent their strength praying to their Books, tangible proofs of the Machine's omnipotence. There were gradations of terror—at times came rumours of hope—the Mending Apparatus was almost mended—the enemies of the Machine had been got under—new "nerve-centres" were evolving which would do the work even more magnificently than before. But there came a day when, without the slightest warning, without any previous hint of feebleness, the entire communication-system broke down, all over the world, and the world, as they understood it, ended.

Vashti was lecturing at the time and her earlier remarks had been punctuated with applause. As she proceeded the audience became silent, and at the conclusion there was no sound. Somewhat displeased, she called to a friend who was a specialist in sympathy. No sound: doubtless the friend was sleeping. And so with the next friend whom she tried to summon, and so with the next, until she remembered Kuno's cryptic remark, "The Machine stops."

The phrase still conveyed nothing. If Eternity was stopping it would of course be set going shortly.

For example, there was still a little light and air—the atmosphere had improved a few hours previously. There was still the Book, and while there was the Book there was security.

Then she broke down, for with the cessation of activity came an unexpected terror—silence.

She had never known silence, and the coming of it nearly killed her—it did kill many thousands of people outright. Ever since her birth she had been surrounded by the steady hum. It was to the ear what artificial air was to the lungs, and agonizing pains shot across her head. And scarcely knowing what she did, she stumbled forward and pressed the unfamiliar button, the one that opened the door of her cell.

Now the door of the cell worked on a simple hinge of its own. It was not connected with the central power station, dying far away in France. It opened, rousing immoderate hopes in Vashti, for she thought that the Machine had been mended. It opened, and she saw the dim tunnel that curved far away towards freedom. One look, and then she shrank back. For the tunnel was full of people—she was almost the last in that city to have taken alarm.

People at any time repelled her, and these were nightmares from her worst dreams. People were crawling about, people were screaming, whimpering, gasping for breath, touching each other, vanishing in the dark, and ever and anon being pushed off the platform on to the live rail. Some were fighting round the electric bells, trying to summon trains which could not be summoned. Others were yelling for Euthanasia or for respirators, or blaspheming the Machine. Others stood at the doors of their cells fearing, like herself, either to stop in them or to leave them. And behind all the uproar was silence—the silence which is the voice of the earth and of the generations who have gone.

No—it was worse than solitude. She closed the door again and sat down to wait for the end. The disintegration went on, accompanied by horrible cracks and rumbling. The valves that restrained the Medical Apparatus must have been weakened, for it ruptured and hung hideously from the ceiling. The floor heaved and fell and flung her from her chair. A tube oozed towards her serpent fashion. And at last the final horror approached—light began to ebb, and she knew that civilization's long day was closing.

She whirled round, praying to be saved from this, at any rate, kissing the Book, pressing button after button. The uproar outside was increasing, and even penetrated the wall. Slowly the brilliancy of her cell was dimmed, the reflections faded from her metal switches. Now she could not see the reading-stand, now not the Book, though she held it in her hand. Light followed the flight of sound, air was following light, and the original void returned to the cavern from which it had been so long excluded. Vashti continued to whirl, like

the devotees of an earlier religion, screaming, praying, striking at the buttons with bleeding hands.

It was thus that she opened her prison and escaped—escaped in the spirit: at least so it seems to me, ere my meditation closes. That she escapes in the body—I cannot perceive that. She struck, by chance, the switch that released the door, and the rush of foul air on her skin, the loud throbbing whispers in her ears, told her that she was facing the tunnel again, and that tremendous platform on which she had seen men fighting. They were not fighting now. Only the whispers remained, and the little whimpering groans. They were dying by hundreds out in the dark.

She burst into tears.

Tears answered her.

They wept for humanity, those two, not for themselves. They could not bear that this should be the end. Ere silence was completed their hearts were opened, and they knew what had been important on the earth. Man, the flower of all flesh, the noblest of all creatures visible, man who had once made god in his image, and had mirrored his strength on the constellations, beautiful naked man was dying, strangled in the garments that he had woven. Century after century had he toiled, and here was his reward. Truly the garment had seemed heavenly at first, shot with the colours of culture, sewn with the threads of self-denial. And heavenly it had been so long as it was a garment and no more, so long as man could shed it at will and live by the essence that is his soul, and the essence, equally divine, that is his body. The sin against the body—it was for that they wept in chief; the centuries of wrong against the muscles and the nerves, and those five portals by which we can alone apprehend—glozing it over with talk of evolution, until the body was white pap, the home of ideas as colourless, last sloshy stirrings of a spirit that had grasped the stars.

"Where are you?" she sobbed.

His voice in the darkness said, "Here."

"Is there any hope, Kuno?"

"None for us."

"Where are you?"

She crawled towards him over the bodies of the dead. His blood spurted over her hands.

"Quicker," he gasped, "I am dying—but we touch, we talk, not through the Machine."

He kissed her.

"We have come back to our own. We die, but we have recaptured life, as it was in Wessex, when Ælfrid overthrew the Danes. We know what they know outside, they who dwelt in the cloud that is the colour of a pearl."

"But, Kuno, is it true? Are there still men on the surface of the earth? Is this—this tunnel, this poisoned darkness—really not the end?"

He replied:

"I have seen them, spoken to them, loved them. They are hiding in the mist and the ferns until our civilization stops. To-day they are the Homeless—to-morrow——"

"Oh, to-morrow—some fool will start the Machine again, to-morrow."

"Never," said Kuno, "never. Humanity has learnt its lesson."

As he spoke, the whole city was broken like a honeycomb. An air-ship had sailed in through the vomitory into a ruined wharf. It crashed downwards, exploding as it went, rending gallery after gallery with its wings of steel. For a moment they saw the nations of the dead, and, before they joined them, scraps of the untainted sky.

1928

Endnotes

- Note 9:
  Forster seems to be mixing up historical, mythical, and fictional figures in this list. "Enicharmon" may be a misspelling of "Enitharmon," an important female figure in the mythology of William Blake; she is the first female formed after "Urizen,"

another Blakean mythical figure representing reason and law in the poet's prophetic works. "Gutch": likely refers to Mathew Gutch (1776–1861), English journalist who published negative sentiments about the French Revolution. "Ho-Yung" and "Chi-Bo-Sing" are of unknown origin. "Lafcadio Hearn" (1850–1904): Greek-Japanese writer, also named Koizumi Yakumo, who translated many French works into English; well known for interpreting Japanese literature and culture for Western audiences. "Carlyle": Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), historian and author of *The French Revolution: A History*, (1837) an authoritative look at the French Revolution. "Mirabeau": Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, Count of Mirabeau (1749–1791), a French politician espousing moderation and support for a constitutional monarchy in the early stages of the French Revolution. Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Lines from "The Lark Ascending" (1881), a poem by George Meredith that was turned into a musical piece of the same name by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams in 1914.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Region in Latvia.Return to reference 2

VIRGINIA WOOLF
1882–1941

Virginia Woolf was born in London, the daughter of Julia Jackson Duckworth, a member of the Duckworth publishing family, and Leslie (later Sir Leslie) Stephen, the Victorian critic, philosopher, biographer, and scholar. She grew up within a large and talented family, educating herself in her father's magnificent library, meeting in childhood many eminent Victorians, and learning Greek from the essayist and critic Walter Pater's sister. Writing and the intellectual life thus came naturally to her. But her youth was shadowed by suffering: her older half-brother sexually abused her; her mother died in 1895, precipitating the first of her mental breakdowns; a beloved half-sister died in childbirth two years later; her father died of cancer in 1904; and a brother died of typhoid in 1906.

After her father's death she settled with her sister and two brothers in Bloomsbury, the district of London that later became associated with the group among whom she moved. The Bloomsbury Group was an intellectual coterie frequented at various times by the biographer Lytton Strachey, the economist John Maynard Keynes, the art critic Roger Fry, and the novelist E. M. Forster. When her sister, Vanessa, a notable painter, married Clive Bell, an art critic, in 1907, Woolf and her brother Adrian took another house in Bloomsbury, and there they entertained their literary and artistic friends at evening gatherings, where the conversation sparkled. The Bloomsbury Group thrived at the center of the middle-

class and upper-middle-class London intelligentsia. Their intelligence was equaled by their frankness, notably on sexual topics, and the sexual life of Bloomsbury provided ample material for discussion and contributed to Woolf's freedom of thinking about gender relations. The painter Duncan Grant, for example, was at different times the lover of Keynes, Woolf's brother Adrian, and her sister, whose daughter, Angelica, he fathered. Woolf too was bisexual; and thirteen years after her marriage to the journalist and essayist Leonard Woolf, she fell passionately in love with the poet Vita (Victoria) Sackville-West, wife of the bisexual diplomat and author Harold Nicolson. Woolf's relationship with this aristocratic lesbian inspired the most lighthearted and scintillating of her books, *Orlando* (1928), a novel about a transhistorical androgynous protagonist, whose identity shifts from masculine to feminine over centuries.

Underneath Woolf's liveliness and wit—qualities so well known among the Bloomsbury Group—lay psychological tensions created partly by her childhood wounds and partly by her perfectionism, she being her own most exacting critic. The public was unaware until her death that she had been subject to periods of severe depression, particularly after finishing a book. In March 1941 she drowned herself in a river, an act influenced by her dread of World War II (had the Nazis invaded England, she and Leonard would have been arrested by the Gestapo because Leonard was Jewish) and her fear that she was about to lose her mind and become a burden on her husband, who had supported her emotionally and intellectually. (In 1917 the Woolfs had founded the Hogarth Press, which published some of the most interesting literature of their time, including T. S. Eliot's *Poems* [1919], fiction by Maxim Gorky, Katherine Mansfield, E. M. Forster, Mulk Raj Anand, and Ahmed Ali, the English translations of Freud, an anticolonial pamphlet by C. L. R. James, and of course Virginia's novels.)

As a fiction writer Woolf rebelled against what she called the "materialism" of novelists such as her contemporaries Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy, who depicted suffering and social injustice through gritty realism, and she sought to render more

intricately those aspects of consciousness in which she felt the truth of human experience lay. In her essay "Modern Fiction" she defines the task of the novelist as looking within, as conveying the mind receiving "a myriad impressions," as representing the "luminous halo" or "semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end." In her novels she abandoned linear narratives in favor of interior monologues and stream-of-consciousness narration, exploring with great subtlety problems of personal identity and personal relationships as well as the significance of time, change, loss, and memory for human personality. After two conventionally realistic novels, *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919), she developed her own style, a carefully modulated flow that brought into prose fiction something of the rhythms and imagery of lyric poetry. While intensely psychological and interior, her novels also found inspiration and material in the physical realities of the body and in the heavily trafficked and populated streets of London. In *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), a series of sketches, she explored the possibilities of moving between action and contemplation, between retrospection and anticipation, between specific external events and delicate tracings of the flow of consciousness. These technical experiments made possible those later novels in which her characteristic method is fully developed—the elegiac *Jacob's Room* (1922); *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), the first completely successful realization of her style; *To the Lighthouse* (1927), which in part memorializes her parents; *The Waves* (1931), the most experimental and difficult of her novels; and *Between the Acts* (1941), which includes a discontinuous pageant of English history and was published after her death.

Woolf was also a prodigious reviewer and essayist. She began to write criticism in 1905 for the *Times Literary Supplement* and published some five hundred reviews and essays for it and other periodicals, collected in *The Common Reader* (1925) and *The Second Common Reader* (1932); her prose presents itself as suggestive rather than authoritative and has an engaging air of spontaneity. In marked contrast to the formal language of the

lecture hall or philosophical treatise, arenas and forms of learning from which women were historically barred, she writes in an informal, personal, playfully polemical tone, which is implicitly linked to her identity as a female writer. In her essays she is equally concerned with her own craft as a writer and with what it was like to be a quite different person living in a different age. At once more informal and more revealing are the six volumes of her *Letters* (1975–80) and five volumes of her *Diary* (1977–84), which she began to write in 1917. These, with their running commentary on her life and work, resemble a painter's sketchbooks and serve as a reminder that her writings, for all their variety, have the coherence found only in the work of the greatest literary artists.

Over the course of her career, Woolf grew increasingly concerned with the position of women, especially professional women, and the constrictions under which they suffered. She wrote several cogent essays on the subject, and women's social subjection also figures in her fiction. Her novel *The Years* (1937) was originally to have reflections on the position of women interspersed amid the action, but she later decided to publish them as a separate book, *Three Guineas* (1938), which also includes an incisive meditation on war (see the excerpt in "Voices from World War II," later in this volume). In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), an essay based on two lectures on "Women and Fiction" delivered to female students at Cambridge, Woolf discusses various male institutions that historically either were denied to or oppressed women. Refused access to education, wealth, and property ownership, women such as Shakespeare's imaginary sister lacked the conditions necessary to write and were unable to develop a literature of their own. Woolf advocated the creation of a literature that would include women's experience and ways of thinking, but instead of encouraging an exclusively female perspective, she proposed literature that would be "androgynous in mind" and resonate equally with men and women.

The Mark on the Wall

Perhaps it was the middle of January in the present year that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember what one saw. So now I think of the fire; the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the winter time, and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock. Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps. The mark was a small round mark, black upon the white wall, about six or seven inches above the mantelpiece.

How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it. . . . If that mark was made by a nail, it can't have been for a picture, it must have been for a miniature—the miniature of a lady with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks, and lips like red carnations. A fraud of course, for the people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way—an old picture for an old room. That is the sort of people they were—very interesting people, and I think of them so often, in such queer places, because one will never see them again, never know what happened next. They wanted to leave this house because they wanted to change their style of furniture, so he said, and he was in process of saying that in his opinion art should have ideas behind it when we were torn asunder, as one is torn from the old lady about to pour out tea

and the young man about to hit the tennis ball in the back garden of the suburban villa as one rushes past in the train.

But for that mark, I'm not sure about it; I don't believe it was made by a nail after all; it's too big, too round, for that. I might get up, but if I got up and looked at it, ten to one I shouldn't be able to say for certain; because once a thing's done, no one ever knows how it happened. Oh! dear me, the mystery of life; the inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of humanity! To show how very little control of our possessions we have—what an accidental affair this living is after all our civilisation—let me just count over a few of the things lost in one lifetime, beginning, for that seems always the most mysterious of losses—what cat would gnaw, what rat would nibble—three pale blue canisters of book-binding tools? Then there were the bird cages, the iron hoops, the steel skates, the Queen Anne coal-scuttle, the bagatelle[1] board, the hand organ—all gone, and jewels, too. Opals and emeralds, they lie about the roots of turnips. What a scraping paring affair it is to be sure! The wonder is that I've any clothes on my back, that I sit surrounded by solid furniture at this moment. Why, if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube[2] at fifty miles an hour—landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked! Tumbling head over heels in the asphodel meadows[3] like brown paper parcels pitched down a shoot in the post office! With one's hair flying back like the tail of a race-horse. Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so haphazard. . . .

But after life. The slow pulling down of thick green stalks so that the cup of the flower, as it turns over, deluges one with purple and red light. Why, after all, should one not be born there as one is born here, helpless, speechless, unable to focus one's eyesight, groping at the roots of the grass, at the toes of the Giants? As for saying which are trees, and which are men and women, or whether there are such things, that one won't be in a condition to do for fifty years or so. There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, rose-shaped blots of an

indistinct colour—dim pinks and blues—which will, as time goes on, become more definite, become—I don't know what. . . .

And yet that mark on the wall is not a hole at all. It may even be caused by some round black substance, such as a small rose leaf, left over from the summer, and I, not being a very vigilant housekeeper—look at the dust on the mantelpiece, for example, the dust which, so they say, buried Troy[4] three times over, only fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation, as one can believe.

The tree outside the window taps very gently on the pane. . . . I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciously, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes . . . Shakespeare. . . . Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat himself solidly in an arm-chair, and looked into the fire, so— A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leant his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door—for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening— But how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all. I wish I could hit upon a pleasant track of thought, a track indirectly reflecting credit upon myself, for those are the pleasantest thoughts, and very frequent even in the minds of modest mouse-coloured people, who believe genuinely that they dislike to hear their own praises. They are not thoughts directly praising oneself; that is the beauty of them; they are thoughts like this:

"And then I came into the room. They were discussing botany. I said how I'd seen a flower growing on a dust heap on the site of an old house in Kingsway.[5] The seed, I said, must have been sown in the reign of Charles the First. What flowers grew in the reign of Charles the First?" I asked—(but I don't remember the answer). Tall flowers with purple tassels to them perhaps. And so it goes on. All the time I'm dressing up the figure of myself in my own mind, lovingly, stealthily, not openly adoring it, for if I did that, I should

catch myself out, and stretch my hand at once for a book in self-protection. Indeed, it is curious how instinctively one protects the image of oneself from idolatry or any other handling that could make it ridiculous, or too unlike the original to be believed in any longer. Or is it not so very curious after all? It is a matter of great importance. Suppose the looking-glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure with the green of forest depths all about it is there no longer, but only that shell of a person which is seen by other people—what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived in. As we face each other in omnibuses and underground railways we are looking into the mirror; that accounts for the vagueness, the gleam of glassiness, in our eyes. And the novelists in future will realise more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted, as the Greeks did and Shakespeare perhaps—but these generalisations are very worthless. The military sound of the word is enough. It recalls leading articles, cabinet ministers—a whole class of things indeed which, as a child, one thought the thing itself, the standard thing, the real thing, from which one could not depart save at the risk of nameless damnation. Generalisations bring back somehow Sunday in London, Sunday afternoon walks, Sunday luncheons, and also ways of speaking of the dead, clothes, and habits—like the habit of sitting all together in one room until a certain hour, although nobody liked it. There was a rule for everything. The rule for tablecloths at that particular period was that they should be made of tapestry with little yellow compartments marked upon them, such as you may see in photographs of the carpets in the corridors of the royal palaces. Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths. How shocking, and yet how wonderful it was to discover that these real things, Sunday luncheons, Sunday walks, country houses, and tablecloths were not entirely real, were indeed half phantoms, and the damnation which visited the disbeliever in them was only a

sense of illegitimate freedom. What now takes the place of those things I wonder, those real standard things? Men perhaps, should you be a woman; the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which establishes Whitaker's Table of Precedency,[6] which has become, I suppose, since the war, half a phantom to many men and women, which soon, one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms go, the mahogany sideboards and the Landseer[7] prints, Gods and Devils, Hell and so forth, leaving us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom —if freedom exists. . . .

In certain lights that mark on the wall seems actually to project from the wall. Nor is it entirely circular. I cannot be sure, but it seems to cast a perceptible shadow, suggesting that if I ran my finger down that strip of the wall it would, at a certain point, mount and descend a small tumulus, a smooth tumulus like those barrows on the South Downs[8] which are, they say, either tombs or camps. Of the two I should prefer them to be tombs, desiring melancholy like most English people, and finding it natural at the end of a walk to think of the bones stretched beneath the turf. . . . There must be some book about it. Some antiquary must have dug up those bones and given them a name. . . . What sort of a man is an antiquary, I wonder? Retired Colonels for the most part, I daresay, leading parties of aged labourers to the top here, examining clods of earth and stone, and getting into correspondence with the neighbouring clergy, which, being opened at breakfast time, gives them a feeling of importance, and the comparison of arrow-heads necessitates cross-country journeys to the country towns, an agreeable necessity both to them and to their elderly wives, who wish to make plum jam or to clean out the study, and have every reason for keeping that great question of the camp or the tomb in perpetual suspension, while the Colonel himself feels agreeably philosophic in accumulating evidence on both sides of the question. It is true that he does finally incline to believe in the c and, being opposed, indites a pamphlet which he is about to read at the quarterly meeting of the local society when a stroke lays him low, and his last conscious thoughts

are not of wife or child, but of the camp and that arrowhead there, which is now in the case at the local museum, together with the foot of a Chinese murderess, a handful of Elizabethan nails, a great many Tudor clay pipes, a piece of Roman pottery, and the wineglass that Nelson[9] drank out of—proving I really don't know what.

No, no, nothing is proved, nothing is known. And if I were to get up at this very moment and ascertain that the mark on the wall is really—what shall we say?—the head of a gigantic old nail, driven in two hundred years ago, which has now, owing to the patient attrition of many generations of housemaids, revealed its head above the coat of paint, and is taking its first view of modern life in the sight of a white-walled fire-lit room, what should I gain?—Knowledge? Matter for further speculation? I can think sitting still as well as standing up. And what is knowledge? What are our learned men save the descendants of witches and hermits who crouched in caves and in woods brewing herbs, interrogating shrew-mice and writing down the language of the stars? And the less we honour them as our superstitions dwindle and our respect for beauty and health of mind increases. . . . Yes, one could imagine a very pleasant world. A quiet, spacious world, with the flowers so red and blue in the open fields. A world without professors or specialists or housekeepers with the profiles of policemen, a world which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin, grazing the stems of the water-lilies, hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs. . . . How peaceful it is down here, rooted in the centre of the world and gazing up through the grey waters, with their sudden gleams of light, and their reflections—if it were not for Whitaker's Almanack—if it were not for the Table of Precedency!

I must jump up and see for myself what that mark on the wall really is—a nail, a rose-leaf, a crack in the wood?

Here is Nature once more at her old game of self-preservation. This train of thought, she perceives, is threatening mere waste of energy, even some collision with reality, for who will ever be able to lift a finger against Whitaker's Table of Precedency? The Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor; the Lord High

Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York. Everybody follows somebody, such is the philosophy of Whitaker; and the great thing is to know who follows whom. Whitaker knows, and let that, so Nature counsels, comfort you, instead of enraging you; and if you can't be comforted, if you must shatter this hour of peace, think of the mark on the wall.

I understand Nature's game—her prompting to take action as a way of ending any thought that threatens to excite or to pain. Hence, I suppose, comes our slight contempt for men of action—men, we assume, who don't think. Still, there's no harm in putting a full stop to one's disagreeable thoughts by looking at a mark on the wall.

Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality which at once turns the two Archbishops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of shades. Here is something definite, something real. Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of. . . . Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow. For years and years they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers—all things one likes to think about. The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it comes up again. I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream like flags blown out; and of water-beetles slowly raising domes of mud upon the bed of the river. I like to think of the tree itself: first of the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap; I like to think of it, too, on winter's nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all

night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and strange in June; and how cold the feet of insects must feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with diamond-cut red eyes. . . . One by one the fibres snap beneath the immense cold pressure of the earth, then the last storm comes and, falling, the highest branches drive deep into the ground again. Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, living rooms, where men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes. It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately—but something is getting in the way. . . . Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs?[1] Whitaker's Almanack? The fields of asphodel? I can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing. . . . There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying:

"I'm going out to buy a newspaper."

"Yes?"

"Though it's no good buying newspapers. . . . Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this war! . . . All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall."

Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail.

1921

Endnotes

- Note 1: Game played on oblong table with cue and balls. "Coal-scuttle": metal pail for carrying coal.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The London underground railway, or subway.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, heaven, the next world (in Greek mythology asphodel flowers grow in the Elysian fields).Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Legendary site of ancient war chronicled in Homer's Greek epic *The Iliad.*Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Street in London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: *Whitaker's Almanack*, an annual compendium of information, prints a "Table of Precedency," which shows the order in which the various ranks in public life and society proceed on formal occasions.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sir Edwin Henry Landseer (1802–1873), English painter, reproductions of whose *Stag at Bay*, *Monarch of the Glen*, and similar animal paintings were often found in Victorian homes.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A range of low hills in southeastern England. "Barrows": mounds of earth or stones erected by prehistoric peoples, usually as burial places.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), celebrated British admiral. "Tudor": 15th-century English.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Part of the sea off the east coast of Kent (or perhaps a reference to the South Downs, the hills mentioned earlier in "The Mark on the Wall").Return to reference 1

Modern Fiction

In making any survey, even the freest and loosest, of modern fiction, it is difficult not to take it for granted that the modern practice of the art is somehow an improvement upon the old. With their simple tools and primitive materials, it might be said, Fielding[1] did well and Jane Austen even better, but compare their opportunities with ours! Their masterpieces certainly have a strange air of simplicity. And yet the analogy between literature and the process, to choose an example, of making motor cars scarcely holds good beyond the first glance. It is doubtful whether in the course of the centuries, though we have learnt much about making machines, we have learnt anything about making literature. We do not come to write better; all that we can be said to do is to keep moving, now a little in this direction, now in that, but with a circular tendency should the whole course of the track be viewed from a sufficiently lofty pinnacle. It need scarcely be said that we make no claim to stand, even momentarily, upon that vantage-ground. On the flat, in the crowd, half blind with dust, we look back with envy to those happier warriors, whose battle is won and whose achievements wear so serene an air of accomplishment that we can scarcely refrain from whispering that the fight was not so fierce for them as for us. It is for the historian of literature to decide; for him to say if we are now beginning or ending or standing in the middle of a great period of prose fiction, for down in the plain little is visible. We only know that certain gratitudes and hostilities inspire us; that certain paths seem to lead to fertile land, others to the dust and the desert; and of this perhaps it may be worth while to attempt some account.

Our quarrel, then, is not with the classics, and if we speak of quarrelling with Mr Wells, Mr Bennett, and Mr Galsworthy;[2] it is partly that by the mere fact of their existence in the flesh their work has a living, breathing, everyday imperfection which bids us take

what liberties with it we choose. But it is also true, that, while we thank them for a thousand gifts, we reserve our unconditional gratitude for Mr Hardy, for Mr Conrad, and in much lesser degree for the Mr Hudson of *The Purple Land*, *Green Mansions*, and *Far Away and Long Ago*.[3] Mr Wells, Mr Bennett, and Mr Galsworthy have excited so many hopes and disappointed them so persistently that our gratitude largely takes the form of thanking them for having shown us what they might have done but have not done; what we certainly could not do, but as certainly, perhaps, do not wish to do. No single phrase will sum up the charge or grievance which we have to bring against a mass of work so large in its volume and embodying so many qualities, both admirable and the reverse. If we tried to formulate our meaning in one word we should say that these three writers are materialists. It is because they are concerned not with the spirit but with the body that they have disappointed us, and left us with the feeling that the sooner English fiction turns its back upon them, as politely as may be, and marches, if only into the desert, the better for its soul. Naturally, no single word reaches the centre of three separate targets. In the case of Mr Wells it falls notably wide of the mark. And yet even with him it indicates to our thinking the fatal alloy in his genius, the great clod of clay that has got itself mixed up with the purity of his inspiration. But Mr Bennett is perhaps the worst culprit of the three, inasmuch as he is by far the best workman. He can make a book so well constructed and solid in its craftsmanship that it is difficult for the most exacting of critics to see through what chink or crevice decay can creep in. There is not so much as a draught between the frames of the windows, or a crack in the boards. And yet—if life should refuse to live there? That is a risk which the creator of *The Old Wives' Tale*, George Cannon, Edwin Clayhanger,[4] and hosts of other figures, may well claim to have surmounted. His characters live abundantly, even unexpectedly, but it remains to ask how do they live, and what do they live for? More and more they seem to us, deserting even the well-built villa in the Five Towns,[5] to spend their time in some softly padded first-class railway carriage, pressing bells and buttons

innumerable; and the destiny to which they travel so luxuriously becomes more and more unquestionably an eternity of bliss spent in the very best hotel in Brighton.[6] It can scarcely be said of Mr Wells that he is a materialist in the sense that he takes too much delight in the solidity of his fabric. His mind is too generous in its sympathies to allow him to spend much time in making things shipshape and substantial. He is a materialist from sheer goodness of heart, taking upon his shoulders the work that ought to have been discharged by Government officials, and in the plethora of his ideas and facts scarcely having leisure to realize, or forgetting to think important, the crudity and coarseness of his human beings. Yet what more damaging criticism can there be both of his earth and of his Heaven than that they are to be inhabited here and hereafter by his Joans and his Peters?[7] Does not the inferiority of their natures tarnish whatever institutions and ideals may be provided for them by the generosity of their creator? Nor, profoundly though we respect the integrity and humanity of Mr Galsworthy, shall we find what we seek in his pages.

If we fasten, then, one label on all these books, on which is one word, materialists, we mean by it that they write of unimportant things; that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring.

We have to admit that we are exacting, and, further, that we find it difficult to justify our discontent by explaining what it is that we exact. We frame our question differently at different times. But it reappears most persistently as we drop the finished novel on the crest of a sigh—Is it worth while? What is the point of it all? Can it be that, owing to one of those little deviations which the human spirit seems to make from time to time, Mr Bennett has come down with his magnificent apparatus for catching life just an inch or two on the wrong side? Life escapes; and perhaps without life nothing else is worth while. It is a confession of vagueness to have to make use of such a figure as this, but we scarcely better the matter by speaking, as critics are prone to do, of reality. Admitting the vagueness which afflicts all criticism of novels, let us hazard the

opinion that for us at this moment the form of fiction most in vogue more often misses than secures the thing we seek. Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide. Nevertheless, we go on perseveringly, conscientiously, constructing our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds. So much of the enormous labour of proving the solidity, the likeness to life, of the story is not merely labour thrown away but labour misplaced to the extent of obscuring and blotting out the light of the conception. The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this? Must novels be like this?

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being "like this." Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday,[8] the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street[9] tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig-lamps[1] symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the

end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it.

It is, at any rate, in some such fashion as this that we seek to define the quality which distinguishes the work of several young writers, among whom Mr James Joyce is the most notable, from that of their predecessors. They attempt to come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests and moves them, even if to do so they must discard most of the conventions which are commonly observed by the novelist. Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. Anyone who has read *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or, what promises to be a far more interesting work, *Ulysses*,[2] now appearing in the *Little Review*, will have hazarded some theory of this nature as to Mr Joyce's intention. On our part, with such a fragment before us, it is hazarded rather than affirmed; but whatever the intention of the whole, there can be no question but that it is of the utmost sincerity and that the result, difficult or unpleasant as we may judge it, is undeniably important. In contrast with those whom we have called materialists, Mr Joyce is spiritual; he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain, and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious, whether it be probability, or coherence, or any other of these signposts which for generations have served to support the imagination of a reader when called upon to imagine what he can neither touch nor see. The scene in the cemetery,[3] for instance, with its brilliancy, its sordidity, its incoherence, its sudden lightning

flashes of significance, does undoubtedly come so close to the quick of the mind that, on a first reading at any rate, it is difficult not to acclaim a masterpiece. If we want life itself, here surely we have it. Indeed, we find ourselves fumbling rather awkwardly if we try to say what else we wish, and for what reason a work of such originality yet fails to compare, for we must take high examples, with *Youth* or *The Mayor of Casterbridge.*[4] It fails because of the comparative poverty of the writer's mind, we might say simply and have done with it. But it is possible to press a little further and wonder whether we may not refer our sense of being in a bright yet narrow room, confined and shut in, rather than enlarged and set free, to some limitation imposed by the method as well as by the mind. Is it the method that inhibits the creative power? Is it due to the method that we feel neither jovial nor magnanimous, but centred in a self which, in spite of its tremor of susceptibility, never embraces or creates what is outside itself and beyond? Does the emphasis laid, perhaps didactically, upon indecency contribute to the effect of something angular and isolated? Or is it merely that in any effort of such originality it is much easier, for contemporaries especially, to feel what it lacks than to name what it gives? In any case it is a mistake to stand outside examining "methods". Any method is right, every method is right, that expresses what we wish to express, if we are writers; that brings us closer to the novelist's intention if we are readers. This method has the merit of bringing us closer to what we were prepared to call life itself; did not the reading of *Ulysses* suggest how much of life is excluded or ignored, and did it not come with a shock to open *Tristram Shandy* or even *Pendennis*[5] and be by them convinced that there are not only other aspects of life, but more important ones into the bargain.

However this may be, the problem before the novelist at present, as we suppose it to have been in the past, is to contrive means of being free to set down what he chooses. He has to have the courage to say that what interests him is no longer "this" but "that": out of "that" alone must he construct his work. For the moderns "that", the point of interest, lies very likely in the dark places of psychology. At

once, therefore, the accent falls a little differently; the emphasis is upon something hitherto ignored; at once a different outline of form becomes necessary, difficult for us to grasp, incomprehensible to our predecessors. No one but a modern, no one perhaps but a Russian, would have felt the interest of the situation which Tchekov has made into the short story which he calls "Gusev."[6] Some Russian soldiers lie ill on board a ship which is taking them back to Russia. We are given a few scraps of their talk and some of their thoughts; then one of them dies and is carried away; the talk goes on among the others for a time, until Gusev himself dies, and looking "like a carrot or a radish" is thrown overboard. The emphasis is laid upon such unexpected places that at first it seems as if there were no emphasis at all; and then, as the eyes accustom themselves to twilight and discern the shapes of things in a room we see how complete the story is, how profound, and how truly in obedience to his vision Tchekov has chosen this, that, and the other, and placed them together to compose something new. But it is impossible to say "this is comic," or "that is tragic," nor are we certain, since short stories, we have been taught, should be brief and conclusive, whether this, which is vague and inconclusive, should be called a short story at all.

The most elementary remarks upon modern English fiction can hardly avoid some mention of the Russian influence, and if the Russians are mentioned one runs the risk of feeling that to write of any fiction save theirs is waste of time. If we want understanding of the soul and heart where else shall we find it of comparable profundity? If we are sick of our own materialism the least considerable of their novelists has by right of birth a natural reverence for the human spirit. "Learn to make yourself akin to people. . . . But let this sympathy be not with the mind—for it is easy with the mind—but with the heart, with love towards them." In every great Russian writer we seem to discern the features of a saint, if sympathy for the sufferings of others, love towards them, endeavour to reach some goal worthy of the most exacting demands of the spirit constitute saintliness. It is the saint in them which confounds us with a feeling of our own irreligious triviality, and turns

so many of our famous novels to tinsel and trickery. The conclusions of the Russian mind, thus comprehensive and compassionate, are inevitably, perhaps, of the utmost sadness. More accurately indeed we might speak of the inconclusiveness of the Russian mind. It is the sense that there is no answer, that if honestly examined life presents question after question which must be left to sound on and on after the story is over in hopeless interrogation that fills us with a deep, and finally it may be with a resentful, despair. They are right perhaps; unquestionably they see further than we do and without our gross impediments of vision. But perhaps we see something that escapes them, or why should this voice of protest mix itself with our gloom? The voice of protest is the voice of another and an ancient civilisation which seems to have bred in us the instinct to enjoy and fight rather than to suffer and understand. English fiction from Sterne to Meredith[7] bears witness to our natural delight in humour and comedy, in the beauty of earth, in the activities of the intellect, and in the splendour of the body. But any deductions that we may draw from the comparison of two fictions so immeasurably far apart are futile save indeed as they flood us with a view of the infinite possibilities of the art and remind us that there is no limit to the horizon, and that nothing—no "method," no experiment, even of the wildest—is forbidden, but only falsity and pretence. "The proper stuff of fiction" does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss. And if we can imagine the art of fiction come alive and standing in our midst, she would undoubtedly bid us break her and bully her, as well as honour and love her, for so her youth is renewed and her sovereignty assured.

1925

Endnotes

- Note 1: Henry Fielding (1707–1754), English novelist.Return to reference 1

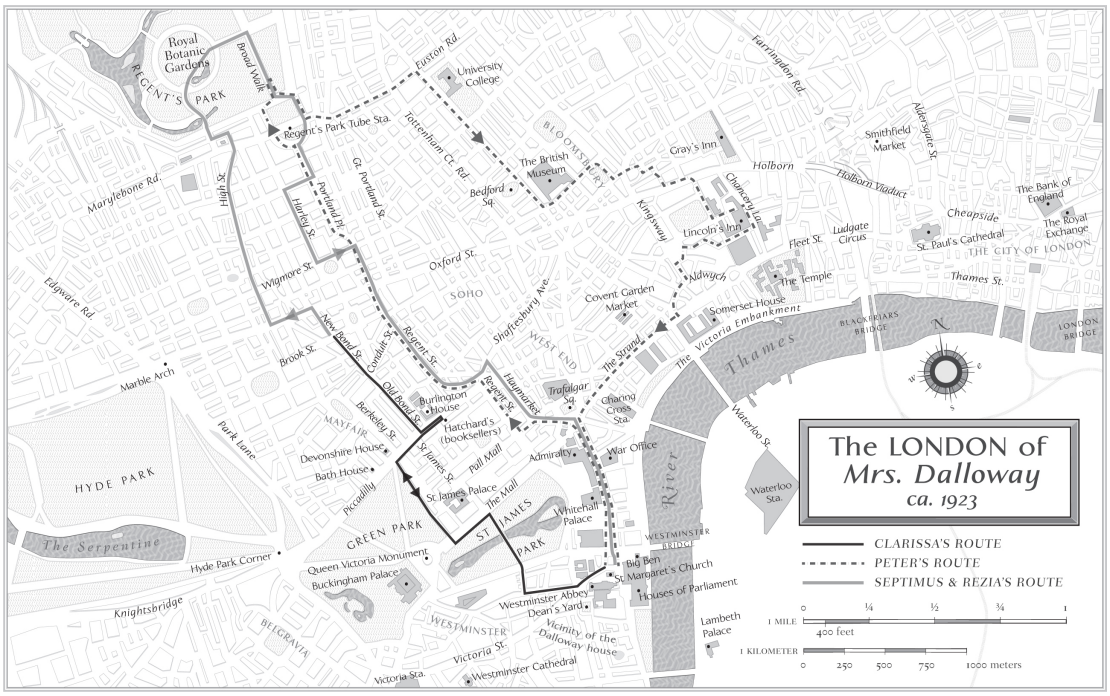
- Note 2: H. G. Wells (1866–1946), Arnold Bennett (1867–1931), John Galsworthy (1867–1933), English novelists.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: W. H. Hudson (1841–1922), naturalist and writer, was born in Argentina, although he later lived in London. *The Purple Land* (1885) is about South America; *Green Mansions* (1904), a novel set in South America, was his first real success.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Characters in Arnold Bennett's novels; *The Old Wives' Tale* (1908) is the best known.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The pottery towns of Staffordshire in which much of Bennett's fiction was set.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Once-fashionable seaside resort on the southwest coast of England.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In his novel *Joan and Peter: The Story of an Education* (1918), Wells advocates education to address social problems.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Monday or Tuesday* was Woolf's 1921 collection of experimental stories and sketches.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Fashionable shopping street in London.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Carriage lamps.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Written April, 1919 [*Woolf's note*].Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The sixth episode ("Hades") of *Ulysses*, where Bloom goes to Paddy Dignam's funeral.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A story and a novel by, respectively, Joseph Conrad and Thomas Hardy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Novels by, respectively, the English writers Laurence Sterne (1713–1768) and William Make-peace Thackeray (1811–1863).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: 1890 story by the Russian writer Anton Chekhov (1860–1904).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: George Meredith (1828–1909), English novelist.Return to reference 7

Mrs. Dalloway "Look within," Virginia Woolf urges in her essay "Modern Fiction" (1919, revised 1925): "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel." Her 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway* looks deep within the consciousness of a middle-aged woman planning an evening party on a fine London day in the middle of June 1923. In exploring the events of a single day, Woolf's novel recalls James Joyce's day-long narrative in *Ulysses* (1922), which, despite her reservations about its form and "indecency," she admired for revealing "the flickering of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain."

In Woolf's more intimately scaled novel, Clarissa Dalloway's "ordinary mind on an ordinary day" is revealed to contain extraordinary riches, and so too, Woolf suggests, might any mind on any day, at least for the sufficiently attentive novelist. As Clarissa walks through London's streets, reacting to the flood of sights and sounds around her, her exhilarated if fleeting impressions of the present often give way to steel-engraved memories of her young adulthood in an idyllic countryside home in Bourton. Following her there through thoughts conveyed in rich metaphors, precise rhythms, and finely spun syntax, we learn of her disappointed suitor Peter Walsh, alluring but too demanding, now a civil servant in India, though he has made a surprising return; the victorious but predictable suitor Richard Dalloway, still her husband and a Conservative member of Parliament; her independent-minded socialist friend Sally Seton, who once planted a burning kiss on her lips, and many years later will unexpectedly appear at Clarissa's party. Thoughts of more-recent events surge just below the surface, such as her daughter Elizabeth's disturbing infatuation with her zealous history tutor. Dismissing more realist novelists' preoccupation with the externalities of plot, Woolf wrote in her diary: "I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth."

However isolated in its cavelike interiority, each mind in *Mrs. Dalloway* intersects with many others. "The idea is that the caves shall connect," said Woolf, elaborating her metaphor, "and each comes to daylight at the present moment." When a car loudly backfires, the shock of the sound and the mystery of the opulent car's occupants form a hinge between Clarissa Dalloway's consciousness and that of her double, Septimus Warren Smith, a veteran traumatized by his experience on the Western Front in World War I. The two characters never directly meet in the novel, but the narrative weaves back and forth between their minds—"the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side," in Woolf's words. Showing Septimus to be a casualty of modern warfare, class stratification, and the mental health profession, her novel questions the solidity of the dividing line between the sane and the insane. Like many thousands of young men, such as the war poets included in the section "Voices of World War I," Septimus had volunteered to fight for a Britain idealized as Shakespeare and English culture; but the carnage of the war, including the irrepressible memory of his dear friend Evans's death, has demolished all hope for, and faith in, English civilization.

In plumbing the depths of her characters' minds, Woolf's narrative subtly glides from one character to another, and from one narrative method to another, including direct speech, interior monologue, and free indirect speech. The events of the day are refracted from an almost cubistic array of angles, as when bystanders speculate on who is in that mysterious car. When an airplane writes a brand name in the sky, observers arrive at different readings of the airy inscription. The passage of time, as hauntingly and insistently signaled by Big Ben's chimes, assumes various forms in the minds of Woolf's characters.



Mrs. Dalloway traces the movement of Woolf's characters through London, including the near misses and intersections of modern city life. Both distinctive and overlapping in their mental experience, characters as unlike as Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith share both physical and psychological space. This map highlights some of the novel's London landmarks and the approximate routes taken by the main characters on a single day in mid-June 1923.

But for all her interest in focusing on what Woolf called the "radiant halo" of consciousness, things happen in *Mrs. Dalloway*—sometimes violent things. Woolf wrote of her intentions for her novel, "I want to criticise the social system, & to show it at work, at its most intense." She observes Clarissa's class position both sympathetically and critically, a society hostess arranging her all-important party with the labor of less privileged household workers. The British class system is shown to perpetuate the wealth and power of royalty, politicians, and doctors, while putting enormous pressure on people like Septimus Smith and Elizabeth's ill-fated history tutor of German descent. Medical professionals, such as Septimus Smith's doctors, seem to advance themselves above all and

to miss the reflection, in some psychiatric illnesses, of a deeply flawed social order. The British Empire demands obeisance to nationalistic symbols of itself and crushes people like Septimus who are summoned to fulfill its will. Barriers along gender lines block the social advancement of women, as well as same-sex sexual fulfillment.

Woolf's ability to "dig out" both the human mind and the social structures and strictures that shape it has helped to make *Mrs. Dalloway* one of the most influential novels of the twentieth century; the work has been rewritten in various novels, including Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (1998), and adapted for film. In conveying, as part of a larger social mix, the intricacies of Clarissa Dalloway's thoughts and feelings on a summer's day—her exultation in flowers, her longings and regrets in friendship and love, her anxieties about the hovering threat of despondency and death—Woolf fulfills her aspiration to portray life as "a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."

Mrs. Dalloway

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy[1] had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men[2] were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton[3] into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?"—was that it?—"I prefer men to cauliflowers"—was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace—Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished—how strange it was!—a few sayings like this about cabbages.

She stiffened a little on the kerb, waiting for Durtnall's van[4] to pass. A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster[5]); a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright.

For having lived in Westminster—how many years now? over twenty,—one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza[6]) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street.[7] For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps,[8] the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June.

For it was the middle of June. The War[9] was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar[1] they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven—over. It was June. The King and Queen were at the Palace.[2] And everywhere, though it was still so early, there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats; Lords, Ascot, Ranelagh[3] and all the rest of it; wrapped in the soft mesh of the grey-blue morning air, which, as the day wore on, would unwind them, and set down on their lawns and pitches the bouncing ponies whose forefeet just struck the ground and up they sprung, the whirling young men, and laughing girls in their transparent muslins who, even now, after dancing all night, were taking their absurd woolly dogs for a run; and even now, at this hour, discreet old dowagers were shooting out in their motor cars on errands of mystery; and the shopkeepers were fidgeting in

their windows with their paste and diamonds, their lovely old sea-green brooches in eighteenth-century settings to tempt Americans (but one must economise, not buy things rashly for Elizabeth), and she, too, loving it as she did with an absurd and faithful passion, being part of it, since her people were courtiers once in the time of the Georges,[4] she, too, was going that very night to kindle and illuminate; to give her party. But how strange, on entering the Park,[5] the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks; the pouched birds waddling; and who should be coming along with his back against the Government buildings, most appropriately, carrying a despatch box stamped with the Royal Arms,[6] who but Hugh Whitbread; her old friend Hugh—the admirable Hugh!

"Good-morning to you, Clarissa!" said Hugh, rather extravagantly, for they had known each other as children. "Where are you off to?"

"I love walking in London," said Mrs. Dalloway. "Really it's better than walking in the country."

They had just come up—unfortunately—to see doctors. Other people came to see pictures; go to the opera; take their daughters out; the Whitbreads came "to see doctors." Times without number Clarissa had visited Evelyn Whitbread in a nursing home. Was Evelyn ill again? Evelyn was a good deal out of sorts, said Hugh, intimating by a kind of pout or swell of his very well-covered, manly, extremely handsome, perfectly upholstered body (he was almost too well dressed always, but presumably had to be, with his little job at Court) that his wife had some internal ailment, nothing serious, which, as an old friend, Clarissa Dalloway would quite understand without requiring him to specify. Ah yes, she did of course; what a nuisance; and felt very sisterly and oddly conscious at the same time of her hat. Not the right hat for the early morning, was that it? For Hugh always made her feel, as he bustled on, raising his hat rather extravagantly and assuring her that she might be a girl of eighteen, and of course he was coming to her party to-night, Evelyn absolutely insisted, only a little late he might be after the party at the Palace to which he had to take one of Jim's boys,—she always felt a little skimpy beside Hugh; schoolgirlish; but attached to him, partly from

having known him always, but she did think him a good sort in his own way, though Richard was nearly driven mad by him, and as for Peter Walsh, he had never to this day forgiven her for liking him.

She could remember scene after scene at Bourton—Peter furious; Hugh not, of course, his match in any way, but still not a positive imbecile as Peter made out; not a mere barber's block. When his old mother wanted him to give up shooting or to take her to Bath[7] he did it, without a word; he was really unselfish, and as for saying, as Peter did, that he had no heart, no brain, nothing but the manners and breeding of an English gentleman, that was only her dear Peter at his worst; and he could be intolerable; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on a morning like this.

(June had drawn out every leaf on the trees. The mothers of Pimlico[8] gave suck to their young. Messages were passing from the Fleet to the Admiralty.[9] Arlington Street and Piccadilly[1] seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved. To dance, to ride, she had adored all that.)

For they might be parted for hundreds of years, she and Peter; she never wrote a letter and his were dry sticks; but suddenly it would come over her, If he were with me now what would he say?—some days, some sights bringing him back to her calmly, without the old bitterness; which perhaps was the reward of having cared for people; they came back in the middle of St. James's Park on a fine morning—indeed they did. But Peter—however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink—Peter never saw a thing of all that. He would put on his spectacles, if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry,[2] people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul. How he scolded her! How they argued! She would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a staircase; the perfect hostess he called her (she had cried over it in her bedroom), she had the makings of the perfect hostess, he said.

So she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still making out that she had been right—and she had too—not to marry

him. For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him. (Where was he this morning for instance? Some committee, she never asked what.) But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, the anguish; and then the horror of the moment when some one told her at a concert that he had married a woman met on the boat going to India! Never should she forget all that! Cold, heartless, a prude, he called her. Never could she understand how he cared. But those Indian women did presumably—silly, pretty, flimsy nincompoops. And she wasted her pity. For he was quite happy, he assured her—perfectly happy, though he had never done a thing that they talked of; his whole life had been a failure. It made her angry still.

She had reached the Park gates.[3] She stood for a moment, looking at the omnibuses in Piccadilly.

She would not say of any one in the world now that they were this or were that. She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. She had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary. How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fräulein Daniels[4] gave them she could not think. She knew nothing; no language, no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed; and yet to her it was absolutely absorbing; all this; the cabs passing; and she would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that.

Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct, she thought, walking on. If you put her in a room with some one, up went her

back like a cat's; or she purred. Devonshire House, Bath House, the house with the china cockatoo,[5] she had seen them all lit up once; and remembered Sylvia, Fred, Sally Seton—such hosts of people; and dancing all night; and the waggons plodding past to market; and driving home across the Park. She remembered once throwing a shilling into the Serpentine.[6] But every one remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab. Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street,[7] did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards'[8] shop window? What was she trying to recover? What image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open:

> Fear no more the heat o' the sun
> Nor the furious winter's rages.[9]

This late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance; a perfectly upright and stoical bearing. Think, for example, of the woman she admired most, Lady Bexborough, opening the bazaar.

There were Jorrocks' *Jaunts and Jollities*; there were *Soapy Sponge* and Mrs. Asquith's *Memoirs* and *Big Game Shooting in Nigeria*,[1] all spread open. Ever so many books there were; but none that seemed exactly right to take to Evelyn Whitbread in her nursing home. Nothing that would serve to amuse her and make that

indescribably dried-up little woman look, as Clarissa came in, just for a moment cordial; before they settled down for the usual interminable talk of women's ailments. How much she wanted it—that people should look pleased as she came in, Clarissa thought and turned and walked back towards Bond Street, annoyed, because it was silly to have other reasons for doing things. Much rather would she have been one of those people like Richard who did things for themselves, whereas, she thought, waiting to cross, half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that; perfect idiocy she knew (and now the policeman held up his hand) for no one was ever for a second taken in. Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought, stepping on to the pavement, could have looked even differently!

She would have been, in the first place, dark like Lady Bexborough, with a skin of crumpled leather and beautiful eyes. She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested in politics like a man; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere. Instead of which she had a narrow pea-stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's. That she held herself well was true; and had nice hands and feet; and dressed well, considering that she spent little. But often now this body she wore (she stopped to look at a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing—nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.

Bond Street fascinated her; Bond Street early in the morning in the season; its flags flying; its shops; no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for fifty years; a few pearls; salmon on an iceblock.

"That is all," she said, looking at the fishmonger's. "That is all," she repeated, pausing for a moment at the window of a glove shop where, before the War, you could buy almost perfect gloves. And her

old Uncle William used to say a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves. He had turned on his bed one morning in the middle of the War. He had said, "I have had enough." Gloves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a straw for either of them.

Not a straw, she thought, going on up Bond Street to a shop where they kept flowers for her when she gave a party. Elizabeth really cared for her dog most of all. The whole house this morning smelt of tar. Still, better poor Grizzle than Miss Kilman; better distemper and tar[2] and all the rest of it than sitting mewed in a stuffy bedroom with a prayer book! Better anything, she was inclined to say. But it might be only a phase, as Richard said, such as all girls go through. It might be falling in love. But why with Miss Kilman? who had been badly treated of course; one must make allowances for that, and Richard said she was very able, had a really historical mind. Anyhow they were inseparable, and Elizabeth, her own daughter, went to Communion; and how she dressed, how she treated people who came to lunch she did not care a bit, it being her experience that the religious ecstasy made people callous (so did causes); dulled their feelings, for Miss Kilman would do anything for the Russians, starved herself for the Austrians,[3] but in private inflicted positive torture, so insensitive was she, dressed in a green mackintosh coat.[4] Year in year out she wore that coat; she perspired; she was never in the room five minutes without making you feel her superiority, your inferiority; how poor she was; how rich you were; how she lived in a slum without a cushion or a bed or a rug or whatever it might be, all her soul rusted with that grievance sticking in it, her dismissal from school during the War—poor embittered unfortunate creature! For it was not her one hated but the idea of her, which undoubtedly had gathered in to itself a great deal that was not Miss Kilman; had become one of those spectres with which one battles in the night; one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants; for no doubt with another throw of the dice, had the black been

uppermost and not the white, she would have loved Miss Kilman! But not in this world. No.

It rasped her, though, to have stirring about in her this brutal monster! to hear twigs cracking and feel hooves planted down in the depths of that leaf-encumbered forest, the soul; never to be content quite, or quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, especially since her illness, had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her spine; gave her physical pain, and made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots, as if the whole panoply of content were nothing but self love! this hatred!

Nonsense, nonsense! she cried to herself, pushing through the swing doors of Mulberry's the florists.

She advanced, light, tall, very upright, to be greeted at once by button-faced Miss Pym, whose hands were always bright red, as if they had been stood in cold water with the flowers.

There were flowers: delphiniums, sweet peas, bunches of lilac; and carnations, masses of carnations. There were roses; there were irises. Ah yes—so she breathed in the earthy garden sweet smell as she stood talking to Miss Pym who owed her help, and thought her kind, for kind she had been years ago; very kind, but she looked older, this year, turning her head from side to side among the irises and roses and nodding tufts of lilac with her eyes half closed, snuffing in, after the street uproar, the delicious scent, the exquisite coolness. And then, opening her eyes, how fresh like frilled linen clean from a laundry laid in wicker trays the roses looked; and dark and prim the red carnations, holding their heads up; and all the sweet peas spreading in their bowls, tinged violet, snow white, pale —as if it were the evening and girls in muslin frocks came out to pick sweet peas and roses after the superb summer's day, with its almost blue-black sky, its delphiniums, its carnations, its arum lilies was over; and it was the moment between six and seven when every flower—roses, carnations, irises, lilac—glows; white, violet, red, deep orange; every flower seems to burn by itself, softly, purely in the

misty beds; and how she loved the grey-white moths spinning in and out, over the cherry pie,[5] over the evening primroses!

And as she began to go with Miss Pym from jar to jar, choosing, nonsense, nonsense, she said to herself, more and more gently, as if this beauty, this scent, this colour, and Miss Pym liking her, trusting her, were a wave which she let flow over her and surmount that hatred, that monster, surmount it all; and it lifted her up and up when—oh! a pistol shot in the street outside!

"Dear, those motor cars,"[6] said Miss Pym, going to the window to look, and coming back and smiling apologetically with her hands full of sweet peas, as if those motor cars, those tyres of motor cars, were all *her* fault.

The violent explosion which made Mrs. Dalloway jump and Miss Pym go to the window and apologise came from a motor car which had drawn to the side of the pavement precisely opposite Mulberry's shop window. Passers-by who, of course, stopped and stared, had just time to see a face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey.

Yet rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxford Street on one side, to Atkinson's scent[7] shop on the other, passing invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills, falling indeed with something of a cloud's sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second before had been utterly disorderly. But now mystery had brushed them with her wing; they had heard the voice of authority; the spirit of religion was abroad with her eyes bandaged tight and her lips gaping wide. But nobody knew whose face had been seen. Was it the Prince of Wales's, the Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew.

Edgar J. Watkiss, with his roll of lead piping round his arm, said audibly, humorously of course: "The Proime Minister's kyar."

Septimus Warren Smith, who found himself unable to pass, heard him.

Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised its whip; where will it descend?

Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Every one looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. It is I who am blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But for what purpose?

"Let us go on, Septimus," said his wife, a little woman, with large eyes in a sallow pointed face; an Italian girl.

But Lucrezia herself could not help looking at the motor car and the tree pattern on the blinds. Was it the Queen in there—the Queen going shopping?

The chauffeur, who had been opening something, turning something, shutting something, got on to the box.[8]

"Come on," said Lucrezia.

But her husband, for they had been married four, five years now, jumped, started, and said, "All right!" angrily, as if she had interrupted him.

People must notice; people must see. People, she thought, looking at the crowd staring at the motor car; the English people, with their children and their horses and their clothes, which she admired in a way; but they were "people" now, because Septimus had said, "I will kill myself"; an awful thing to say. Suppose they had heard him? She looked at the crowd. Help, help! she wanted to cry out to butchers' boys and women. Help! Only last autumn she and Septimus had stood on the Embankment[9] wrapped in the same cloak and, Septimus reading a paper instead of talking, she had snatched it from him and laughed in the old man's face who saw them! But failure one conceals. She must take him away into some park.

"Now we will cross," she said.

She had a right to his arm, though it was without feeling. He would give her, who was so simple, so impulsive, only twenty-four, without friends in England, who had left Italy for his sake, a piece of bone.

The motor car with its blinds drawn and an air of inscrutable reserve proceeded towards Piccadilly, still gazed at, still ruffling the faces on both sides of the street with the same dark breath of veneration whether for Queen, Prince, or Prime Minister nobody knew. The face itself had been seen only once by three people for a few seconds. Even the sex was now in dispute. But there could be no doubt that greatness was seated within; greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand's-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first and last time, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England, of the enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries, sifting the ruins of time, when London is a grass-grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednesday morning are but bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust and the gold stoppings of innumerable decayed teeth. The face in the motor car will then be known.

It is probably the Queen, thought Mrs. Dalloway, coming out of Mulberry's with her flowers; the Queen. And for a second she wore a

look of extreme dignity standing by the flower shop in the sunlight while the car passed at a foot's pace, with its blinds drawn. The Queen going to some hospital; the Queen opening some bazaar, thought Clarissa.

The crush was terrific for the time of day. Lords, Ascot, Hurlingham,[1] what was it? she wondered, for the street was blocked. The British middle classes sitting sideways on the tops of omnibuses with parcels and umbrellas, yes, even furs on a day like this, were, she thought, more ridiculous, more unlike anything there has ever been than one could conceive; and the Queen herself held up; the Queen herself unable to pass. Clarissa was suspended on one side of Brook Street;[2] Sir John Buckhurst, the old Judge on the other, with the car between them (Sir John had laid down the law for years and liked a well-dressed woman) when the chauffeur, leaning ever so slightly, said or showed something to the policeman, who saluted and raised his arm and jerked his head and moved the omnibus to the side and the car passed through. Slowly and very silently it took its way.

Clarissa guessed; Clarissa knew of course; she had seen something white, magical, circular, in the footman's hand, a disc inscribed with a name,—the Queen's, the Prince of Wales's, the Prime Minister's?—which, by force of its own lustre, burnt its way through (Clarissa saw the car diminishing, disappearing), to blaze among candelabras, glittering stars, breasts stiff with oak leaves,[3] Hugh Whitbread and all his colleagues, the gentlemen of England, that night in Buckingham Palace. And Clarissa, too, gave a party. She stiffened a little; so she would stand at the top of her stairs.

The car had gone, but it had left a slight ripple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops and tailors' shops on both sides of Bond Street. For thirty seconds all heads were inclined the same way—to the window. Choosing a pair of gloves—should they be to the elbow or above it, lemon or pale grey?—ladies stopped; when the sentence was finished something had happened. Something so trifling in single instances that no mathematical instrument, though capable of transmitting shocks in China, could register the vibration;

yet in its fulness rather formidable and in its common appeal emotional; for in all the hat shops and tailors' shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire. In a public house[4] in a back street a Colonial[5] insulted the House of Windsor[6] which led to words, broken beer glasses, and a general shindy,[7] which echoed strangely across the way in the ears of girls buying white underlinen threaded with pure white ribbon for their weddings. For the surface agitation of the passing car as it sunk grazed something very profound.

Gliding across Piccadilly, the car turned down St. James's Street. Tall men, men of robust physique, well-dressed men with their tail-coats and their white slips[8] and their hair raked back who, for reasons difficult to discriminate, were standing in the bow window of Brooks's[9] with their hands behind the tails of their coats, looking out, perceived instinctively that greatness was passing, and the pale light of the immortal presence fell upon them as it had fallen upon Clarissa Dalloway. At once they stood even straighter, and removed their hands, and seemed ready to attend their Sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's mouth, as their ancestors had done before them. The white busts and the little tables in the background covered with copies of the *Tatler*[1] and syphons of soda water seemed to approve; seemed to indicate the flowing corn and the manor houses of England; and to return the frail hum of the motor wheels as the walls of a whispering gallery return a single voice expanded and made sonorous by the might of a whole cathedral.[2] Shawled Moll Pratt with her flowers on the pavement wished the dear boy well (it was the Prince of Wales for certain) and would have tossed the price of a pot of beer—a bunch of roses—into St. James's Street out of sheer light-heartedness and contempt of poverty had she not seen the constable's eye upon her, discouraging an old Irishwoman's loyalty. The sentries at St. James's saluted; Queen Alexandra's policeman[3] approved.

A small crowd meanwhile had gathered at the gates of Buckingham Palace. Listlessly, yet confidently, poor people all of

them, they waited; looked at the Palace itself with the flag flying; at Victoria, billowing on her mound,[4] admired her shelves of running water, her geraniums; singled out from the motor cars in the Mall[5] first this one, then that; bestowed emotion, vainly, upon commoners out for a drive; recalled their tribute to keep it unspent while this car passed and that; and all the time let rumour accumulate in their veins and thrill the nerves in their thighs at the thought of Royalty looking at them; the Queen bowing; the Prince saluting; at the thought of the heavenly life divinely bestowed upon Kings; of the equerries[6] and deep curtsies; of the Queen's old doll's house;[7] of Princess Mary married to an Englishman, and the Prince—ah! the Prince! who took wonderfully, they said, after old King Edward,[8] but was ever so much slimmer. The Prince lived at St. James's; but he might come along in the morning to visit his mother.

So Sarah Bletchley said with her baby in her arms, tipping her foot up and down as though she were by her own fender in Pimlico, but keeping her eyes on the Mall, while Emily Coates ranged over the Palace windows and thought of the housemaids, the innumerable housemaids, the bedrooms, the innumerable bedrooms. Joined by an elderly gentleman with an Aberdeen terrier, by men without occupation, the crowd increased. Little Mr. Bowley, who had rooms in the Albany[9] and was sealed with wax over the deeper sources of life but could be unsealed suddenly, inappropriately, sentimentally, by this sort of thing—poor women waiting to see the Queen go past—poor women, nice little children, orphans, widows, the War—tut-tut—actually had tears in his eyes. A breeze flaunting ever so warmly down the Mall through the thin trees, past the bronze heroes,[1] lifted some flag flying in the British breast of Mr. Bowley and he raised his hat as the car turned into the Mall and held it high as the car approached; and let the poor mothers of Pimlico press close to him, and stood very upright. The car came on.

Suddenly Mrs. Coates looked up into the sky. The sound of an aeroplane bored ominously into the ears of the crowd. There it was coming over the trees, letting out white smoke from behind, which

curled and twisted, actually writing something! making letters in the sky![2] Every one looked up.

Dropping dead down the aeroplane soared straight up, curved in a loop, raced, sank, rose, and whatever it did, wherever it went, out fluttered behind it a thick ruffled bar of white smoke which curled and wreathed upon the sky in letters. But what letters? A C was it? an E, then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky, and the aeroplane shot further away and again, in a fresh space of sky, began writing a K, an E, a Y perhaps?

"Glaxo,"[3] said Mrs. Coates in a strained, awe-stricken voice, gazing straight up, and her baby, lying stiff and white in her arms, gazed straight up.

"Kreemo," murmured Mrs. Bletchley, like a sleepwalker. With his hat held out perfectly still in his hand, Mr. Bowley gazed straight up. All down the Mall people were standing and looking up into the sky. As they looked the whole world became perfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, first one gull leading, then another, and in this extraordinary silence and peace, in this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up there among the gulls.

The aeroplane turned and raced and swooped exactly where it liked, swiftly, freely, like a skater—

"That's an E," said Mrs. Bletchley—or a dancer—

"It's toffee," murmured Mr. Bowley—(and the car went in at the gates and nobody looked at it), and shutting off the smoke, away and away it rushed, and the smoke faded and assembled itself round the broad white shapes of the clouds.

It had gone; it was behind the clouds. There was no sound. The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was—a mission of the greatest importance. Then suddenly, as a train comes out of a tunnel, the aeroplane rushed out of the clouds again, the sound boring into the ears of all people in the Mall, in the Green Park,[4] in Piccadilly, in Regent Street, in

Regent's Park, and the bar of smoke curved behind and it dropped down, and it soared up and wrote one letter after another—but what word was it writing?

Lucrezia Warren Smith, sitting by her husband's side on a seat in Regent's Park in the Broad Walk,[5] looked up.

"Look, look, Septimus!" she cried. For Dr. Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself.

So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks.

It was toffee; they were advertising toffee, a nursemaid told Rezia. Together they began to spell t . . . o . . . f . . .

"K . . . R . . ." said the nursemaid, and Septimus heard her say "Kay Arr" close to his ear, deeply, softly, like a mellow organ, but with a roughness in her voice like a grasshopper's, which rasped his spine deliciously and sent running up into his brain waves of sound which, concussing, broke. A marvellous discovery indeed—that the human voice in certain atmospheric conditions (for one must be scientific, above all scientific) can quicken trees into life! Happily Rezia put her hand with a tremendous weight on his knee so that he was weighted down, transfixed, or the excitement of the elm trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave, like plumes on horses' heads, feathers on ladies', so proudly they rose and fell, so superbly, would have sent him mad. But he would not go mad. He would shut his eyes; he would see no more.

But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All taken together meant the birth of a new religion—

"Septimus!" said Rezia. He started violently. People must notice.

"I am going to walk to the fountain and back," she said.

For she could stand it no longer. Dr. Holmes might say there was nothing the matter. Far rather would she that he were dead! She could not sit beside him when he stared so and did not see her and made everything terrible; sky and tree, children playing, dragging carts, blowing whistles, falling down; all were terrible. And he would not kill himself; and she could tell no one. "Septimus has been working too hard"—that was all she could say to her own mother. To love makes one solitary, she thought. She could tell nobody, not even Septimus now, and looking back, she saw him sitting in his shabby overcoat alone on the seat, hunched up, staring. And it was cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself, but Septimus had fought;[6] he was brave; he was not Septimus now. She put on her lace collar. She put on her new hat and he never noticed; and he was happy without her. Nothing could make her happy without him! Nothing! He was selfish. So men are. For he was not ill. Dr. Holmes said there was nothing the matter with him. She spread her hand before her. Look! Her wedding ring slipped—she had grown so thin. It was she who suffered—but she had nobody to tell.

Far was Italy and the white houses and the room where her sisters sat making hats, and the streets crowded every evening with people walking, laughing out loud, not half alive like people here, huddled up in Bath chairs,[7] looking at a few ugly flowers stuck in pots!

"For you should see the Milan gardens,"[8] she said aloud. But to whom?

There was nobody. Her words faded. So a rocket fades. Its sparks, having grazed their way into the night, surrender to it, dark descends, pours over the outlines of houses and towers; bleak hillsides soften and fall in. But though they are gone, the night is full of them; robbed of colour, blank of windows, they exist more ponderously, give out what the frank daylight fails to transmit—the trouble and suspense of things conglomerated there in the darkness; huddled together in the darkness; reft of the relief which dawn brings when, washing the walls white and grey, spotting each windowpane, lifting the mist from the fields, showing the red brown cows peacefully grazing, all is once more decked out to the eye; exists again. I am alone; I am alone! she cried, by the fountain in Regent's Park (staring at the Indian and his cross[9]), as perhaps at midnight, when all boundaries are lost, the country reverts to its ancient shape, as the Romans[1] saw it, lying cloudy, when they landed, and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where—such was her darkness; when suddenly, as if a shelf were shot forth and she stood on it, she said how she was his wife, married years ago in Milan, his wife, and would never, never tell that he was mad! Turning, the shelf fell; down, down she dropped. For he was gone, she thought—gone, as he threatened, to kill himself—to throw himself under a cart! But no; there he was; still sitting alone on the seat, in his shabby overcoat, his legs crossed, staring, talking aloud.

Men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He noted such revelations on the backs of envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (he wrote it down). He waited. He listened. A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words,[2] from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk,[3] how there is no death.

There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings!

"What are you saying?" said Rezia suddenly, sitting down by him.

Interrupted again! She was always interrupting.

Away from people—they must get away from people, he said (jumping up), right away over there, where there were chairs beneath a tree and the long slope of the park dipped like a length of green stuff with a ceiling cloth of blue and pink smoke high above, and there was a rampart of far irregular houses hazed in smoke, the traffic hummed in a circle, and on the right, duncoloured animals stretched long necks over the Zoo[4] palings, barking, howling. There they sat down under a tree.

"Look," she implored him, pointing at a little troop of boys carrying cricket stumps,[5] and one shuffled, spun round on his heel and shuffled, as if he were acting a clown at the music hall.

"Look," she implored him, for Dr. Holmes had told her to make him notice real things, go to a music hall, play cricket—that was the very game, Dr. Holmes said, a nice out-of-door game, the very game for her husband.

"Look," she repeated.

Look the unseen bade him, the voice which now communicated with him who was the greatest of mankind, Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever unwasted, suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer, but he did not want it, he moaned, putting from him with a wave of his hand that eternal suffering, that eternal loneliness.

"Look," she repeated, for he must not talk aloud to himself out of doors.

"Oh look," she implored him. But what was there to look at? A few sheep. That was all.

The way to Regent's Park Tube[6] station—could they tell her the way to Regent's Park Tube station—Maisie Johnson wanted to know.

She was only up from Edinburgh[7] two days ago.

"Not this way—over there!" Rezia exclaimed, waving her aside, lest she should see Septimus.

Both seemed queer, Maisie Johnson thought. Everything seemed very queer. In London for the first time, come to take up a post at her uncle's in Leadenhall Street,[8] and now walking through Regent's Park in the morning, this couple on the chairs gave her quite a turn; the young woman seeming foreign, the man looking queer; so that should she be very old she would still remember and make it jangle again among her memories how she had walked through Regent's Park on a fine summer's morning fifty years ago. For she was only nineteen and had got her way at last, to come to London; and now how queer it was, this couple she had asked the way of, and the girl started and jerked her hand, and the man—he seemed awfully odd; quarrelling, perhaps; parting for ever, perhaps; something was up, she knew; and now all these people (for she returned to the Broad Walk), the stone basins, the prim flowers, the old men and women, invalids most of them in Bath chairs—all seemed, after Edinburgh, so queer. And Maisie Johnson, as she joined that gently trudging, vaguely gazing, breeze-kissed company—squirrels perching and preening, sparrow fountains fluttering for crumbs, dogs busy with the railings, busy with each other, while the soft warm air washed over them and lent to the fixed unsurprised gaze with which they received life something whimsical and mollified—Maisie Johnson positively felt she must cry Oh! (for that young man on the seat had given her quite a turn. Something was up, she knew.)

Horror! horror! she wanted to cry. (She had left her people; they had warned her what would happen.)

Why hadn't she stayed at home? she cried, twisting the knob of the iron railing.

That girl, thought Mrs. Dempster (who saved crusts for the squirrels and often ate her lunch in Regent's Park), don't know a thing yet; and really it seemed to her better to be a little stout, a little slack, a little moderate in one's expectations. Percy drank. Well, better to have a son, thought Mrs. Dempster. She had had a hard

time of it, and couldn't help smiling at a girl like that. You'll get married, for you're pretty enough, thought Mrs. Dempster. Get married, she thought, and then you'll know. Oh, the cooks, and so on. Every man has his ways. But whether I'd have chosen quite like that if I could have known, thought Mrs. Dempster, and could not help wishing to whisper a word to Maisie Johnson; to feel on the creased pouch of her worn old face the kiss of pity. For it's been a hard life, thought Mrs. Dempster. What hadn't she given to it? Roses; figure; her feet too. (She drew the knobbed lumps beneath her skirt.)

Roses, she thought sardonically. All trash, m'dear. For really, what with eating, drinking, and mating, the bad days and good, life had been no mere matter of roses, and what was more, let me tell you, Carrie Dempster had no wish to change her lot with any woman's in Kentish Town![9] But, she implored, pity. Pity, for the loss of roses. Pity she asked of Maisie Johnson, standing by the hyacinth beds.

Ah, but that aeroplane! Hadn't Mrs. Dempster always longed to see foreign parts? She had a nephew, a missionary. It soared and shot. She always went on the sea at Margate,[1] not out o' sight of land, but she had no patience with women who were afraid of water. It swept and fell. Her stomach was in her mouth. Up again. There's a fine young feller aboard of it, Mrs. Dempster wagered, and away and away it went, fast and fading, away and away the aeroplane shot; soaring over Greenwich[2] and all the masts; over the little island of grey churches, St. Paul's[3] and the rest till, on either side of London, fields spread out and dark brown woods where adventurous thrushes hopping boldly, glancing quickly, snatched the snail and tapped him on a stone, once, twice, thrice.

Away and away the aeroplane shot, till it was nothing but a bright spark; an aspiration; a concentration; a symbol (so it seemed to Mr. Bentley, vigorously rolling his strip of turf at Greenwich) of man's soul; of his determination, thought Mr. Bentley, sweeping round the cedar tree, to get outside his body, beyond his house, by means of thought, Einstein,[4] speculation,[5] mathematics, the Mendelian theory[6]—away the aeroplane shot.

Then, while a seedy-looking nondescript man carrying a leather bag stood on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, and hesitated, for within was what balm, how great a welcome, how many tombs with banners waving over them, tokens of victories not over armies, but over, he thought, that plaguy spirit of truth seeking which leaves me at present without a situation, and more than that, the cathedral offers company, he thought, invites you to membership of a society; great men belong to it; martyrs have died for it; why not enter in, he thought, put this leather bag stuffed with pamphlets before an altar, a cross, the symbol of something which has soared beyond seeking and questing and knocking of words together and has become all spirit, disembodied, ghostly—why not enter in? he thought and while he hesitated out flew the aeroplane over Ludgate Circus.[7]

It was strange; it was still. Not a sound was to be heard above the traffic. Unguided it seemed; sped of its own free will. And now, curving up and up, straight up, like something mounting in ecstasy, in pure delight, out from behind poured white smoke looping, writing a T, an O, an F.

"What are they looking at?" said Clarissa Dalloway to the maid who opened her door.

The hall of the house was cool as a vault. Mrs. Dalloway raised her hand to her eyes, and, as the maid shut the door to, and she heard the swish of Lucy's skirts, she felt like a nun who has left the world and feels fold round her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions. The cook whistled in the kitchen. She heard the click of the typewriter. It was her life, and, bending her head over the hall table, she bowed beneath the influence, felt blessed and purified, saying to herself, as she took the pad with the telephone message on it, how moments like this are buds on the tree of life, flowers of darkness they are, she thought (as if some lovely rose had blossomed for her eyes only); not for a moment did she believe in God; but all the more, she thought, taking up the pad, must one repay in daily life to servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband, who was the foundation of it—of the gay

sounds, of the green lights, of the cook even whistling, for Mrs. Walker was Irish and whistled all day long—one must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments, she thought, lifting the pad, while Lucy stood by her, trying to explain how

"Mr. Dalloway, ma'am"—

Clarissa read on the telephone pad, "Lady Bruton wishes to know if Mr. Dalloway will lunch with her to-day."

"Mr. Dalloway, ma'am, told me to tell you he would be lunching out."

"Dear!" said Clarissa, and Lucy shared as she meant her to her disappointment (but not the pang); felt the concord between them; took the hint; thought how the gentry love; gilded her own future with calm; and, taking Mrs. Dalloway's parasol, handled it like a sacred weapon which a Goddess, having acquitted herself honourably in the field of battle, sheds, and placed it in the umbrella stand.

"Fear no more," said Clarissa. Fear no more the heat o' the sun;[8] for the shock of Lady Bruton asking Richard to lunch without her made the moment in which she had stood shiver, as a plant on the river-bed feels the shock of a passing oar and shivers: so she rocked: so she shivered.

Millicent Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her. No vulgar jealousy could separate her from Richard. But she feared time itself, and read on Lady Bruton's face, as if it had been a dial cut in impassive stone, the dwindling of life; how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence, so that she filled the room she entered, and felt often as she stood hesitating one moment on the threshold of her drawing-room, an exquisite suspense, such as might stay a diver before plunging while the sea darkens and brightens beneath him, and the waves which threaten to break, but only gently split their surface, roll and conceal and encrust as they just turn over the weeds with pearl.

She put the pad on the hall table. She began to go slowly upstairs, with her hand on the bannisters, as if she had left a party, where now this friend now that had flashed back her face, her voice; had shut the door and gone out and stood alone, a single figure against the appalling night, or rather, to be accurate, against the stare of this matter-of-fact June morning; soft with the glow of rose petals for some, she knew, and felt it, as she paused by the open staircase window which let in blinds flapping, dogs barking, let in, she thought, feeling herself suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed, since Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her.

Like a nun withdrawing, or a child exploring a tower, she went upstairs, paused at the window, came to the bathroom. There was the green linoleum and a tap dripping. There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room. Women must put off their rich apparel. At midday they must disrobe. She pierced the pincushion and laid her feathered yellow hat on the bed. The sheets were clean, tight stretched in a broad white band from side to side. Narrower and narrower would her bed be. The candle was half burnt down and she had read deep in Baron Marbot's *Memoirs.*[9] She had read late at night of the retreat from Moscow. For the House sat so long that Richard insisted, after her illness, that she must sleep undisturbed. And really she preferred to read of the retreat from Moscow. He knew it. So the room was an attic; the bed narrow; and lying there reading, for she slept badly, she could not dispel a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet. Lovely in girlhood, suddenly there came a moment—for example on the river beneath the woods at Clieveden—when, through some contraction of this cold spirit, she had failed him. And then at Constantinople,[1] and again and again. She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together.

For *that* she could dimly perceive. She resented it, had a scruple picked up Heaven knows where, or, as she felt, sent by Nature (who is invariably wise); yet she could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl, of a woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape, some folly. And whether it was pity, or their beauty, or that she was older, or some accident—like a faint scent, or a violin next door (so strange is the power of sounds at certain moments), she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment. Against such moments (with women too) there contrasted (as she laid her hat down) the bed and Baron Marbot and the candle half-burnt. Lying awake, the floor creaked; the lit house was suddenly darkened, and if she raised her head she could just hear the click of the handle released as gently as possible by Richard, who slipped upstairs in his socks and then, as often as not, dropped his hot-water bottle and swore! How she laughed!

But this question of love (she thought, putting her coat away), this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love?

She sat on the floor—that was her first impression of Sally—she sat on the floor with her arms round her knees, smoking a cigarette. Where could it have been? The Mannings? The Kinloch-Jones's? At some party (where, she could not be certain), for she had a distinct recollection of saying to the man she was with, "Who is *that*?" And he had told her, and said that Sally's parents did not get on (how that shocked her—that one's parents should quarrel!). But all that evening she could not take her eyes off Sally. It was an

extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed, with that quality which, since she hadn't got it herself, she always envied—a sort of abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything; a quality much commoner in foreigners than in Englishwomen. Sally always said she had French blood in her veins, an ancestor had been with Marie Antoinette,[2] had his head cut off, left a ruby ring. Perhaps that summer she came to stay at Bourton, walking in quite unexpectedly without a penny in her pocket, one night after dinner, and upsetting poor Aunt Helena to such an extent that she never forgave her. There had been some quarrel at home. She literally hadn't a penny that night when she came to them—had pawned a brooch to come down. She had rushed off in a passion. They sat up till all hours of the night talking. Sally it was who made her feel, for the first time, how sheltered the life at Bourton was. She knew nothing about sex—nothing about social problems. She had once seen an old man who had dropped dead in a field—she had seen cows just after their calves were born. But Aunt Helena never liked discussion of anything (when Sally gave her William Morris,[3] it had to be wrapped in brown paper). There they sat, hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not sent out. The ideas were Sally's, of course—but very soon she was just as excited—read Plato in bed before breakfast; read Morris; read Shelley[4] by the hour.

Sally's power was amazing, her gift, her personality. There was her way with flowers, for instance. At Bourton they always had stiff little vases all the way down the table. Sally went out, picked hollyhocks, dahlias—all sorts of flowers that had never been seen together—cut their heads off, and made them swim on the top of water in bowls. The effect was extraordinary—coming in to dinner in the sunset (Of course Aunt Helena thought it wicked to treat flowers like that.) Then she forgot her sponge, and ran along the passage naked. That grim old housemaid, Ellen Atkins, went about grumbling

—"Suppose any of the gentlemen had seen?" Indeed she did shock people. She was untidy, Papa said.

The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally. It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could only exist between women, between women just grown up. It was protective, on her side; sprang from a sense of being in league together, a presentiment of something that was bound to part them (they spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe), which led to this chivalry, this protective feeling which was much more on her side than Sally's. For in those days she was completely reckless; did the most idiotic things out of bravado; bicycled round the parapet on the terrace; smoked cigars. Absurd, she was—very absurd. But the charm was overpowering, to her at least, so that she could remember standing in her bedroom at the top of the house holding the hot-water can in her hands and saying aloud, "She is beneath this roof. . . . She is beneath this roof!"

No, the words meant absolutely nothing to her now. She could not even get an echo of her old emotion. But she could remember going cold with excitement, and doing her hair in a kind of ecstasy (now the old feeling began to come back to her, as she took out her hairpins, laid them on the dressing-table, began to do her hair), with the rooks flaunting up and down in the pink evening light, and dressing, and going downstairs, and feeling as she crossed the hall "if it were now to die 'twere now to be most happy." That was her feeling—Othello's feeling,[5] and she felt it, she was convinced, as strongly as Shakespeare meant Othello to feel it, all because she was coming down to dinner in a white frock to meet Sally Seton!

She was wearing pink gauze—was that possible? She *seemed*, anyhow, all light, glowing, like some bird or air ball[6] that has flown in, attached itself for a moment to a bramble. But nothing is so strange when one is in love (and what was this except being in love?) as the complete indifference of other people. Aunt Helena just wandered off after dinner; Papa read the paper. Peter Walsh might have been there, and old Miss Cummings; Joseph Breitkopf certainly

was, for he came every summer, poor old man, for weeks and weeks, and pretended to read German with her, but really played the piano and sang Brahms[7] without any voice.

All this was only a background for Sally. She stood by the fireplace talking, in that beautiful voice which made everything she said sound like a caress, to Papa, who had begun to be attracted rather against his will (he never got over lending her one of his books and finding it soaked on the terrace), when suddenly she said, "What a shame to sit indoors!" and they all went out on to the terrace and walked up and down. Peter Walsh and Joseph Breitkopf went on about Wagner. She and Sally fell a little behind. Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it—a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling!—when old Joseph and Peter faced them:

"Star-gazing?" said Peter.

It was like running one's face against a granite wall in the darkness! It was shocking; it was horrible!

Not for herself. She felt only how Sally was being mauled already, maltreated; she felt his hostility; his jealousy; his determination to break into their companionship. All this she saw as one sees a landscape in a flash of lightning—and Sally (never had she admired her so much!) gallantly taking her way unvanquished. She laughed. She made old Joseph tell her the names of the stars, which he liked doing very seriously. She stood there: she listened. She heard the names of the stars.

"Oh this horror!" she said to herself, as if she had known all along that something would interrupt, would embitter her moment of happiness.

Yet, after all, how much she owed to him later. Always when she thought of him she thought of their quarrels for some reason—because she wanted his good opinion so much, perhaps. She owed him words: "sentimental," "civilised"; they started up every day of her life as if he guarded her. A book was sentimental; an attitude to life sentimental. "Sentimental," perhaps she was to be thinking of the past. What would he think, she wondered, when he came back?

That she had grown older? Would he say that, or would she see him thinking when he came back, that she had grown older? It was true. Since her illness she had turned almost white.

Laying her brooch on the table, she had a sudden spasm, as if, while she mused, the icy claws had had the chance to fix in her. She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch the falling drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing-table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there—the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all the other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing-table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself.

How many million times she had seen her face, and always with the same imperceptible contraction! She pursed her lips when she looked in the glass. It was to give her face point. That was her self—pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps; she had helped young people, who were grateful to her; had tried to be the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her—faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions, like this of Lady Bruton not asking

her to lunch; which, she thought (combing her hair finally), is utterly base! Now, where was her dress?

Her evening dresses hung in the cupboard. Clarissa, plunging her hand into the softness, gently detached the green dress and carried it to the window. She had torn it. Some one had trod on the skirt. She had felt it give at the Embassy party at the top among the folds. By artificial light the green shone, but lost its colour now in the sun. She would mend it. Her maids had too much to do. She would wear it to-night. She would take her silks, her scissors, her—what was it? —her thimble, of course, down into the drawing-room, for she must also write, and see that things generally were more or less in order.

Strange, she thought, pausing on the landing, and assembling that diamond shape, that single person, strange how a mistress knows the very moment, the very temper of her house! Faint sounds rose in spirals up the well of the stairs; the swish of a mop; tapping; knocking; a loudness when the front door opened; a voice repeating a message in the basement; the chink of silver on a tray, clean silver for the party. All was for the party.

(And Lucy, coming into the drawing-room with her tray held out, put the giant candlesticks on the mantelpiece, the silver casket[8] in the middle, turned the crystal dolphin towards the clock. They would come; they would stand; they would talk in the mincing tones which she could imitate, ladies and gentlemen. Of all, her mistress was loveliest—mistress of silver, of linen, of china, for the sun, the silver, doors off their hinges, Rumpelmayer's men, gave her a sense, as she laid the paper-knife[9] on the inlaid table, of something achieved. Behold! Behold! she said, speaking to her old friends in the baker's shop, where she had first seen service at Caterham,[1] prying into the glass. She was Lady Angela, attending Princess Mary, when in came Mrs. Dalloway.)

"Oh Lucy," she said, "the silver does look nice!"

"And how," she said, turning the crystal dolphin to stand straight, "how did you enjoy the play last night?" "Oh, they had to go before the end!" she said. "They had to be back at ten!" she said. "So they don't know what happened," she said. "That does seem hard luck,"

she said (for her servants stayed later, if they asked her). "That does seem rather a shame," she said, taking the old bald-looking cushion in the middle of the sofa and putting it in Lucy's arms, and giving her a little push, and crying:

"Take it away! Give it to Mrs. Walker with my compliments! Take it away!" she cried.

And Lucy stopped at the drawing-room door, holding the cushion, and said, very shyly, turning a little pink, Couldn't she help to mend that dress?

But, said Mrs. Dalloway, she had enough on her hands already, quite enough of her own to do without that.

"But, thank you, Lucy, oh, thank you," said Mrs. Dalloway, and thank you, thank you, she went on saying (sitting down on the sofa with her dress over her knees, her scissors, her silks), thank you, thank you, she went on saying in gratitude to her servants generally for helping her to be like this, to be what she wanted, gentle, generous-hearted. Her servants liked her. And then this dress of hers —where was the tear? and now her needle to be threaded. This was a favourite dress, one of Sally Parker's, the last almost she ever made, alas, for Sally had now retired, living at Ealing,[2] and if ever I have a moment, thought Clarissa (but never would she have a moment any more), I shall go and see her at Ealing. For she was a character, thought Clarissa, a real artist. She thought of little out-of-the-way things; yet her dresses were never queer. You could wear them at Hatfield;[3] at Buckingham Palace. She had worn them at Hatfield; at Buckingham Palace.

Quiet descended on her, calm, content, as her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to its gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them, very lightly, to the belt. So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance, and fall; collect and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying "that is all" more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, That is all. Fear no more, says the heart. Fear no more, says the heart, committing its burden to some sea, which sighs collectively for all sorrows, and renews, begins, collects, lets

fall. And the body alone listens to the passing bee; the wave breaking; the dog barking, far away barking and barking.

"Heavens, the front-door bell!" exclaimed Clarissa, staying her needle. Roused, she listened.

"Mrs. Dalloway will see me," said the elderly man in the hall. "Oh yes, she will see *me*," he repeated, putting Lucy aside very benevolently, and running upstairs ever so quickly. "Yes, yes, yes," he muttered as he ran upstairs. "She will see me. After five years in India,[4] Clarissa will see me."

"Who can—what can," asked Mrs. Dalloway (thinking it was outrageous to be interrupted at eleven o'clock on the morning of the day she was giving a party), hearing a step on the stairs. She heard a hand upon the door. She made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy. Now the brass knob slipped. Now the door opened, and in came—for a single second she could not remember what he was called! so surprised she was to see him, so glad, so shy, so utterly taken aback to have Peter Walsh come to her unexpectedly in the morning! (She had not read his letter.)

"And how are you?" said Peter Walsh, positively trembling; taking both her hands; kissing both her hands. She's grown older, he thought, sitting down. I shan't tell her anything about it, he thought, for she's grown older. She's looking at me, he thought, a sudden embarrassment coming over him, though he had kissed her hands. Putting his hand into his pocket, he took out a large pocket-knife and half opened the blade.

Exactly the same, thought Clarissa; the same queer look; the same check suit; a little out of the straight his face is, a little thinner, dryer, perhaps, but he looks awfully well, and just the same.

"How heavenly it is to see you again!" she exclaimed. He had his knife out. That's so like him, she thought.

He had only reached town last night, he said; would have to go down into the country at once; and how was everything, how was everybody—Richard? Elizabeth?

"And what's all this?" he said, tilting his pen-knife towards her green dress.

He's very well dressed, thought Clarissa; yet he always criticises *me.*

Here she is mending her dress; mending her dress as usual, he thought; here she's been sitting all the time I've been in India; mending her dress; playing about; going to parties; running to the House and back and all that, he thought, growing more and more irritated, more and more agitated, for there's nothing in the world so bad for some women as marriage, he thought; and politics; and having a Conservative husband, like the admirable Richard. So it is, so it is, he thought, shutting his knife with a snap.

"Richard's very well. Richard's at a Committee,"[5] said Clarissa.

And she opened her scissors, and said, did he mind her just finishing what she was doing to her dress, for they had a party that night?

"Which I shan't ask you to," she said. "My dear Peter!" she said.

But it was delicious to hear her say that—my dear Peter! Indeed, it was all so delicious—the silver, the chairs; all so delicious!

Why wouldn't she ask him to her party? he asked.

Now of course, thought Clarissa, he's enchanting! perfectly enchanting! Now I remember how impossible it was ever to make up my mind—and why did I make up my mind—not to marry him? she wondered, that awful summer?

"But it's so extraordinary that you should have come this morning!" she cried, putting her hands, one on top of another, down on her dress.

"Do you remember," she said, "how the blinds used to flap at Bourton?"

"They did," he said; and he remembered breakfasting alone, very awkwardly, with her father; who had died; and he had not written to Clarissa. But he had never got on well with old Parry, that querulous, weak-kneed old man, Clarissa's father, Justin Parry.

"I often wish I'd got on better with your father," he said.

"But he never liked any one who—our friends," said Clarissa; and could have bitten her tongue for thus reminding Peter that he had

wanted to marry her.

Of course I did, thought Peter; it almost broke my heart too, he thought; and was overcome with his own grief, which rose like a moon looked at from a terrace, ghastly beautiful with light from the sunken day. I was more unhappy than I've ever been since, he thought. And as if in truth he were sitting there on the terrace he edged a little towards Clarissa; put his hand out; raised it; let it fall. There above them it hung, that moon. She too seemed to be sitting with him on the terrace, in the moonlight.

"Herbert has it now," she said. "I never go there now," she said.

Then, just as happens on a terrace in the moonlight, when one person begins to feel ashamed that he is already bored, and yet as the other sits silent, very quiet, sadly looking at the moon, does not like to speak, moves his foot, clears his throat, notices some iron scroll on a table leg, stirs a leaf, but says nothing—so Peter Walsh did now. For why go back like this to the past? he thought. Why make him think of it again? Why make him suffer, when she had tortured him so infernally? Why?

"Do you remember the lake?" she said, in an abrupt voice, under the pressure of an emotion which caught her heart, made the muscles of her throat stiff, and contracted her lips in a spasm as she said "lake." For she was a child, throwing bread to the ducks, between her parents, and at the same time a grown woman coming to her parents who stood by the lake, holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life, a complete life, which she put down by them and said, "This is what I have made of it! This!" And what had she made of it? What, indeed? sitting there sewing this morning with Peter.

She looked at Peter Walsh; her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully; settled on him tearfully; and rose and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away. Quite simply she wiped her eyes.

"Yes," said Peter. "Yes, yes, yes," he said, as if she drew up to the surface something which positively hurt him as it rose. Stop! Stop!

he wanted to cry. For he was not old; his life was not over; not by any means. He was only just past fifty. Shall I tell her, he thought, or not? He would like to make a clean breast of it all. But she is too cold, he thought; sewing, with her scissors; Daisy would look ordinary beside Clarissa. And she would think me a failure, which I am in their sense, he thought; in the Dalloways' sense. Oh yes, he had no doubt about that; he was a failure, compared with all this—the inlaid table, the mounted paper-knife, the dolphin and the candlesticks, the chair-covers and the old valuable English tinted prints—he was a failure! I detest the smugness of the whole affair, he thought; Richard's doing, not Clarissa's; save that she married him. (Here Lucy came into the room, carrying silver, more silver, but charming, slender, graceful she looked, he thought, as she stooped to put it down.) And this has been going on all the time! he thought; week after week; Clarissa's life; while I—he thought; and at once everything seemed to radiate from him; journeys; rides; quarrels; adventures; bridge parties; love affairs; work; work, work! and he took out his knife quite openly—his old horn-handled knife which Clarissa could swear he had had these thirty years—and clenched his fist upon it.

What an extraordinary habit that was, Clarissa thought; always playing with a knife. Always making one feel, too, frivolous; empty-minded; a mere silly chatterbox, as he used. But I too, she thought, and, taking up her needle, summoned, like a Queen whose guards have fallen asleep and left her unprotected (she had been quite taken aback by this visit—it had upset her) so that any one can stroll in and have a look at her where she lies with the brambles curving over her, summoned to her help the things she did; the things she liked; her husband; Elizabeth; her self, in short, which Peter hardly knew now, all to come about her and beat off the enemy.

"Well, and what's happened to you?" she said. So before a battle begins, the horses paw the ground; toss their heads; the light shines on their flanks; their necks curve. So Peter Walsh and Clarissa, sitting side by side on the blue sofa, challenged each other. His powers chafed and tossed in him. He assembled from different

quarters all sorts of things; praise; his career at Oxford; his marriage, which she knew nothing whatever about; how he had loved; and altogether done his job.

"Millions of things!" he exclaimed, and, urged by the assembly of powers which were now charging this way and that and giving him the feeling at once frightening and extremely exhilarating of being rushed through the air on the shoulders of people he could no longer see, he raised his hands to his forehead.

Clarissa sat very upright; drew in her breath.

"I am in love," he said, not to her however, but to some one raised up in the dark so that you could not touch her but must lay your garland down on the grass in the dark.

"In love," he repeated, now speaking rather dryly to Clarissa Dalloway; "in love with a girl in India." He had deposited his garland. Clarissa could make what she would of it.

"In love!" she said. That he at his age should be sucked under in his little bow-tie by that monster! And there's no flesh on his neck; his hands are red; and he's six months older than I am! her eye flashed back to her; but in her heart she felt, all the same, he is in love. He has that, she felt; he is in love.

But the indomitable egotism which for ever rides down the hosts opposed to it, the river which says on, on, on; even though, it admits, there may be no goal for us whatever, still on, on; this indomitable egotism charged her cheeks with colour; made her look very young; very pink; very bright-eyed as she sat with her dress upon her knee, and her needle held to the end of green silk, trembling a little. He was in love! Not with her. With some younger woman, of course.

"And who is she?" she asked.

Now this statue must be brought from its height and set down between them.

"A married woman, unfortunately," he said; "the wife of a Major in the Indian Army."

And with a curious ironical sweetness he smiled as he placed her in this ridiculous way before Clarissa.

(All the same, he is in love, thought Clarissa.)

"She has," he continued, very reasonably, "two small children; a boy and a girl; and I have come over to see my lawyers about the divorce."

There they are! he thought. Do what you like with them, Clarissa! There they are! And second by second it seemed to him that the wife of the Major in the Indian Army[6] (his Daisy) and her two small children became more and more lovely as Clarissa looked at them; as if he had set light to a grey pellet on a plate and there had risen up a lovely tree in the brisk sea-salted air of their intimacy (for in some ways no one understood him, felt with him, as Clarissa did)—their exquisite intimacy.

She flattered him; she fooled him, thought Clarissa; shaping the woman, the wife of the Major in the Indian Army, with three strokes of a knife. What a waste! What a folly! All his life long Peter had been fooled like that; first getting sent down from Oxford;[7] next marrying the girl on the boat going out to India; now the wife of a Major in the Indian Army—thank Heaven she had refused to marry him! Still, he was in love; her old friend, her dear Peter, he was in love.

"But what are you going to do?" she asked him. Oh the lawyers and solicitors, Messrs. Hooper and Grateley of Lincoln's Inn,[8] they were going to do it, he said. And he actually pared his nails with his pocket-knife.

For Heaven's sake, leave your knife alone! she cried to herself in irrepressible irritation; it was his silly unconventionality, his weakness; his lack of the ghost of a notion what any one else was feeling that annoyed her, had always annoyed her; and now at his age, how silly!

I know all that, Peter thought; I know what I'm up against, he thought, running his finger along the blade of his knife, Clarissa and Dalloway and all the rest of them; but I'll show Clarissa—and then to his utter surprise, suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces thrown through the air, he burst into tears; wept; wept without the least shame, sitting on the sofa, the tears running down his cheeks.

And Clarissa had leant forward, taken his hand, drawn him to her, kissed him,—actually had felt his face on hers before she could down the brandishing of silver flashing—plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast, which, subsiding, left her holding his hand, patting his knee and, feeling as she sat back extraordinarily at her ease with him and light-hearted, all in a clap it came over her, If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!

It was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone up into the tower alone and left them blackberrying in the sun. The door had shut, and there among the dust of fallen plaster and the litter of birds' nests how distant the view had looked, and the sounds came thin and chill (once on Leith Hill,[9] she remembered), and Richard, Richard! she cried, as a sleeper in the night starts and stretches a hand in the dark for help. Lunching with Lady Bruton, it came back to her. He has left me; I am alone for ever, she thought, folding her hands upon her knee.

Peter Walsh had got up and crossed to the window and stood with his back to her, flicking a bandanna handkerchief from side to side. Masterly and dry and desolate he looked, his thin shoulder-blades lifting his coat slightly; blowing his nose violently. Take me with you, Clarissa thought impulsively, as if he were starting directly upon some great voyage; and then, next moment, it was as if the five acts of a play that had been very exciting and moving were now over and she had lived a lifetime in them and had run away, had lived with Peter, and it was now over.

Now it was time to move, and, as a woman gathers her things together, her cloak, her gloves, her opera-glasses, and gets up to go out of the theatre into the street, she rose from the sofa and went to Peter.

And it was awfully strange, he thought, how she still had the power, as she came tinkling, rustling, still had the power as she came across the room, to make the moon, which he detested, rise at Bourton on the terrace in the summer sky.

"Tell me," he said, seizing her by the shoulders. "Are you happy, Clarissa? Does Richard—"

The door opened.

"Here is my Elizabeth," said Clarissa, emotionally, histrionically, perhaps.

"How d'y do?" said Elizabeth coming forward.

The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that.

"Hullo, Elizabeth!" cried Peter, stuffing his handkerchief into his pocket, going quickly to her, saying "Good-bye, Clarissa" without looking at her, leaving the room quickly, and running downstairs and opening the hall door.

"Peter! Peter!" cried Clarissa, following him out on to the landing. "My party to-night! Remember my party to-night!" she cried, having to raise her voice against the roar of the open air, and, overwhelmed by the traffic and the sound of all the clocks striking, her voice crying "Remember my party to-night!" sounded frail and thin and very far away as Peter Walsh shut the door.

Remember my party, remember my party, said Peter Walsh as he stepped down the street, speaking to himself rhythmically, in time with the flow of the sound, the direct downright sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour. (The leaden circles dissolved in the air.) Oh these parties, he thought; Clarissa's parties. Why does she give these parties, he thought. Not that he blamed her or this effigy of a man in a tail-coat with a carnation in his button-hole coming towards him. Only one person in the world could be as he was, in love. And there he was, this fortunate man, himself, reflected in the plate-glass window of a motor-car manufacturer in Victoria Street. All India lay behind him; plains, mountains; epidemics of cholera; a district twice as big as Ireland; decisions he had come to alone—he, Peter Walsh; who was now really for the first time in his life, in love. Clarissa had grown hard, he thought; and a trifle sentimental into the bargain, he suspected, looking at the great motor-cars capable of doing—how many miles on how many gallons? For he had a turn for mechanics;

had invented a plough in his district, had ordered wheel-barrows from England, but the coolies[1] wouldn't use them, all of which Clarissa knew nothing whatever about.

The way she said "Here is my Elizabeth!"—that annoyed him. Why not "Here's Elizabeth" simply? It was insincere. And Elizabeth didn't like it either. (Still the last tremors of the great booming voice shook the air round him; the half-hour; still early; only half-past eleven still.) For he understood young people; he liked them. There was always something cold in Clarissa, he thought. She had always, even as a girl, a sort of timidity, which in middle age becomes conventionality, and then it's all up, it's all up, he thought, looking rather drearily into the glassy depths, and wondering whether by calling at that hour he had annoyed her; overcome with shame suddenly at having been a fool; wept; been emotional; told her everything, as usual, as usual.

As a cloud crosses the sun, silence falls on London; and falls on the mind. Effort ceases. Time flaps on the mast. There we stop; there we stand. Rigid, the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame. Where there is nothing, Peter Walsh said to himself; feeling hollowed out, utterly empty within. Clarissa refused me, he thought. He stood there thinking, Clarissa refused me.

Ah, said St. Margaret's,[2] like a hostess who comes into her drawing-room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says. Yet, though she is perfectly right, her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality. Some grief for the past holds it back; some concern for the present. It is half-past eleven, she says, and the sound of St. Margaret's glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest—like Clarissa herself, thought Peter Walsh, coming down the stairs on the stroke of the hour in white. It is Clarissa herself, he thought, with a deep emotion, and an extraordinarily clear, yet puzzling, recollection of her, as if this bell had come into the room years ago, where they sat at some moment

of great intimacy, and had gone from one to the other and had left, like a bee with honey, laden with the moment. But what room? What moment? And why had he been so profoundly happy when the clock was striking? Then, as the sound of St. Margaret's languished, he thought, She has been ill, and the sound expressed languor and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall,[3] as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future.

He was not old, or set, or dried in the least. As for caring what they said of him—the Dalloways, the Whitbreads, and their set, he cared not a straw—not a straw (though it was true he would have, some time or other, to see whether Richard couldn't help him to some job). Striding, staring, he glared at the statue of the Duke of Cambridge.[4] He had been sent down from Oxford—true. He had been a Socialist, in some sense a failure—true. Still the future of civilisation lies, he thought, in the hands of young men like that; of young men such as he was, thirty years ago; with their love of abstract principles; getting books sent out to them all the way from London to a peak in the Himalayas; reading science; reading philosophy. The future lies in the hands of young men like that, he thought.

A patter like the patter of leaves in a wood came from behind, and with it a rustling, regular thudding sound, which as it overtook him drummed his thoughts, strict in step, up Whitehall, without his doing. Boys in uniform, carrying guns, marched with their eyes ahead of them, marched, their arms stiff, and on their faces an expression like the letters of a legend written round the base of a statue praising duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England.

It is, thought Peter Walsh, beginning to keep step with them, a very fine training. But they did not look robust. They were weedy for the most part, boys of sixteen, who might, tomorrow, stand behind bowls of rice, cakes of soap on counters. Now they wore on them

unmixed with sensual pleasure or daily preoccupations the solemnity of the wreath which they had fetched from Finsbury Pavement to the empty tomb.[5] They had taken their vow. The traffic respected it; vans were stopped.

I can't keep up with them, Peter Walsh thought, as they marched up Whitehall, and sure enough, on they marched, past him, past every one, in their steady way, as if one will worked legs and arms uniformly, and life, with its varieties, its irreticences, had been laid under a pavement of monuments and wreaths and drugged into a stiff yet staring corpse by discipline. One had to respect it; one might laugh; but one had to respect it, he thought. There they go, thought Peter Walsh, pausing at the edge of the pavement; and all the exalted statues, Nelson, Gordon, Havelock, the black, the spectacular images of great soldiers[6] stood looking ahead of them, as if they too had made the same renunciation (Peter Walsh felt he too had made it, the great renunciation), trampled under the same temptations, and achieved at length a marble stare. But the stare Peter Walsh did not want for himself in the least; though he could respect it in others. He could respect it in boys. They don't know the troubles of the flesh yet, he thought, as the marching boys disappeared in the direction of the Strand[7]—all that I've been through, he thought, crossing the road, and standing under Gordon's statue, Gordon whom as a boy he had worshipped; Gordon standing lonely with one leg raised and his arms crossed,—poor Gordon, he thought.

And just because nobody yet knew he was in London, except Clarissa, and the earth, after the voyage, still seemed an island to him, the strangeness of standing alone, alive, unknown, at half-past eleven in Trafalgar Square overcame him. What is it? Where am I? And why, after all, does one do it? he thought, the divorce seeming all moonshine. And down his mind went flat as a marsh, and three great emotions bowled over him; understanding; a vast philanthropy; and finally, as if the result of the others, an irrepressible, exquisite delight; as if inside his brain by another hand strings were pulled, shutters moved, and he, having nothing to do

with it, yet stood at the opening of endless avenues, down which if he chose he might wander. He had not felt so young for years.

He had escaped! was utterly free—as happens in the downfall of habit when the mind, like an unguarded flame, bows and bends and seems about to blow from its holding. I haven't felt so young for years! thought Peter, escaping (only of course for an hour or so) from being precisely what he was, and feeling like a child who runs out of doors, and sees, as he runs, his old nurse waving at the wrong window. But she's extraordinarily attractive, he thought, as, walking across Trafalgar Square in the direction of the Haymarket,[8] came a young woman who, as she passed Gordon's statue, seemed, Peter Walsh thought (susceptible as he was), to shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet, black,[9] but enchanting.

Straightening himself and stealthily fingering his pocket-knife he started after her to follow this woman, this excitement, which seemed even with its back turned to shed on him a light which connected them, which singled him out, as if the random uproar of the traffic had whispered through hollowed hands his name, not Peter, but his private name which he called himself in his own thoughts. "You," she said, only "you," saying it with her white gloves and her shoulders. Then the thin long cloak which the wind stirred as she walked past Dent's shop in Cockspur Street[1] blew out with an enveloping kindness, a mournful tenderness, as of arms that would open and take the tired—

But she's not married; she's young; quite young, thought Peter, the red carnation he had seen her wear as she came across Trafalgar Square burning again in his eyes and making her lips red. But she waited at the kerbstone. There was a dignity about her. She was not worldly, like Clarissa; not rich, like Clarissa. Was she, he wondered as she moved, respectable? Witty, with a lizard's flickering tongue, he thought (for one must invent, must allow oneself a little diversion), a cool waiting wit, a darting wit; not noisy.

She moved; she crossed; he followed her. To embarrass her was the last thing he wished. Still if she stopped he would say "Come

and have an ice," he would say, and she would answer, perfectly simply, "Oh yes."

But other people got between them in the street, obstructing him, blotting her out. He pursued; she changed. There was colour in her cheeks; mockery in her eyes; he was an adventurer, reckless, he thought, swift, daring, indeed (landed as he was last night from India) a romantic buccaneer, careless of all these damned proprieties, yellow dressing-gowns, pipes, fishing-rods, in the shop windows; and respectability and evening parties and spruce old men wearing white slips beneath their waistcoats. He was a buccaneer.[2] On and on she went, across Piccadilly, and up Regent Street, ahead of him, her cloak, her gloves, her shoulders combining with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows to make the spirit of finery and whimsy which dwindled out of the shops on to the pavement, as the light of a lamp goes wavering at night over hedges in the darkness.

Laughing and delightful, she had crossed Oxford Street and Great Portland Street[3] and turned down one of the little streets, and now, and now, the great moment was approaching, for now she slackened, opened her bag, and with one look in his direction, but not at him, one look that bade farewell, summed up the whole situation and dismissed it triumphantly, for ever, had fitted her key, opened the door, and gone! Clarissa's voice saying, Remember my party, Remember my party, sang in his ears. The house was one of those flat red houses with hanging flower-baskets of vague impropriety. It was over.

Well, I've had my fun; I've had it, he thought, looking up at the swinging baskets of pale geraniums. And it was smashed to atoms—his fun, for it was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life, he thought—making oneself up; making her up; creating an exquisite amusement, and something more. But odd it was, and quite true; all this one could never share—it smashed to atoms.

He turned; went up the street, thinking to find somewhere to sit, till it was time for Lincoln's Inn—for Messrs. Hooper and Grateley.

Where should he go? No matter. Up the street, then, towards Regent's Park. His boots on the pavement struck out "no matter"; for it was early, still very early.

It was a splendid morning too. Like the pulse of a perfect heart, life struck straight through the streets. There was no fumbling—no hesitation. Sweeping and swerving, accurately, punctually, noiselessly, there, precisely at the right instant, the motor-car stopped at the door. The girl, silk-stockinged, feathered, evanescent, but not to him particularly attractive (for he had had his fling), alighted. Admirable butlers, tawny chow dogs, halls laid in black and white lozenges[4] with white blinds blowing, Peter saw through the opened door and approved of. A splendid achievement in its own way, after all, London; the season; civilisation. Coming as he did from a respectable Anglo-Indian family[5] which for at least three generations had administered the affairs of a continent (it's strange, he thought, what a sentiment I have about that, disliking India, and empire, and army as he did), there were moments when civilisation, even of this sort, seemed dear to him as a personal possession; moments of pride in England; in butlers; chow dogs; girls in their security. Ridiculous enough, still there it is, he thought. And the doctors and men of business and capable women all going about their business, punctual, alert, robust, seemed to him wholly admirable, good fellows, to whom one would entrust one's life, companions in the art of living, who would see one through. What with one thing and another, the show was really very tolerable; and he would sit down in the shade and smoke.

There was Regent's Park. Yes. As a child he had walked in Regent's Park—odd, he thought, how the thought of childhood keeps coming back to me—the result of seeing Clarissa, perhaps; for women live much more in the past than we do, he thought. They attach themselves to places; and their fathers—a woman's always proud of her father. Bourton was a nice place, a very nice place, but I could never get on with the old man, he thought. There was quite a scene one night—an argument about something or other, what, he could not remember. Politics presumably.

Yes, he remembered Regent's Park; the long straight walk; the little house where one bought air-balls to the left; an absurd statue with an inscription[6] somewhere or other. He looked for an empty seat. He did not want to be bothered (feeling a little drowsy as he did) by people asking him the time. An elderly grey nurse, with a baby asleep in its perambulator—that was the best he could do for himself; sit down at the far end of the seat by that nurse.

She's a queer-looking girl, he thought, suddenly remembering Elizabeth as she came into the room and stood by her mother. Grown big; quite grown-up, not exactly pretty; handsome rather; and she can't be more than eighteen. Probably she doesn't get on with Clarissa. "There's my Elizabeth"—that sort of thing—why not "Here's Elizabeth" simply?—trying to make out, like most mothers, that things are what they're not. She trusts to her charm too much, he thought. She overdoes it.

The rich benignant cigar smoke eddied coolly down his throat; he puffed it out again in rings which breasted the air bravely for a moment; blue, circular—I shall try and get a word alone with Elizabeth to-night, he thought—then began to wobble into hour-glass shapes and taper away; odd shapes they take, he thought. Suddenly he closed his eyes, raised his hand with an effort, and threw away the heavy end of his cigar. A great brush swept smooth across his mind, sweeping across it moving branches, children's voices, the shuffle of feet, and people passing, and humming traffic, rising and falling traffic. Down, down he sank into the plumes and feathers of sleep, sank, and was muffled over.

The grey nurse resumed her knitting as Peter Walsh, on the hot seat beside her, began snoring. In her grey dress, moving her hands indefatigably yet quietly, she seemed like the champion of the rights of sleepers, like one of those spectral presences which rise in twilight in woods made of sky and branches. The solitary traveller, haunter of lanes, disturber of ferns, and devastator of great hemlock plants, looking up, suddenly sees the giant figure at the end of the ride.

By conviction an atheist perhaps, he is taken by surprise with moments of extraordinary exaltation. Nothing exists outside us except a state of mind, he thinks; a desire for solace, for relief, for something outside these miserable pigmies, these feeble, these ugly, these craven men and women. But if he can conceive of her, then in some sort she exists, he thinks, and advancing down the path with his eyes upon sky and branches he rapidly endows them with womanhood; sees with amazement how grave they become; how majestically, as the breeze stirs them, they dispense with a dark flutter of the leaves charity, comprehension, absolution, and then, flinging themselves suddenly aloft, confound the piety of their aspect with a wild carouse.

Such are the visions which proffer great cornucopias full of fruit to the solitary traveller, or murmur in his ear like sirens lolloping away on the green sea waves, or are dashed in his face like bunches of roses, or rise to the surface like pale faces which fishermen flounder through floods to embrace.

Such are the visions which ceaselessly float up, pace beside, put their faces in front of, the actual thing; often overpowering the solitary traveller and taking away from him the sense of the earth, the wish to return, and giving him for substitute a general peace, as if (so he thinks as he advances down the forest ride) all this fever of living were simplicity itself; and myriads of things merged in one thing; and this figure, made of sky and branches as it is, had risen from the troubled sea (he is elderly, past fifty now) as a shape might be sucked up out of the waves to shower down from her magnificent hands compassion, comprehension, absolution. So, he thinks, may I never go back to the lamplight; to the sitting-room; never finish my book; never knock out my pipe; never ring for Mrs. Turner to clear away; rather let me walk straight on to this great figure, who will, with a toss of her head, mount me on her streamers and let me blow to nothingness with the rest.

Such are the visions. The solitary traveller is soon beyond the wood; and there, coming to the door with shaded eyes, possibly to look for his return, with hands raised, with white apron blowing, is

an elderly woman who seems (so powerful is this infirmity) to seek, over a desert, a lost son; to search for a rider destroyed; to be the figure of the mother whose sons have been killed in the battles of the world. So, as the solitary traveller advances down the village street where the women stand knitting and the men dig in the garden, the evening seems ominous; the figures still; as if some august fate, known to them, awaited without fear, were about to sweep them into complete annihilation.

Indoors among ordinary things, the cupboard, the table, the window-sill with its geraniums, suddenly the outline of the landlady, bending to remove the cloth, becomes soft with light, an adorable emblem which only the recollection of cold human contacts forbids us to embrace. She takes the marmalade; she shuts it in the cupboard.

"There is nothing more to-night, sir?"

But to whom does the solitary traveller make reply?

So the elderly nurse knitted over the sleeping baby in Regent's Park. So Peter Walsh snored.

He woke with extreme suddenness, saying to himself, "The death of the soul."

"Lord, Lord!" he said to himself out loud, stretching and opening his eyes. "The death of the soul." The words attached themselves to some scene, to some room, to some past he had been dreaming of. It became clearer; the scene, the room, the past he had been dreaming of.

It was at Bourton that summer, early in the 'nineties, when he was so passionately in love with Clarissa. There were a great many people there, laughing and talking, sitting round a table after tea and the room was bathed in yellow light and full of cigarette smoke. They were talking about a man who had married his housemaid, one of the neighbouring squires, he had forgotten his name. He had married his housemaid, and she had been brought to Bourton to call —an awful visit it had been. She was absurdly over-dressed, "like a cockatoo," Clarissa had said, imitating her, and she never stopped

talking. On and on she went, on and on. Clarissa imitated her. Then somebody said—Sally Seton it was—did it make any real difference to one's feelings to know that before they'd married she had had a baby? (In those days, in mixed company, it was a bold thing to say.) He could see Clarissa now, turning bright pink; somehow contracting; and saying, "Oh, I shall never be able to speak to her again!" Whereupon the whole party sitting round the tea-table seemed to wobble. It was very uncomfortable.

He hadn't blamed her for minding the fact, since in those days a girl brought up as she was, knew nothing, but it was her manner that annoyed him; timid; hard; something arrogant; unimaginative; prudish. "The death of the soul." He had said that instinctively, ticketing the moment as he used to do—the death of her soul.

Every one wobbled; every one seemed to bow, as she spoke, and then to stand up different. He could see Sally Seton, like a child who has been in mischief, leaning forward, rather flushed, wanting to talk, but afraid, and Clarissa did frighten people. (She was Clarissa's greatest friend, always about the place, totally unlike her, an attractive creature, handsome, dark, with the reputation in those days of great daring and he used to give her cigars, which she smoked in her bedroom. She had either been engaged to somebody or quarrelled with her family and old Parry disliked them both equally, which was a great bond.) Then Clarissa, still with an air of being offended with them all, got up, made some excuse, and went off, alone. As she opened the door, in came that great shaggy dog which ran after sheep. She flung herself upon him, went into raptures. It was as if she said to Peter—it was all aimed at him, he knew—"I know you thought me absurd about that woman just now; but see how extraordinarily sympathetic I am; see how I love my Rob!"

They had always this queer power of communicating without words. She knew directly he criticised her. Then she would do something quite obvious to defend herself, like this fuss with the dog—but it never took him in, he always saw through Clarissa. Not that

he said anything, of course; just sat looking glum. It was the way their quarrels often began.

She shut the door. At once he became extremely depressed. It all seemed useless—going on being in love; going on quarrelling; going on making it up, and he wandered off alone, among outhouses, stables, looking at the horses. (The place was quite a humble one; the Parrys were never very well off; but there were always grooms and stable-boys about—Clarissa loved riding—and an old coachman —what was his name?—an old nurse, old Moody, old Goody, some such name they called her, whom one was taken to visit in a little room with lots of photographs, lots of bird-cages.)

It was an awful evening! He grew more and more gloomy, not about that only; about everything. And he couldn't see her; couldn't explain to her; couldn't have it out. There were always people about —she'd go on as if nothing had happened. That was the devilish part of her—this coldness, this woodenness, something very profound in her, which he had felt again this morning talking to her; an impenetrability. Yet Heaven knows he loved her. She had some queer power of fiddling on one's nerves, turning one's nerves to fiddle-strings, yes.

He had gone in to dinner rather late, from some idiotic idea of making himself felt, and had sat down by old Miss Parry—Aunt Helena—Mr. Parry's sister, who was supposed to preside. There she sat in her white Cashmere shawl, with her head against the window —a formidable old lady, but kind to him, for he had found her some rare flower, and she was a great botanist, marching off in thick boots with a black collecting-box slung between her shoulders. He sat down beside her, and couldn't speak. Everything seemed to race past him; he just sat there, eating. And then half-way through dinner he made himself look across at Clarissa for the first time. She was talking to a young man on her right. He had a sudden revelation. "She will marry that man," he said to himself. He didn't even know his name.

For of course it was that afternoon, that very afternoon, that Dalloway had come over; and Clarissa called him "Wickham"; that

was the beginning of it all. Somebody had brought him over; and Clarissa got his name wrong. She introduced him to everybody as Wickham.[7] At last he said "My name is Dalloway!"—that was his first view of Richard—a fair young man, rather awkward, sitting on a deck-chair, and blurting out "My name is Dalloway!" Sally got hold of it; always after that she called him "My name is Dalloway!"

He was a prey to revelations at that time. This one—that she would marry Dalloway—was blinding—overwhelming at the moment. There was a sort of—how could he put it?—a sort of ease in her manner to him; something maternal; something gentle. They were talking about politics. All through dinner he tried to hear what they were saying.

Afterwards he could remember standing by old Miss Parry's chair in the drawing-room. Clarissa came up, with her perfect manners, like a real hostess, and wanted to introduce him to some one—spoke as if they had never met before, which enraged him. Yet even then he admired her for it. He admired her courage; her social instinct; he admired her power of carrying things through. "The perfect hostess," he said to her, whereupon she winced all over. But he meant her to feel it. He would have done anything to hurt her after seeing her with Dalloway. So she left him. And he had a feeling that they were all gathered together in a conspiracy against him—laughing and talking—behind his back. There he stood by Miss Parry's chair as though he had been cut out of wood, he talking about wild flowers. Never, never had he suffered so infernally! He must have forgotten even to pretend to listen; at last he woke up; he saw Miss Parry looking rather disturbed, rather indignant, with her prominent eyes fixed. He almost cried out that he couldn't attend because he was in Hell! People began going out of the room. He heard them talking about fetching cloaks; about its being cold on the water, and so on. They were going boating on the lake by moonlight—one of Sally's mad ideas. He could hear her describing the moon. And they all went out. He was left quite alone.

"Don't you want to go with them?" said Aunt Helena—old Miss Parry!—she had guessed. And he turned round and there was

Clarissa again. She had come back to fetch him. He was overcome by her generosity—her goodness.

"Come along," she said. "They're waiting."

He had never felt so happy in the whole of his life! Without a word they made it up. They walked down to the lake. He had twenty minutes of perfect happiness. Her voice, her laugh, her dress (something floating, white, crimson), her spirit, her adventurousness; she made them all disembark and explore the island; she startled a hen; she laughed; she sang. And all the time, he knew perfectly well, Dalloway was falling in love with her; she was falling in love with Dalloway; but it didn't seem to matter. Nothing mattered. They sat on the ground and talked—he and Clarissa. They went in and out of each other's minds without any effort. And then in a second it was over. He said to himself as they were getting into the boat, "She will marry that man," dully, without any resentment; but it was an obvious thing. Dalloway would marry Clarissa.

Dalloway rowed them in. He said nothing. But somehow as they watched him start, jumping on to his bicycle to ride twenty miles through the woods, wobbling off down the drive, waving his hand and disappearing, he obviously did feel, instinctively, tremendously, strongly, all that; the night; the romance; Clarissa. He deserved to have her.

For himself, he was absurd. His demands upon Clarissa (he could see it now) were absurd. He asked impossible things. He made terrible scenes. She would have accepted him still, perhaps, if he had been less absurd. Sally thought so. She wrote him all that summer long letters; how they had talked of him; how she had praised him, how Clarissa burst into tears! It was an extraordinary summer—all letters, scenes, telegrams—arriving at Bourton early in the morning, hanging about till the servants were up; appalling *tête-à-têtes* with old Mr. Parry at breakfast; Aunt Helena formidable but kind; Sally sweeping him off for talks in the vegetable garden; Clarissa in bed with headaches.

The final scene, the terrible scene which he believed had mattered more than anything in the whole of his life (it might be an exaggeration—but still so it did seem now) happened at three o'clock in the afternoon of a very hot day. It was a trifle that led up to it—Sally at lunch saying something about Dalloway, and calling him "My name is Dalloway"; whereupon Clarissa suddenly stiffened, coloured, in a way she had, and rapped out sharply, "We've had enough of that feeble joke." That was all; but for him it was precisely as if she had said, "I'm only amusing myself with you; I've an understanding with Richard Dalloway." So he took it. He had not slept for nights. "It's got to be finished one way or the other," he said to himself. He sent a note to her by Sally asking her to meet him by the fountain at three. "Something very important has happened," he scribbled at the end of it.

The fountain was in the middle of a little shrubbery, far from the house, with shrubs and trees all round it. There she came, even before the time, and they stood with the fountain between them, the spout (it was broken) dribbling water incessantly. How sights fix themselves upon the mind! For example, the vivid green moss.

She did not move. "Tell me the truth, tell me the truth," he kept on saying. He felt as if his forehead would burst. She seemed contracted, petrified. She did not move. "Tell me the truth," he repeated, when suddenly that old man Breitkopf popped his head in carrying the *Times*, stared at them; gaped; and went away. They neither of them moved. "Tell me the truth," he repeated. He felt that he was grinding against something physically hard; she was unyielding. She was like iron, like flint, rigid up the backbone. And when she said, "It's no use. It's no use. This is the end"—after he had spoken for hours, it seemed, with the tears running down his cheeks—it was as if she had hit him in the face. She turned, she left him, went away.

"Clarissa!" he cried. "Clarissa!" But she never came back. It was over. He went away that night. He never saw her again.

It was awful, he cried, awful, awful!

Still, the sun was hot. Still, one got over things. Still, life had a way of adding day to day. Still, he thought, yawning and beginning to take notice—Regent's Park had changed very little since he was a boy, except for the squirrels—still, presumably there were compensations—when little Elise Mitchell, who had been picking up pebbles to add to the pebble collection which she and her brother were making on the nursery mantelpiece, plumped her handful down on the nurse's knee and scudded off again full tilt into a lady's legs. Peter Walsh laughed out.

But Lucrezia Warren Smith was saying to herself, It's wicked; why should I suffer? she was asking, as she walked down the broad path. No; I can't stand it any longer, she was saying, having left Septimus, who wasn't Septimus any longer, to say hard, cruel, wicked things, to talk to himself, to talk to a dead man, on the seat over there; when the child ran full tilt into her, fell flat, and burst out crying.

That was comforting rather. She stood her upright, dusted her frock, kissed her.

But for herself she had done nothing wrong; she had loved Septimus; she had been happy; she had had a beautiful home, and there her sisters lived still, making hats. Why should *she* suffer?

The child ran straight back to its nurse, and Rezia saw her scolded, comforted, taken up by the nurse who put down her knitting, and the kind-looking man gave her his watch to blow open[8] to comfort her—but why should *she* be exposed? Why not left in Milan? Why tortured? Why?

Slightly waved by tears the broad path, the nurse, the man in grey, the perambulator, rose and fell before her eyes. To be rocked by this malignant torturer was her lot. But why? She was like a bird sheltering under the thin hollow of a leaf, who blinks at the sun when the leaf moves; starts at the crack of a dry twig. She was exposed; she was surrounded by the enormous trees, vast clouds of an indifferent world, exposed; tortured; and why should she suffer? Why?

She frowned; she stamped her foot. She must go back again to Septimus since it was almost time for them to be going to Sir William

Bradshaw. She must go back and tell him, go back to him sitting there on the green chair under the tree, talking to himself, or to that dead man Evans, whom she had only seen once for a moment in the shop. He had seemed a nice quiet man; a great friend of Septimus's, and he had been killed in the War. But such things happen to every one. Every one has friends who were killed in the War. Every one gives up something when they marry. She had given up her home. She had come to live here, in this awful city. But Septimus let himself think about horrible things, as she could too, if she tried. He had grown stranger and stranger. He said people were talking behind the bedroom walls. Mrs. Filmer thought it odd. He saw things too—he had seen an old woman's head in the middle of a fern. Yet he could be happy when he chose. They went to Hampton Court[9] on top of a bus, and they were perfectly happy. All the little red and yellow flowers were out on the grass, like floating lamps he said, and talked and chattered and laughed, making up stories. Suddenly he said, "Now we will kill ourselves," when they were standing by the river, and he looked at it with a look which she had seen in his eyes when a train went by, or an omnibus—a look as if something fascinated him; and she felt he was going from her and she caught him by the arm. But going home he was perfectly quiet—perfectly reasonable. He would argue with her about killing themselves; and explain how wicked people were; how he could see them making up lies as they passed in the street. He knew all their thoughts, he said; he knew everything. He knew the meaning of the world, he said. Then when they got back he could hardly walk. He lay on the sofa and made her hold his hand to prevent him from falling down, down, he cried, into the flames! and saw faces laughing at him, calling him horrible disgusting names, from the walls, and hands pointing round the screen. Yet they were quite alone. But he began to talk aloud, answering people, arguing, laughing, crying, getting very excited and making her write things down. Perfect nonsense it was; about death; about Miss Isabel Pole. She could stand it no longer. She would go back.

She was close to him now, could see him staring at the sky, muttering, clasping his hands. Yet Dr. Holmes said there was nothing the matter with him. What then had happened—why had he gone, then, why, when she sat by him, did he start, frown at her, move away, and point at her hand, take her hand, look at it terrified?

Was it that she had taken off her wedding ring? "My hand has grown so thin," she said. "I have put it in my purse," she told him.

He dropped her hand. Their marriage was over, he thought, with agony, with relief. The rope was cut; he mounted; he was free, as it was decreed that he, Septimus, the lord of men, should be free; alone (since his wife had thrown away her wedding ring; since she had left him), he, Septimus, was alone, called forth in advance of the mass of men to hear the truth, to learn the meaning, which now at last, after all the toils of civilisation—Greeks, Romans, Shakespeare, Darwin,[1] and now himself—was to be given whole to. . . . "To whom?" he asked aloud. "To the Prime Minister," the voices which rustled above his head replied. The supreme secret must be told to the Cabinet; first that trees are alive; next there is no crime; next love, universal love, he muttered, gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out these profound truths which needed, so deep were they, so difficult, an immense effort to speak out, but the world was entirely changed by them for ever.

No crime; love; he repeated, fumbling for his card and pencil, when a Skye terrier snuffed his trousers and he started in an agony of fear. It was turning into a man! He could not watch it happen! It was horrible, terrible to see a dog become a man! At once the dog trotted away.

Heaven was divinely merciful, infinitely benignant. It spared him, pardoned his weakness. But what was the scientific explanation (for one must be scientific above all things)? Why could he see through bodies, see into the future, when dogs will become men? It was the heat wave presumably, operating upon a brain made sensitive by eons of evolution. Scientifically speaking, the flesh was melted off the world. His body was macerated until only the nerve fibres were left. It was spread like a veil upon a rock.

He lay back in his chair, exhausted but upheld. He lay resting, waiting, before he again interpreted, with effort, with agony, to mankind. He lay very high, on the back of the world. The earth thrilled beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh; their stiff leaves rustled by his head. Music began clanging against the rocks up here. It is a motor horn down in the street, he muttered; but up here it cannoned from rock to rock, divided, met in shocks of sound which rose in smooth columns (that music should be visible was a discovery) and became an anthem, an anthem twined round now by a shepherd boy's piping (That's an old man playing a penny whistle by the public-house, he muttered) which, as the boy stood still came bubbling from his pipe, and then, as he climbed higher, made its exquisite plaint while the traffic passed beneath. This boy's elegy is played among the traffic, thought Septimus. Now he withdraws up into the snows, and roses hang about him—the thick red roses which grow on my bedroom wall, he reminded himself. The music stopped. He has his penny, he reasoned it out, and has gone on to the next public-house.

But he himself remained high on his rock, like a drowned sailor on a rock. I leant over the edge of the boat and fell down, he thought I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive, but let me rest still; he begged (he was talking to himself again—it was awful, awful!); and as, before waking, the voices of birds and the sound of wheels chime and chatter in a queer harmony, grow louder and louder and the sleeper feels himself drawing to the shores of life, so he felt himself drawing towards life, the sun growing hotter, cries sounding louder, something tremendous about to happen.

He had only to open his eyes; but a weight was on them; a fear. He strained; he pushed; he looked; he saw Regent's Park before him. Long streamers of sunlight fawned at his feet. The trees waved, brandished. We welcome, the world seemed to say; we accept; we create. Beauty, the world seemed to say. And as if to prove it (scientifically) wherever he looked at the houses, at the railings, at the antelopes stretching over the palings, beauty sprang instantly. To

watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy. Up in the sky swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out, round and round, yet always with perfect control as if elastics held them; and the flies rising and falling; and the sun spotting now this leaf, now that, in mockery, dazzling it with soft gold in pure good temper; and now and again some chime (it might be a motor horn) tinkling divinely on the grass stalks—all of this, calm and reasonable as it was, made out of ordinary things as it was, was the truth now; beauty, that was the truth now. Beauty was everywhere.

"It is time," said Rezia.

The word "time" split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly,[2] Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself—

"For God's sake don't come!" Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead.

But the branches parted. A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried, raising his hand (as the dead man in the grey suit came nearer), raising his hand like some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone with his hands pressed to his forehead, furrows of despair on his cheeks, and now sees light on the desert's edge which broadens and strikes the iron-black figure (and Septimus half rose from his chair), and with legions of men prostrate behind him he, the giant mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole—

"But I am so unhappy, Septimus," said Rezia trying to make him sit down.

The millions lamented; for ages they had sorrowed. He would turn round, he would tell them in a few moments, only a few

moments more, of this relief, of this joy, of this astonishing revelation—

"The time, Septimus," Rezia repeated. "What is the time?"

He was talking, he was starting, this man must notice him. He was looking at them.

"I will tell you the time," said Septimus, very slowly, very drowsily, smiling mysteriously. As he sat smiling at the dead man in the grey suit the quarter struck—the quarter to twelve.

And that is being young, Peter Walsh thought as he passed them. To be having an awful scene—the poor girl looked absolutely desperate—in the middle of the morning. But what was it about, he wondered, what had the young man in the overcoat been saying to her to make her look like that; what awful fix had they got themselves into, both to look so desperate as that on a fine summer morning? The amusing thing about coming back to England, after five years, was the way it made, anyhow the first days, things stand out as if one had never seen them before; lovers squabbling under a tree; the domestic family life of the parks. Never had he seen London look so enchanting—the softness of the distances; the richness; the greenness; the civilisation, after India, he thought, strolling across the grass.

This susceptibility to impressions had been his undoing no doubt. Still at his age he had, like a boy or a girl even, these alternations of mood; good days, bad days, for no reason whatever, happiness from a pretty face, downright misery at the sight of a frump. After India of course one fell in love with every woman one met. There was a freshness about them; even the poorest dressed better than five years ago surely; and to his eye the fashions had never been so becoming; the long black cloaks; the slimness; the elegance; and then the delicious and apparently universal habit of paint. Every woman, even the most respectable, had roses blooming under glass; lips cut with a knife; curls of Indian ink; there was design, art, everywhere; a change of some sort had undoubtedly taken place. What did the young people think about? Peter Walsh asked himself.

Those five years—1918 to 1923—had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different. Newspapers seemed different. Now for instance there was a man writing quite openly in one of the respectable weeklies about water-closets. That you couldn't have done ten years ago—written quite openly about water-closets[3] in a respectable weekly. And then this taking out a stick of rouge, or a powder-puff and making up in public. On board ship coming home there were lots of young men and girls—Betty and Bertie he remembered in particular—carrying on quite openly; the old mother sitting and watching them with her knitting, cool as a cucumber. The girl would stand still and powder her nose in front of every one. And they weren't engaged; just having a good time; no feelings hurt on either side. As hard as nails she was—Betty What'shername—; but a thorough good sort. She would make a very good wife at thirty—she would marry when it suited her to marry; marry some rich man and live in a large house near Manchester.[4]

Who was it now who had done that? Peter Walsh asked himself, turning into the Broad Walk,—married a rich man and lived in a large house near Manchester? Somebody who had written him a long, gushing letter quite lately about "blue hydrangeas." It was seeing blue hydrangeas that made her think of him and the old days—Sally Seton, of course! It was Sally Seton—the last person in the world one would have expected to marry a rich man and live in a large house near Manchester, the wild, the daring, the romantic Sally!

But of all that ancient lot, Clarissa's friends—Whitbreads, Kinderleys, Cunninghams, Kinloch-Jones's—Sally was probably the best. She tried to get hold of things by the right end anyhow. She saw through Hugh Whitbread anyhow—the admirable Hugh—when Clarissa and the rest were at his feet.

"The Whitbreads?" he could hear her saying. "Who are the Whitbreads? Coal merchants. Respectable tradespeople."

Hugh she detested for some reason. He thought of nothing but his own appearance, she said. He ought to have been a Duke. He would be certain to marry one of the Royal Princesses. And of course Hugh had the most extraordinary, the most natural, the most

sublime respect for the British aristocracy of any human being he had ever come across. Even Clarissa had to own that. Oh, but he was such a dear, so unselfish, gave up shooting to please his old mother—remembered his aunts' birthdays, and so on.

Sally, to do her justice, saw through all that. One of the things he remembered best was an argument one Sunday morning at Bourton about women's rights[5] (that antediluvian topic), when Sally suddenly lost her temper, flared up, and told Hugh that he represented all that was most detestable in British middle-class life. She told him that she considered him responsible for the state of "those poor girls in Piccadilly"[6]—Hugh, the perfect gentleman, poor Hugh!—never did a man look more horrified! She did it on purpose she said afterwards (for they used to get together in the vegetable garden and compare notes). "He's read nothing, thought nothing, felt nothing," he could hear her saying in that very emphatic voice which carried so much farther than she knew. The stable-boys had more life in them than Hugh, she said. He was a perfect specimen of the public school[7] type, she said. No country but England could have produced him. She was really spiteful, for some reason; had some grudge against him. Something had happened—he forgot what—in the smoking-room. He had insulted her—kissed her? Incredible! Nobody believed a word against Hugh of course. Who could? Kissing Sally in the smoking-room! If it had been some Honourable Edith or Lady Violet, perhaps; but not that ragamuffin Sally without a penny to her name, and a father or a mother gambling at Monte Carlo.[8] For of all the people he had ever met Hugh was the greatest snob—the most obsequious—no, he didn't cringe exactly. He was too much of a prig for that. A first-rate valet was the obvious comparison—somebody who walked behind carrying suit cases; could be trusted to send telegrams—indispensable to hostesses. And he'd found his job—married his Honourable Evelyn; got some little post at Court, looked after the King's cellars, polished the Imperial shoe-buckles, went about in knee-breeches and lace ruffles. How remorseless life is! A little job at Court!

He had married this lady, the Honourable Evelyn, and they lived hereabouts, so he thought (looking at the pompous houses overlooking the Park), for he had lunched there once in a house which had, like all Hugh's possessions, something that no other house could possibly have—linen cupboards it might have been. You had to go and look at them—you had to spend a great deal of time always admiring whatever it was—linen cupboards, pillow-cases, old oak furniture, pictures, which Hugh had picked up for an old song. But Mrs. Hugh sometimes gave the show away. She was one of those obscure mouse-like little women who admire big men. She was almost negligible. Then suddenly she would say something quite unexpected—something sharp. She had the relics of the grand manner perhaps. The steam coal was a little too strong for her—it made the atmosphere thick. And so there they lived, with their linen cupboards and their old masters and their pillow-cases fringed with real lace at the rate of five or ten thousand a year presumably, while he, who was two years older than Hugh, cadged for a job.[9]

At fifty-three he had to come and ask them to put him into some secretary's office, to find him some usher's job teaching little boys Latin, at the beck and call of some mandarin[1] in an office, something that brought in five hundred a year; for if he married Daisy, even with his pension, they could never do on less. Whitbread could do it presumably; or Dalloway. He didn't mind what he asked Dalloway. He was a thorough good sort; a bit limited; a bit thick in the head; yes; but a thorough good sort. Whatever he took up he did in the same matter-of-fact sensible way; without a touch of imagination, without a spark of brilliancy, but with the inexplicable niceness of his type. He ought to have been a country gentleman—he was wasted on politics. He was at his best out of doors, with horses and dogs—how good he was, for instance, when that great shaggy dog of Clarissa's got caught in a trap and had its paw half torn off, and Clarissa turned faint and Dalloway did the whole thing; bandaged, made splints; told Clarissa not to be a fool. That was what she liked him for perhaps—that was what she needed. "Now, my dear, don't

be a fool. Hold this—fetch that," all the time talking to the dog as if it were a human being.

But how could she swallow all that stuff about poetry? How could she let him hold forth about Shakespeare? Seriously and solemnly Richard Dalloway got on his hind legs and said that no decent man ought to read Shakespeare's sonnets because it was like listening at keyholes (besides the relationship was not one that he approved). No decent man ought to let his wife visit a deceased wife's sister. Incredible! The only thing to do was to pelt him with sugared almonds—it was at dinner. But Clarissa sucked it all in; thought it so honest of him; so independent of him; Heaven knows if she didn't think him the most original mind she'd ever met!

That was one of the bonds between Sally, and himself. There was a garden where they used to walk, a walled-in place, with rose-bushes and giant cauliflowers—he could remember Sally tearing off a rose, stopping to exclaim at the beauty of the cabbage leaves in the moonlight (it was extraordinary how vividly it all came back to him, things he hadn't thought of for years), while she implored him, half laughing of course, to carry off Clarissa, to save her from the Hughs and the Dalloways and all the other "perfect gentlemen" who would "stifle her soul" (she wrote reams of poetry in those days), make a mere hostess of her, encourage her worldliness. But one must do Clarissa justice. She wasn't going to marry Hugh anyhow. She had a perfectly clear notion of what she wanted. Her emotions were all on the surface. Beneath, she was very shrewd—a far better judge of character than Sally, for instance, and with it all, purely feminine; with that extraordinary gift, that woman's gift, of making a world of her own wherever she happened to be. She came into a room; she stood, as he had often seen her, in a doorway with lots of people round her. But it was Clarissa one remembered. Not that she was striking; not beautiful at all; there was nothing picturesque about her; she never said anything specially clever; there she was, however; there she was.

No, no, no! He was not in love with her any more! He only felt, after seeing her that morning, among her scissors and silks, making

ready for the party, unable to get away from the thought of her; she kept coming back and back like a sleeper jolting against him in a railway carriage; which was not being in love, of course; it was thinking of her, criticising her, starting again, after thirty years, trying to explain her. The obvious thing to say of her was that she was worldly; cared too much for rank and society and getting on in the world—which was true in a sense; she had admitted it to him. (You could always get her to own up if you took the trouble; she was honest.) What she would say was that she hated frumps, fogies, failures, like himself presumably; thought people had no right to slouch about with their hands in their pockets; must do something, be something; and these great swells, these Duchesses, these hoary old Countesses one met in her drawing-room, unspeakably remote as he felt them to be from anything that mattered a straw, stood for something real to her. Lady Bexborough, she said once, held herself upright (so did Clarissa herself; she never lounged in any sense of the word; she was straight as a dart, a little rigid in fact). She said they had a kind of courage which the older she grew the more she respected. In all this there was a great deal of Dalloway, of course; a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit,[2] which had grown on her, as it tends to do. With twice his wits, she had to see things through his eyes—one of the tragedies of married life. With a mind of her own, she must always be quoting Richard—as if one couldn't know to a tittle what Richard thought by reading the *Morning Post*[3] of a morning! These parties for example were all for him, or for her idea of him (to do Richard justice he would have been happier farming in Norfolk). She made her drawing-room a sort of meeting-place; she had a genius for it. Over and over again he had seen her take some raw youth, twist him, turn him, wake him up; set him going. Infinite numbers of dull people conglomerated round her of course. But odd unexpected people turned up; an artist sometimes; sometimes a writer; queer fish in that atmosphere. And behind it all was that network of visiting, leaving cards, being kind to people; running about with bunches of flowers, little presents; So-and-so was going to France—

must have an air-cushion; a real drain on her strength; all that interminable traffic that women of her sort keep up; but she did it genuinely, from a natural instinct.

Oddly enough, she was one of the most thorough-going sceptics he had ever met, and possibly (this was a theory he used to make up to account for her, so transparent in some ways, so inscrutable in others), possibly she said to herself, As we are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship (her favourite reading as a girl was Huxley and Tyndall,[4] and they were fond of these nautical metaphors), as the whole thing is a bad joke, let us, at any rate, do our part; mitigate the sufferings of our fellow-prisoners (Huxley again); decorate the dungeon with flowers and air-cushions; be as decent as we possibly can. Those ruffians, the Gods, shan't have it all their own way,—her notion being that the Gods, who never lost a chance of hurting, thwarting and spoiling human lives were seriously put out if, all the same, you behaved like a lady. That phase came directly after Sylvia's death—that horrible affair. To see your own sister killed by a falling tree (all Justin Parry's fault—all his carelessness) before your very eyes, a girl too on the verge of life, the most gifted of them, Clarissa always said, was enough to turn one bitter. Later she wasn't so positive perhaps; she thought there were no Gods; no one was to blame; and so she evolved this atheist's religion of doing good for the sake of goodness.

And of course she enjoyed life immensely. It was her nature to enjoy (though goodness only knows, she had her reserves; it was a mere sketch, he often felt, that even he, after all these years, could make of Clarissa). Anyhow there was no bitterness in her; none of that sense of moral virtue which is so repulsive in good women. She enjoyed practically everything. If you walked with her in Hyde Park now it was a bed of tulips, now a child in a perambulator, now some absurd little drama she made up on the spur of the moment. (Very likely, she would have talked to those lovers, if she had thought them unhappy.) She had a sense of comedy that was really exquisite, but she needed people, always people, to bring it out, with the inevitable result that she frittered her time away, lunching,

dining, giving these incessant parties of hers, talking nonsense, saying things she didn't mean, blunting the edge of her mind, losing her discrimination. There she would sit at the head of the table taking infinite pains with some old buffer who might be useful to Dalloway—they knew the most appalling bores in Europe—or in came Elizabeth and everything must give way to *her.* She was at a High School,[5] at the inarticulate stage last time he was over, a round-eyed, pale-faced girl, with nothing of her mother in her, a silent stolid creature, who took it all as a matter of course, let her mother make a fuss of her, and then said "May I go now?" like a child of four; going off, Clarissa explained, with that mixture of amusement and pride which Dalloway himself seemed to rouse in her, to play hockey. And now Elizabeth was "out,"[6] presumably; thought him an old fogy, laughed at her mother's friends. Ah well, so be it. The compensation of growing old, Peter Walsh thought, coming out of Regent's Park, and holding his hat in hand, was simply this; that the passions remain as strong as ever, but one has gained —at last!—the power which adds the supreme flavour to existence, —the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it round, slowly, in the light.

A terrible confession it was (he put his hat on again), but now, at the age of fifty-three one scarcely needed people any more. Life itself, every moment of it, every drop of it, here, this instant, now, in the sun, in Regent's Park, was enough. Too much indeed. A whole lifetime was too short to bring out, now that one had acquired the power, the full flavour; to extract every ounce of pleasure, every shade of meaning; which both were so much more solid than they used to be, so much less personal. It was impossible that he should ever suffer again as Clarissa had made him suffer. For hours at a time (pray God that one might say these things without being overheard!), for hours and days he never thought of Daisy.

Could it be that he was in love with her then, remembering the misery, the torture, the extraordinary passion of those days? It was a different thing altogether—a much pleasanter thing—the truth being, of course, that now *she* was in love with *him.* And that

perhaps was the reason why, when the ship actually sailed, he felt an extraordinary relief, wanted nothing so much as to be alone; was annoyed to find all her little attentions—cigars, notes, a rug for the voyage—in his cabin. Every one if they were honest would say the same; one doesn't want people after fifty; one doesn't want to go on telling women they are pretty; that's what most men of fifty would say, Peter Walsh thought, if they were honest.

But then these astonishing accesses of emotion—bursting into tears this morning, what was all that about? What could Clarissa have thought of him? thought him a fool presumably, not for the first time. It was jealousy that was at the bottom of it—jealousy which survives every other passion of mankind, Peter Walsh thought, holding his pocket-knife at arm's length. She had been meeting Major Orde, Daisy said in her last letter; said it on purpose he knew; said it to make him jealous; he could see her wrinkling her forehead as she wrote, wondering what she could say to hurt him; and yet it made no difference; he was furious! All this pother of coming to England and seeing lawyers wasn't to marry her, but to prevent her from marrying anybody else. That was what tortured him, that was what came over him when he saw Clarissa so calm, so cold, so intent on her dress or whatever it was; realising what she might have spared him, what she had reduced him to—a whimpering, snivelling old ass. But women, he thought, shutting his pocketknife, don't know what passion is. They don't know the meaning of it to men. Clarissa was as cold as an icicle. There she would sit on the sofa by his side, let him take her hand, give him one kiss—Here he was at the crossing.

A sound interrupted him; a frail quivering sound, a voice bubbling up without direction, vigour, beginning or end, running weakly and shrilly and with an absence of all human meaning into

ee um fah um so
foo swee too eem oo—

the voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth; which issued, just opposite Regent's Park Tube

station from a tall quivering shape, like a funnel, like a rusty pump, like a wind-beaten tree for ever barren of leaves which lets the wind run up and down its branches singing

ee um fah um so
foo swee too eem oo

and rocks and creaks and moans in the eternal breeze.

Through all ages—when the pavement was grass, when it was swamp, through the age of tusk and mammoth, through the age of silent sunrise, the battered woman—for she wore a skirt—with her right hand exposed, her left clutching at her side, stood singing of love—love which has lasted a million years, she sang, love which prevails, and millions of years ago, her lover, who had been dead these centuries, had walked, she crooned, with her in May; but in the course of ages, long as summer days, and flaming, she remembered, with nothing but red asters, he had gone; death's enormous sickle had swept those tremendous hills, and when at last she laid her hoary and immensely aged head on the earth, now become a mere cinder of ice, she implored the Gods to lay by her side a bunch of purple heather, there on her high burial place which the last rays of the last sun caressed; for then the pageant of the universe would be over.

As the ancient song bubbled up opposite Regent's Park Tube station still the earth seemed green and flowery; still, though it issued from so rude a mouth, a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grasses, still the old bubbling burbling song, soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure, streamed away in rivulets over the pavement and all along the Marylebone Road, and down towards Euston,[7] fertilising, leaving a damp stain.

Still remembering how once in some primeval May she had walked with her lover, this rusty pump, this battered old woman with one hand exposed for coppers the other clutching her side, would still be there in ten million years, remembering how once she had

walked in May, where the sea flows now, with whom it did not matter—he was a man, oh yes, a man who had loved her. But the passage of ages had blurred the clarity of that ancient May day, the bright petalled flowers were hoar and silver frosted; and she no longer saw, when she implored him (as she did now quite clearly) "look in my eyes with thy sweet eyes intently," she no longer saw brown eyes, black whiskers or sunburnt face but only a looming shape, a shadow shape, to which, with the bird-like freshness of the very aged she still twittered "give me your hand and let me press it gently" (Peter Walsh couldn't help giving the poor creature a coin as he stepped into his taxi), "and if some one should see, what matter they?" she demanded; and her fist clutched at her side, and she smiled, pocketing her shilling, and all peering inquisitive eyes seemed blotted out, and the passing generations—the pavement was crowded with bustling middleclass people—vanished, like leaves, to be trodden under, to be soaked and steeped and made mould of by that eternal spring—

ee um fah um so
foo swee too eem oo

"Poor old woman," said Rezia Warren Smith, waiting to cross.

Oh poor old wretch!

Suppose it was a wet night? Suppose one's father, or somebody who had known one in better days had happened to pass, and saw one standing there in the gutter? And where did she sleep at night?

Cheerfully, almost gaily, the invincible thread of sound wound up into the air like the smoke from a cottage chimney, winding up clean beech trees and issuing in a tuft of blue smoke among the topmost leaves. "And if some one should see, what matter they?"

Since she was so unhappy, for weeks and weeks now, Rezia had given meanings to things that happened, almost felt sometimes that she must stop people in the street, if they looked good, kind people, just to say to them "I am unhappy"; and this old woman singing in the street "if some one should see, what matter they?" made her suddenly quite sure that everything was going to be right. They

were going to Sir William Bradshaw; she thought his name sounded nice; he would cure Septimus at once. And then there was a brewer's cart, and the grey horses had upright bristles of straw in their tails; there were newspaper placards. It was a silly, silly dream, being unhappy.

So they crossed, Mr. and Mrs. Septimus Warren Smith, and was there, after all, anything to draw attention to them, anything to make a passer-by suspect here is a young man who carries in him the greatest message in the world, and is, moreover, the happiest man in the world, and the most miserable? Perhaps they walked more slowly than other people, and there was something hesitating, trailing, in the man's walk, but what more natural for a clerk, who has not been in the West End[8] on a weekday at this hour for years, than to keep looking at the sky, looking at this, that and the other, as if Portland Place were a room he had come into when the family are away, the chandeliers being hung in holland bags,[9] and the caretaker, as she lets in long shafts of dusty light upon deserted, queer-looking armchairs, lifting one corner of the long blinds, explains to the visitors what a wonderful place it is; how wonderful, but at the same time, he thinks, as he looks at chairs and tables, how strange.

To look at, he might have been a clerk, but of the better sort; for he wore brown boots; his hands were educated; so, too, his profile—his angular, big-nosed, intelligent, sensitive profile; but not his lips altogether, for they were loose; and his eyes (as eyes tend to be), eyes merely; hazel, large; so that he was, on the whole, a border case, neither one thing nor the other, might end with a house at Purley[1] and a motor car, or continue renting apartments in back streets all his life; one of those half-educated, self-educated men whose education is all learnt from books borrowed from public libraries, read in the evening after the day's work, on the advice of well-known authors consulted by letter.

As for the other experiences, the solitary ones, which people go through alone, in their bedrooms, in their offices, walking the fields and the streets of London, he had them; had left home, a mere boy,

because of his mother; she lied; because he came down to tea for the fiftieth time with his hands unwashed; because he could see no future for a poet in Stroud;[2] and so, making a confidant of his little sister, had gone to London leaving an absurd note behind him, such as great men have written, and the world has read later when the story of their struggles has become famous.

London has swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith; thought nothing of fantastic Christian names like Septimus with which their parents have thought to distinguish them. Lodging off the Euston Road,[3] there were experiences, again experiences, such as change a face in two years from a pink innocent oval to a face lean, contracted, hostile. But of all this what could the most observant of friends have said except what a gardener says when he opens the conservatory door in the morning and finds a new blossom on his plant:—It has flowered; flowered from vanity, ambition, idealism, passion, loneliness, courage, laziness, the usual seeds, which all muddled up (in a room off the Euston Road), made him shy, and stammering, made him anxious to improve himself, made him fall in love with Miss Isabel Pole, lecturing in the Waterloo Road[4] upon Shakespeare.

Was he not like Keats?[5] she asked; and reflected how she might give him a taste of *Antony and Cleopatra*[6] and the rest; lent him books; wrote him scraps of letters; and lit in him such a fire as burns only once in a lifetime, without heat, flickering a red gold flame infinitely ethereal and insubstantial over Miss Pole; *Antony and Cleopatra*; and the Waterloo Road. He thought her beautiful, believed her impeccably wise; dreamed of her, wrote poems to her, which, ignoring the subject, she corrected in red ink; he saw her, one summer evening, walking in a green dress in a square. "It has flowered," the gardener might have said, had he opened the door; had he come in, that is to say, any night about this time, and found him writing; found him tearing up his writing; found him finishing a masterpiece at three o'clock in the morning and running out to pace the streets, and visiting churches, and fasting one day, drinking

another, devouring Shakespeare, Darwin, *The History of Civilisation*, and Bernard Shaw.[7]

Something was up, Mr. Brewer knew; Mr. Brewer, managing clerk at Sibleys and Arrowsmiths,[8] auctioneers, valuers, land and estate agents; something was up, he thought, and, being paternal with his young men, and thinking very highly of Smith's abilities, and prophesying that he would, in ten or fifteen years, succeed to the leather arm-chair in the inner room under the skylight with the deed-boxes round him, "if he keeps his health," said Mr. Brewer, and that was the danger—he looked weakly; advised football, invited him to supper and was seeing his way to consider recommending a rise of salary, when something happened which threw out many of Mr. Brewer's calculations, took away his ablest young fellows, and eventually, so prying and insidious were the fingers of the European War, smashed a plaster cast of Ceres,[9] ploughed a hole in the geranium beds, and utterly ruined the cook's nerves at Mr. Brewer's establishment at Muswell Hill.[1]

Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square. There in the trenches the change which Mr. Brewer desired when he advised football was produced instantly; he developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug; one worrying a paper screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly. They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other. But when Evans (Rezia who had only seen him once called him "a quiet man," a sturdy red-haired man, undemonstrative in the company of women), when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice,[2] in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone

through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference. When peace came he was in Milan, billeted in the house of an innkeeper with a courtyard, flowers in tubs, little tables in the open, daughters making hats, and to Lucrezia, the younger daughter, he became engaged one evening when the panic was on him—that he could not feel.

For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunderclaps of fear. He could not feel. As he opened the door of the room where the Italian girls sat making hats, he could see them; could hear them; they were rubbing wires among coloured beads in saucers; they were turning buckram[3] shapes this way and that; the table was all strewn with feathers, spangles, silks, ribbons; scissors were rapping on the table; but something failed him; he could not feel. Still, scissors rapping, girls laughing, hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge. But he could not sit there all night. There were moments of waking in the early morning. The bed was falling; he was falling. Oh for the scissors and the lamplight and the buckram shapes! He asked Lucrezia to marry him, the younger of the two, the gay, the frivolous, with those little artist's fingers that she would hold up and say "It is all in them." Silk, feathers, what not were alive to them.

"It is the hat that matters most," she would say, when they walked out together. Every hat that passed, she would examine; and the cloak and the dress and the way the woman held herself. Ill-dressing, over-dressing she stigmatised, not savagely, rather with impatient movements of the hands, like those of a painter who puts from him some obvious well-meant glaring imposture; and then, generously, but always critically, she would welcome a shopgirl who had turned her little bit of stuff gallantly, or praise, wholly, with enthusiastic and professional understanding, a French lady descending from her carriage, in chinchilla,[4] robes, pearls.

"Beautiful!" she would murmur, nudging Septimus, that he might see. But beauty was behind a pane of glass. Even taste (Rezia liked ices, chocolates, sweet things) had no relish to him. He put down his cup on the little marble table. He looked at people outside; happy they seemed, collecting in the middle of the street, shouting, laughing, squabbling over nothing. But he could not taste, he could not feel. In the teashop among the tables and the chattering waiters the appalling fear came over him—he could not feel. He could reason; he could read, Dante for example, quite easily ("Septimus, do put down your book," said Rezia, gently shutting the *Inferno*[5]), he could add up his bill; his brain was perfect; it must be the fault of the world then—that he could not feel.

"The English are so silent," Rezia said. She liked it, she said. She respected these Englishmen, and wanted to see London, and the English horses, and the tailor-made suits, and could remember hearing how wonderful the shops were, from an Aunt who had married and lived in Soho.[6]

It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven;[7] it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning.

At the office they advanced him to a post of considerable responsibility. They were proud of him; he had won crosses. "You have done your duty; it is up to us—" began Mr. Brewer; and could not finish, so pleasurable was his emotion. They took admirable lodgings off the Tottenham Court Road.[8]

Here he opened Shakespeare once more. That boy's business of the intoxication of language—*Antony and Cleopatra*—had shrivelled utterly. How Shakespeare loathed humanity—the putting on of clothes, the getting of children, the sordidity of the mouth and the belly! This was now revealed to Septimus; the message hidden in the beauty of words. The secret signal which one generation passes, under disguise, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair. Dante the same. Aeschylus[9] (translated) the same. There Rezia sat at the table trimming hats. She trimmed hats for Mrs. Filmer's friends; she

trimmed hats by the hour. She looked pale, mysterious, like a lily, drowned, under water, he thought.

"The English are so serious," she would say, putting her arms round Septimus, her cheek against his.

Love between man and woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The business of copulation was filth to him before the end. But, Rezia said, she must have children. They had been married five years.

They went to the Tower together; to the Victoria and Albert Museum; stood in the crowd to see the King open Parliament.[1] And there were the shops—hat shops, dress shops, shops with leather bags in the window, where she would stand staring. But she must have a boy.

She must have a son like Septimus, she said. But nobody could be like Septimus; so gentle; so serious; so clever. Could she not read Shakespeare too? Was Shakespeare a difficult author? she asked.

One cannot bring children into a world like this. One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that.

He watched her snip, shape, as one watches a bird hop, flit in the grass, without daring to move a finger. For the truth is (let her ignore it) that human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness. They desert the fallen. They are plastered over with grimaces. There was Brewer at the office, with his waxed moustache, coral tie-pin, white slip, and pleasurable emotions—all coldness and clamminess within,—his geraniums ruined in the War—his cook's nerves destroyed; or Amelia What'shername, handing round cups of tea punctually at five—a leering, sneering obscene little harpy; and the Toms and Berties[2] in their starched shirt fronts oozing thick drops of vice. They never saw him drawing pictures of them naked at their antics in his notebook. In the street, vans roared past him; brutality blared out on placards;

men were trapped in mines; women burnt alive; and once a maimed file of lunatics being exercised or displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laughed aloud), ambled and nodded and grinned past him, in the Tottenham Court Road, each half apologetically, yet triumphantly, inflicting his hopeless woe. And would *he* go mad?

At tea Rezia told him that Mrs. Filmer's daughter was expecting a baby. *She* could not grow old and have no children! She was very lonely, she was very unhappy! She cried for the first time since they were married. Far away he heard her sobbing; he heard it accurately, he noticed it distinctly; he compared it to a piston thumping. But he felt nothing.

His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step into the pit.

At last, with a melodramatic gesture which he assumed mechanically and with complete consciousness of its insincerity, he dropped his head on his hands. Now he had surrendered; now other people must help him. People must be sent for. He gave in.

Nothing could rouse him. Rezia put him to bed. She sent for a doctor—Mrs. Filmer's Dr. Holmes. Dr. Holmes examined him. There was nothing whatever the matter, said Dr. Holmes. Oh, what a relief! What a kind man, what a good man! thought Rezia. When he felt like that he went to the Music Hall, said Dr. Holmes. He took a day off with his wife and played golf. Why not try two tabloids of bromide[3] dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime? These old Bloomsbury houses, said Dr. Holmes, tapping the wall, are often full of very fine panelling, which the landlords have the folly to paper over. Only the other day, visiting a patient, Sir Somebody Something in Bedford Square[4]—

So there was no excuse; nothing whatever the matter, except the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel. He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realising its

degradation; how he had married his wife without loving her; had lied to her; seduced her; outraged Miss Isabel Pole, and was so pocked and marked with vice that women shuddered when they saw him in the street. The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death.

Dr. Holmes came again. Large, fresh coloured, handsome, flicking his boots, looking in the glass, he brushed it all aside—headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams—nerve symptoms and nothing more, he said. If Dr. Holmes found himself even half a pound below eleven stone six, he asked his wife for another plate of porridge at breakfast. (Rezia would learn to cook porridge.) But, he continued, health is largely a matter in our own control. Throw yourself into outside interests; take up some hobby. He opened Shakespeare—*Antony and Cleopatra*; pushed Shakespeare aside. Some hobby, said Dr. Holmes, for did he not owe his own excellent health (and he worked as hard as any man in London) to the fact that he could always switch off from his patients on to old furniture? And what a very pretty comb, if he might say so, Mrs. Warren Smith was wearing!

When the damned fool came again, Septimus refused to see him. Did he indeed? said Dr. Holmes, smiling agreeably. Really he had to give that charming little lady, Mrs. Smith, a friendly push before he could get past her into her husband's bedroom.

"So you're in a funk," he said agreeably, sitting down by his patient's side. He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, a foreigner, wasn't she? Didn't that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn't one owe perhaps a duty to one's wife? Wouldn't it be better to do something instead of lying in bed? For he had had forty years' experience behind him; and Septimus could take Dr. Holmes's word for it—there was nothing whatever the matter with him. And next time Dr. Holmes came he hoped to find Smith out of bed and not making that charming little lady his wife anxious about him.

Human nature, in short, was on him—the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils. Holmes was on him. Dr. Holmes came quite

regularly every day. Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a postcard, human nature is on you. Holmes is on you. Their only chance was to escape, without letting Holmes know; to Italy—anywhere, anywhere, away from Dr. Holmes.

But Rezia could not understand him. Dr. Holmes was such a kind man. He was so interested in Septimus. He only wanted to help them, he said. He had four little children and he had asked her to tea, she told Septimus.

So he was deserted. The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sakes. But why should he kill himself for their sakes? Food was pleasant; the sun hot; and this killing oneself, how does one set about it, with a table knife, uglily, with floods of blood,—by sucking a gaspipe? He was too weak; he could scarcely raise his hand. Besides, now that he was quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die are alone, there was a luxury in it, an isolation full of sublimity; a freedom which the attached can never know. Holmes had won of course; the brute with the red nostrils had won. But even Holmes himself could not touch this last relic straying on the edge of the world, this outcast, who gazed back at the inhabited regions, who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world.

It was at that moment (Rezia gone shopping) that the great revelation took place. A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him.

"Evans, Evans!" he cried.

Mr. Smith was talking aloud to himself, Agnes the servant girl cried to Mrs. Filmer in the kitchen. "Evans, Evans," he had said as she brought in the tray. She jumped, she did. She scuttled downstairs.

And Rezia came in, with her flowers, and walked across the room, and put the roses in a vase, upon which the sun struck directly, and it went laughing, leaping round the room.

She had had to buy the roses, Rezia said, from a poor man in the street. But they were almost dead already, she said, arranging the roses.

So there was a man outside; Evans presumably; and the roses, which Rezia said were half dead, had been picked by him in the fields of Greece. "Communication is health; communication is happiness, communication—" he muttered.

"What are you saying, Septimus?" Rezia asked, wild with terror, for he was talking to himself.

She sent Agnes running for Dr. Holmes. Her husband, she said, was mad. He scarcely knew her.

"You brute! You brute!" cried Septimus, seeing human nature, that is Dr. Holmes, enter the room.

"Now what's all this about?" said Dr. Holmes in the most amiable way in the world. "Talking nonsense to frighten your wife?" But he would give him something to make him sleep. And if they were rich people, said Dr. Holmes, looking ironically round the room, by all means let them go to Harley Street;[5] if they had no confidence in him, said Dr. Holmes, looking not quite so kind.

It was precisely twelve o'clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London; blent with that of other clocks, mixed in a thin ethereal way with the clouds and wisps of smoke, and died up there among the seagulls—twelve o'clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. Twelve was the hour of their appointment. Probably, Rezia thought, that was Sir William Bradshaw's house with the grey motor car in front of it. The leaden circles dissolved in the air.

Indeed it was—Sir William Bradshaw's motor car; low, powerful, grey with plain initials interlocked on the panel, as if the pomps of heraldry were incongruous, this man being the ghostly helper, the priest of science; and, as the motor car was grey, so to match its sober suavity, grey furs, silver grey rugs were heaped in it, to keep her ladyship warm while she waited. For often Sir William would travel sixty miles or more down into the country to visit the rich, the afflicted, who could afford the very large fee which Sir William very properly charged for his advice. Her ladyship waited with the rugs about her knees an hour or more, leaning back, thinking sometimes

of the patient, sometimes, excusably, of the wall of gold, mounting minute by minute while she waited; the wall of gold that was mounting between them and all shifts and anxieties (she had borne them bravely; they had had their struggles) until she felt wedged on a calm ocean, where only spice winds blow; respected, admired, envied, with scarcely anything left to wish for, though she regretted her stoutness; large dinner-parties every Thursday night to the profession; an occasional bazaar to be opened; Royalty greeted; too little time, alas, with her husband, whose work grew and grew; a boy doing well at Eton;[6] she would have liked a daughter too; interests she had, however, in plenty; child welfare; the after-care of the epileptic, and photography, so that if there was a church building, or a church decaying, she bribed the sexton,[7] got the key and took photographs, which were scarcely to be distinguished from the work of professionals, while she waited.

Sir William himself was no longer young. He had worked very hard; he had won his position by sheer ability (being the son of a shopkeeper); loved his profession; made a fine figurehead at ceremonies and spoke well—all of which had by the time he was knighted given him a heavy look, a weary look (the stream of patients being so incessant, the responsibilities and privileges of his profession so onerous), which weariness, together with his grey hairs, increased the extraordinary distinction of his presence and gave him the reputation (of the utmost importance in dealing with nerve cases) not merely of lightning skill, and almost infallible accuracy in diagnosis but of sympathy; tact; understanding of the human soul. He could see the first moment they came into the room (the Warren Smiths they were called); he was certain directly he saw the man; it was a case of extreme gravity. It was a case of complete breakdown—complete physical and nervous breakdown, with every symptom in an advanced stage, he ascertained in two or three minutes (writing answers to questions, murmured discreetly, on a pink card).

How long had Dr. Holmes been attending him?

Six weeks.

Prescribed a little bromide? Said there was nothing the matter? Ah yes (those general practitioners! thought Sir William. It took half his time to undo their blunders. Some were irreparable).

"You served with great distinction in the War?"

The patient repeated the word "war" interrogatively.

He was attaching meanings to words of a symbolical kind. A serious symptom, to be noted on the card.

"The War?" the patient asked. The European War—that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder? Had he served with distinction? He really forgot. In the War itself he had failed.

"Yes, he served with the greatest distinction," Rezia assured the doctor; "he was promoted."

"And they have the very highest opinion of you at your office?" Sir William murmured, glancing at Mr. Brewer's very generously worded letter. "So that you have nothing to worry you, no financial anxiety, nothing?"

He had committed an appalling crime and been condemned to death by human nature.

"I have—I have," he began, "committed a crime—"

"He has done nothing wrong whatever," Rezia assured the doctor. If Mr. Smith would wait, said Sir William, he would speak to Mrs. Smith in the next room. Her husband was very seriously ill, Sir William said. Did he threaten to kill himself?

Oh, he did, she cried. But he did not mean it, she said. Of course not. It was merely a question of rest,[8] said Sir William; of rest, rest, rest; a long rest in bed. There was a delightful home down in the country where her husband would be perfectly looked after. Away from her? she asked. Unfortunately, yes; the people we care for most are not good for us when we are ill. But he was not mad, was he? Sir William said he never spoke of "madness"; he called it not having a sense of proportion. But her husband did not like doctors. He would refuse to go there. Shortly and kindly Sir William explained to her the state of the case. He had threatened to kill himself. There was no alternative. It was a question of law.[9] He would lie in bed in

a beautiful house in the country. The nurses were admirable. Sir William would visit him once a week. If Mrs. Warren Smith was quite sure she had no more questions to ask—he never hurried his patients—they would return to her husband. She had nothing more to ask—not of Sir William.

So they returned to the most exalted of mankind; the criminal who faced his judges; the victim exposed on the heights; the fugitive; the drowned sailor; the poet of the immortal ode; the Lord who had gone from life to death; to Septimus Warren Smith, who sat in the arm-chair under the skylight staring at a photograph of Lady Bradshaw in Court dress, muttering messages about beauty.

"We have had our little talk," said Sir William.

"He says you are very, very ill," Rezia cried.

"We have been arranging that you should go into a home," said Sir William.

"One of Holmes's homes?" sneered Septimus.

The fellow made a distasteful impression. For there was in Sir William, whose father had been a tradesman, a natural respect for breeding and clothing, which shabbiness nettled; again, more profoundly, there was in Sir William, who had never had time for reading, a grudge, deeply buried, against cultivated people who came into his room and intimated that doctors, whose profession is a constant strain upon all the highest faculties, are not educated men.

"One of *my* homes, Mr. Warren Smith," he said, "where we will teach you to rest."

And there was just one thing more.

He was quite certain that when Mr. Warren Smith was well he was the last man in the world to frighten his wife. But he had talked of killing himself.

"We all have our moments of depression," said Sir William.

Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. They scour the desert. They

fly screaming into the wilderness. The rack and the thumbscrew[1] are applied. Human nature is remorseless.

"Impulses came upon him sometimes?" Sir William asked, with his pencil on a pink card.

That was his own affair, said Septimus.

"Nobody lives for himself alone," said Sir William, glancing at the photograph of his wife in Court dress.

"And you have a brilliant career before you," said Sir William. There was Mr. Brewer's letter on the table. "An exceptionally brilliant career."

But if he confessed? If he communicated? Would they let him off then, his torturers?

"I—I—" he stammered.

But what was his crime? He could not remember it.

"Yes?" Sir William encouraged him. (But it was growing late.)

Love, trees, there is no crime—what was his message?

He could not remember it.

"I—I—" Septimus stammered.

"Try to think as little about yourself as possible," said Sir William kindly. Really, he was not fit to be about.

Was there anything else they wished to ask him? Sir William would make all arrangements (he murmured to Rezia) and he would let her know between five and six that evening he murmured.

"Trust everything to me," he said, and dismissed them.

Never, never had Rezia felt such agony in her life! She had asked for help and been deserted! He had failed them! Sir William Bradshaw was not a nice man.

The upkeep of that motor car alone must cost him quite a lot, said Septimus, when they got out into the street.

She clung to his arm. They had been deserted.

But what more did she want?

To his patients he gave three-quarters of an hour; and if in this exacting science which has to do with what, after all, we know nothing about—the nervous system, the human brain—a doctor

loses his sense of proportion, as a doctor he fails. Health we must have; and health is proportion; so that when a man comes into your room and says he is Christ (a common delusion), and has a message, as they mostly have, and threatens, as they often do, to kill himself, you invoke proportion; order rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books, without messages; six months' rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve.[2]

Proportion, divine proportion, Sir William's goddess, was acquired by Sir William walking hospitals, catching salmon, begetting one son in Harley Street by Lady Bradshaw, who caught salmon herself and took photographs scarcely to be distinguished from the work of professionals. Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair; made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion —his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women (she embroidered, knitted, spent four nights out of seven at home with her son), so that not only did his colleagues respect him, his subordinates fear him, but the friends and relations of his patients felt for him the keenest gratitude for insisting that these prophetic Christs and Christesses, who prophesied the end of the world, or the advent of God, should drink milk in bed, as Sir William ordered; Sir William with his thirty years' experience of these kinds of cases, and his infallible instinct, this is madness, this sense; in fact, his sense of proportion.

But Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess even now engaged—in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus[3] of London, wherever in short the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is her own—is even now engaged in dashing down shrines, smashing idols, and setting up in their place her own stern countenance. Conversion is her name and she feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace. At Hyde Park Corner[4] on a tub

she stands preaching; shrouds herself in white and walks penitentially disguised as brotherly love through factories and parliaments; offers help, but desires power; smites out of her way roughly the dissentient, or dissatisfied; bestows her blessing on those who, looking upward, catch submissively from her eyes the light of their own. This lady too (Rezia Warren Smith divined it) had her dwelling in Sir William's heart, though concealed, as she mostly is, under some plausible disguise; some venerable name; love, duty, self sacrifice. How he would work—how toil to raise funds, propagate reforms, initiate institutions! But conversion, fastidious Goddess, loves blood better than brick, and feasts most subtly on the human will. For example, Lady Bradshaw. Fifteen years ago she had gone under. It was nothing you could put your finger on; there had been no scene, no snap; only the slow sinking, water-logged, of her will into his. Sweet was her smile, swift her submission; dinner in Harley Street, numbering eight or nine courses, feeding ten or fifteen guests of the professional classes, was smooth and urbane. Only as the evening wore on a very slight dulness, or uneasiness perhaps, a nervous twitch, fumble, stumble and confusion indicated, what it was really painful to believe—that the poor lady lied. Once, long ago, she had caught salmon freely: now, quick to minister to the craving which lit her husband's eye so oilily for dominion, for power, she cramped, squeezed, pared, pruned, drew back, peeped through; so that without knowing precisely what made the evening disagreeable, and caused this pressure on the top of the head (which might well be imputed to the professional conversation, or the fatigue of a great doctor whose life, Lady Bradshaw said, "is not his own but his patients' ") disagreeable it was: so that guests, when the clock struck ten, breathed in the air of Harley Street even with rapture; which relief, however, was denied to his patients.

There in the grey room, with the pictures on the wall, and the valuable furniture, under the ground glass skylight, they learnt the extent of their transgressions; huddled up in armchairs, they watched him go through, for their benefit, a curious exercise with the arms, which he shot out, brought sharply back to his hip, to

prove (if the patient was obstinate) that Sir William was master of his own actions, which the patient was not. There some weakly broke down; sobbed, submitted; others, inspired by Heaven knows what intemperate madness, called Sir William to his face a damnable humbug; questioned, even more impiously, life itself. Why live? they demanded. Sir William replied that life was good. Certainly Lady Bradshaw in ostrich feathers hung over the mantelpiece, and as for his income it was quite twelve thousand a year. But to us, they protested, life has given no such bounty. He acquiesced. They lacked a sense of proportion. And perhaps, after all, there is no God? He shrugged his shoulders. In short, this living or not living is an affair of our own? But there they were mistaken. Sir William had a friend in Surrey where they taught, what Sir William frankly admitted was a difficult art—a sense of proportion. There were, moreover, family affection; honour; courage; and a brilliant career. All of these had in Sir William a resolute champion. If they failed him, he had to support police and the good of society, which, he remarked very quietly, would take care, down in Surrey,[5] that these unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by the lack of good blood, were held in control. And then stole out from her hiding-place and mounted her throne that Goddess whose lust is to override opposition, to stamp indelibly in the sanctuaries of others the image of herself. Naked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless received the impress of Sir William's will. He swooped; he devoured. He shut people up. It was this combination of decision and humanity that endeared Sir William so greatly to the relations of his victims.

But Rezia Warren Smith cried, walking down Harley Street, that she did not like that man.

Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion, until the mound of time was so far diminished that a commercial clock, suspended above a shop in Oxford Street, announced, genially and fraternally, as if it were a pleasure to

Messrs. Rigby and Lowndes to give the information gratis, that it was half-past one.

Looking up, it appeared that each letter of their names stood for one of the hours; subconsciously one was grateful to Rigby and Lowndes for giving one time ratified by Greenwich;[6] and this gratitude (so Hugh Whitbread ruminated, dallying there in front of the shop window), naturally took the form later of buying off Rigby and Lowndes socks or shoes. So he ruminated. It was his habit. He did not go deeply. He brushed surfaces; the dead languages, the living, life in Constantinople, Paris, Rome; riding, shooting, tennis, it had been once. The malicious asserted that he now kept guard at Buckingham Palace, dressed in silk stockings and knee-breeches, over what nobody knew. But he did it extremely efficiently. He had been afloat on the cream of English society for fifty-five years. He had known Prime Ministers. His affections were understood to be deep. And if it were true that he had not taken part in any of the great movements of the time or held important office, one or two humble reforms stood to his credit; an improvement in public shelters was one; the protection of owls in Norfolk[7] another; servant girls had reason to be grateful to him; and his name at the end of letters to the *Times*,[8] asking for funds, appealing to the public to protect, to preserve, to clear up litter, to abate smoke, and stamp out immorality in parks, commanded respect.

A magnificent figure he cut too, pausing for a moment (as the sound of the half hour died away) to look critically, magisterially, at socks and shoes; impeccable, substantial, as if he beheld the world from a certain eminence, and dressed to match; but realised the obligations which size, wealth, health, entail, and observed punctiliously even when not absolutely necessary, little courtesies, old-fashioned ceremonies which gave a quality to his manner, something to imitate, something to remember him by, for he would never lunch, for example, with Lady Bruton, whom he had known these twenty years, without bringing her in his outstretched hand a bunch of carnations and asking Miss Brush, Lady Bruton's secretary, after her brother in South Africa, which, for some reason, Miss

Brush, deficient though she was in every attribute of female charm, so much resented that she said "Thank you, he's doing very well in South Africa," when, for half a dozen years, he had been doing badly in Portsmouth.[9]

Lady Bruton herself preferred Richard Dalloway, who arrived at the next moment. Indeed they met on the doorstep.

Lady Bruton preferred Richard Dalloway of course. He was made of much finer material. But she wouldn't let them run down her poor dear Hugh. She could never forget his kindness—he had been really remarkably kind—she forgot precisely upon what occasion. But he had been—remarkably kind. Anyhow, the difference between one man and another does not amount to much. She had never seen the sense of cutting people up, as Clarissa Dalloway did—cutting them up and sticking them together again; not at any rate when one was sixty-two. She took Hugh's carnations with her angular grim smile. There was nobody else coming, she said. She had got them there on false pretences, to help her out of a difficulty—

"But let us eat first," she said.

And so there began a soundless and exquisite passing to and fro through swing doors of aproned white-capped maids, handmaidens not of necessity, but adepts in a mystery or grand deception practised by hostesses in Mayfair[1] from one-thirty to two, when, with a wave of the hand, the traffic ceases, and there rises instead this profound illusion in the first place about the food—how it is not paid for; and then that the table spreads itself voluntarily with glass and silver, little mats, saucers of red fruit; films of brown cream mask turbot;[2] in casseroles severed chickens swim; coloured, undomestic, the fire burns; and with the wine and the coffee (not paid for) rise jocund visions before musing eyes; gently speculative eyes; eyes to whom life appears musical, mysterious; eyes now kindled to observe genially the beauty of the red carnations which Lady Bruton (whose movements were always angular) had laid beside her plate, so that Hugh Whitbread, feeling at peace with the entire universe and at the same time completely sure of his standing, said, resting his fork,

"Wouldn't they look charming against your lace?"

Miss Brush resented this familiarity intensely. She thought him an underbred fellow. She made Lady Bruton laugh.

Lady Bruton raised the carnations, holding them rather stiffly with much the same attitude with which the General held the scroll in the picture behind her; she remained fixed, tranced. Which was she now, the General's great-grand-daughter? great-great-grand-daughter? Richard Dalloway asked himself. Sir Roderick, Sir Miles, Sir Talbot—that was it. It was remarkable how in that family the likeness persisted in the women. She should have been a general of dragoons[3] herself. And Richard would have served under her, cheerfully; he had the greatest respect for her; he cherished these romantic views about well-set-up old women of pedigree, and would have liked, in his good-humoured way, to bring some young hot-heads of his acquaintance to lunch with her; as if a type like hers could be bred of amiable tea-drinking enthusiasts! He knew her country. He knew her people. There was a vine, still bearing, which either Lovelace or Herrick[4]—she never read a word of poetry herself, but so the story ran—had sat under. Better wait to put before them the question that bothered her (about making an appeal to the public; if so, in what terms and so on), better wait until they have had their coffee, Lady Bruton thought; and so laid the carnations down beside her plate.

"How's Clarissa?" she asked abruptly.

Clarissa always said that Lady Bruton did not like her. Indeed, Lady Bruton had the reputation of being more interested in politics than people; of talking like a man; of having had a finger in some notorious intrigue of the eighties, which was now beginning to be mentioned in memoirs. Certainly there was an alcove in her drawing-room, and a table in that alcove, and a photograph upon that table of General Sir Talbot Moore, now deceased, who had written there (one evening in the eighties) in Lady Bruton's presence, with her cognisance, perhaps advice, a telegram ordering the British troops to advance upon an historical occasion. (She kept the pen and told the story.) Thus, when she said in her offhand way "How's Clarissa?" husbands had difficulty in persuading their wives and indeed,

however devoted, were secretly doubtful themselves, of her interest in women who often got in their husbands' way, prevented them from accepting posts abroad, and had to be taken to the seaside in the middle of the session to recover from influenza. Nevertheless her inquiry, "How's Clarissa?" was known by women infallibly, to be a signal from a well-wisher, from an almost silent companion, whose utterances (half a dozen perhaps in the course of a lifetime) signified recognition of some feminine comradeship which went beneath masculine lunch parties and united Lady Bruton and Mrs. Dalloway, who seldom met, and appeared when they did meet indifferent and even hostile, in a singular bond.

"I met Clarissa in the Park this morning," said Hugh Whitbread, diving into the casserole, anxious to pay himself this little tribute, for he had only to come to London and he met everybody at once; but greedy, one of the greediest men she had ever known, Milly Brush thought, who observed men with unflinching rectitude, and was capable of everlasting devotion, to her own sex in particular, being knobbed, scraped, angular, and entirely without feminine charm.

"D'you know who's in town?" said Lady Bruton suddenly bethinking her. "Our old friend, Peter Walsh."

They all smiled. Peter Walsh! And Mr. Dalloway was genuinely glad, Milly Brush thought; and Mr. Whitbread thought only of his chicken.

Peter Walsh! All three, Lady Bruton, Hugh Whitbread, and Richard Dalloway, remembered the same thing—how passionately Peter had been in love; been rejected; gone to India; come a cropper;[5] made a mess of things; and Richard Dalloway had a very great liking for the dear old fellow too. Milly Brush saw that; saw a depth in the brown of his eyes; saw him hesitate; consider; which interested her, as Mr. Dalloway always interested her, for what was he thinking, she wondered, about Peter Walsh?

That Peter Walsh had been in love with Clarissa; that he would go back directly after lunch and find Clarissa; that he would tell her, in so many words, that he loved her. Yes, he would say that.

Milly Brush once might almost have fallen in love with these silences; and Mr. Dalloway was always so dependable; such a gentleman too. Now, being forty, Lady Bruton had only to nod, or turn her head a little abruptly, and Milly Brush took the signal, however deeply she might be sunk in these reflections of a detached spirit, of an uncorrupted soul whom life could not bamboozle, because life had not offered her a trinket of the slightest value; not a curl, smile, lip, cheek, nose; nothing whatever; Lady Bruton had only to nod, and Perkins was instructed to quicken the coffee.

"Yes; Peter Walsh has come back," said Lady Bruton. It was vaguely flattering to them all. He had come back, battered, unsuccessful, to their secure shores. But to help him, they reflected, was impossible; there was some flaw in his character. Hugh Whitbread said one might of course mention his name to So-and-so. He wrinkled lugubriously, consequentially, at the thought of the letters he would write to the heads of Government offices about "my old friend, Peter Walsh," and so on. But it wouldn't lead to anything —not to anything permanent, because of his character.

"In trouble with some woman," said Lady Bruton. They had all guessed that *that* was at the bottom of it.

"However," said Lady Bruton, anxious to leave the subject, "we shall hear the whole story from Peter himself."

(The coffee was very slow in coming.)

"The address?" murmured Hugh Whitbread; and there was at once a ripple in the grey tide of service which washed round Lady Bruton day in, day out, collecting, intercepting, enveloping her in a fine tissue which broke concussions, mitigated interruptions, and spread round the house in Brook Street[6] a fine net where things lodged and were picked out accurately, instantly, by grey-haired Perkins, who had been with Lady Bruton these thirty years and now wrote down the address; handed it to Mr. Whitbread, who took out his pocketbook, raised his eyebrows, and slipping it in among documents of the highest importance, said that he would get Evelyn to ask him to lunch.

(They were waiting to bring the coffee until Mr. Whitbread had finished.)

Hugh was very slow, Lady Bruton thought. He was getting fat, she noticed. Richard always kept himself in the pink of condition.[7] She was getting impatient; the whole of her being was setting positively, undeniably, domineeringly brushing aside all this unnecessary trifling (Peter Walsh and his affairs) upon that subject which engaged her attention, and not merely her attention, but that fibre which was the ramrod of her soul, that essential part of her without which Millicent Bruton would not have been Millicent Bruton; that project for emigrating young people of both sexes born of respectable parents and setting them up with a fair prospect of doing well in Canada.[8] She exaggerated. She had perhaps lost her sense of proportion. Emigration was not to others the obvious remedy, the sublime conception. It was not to them (not to Hugh, or Richard, or even to devoted Miss Brush) the liberator of the pent[9] egotism, which a strong martial woman, well nourished, well descended, of direct impulses, downright feelings, and little introspective power (broad and simple—why could not every one be broad and simple? she asked) feels rise within her, once youth is past, and must eject upon some object—it may be Emigration, it may be Emancipation; but whatever it be, this object round which the essence of her soul is daily secreted, becomes inevitably prismatic, lustrous, half looking-glass, half precious stone; now carefully hidden in case people should sneer at it; now proudly displayed. Emigration had become, in short, largely Lady Bruton.

But she had to write. And one letter to the *Times*, she used to say to Miss Brush, cost her more than to organise an expedition to South Africa (which she had done in the war). After a morning's battle beginning, tearing up, beginning again, she used to feel the futility of her own womanhood as she felt it on no other occasion, and would turn gratefully to the thought of Hugh Whitbread who possessed—no one could doubt it—the art of writing letters to the *Times.*

A being so differently constituted from herself, with such a command of language; able to put things as editors like them put; had passions which one could not call simply greed. Lady Bruton often suspended judgement upon men in deference to the mysterious accord in which they, but no woman, stood to the laws of the universe; knew how to put things; knew what was said; so that if Richard advised her, and Hugh wrote for her, she was sure of being somehow right. So she let Hugh eat his soufflé; asked after poor Evelyn; waited until they were smoking, and then said,

"Milly, would you fetch the papers?"

And Miss Brush went out, came back; laid papers on the table; and Hugh produced his fountain pen; his silver fountain pen, which had done twenty years' service, he said, unscrewing the cap. It was still in perfect order; he had shown it to the makers; there was no reason, they said, why it should ever wear out; which was somehow to Hugh's credit, and to the credit of the sentiments which his pen expressed (so Richard Dalloway felt) as Hugh began carefully writing capital letters with rings round them in the margin, and thus marvellously reduced Lady Bruton's tangles to sense, to grammar such as the editor of the *Times*, Lady Bruton felt, watching the marvellous transformation, must respect. Hugh was slow. Hugh was pertinacious. Richard said one must take risks. Hugh proposed modifications in deference to people's feelings, which, he said rather tartly when Richard laughed, "had to be considered," and read out "how, therefore, we are of opinion that the times are ripe . . . the superfluous youth of our ever-increasing population . . . what we owe to the dead . . ." which Richard thought all stuffing and bunkum, but no harm in it, of course, and Hugh went on drafting sentiments in alphabetical order of the highest nobility, brushing the cigar ash from his waistcoat, and summing up now and then the progress they had made until, finally, he read out the draft of a letter which Lady Bruton felt certain was a masterpiece. Could her own meaning sound like that?

Hugh could not guarantee that the editor would put it in; but he would be meeting somebody at luncheon.

Whereupon Lady Bruton, who seldom did a graceful thing, stuffed all Hugh's carnations into the front of her dress, and flinging her hands out called him "My Prime Minister!" What she would have done without them both she did not know. They rose. And Richard Dalloway strolled off as usual to have a look at the General's portrait, because he meant, whenever he had a moment of leisure, to write a history of Lady Bruton's family.

And Millicent Bruton was very proud of her family. But they could wait, they could wait, she said, looking at the picture; meaning that her family, of military men, administrators, admirals, had been men of action, who had done their duty; and Richard's first duty was to his country, but it was a fine face, she said; and all the papers were ready for Richard down at Aldmixton whenever the time came; the Labour Government[1] she meant. "Ah, the news from India!" she cried.

And then, as they stood in the hall taking yellow gloves from the bowl on the malachite[2] table and Hugh was offering Miss Brush with quite unnecessary courtesy some discarded ticket or other compliment, which she loathed from the depths of her heart and blushed brick red, Richard turned to Lady Bruton, with his hat in his hand, and said,

"We shall see you at our party to-night?" whereupon Lady Bruton resumed the magnificence which letter-writing had shattered. She might come; or she might not come. Clarissa had wonderful energy. Parties terrified Lady Bruton. But then, she was getting old. So she intimated, standing at her doorway; handsome; very erect; while her chow stretched behind her, and Miss Brush disappeared into the background with her hands full of papers.

And Lady Bruton went ponderously, majestically, up to her room, lay, one arm extended, on the sofa. She sighed, she snored, not that she was asleep, only drowsy and heavy, drowsy and heavy, like a field of clover in the sunshine this hot June day, with the bees going round and about and the yellow butterflies. Always she went back to those fields down in Devonshire,[3] where she had jumped the brooks on Patty, her pony, with Mortimer and Tom, her brothers. And there

were the dogs; there were the rats; there were her father and mother on the lawn under the trees, with the tea-things out, and the beds of dahlias, the hollyhocks, the pampas grass; and they, little wretches, always up to some mischief! stealing back through the shrubbery, so as not to be seen, all bedraggled from some roguery. What old nurse used to say about her frocks!

Ah dear, she remembered—it was Wednesday in Brook Street. Those kind good fellows, Richard Dalloway, Hugh Whitbread, had gone this hot day through the streets whose growl came up to her lying on the sofa. Power was hers, position, income. She had lived in the forefront of her time. She had had good friends; known the ablest men of her day. Murmuring London flowed up to her, and her hand, lying on the sofa back, curled upon some imaginary baton such as her grandfathers might have held, holding which she seemed, drowsy and heavy, to be commanding battalions marching to Canada, and those good fellows walking across London, that territory of theirs, that little bit of carpet, Mayfair.

And they went further and further from her, being attached to her by a thin thread (since they had lunched with her) which would stretch and stretch, get thinner and thinner as they walked across London; as if one's friends were attached to one's body, after lunching with them, by a thin thread, which (as she dozed there) became hazy with the sound of bells, striking the hour or ringing to service, as a single spider's thread is blotted with rain-drops, and, burdened, sags down. So she slept.

And Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread hesitated at the corner of Conduit Street[4] at the very moment that Millicent Bruton, lying on the sofa, let the thread snap; snored. Contrary winds buffeted at the street corner. They looked in at a shop window; they did not wish to buy or to talk but to part, only with contrary winds buffeting the street corner, with some sort of lapse in the tides of the body, two forces meeting in a swirl, morning and afternoon, they paused. Some newspaper placard went up in the air, gallantly, like a kite at first, then paused, swooped, fluttered; and a lady's veil hung. Yellow awnings trembled. The speed of the morning traffic

slackened, and single carts rattled carelessly down half-empty streets. In Norfolk, of which Richard Dalloway was half thinking, a soft warm wind blew back the petals; confused the waters; ruffled the flowering grasses. Haymakers, who had pitched beneath hedges to sleep away the morning toil, parted curtains of green blades; moved trembling globes of cow parsley to see the sky, the blue, the steadfast, the blazing summer sky.

Aware that he was looking at a silver two-handled Jacobean[5] mug, and that Hugh Whitbread admired condescendingly with airs of connoisseurship a Spanish necklace which he thought of asking the price of in case Evelyn might like it—still Richard was torpid; could not think or move. Life had thrown up this wreckage; shop windows full of coloured paste, and one stood stark with the lethargy of the old, stiff with the rigidity of the old, looking in. Evelyn Whitbread might like to buy this Spanish necklace—so she might. Yawn he must. Hugh was going into the shop.

"Right you are!" said Richard, following.

Goodness knows he didn't want to go buying necklaces with Hugh. But there are tides in the body. Morning meets afternoon. Borne like a frail shallop[6] on deep, deep floods, Lady Bruton's great-grandfather and his memoir and his campaigns in North America were whelmed and sunk. And Millicent Bruton too. She went under. Richard didn't care a straw what became of Emigration; about that letter, whether the editor put it in or not. The necklace hung stretched between Hugh's admirable fingers. Let him give it to a girl, if he must buy jewels—any girl, any girl in the street. For the worthlessness of this life did strike Richard pretty forcibly—buying necklaces for Evelyn. If he'd had a boy he'd have said, Work, work. But he had his Elizabeth; he adored his Elizabeth.

"I should like to see Mr. Dubonnet," said Hugh in his curt worldly way. It appeared that this Dubonnet had the measurements of Mrs. Whitbread's neck, or, more strangely still, knew her views upon Spanish jewellery and the extent of her possessions in that line (which Hugh could not remember). All of which seemed to Richard Dalloway awfully odd. For he never gave Clarissa presents, except a

bracelet two or three years ago, which had not been a success. She never wore it. It pained him to remember that she never wore it. And as a single spider's thread after wavering here and there attaches itself to the point of a leaf, so Richard's mind, recovering from its lethargy, set now on his wife, Clarissa, whom Peter Walsh had loved so passionately; and Richard had had a sudden vision of her there at luncheon; of himself and Clarissa; of their life together; and he drew the tray of old jewels towards him, and taking up first this brooch then that ring, "How much is that?" he asked, but doubted his own taste. He wanted to open the drawing-room door and come in holding out something; a present for Clarissa. Only what? But Hugh was on his legs again. He was unspeakably pompous. Really, after dealing here for thirty-five years he was not going to be put off by a mere boy who did not know his business. For Dubonnet, it seemed, was out, and Hugh would not buy anything until Mr. Dubonnet chose to be in; at which the youth flushed and bowed his correct little bow. It was all perfectly correct. And yet Richard couldn't have said that to save his life! Why these people stood that damned insolence he could not conceive. Hugh was becoming an intolerable ass. Richard Dalloway could not stand more than an hour of his society. And, flicking his bowler hat by way of farewell, Richard turned at the corner of Conduit Street eager, yes, very eager, to travel that spider's thread of attachment between himself and Clarissa; he would go straight to her, in Westminster.

But he wanted to come in holding something. Flowers? Yes, flowers, since he did not trust his taste in gold; any number of flowers, roses, orchids, to celebrate what was, reckoning things as you will, an event; this feeling about her when they spoke of Peter Walsh at luncheon; and they never spoke of it; not for years had they spoken of it; which, he thought, grasping his red and white roses together (a vast bunch in tissue paper), is the greatest mistake in the world. The time comes when it can't be said; one's too shy to say it, he thought, pocketing his sixpence or two of change, setting off with his great bunch held against his body to Westminster to say straight out in so many words (whatever she might think of him),

holding out his flowers, "I love you." Why not? Really it was a miracle thinking of the war, and thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half forgotten; it was a miracle. Here he was walking across London to say to Clarissa in so many words that he loved her. Which one never does say, he thought. Partly one's lazy; partly one's shy. And Clarissa—it was difficult to think of her; except in starts, as at luncheon, when he saw her quite distinctly; their whole life. He stopped at the crossing; and repeated—being simple by nature, and undebauched, because he had tramped, and shot; being pertinacious and dogged, having championed the downtrodden and followed his instincts in the House of Commons; being preserved in his simplicity yet at the same time grown rather speechless, rather stiff—he repeated that it was a miracle that he should have married Clarissa; a miracle—his life had been a miracle, he thought; hesitating to cross. But it did make his blood boil to see little creatures of five or six crossing Piccadilly alone. The police ought to have stopped the traffic at once. He had no illusions about the London police. Indeed, he was collecting evidence of their malpractices; and those costermongers,[7] not allowed to stand their barrows in the streets; and prostitutes, good Lord, the fault wasn't in them, nor in young men either, but in our detestable social system and so forth; all of which he considered, could be seen considering, grey, dogged, dapper, clean, as he walked across the Park to tell his wife that he loved her.

For he would say it in so many words, when he came into the room. Because it is a thousand pities never to say what one feels, he thought, crossing the Green Park and observing with pleasure how in the shade of the trees whole families, poor families, were sprawling; children kicking up their legs; sucking milk; paper bags thrown about, which could easily be picked up (if people objected) by one of those fat gentlemen in livery;[8] for he was of opinion that every park, and every square, during the summer months should be open to children (the grass of the park flushed and faded, lighting up the poor mothers of Westminster and their crawling babies, as if a yellow lamp were moved beneath). But what could be done for

female vagrants like that poor creature, stretched on her elbow (as if she had flung herself on the earth, rid of all ties, to observe curiously, to speculate boldly, to consider the whys and the wherefores, impudent, loose-lipped, humorous), he did not know. Bearing his flowers like a weapon, Richard Dalloway approached her; intent he passed her; still there was time for a spark between them —she laughed at the sight of him, he smiled good-humouredly, considering the problem of the female vagrant; not that they would ever speak. But he would tell Clarissa that he loved her, in so many words. He had, once upon a time, been jealous of Peter Walsh; jealous of him and Clarissa. But she had often said to him that she had been right not to marry Peter Walsh; which, knowing Clarissa, was obviously true; she wanted support. Not that she was weak; but she wanted support.

As for Buckingham Palace (like an old prima donna facing the audience all in white) you can't deny it a certain dignity, he considered, nor despise what does, after all, stand to millions of people (a little crowd was waiting at the gate to see the King drive out) for a symbol, absurd though it is; a child with a box of bricks could have done better, he thought; looking at the memorial to Queen Victoria (whom he could remember in her horn spectacles driving through Kensington), its white mound, its billowing motherliness; but he liked being ruled by the descendant of Horsa;[9] he liked continuity; and the sense of handing on the traditions of the past. It was a great age in which to have lived. Indeed, his own life was a miracle; let him make no mistake about it; here he was, in the prime of life, walking to his house in Westminster to tell Clarissa that he loved her. Happiness is this, he thought.

It is this, he said, as he entered Dean's Yard.[1] Big Ben was beginning to strike, first the warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. Lunch parties waste the entire afternoon, he thought, approaching his door.

The sound of Big Ben flooded Clarissa's drawing-room, where she sat, ever so annoyed, at her writing-table; worried; annoyed. It was perfectly true that she had not asked Ellie Henderson to her party;

but she had done it on purpose. Now Mrs. Marsham wrote "she had told Ellie Henderson she would ask Clarissa—Ellie so much wanted to come."

But why should she invite all the dull women in London to her parties? Why should Mrs. Marsham interfere? And there was Elizabeth closeted all this time with Doris Kilman. Anything more nauseating she could not conceive. Prayer at this hour with that woman. And the sound of the bell flooded the room with its melancholy wave; which receded, and gathered itself together to fall once more, when she heard, distractingly, something fumbling, something scratching at the door. Who at this hour? Three, good Heavens! Three already! For with overpowering directness and dignity the clock struck three; and she heard nothing else; but the door handle slipped round and in came Richard! What a surprise! In came Richard, holding out flowers. She had failed him, once at Constantinople; and Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her. He was holding out flowers—roses, red and white roses. (But he could not bring himself to say he loved her; not in so many words.)

But how lovely, she said, taking his flowers. She understood; she understood without his speaking; his Clarissa. She put them in vases on the mantelpiece. How lovely they looked! she said. And was it amusing, she asked? Had Lady Bruton asked after her? Peter Walsh was back. Mrs. Marsham had written. Must she ask Ellie Henderson? That woman Kilman was upstairs.

"But let us sit down for five minutes," said Richard.

It all looked so empty. All the chairs were against the wall. What had they been doing? Oh, it was for the party; no, he had not forgotten, the party. Peter Walsh was back. Oh yes; she had had him. And he was going to get a divorce; and he was in love with some woman out there. And he hadn't changed in the slightest. There she was, mending her dress. . . .

"Thinking of Bourton," she said.

"Hugh was at lunch," said Richard. She had met him too! Well, he was getting absolutely intolerable. Buying Evelyn necklaces; fatter

than ever; an intolerable ass.

"And it came over me 'I might have married you,' " she said, thinking of Peter sitting there in his little bow-tie; with that knife, opening it, shutting it. "Just as he always was, you know."

They were talking about him at lunch, said Richard. (But he could not tell her he loved her. He held her hand. Happiness is this, he thought.) They had been writing a letter to the *Times* for Millicent Bruton. That was about all Hugh was fit for.

"And our dear Miss Kilman?" he asked. Clarissa thought the roses absolutely lovely, first bunched together; now of their own accord starting apart.

"Kilman arrives just as we've done lunch," she said. "Elizabeth turns pink. They shut themselves up. I suppose they're praying."

Lord! He didn't like it; but these things pass over if you let them.

"In a mackintosh with an umbrella," said Clarissa.

He had not said "I love you"; but he held her hand. Happiness is this, is this, he thought.

"But why should I ask all the dull women in London to my parties?" said Clarissa. And if Mrs. Marsham gave a party, did *she* invite her guests?

"Poor Ellie Henderson," said Richard—it was a very odd thing how much Clarissa minded about her parties, he thought.

But Richard had no notion of the look of a room. However—what was he going to say?

If she worried about these parties he would not let her give them. Did she wish she had married Peter? But he must go.

He must be off, he said, getting up. But he stood for a moment as if he were about to say something; and she wondered what? Why? There were the roses.

"Some Committee?" she asked, as he opened the door.

"Armenians," he said; or perhaps it was "Albanians."[2]

And there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect, thought Clarissa, watching him open the door; for one would not part with it

oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self-respect—something, after all, priceless.

He returned with a pillow and a quilt.

"An hour's complete rest after luncheon," he said. And he went.

How like him! He would go on saying "An hour's complete rest after luncheon" to the end of time, because a doctor had ordered it once. It was like him to take what doctors said literally; part of his adorable, divine simplicity, which no one had to the same extent; which made him go and do the thing while she and Peter frittered their time away bickering. He was already halfway to the House of Commons, to his Armenians, his Albanians, having settled her on the sofa, looking at his roses. And people would say, "Clarissa Dalloway is spoilt." She cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians. Hunted out of existence, maimed, frozen, the victims of cruelty and injustice (she had heard Richard say so over and over again)—no, she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians? but she loved her roses (didn't that help the Armenians?)—the only flowers she could bear to see cut. But Richard was already at the House of Commons; at his Committee, having settled all her difficulties. But no; alas, that was not true. He did not see the reasons against asking Ellie Henderson. She would do it, of course, as he wished it. Since he had brought the pillows, she would lie down. . . . But—but—why did she suddenly feel, for no reason that she could discover, desperately unhappy? As a person who has dropped some grain of pearl or diamond into the grass and parts the tall blades very carefully, this way and that, and searches here and there vainly, and at last spies it there at the roots, so she went through one thing and another; no, it was not Sally Seton saying that Richard would never be in the Cabinet because he had a second-class brain (it came back to her); no, she did not mind that; nor was it to do with Elizabeth either and Doris Kilman; those were facts. It was a feeling, some unpleasant feeling, earlier in the day perhaps; something that Peter had said, combined with some depression of her own, in her bedroom, taking off her hat; and what

Richard had said had added to it, but what had he said? There were his roses. Her parties! That was it! Her parties! Both of them criticised her very unfairly, laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties. That was it! That was it!

Well, how was she going to defend herself? Now that she knew what it was, she felt perfectly happy. They thought, or Peter at any rate thought, that she enjoyed imposing herself; liked to have famous people about her; great names; was simply a snob in short. Well, Peter might think so. Richard merely thought it foolish of her to like excitement when she knew it was bad for her heart. It was childish, he thought. And both were quite wrong. What she liked was simply life.

"That's what I do it for," she said, speaking aloud, to life.

Since she was lying on the sofa, cloistered, exempt, the presence of this thing which she felt to be so obvious became physically existent; with robes of sound from the street, sunny, with hot breath, whispering, blowing out the blinds. But suppose Peter said to her, "Yes, yes, but your parties—what's the sense of your parties?" all she could say was (and nobody could be expected to understand): They're an offering; which sounded horribly vague. But who was Peter to make out that life was all plain sailing?—Peter always in love, always in love with the wrong woman? What's your love? she might say to him. And she knew his answer; how it is the most important thing in the world and no woman possibly understood it. Very well. But could any man understand what she meant either? about life? She could not imagine Peter or Richard taking the trouble to give a party for no reason whatever.

But to go deeper, beneath what people said (and these judgements, how superficial, how fragmentary they are!) in her own mind now, what did it mean to her, this thing she called life? Oh, it was very queer. Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater;[3] and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be

brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom?

An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift. Nothing else had she of the slightest importance; could not think, write, even play the piano. She muddled Armenians and Turks; loved success; hated discomfort; must be liked; talked oceans of nonsense: and to this day, ask her what the Equator was, and she did not know.

All the same, that one day should follow another; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, that one should wake up in the morning; see the sky; walk in the park; meet Hugh Whitbread; then suddenly in came Peter; then these roses; it was enough. After that, how unbelievable death was!—that it must end; and no one in the whole world would know how she had loved it all; how, every instant . . .

The door opened. Elizabeth knew that her mother was resting. She came in very quietly. She stood perfectly still. Was it that some Mongol[4] had been wrecked on the coast of Norfolk (as Mrs. Hilbery said), had mixed with the Dalloway ladies, perhaps, a hundred years ago? For the Dalloways, in general, were fair-haired; blue-eyed; Elizabeth, on the contrary, was dark; had Chinese eyes[5] in a pale face; an Oriental mystery; was gentle, considerate, still. As a child, she had had a perfect sense of humour; but now at seventeen, why, Clarissa could not in the least understand, she had become very serious; like a hyacinth, sheathed in glossy green, with buds just tinted, a hyacinth which has had no sun.

She stood quite still and looked at her mother; but the door was ajar, and outside the door was Miss Kilman, as Clarissa knew; Miss Kilman in her mackintosh, listening to whatever they said.

Yes, Miss Kilman stood on the landing, and wore a mackintosh; but had her reasons. First, it was cheap; second, she was over forty; and did not, after all, dress to please. She was poor, moreover; degradingly poor. Otherwise she would not be taking jobs from people like the Dalloways; from rich people, who liked to be kind. Mr. Dalloway, to do him justice, had been kind. But Mrs. Dalloway had not. She had been merely condescending. She came from the most

worthless of all classes—the rich, with a smattering of culture. They had expensive things everywhere; pictures, carpets, lots of servants. She considered that she had a perfect right to anything that the Dalloways did for her.

She had been cheated. Yes, the word was no exaggeration, for surely a girl has a right to some kind of happiness? And she had never been happy, what with being so clumsy and so poor. And then, just as she might have had a chance at Miss Dolby's school, the war came; and she had never been able to tell lies. Miss Dolby thought she would be happier with people who shared her views about the Germans. She had had to go. It was true that the family was of German origin; spelt the name Kiehlman in the eighteenth century; but her brother had been killed. They turned her out because she would not pretend that the Germans were all villains—when she had German friends, when the only happy days of her life had been spent in Germany! And after all, she could read history. She had had to take whatever she could get. Mr. Dalloway had come across her working for the Friends.[6] He had allowed her (and that was really generous of him) to teach his daughter history. Also she did a little Extension lecturing[7] and so on. Then Our Lord had come to her (and here she always bowed her head). She had seen the light two years and three months ago. Now she did not envy women like Clarissa Dalloway; she pitied them.

She pitied and despised them from the bottom of her heart, as she stood on the soft carpet, looking at the old engraving of a little girl with a muff.[8] With all this luxury going on, what hope was there for a better state of things? Instead of lying on a sofa—"My mother is resting," Elizabeth had said—she should have been in a factory; behind a counter; Mrs. Dalloway and all the other fine ladies!

Bitter and burning, Miss Kilman had turned in to a church two years three months ago. She had heard the Rev. Edward Whittaker preach; the boys sing; had seen the solemn lights descend, and whether it was the music, or the voices (she herself when alone in the evening found comfort in a violin; but the sound was excruciating; she had no ear), the hot and turbulent feelings which

boiled and surged in her had been assuaged as she sat there, and she had wept copiously, and gone to call on Mr. Whittaker at his private house in Kensington. It was the hand of God, he said. The Lord had shown her the way. So now, whenever the hot and painful feelings boiled within her, this hatred of Mrs. Dalloway, this grudge against the world, she thought of God. She thought of Mr. Whittaker. Rage was succeeded by calm. A sweet savour filled her veins, her lips parted, and, standing formidable upon the landing in her mackintosh, she looked with steady and sinister serenity at Mrs. Dalloway, who came out with her daughter.

Elizabeth said she had forgotten her gloves. That was because Miss Kilman and her mother hated each other. She could not bear to see them together. She ran upstairs to find her gloves.

But Miss Kilman did not hate Mrs. Dalloway. Turning her large gooseberry-coloured eyes upon Clarissa, observing her small pink face, her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion, Miss Kilman felt, Fool! Simpleton! You who have known neither sorrow nor pleasure; who have trifled your life away! And there rose in her an overmastering desire to overcome her; to unmask her. If she could have felled her it would have eased her. But it was not the body; it was the soul and its mockery that she wished to subdue; make feel her mastery. If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying, You are right! But this was God's will, not Miss Kilman's. It was to be a religious victory. So she glared; so she glowered.

Clarissa was really shocked. This a Christian—this woman! This woman had taken her daughter from her! She in touch with invisible presences! Heavy, ugly, commonplace, without kindness or grace, she know the meaning of life!

"You are taking Elizabeth to the Stores?"[9] Mrs. Dalloway said.

Miss Kilman said she was. They stood there. Miss Kilman was not going to make herself agreeable. She had always earned her living. Her knowledge of modern history was thorough in the extreme. She did out of her meagre income set aside so much for causes she believed in; whereas this woman did nothing, believed nothing;

brought up her daughter—but here was Elizabeth, rather out of breath, the beautiful girl.

So they were going to the Stores. Odd it was, as Miss Kilman stood there (and stand she did, with the power and taciturnity of some prehistoric monster armoured for primeval warfare), how, second by second, the idea of her diminished, how hatred (which was for ideas, not people) crumbled, how she lost her malignity, her size, became second by second merely Miss Kilman, in a mackintosh, whom Heaven knows Clarissa would have liked to help.

At this dwindling of the monster, Clarissa laughed. Saying good-bye, she laughed.

Off they went together, Miss Kilman and Elizabeth, downstairs.

With a sudden impulse, with a violent anguish, for this woman was taking her daughter from her, Clarissa leant over the bannisters and cried out, "Remember the party! Remember our party to-night!"

But Elizabeth had already opened the front door; there was a van passing; she did not answer.

Love and religion! thought Clarissa, going back into the drawing-room, tingling all over. How detestable, how detestable they are! For now that the body of Miss Kilman was not before her, it overwhelmed her—the idea. The crudest things in the world, she thought, seeing them clumsy, hot, domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel and unscrupulous, dressed in a mackintosh coat, on the landing; love and religion. Had she ever tried to convert any one herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves? And she watched out of the window the old lady opposite climbing upstairs. Let her climb upstairs if she wanted to; let her stop; then let her, as Clarissa had often seen her, gain her bedroom, part her curtains, and disappear again into the background. Somehow one respected that—that old woman looking out of the window, quite unconscious that she was being watched. There was something solemn in it—but love and religion would destroy that, whatever it was, the privacy of the soul. The odious Kilman would destroy it. Yet it was a sight that made her want to cry.

Love destroyed too. Everything that was fine, everything that was true went. Take Peter Walsh now. There was a man, charming, clever, with ideas about everything. If you wanted to know about Pope, say, or Addison,[1] or just to talk nonsense, what people were like, what things meant, Peter knew better than any one. It was Peter who had helped her; Peter who had lent her books. But look at the women he loved—vulgar, trivial, commonplace. Think of Peter in love—he came to see her after all these years, and what did he talk about? Himself. Horrible passion! she thought. Degrading passion! she thought, thinking of Kilman and her Elizabeth walking to the Army and Navy Stores.

Big Ben struck the half-hour.

How extraordinary it was, strange, yes, touching, to see the old lady (they had been neighbours ever so many years) move away from the window, as if she were attached to that sound, that string. Gigantic as it was, it had something to do with her. Down, down, into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell making the moment solemn. She was forced, so Clarissa imagined, by that sound, to move, to go—but where? Clarissa tried to follow her as she turned and disappeared, and could still just see her white cap moving at the back of the bedroom. She was still there moving about at the other end of the room. Why creeds and prayers and mackintoshes? when, thought Clarissa, that's the miracle, that's the mystery; that old lady, she meant, whom she could see going from chest of drawers to dressing-table. She could still see her. And the supreme mystery which Kilman might say she had solved, or Peter might say he had solved, but Clarissa didn't believe either of them had the ghost of an idea of solving, was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?

Love—but here the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben, came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends, which it dumped down as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just, but she must remember all sorts of little things besides—Mrs. Marsham, Ellie Henderson, glasses for ices—all sorts of little things came flooding

and lapping and dancing in on the wake of that solemn stroke which lay flat like a bar of gold on the sea. Mrs. Marsham, Ellie Henderson, glasses for ices. She must telephone now at once.

Volubly, troublously, the late clock sounded, coming in on the wake of Big Ben, with its lap full of trifles. Beaten up, broken up by the assault of carriages, the brutality of vans, the eager advance of myriads of angular men, of flaunting women, the domes and spires of offices and hospitals, the last relics of this lap full of odds and ends seemed to break, like the spray of an exhausted wave, upon the body of Miss Kilman standing still in the street for a moment to mutter "It is the flesh."

It was the flesh that she must control. Clarissa Dalloway had insulted her. That she expected. But she had not triumphed; she had not mastered the flesh. Ugly, clumsy, Clarissa Dalloway had laughed at her for being that; and had revived the fleshly desires, for she minded looking as she did beside Clarissa. Nor could she talk as she did. But why wish to resemble her? Why? She despised Mrs. Dalloway from the bottom of her heart. She was not serious. She was not good. Her life was a tissue of vanity and deceit. Yet Doris Kilman had been overcome. She had, as a matter of fact, very nearly burst into tears when Clarissa Dalloway laughed at her. "It is the flesh, it is the flesh," she muttered (it being her habit to talk aloud) trying to subdue this turbulent and painful feeling as she walked down Victoria Street. She prayed to God. She could not help being ugly; she could not afford to buy pretty clothes. Clarissa Dalloway had laughed—but she would concentrate her mind upon something else until she had reached the pillar-box.[2] At any rate she had got Elizabeth. But she would think of something else; she would think of Russia; until she reached the pillar-box.

How nice it must be, she said, in the country, struggling, as Mr. Whittaker had told her, with that violent grudge against the world which had scorned her, sneered at her, cast her off, beginning with this indignity—the infliction of her unlovable body which people could not bear to see. Do her hair as she might, her forehead remained like an egg, bald, white. No clothes suited her. She might

buy anything. And for a woman, of course, that meant never meeting the opposite sex. Never would she come first with any one. Sometimes lately it had seemed to her that, except for Elizabeth, her food was all that she lived for; her comforts; her dinner, her tea; her hot-water bottle at night. But one must fight; vanquish; have faith in God. Mr. Whittaker had said she was there for a purpose. But no one knew the agony! He said, pointing to the crucifix, that God knew. But why should she have to suffer when other women, like Clarissa Dalloway, escaped? Knowledge comes through suffering, said Mr. Whittaker.

She had passed the pillar-box, and Elizabeth had turned into the cool brown tobacco department of the Army and Navy Stores while she was still muttering to herself what Mr. Whittaker had said about knowledge coming through suffering and the flesh. "The flesh," she muttered.

What department did she want? Elizabeth interrupted her.

"Petticoats," she said abruptly, and stalked straight on to the lift.

Up they went. Elizabeth guided her this way and that; guided her in her abstraction as if she had been a great child, an unwieldy battleship. There were the petticoats, brown, decorous, striped, frivolous, solid, flimsy; and she chose, in her abstraction, portentously, and the girl serving thought her mad.

Elizabeth rather wondered, as they did up the parcel, what Miss Kilman was thinking. They must have their tea, said Miss Kilman, rousing, collecting herself. They had their tea.

Elizabeth rather wondered whether Miss Kilman could be hungry. It was her way of eating, eating with intensity, then looking, again and again, at a plate of sugared cakes on the table next them; then, when a lady and a child sat down and the child took the cake, could Miss Kilman really mind it? Yes, Miss Kilman did mind it. She had wanted that cake—the pink one. The pleasure of eating was almost the only pure pleasure left her, and then to be baffled even in that!

When people are happy, they have a reserve, she had told Elizabeth, upon which to draw, whereas she was like a wheel without a tyre (she was fond of such metaphors), jolted by every

pebble, so she would say staying on after the lesson standing by the fire-place with her bag of books, her "satchel," she called it, on a Tuesday morning, after the lesson was over. And she talked too about the war. After all, there were people who did not think the English invariably right. There were books. There were meetings. There were other points of view. Would Elizabeth like to come with her to listen to So-and-so (a most extraordinary looking old man)? Then Miss Kilman took her to some church in Kensington and they had tea with a clergyman. She had lent her books. Law, medicine, politics, all professions are open to women of your generation, said Miss Kilman. But for herself, her career was absolutely ruined and was it her fault? Good gracious, said Elizabeth, no.

And her mother would come calling to say that a hamper had come from Bourton and would Miss Kilman like some flowers? To Miss Kilman she was always very, very nice, but Miss Kilman squashed the flowers all in a bunch, and hadn't any small talk, and what interested Miss Kilman bored her mother, and Miss Kilman and she were terrible together; and Miss Kilman swelled and looked very plain. But then Miss Kilman was frightfully clever. Elizabeth had never thought about the poor. They lived with everything they wanted,—her mother had breakfast in bed every day; Lucy carried it up; and she liked old women because they were Duchesses, and being descended from some Lord. But Miss Kilman said (one of those Tuesday mornings when the lesson was over), "My grandfather kept an oil and colour shop[3] in Kensington." Miss Kilman made one feel so small.

Miss Kilman took another cup of tea. Elizabeth, with her oriental bearing, her inscrutable mystery, sat perfectly upright; no, she did not want anything more. She looked for her gloves—her white gloves. They were under the table. Ah, but she must not go! Miss Kilman could not let her go! this youth, that was so beautiful, this girl, whom she genuinely loved! Her large hand opened and shut on the table.

But perhaps it was a little flat somehow, Elizabeth felt. And really she would like to go.

But said Miss Kilman, “I’ve not quite finished yet.”

Of course, then, Elizabeth would wait. But it was rather stuffy in here.

“Are you going to the party to-night?” Miss Kilman said. Elizabeth supposed she was going; her mother wanted her to go. She must not let parties absorb her, Miss Kilman said, fingering the last two inches of a chocolate éclair.

She did not much like parties, Elizabeth said. Miss Kilman opened her mouth, slightly projected her chin, and swallowed down the last inches of the chocolate éclair, then wiped her fingers, and washed the tea round in her cup.

She was about to split asunder, she felt. The agony was so terrific. If she could grasp her, if she could clasp her, if she could make her hers absolutely and forever and then die; that was all she wanted. But to sit here, unable to think of anything to say; to see Elizabeth turning against her; to be felt repulsive even by her—it was too much; she could not stand it. The thick fingers curled inwards.

“I never go to parties,” said Miss Kilman, just to keep Elizabeth from going. “People don’t ask me to parties”—and she knew as she said it that it was this egotism that was her undoing; Mr. Whittaker had warned her; but she could not help it. She had suffered so horribly. “Why should they ask me?” she said. “I’m plain, I’m unhappy.” She knew it was idiotic. But it was all those people passing—people with parcels who despised her, who made her say it. However, she was Doris Kilman. She had her degree. She was a woman who had made her way in the world. Her knowledge of modern history was more than respectable.

“I don’t pity myself,” she said. “I pity”—she meant to say “your mother” but no, she could not, not to Elizabeth. “I pity other people,” she said, “more.”

Like some dumb creature who has been brought up to a gate for an unknown purpose, and stands there longing to gallop away, Elizabeth Dalloway sat silent. Was Miss Kilman going to say anything more?

"Don't quite forget me," said Doris Kilman; her voice quivered. Right away to the end of the field the dumb creature galloped in terror.

The great hand opened and shut.

Elizabeth turned her head. The waitress came. One had to pay at the desk, Elizabeth said, and went off, drawing out, so Miss Kilman felt, the very entrails in her body, stretching them as she crossed the room, and then, with a final twist, bowing her head very politely, she went.

She had gone. Miss Kilman sat at the marble table among the éclairs, stricken once, twice, thrice by shocks of suffering. She had gone. Mrs. Dalloway had triumphed. Elizabeth had gone. Beauty had gone, youth had gone.

So she sat. She got up, blundered off among the little tables, rocking slightly from side to side, and somebody came after her with her petticoat, and she lost her way, and was hemmed in by trunks specially prepared for taking to India; next got among the accouchement[4] sets, and baby linen; through all the commodities of the world, perishable and permanent, hams, drugs, flowers, stationery, variously smelling, now sweet, now sour she lurched; saw herself thus lurching with her hat askew, very red in the face, full length in a looking-glass; and at last came out into the street.

The tower of Westminster Cathedral[5] rose in front of her, the habitation of God. In the midst of the traffic, there was the habitation of God. Doggedly she set off with her parcel to that other sanctuary, the Abbey,[6] where, raising her hands in a tent before her face, she sat beside those driven into shelter too; the variously assorted worshippers, now divested of social rank, almost of sex, as they raised their hands before their faces; but once they removed them, instantly reverent, middle class, English men and women, some of them desirous of seeing the wax works.[7]

But Miss Kilman held her tent before her face. Now she was deserted; now rejoined. New worshippers came in from the street to replace the strollers, and still, as people gazed round and shuffled

past the tomb of the Unknown Warrior,[8] still she barred her eyes with her fingers and tried in this double darkness, for the light in the Abbey was bodiless, to aspire above the vanities, the desires, the commodities, to rid herself both of hatred and of love. Her hands twitched. She seemed to struggle. Yet to others God was accessible and the path to Him smooth. Mr. Fletcher, retired, of the Treasury, Mrs. Gorham, widow of the famous K.C.,[9] approached Him simply, and having done their praying, leant back, enjoyed the music (the organ pealed sweetly), and saw Miss Kilman at the end of the row, praying, praying, and, being still on the threshold of their underworld, thought of her sympathetically as a soul haunting the same territory, a soul cut out of immaterial substance; not a woman, a soul.

But Mr. Fletcher had to go. He had to pass her, and being himself neat as a new pin, could not help being a little distressed by the poor lady's disorder; her hair down; her parcel on the floor. She did not at once let him pass. But, as he stood gazing about him, at the white marbles, grey window panes, and accumulated treasures (for he was extremely proud of the Abbey), her largeness, robustness, and power as she sat there shifting her knees from time to time (it was so rough the approach to her God—so tough her desires) impressed him, as they had impressed Mrs. Dalloway (she could not get the thought of her out of her mind that afternoon), the Rev. Edward Whittaker, and Elizabeth too.

And Elizabeth waited in Victoria Street for an omnibus. It was so nice to be out of doors. She thought perhaps she need not go home just yet. It was so nice to be out in the air. So she would get on to an omnibus. And already, even as she stood there, in her very well cut clothes, it was beginning. . . . People were beginning to compare her to poplar trees, early dawn, hyacinths, fawns, running water, and garden lilies, and it made her life a burden to her, for she so much preferred being left alone to do what she liked in the country, but they would compare her to lilies, and she had to go to parties, and London was so dreary compared with being alone in the country with her father and the dogs.

Buses swooped, settled, were off—garish caravans, glistening with red and yellow varnish. But which should she get on to? She had no preferences. Of course, she would not push her way. She inclined to be passive. It was expression she needed, but her eyes were fine, Chinese, oriental, and, as her mother said, with such nice shoulders and holding herself so straight, she was always charming to look at; and lately, in the evening especially, when she was interested, for she never seemed excited, she looked almost beautiful, very stately, very serene. What could she be thinking? Every man fell in love with her, and she was really awfully bored. For it was beginning. Her mother could see that—the compliments were beginning. That she did not care more about it—for instance for her clothes—sometimes worried Clarissa, but perhaps it was as well with all those puppies and guinea pigs about having distemper, and it gave her a charm. And now there was this odd friendship with Miss Kilman. Well, thought Clarissa about three o'clock in the morning, reading Baron Marbot for she could not sleep, it proves she has a heart.

Suddenly Elizabeth stepped forward and most competently boarded the omnibus, in front of everybody. She took a seat on top. The impetuous creature—a pirate—started forward, sprang away; she had to hold the rail to steady herself, for a pirate it was, reckless, unscrupulous, bearing down ruthlessly, circumventing dangerously, boldly snatching a passenger, or ignoring a passenger, squeezing eel-like and arrogant in between, and then rushing insolently all sails spread up Whitehall. And did Elizabeth give one thought to poor Miss Kilman who loved her without jealousy, to whom she had been a fawn in the open, a moon in a glade? She was delighted to be free. The fresh air was so delicious. It had been so stuffy in the Army and Navy Stores. And now it was like riding, to be rushing up Whitehall; and to each movement of the omnibus the beautiful body in the fawn-coloured coat responded freely like a rider, like the figurehead of a ship, for the breeze slightly disarrayed her; the heat gave her cheeks the pallor of white painted wood; and

her fine eyes, having no eyes to meet, gazed ahead, blank, bright, with the staring incredible innocence of sculpture.

It was always talking about her own sufferings that made Miss Kilman so difficult. And was she right? If it was being on committees and giving up hours and hours every day (she hardly ever saw him in London) that helped the poor, her father did that, goodness knows,—if that was what Miss Kilman meant about being a Christian; but it was so difficult to say. Oh, she would like to go a little further. Another penny was it to the Strand? Here was another penny then. She would go up the Strand.

She liked people who were ill. And every profession is open to the women of your generation, said Miss Kilman. So she might be a doctor. She might be a farmer. Animals are often ill. She might own a thousand acres and have people under her. She would go and see them in their cottages. This was Somerset House.[1] One might be a very good farmer—and that, strangely enough though Miss Kilman had her share in it, was almost entirely due to Somerset House. It looked so splendid, so serious, that great grey building. And she liked the feeling of people working. She liked those churches, like shapes of grey paper, breasting the stream of the Strand. It was quite different here from Westminster, she thought, getting off at Chancery Lane.[2] It was so serious; it was so busy. In short, she would like to have a profession. She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament, if she found it necessary, all because of the Strand.

The feet of those people busy about their activities, hands putting stone to stone, minds eternally occupied not with trivial chatterings (comparing women to poplars—which was rather exciting, of course, but very silly), but with thoughts of ships, of business, of law, of administration, and with it all so stately (she was in the Temple), gay (there was the river), pious (there was the Church[3]), made her quite determined, whatever her mother might say, to become either a farmer or a doctor. But she was, of course, rather lazy.

And it was much better to say nothing about it. It seemed so silly. It was the sort of thing that did sometimes happen, when one was alone—buildings without architects' names, crowds of people coming back from the city having more power than single clergymen in Kensington, than any of the books Miss Kilman had lent her, to stimulate what lay slumbrous, clumsy, and shy on the mind's sandy floor to break surface, as a child suddenly stretches its arms; it was just that, perhaps, a sigh, a stretch of the arms, an impulse, a revelation, which has its effects for ever, and then down again it went to the sandy floor. She must go home. She must dress for dinner. But what was the time?—where was a clock?

She looked up Fleet Street.[4] She walked just a little way towards St. Paul's, shyly, like some one penetrating on tiptoe, exploring a strange house by night with a candle, on edge lest the owner should suddenly fling wide his bedroom door and ask her business, nor did she dare wander off into queer alleys, tempting bye-streets, any more than in a strange house open doors which might be bedroom doors, or sitting-room doors, or lead straight to the larder.[5] For no Dalloways came down the Strand daily; she was a pioneer, a stray, venturing, trusting.

In many ways, her mother felt, she was extremely immature, like a child still, attached to dolls, to old slippers; a perfect baby; and that was charming. But then, of course, there was in the Dalloway family the tradition of public service. Abbesses, principals, head mistresses, dignitaries, in the republic of women—without being brilliant, any of them, they were that. She penetrated a little further in the direction of St. Paul's. She liked the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. It seemed to her good. The noise was tremendous; and suddenly there were trumpets (the unemployed) blaring, rattling about in the uproar, military music; as if people were marching; yet had they been dying—had some woman breathed her last and whoever was watching, opening the window of the room where she had just brought off that act of supreme dignity, looked down on Fleet Street, that uproar, that

military music would have come triumphing up to him, consolatory, indifferent.

It was not conscious. There was no recognition in it of one's fortune, or fate, and for that very reason even to those dazed with watching for the last shivers of consciousness on the faces of the dying, consoling. Forgetfulness in people might wound, their ingratitude corrode, but this voice, pouring endlessly, year in year out, would take whatever it might be; this vow; this van; this life; this procession, would wrap them all about and carry them on, as in the rough stream of a glacier the ice holds a splinter of bone, a blue petal, some oak trees, and rolls them on.

But it was later than she thought. Her mother would not like her to be wandering off alone like this. She turned back down the Strand.

A puff of wind (in spite of the heat, there was quite a wind) blew a thin black veil over the sun and over the Strand. The faces faded; the omnibuses suddenly lost their glow. For although the clouds were of mountainous white so that one could fancy hacking hard chips off with a hatchet, with broad golden slopes, lawns of celestial pleasure gardens, on their flanks, and had all the appearance of settled habitations assembled for the conference of gods above the world, there was a perpetual movement among them. Signs were interchanged, when, as if to fulfil some scheme arranged already, now a summit dwindled, now a whole block of pyramidal size which had kept its station inalterably advanced into the midst or gravely led the procession to fresh anchorage. Fixed though they seemed at their posts, at rest in perfect unanimity, nothing could be fresher, freer, more sensitive superficially than the snow-white or gold-kindled surface; to change, to go, to dismantle the solemn assemblage was immediately possible; and in spite of the grave fixity, the accumulated robustness and solidity, now they struck light to the earth, now darkness.

Calmly and competently, Elizabeth Dalloway mounted the Westminster omnibus.

Going and coming, beckoning, signalling, so the light and shadow which now made the wall grey, now the bananas bright yellow, now made the Strand grey, now made the omnibuses bright yellow, seemed to Septimus Warren Smith lying on the sofa in the sitting-room; watching the watery gold glow and fade with the astonishing sensibility of some live creature on the roses, on the wall-paper. Outside the trees dragged their leaves like nets through the depths of the air; the sound of water was in the room and through the waves came the voices of birds singing. Every power poured its treasures on his head, and his hand lay there on the back of the sofa, as he had seen his hand lie when he was bathing, floating, on the top of the waves, while far away on shore he heard dogs barking and barking far away. Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more.

He was not afraid. At every moment Nature signified by some laughing hint like that gold spot which went round the wall—there, there, there—her determination to show, by brandishing her plumes, shaking her tresses, flinging her mantle this way and that, beautifully, always beautifully, and standing close up to breathe through her hollowed hands Shakespeare's words, her meaning.

Rezia, sitting at the table twisting a hat in her hands, watched him; saw him smiling. He was happy then. But she could not bear to see him smiling. It was not marriage; it was not being one's husband to look strange like that, always to be starting, laughing, sitting hour after hour silent, or clutching her and telling her to write. The table drawer was full of those writings; about war, about Shakespeare; about great discoveries; how there is no death. Lately he had become excited suddenly for no reason (and both Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw said excitement was the worst thing for him), and waved his hands and cried out that he knew the truth! He knew everything! That man, his friend who was killed, Evans, had come, he said. He was singing behind the screen. She wrote it down just as he spoke it. Some things were very beautiful; others sheer nonsense. And he was always stopping in the middle, changing his

mind; wanting to add something; hearing something new; listening with his hand up.

But she heard nothing.

And once they found the girl who did the room reading one of these papers in fits of laughter. It was a dreadful pity. For that made Septimus cry out about human cruelty—how they tear each other to pieces. The fallen, he said, they tear to pieces. "Holmes is on us," he would say, and he would invent stories about Holmes; Holmes eating porridge; Holmes reading Shakespeare—making himself roar with laughter or rage, for Dr. Holmes seemed to stand for something horrible to him. "Human nature," he called him. Then there were the visions. He was drowned, he used to say, and lying on a cliff with the gulls screaming over him. He would look over the edge of the sofa down into the sea. Or he was hearing music. Really it was only a barrel organ or some man crying in the street. But "Lovely!" he used to cry, and the tears would run down his cheeks, which was to her the most dreadful thing of all, to see a man like Septimus, who had fought, who was brave, crying. And he would lie listening until suddenly he would cry that he was falling down, down into the flames! Actually she would look for flames, it was so vivid. But there was nothing. They were alone in the room. It was a dream, she would tell him and so quiet him at last, but sometimes she was frightened too. She sighed as she sat sewing.

Her sigh was tender and enchanting, like the wind outside a wood in the evening. Now she put down her scissors; now she turned to take something from the table. A little stir, a little crinkling, a little tapping built up something on the table there, where she sat sewing. Through his eyelashes he could see her blurred outline; her little black body; her face and hands; her turning movements at the table, as she took up a reel, or looked (she was apt to lose things) for her silk. She was making a hat for Mrs. Filmer's married daughter, whose name was—he had forgotten her name.

"What is the name of Mrs. Filmer's married daughter?" he asked.

"Mrs. Peters," said Rezia. She was afraid it was too small, she said, holding it before her. Mrs. Peters was a big woman; but she did

not like her. It was only because Mrs. Filmer had been so good to them. "She gave me grapes this morning," she said—that Rezia wanted to do something to show that they were grateful. She had come into the room the other evening and found Mrs. Peters, who thought they were out, playing the gramophone.

"Was it true?" he asked. She was playing the gramophone? Yes; she had told him about it at the time; she had found Mrs. Peters playing the gramophone.

He began, very cautiously, to open his eyes, to see whether a gramophone was really there. But real things—real things were too exciting. He must be cautious. He would not go mad. First he looked at the fashion papers on the lower shelf, then, gradually at the gramophone with the green trumpet. Nothing could be more exact. And so, gathering courage, he looked at the sideboard; the plate of bananas; the engraving of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort;[6] at the mantelpiece, with the jar of roses. None of these things moved. All were still; all were real.

"She is a woman with a spiteful tongue," said Rezia.

"What does Mr. Peters do?" Septimus asked.

"Ah," said Rezia, trying to remember. She thought Mrs. Filmer had said that he travelled for some company. "Just now he is in Hull,"[7] she said.

"Just now!" She said that with her Italian accent. She said that herself. He shaded his eyes so that he might see only a little of her face at a time, first the chin, then the nose, then the forehead, in case it were deformed, or had some terrible mark on it. But no, there she was, perfectly natural, sewing, with the pursed lips that women have, the set, the melancholy expression, when sewing. But there was nothing terrible about it, he assured himself, looking a second time, a third time at her face, her hands, for what was frightening or disgusting in her as she sat there in broad daylight, sewing? Mrs. Peters had a spiteful tongue. Mr. Peters was in Hull. Why then rage and prophesy? Why fly scourged and outcast? Why be made to tremble and sob by the clouds? Why seek truths and deliver messages when Rezia sat sticking pins into the front of her

dress, and Mr. Peters was in Hull? Miracles, revelations, agonies, loneliness, falling through the sea, down, down into the flames, all were burnt out, for he had a sense, as he watched Rezia trimming the straw hat for Mrs. Peters, of a coverlet of flowers.

"It's too small for Mrs. Peters," said Septimus.

For the first time for days he was speaking as he used to do! Of course it was—absurdly small, she said. But Mrs. Peters had chosen it.

He took it out of her hands. He said it was an organ grinder's monkey's hat.

How it rejoiced her that! Not for weeks had they laughed like this together, poking fun privately like married people. What she meant was that if Mrs. Filmer had come in, or Mrs. Peters or anybody they would not have understood what she and Septimus were laughing at.

"There," she said, pinning a rose to one side of the hat. Never had she felt so happy! Never in her life!

But that was still more ridiculous, Septimus said. Now the poor woman looked like a pig at a fair. (Nobody ever made her laugh as Septimus did.)

What had she got in her work-box? She had ribbons and beads, tassels, artificial flowers. She tumbled them out on the table. He began putting odd colours together—for though he had no fingers, could not even do up a parcel, he had a wonderful eye, and often he was right, sometimes absurd, of course, but sometimes wonderfully right.

"She shall have a beautiful hat!" he murmured, taking up this and that, Rezia kneeling by his side, looking over his shoulder. Now it was finished—that is to say the design; she must stitch it together. But she must be very, very careful, he said, to keep it just as he had made it.

So she sewed. When she sewed, he thought, she made a sound like a kettle on the hob;[8] bubbling, murmuring, always busy, her strong little pointed fingers pinching and poking; her needle flashing straight. The sun might go in and out, on the tassels, on the

wallpaper, but he would wait, he thought, stretching out his feet, looking at his ringed sock at the end of the sofa; he would wait in this warm place, this pocket of still air, which one comes on at the edge of a wood sometimes in the evening, when, because of a fall in the ground, or some arrangement of the trees (one must be scientific above all, scientific), warmth lingers, and the air buffets the cheek like the wing of a bird.

"There it is," said Rezia, twirling Mrs. Peters' hat on the tips of her fingers. "That'll do for the moment. Later . . ." her sentence bubbled away drip, drip, drip, like a contented tap left running.

It was wonderful. Never had he done anything which made him feel so proud. It was so real, it was so substantial, Mrs. Peters' hat.

"Just look at it," he said.

Yes, it would always make her happy to see that hat. He had become himself then, he had laughed then. They had been alone together. Always she would like that hat.

He told her to try it on.

"But I must look so queer!" she cried, running over to the glass and looking first this side then that. Then she snatched it off again, for there was a tap at the door. Could it be Sir William Bradshaw? Had he sent already?

No! it was only the small girl with the evening paper.

What always happened, then happened—what happened every night of their lives. The small girl sucked her thumb at the door; Rezia went down on her knees; Rezia cooed and kissed; Rezia got a bag of sweets out of the table drawer. For so it always happened. First one thing, then another. So she built it up, first one thing and then another. Dancing, skipping, round and round the room they went. He took the paper. Surrey was all out,[9] he read. There was a heat wave. Rezia repeated: Surrey was all out. There was a heat wave, making it part of the game she was playing with Mrs. Filmer's grandchild, both of them laughing, chattering at the same time, at their game. He was very tired. He was very happy. He would sleep. He shut his eyes. But directly he saw nothing the sounds of the game became fainter and stranger and sounded like the cries of

people seeking and not finding, and passing further and further away. They had lost him!

He started up in terror. What did he see? The plate of bananas on the sideboard. Nobody was there (Rezia had taken the child to its mother. It was bedtime). That was it: to be alone forever. That was the doom pronounced in Milan when he came into the room and saw them cutting out buckram shapes with their scissors; to be alone forever.

He was alone with the sideboard and the bananas. He was alone, exposed on this bleak eminence, stretched out—but not on a hill-top; not on a crag; on Mrs. Filmer's sitting-room sofa. As for the visions, the faces, the voices of the dead, where were they? There was a screen in front of him, with black bulrushes and blue swallows. Where he had once seen mountains, where he had seen faces, where he had seen beauty, there was a screen.

"Evans!" he cried. There was no answer. A mouse had squeaked, or a curtain rustled. Those were the voices of the dead. The screen, the coal-scuttle, the sideboard remained to him. Let him then face the screen, the coal-scuttle and the sideboard . . . but Rezia burst into the room chattering.

Some letter had come. Everybody's plans were changed. Mrs. Filmer would not be able to go to Brighton[1] after all. There was no time to let Mrs. Williams know, and really Rezia thought it very, very annoying, when she caught sight of the hat and thought . . . perhaps . . . she . . . might just make a little. . . . Her voice died out in contented melody.

"Ah, damn!" she cried (it was a joke of theirs, her swearing), the needle had broken. Hat, child, Brighton, needle. She built it up; first one thing, then another, she built it up, sewing.

She wanted him to say whether by moving the rose she had improved the hat. She sat on the end of the sofa.

They were perfectly happy now, she said, suddenly, putting the hat down. For she could say anything to him now. She could say whatever came into her head. That was almost the first thing she had felt about him, that night in the café when he had come in with

his English friends. He had come in, rather shyly, looking round him, and his hat had fallen when he hung it up. That she could remember: She knew he was English, though not one of the large Englishmen her sister admired, for he was always thin; but he had a beautiful fresh colour; and with his big nose, his bright eyes, his way of sitting a little hunched made her think, she had often told him, of a young hawk, that first evening she saw him, when they were playing dominoes, and he had come in—of a young hawk; but with her he was always very gentle. She had never seen him wild or drunk, only suffering sometimes through this terrible war, but even so, when she came in, he would put it all away. Anything, anything in the whole world, any little bother with her work, anything that struck her to say she would tell him, and he understood at once. Her own family even were not the same. Being older than she was and being so clever—how serious he was, wanting her to read Shakespeare before she could even read a child's story in English!—being so much more experienced, he could help her. And she too could help him.

But this hat now. And then (it was getting late) Sir William Bradshaw.

She held her hands to her head, waiting for him to say did he like the hat or not, and as she sat there, waiting, looking down, he could feel her mind, like a bird, falling from branch to branch, and always alighting, quite rightly; he could follow her mind, as she sat there in one of those loose lax poses that came to her naturally and, if he should say anything, at once she smiled, like a bird alighting with all its claws firm upon the bough.

But he remembered Bradshaw said, "The people we are most fond of are not good for us when we are ill." Bradshaw said, he must be taught to rest. Bradshaw said they must be separated.

"Must," "must," why "must"? What power had Bradshaw over him? "What right has Bradshaw to say 'must' to me?" he demanded.

"It is because you talked of killing yourself," said Rezia. (Mercifully, she could now say anything to Septimus.)

So he was in their power! Holmes and Bradshaw were on him! The brute with the red nostrils was snuffing into every secret place! "Must" it could say! Where were his papers? the things he had written?

She brought him his papers, the things he had written, things she had written for him. She tumbled them out on to the sofa. They looked at them together. Diagrams, designs, little men and women brandishing sticks for arms, with wings—were they?—on their backs; circles traced round shillings and sixpences—the suns and stars; zigzagging precipices with mountaineers ascending roped together, exactly like knives and forks; sea pieces with little faces laughing out of what might perhaps be waves: the map of the world. Burn them! he cried. Now for his writings; how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes; odes to Time; conversations with Shakespeare; Evans, Evans, Evans—his messages from the dead; do not cut down trees; tell the Prime Minister. Universal love: the meaning of the world. Burn them! he cried.

But Rezia laid her hands on them. Some were very beautiful, she thought. She would tie them up (for she had no envelope) with a piece of silk.

Even if they took him, she said, she would go with him. They could not separate them against their wills, she said.

Shuffling the edges straight, she did up the papers, and tied the parcel almost without looking, sitting beside him, he thought, as if all her petals were about her. She was a flowering tree; and through her branches looked out the face of a lawgiver, who had reached a sanctuary where she feared no one; not Holmes; not Bradshaw; a miracle, a triumph, the last and greatest. Staggering he saw her mount the appalling staircase, laden with Holmes and Bradshaw, men who never weighed less than eleven stone six, who sent their wives to Court, men who made ten thousand a year and talked of proportion; who different in their verdicts (for Holmes said one thing, Bradshaw another), yet judges they were; who mixed the vision and the sideboard; saw nothing clear, yet ruled, yet inflicted. "Must" they said. Over them she triumphed.

"There!" she said. The papers were tied up. No one should get at them. She would put them away.

And, she said, nothing should separate them. She sat down beside him and called him by the name of that hawk or crow which being malicious and a great destroyer of crops was precisely like him. No one could separate them, she said.

Then she got up to go into the bedroom to pack their things, but hearing voices downstairs and thinking that Dr. Holmes had perhaps called, ran down to prevent him coming up.

Septimus could hear her talking to Holmes on the staircase.

"My dear lady, I have come as a friend," Holmes was saying.

"No. I will not allow you to see my husband," she said.

He could see her, like a little hen, with her wings spread barring his passage. But Holmes persevered.

"My dear lady, allow me . . ." Holmes said, putting her aside (Holmes was a powerfully built man).

Holmes was coming upstairs. Holmes would burst open the door. Holmes would say "In a funk, eh?" Holmes would get him. But no; not Holmes; not Bradshaw. Getting up rather unsteadily, hopping indeed from foot to foot, he considered Mrs. Filmer's nice clean bread knife with "Bread" carved on the handle. Ah, but one mustn't spoil that. The gas fire? But it was too late now. Holmes was coming. Razors he might have got, but Rezia, who always did that sort of thing, had packed them. There remained only the window, the large Bloomsbury-lodging house window, the tiresome, the troublesome, and rather melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out. It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him). Holmes and Bradshaw like that sort of thing. (He sat on the sill.) But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings—what did *they* want? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. "I'll give it you!" he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings.

"The coward!" cried Dr. Holmes, bursting the door open. Rezia ran to the window, she saw; she understood. Dr. Holmes and Mrs. Filmer collided with each other. Mrs. Filmer flapped her apron and made her hide her eyes in the bedroom. There was a great deal of running up and down stairs. Dr. Holmes came in—white as a sheet, shaking all over, with a glass in his hand. She must be brave and drink something, he said (What was it? Something sweet), for her husband was horribly mangled, would not recover consciousness, she must not see him, must be spared as much as possible, would have the inquest to go through, poor young woman. Who could have foretold it? A sudden impulse, no one was in the least to blame (he told Mrs. Filmer). And why the devil he did it, Dr. Holmes could not conceive.

It seemed to her as she drank the sweet stuff that she was opening long windows, stepping out into some garden. But where? The clock was striking—one, two, three: how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself. She was falling asleep. But the clock went on striking, four, five, six and Mrs. Filmer waving her apron (they wouldn't bring the body in here, would they?) seemed part of that garden; or a flag. She had once seen a flag slowly rippling out from a mast when she stayed with her aunt at Venice. Men killed in battle were thus saluted, and Septimus had been through the War. Of her memories, most were happy.

She put on her hat, and ran through cornfields—where could it have been?—on to some hill, somewhere near the sea, for there were ships, gulls, butterflies, they sat on a cliff. In London too, there they sat, and, half dreaming, came to her through the bedroom door, rain falling, whisperings, stirrings among dry corn, the caress of the sea, as it seemed to her, hollowing them in its arched shell and murmuring to her laid on shore, strewn she felt, like flying flowers over some tomb.

"He is dead," she said, smiling at the poor old woman who guarded her with her honest light-blue eyes fixed on the door. (They wouldn't bring him in here, would they?) But Mrs. Filmer pooh-

poohed. Oh no, oh no! They were carrying him away now. Ought she not to be told? Married people ought to be together, Mrs. Filmer thought. But they must do as the doctor said.

"Let her sleep," said Dr. Holmes, feeling her pulse. She saw the large outline of his body standing dark against the window. So that was Dr. Holmes.

One of the triumphs of civilisation, Peter Walsh thought. It is one of the triumphs of civilisation, as the light high bell of the ambulance sounded. Swiftly, cleanly the ambulance sped to the hospital, having picked up instantly, humanely, some poor devil; some one hit on the head, struck down by disease, knocked over perhaps a minute or so ago at one of these crossings, as might happen to oneself. That was civilisation. It struck him coming back from the East—the efficiency, the organisation, the communal spirit of London. Every cart or carriage of its own accord drew aside to let the ambulance pass. Perhaps it was morbid; or was it not touching rather, the respect which they showed this ambulance with its victim inside—busy men hurrying home yet instantly bethinking them as it passed of some wife; or presumably how easily it might have been them there, stretched on a shelf with a doctor and a nurse. . . . Ah, but thinking became morbid, sentimental, directly one began conjuring up doctors, dead bodies; a little glow of pleasure, a sort of lust too over the visual impression warned one not to go on with that sort of thing any more—fatal to art, fatal to friendship. True. And yet, thought Peter Walsh, as the ambulance turned the corner though the light high bell could be heard down the next street and still farther as it crossed the Tottenham Court Road, chiming constantly, it is the privilege of loneliness; in privacy one may do as one chooses. One might weep if no one saw. It had been his undoing—this susceptibility—in Anglo-Indian society; not weeping at the right time, or laughing either. I have that in me, he thought standing by the pillar-box, which could now dissolve in tears. Why, Heaven knows. Beauty of some sort probably, and the weight of the day, which beginning with that visit to Clarissa had exhausted him with its heat, its intensity, and the drip, drip, of one impression after another down

into that cellar where they stood, deep, dark, and no one would ever know. Partly for that reason, its secrecy, complete and inviolable, he had found life like an unknown garden, full of turns and corners, surprising, yes; really it took one's breath away, these moments; there coming to him by the pillar-box opposite the British Museum[2] one of them, a moment, in which things came together; this ambulance; and life and death. It was as if he were sucked up to some very high roof by that rush of emotion and the rest of him, like a white shell-sprinkled beach, left bare. It had been his undoing in Anglo-Indian society—this susceptibility.

Clarissa once, going on top of an omnibus with him somewhere, Clarissa superficially at least, so easily moved, now in despair, now in the best of spirits, all aquiver in those days and such good company, spotting queer little scenes, names, people from the top of a bus, for they used to explore London and bring back bags full of treasures from the Caledonian market[3]—Clarissa had a theory in those days—they had heaps of theories, always theories, as young people have. It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction; not knowing people; not being known. For how could they know each other? You met every day, then not for six months, or years. It was unsatisfactory, they agreed, how little one knew people. But she said, sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt herself everywhere; not "here, here, here"; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue.[4] She was all that. So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter—even trees, or barns. It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her scepticism), that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death . . . perhaps—perhaps.

Looking back over that long friendship of almost thirty years her theory worked to this extent. Brief, broken, often painful as their actual meetings had been what with his absences and interruptions (this morning, for instance, in came Elizabeth, like a long-legged colt, handsome, dumb, just as he was beginning to talk to Clarissa) the effect of them on his life was immeasurable. There was a mystery about it. You were given a sharp, acute, uncomfortable grain—the actual meeting; horribly painful as often as not; yet in absence, in the most unlikely places, it would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost. Thus she had come to him; on board ship; in the Himalayas; suggested by the oddest things (so Sally Seton, generous, enthusiastic goose! thought of *him* when she saw blue hydrangeas). She had influenced him more than any person he had ever known. And always in this way coming before him without his wishing it, cool, lady-like, critical; or ravishing, romantic, recalling some field or English harvest. He saw her most often in the country, not in London. One scene after another at Bourton. . . .

He had reached his hotel. He crossed the hall, with its mounds of reddish chairs and sofas, its spike-leaved, withered-looking plants. He got his key off the hook. The young lady handed him some letters. He went upstairs—he saw her most often at Bourton, in the late summer, when he stayed there for a week, or fortnight even, as people did in those days. First on top of some hill there she would stand, hands clapped to her hair, her cloak blowing out, pointing, crying to them—she saw the Severn[5] beneath. Or in a wood, making the kettle boil—very ineffective with her fingers; the smoke curtseying, blowing in their faces; her little pink face showing through; begging water from an old woman in a cottage, who came to the door to watch them go. They walked always; the others drove. She was bored driving, disliked all animals, except that dog. They tramped miles along roads. She would break off to get her bearings, pilot him back across country; and all the time they argued, discussed poetry, discussed people, discussed politics (she

was a Radical then); never noticing a thing except when she stopped, cried out at a view or a tree, and made him look with her; and so on again, through stubble fields, she walking ahead, with a flower for her aunt, never tired of walking for all her delicacy; to drop down on Bourton in the dusk. Then, after dinner, old Breitkopf would open the piano and sing without any voice, and they would lie sunk in arm-chairs, trying not to laugh, but always breaking down and laughing, laughing—laughing at nothing. Breitkopf was supposed not to see. And then in the morning, flirting up and down like a wagtail[6] in front of the house. . . .

Oh it was a letter from her! This blue envelope; that was her hand. And he would have to read it. Here was another of those meetings, bound to be painful! To read her letter needed the devil of an effort. "How heavenly it was to see him. She must tell him that." That was all.

But it upset him. It annoyed him. He wished she hadn't written it. Coming on top of his thoughts, it was like a nudge in the ribs. Why couldn't she let him be? After all, she had married Dalloway, and lived with him in perfect happiness all these years.

These hotels are not consoling places. Far from it. Any number of people had hung up their hats on those pegs. Even the flies, if you thought of it, had settled on other people's noses. As for the cleanliness which hit him in the face, it wasn't cleanliness, so much as bareness, frigidity; a thing that had to be. Some arid matron made her rounds at dawn sniffing, peering, causing blue-nosed[7] maids to scour, for all the world as if the next visitor were a joint of meat to be served on a perfectly clean platter. For sleep, one bed; for sitting in, one arm-chair; for cleaning one's teeth and shaving one's chin, one tumbler, one looking-glass. Books, letters, dressing-gown, slipped about on the impersonality of the horsehair like incongruous impertinences. And it was Clarissa's letter that made him see all this. "Heavenly to see you. She must say so!" He folded the paper; pushed it away; nothing would induce him to read it again!

To get that letter[8] to him by six o'clock she must have sat down and written it directly he left her; stamped it; sent somebody to the post. It was, as people say, very like her. She was upset by his visit. She had felt a great deal; had for a moment, when she kissed his hand, regretted, envied him even, remembered possibly (for he saw her look it) something he had said—how they would change the world if she married him perhaps; whereas, it was this; it was middle age; it was mediocrity; then forced herself with her indomitable vitality to put all that aside, there being in her a thread of life which for toughness, endurance, power to overcome obstacles, and carry her triumphantly through he had never known the like of. Yes; but there would come a reaction directly he left the room. She would be frightfully sorry for him; she would think what in the world she could do to give him pleasure (short always of the one thing) and he could see her with the tears running down her cheeks going to her writing-table and dashing off that one line which he was to find greeting him. . . . "Heavenly to see you!" And she meant it.

Peter Walsh had now unlaced his boots.

But it would not have been a success, their marriage. The other thing, after all, came so much more naturally.

It was odd; it was true; lots of people felt it. Peter Walsh, who had done just respectably, filled the usual posts adequately, was liked, but thought a little cranky, gave himself airs—it was odd that *he* should have had, especially now that his hair was grey, a contented look; a look of having reserves. It was this that made him attractive to women who liked the sense that he was not altogether manly. There was something unusual about him, or something behind him. It might be that he was bookish—never came to see you without taking up the book on the table (he was now reading, with his bootlaces trailing on the floor); or that he was a gentleman, which showed itself in the way he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and in his manners of course to women. For it was very charming and quite ridiculous how easily some girl without a grain of sense could twist him round her finger. But at her own risk. That is to say, though he might be ever so easy, and indeed with his gaiety and

good-breeding fascinating to be with, it was only up to a point. She said something—no, no; he saw through that. He wouldn't stand that—no, no. Then he could shout and rock and hold his sides together over some joke with men. He was the best judge of cooking in India. He was a man. But not the sort of man one had to respect—which was a mercy; not like Major Simmons, for instance; not in the least like that, Daisy thought, when, in spite of her two small children, she used to compare them.

He pulled off his boots. He emptied his pockets. Out came with his pocket-knife a snapshot of Daisy on the verandah; Daisy all in white, with a fox-terrier on her knee; very charming, very dark; the best he had ever seen of her. It did come, after all so naturally; so much more naturally than Clarissa. No fuss. No bother. No finicking and fidgeting. All plain sailing. And the dark, adorably pretty girl on the verandah exclaimed (he could hear her). Of course, of course she would give him everything! she cried (she had no sense of discretion) everything he wanted! she cried, running to meet him, whoever might be looking. And she was only twenty-four. And she had two children. Well, well!

Well indeed he had got himself into a mess at his age. And it came over him when he woke in the night pretty forcibly. Suppose they did marry? For him it would be all very well, but what about her? Mrs. Burgess, a good sort and no chatterbox, in whom he had confided, thought this absence of his in England, ostensibly to see lawyers might serve to make Daisy reconsider, think what it meant. It was a question of her position, Mrs. Burgess said; the social barrier; giving up her children. She'd be a widow with a past one of these days, draggling about in the suburbs, or more likely, indiscriminate (you know, she said, what such women get like, with too much paint). But Peter Walsh pooh-poohed all that. He didn't mean to die yet. Anyhow she must settle for herself; judge for herself, he thought, padding about the room in his socks, smoothing out his dress-shirt, for he might go to Clarissa's party, or he might go to one of the Halls, or he might settle in and read an absorbing book written by a man he used to know at Oxford. And if he did retire,

that's what he'd do—write books. He would go to Oxford and poke about in the Bodleian.[9] Vainly the dark, adorably pretty girl ran to the end of the terrace; vainly waved her hand; vainly cried she didn't care a straw what people said. There he was, the man she thought the world of, the perfect gentleman, the fascinating, the distinguished (and his age made not the least difference to her), padding about a room in an hotel in Bloomsbury, shaving, washing, continuing, as he took up cans, put down razors, to poke about in the Bodleian, and get at the truth about one or two little matters that interested him. And he would have a chat with whoever it might be, and so come to disregard more and more precise hours for lunch, and miss engagements, and when Daisy asked him, as she would, for a kiss, a scene, fail to come up to the scratch[1] (though he was genuinely devoted to her)—in short it might be happier, as Mrs. Burgess said, that she should forget him, or merely remember him as he was in August 1922, like a figure standing at the cross roads at dusk, which grows more and more remote as the dog-cart[2] spins away, carrying her securely fastened to the back seat, though her arms are outstretched, and as she sees the figure dwindle and disappear still she cries out how she would do anything in the world, anything, anything, anything. . . .

He never knew what people thought. It became more and more difficult for him to concentrate. He become absorbed; he became busied with his own concerns; now surly, now gay; dependent on women, absent-minded, moody, less and less able (so he thought as he shaved) to understand why Clarissa couldn't simply find them a lodging and be nice to Daisy; introduce her. And then he could just—just do what? just haunt and hover (he was at the moment actually engaged in sorting out various keys, papers), swoop and taste, be alone, in short, sufficient to himself; and yet nobody of course was more dependent upon others (he buttoned his waistcoat); it had been his undoing. He could not keep out of smoking-rooms, liked colonels, liked golf, liked bridge, and above all women's society, and the fineness of their companionship, and their faithfulness and audacity and greatness in loving which though it had its drawbacks

seemed to him (and the dark, adorably pretty face was on top of the envelopes) so wholly admirable, so splendid a flower to grow on the crest of human life, and yet he could not come up to the scratch, being always apt to see round things (Clarissa had sapped something in him permanently), and to tire very easily of mute devotion and to want variety in love, though it would make him furious if Daisy loved anybody else, furious! for he was jealous, uncontrollably jealous by temperament. He suffered tortures! But where was his knife; his watch; his seals, his notecase, and Clarissa's letter which he would not read again but liked to think of, and Daisy's photograph? And now for dinner.

They were eating.

Sitting at little tables round vases, dressed or not dressed, with their shawls and bags laid beside them, with their air of false composure, for they were not used to so many courses at dinner, and confidence, for they were able to pay for it, and strain, for they had been running about London all day shopping, sightseeing; and their natural curiosity, for they looked round and up as the nice-looking gentleman in horn-rimmed spectacles came in, and their good nature, for they would have been glad to do any little service, such as lend a time-table or impart useful information, and their desire, pulsing in them, tugging at them subterraneously, somehow to establish connections if it were only a birthplace (Liverpool,[3] for example) in common or friends of the same name; with their furtive glances, odd silences, and sudden withdrawals into family jocularity and isolation; there they sat eating dinner when Mr. Walsh came in and took his seat at a little table by the curtain.

It was not that he said anything, for being solitary he could only address himself to the waiter; it was his way of looking at the menu, of pointing his forefinger to a particular wine, of hitching himself up to the table, of addressing himself seriously, not gluttonously to dinner, that won him their respect; which, having to remain unexpressed for the greater part of the meal, flared up at the table where the Morrises sat when Mr. Walsh was heard to say at the end of the meal, "Bartlett pears." Why he should have spoken so

moderately yet firmly, with the air of a disciplinarian well within his rights which are founded upon justice, neither young Charles Morris, nor old Charles, neither Miss Elaine nor Mrs. Morris knew. But when he said, "Bartlett pears," sitting alone at his table, they felt that he counted on their support in some lawful demand; was champion of a cause which immediately became their own, so that their eyes met his eyes sympathetically, and when they all reached the smoking-room simultaneously, a little talk between them became inevitable.

It was not very profound—only to the effect that London was crowded; had changed in thirty years; that Mr. Morris preferred Liverpool; that Mrs. Morris had been to the Westminster flower-show, and that they had all seen the Prince of Wales. Yet, thought Peter Walsh, no family in the world can compare with the Morrises; none whatever; and their relations to each other are perfect, and they don't care a hang for the upper classes, and they like what they like, and Elaine is training for the family business, and the boy has won a scholarship at Leeds, and the old lady (who is about his own age) has three more children at home; and they have two motor cars, but Mr. Morris still mends the boots on Sunday: it is superb, it is absolutely superb, thought Peter Walsh, swaying a little backwards and forwards with his liqueur glass in his hand among the hairy red chairs and ashtrays, feeling very well pleased with himself, for the Morrises liked him. Yes, they liked a man who said, "Bartlett pears." They liked him, he felt.

He would go to Clarissa's party. (The Morrises moved off; but they would meet again.) He would go to Clarissa's party, because he wanted to ask Richard what they were doing in India—the conservative duffers.[4] And what's being acted? And music. . . . Oh yes, and mere gossip.

For this is the truth about our soul, he thought, our self, who fish-like inhabits deep seas and plies among obscurities threading her way between the boles of giant weeds, over sun-flickered spaces and on and on into gloom, cold, deep, inscrutable; suddenly she shoots to the surface and sports on the wind-wrinkled waves; that is, has a positive need to brush, scrape, kindle herself, gossiping.

What did the Government mean—Richard Dalloway would know—to do about India?

Since it was a very hot night and the paper boys went by with placards proclaiming in huge red letters that there was a heat-wave, wicker chairs were placed on the hotel steps and there, sipping, smoking, detached gentlemen sat. Peter Walsh sat there. One might fancy that day, the London day, was just beginning. Like a woman who had slipped off her print dress and white apron to array herself in blue and pearls, the day changed, put off stuff, took gauze, changed to evening, and with the same sigh of exhilaration that a woman breathes, tumbling petticoats on the floor, it too shed dust, heat, colour; the traffic thinned; motor cars, tinkling, darting, succeeded the lumber of vans; and here and there among the thick foliage of the squares an intense light hung. I resign, the evening seemed to say, as it paled and faded above the battlements and prominences, moulded, pointed, of hotel, flat, and block of shops, I fade, she was beginning, I disappear, but London would have none of it, and rushed her bayonets into the sky, pinioned her, constrained her to partnership in her revelry.

For the great revolution of Mr. Willett's summer time had taken place since Peter Walsh's last visit to England. The prolonged evening was new to him. It was inspiriting, rather. For as the young people went by with their despatch-boxes,[5] awfully glad to be free, proud too, dumbly, of stepping this famous pavement, joy of a kind, cheap, tinselly, if you like, but all the same rapture, flushed their faces. They dressed well too; pink stockings; pretty shoes. They would now have two hours at the pictures. It sharpened, it refined them, the yellow-blue evening light; and on the leaves in the square shone lurid, livid—they looked as if dipped in sea water—the foliage of a submerged city. He was astonished by the beauty; it was encouraging too, for where the returned Anglo-Indian sat by rights (he knew crowds of them) in the Oriental Club[6] biliously summing up the ruin of the world, here was he, as young as ever; envying young people their summer time[7] and the rest of it, and more than suspecting from the words of a girl, from a housemaid's laughter—

intangible things you couldn't lay your hands on—that shift in the whole pyramidal accumulation which in his youth had seemed immovable. On top of them it had pressed; weighed them down, the women especially, like those flowers Clarissa's Aunt Helena used to press between sheets of grey blotting-paper with Littré's dictionary[8] on top, sitting under the lamp after dinner. She was dead now. He had heard of her, from Clarissa, losing the sight of one eye. It seemed so fitting—one of nature's masterpieces—that old Miss Parry should turn to glass. She would die like some bird in a frost gripping her perch. She belonged to a different age, but being so entire, so complete, would always stand up on the horizon, stone-white, eminent, like a lighthouse marking some past stage on this adventurous, long, long voyage, this interminable (he felt for a copper[9] to buy a paper and read about Surrey and Yorkshire—he had held out that copper millions of times. Surrey was all out once more)—this interminable life. But cricket was no mere game. Cricket was important. He could never help reading about cricket. He read the scores in the stop press first, then how it was a hot day; then about a murder case. Having done things millions of times enriched them, though it might be said to take the surface off. The past enriched, and experience, and having cared for one or two people, and so having acquired the power which the young lack, of cutting short, doing what one likes, not caring a rap what people say and coming and going without any very great expectations (he left his paper on the table and moved off), which however (and he looked for his hat and coat) was not altogether true of him, not to-night, for here he was starting to go to a party, at his age, with the belief upon him that he was about to have an experience. But what?

Beauty anyhow. Not the crude beauty of the eye. It was not beauty pure and simple—Bedford Place leading into Russell Square.[1] It was straightness and emptiness of course; the symmetry of a corridor; but it was also windows lit up, a piano, a gramophone sounding; a sense of pleasure-making hidden, but now and again emerging when, through the uncurtained window, the window left open, one saw parties sitting over tables, young people slowly

circling, conversations between men and women, maids idly looking out (a strange comment theirs, when work was done), stockings drying on top ledges, a parrot, a few plants. Absorbing, mysterious, of infinite richness, this life. And in the large square where the cabs shot and swerved so quick, there were loitering couples, dallying, embracing, shrunk up under the shower of a tree; that was moving; so silent, so absorbed, that one passed, discreetly, timidly, as if in the presence of some sacred ceremony to interrupt which would have been impious. That was interesting. And so on into the flare and glare.

His light overcoat blew open, he stepped with indescribable idiosyncrasy, leant a little forward, tripped, with his hands behind his back and his eyes still a little hawklike; he tripped through London, towards Westminster, observing.

Was everybody dining out, then? Doors were being opened here by a footman to let issue a high-stepping old dame, in buckled shoes, with three purple ostrich feathers in her hair. Doors were being opened for ladies wrapped like mummies in shawls with bright flowers on them, ladies with bare heads. And in respectable quarters with stucco pillars through small front gardens lightly swathed with combs in their hair (having run up to see the children), women came; men waited for them, with their coats blowing open, and the motor started. Everybody was going out. What with these doors being opened, and the descent and the start, it seemed as if the whole of London were embarking in little boats moored to the bank, tossing on the waters, as if the whole place were floating off in carnival. And Whitehall was skated over, silver beaten as it was, skated over by spiders, and there was a sense of midges[2] round the arc lamps; it was so hot that people stood about talking. And here in Westminster was a retired Judge, presumably, sitting four square at his house door dressed all in white. An Anglo-Indian presumably.

And here a shindy[3] of brawling women, drunken women; here only a policeman and looming houses, high houses, domed houses, churches, parliaments, and the hoot of a steamer on the river, a hollow misty cry. But it was her street, this, Clarissa's; cabs were

rushing round the corner, like water round the piers of a bridge, drawn together, it seemed to him because they bore people going to her party, Clarissa's party.

The cold stream of visual impressions failed him now as if the eye were a cup that overflowed and let the rest run down its china walls unrecorded. The brain must wake now. The body must contract now, entering the house, the lighted house, where the door stood open, where the motor cars were standing, and bright women descending: the soul must brave itself to endure. He opened the big blade of his pocket-knife.

Lucy came running full tilt downstairs, having just nipped in to the drawing-room to smooth a cover, to straighten a chair, to pause a moment and feel whoever came in must think how clean, how bright, how beautifully cared for, when they saw the beautiful silver, the brass fire-irons, the new chair-covers, and the curtains of yellow chintz: she appraised each; heard a roar of voices; people already coming up from dinner; she must fly!

The Prime Minister[4] was coming, Agnes said: so she had heard them say in the dining-room, she said, coming in with a tray of glasses. Did it matter, did it matter in the least, one Prime Minister more or less? It made no difference at this hour of the night to Mrs. Walker among the plates, saucepans, cullenders, frying-pans, chicken in aspic,[5] ice-cream freezers, pared crusts of bread, lemons, soup tureens, and pudding basins which, however hard they washed up in the scullery seemed to be all on top of her, on the kitchen table, on chairs, while the fire blared and roared, the electric lights glared, and still supper had to be laid. All she felt was, one Prime Minister more or less made not a scrap of difference to Mrs. Walker.

The ladies were going upstairs already, said Lucy; the ladies were going up, one by one, Mrs. Dalloway walking last and almost always sending back some message to the kitchen, "My love to Mrs. Walker," that was it one night. Next morning they would go over the dishes—the soup, the salmon; the salmon, Mrs. Walker knew, as usual underdone, for she always got nervous about the pudding and

left it to Jenny; so it happened, the salmon was always underdone. But some lady with fair hair and silver ornaments had said, Lucy said, about the entrée, was it really made at home? But it was the salmon that bothered Mrs. Walker, as she spun the plates round and round, and pulled in dampers and pulled out dampers;[6] and there came a burst of laughter from the dining-room; a voice speaking; then another burst of laughter—the gentlemen enjoying themselves when the ladies had gone. The tokay, said Lucy running in. Mr. Dalloway had sent for the tokay, from the Emperor's cellars, the Imperial Tokay.[7]

It was borne through the kitchen. Over her shoulder Lucy reported how Miss Elizabeth looked quite lovely; she couldn't take her eyes off her; in her pink dress, wearing the necklace Mr. Dalloway had given her. Jenny must remember the dog, Miss Elizabeth's fox-terrier, which, since it bit, had to be shut up and might, Elizabeth thought, want something. Jenny must remember the dog. But Jenny was not going upstairs with all those people about. There was a motor at the door already! There was a ring at the bell—and the gentlemen still in the dining-room, drinking tokay!

There, they were going upstairs; that was the first to come, and now they would come faster and faster, so that Mrs. Parkinson (hired for parties) would leave the hall door ajar, and the hall would be full of gentlemen waiting (they stood waiting, sleeking down their hair) while the ladies took their cloaks off in the room along the passage; where Mrs. Barnet helped them, old Ellen Barnet, who had been with the family for forty years, and came every summer to help the ladies, and remembered mothers when they were girls, and though very unassuming did shake hands; said "milady" very respectfully, yet had a humorous way with her, looking at the young ladies, and ever so tactfully helping Lady Lovejoy, who had some trouble with her underbodice. And they could not help feeling, Lady Lovejoy and Miss Alice, that some little privilege in the matter of brush and comb, was awarded them having known Mrs. Barnet—"thirty years, milady," Mrs. Barnet supplied her. Young ladies did not use to rouge, said Lady Lovejoy, when they stayed at Bourton in the old days. And Miss

Alice didn't need rouge, said Mrs. Barnet, looking at her fondly. There Mrs. Barnet would sit, in the cloakroom, patting down the furs, smoothing out the Spanish shawls, tidying the dressing-table, and knowing perfectly well, in spite of the furs and the embroideries, which were nice ladies, which were not. The dear old body, said Lady Lovejoy, mounting the stairs, Clarissa's old nurse.

And then Lady Lovejoy stiffened. "Lady and Miss Lovejoy," she said to Mr. Wilkins (hired for parties). He had an admirable manner, as he bent and straightened himself, bent and straightened himself and announced with perfect impartiality "Lady and Miss Lovejoy . . . Sir John and Lady Needham . . . Miss Weld . . . Mr. Walsh." His manner was admirable; his family life must be irreproachable, except that it seemed impossible that a being with greenish lips and shaven cheeks could ever have blundered into the nuisance of children.

"How delightful to see you!" said Clarissa. She said it to every one. How delightful to see you! She was at her worst—effusive, insincere. It was a great mistake to have come. He should have stayed at home and read his book, thought Peter Walsh; should have gone to a music hall; he should have stayed at home, for he knew no one.

Oh dear, it was going to be a failure; a complete failure, Clarissa felt it in her bones as dear old Lord Lexham stood there apologising for his wife who had caught cold at the Buckingham Palace garden party. She could see Peter out of the tail of her eye, criticising her, there, in that corner. Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders! Better anything, better brandish one's torch and hurl it to earth than taper and dwindle away like some Ellie Henderson! It was extraordinary how Peter put her into these states just by coming and standing in a corner. He made her see herself; exaggerate. It was idiotic. But why did he come, then, merely to criticise? Why always take, never give? Why not risk one's one little point of view? There he was wandering off, and she must speak to him. But she would not get the chance. Life was that—humiliation, renunciation. What Lord Lexham was saying was that

his wife would not wear her furs at the garden party because "my dear, you ladies are all alike"—Lady Lexham being seventy-five at least! It was delicious, how they petted each other, that old couple. She did like old Lord Lexham. She did think it mattered, her party, and it made her feel quite sick to know that it was all going wrong, all falling flat. Anything, any explosion, any horror was better than people wandering aimlessly, standing in a bunch at a corner like Ellie Henderson, not even caring to hold themselves upright.

Gently the yellow curtain with all the birds of Paradise[8] blew out and it seemed as if there were a flight of wings into the room, right out, then sucked back. (For the windows were open.) Was it draughty, Ellie Henderson wondered? She was subject to chills. But it did not matter that she should come down sneezing tomorrow; it was the girls with their naked shoulders she thought of, being trained to think of others by an old father, an invalid, late vicar of Bourton, but he was dead now; and her chills never went to her chest, never. It was the girls she thought of, the young girls with their bare shoulders, she herself having always been a wisp of a creature, with her thin hair and meagre profile; though now, past fifty, there was beginning to shine through some mild beam, something purified into distinction by years of self-abnegation but obscured again, perpetually, by her distressing gentility, her panic fear, which arose from three hundred pounds' income, and her weaponless state (she could not earn a penny) and it made her timid, and more and more disqualified year by year to meet well-dressed people who did this sort of thing every night of the season, merely telling their maids "I'll wear so and so," whereas Ellie Henderson ran out nervously and bought cheap pink flowers, half a dozen, and then threw a shawl over her old black dress. For her invitation to Clarissa's party had come at the last moment. She was not quite happy about it. She had a sort of feeling that Clarissa had not meant to ask her this year.

Why should she? There was no reason really, except that they had always known each other. Indeed, they were cousins. But naturally they had rather drifted apart, Clarissa being so sought

after. It was an event to her, going to a party. It was quite a treat just to see the lovely clothes. Wasn't that Elizabeth, grown up, with her hair done in the fashionable way, in the pink dress? Yet she could not be more than seventeen. She was very, very handsome. But girls when they first came out didn't seem to wear white as they used. (She must remember everything to tell Edith.) Girls wore straight frocks, perfectly tight, with skirts well above the ankles. It was not becoming, she thought.

So, with her weak eyesight, Ellie Henderson craned rather forward, and it wasn't so much she who minded not having any one to talk to (she hardly knew anybody there), for she felt that they were all such interesting people to watch; politicians presumably; Richard Dalloway's friends; but it was Richard himself who felt that he could not let the poor creature go on standing there all the evening by herself.

"Well, Ellie, and how's the world treating *you?*" he said in his genial way, and Ellie Henderson, getting nervous and flushing and feeling that it was extraordinarily nice of him to come and talk to her, said that many people really felt the heat more than the cold.

"Yes, they do," said Richard Dalloway. "Yes."

But what more did one say?

"Hullo, Richard," said somebody, taking him by the elbow, and, good Lord, there was old Peter, old Peter Walsh. He was delighted to see him—ever so pleased to see him! He hadn't changed a bit. And off they went together walking right across the room, giving each other little pats, as if they hadn't met for a long time, Ellie Henderson thought, watching them go, certain she knew that man's face. A tall man, middle aged, rather fine eyes, dark, wearing spectacles, with a look of John Burrows. Edith would be sure to know.

The curtain with its flight of birds of Paradise blew out again. And Clarissa saw—she saw Ralph Lyon beat it back, and go on talking. So it wasn't a failure after all! it was going to be all right now—her party. It had begun. It had started. But it was still touch and go. She must stand there for the present. People seemed to come in a rush.

Colonel and Mrs. Garrod . . . Mr. Hugh Whitbread . . . Mr. Bowley . . . Mrs. Hilbery . . . Lady Mary Maddox . . . Mr. Quin . . . intoned Wilkin. She had six or seven words with each, and they went on, they went into the rooms; into something now, not nothing, since Ralph Lyon had beat back the curtain.

And yet for her own part, it was too much of an effort. She was not enjoying it. It was too much like being—just anybody, standing there; anybody could do it, yet this anybody she did a little admire, couldn't help feeling that she had, anyhow, made this happen, that it marked a stage, this post that she felt herself to have become, for oddly enough she had quite forgotten what she looked like, but felt herself a stake driven in at the top of her stairs. Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another. It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways, partly the background, it was possible to say things you couldn't say anyhow else, things that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. But not for her; not yet anyhow.

"How delightful to see you!" she said. Dear old Sir Harry! He would know every one.

And what was so odd about it was the sense one had as they came up the stairs one after another, Mrs. Mount and Celia, Herbert Ainsty, Mrs. Dakers—oh and Lady Bruton!

"How awfully good of you to come!" she said, and she meant it—it was odd how standing there one felt them going on, going on, some quite old, some . . .

What name? Lady Rosseter? But who on earth was Lady Rosseter?

"Clarissa!" That voice! It was Sally Seton! Sally Seton! after all these years! She loomed through a mist. For she hadn't looked like *that*, Sally Seton, when Clarissa grasped the hot water can, to think of her under this roof, under this roof! Not like that!

All on top of each other, embarrassed, laughing, words tumbled out—passing through London; heard from Clara Haydon; what a

chance of seeing you! So I thrust myself in—without an invitation. . . .

One might put down the hot water can quite composedly. The lustre had gone out of her. Yet it was extraordinary to see her again, older, happier, less lovely. They kissed each other, first this cheek then that, by the drawing-room door, and Clarissa turned, with Sally's hand in hers, and saw her rooms full, heard the roar of voices, saw the candlesticks, the blowing curtains, and the roses which Richard had given her.

"I have five enormous boys," said Sally.

She had the simplest egotism, the most open desire to be thought first always, and Clarissa loved her for being still like that. "I can't believe it!" she cried, kindling all over with pleasure at the thought of the past.

But alas, Wilkins; Wilkins wanted her; Wilkins was emitting in a voice of commanding authority as if the whole company must be admonished and the hostess reclaimed from frivolity, one name:

"The Prime Minister," said Peter Walsh.

The Prime Minister? Was it really? Ellie Henderson marvelled. What a thing to tell Edith!

One couldn't laugh at him. He looked so ordinary. You might have stood him behind a counter and bought biscuits[9]—poor chap, all rigged up in gold lace. And to be fair, as he went his rounds, first with Clarissa then with Richard escorting him, he did it very well. He tried to look somebody. It was amusing to watch. Nobody looked at him. They just went on talking, yet it was perfectly plain that they all knew, felt to the marrow of their bones, this majesty passing; this symbol of what they all stood for, English society. Old Lady Bruton, and she looked very fine too, very stalwart in her lace, swam up, and they withdrew into a little room which at once became spied upon, guarded, and a sort of stir and rustle rippled through every one, openly: the Prime Minister!

Lord, lord, the snobbery of the English! thought Peter Walsh, standing in the corner. How they loved dressing up in gold lace and doing homage! There! That must be, by Jove it was, Hugh

Whitbread, snuffing round the precincts of the great, grown rather fatter, rather whiter, the admirable Hugh!

He looked always as if he were on duty, thought Peter, a privileged, but secretive being, hoarding secrets which he would die to defend, though it was only some little piece of tittle-tattle dropped by a court footman, which would be in all the papers to-morrow. Such were his rattles, his baubles, in playing with which he had grown white, come to the verge of old age, enjoying the respect and affection of all who had the privilege of knowing this type of the English public school man.[1] Inevitably one made up things like that about Hugh; that was his style; the style of those admirable letters which Peter had read thousands of miles across the sea in the *Times*, and had thanked God he was out of that pernicious hubble-bubble if it were only to hear baboons chatter and coolies beat their wives. An olive-skinned youth from one of the Universities stood obsequiously by. Him he would patronise, initiate, teach how to get on. For he liked nothing better than doing kindnesses, making the hearts of old ladies palpitate with the joy of being thought of in their age, their affliction, thinking themselves quite forgotten, yet here was dear Hugh driving up and spending an hour talking of the past, remembering trifles, praising the homemade cake, though Hugh might eat cake with a Duchess any day of his life, and, to look at him, probably did spend a good deal of time in that agreeable occupation. The All-judging, the All-merciful, might excuse. Peter Walsh had no mercy. Villains there must be, and God knows the rascals who get hanged for battering the brains of a girl out in a train do less harm on the whole than Hugh Whitbread and his kindness. Look at him now, on tiptoe, dancing forward, bowing and scraping, as the Prime Minister and Lady Bruton emerged, intimating for all the world to see that he was privileged to say something, something private, to Lady Bruton as she passed. She stopped. She wagged her fine old head. She was thanking him presumably for some piece of servility. She had her toadies, minor officials in Government offices who ran about putting through little jobs on her

behalf, in return for which she gave them luncheon. But she derived from the eighteenth century. She was all right.

And now Clarissa escorted her Prime Minister down the room, prancing, sparkling, with the stateliness of her grey hair. She wore ear-rings, and a silver-green mermaid's dress. Lolloping on the waves and braiding her tresses she seemed, having that gift still; to be; to exist; to sum it all up in the moment as she passed; turned, caught her scarf in some other woman's dress, unhitched it, laughed, all with the most perfect ease and air of a creature floating in its element. But age had brushed her; even as a mermaid might behold in her glass the setting sun on some very clear evening over the waves. There was a breath of tenderness; her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were all warmed through now, and she had about her as she said goodbye to the thick gold-laced man who was doing his best, and good luck to him, to look important, an inexpressible dignity; an exquisite cordiality; as if she wished the whole world well, and must now, being on the very verge and rim of things, take her leave. So she made him think. (But he was not in love.)

Indeed, Clarissa felt, the Prime Minister had been good to come. And, walking down the room with him, with Sally there and Peter there and Richard very pleased, with all those people rather inclined, perhaps, to envy, she had felt that intoxication of the moment, that dilatation of the nerves of the heart itself till it seemed to quiver, steeped, upright;—yes, but after all it was what other people felt, that; for, though she loved it and felt it tingle and sting, still these semblances, these triumphs (dear old Peter, for example, thinking her so brilliant), had a hollowness; at arm's length they were, not in the heart; and it might be that she was growing old but they satisfied her no longer as they used; and suddenly, as she saw the Prime Minister go down the stairs, the gilt rim of the Sir Joshua picture[2] of the little girl with a muff brought back Kilman with a rush; Kilman her enemy. That was satisfying; that was real. Ah, how she hated her—hot, hypocritical, corrupt; with all that power; Elizabeth's seducer; the woman who had crept in to steal and defile

(Richard would say, What nonsense!). She hated her: she loved her. It was enemies one wanted, not friends—not Mrs. Durrant and Clara, Sir William and Lady Bradshaw, Miss Truelock and Eleanor Gibson (whom she saw coming upstairs). They must find her if they wanted her. She was for the party!

There was her old friend Sir Harry.

"Dear Sir Harry!" she said, going up to the fine old fellow who had produced more bad pictures than any other two Academicians in the whole of St. John's Wood[3] (they were always of cattle, standing in sunset pools absorbing moisture, or signifying, for he had a certain range of gesture, by the raising of one foreleg and the toss of the antlers, "the Approach of the Stranger"—all his activities, dining out, racing, were founded on cattle standing absorbing moisture in sunset pools).

"What are you laughing at?" she asked him. For Willie Titcomb and Sir Harry and Herbert Ainsty were all laughing. But no. Sir Harry could not tell Clarissa Dalloway (much though he liked her; of her type he thought her perfect, and threatened to paint her) his stories of the music hall stage. He chaffed her about her party. He missed his brandy. These circles, he said, were above him. But he liked her; respected her, in spite of her damnable, difficult upper-class refinement, which made it impossible to ask Clarissa Dalloway to sit on his knee. And up came that wandering will-o'-the-wisp,[4] that vagulous phosphorescence, old Mrs. Hilbery, stretching her hands to the blaze of his laughter (about the Duke and the Lady), which, as she heard it across the room, seemed to reassure her on a point which sometimes bothered her if she woke early in the morning and did not like to call her maid for a cup of tea; how it is certain we must die.

"They won't tell us their stories," said Clarissa.

"Dear Clarissa!" exclaimed Mrs. Hilbery. She looked tonight, she said, so like her mother as she first saw her walking in a garden in a grey hat.

And really Clarissa's eyes filled with tears. Her mother, walking in a garden! But alas, she must go.

For there was Professor Brierly, who lectured on Milton,[5] talking to little Jim Hutton (who was unable even for a party like this to compass both tie and waistcoat or make his hair lie flat), and even at this distance they were quarrelling, she could see. For Professor Brierly was a very queer fish. With all those degrees, honours, lectureships between him and the scribblers he suspected instantly an atmosphere not favourable to his queer compound; his prodigious learning and timidity; his wintry charm without cordiality, his innocence blent with snobbery; he quivered if made conscious by a lady's unkempt hair, a youth's boots, of an underworld, very creditable doubtless, of rebels, of ardent young people; of would-be geniuses, and intimated with a little toss of the head, with a sniff—Humph!— the value of moderation; of some slight training in the classics in order to appreciate Milton. Professor Brierly (Clarissa could see) wasn't hitting it off with little Jim Hutton (who wore red socks, his black being at the laundry) about Milton. She interrupted.

She said she loved Bach.[6] So did Hutton. That was the bond between them, and Hutton (a very bad poet) always felt that Mrs. Dalloway was far the best of the great ladies who took an interest in art. It was odd how strict she was. About music she was purely impersonal. She was rather a prig. But how charming to look at! She made her house so nice if it weren't for her Professors. Clarissa had half a mind to snatch him off and set him down at the piano in the back room. For he played divinely.

"But the noise!" she said. "The noise!"

"The sign of a successful party." Nodding urbanely, the Professor stepped delicately off.

"He knows everything in the whole world about Milton," said Clarissa.

"Does he indeed?" said Hutton, who would imitate the Professor throughout Hampstead;[7] the Professor on Milton; the Professor on moderation; the Professor stepping delicately off.

But she must speak to that couple, said Clarissa, Lord Gayton and Nancy Blow.

Not that *they* added perceptibly to the noise of the party. They were not talking (perceptibly) as they stood side by side by the yellow curtains. They would soon be off elsewhere, together; and never had very much to say in any circumstances. They looked; that was all. That was enough. They looked so clean, so sound, she with an apricot bloom of powder and paint, but he scrubbed, rinsed, with the eyes of a bird, so that no ball could pass him or stroke surprise him. He struck, he leapt, accurately, on the spot. Ponies' mouths quivered at the end of his reins. He had his honours, ancestral monuments, banners hanging in the church at home. He had his duties; his tenants; a mother and sisters; had been all day at Lords, and that was what they were talking about—cricket, cousins, the movies—when Mrs. Dalloway came up. Lord Gayton liked her most awfully. So did Miss Blow. She had such charming manners.

"It is angelic—it is delicious of you to have come!" she said. She loved Lords; she loved youth, and Nancy, dressed at enormous expense by the greatest artists in Paris, stood there looking as if her body had merely put forth, of its own accord, a green frill.

"I had meant to have dancing," said Clarissa.

For the young people could not talk. And why should they? Shout, embrace, swing, be up at dawn; carry sugar to ponies; kiss and caress the snouts of adorable chows; and then all tingling and streaming, plunge and swim. But the enormous resources of the English language, the power it bestows, after all, of communicating feelings (at their age, she and Peter would have been arguing all the evening), was not for them. They would solidify young. They would be good beyond measure to the people on the estate, but alone, perhaps, rather dull.

"What a pity!" she said. "I had hoped to have dancing."

It was so extraordinarily nice of them to have come! But talk of dancing! The rooms were packed.

There was old Aunt Helena in her shawl. Alas, she must leave them—Lord Gayton and Nancy Blow. There was old Miss Parry, her aunt.

For Miss Helena Parry was not dead: Miss Parry was alive. She was past eighty. She ascended staircases slowly with a stick. She was placed in a chair (Richard had seen to it). People who had known Burma in the 'seventies were always led up to her. Where had Peter got to? They used to be such friends. For at the mention of India, or even Ceylon,[8] her eyes (only one was glass) slowly deepened, became blue, beheld, not human beings—she had no tender memories, no proud illusions about Viceroys, Generals, Mutinies[9]—it was orchids she saw, and mountain passes and herself carried on the backs of coolies in the 'sixties over solitary peaks; or descending to uproot orchids (startling blossoms, never beheld before) which she painted in water-colour; an indomitable Englishwoman, fretful if disturbed by the War, say, which dropped a bomb at her very door, from her deep meditation over orchids and her own figure journeying in the 'sixties in India—but here was Peter.

"Come and talk to Aunt Helena about Burma," said Clarissa.

And yet he had not had a word with her all the evening!

"We will talk later," said Clarissa, leading him up to Aunt Helena, in her white shawl, with her stick.

"Peter Walsh," said Clarissa.

That meant nothing.

Clarissa had asked her. It was tiring; it was noisy; but Clarissa had asked her. So she had come. It was a pity that they lived in London—Richard and Clarissa. If only for Clarissa's health it would have been better to live in the country. But Clarissa had always been fond of society.

"He has been in Burma," said Clarissa.

Ah. She could not resist recalling what Charles Darwin had said about her little book on the orchids of Burma.

(Clarissa must speak to Lady Bruton.)

No doubt it was forgotten now, her book on the orchids of Burma, but it went into three editions before 1870, she told Peter. She remembered him now. He had been at Bourton (and he had left

her, Peter Walsh remembered, without a word in the drawing-room that night when Clarissa had asked him to come boating).

"Richard so much enjoyed his lunch party," said Clarissa to Lady Bruton.

"Richard was the greatest possible help," Lady Bruton replied. "He helped me to write a letter. And how are you?"

"Oh, perfectly well!" said Clarissa. (Lady Bruton detested illness in the wives of politicians.)

"And there's Peter Walsh!" said Lady Bruton (for she could never think of anything to say to Clarissa; though she liked her. She had lots of fine qualities; but they had nothing in common—she and Clarissa. It might have been better if Richard had married a woman with less charm, who would have helped him more in his work. He had lost his chance of the Cabinet). "There's Peter Walsh!" she said, shaking hands with that agreeable sinner, that very able fellow who should have made a name for himself but hadn't (always in difficulties with women), and, of course, old Miss Parry. Wonderful old lady!

Lady Bruton stood by Miss Parry's chair, a spectral grenadier, draped in black, inviting Peter Walsh to lunch; cordial; but without small talk, remembering nothing whatever about the flora or fauna of India. She had been there, of course; had stayed with three Viceroys; thought some of the Indian civilians uncommonly fine fellows; but what a tragedy it was—the state of India! The Prime Minister had just been telling her (old Miss Parry huddled up in her shawl, did not care what the Prime Minister had just been telling her), and Lady Bruton would like to have Peter Walsh's opinion, he being fresh from the centre, and she would get Sir Sampson to meet him, for really it prevented her from sleeping at night, the folly of it, the wickedness she might say, being a soldier's daughter. She was an old woman now, not good for much. But her house, her servants, her good friend Milly Brush—did he remember her?—were all there only asking to be used if—if they could be of help, in short. For she never spoke of England, but this isle of men, this dear, dear land,[1] was in her blood (without reading Shakespeare), and if ever a

woman could have worn the helmet and shot the arrow, could have led troops to attack, ruled with indomitable justice barbarian hordes and lain under a shield noseless in a church, or made a green grass mound on some primeval hillside, that woman was Millicent Bruton. Debarred by her sex and some truancy, too, of the logical faculty (she found it impossible to write a letter to the *Times*), she had the thought of Empire always at hand, and had acquired from her association with that armoured goddess[2] her ramrod bearing, her robustness of demeanour, so that one could not figure her even in death parted from the earth or roaming territories over which, in some spiritual shape, the Union Jack[3] had ceased to fly. To be not English even among the dead—no, no! Impossible!

But was it Lady Bruton (whom she used to know)? Was it Peter Walsh grown grey? Lady Rosseter asked herself (who had been Sally Seton). It was old Miss Parry certainly—the old aunt who used to be so cross when she stayed at Bourton. Never should she forget running along the passage naked, and being sent for by Miss Parry! And Clarissa! oh Clarissa! Sally caught her by the arm.

Clarissa stopped beside them.

"But I can't stay," she said. "I shall come later. Wait," she said, looking at Peter and Sally. They must wait, she meant, until all these people had gone.

"I shall come back," she said, looking at her old friends, Sally and Peter, who were shaking hands, and Sally, remembering the past no doubt, was laughing.

But her voice was wrung of its old ravishing richness; her eyes not aglow as they used to be, when she smoked cigars, when she ran down the passage to fetch her sponge bag, without a stitch of clothing on her, and Ellen Atkins asked, What if the gentlemen had met her? But everybody forgave her. She stole a chicken from the larder because she was hungry in the night; she smoked cigars in her bedroom; she left a priceless book in the punt.[4] But everybody adored her (except perhaps Papa). It was her warmth; her vitality—she would paint, she would write. Old women in the village never to this day forgot to ask after "your friend in the red cloak who seemed

so bright." She accused Hugh Whitbread, of all people (and there he was, her old friend Hugh, talking to the Portuguese Ambassador), of kissing her in the smoking-room to punish her for saying that women should have votes. Vulgar men did, she said. And Clarissa remembered having to persuade her not to denounce him at family prayers—which she was capable of doing with her daring, her recklessness, her melodramatic love of being the centre of everything and creating scenes, and it was bound, Clarissa used to think, to end in some awful tragedy; her death; her martyrdom; instead of which she had married, quite unexpectedly, a bald man with a large buttonhole who owned, it was said, cotton mills at Manchester. And she had five boys!

She and Peter had settled down together. They were talking: it seemed so familiar—that they should be talking. They would discuss the past. With the two of them (more even than with Richard) she shared her past; the garden; the trees; old Joseph Breitkopf singing Brahms without any voice; the drawing-room wallpaper; the smell of the mats. A part of this Sally must always be; Peter must always be. But she must leave them. There were the Bradshaws, whom she disliked. She must go up to Lady Bradshaw (in grey and silver, balancing like a sea-lion at the edge of its tank, barking for invitations, Duchesses, the typical successful man's wife), she must go up to Lady Bradshaw and say . . .

But Lady Bradshaw anticipated her.

"We are shockingly late, dear Mrs. Dalloway, we hardly dared to come in," she said.

And Sir William, who looked very distinguished, with his grey hair and blue eyes, said yes; they had not been able to resist the temptation. He was talking to Richard about that Bill probably, which they wanted to get through the Commons. Why did the sight of him, talking to Richard, curl her up? He looked what he was, a great doctor. A man absolutely at the head of his profession, very powerful, rather worn. For think what cases came before him—people in the uttermost depths of misery; people on the verge of insanity; husbands and wives. He had to decide questions of

appalling difficulty. Yet—what she felt was, one wouldn't like Sir William to see one unhappy. No; not that man.

"How is your son at Eton?" she asked Lady Bradshaw.

He had just missed his eleven,[5] said Lady Bradshaw, because of the mumps. His father minded even more than he did, she thought "being," she said, "nothing but a great boy himself."

Clarissa looked at Sir William, talking to Richard. He did not look like a boy—not in the least like a boy. She had once gone with some one to ask his advice. He had been perfectly right; extremely sensible. But Heavens—what a relief to get out to the street again! There was some poor wretch sobbing, she remembered, in the waiting-room. But she did not know what it was—about Sir William; what exactly she disliked. Only Richard agreed with her, "didn't like his taste, didn't like his smell." But he was extraordinarily able. They were talking about this Bill. Some case, Sir William was mentioning, lowering his voice. It had its bearing upon what he was saying about the deferred effects of shell shock.[6] There must be some provision in the Bill.

Sinking her voice, drawing Mrs. Dalloway into the shelter of a common femininity, a common pride in the illustrious qualities of husbands and their sad tendency to overwork, Lady Bradshaw (poor goose—one didn't dislike her) murmured how, "just as we were starting, my husband was called up on the telephone, a very sad case. A young man (that is what Sir William is telling Mr. Dalloway) had killed himself. He had been in the army." Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought.

She went on, into the little room where the Prime Minister had gone with Lady Bruton. Perhaps there was somebody there. But there was nobody. The chairs still kept the impress of the Prime Minister and Lady Bruton, she turned deferentially, he sitting four-square, authoritatively. They had been talking about India. There was nobody. The party's splendour fell to the floor, so strange it was to come in alone in her finery.

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party—

the Bradshaws, talked of death. He had killed himself—but how? Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it? And the Bradshaws talked of it at her party!

She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death.

But this young man who had killed himself—had he plunged holding his treasure? "If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy,"[7] she had said to herself once, coming down in white.

Or there were the poets and thinkers. Suppose he had had that passion, and had gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor yet to her obscurely evil, without sex or lust, extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing your soul, that was it—if this young man had gone to him, and Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that?

Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading the *Times,* so that she could

crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, she must have perished. But that young man had killed himself.

Somehow it was her disaster—her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress. She had schemed; she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable. She had wanted success. Lady Bexborough and the rest of it. And once she had walked on the terrace at Bourton.

It was due to Richard; she had never been so happy. Nothing could be slow enough; nothing last too long. No pleasure could equal, she thought, straightening the chairs, pushing in one book on the shelf, this having done with the triumphs of youth, lost herself in the process of living, to find it, with a shock of delight, as the sun rose, as the day sank. Many a time had she gone, at Bourton when they were all talking, to look at the sky, or seen it between people's shoulders at dinner; seen it in London when she could not sleep. She walked to the window.

It held, foolish as the idea was, something of her own in it, this country sky, this sky above Westminster. She parted the curtains; she looked. Oh, but how surprising!—in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her! She was going to bed. And the sky. It will be a solemn sky, she had thought, it will be a dusky sky, turning away its cheek in beauty. But there it was—ashen pale, raced over quickly by tapering vast clouds. It was new to her. The wind must have risen. She was going to bed, in the room opposite. It was fascinating to watch her, moving about, that old lady, crossing the room, coming to the window. Could she see her? It was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the drawing-room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to bed. She pulled the blind now. The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear

no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room.

"But where is Clarissa?" said Peter. He was sitting on the sofa with Sally. (After all these years he really could not call her "Lady Rosseter.") "Where's the woman gone to?" he asked. "Where's Clarissa?"

Sally supposed, and so did Peter for the matter of that, that there were people of importance, politicians, whom neither of them knew unless by sight in the picture papers, whom Clarissa had to be nice to, had to talk to. She was with them. Yet there was Richard Dalloway not in the Cabinet. He hadn't been a success, Sally supposed? For herself, she scarcely ever read the papers. She sometimes saw his name mentioned. But then—well, she lived a very solitary life, in the wilds, Clarissa would say, among great merchants, great manufacturers, men, after all, who did things. She had done things too!

"I have five sons!" she told him.

Lord, Lord, what a change had come over her! the softness of motherhood; its egotism too. Last time they met, Peter remembered, had been among the cauliflowers in the moonlight, the leaves "like rough bronze" she had said, with her literary turn; and she had picked a rose. She had marched him up and down that awful night, after the scene by the fountain; he was to catch the midnight train. Heavens, he had wept!

That was his old trick, opening a pocket-knife, thought Sally, always opening and shutting a knife when he got excited. They had been very, very intimate, she and Peter Walsh, when he was in love with Clarissa, and there was that dreadful, ridiculous scene over Richard Dalloway at lunch. She had called Richard "Wickham." Why not call Richard "Wickham"? Clarissa had flared up! and indeed they

had never seen each other since, she and Clarissa, not more than half a dozen times perhaps in the last ten years. And Peter Walsh had gone off to India, and she had heard vaguely that he had made an unhappy marriage, and she didn't know whether he had any children, and she couldn't ask him, for he had changed. He was rather shrivelled-looking, but kinder, she felt, and she had a real affection for him, for he was connected with her youth, and she still had a little Emily Brontë[8] he had given her, and he was to write, surely? In those days he was to write.

"Have you written?" she asked him, spreading her hand, her firm and shapely hand, on her knee in a way he recalled.

"Not a word!" said Peter Walsh, and she laughed.

She was still attractive, still a personage, Sally Seton. But who was this Rosseter? He wore two camelias on his wedding day—that was all Peter knew of him. "They have myriads of servants, miles of conservatories,"[9] Clarissa wrote; something like that. Sally owned it with a shout of laughter.

"Yes, I have ten thousand a year"—whether before the tax was paid or after, she couldn't remember, for her husband, "whom you must meet," she said, "whom you would like," she said, did all that for her.

And Sally used to be in rags and tatters. She had pawned her grandmother's ring which Marie Antoinette had given her great-grandfather to come to Bourton.

Oh yes, Sally remembered; she had it still, a ruby ring which Marie Antoinette had given her great-grandfather. She never had a penny to her name in those days, and going to Bourton always meant some frightful pinch. But going to Bourton had meant so much to her—had kept her sane, she believed, so unhappy had she been at home. But that was all a thing of the past—all over now, she said. And Mr. Parry was dead; and Miss Parry was still alive. Never had he had such a shock in his life! said Peter. He had been quite certain she was dead. And the marriage had been, Sally supposed, a success? And that very handsome, very self-possessed young woman was Elizabeth, over there, by the curtains, in red.[1]

(She was like a poplar, she was like a river, she was like a hyacinth, Willie Titcomb was thinking. Oh how much nicer to be in the country and do what she liked! She could hear her poor dog howling, Elizabeth was certain.) She was not a bit like Clarissa, Peter Walsh said.

"Oh, Clarissa!" said Sally.

What Sally felt was simply this. She had owed Clarissa an enormous amount. They had been friends, not acquaintances, friends, and she still saw Clarissa all in white going about the house with her hands full of flowers—to this day tobacco plants made her think of Bourton. But—did Peter understand?—she lacked something. Lacked what was it? She had charm; she had extraordinary charm. But to be frank (and she felt that Peter was an old friend, a real friend—did absence matter? did distance matter? She had often wanted to write to him, but torn it up, yet felt he understood, for people understand without things being said, as one realises growing old, and old she was, had been that afternoon to see her sons at Eton, where they had the mumps), to be quite frank then, how could Clarissa have done it?—married Richard Dalloway? a sportsman, a man who cared only for dogs. Literally, when he came into the room he smelt of the stables. And then all this? She waved her hand.

Hugh Whitbread it was, strolling past in his white waistcoat, dim, fat, blind, past everything he looked, except self-esteem and comfort.

"He's not going to recognise *us*," said Sally, and really she hadn't the courage—so that was Hugh! the admirable Hugh!

"And what does he do?" she asked Peter.

He blacked the King's boots or counted bottles at Windsor,[2] Peter told her. Peter kept his sharp tongue still! But Sally must be frank, Peter said. That kiss now, Hugh's.

On the lips, she assured him, in the smoking-room one evening. She went straight to Clarissa in a rage. Hugh didn't do such things! Clarissa said, the admirable Hugh! Hugh's socks were without

exception the most beautiful she had ever seen—and now his evening dress. Perfect! And had he children?

"Everybody in the room has six sons at Eton," Peter told her, except himself. He, thank God, had none. No sons, no daughters, no wife. Well, he didn't seem to mind, said Sally. He looked younger, she thought, than any of them.

But it had been a silly thing to do, in many ways, Peter said, to marry like that; "a perfect goose she was," he said, but, he said, "we had a splendid time of it," but how could that be? Sally wondered; what did he mean? and how odd it was to know him and yet not know a single thing that had happened to him. And did he say it out of pride? Very likely, for after all it must be galling for him (though he was an oddity, a sort of sprite, not at all an ordinary man), it must be lonely at his age to have no home, nowhere to go to. But he must stay with them for weeks and weeks. Of course he would; he would love to stay with them, and that was how it came out. All these years the Dalloways had never been once. Time after time they had asked them. Clarissa (for it was Clarissa of course) would not come. For, said Sally, Clarissa was at heart a snob—one had to admit it, a snob. And it was that that was between them, she was convinced. Clarissa thought she had married beneath her, her husband being—she was proud of it—a miner's son. Every penny they had he had earned. As a little boy (her voice trembled) he had carried great sacks.

(And so she would go on, Peter felt, hour after hour; the miner's son; people thought she had married beneath her; her five sons; and what was the other thing—plants, hydrangeas, syringas, very, very rare hibiscus lilies that never grow north of the Suez Canal,[3] but she, with one gardener in a suburb near Manchester, had beds of them, positively beds! Now all that Clarissa had escaped, unmaternal as she was.)

A snob was she? Yes, in many ways. Where was she, all this time? It was getting late.

"Yet," said Sally, "when I heard Clarissa was giving a party, I felt I couldn't *not* come—must see her again (and I'm staying in Victoria

Street, practically next door). So I just came without an invitation. But," she whispered, "tell me, do. Who is this?"

It was Mrs. Hilbery, looking for the door. For how late it was getting! And, she murmured, as the night grew later, as people went, one found old friends; quiet nooks and corners; and the loveliest views. Did they know, she asked, that they were surrounded by an enchanted garden? Lights and trees and wonderful gleaming lakes and the sky. Just a few fairy lamps,[4] Clarissa Dalloway had said, in the back garden! But she was a magician! It was a park. . . . And she didn't know their names, but friends she knew they were, friends without names, songs without words, always the best. But there were so many doors, such unexpected places, she could not find her way.

"Old Mrs. Hilbery," said Peter; but who was that? that lady standing by the curtain all the evening, without speaking? He knew her face; connected her with Bourton. Surely she used to cut up underclothes at the large table in the window? Davidson, was that her name?

"Oh, that is Ellie Henderson," said Sally. Clarissa was really very hard on her. She was a cousin, very poor. Clarissa *was* hard on people.

She was rather, said Peter. Yet, said Sally, in her emotional way, with a rush of that enthusiasm which Peter used to love her for, yet dreaded a little now, so effusive she might become—how generous to her friends Clarissa was! and what a rare quality one found it, and how sometimes at night or on Christmas Day, when she counted up her blessings, she put that friendship first. They were young; that was it. Clarissa was pure-hearted; that was it. Peter would think her sentimental. So she was. For she had come to feel that it was the only thing worth saying—what one felt. Cleverness was silly. One must say simply what one felt.

"But I do not know," said Peter Walsh, "what I feel."

Poor Peter, thought Sally. Why did not Clarissa come and talk to them? That was what he was longing for. She knew it. All the time he was thinking only of Clarissa, and was fidgeting with his knife.

He had not found life simple, Peter said. His relations with Clarissa had not been simple. It had spoilt his life, he said. (They had been so intimate—he and Sally Seton, it was absurd not to say it.) One could not be in love twice, he said. And what could she say? Still, it is better to have loved (but he would think her sentimental—he used to be so sharp). He must come and stay with them in Manchester. That is all very true, he said. All very true. He would love to come and stay with them, directly he had done what he had to do in London.

And Clarissa had cared for him more than she had ever cared for Richard. Sally was positive of that.

"No, no, no!" said Peter (Sally should not have said that—she went too far). That good fellow—there he was at the end of the room, holding forth, the same as ever, dear old Richard. Who was he talking to? Sally asked, that very distinguished-looking man? Living in the wilds as she did, she had an insatiable curiosity to know who people were. But Peter did not know. He did not like his looks, he said, probably a Cabinet Minister. Of them all, Richard seemed to him the best, he said—the most disinterested.

"But what has he done?" Sally asked. Public work, she supposed. And were they happy together? Sally asked (she herself was extremely happy); for, she admitted, she knew nothing about them, only jumped to conclusions, as one does, for what can one know even of the people one lives with every day? she asked. Are we not all prisoners? She had read a wonderful play about a man who scratched on the wall of his cell,[5] and she had felt that was true of life—one scratched on the wall. Despairing of human relationships (people were so difficult), she often went into her garden and got from her flowers a peace which men and women never gave her. But no; he did not like cabbages; he preferred human beings, Peter said. Indeed, the young are beautiful, Sally said, watching Elizabeth cross the room. How unlike Clarissa at her age! Could he make anything of her? She would not open her lips. Not much, not yet, Peter admitted. She was like a lily, Sally said, a lily by the side of a pool.

But Peter did not agree that we know nothing. We know everything, he said; at least he did.

But these two, Sally whispered, these two coming now (and really she must go, if Clarissa did not come soon), this distinguished-looking man and his rather common-looking wife who had been talking to Richard—what could one know about people like that?

"That they're damnable humbugs," said Peter, looking at them casually. He made Sally laugh.

But Sir William Bradshaw stopped at the door to look at a picture. He looked in the corner for the engraver's name. His wife looked too. Sir William Bradshaw was so interested in art.

When one was young, said Peter, one was too much excited to know people. Now that one was old, fifty-two[6] to be precise (Sally was fifty-five, in body, she said, but her heart was like a girl's of twenty); now that one was mature then, said Peter, one could watch, one could understand, and one did not lose the power of feeling, he said. No, that is true, said Sally. She felt more deeply, more passionately, every year. It increased, he said, alas, perhaps, but one should be glad of it—it went on increasing in his experience. There was some one in India. He would like to tell Sally about her. He would like Sally to know her. She was married, he said. She had two small children. They must all come to Manchester, said Sally—he must promise before they left.

There's Elizabeth, he said, she feels not half what we feel, not yet. But, said Sally, watching Elizabeth go to her father, one can see they are devoted to each other. She could feel it by the way Elizabeth went to her father.

For her father had been looking at her, as he stood talking to the Bradshaws, and he had thought to himself, Who is that lovely girl? And suddenly he realised that it was his Elizabeth, and he had not recognised her, she looked so lovely in her pink frock! Elizabeth had felt him looking at her as she talked to Willie Titcomb. So she went to him and they stood together, now that the party was almost over, looking at the people going, and the rooms getting emptier and emptier, with things scattered on the floor. Even Ellie Henderson was

going, nearly last of all, though no one had spoken to her, but she had wanted to see everything, to tell Edith. And Richard and Elizabeth were rather glad it was over, but Richard was proud of his daughter. And he had not meant to tell her, but he could not help telling her. He had looked at her, he said, and he had wondered, Who is that lovely girl? and it was his daughter! That did make her happy. But her poor dog was howling.

"Richard has improved. You are right," said Sally. "I shall go and talk to him. I shall say good-night. What does the brain matter," said Lady Rosseter, getting up, "compared with the heart?"

"I will come," said Peter, but he sat on for a moment. What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? he thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?

It is Clarissa, he said.

For there she was.

1925

Endnotes

- Note 1: Clarissa Dalloway's maid.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Caterers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Village in western England and Mrs. Dalloway's childhood home.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A warehouse van.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: London borough that includes Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, and Westminster Abbey.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The 1918–19 worldwide influenza pandemic had killed over 20 million people.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Clarissa is walking north. "Big Ben": the name for the Great Bell in the clock tower above the Houses of Parliament.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Grumpy, shabbily dressed people.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: World War I (1914–18).Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Street fair with many stalls selling a variety of goods to benefit a charitable organization.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Buckingham Palace, where King George V (1865–1936) and Queen Mary (1867–1953) resided.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Hurlingham Club in Ranelagh Gardens in southwest London, where polo is played. "Lords": the cricket ground at St John's Wood in north London. "Ascot": a town west of London with an annual horse race. Summer sporting events at all three locations have long been fixtures of the London social season.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Era of the combined reigns of the Kings George I–IV (1714–1830).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: St. James's Park, home to many kinds of water birds and a frequent haunt of politicians.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Sign indicating that the box contains papers to or from the royal family.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Spa town in southwest England.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Modest London borough southwest of Westminster.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Since 1909 a wireless antenna on the Admiralty building in Whitehall had enabled communication by telegraph with British ships at sea.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Intersection at the northeast corner of Green Park, part of a luxurious district containing the Ritz Hotel.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Works by English poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744). "Wagner": Richard Wilhelm Wagner (1813–1883), German composer famous for his grandly staged operas.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Green Park's northeast gate on Piccadilly.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Her governess.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Private homes near Piccadilly.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A large, winding pond in Hyde Park.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Important shopping street in northwest London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A bookstore.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From a song bidding farewell to the supposedly dead heroine of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* (4.2.258–81).Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  Book invented by Woolf. "Jorrocks' *Jaunts and Jollities*": 1838 collection of stories about a Cockney grocer named Jorrocks by English sporting novelist Robert Smith Surtees (1805–1864). "*Soapy Sponge*": character in another novel by Surtees, *Mr Sponge's Sporting Tour* (1853). "Mrs. Asquith's *Memoirs*" two-volume autobiography (1920–1922) of Emma Alice Margaret (Margot) Asquith (1864–1945), wife of Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith (served 1908–16).
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Used for dog grooming. "Distemper": an animal disease characterized by cough, loss of strength, and a discharge from the nose or eyes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Peoples suffering poor economies after World War I and the Russian Revolution.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Raincoat.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Nickname for valerian, an herb with white or pink flowers.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A car has backfired.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, perfume.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Because the car stalled, the driver has to crank its starting handle before returning to his seat and continuing to drive.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Road running along the River Thames between Westminster and Blackfriars Bridges.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Exclusive club in Ranelagh Gardens (see p. 291, n. 3).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Street in Mayfair that crosses Bond Street. From here, Clarissa turns south again and walks home to Westminster.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Worn on King Charles II's birthday (May 29) to commemorate his restoration in 1660.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Pub.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Someone from one of the colonies of the British Empire.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, the British royal family.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Uproar, fracas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Light garment showing under a waistcoat.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Aristocratic gentlemen's club on St. James's Street.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Journal reporting high-society news.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Acoustical effect whereby a curved wall, ceiling, or doorframe carries a soft sound, such as the whispering gallery in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Guard on duty at Marlborough House, the residence of Queen Alexandra (1844–1925), the widow of King Edward VII. "Sentries at St. James's": guards at St. James's Palace. Both the palace and the house are within view of the car's route down St. James's Street.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Queen Victoria's statue outside the entrance to Buckingham Palace.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Wide avenue that leads from the Admiralty Arch along St. James's Park to Buckingham Palace.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Officers of the royal household.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Doll house designed by British architect Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944) in 1923 for Queen Mary.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII (1894–1972), is compared to his grandfather, King Edward VII (1841–1910). Princess Mary (1897–1965), the only daughter of King George V and Queen Mary, married Viscount Lascelles (1882–1947) in 1922.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Apartment complex in Piccadilly, housing politicians.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: The Royal Marines Memorial, completed in 1903 in memory of those who served in artillery and light infantry regiments and died in wars in South Africa and China (1889–1902). The memorial is located in St. James's Park near the Admiralty Arch.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The first demonstration of skywriting for advertising, in which Major Cyril Turner wrote the words "Daily Mail," occurred over Epsom Downs, a racecourse southwest of London, in 1922.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Name of a baby formula and the firm that produced it.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Royal park north of St. James's Park.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: North–south pedestrian avenue in Regent's Park in north London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In World War I (1914–18).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Wheeled chairs for invalids.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In Italy.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Drinking fountain resembling a cross at the north end of the Broad Walk and commemorating the protection of Parsis, Indian Zoroastrians, under British colonial rule in India.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The Roman Empire included most of Britain from 43 to 410 C.E.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Woolf wrote of having a similar experience during a 1904 breakdown, in her 1922 memoir "Old Bloomsbury."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See the River Styx, separating the living from the realm of the dead in the mythical Greek underworld.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Regent's Park.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Upright sticks that, with cross-pieces called bails, form the wicket defended by the batsman in cricket.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Underground (subway).Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Colloquially, one travels "up" to London even if, as in this case, one is actually traveling south from Scotland's capital.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Street in east London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Working-class neighborhood in north London near Hampstead Heath.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Seaside town in the county of Kent, west of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: London borough south of the Thames.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: St. Paul's Cathedral, the tallest building in London in 1923.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: German-born theoretical physicist Albert Einstein (1879–1955) won the 1921 Nobel Prize in Physics.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Risky buying and selling for profit.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Laws of genetics studied by Austrian monk Gregor Mendel (1822–1884) in his work with pea plants.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: London intersection west of St. Paul's Cathedral.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: See p. 294 and n. 9.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Memoirs by French general Jean-Baptiste Antoine Marcellin, baron de Marbot (1782–1854), describe the disastrous Russian campaign undertaken in the winter of 1812 by Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Now Istanbul, Turkey. "Clieveden": forest on the banks of the Thames.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Queen of France and wife of Louis XVI (1755–1793), guillotined during the French Revolution.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, a book by the English textile designer, writer, and socialist (1834–1896).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), English Romantic poet. Plato (ca. 429–347 B.C.E.), Greek philosopher.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: From Shakespeare's *Othello* 2.1.87–88.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Toy balloon.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Johannes Brahms (1837–1897), German Romantic composer.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Small box.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A slim knife used, for example, for slitting open letters.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Town south of London in the county of Surrey.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: District in west London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hertfordshire estate.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, after five years working in India as a colonial administrator. Peter Walsh's position there would have become more complicated following the 1919 Amritsar Massacre. It created strong anti-British sentiment and led to the Government of India Act, which established a national parliament, and the beginning of Mohandas Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience (1920).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Group of members of Parliament charged with overseeing a particular issue. "The House": the House of Commons, the lower house of Parliament. "Conservative": member of the Conservative Party, the less reforming of the (usually) two major political parties.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: British Army stationed in India.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Compelled to leave the university as a punishment.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: One of the Inns of Court, or legal societies, that admitted people to the bar to practice law.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The highest point in southeast England, in the county of Surrey, famous for its early summer flowers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Manual laborers in British colonies, usually from the lower classes.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Bells of the parish church for the Houses of Parliament, situated on the grounds of Westminster Abbey.Return to

reference 2

- Note 3: Street in Westminster and site of government buildings.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Equestrian statue of Prince George, Duke of Cambridge (1819–1904), commander in chief of the army and grandson of King George III.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The boys, probably members of the London Cadets, have come from east London, near the Armoury House, to place a wreath at the Cenotaph, a World War I memorial.Return to reference 5
- Note 6:
  Monumental statues in Trafalgar Square commemorating the 1805 battle in which the British defeated Napoleon's navy. The statue of the hero of the battle, Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), appears on top of Nelson's Column. The statue of Henry Havelock (1795–1857), killed while serving in India, stands on the southeast plinth of the square. The statue of army officer Charles George Gordon (1833–1885), killed while serving in the Sudan, would be removed in 1943. The silhouetted statues all appear black.
  Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Street running east from Trafalgar Square.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Street to the west of Trafalgar Square, running northwest toward Piccadilly Circus.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: With a dark complexion or black hair, that is, not of African descent.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Street connecting Trafalgar Square with Haymarket. Instead of turning here, Walsh follows the young woman up Regent Street (which runs parallel to Haymarket), crosses Piccadilly, and continues north toward Regent's Park. "Dent's shop": headquarters of the company that constructed Big Ben.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pirate.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Walsh follows north along Regent Street, crosses Oxford Street, and then turns into a street near Great Portland Street,

which leads into Regent's Park.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Diamondlike shapes.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A person of British heritage born in India.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Possibly the Matilda drinking fountain, with a statue of a milkmaid.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See George Wickham, the villainous suitor in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by English novelist Jane Austen (1775–1817).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Perhaps Walsh opens the cover on his pocket watch and pretends that the child has blown it open.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Royal palace on the Thames in western London, near Richmond.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Charles Darwin (1809–1882), English scientist whose writings laid the foundation for the study of evolution.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Region of Greece also known as Aeolia.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Toilets.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Large industrial city in northern England.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Campaigns by suffragists led to the right to vote for British women thirty and older in 1918 and, in 1928, for women twenty-one and older. Thus the topic was hardly "antediluvian," that is, antiquated or outdated.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Prostitutes.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Fee-paying secondary school (British).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: City in Monaco with a famous casino.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Begged for employment.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Powerful, sometimes secretive or corrupt, civil servant.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Richard's views are typical of the Conservative Party. Tariff reform would have been intended to protect British goods.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Conservative daily newspaper.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895), English biologist, and John Tyndall (1820–1893), English physicist. The work of both scientists challenged Victorians' religious worldviews.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A fee-paying girls' day school.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, introduced to society, presented at Court, and participating in the social life of a debutante.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Area in London east of Regent's Park, accessible by walking east along the Marylebone Road, which lies to the south of the park.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Entertainment and shopping district to the west of Portland Place, a street running south from the Regent's Park Tube station toward Oxford Street.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Bags made from smooth linen fabric often used as furniture covering.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Town south of London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Town in Gloucestershire, west of London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Road running east from the Regent's Park Tube (subway) station toward King's Cross, a busy train station.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Road running south from the Thames. Miss Pole likely teaches classes for Morley College in the Old Vic Theater.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: John Keats (1795–1821), English Romantic poet.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Tragedy by Shakespeare.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), Irish playwright, journalist, and Fabian Socialist. "*The History of Civilisation*" (1857–61): two-volume study of human interaction with nature, by English writer Henry Thomas Buckle (1821–1862).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Fictional real estate company.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Roman goddess of agriculture.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Residential district in north London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Agreement ending World War I, November 11, 1918.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Linen or cotton fabric.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Soft gray fur from rodents native to South America.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Description of hell in one of three parts of *The Divine Comedy*, by Italian poet Dante Aligheri (1265–1321).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: London district known for its cosmopolitanism, entertainment, and sex industries.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Port city on the English Channel south of London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Major London road running north through Bloomsbury, home to Woolf and her friends, toward the Euston Road.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Greek dramatist (ca. 525–426 B.C.E.).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The monarch traditionally gives a speech to begin the annual session of Parliament. "The Tower": the Tower of London, fortress and royal palace on the Thames, begun in 1078. "Victoria and Albert Museum": exhibition of applied arts opened in 1909.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Diminutives of Thomas and Albert, common British names.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Potassium bromide, likely taken as a sedative.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Residential area in Bloomsbury.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A popular street for doctors, running south from the Marylebone Road.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Eton College, aristocratic boys' school in southwest England.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Church officer responsible for its property and grounds.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A period of inactivity was commonly prescribed to treat mental illness.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Suicide was illegal in Britain until 1961.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Instruments of torture.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A stone is a measure of weight equal to fourteen pounds, hence an increase from 104 to 168 pounds.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Outskirts, borders, or slums.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Speaker's Corner, at the northeast corner of Hyde Park, where anyone may stand and talk on any subject.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: English county south of London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Greenwich Mean Time, international standard for deriving time since 1884, is calculated by the Royal Observatory, located on the prime meridian in the London borough of Greenwich. "Messrs. Rigby and Lowndes": fictional department store with a clock.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: English county northeast of London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Major London newspaper since the 1780s.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: City on the English Channel with a naval base.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Posh neighborhood east of Hyde Park.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Large flat fish.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cavalry soldiers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: English lyric poets Richard Lovelace (1617–1657) and Robert Herrick (1591–1674), noted for their love poems and known as Cavalier poets because of their support for Charles I (1600–1649) in the English Civil War.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Failed badly.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Mayfair.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, in excellent health.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: In response to Britain's supposedly "surplus" population and resultant worries about employment, Lady Bruton favors a project encouraging young people to emigrate to Canada, which had suffered great losses in World War I.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Unspoken or repressed.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, whenever a Labour Government comes to power, Richard, a Conservative, might be voted out of office and thus become free to write her family history.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Deep green stone.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: County in southwest England.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Street in Mayfair. Richard and Hugh appear to have walked east on Brook Street and then south on Bond Street to this intersection.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In the style of, or dating from, the reign of King James I (1603–25).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Small boat; dinghy.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Street vendors who sell fruit from open carts.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In uniform, presumably that of park officials.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Of Saxon heritage. The brothers Horsa and Hengist were said to have begun the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain in the fifth century C.E. "Kensington": London borough west of Hyde Park, where Kensington Gardens and Kensington Palace are located.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Residential area that was once part of the gardens of Westminster Abbey belonging to its dean.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Armenians, a Christian minority in Turkey, were persecuted; 1.75 million were forced to emigrate between 1915 and 1921. Their plight is more likely to be the subject of Richard's meeting than that of the Albanians, who, after a period of unrest (1908–21), had their territorial security guaranteed by the League of Nations.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: London borough north of Hyde Park. South Kensington: borough south of Hyde Park.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Person from Mongolia, in Asia.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Almond-shaped, presumably, and suggestive to Britons at this time of an "oriental" mystery.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Religious Society of Friends, known as the Quakers.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Teaching students who are not part of a typical degree program.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A cylindrical warmer for both hands.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria Street, founded as a cooperative society to supply cheap goods to military families.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Joseph Addison (1672–1719), English politician and writer.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mailbox shaped like a pillar.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Store selling oils, paints, and other art supplies.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Childbirth.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Roman Catholic cathedral (1903) on Victoria Street, with a high bell tower.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Westminster Abbey, Anglican cathedral near Parliament.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Effigies of monarchs buried in the Abbey, such as Elizabeth I, located in the Abbey Museum.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior, in the Abbey's nave, commemorates the dead of World War I; it contains the body of an unidentified soldier, buried there on November 11, 1920.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: King's Counsel, senior barrister or lawyer.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Large 18th-century neoclassical building, between the Strand and the Thames Embankment, housing the national registry for births, marriages, and deaths.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A center of the legal profession.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Temple Church, shared by two of the Inns of Court, at the foot of Chancery Lane, between Fleet Street and the

Thames.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Center of the newspaper industry.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Room for storing provisions, especially meat.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (1819–1861), husband of Queen Victoria.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Port city on the river Hull, near the North Sea.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Shelf at the back or side of the fireplace.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Headline indicating that the Surrey cricket team has ended its first innings in a match.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Popular seaside resort town in Sussex, on England's south coast.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: National museum in Bloomsbury.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Street market held on Fridays in north London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Road through the theater district, running northeast from Piccadilly Circus to Covent Garden.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The river Severn, in Gloucestershire.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Small bird with a characteristic tail-wagging motion.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Puritanical or prudish.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Multiple daily mail deliveries in the 1920s ensure that Clarissa could write a letter and Peter could receive it on the same day.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Main library at Oxford University.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, to meet the required standard.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An open carriage with two back-to-back seats, one facing forward for the driver and another facing toward the rear for the passenger.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Major port city in northwest England, on the Irish Sea.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Incompetent people, fools.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Boxes for carrying important messages requiring quick delivery.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Gentlemen's club for members of the East India Company.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Daylight Saving Time, introduced in Britain in 1916.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Four-volume French dictionary by Émile Littré (1801–1881).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Penny or halfpenny.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In Bloomsbury.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Gnatlike insects.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Commotion.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Stanley Baldwin (1867–1947) was prime minister in 1923.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Meat-flavored jelly. "Cullenders": colanders.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Metal plates in stoves that regulate air flow and thus control the intensity of the fire.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sweet Hungarian wine.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Birds native to New Guinea, notable for the beautiful plumage of the males.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Thin, dry cookies.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, a man with an elite education from a British public school, analogous to an American private school.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Painting by English portraitist Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: District in north London near Regent's Park.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Flitting phosphorescent light seen at night in marshes; colloquially, something misleading.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: John Milton (1608–1674), English poet.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), German composer.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: A preserved open area in north London, popular with artists.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: British colonial name for Sri Lanka. “Burma in the ’seventies”: southeast Asian country now known as Myanmar, formerly part of the British Empire, which fought three wars to annex it, in 1824–26, 1852, and 1885.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: For example, the 1857 Indian Rebellion, or Indian Mutiny, of Indian troops against British colonial rule. “Viceroys”: British governors of colonial territories.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: See Shakespeare’s play *Richard II* 2.1.57.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See the Greek goddess Athena, often represented with armor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: British national flag.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Flat-bottomed, shallow boat.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: His cricket team, made up of eleven players.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Psychological disturbance caused by prolonged exposure to combat (at first thought to be a reaction to the sound of exploding bombshells). The War Office undertook an official inquiry into the subject and issued a report, printed in the *Times* in 1922, that recognized the complexity of the illness. The condition today is known as post-traumatic stress disorder.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See p. 308 and n. 5.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A book by the English novelist and poet (1818–1848).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Greenhouses.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Earlier described as pink.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Windsor Castle, a royal residence west of London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Canal in Egypt connecting the Mediterranean and the Red Seas.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Small colored lights often hung in trees for decoration.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: See Shakespeare's *Richard II* 5.5.19–21.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Earlier, fifty-three years old.Return to reference 6

From A Room of One's Own

[SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER][1]

It was disappointing not to have brought back in the evening some important statement, some authentic fact. Women are poorer than men because—this or that. Perhaps now it would be better to give up seeking for the truth, and receiving on one's head an avalanche of opinion hot as lava, discoloured as dish-water. It would be better to draw the curtains; to shut out distractions; to light the l to narrow the enquiry and to ask the historian, who records not opinions but facts, to describe under what conditions women lived, not throughout the ages, but in England, say in the time of Elizabeth.[2]

For it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet. What were the conditions in which women lived, I asked myself; for fiction, imaginative work that is, is not dropped like a pebble upon the ground, as science may be; fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible; Shakespeare's plays, for instance, seem to hang there complete by themselves. But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in.

I went, therefore, to the shelf where the histories stand and took down one of the latest, Professor Trevelyan's *History of England*.[3] Once more I looked up Women, found "position of," and turned to the pages indicated. "Wife-beating," I read, "was a recognised right of man, and was practised without shame by high as well as low. . . . Similarly," the historian goes on, "the daughter who refused to

marry the gentleman of her parents' choice was liable to be locked up, beaten and flung about the room, without any shock being inflicted on public opinion. Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the 'chivalrous' upper classes. . . . Betrothal often took place while one or both of the parties was in the cradle, and marriage when they were scarcely out of the nurses' charge." That was about 1470, soon after Chaucer's time. The next reference to the position of women is some two hundred years later, in the time of the Stuarts.[4] "It was still the exception for women of the upper and middle class to choose their own husbands, and when the husband had been assigned, he was lord and master, so far at least as law and custom could make him. Yet even so," Professor Trevelyan concludes, "neither Shakespeare's women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs, like the Verneys and the Hutchinsons,[5] seem wanting in personality and character." Certainly, if we consider it, Cleopatra must have had a way with her; Lady Macbeth, one would suppose, had a will of her own; Rosalind,[6] one might conclude, was an attractive girl. Professor Trevelyan is speaking no more than the truth when he remarks that Shakespeare's women do not seem wanting in personality and character. Not being a historian, one might go even further and say that women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time—Clytemnestra, Antigone, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth, Phèdre, Cressida, Rosalind, Desdemona, the Duchess of Malfi, among the dramatists; then among the prose writers: Millamant, Clarissa, Becky Sharp, Anna Karenina, Emma Bovary, Madame de Guermantes[7]—the names flock to mind, nor do they recall women "lacking in personality and character." Indeed, if woman had no existence save in the fiction written by men, one would imagine her a person of the utmost importance, very various; heroic and mean; splendid and sordid; infinitely beautiful and hideous in the extreme; as great as a man, some think even greater.[8] But this is woman in fiction. In fact, as Professor Trevelyan points out, she was locked up, beaten and flung about the room.

A very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband.

It was certainly an odd monster that one made up by reading the historians first and the poets afterwards—a worm winged like an eagle; the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet. But these monsters, however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact. What one must do to bring her to life was to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact—that she is Mrs Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes; but not losing sight of fiction either—that she is a vessel in which all sorts of spirits and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually. The moment, however, that one tries this method with the Elizabethan woman, one branch of illumination fails; one is held up by the scarcity of facts. One knows nothing detailed, nothing perfectly true and substantial about her. History scarcely mentions her. And I turned to Professor Trevelyan again to see what history meant to him. I found by looking at his chapter headings that it meant—

"The Manor Court and the Methods of Open-field Agriculture . . . The Cistercians and Sheep-farming . . . The Crusades . . . The University . . . The House of Commons . . . The Hundred Years' War . . . The Wars of the Roses . . . The Renaissance Scholars . . . The Dissolution of the Monasteries . . . Agrarian and Religious Strife . . . The Origin of English Sea-power . . . The Armada . . ." and so on. Occasionally an individual woman is mentioned, an Elizabeth, or a Mary; a queen or a great lady. But by no possible means could middle-class women with nothing but brains and character at their command have taken part in any one of the great movements

which, brought together, constitute the historian's view of the past. Nor shall we find her in any collection of anecdotes. Aubrey[9] hardly mentions her. She never writes her own life and scarcely keeps a diary; there are only a handful of her letters in existence. She left no plays or poems by which we can judge her. What one wants, I thought—and why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton[1] supply it?—is a mass of information; at what age did she marry; how many children had she as a rule; what was her house like; had she a room to herself; did she do the cooking; would she be likely to have a servant? All these facts lie somewhere, presumably, in parish registers and account books; the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere, could one collect it and make a book of it. It would be ambitious beyond my daring, I thought, looking about the shelves for books that were not there, to suggest to the students of those famous colleges that they should re-write history, though I own that it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided; but why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety? For one often catches a glimpse of them in the lives of the great, whisking away into the background, concealing, I sometimes think, a wink a laugh, perhaps a tear. And, after all, we have lives enough of Jane Austen;[2] it scarcely seems necessary to consider again the influence of the tragedies of Joanna Baillie upon the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe;[3] as for myself, I should not mind if the homes and haunts of Mary Russell Mitford[4] were closed to the public for a century at least. But what I find deplorable, I continued, looking about the bookshelves again, is that nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century. I have no model in my mind to turn about this way and that. Here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write; whether they had sitting-rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night. They had no money evidently;

according to Professor Trevelyan they were married whether they liked it or not before they were out of the nursery, at fifteen or sixteen very likely. It would have been extremely odd, even upon this showing, had one of them suddenly written the plays of Shakespeare, I concluded, and I thought of that old gentleman, who is dead now, but was a bishop, I think, who declared that it was impossible for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the genius of Shakespeare. He wrote to the papers about it. He also told a lady who applied to him for information that cats do not as a matter of fact go to heaven, though they have, he added, souls of a sort. How much thinking those old gentlemen used to save one! How the borders of ignorance shrank back at their approach! Cats do not go to heaven. Women cannot write the plays of Shakespeare.

Be that as it may, I could not help thinking, as I looked at the works of Shakespeare on the shelf, that the bishop was right at least in this; it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. Let me imagine, since facts are so hard to come by, what would have happened had Shakespeare had a wonderfully gifted sister, called Judith,[5] let us say. Shakespeare himself went, very probably—his mother was an heiress—to the grammar school, where he may have learnt Latin—Ovid, Virgil and Horace—and the elements of grammar and logic. He was, it is well known, a wild boy who poached rabbits, perhaps shot a deer, and had, rather sooner than he should have done, to marry a woman in the neighbourhood, who bore him a child rather quicker than was right. That escapade sent him to seek his fortune in London. He had, it seemed, a taste for the theatre; he began by holding horses at the stage door. Very soon he got work in the theatre, became a successful actor, and lived at the hub of the universe, meeting everybody, knowing everybody, practising his art on the boards, exercising his wits in the streets, and even getting access to the palace of the queen. Meanwhile his extraordinarily gifted sister, let us suppose, remained at home. She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no

chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. They would have spoken sharply but kindly, for they were substantial people who knew the conditions of life for a woman and loved their daughter—indeed, more likely than not she was the apple of her father's eye. Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighbouring wool-stapler.[6] She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. Then he ceased to scold her. He begged her instead not to hurt him, not to shame him in this matter of her marriage. He would give her a chain of beads or a fine petticoat, he said; and there were tears in his eyes. How could she disobey him? How could she break his heart? The force of her own gift alone drove her to it. She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. The birds that sang in the hedge were not more musical than she was. She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. Like him, she had a taste for the theatre. She stood at the stage door; she wanted to act, she said. Men laughed in her face. The manager—a fat, loose-lipped man—guffawed. He bellowed something about poodles dancing and women acting—no woman, he said, could possibly be an actress. He hinted—you can imagine what. She could get no training in her craft. Could she even seek her dinner in a tavern or roam the streets at midnight? Yet her genius was for fiction and lusted to feed abundantly upon the lives of men and women and the study of their ways. At last—for she was very young, oddly like Shakespeare the poet in her face, with the same grey eyes and rounded brows—at last Nick Greene the actor-manager took pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so—who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught

and tangled in a woman's body?—killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle.[7]

That, more or less, is how the story would run, I think, if a woman in Shakespeare's day had had Shakespeare's genius. But for my part, I agree with the deceased bishop, if such he was—it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare's day should have had Shakespeare's genius. For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among labouring, uneducated, servile people. It was not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It is not born today among the working classes. How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began, according to Professor Trevelyan, almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom? Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes. Now and again an Emily Brontë or a Robert Burns[8] blazes out and proves its presence. But certainly it never got itself on to paper. When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs, or even of a very remarkable man who had a mother, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious[9] Jane Austen, some Emily Brontë who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to. Indeed, I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman. It was a woman Edward Fitzgerald,[1] I think, suggested who made the ballads and the folk-songs, crooning them to her children, beguiling her spinning with them, or the length of the winter's night.

This may be true or it may be false—who can say?—but what is true in it, so it seemed to me, reviewing the story of Shakespeare's sister as I had made it, is that any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill in

psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty. No girl could have walked to London and stood at a stage door and forced her way into the presence of actor-managers without doing herself a violence and suffering an anguish which may have been irrational—for chastity may be a fetish invented by certain societies for unknown reasons—but were none the less inevitable. Chastity had then, it has even now, a religious importance in a woman's life, and has so wrapped itself round with nerves and instincts that to cut it free and bring it to the light of day demands courage of the rarest. To have lived a free life in London in the sixteenth century would have meant for a woman who was poet and playwright a nervous stress and dilemma which might well have killed her. Had she survived, whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination. And undoubtedly, I thought, looking at the shelf where there are no plays by women, her work would have gone unsigned. That refuge she would have sought certainly. It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women even so late as the ninteeenth century. Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand,[2] all the victims of inner strife as their writings prove, sought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man. Thus they did homage to the convention, which if not implanted by the other sex was liberally encouraged by them (the chief glory of a woman is not to be talked of, said Pericles,[3] himself a much-talked-of man), that publicity in women is detestable. Anonymity runs in their blood. The desire to be veiled still possesses them. They are not even now as concerned about the health of their fame as men are, and, speaking generally, will pass a tombstone or a signpost without feeling an irresistible desire to cut their names on it, as Alf, Bert or Chas must do in obedience to their instinct, which murmurs if it sees a fine woman go by, or even a dog, Ce chien est à moi.[4] And, of course, it may not be a dog, I thought, remembering Parliament Square, the

Sieges Allee[5] and other avenues; it may be a piece of land or a man with curly black hair. It is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her.

That woman, then, who was born with a gift of poetry in the sixteenth century, was an unhappy woman, a woman at strife against herself. All the conditions of her life, all her own instincts, were hostile to the state of mind which is needed to set free whatever is in the brain. But what is the state of mind that is most propitious to the act of creation, I asked. Can one come by any notion of the state that furthers and makes possible that strange activity? Here I opened the volume containing the Tragedies of Shakespeare. What was Shakespeare's state of mind, for instance, when he wrote *Lear* and *Antony and Cleopatra*? It was certainly the state of mind most favourable to poetry that there has ever existed. But Shakespeare himself said nothing about it. We only know casually and by chance that he "never blotted a line."[6] Nothing indeed was ever said by the artist himself about his state of mind until the eighteenth century perhaps. Rousseau[7] perhaps began it. At any rate, by the nineteenth century self-consciousness had developed so far that it was the habit for men of letters to describe their minds in confessions and autobiographies. Their lives also were written, and their letters were printed after their deaths. Thus, though we do not know what Shakespeare went through when he wrote *Lear*, we do know what Carlyle went through when he wrote the *French Revolution*; what Flaubert went through when he wrote *Madame Bovary*; what Keats was going through when he tried to write poetry against the coming of death and the indifference of the world.

And one gathers from this enormous modern literature of confession and self-analysis that to write a work of genius is almost always a feat of prodigious difficulty. Everything is against the likelihood that it will come from the writer's mind whole and entire. Generally material circumstances are against it. Dogs will bark; people will interrupt; money must be made; health will break down.

Further, accentuating all these difficulties and making them harder to bear is the world's notorious indifference. It does not ask people to write poems and novels and histories; it does not need them. It does not care whether Flaubert finds the right word or whether Carlyle[8] scrupulously verifies this or that fact. Naturally, it will not pay for what it does not want. And so the writer, Keats,[9] Flaubert, Carlyle, suffers, especially in the creative years of youth, every form of distraction and discouragement. A curse, a cry of agony, rises from those books of analysis and confession. "Mighty poets in their misery dead"[1]—that is the burden of their song. If anything comes through in spite of all this, it is a miracle, and probably no book is born entire and uncrippled as it was conceived.

But for women, I thought, looking at the empty shelves, these difficulties were infinitely more formidable. In the first place, to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a sound-proof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble, even up to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Since her pin money, which depended on the good will of her father, was only enough to keep her clothed, she was debarred from such alleviations as came even to Keats or Tennyson[2] or Carlyle, all poor men, from a walking tour, a little journey to France, from the separate lodging which, even if it were miserable enough, sheltered them from the claims and tyrannies of their families. Such material difficulties were formidable; but much worse were the immaterial. The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?

* * *

Young women, I would say, and please attend, for the peroration is beginning, you are, in my opinion, disgracefully ignorant. You have never made a discovery of any sort of importance. You have never

shaken an empire or led an army into battle. The plays of Shakespeare are not by you, and you have never introduced a barbarous race to the blessings of civilisation. What is your excuse? It is all very well for you to say, pointing to the streets and squares and forests of the globe swarming with black and white and coffee-coloured inhabitants, all busily engaged in traffic and enterprise and love-making, we have had other work on our hands. Without our doing, those seas would be unsailed and those fertile lands a desert. We have borne and bred and washed and taught, perhaps to the age of six or seven years, the one thousand six hundred and twenty-three million human beings who are, according to statistics, at present in existence, and that, allowing that some had help, takes time.

There is truth in what you say—I will not deny it. But at the same time may I remind you that there have been at least two colleges for women in existence in England since the year 1866; that after the year 1880 a married woman was allowed by law to possess her own property; and that in 1919—which is a whole nine years ago—she was given a vote? May I also remind you that the most of the professions have been open to you for close on ten years now? When you reflect upon these immense privileges and the length of time during which they have been enjoyed, and the fact that there must be at this moment some two thousand women capable of earning over five hundred a year in one way or another, you will agree that the excuse of lack of opportunity, training, encouragement, leisure and money no longer holds good. Moreover, the economists are telling us that Mrs Seton has had too many children. You must, of course, go on bearing children, but, so they say, in twos and threes, not in tens and twelves.

Thus, with some time on your hands and with some book learning in your brains—you have had enough of the other kind, and are sent to college partly, I suspect, to be uneducated—surely you should embark upon another stage of your very long, very laborious and highly obscure career. A thousand pens are ready to suggest what you should do and what effect you will have. My own

suggestion is a little fantastic, I admit; I prefer, therefore, to put it in the form of fiction.

I told you in the course of this paper that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sir Sidney Lee's[3] life of the poet. She died young—alas, she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop, opposite the Elephant and Castle. Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the crossroads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. This opportunity, as I think, it is now coming within your power to give her. For my belief is that if we live another century or so—I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals—and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton's bogey,[4] for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born. As for her coming without that preparation, without that effort on our part, without that determination that when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The selection is drawn from chapter 3 and from the conclusion to the final chapter. In chapter 2, Woolf has been to the library of the British Museum, trying in vain to find answers to questions about the different fates of men and women.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: G. M. Trevelyan's *History of England* (1926) long held its place as the standard one-volume history of the country.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, during the reign of the British house of Stuart (1603–49, 1660–1714).Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  "The ideal family life of the period [1640–50] that ended in such tragic political division has been recorded once for all in the *Memoirs of the Verney Family*" (Trevelyan, *History of England*). Lucy Hutchinson (1620–after 1675) wrote the biography of her husband, Col. John Hutchinson (1615–1664); it was first published in 1806.
  Return to reference 5
- Note 6: These three Shakespearean heroines are, respectively, in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Macbeth*, and *As You Like It.*Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  Characters in, respectively, Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*; Sophocles' *Antigone*; Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth*; Racine's *Phèdre*; Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, *As You Like It*, and *Othèllo*; Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*; Congreve's *Way of the World*; Richardson's *Clarissa*; Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*; Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*; Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*; and Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*).

Return to reference 7

- Note 8:
  "It remains a strange and almost inexplicable fact that in Athena's city, where women were kept in almost Oriental suppression as odalisques or drudges, the stage should yet have produced figures like Clytemnestra and Cassandra, Atossa and Antigone, Phèdre and Medea, and all the other heroines who dominate play after play of the 'misogynist' Euripides. But the paradox of this world where in real life a respectable woman could hardly show her face alone in the street, and yet on the stage woman equals or surpasses man, has never been satisfactorily explained. In modern tragedy the same predominance exists. At all events, a very cursory survey of Shakespeare's work (similarly with Webster, though not with Marlowe or Jonson) suffices to reveal how this dominance, this initiative of women, persists from Rosalind to Lady Macbeth. So too in Racine; six of his tragedies bear their heroines' names; and what male characters of his shall we set against Hermione and Andromaque, Bérénice and Roxane, Phèdre and Athalie? So again with Ibsen; what men shall we match with Solveig and Nora, Hedda and Hilda Wangel and Rebecca West?"—F. L. Lucas, *Tragedy*, pp. 114–15 [*Woolf's note*].
  Return to reference 8
- Note 9: John Aubrey (1626–1697), English writer, especially of short biographies.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The two women's colleges at Cambridge, where Woolf first delivered a version of *A Room of One's Own*.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: English novelist (1775–1817).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: American poet and fiction writer (1809–1849). Joanna Baillie: English poet and dramatist (1762–1851).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Poet and novelist (1787–1855), best known for sketches of country life.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shakespeare had a daughter named Judith.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: A stapler is a dealer in staple goods (that is, established goods in trade and marketing); hence a wool-stapler is a dealer in wool (one of the "staple" products of 16th-century England).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Suicides were buried at crossroads. The Elephant and Castle was a tavern south of the river Thames, where roads went off to different parts of southern England.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Scottish poet (1759–1796).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: An echo of Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), line 59: "Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Poet and translator (1809–1883).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Male pseudonyms, respectively, of Charlotte Brontë, Marian Evans, and Amandine-Aurore-Lucie Dupin (1804–1876).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Athenian statesman (ca. 495–429 B.C.E.).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: This dog is mine (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Avenue of Victory, a busy thoroughfare in Berlin. "Parliament Square": London intersection.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ben Jonson, *Timber* (1640): "I remember, the players have often mentioned it as an honour to Shakespeare that in his writing (whatsoever he penned) he never blotted out a line."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), early Romantic French (Swiss-born) philosopher and memoirist.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Scottish writer and historian. Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), French novelist who believed the literary artist should find "the right word" (*le mot juste*).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: John Keats (1795–1821), English poet.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: From William Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" (1807), line 116.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), English poet.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Biographer and Shakespeare scholar (1859–1926), author of *Life of William Shakespeare* (1898).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Milton's unhappy first marriage, his campaign for freedom of divorce, and his deliberate subordination of Eve to Adam in *Paradise Lost.*Return to reference 4

Professions for Women[1]

When your secretary invited me to come here, she told me that your Society is concerned with the employment of women and she suggested that I might tell you something about my own professional experiences. It is true I am a woman; it is true I am employed; but what professional experiences have I had? It is difficult to say. My profession is literature; and in that profession there are fewer experiences for women than in any other, with the exception of the stage—fewer, I mean, that are peculiar to women. For the road was cut many years ago—by Fanny Burney, by Aphra Behn, by Harriet Martineau,[2] by Jane Austen, by George Eliot—many famous women, and many more unknown and forgotten, have been before me, making the path smooth, and regulating my steps. Thus, when I came to write, there were very few material obstacles in my way. Writing was a reputable and harmless occupation. The family peace was not broken by the scratching of a pen. No demand was made upon the family purse. For ten and sixpence one can buy paper enough to write all the plays of Shakespeare—if one has a mind that way. Pianos and models, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, masters and mistresses, are not needed by a writer. The cheapness of writing paper is, of course, the reason why women have succeeded as writers before they have succeeded in the other professions.

But to tell you my story—it is a simple one. You have only got to figure to yourselves a girl in a bedroom with a pen in her hand. She had only to move that pen from left to right—from ten o'clock to one. Then it occurred to her to do what is simple and cheap enough after all—to slip a few of those pages into an envelope, fix a penny stamp in the corner, and drop the envelope into the red box at the corner. It was thus that I became a journalist; and my effort was rewarded on the first day of the following month—a very glorious

day it was for me—by a letter from an editor containing a cheque for one pound ten shillings and sixpence. But to show you how little I deserve to be called a professional woman, how little I know of the struggles and difficulties of such lives, I have to admit that instead of spending that sum upon bread and butter, rent, shoes and stockings, or butcher's bills, I went out and bought a cat—a beautiful cat, a Persian cat, which very soon involved me in bitter disputes with my neighbours.

What could be easier than to write articles and to buy Persian cats with the profits? But wait a moment. Articles have to be about something. Mine, I seem to remember, was about a novel by a famous man. And while I was writing this review, I discovered that if I were going to review books I should need to do battle with a certain phantom. And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House.[3] It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her. You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of her—you may not know what I mean by The Angel in the House. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it—in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathise always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all—I need not say it—she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty—her blushes, her great grace. In those days—the last of Queen Victoria—every house had its Angel. And when I came to write I encountered her with the very first words. The shadow of her wings fell on my page; I heard the rustling of her skirts in the room. Directly, that is to say, I took my pen in my hand to review that novel by a famous man, she slipped behind me and whispered: 'My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has

been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure.' And she made as if to guide my pen. I now record the one act for which I take some credit to myself, though the credit rightly belongs to some excellent ancestors of mine who left me a certain sum of money—shall we say five hundred pounds a year?—so that it was not necessary for me to depend solely on charm for my living. I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing. For, as I found, directly I put pen to paper, you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex. And all these questions, according to the Angel of the House, cannot be dealt with freely and openly by women; they must charm, they must conciliate, they must—to put it bluntly—tell lies if they are to succeed. Thus, whenever I felt the shadow of her wing or the radiance of her halo upon my page, I took up the inkpot and flung it at her. She died hard. Her fictitious nature was of great assistance to her. It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality. She was always creeping back when I thought I had despatched her. Though I flatter myself that I killed her in the end, the struggle was severe; it took much time that had better have been spent upon learning Greek grammar; or in roaming the world in search of adventures. But it was a real experience; it was an experience that was bound to befall all women writers at that time. Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer.

But to continue my story. The Angel was dead; what then remained? You may say that what remained was a simple and common object—a young woman in a bedroom with an inkpot. In other words, now that she had rid herself of falsehood, that young woman had only to be herself. Ah, but what is 'herself'? I mean, what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that

you know. I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill. That indeed is one of the reasons why I have come here—out of respect for you, who are in process of showing us by your experiments what a woman is, who are in process of providing us, by your failures and successes, with that extremely important piece of information.

But to continue the story of my professional experiences. I made one pound ten and six by my first review; and I bought a Persian cat with the proceeds. Then I grew ambitious. A Persian cat is all very well, I said; but a Persian cat is not enough. I must have a motor-car. And it was thus that I became a novelist—for it is a very strange thing that people will give you a motor-car if you will tell them a story. It is a still stranger thing that there is nothing so delightful in the world as telling stories. It is far pleasanter than writing reviews of famous novels. And yet, if I am to obey your secretary and tell you my professional experiences as a novelist, I must tell you about a very strange experience that befell me as a novelist. And to understand it you must try first to imagine a novelist's state of mind. I hope I am not giving away professional secrets if I say that a novelist's chief desire is to be as unconscious as possible. He has to induce in himself a state of perpetual lethargy. He wants life to proceed with the utmost quiet and regularity. He wants to see the same faces, to read the same books, to do the same things day after day, month after month, while he is writing, so that nothing may break the illusion in which he is living—so that nothing may disturb or disquiet the mysterious nosings about, feelings round, darts, dashes, and sudden discoveries of that very shy and illusive spirit, the imagination. I suspect that this state is the same both for men and women. Be that as it may, I want you to imagine me writing a novel in a state of trance. I want you to figure to yourselves a girl sitting with a pen in her hand, which for minutes, and indeed for hours, she never dips into the inkpot. The image that comes to my mind when I think of this girl is the image of a fisherman lying sunk in dreams on the verge of a deep lake with a rod held out over the

water. She was letting her imagination sweep unchecked round every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being. Now came the experience that I believe to be far commoner with women writers than with men. The line raced through the girl's fingers. Her imagination had rushed away. It had sought the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber. And then there was a smash. There was an explosion. There was foam and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard. The girl was roused from her dream. She was indeed in a state of the most acute and difficult distress. To speak without figure, she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. Men, her reason told her, would be shocked. The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. The trance was over. Her imagination could work no longer. This I believe to be a very common experience with women writers—they are impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex. For though men sensibly allow themselves great freedom in these respects, I doubt that they realize or can control the extreme severity with which they condemn such freedom in women.

These then were two very genuine experiences of my own. These were two of the adventures of my professional life. The first—killing the Angel in the House—I think I solved. She died. But the second, telling the truth about my own experiences as a body, I do not think I solved. I doubt that any woman has solved it yet. The obstacles against her are still immensely powerful—and yet they are very difficult to define. Outwardly, what is simpler than to write books? Outwardly, what obstacles are there for a woman rather than for a man? Inwardly, I think, the case is very different; she has still many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome. Indeed it will be a long time still, I think, before a woman can sit down to write a book without finding a phantom to be slain, a rock to be dashed against. And if this is so in literature, the freest of all professions for

women, how is it in the new professions which you are now for the first time entering?

Those are the questions that I should like, had I time, to ask you. And indeed, if I have laid stress upon these professional experiences of mine, it is because I believe that they are, though in different forms, yours also. Even when the path is nominally open—when there is nothing to prevent a woman from being a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant—there are many phantoms and obstacles, as I believe, looming in her way. To discuss and define them is I think of great value and importance; for thus only can the labour be shared, the difficulties be solved. But besides this, it is necessary also to discuss the ends and the aims for which we are fighting, for which we are doing battle with these formidable obstacles. Those aims cannot be taken for granted; they must be perpetually questioned and examined. The whole position, as I see it—here in this hall surrounded by women practising for the first time in history I know not how many different professions—is one of extraordinary interest and importance. You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men. You are able, though not without great labour and effort, to pay the rent. You are earning your five hundred pounds a year. But this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but it is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? These, I think are questions of the utmost importance and interest. For the first time in history you are able to ask them; for the first time you are able to decide for yourselves what the answers should be. Willingly would I stay and discuss those questions and answers—but not tonight. My time is up; and I must cease.

1942

Endnotes

- Note 1: A paper read to the Women's Service League [*Woolf's note*]. Woolf here echoes her points in *A Room of One's Own* about a woman's needing money (specifically, an annual income of five hundred British pounds) and a room in which to write.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Economist, moralist, journalist, and novelist (1802–1876). Burney (1752–1840), author of *Evelina* and other novels. Behn (1640–1689), writer of romances and plays.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: By Coventry Patmore (1823–1896), published 1854–62.Return to reference 3

JAMES JOYCE
1882–1941

James Joyce was born in Dublin, son of a talented but feckless father, who is accurately described in Joyce's novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) as having been "a medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor, a shouting politician, a small landlord, a small investor, a drinker, a good fellow, a storyteller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a tax-gatherer, a bankrupt, and at present a praiser of his own past." The elder Joyce, like the father in Joyce's novel, drifted steadily down the financial and social scale, his family moving from house to house, each one less genteel and more shabby than the previous. James Joyce's primary education was Catholic, from the age of six to the age of nine at Clongowes Wood College and from eleven to sixteen at Belvedere College, as vividly recalled in *A Portrait of the Artist.* Both were Jesuit institutions and were conventional roads to the priesthood. He then studied modern languages at University College, Dublin.

From a comparatively young age Joyce regarded himself as a rebel against the shabbiness and philistinism of Dublin. In his last year of school at Belvedere he began to reject his Catholic faith in favor of a literary mission that he saw as involving rebellion and exile. He refused to play any part in the nationalist or other popular activities of his fellow students, and he created some stir by his outspoken articles, one of which, on the Norwegian playwright

Henrik Ibsen, appeared in London's *Fortnightly Review* when Joyce was eighteen. He taught himself Dano-Norwegian in order to read Ibsen and to write to him. When, on instructions of the faculty adviser, an article by Joyce, significantly titled "The Day of the Rabblement," was refused by the student magazine that had commissioned it, he had it printed privately. By 1902, when he received his B.A. degree, the young man was already committed to a career as exile and writer. For Joyce, as for his character Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*, being a writer necessarily implied a self-imposed state of exile. To preserve his integrity, to avoid involvement in popular causes, to devote himself to the life of the artist, he felt that he had to go abroad.

Dublin ca. 1899. Sackville Street, renamed O'Connell Street in 1924, was and still is the grand main street in Dublin. After he left for the Continent, Joyce imaginatively populated the city with such fictional characters as Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, and Molly Bloom. In Joyce's time, as seen in this picture, Dublin bustled with pedestrians, horse-drawn carriages, electric trams, and automobiles. Also visible are monuments to the British

colonial system, most prominently Nelson's Pillar, dedicated in 1809 to the British naval hero Horatio Nelson and destroyed in 1966 by Irish republicans.

Joyce went to Paris after graduation, was recalled to Dublin by his mother's fatal illness, had a short spell there as a schoolteacher, then returned to the Continent in 1904 to teach English in Trieste and then in Zurich. He took with him Nora Barnacle, a woman from Galway with no interest in literature; her vivacity and wit charmed Joyce, and the two lived in devoted companionship until his death, although they were not married until 1931. In 1920 Joyce and Barnacle settled in Paris, where they lived until December 1940, when the war forced them to take refuge in Switzerland; he died in Zurich a few weeks later.

Proud, obstinate, absolutely convinced of his genius, given to fits of sudden gaiety and of sudden silence, Joyce was not always an easy person to get along with, yet he never lacked friends, and throughout his thirty-six years on the Continent he was always the center of a literary circle. Life was hard at first. In Trieste he had little money, and he did not improve matters by drinking heavily, a habit checked somewhat by his brother Stanislaus, who came out from Dublin to act (as Stanislaus put it much later) as his "brother's keeper." Joyce also suffered from eye diseases and, blind for brief periods, underwent twenty-five operations. In 1917 Edith Rockefeller McCormick and then the lawyer John Quinn, steered in Joyce's direction by Ezra Pound, helped out financially. A benefactor who would prove to be permanent was the English feminist and editor Harriet Shaw Weaver, who not only subsidized Joyce generously from 1917 to the end of his life but also occupied herself indefatigably with arrangements for publishing his work.

In spite of doing most of his writing in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris, Joyce paradoxically wrote only and always about Dublin. No writer has ever been more soaked in Dublin—its atmosphere, its history, its topography. He devised ways of expanding his accounts of the Irish

capital, however, so that they became microcosms of human history, geography, and experience.

Joyce began his career by writing a series of stories that etched, with extraordinary clarity, aspects of Dublin life. These stories—published as *Dubliners* in 1914—are sharp, realistic sketches of what Joyce called the "paralysis" that beset the lives of people in then-provincial Ireland. The language is crisp, lucid, and detached, and the details are chosen and organized so meticulously that their symbolic meanings intensify as the events and images intersect. Some of the stories, such as "Araby," are built around what Joyce called an "epiphany," a dramatic but fleeting moment of revelation about the self or the world. Others, like "Clay," withhold key bits of information to capture the perceptions and often misapprehensions of a vulnerable main character. Many end abruptly, without conventional narrative closure, or they lack overt connectives and transitions, leaving multiple possibilities in suspension. The last story in *Dubliners*, "The Dead," was not part of the original draft of the book but was added later, when Joyce was preoccupied with the nature of artistic objectivity. At a festive event, attended by guests whose portraits Joyce draws with precision and economy, a series of jolting events frees the protagonist, Gabriel, from his possessiveness and egotism. The view he attains at the end is the mood of supreme neutrality that Joyce saw as the beginning of artistic awareness. It is the view of art developed by Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist*.

Dubliners represents Joyce's first phase, in which he came to terms with the life he had rejected. Next he had to come to terms with the meaning of his emergence as a man dedicated to imaginative writing; the result was a novel about the youth and development of an artist, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Joyce wove his autobiography into a work of fiction so finely chiseled and arranged, so stripped of anything superfluous, that each word contributes to the presentation of the theme: the parallel movement toward art and toward exile. A part of his first draft was published posthumously under the original title, *Stephen Hero* (1944), and a comparison between it and the final version, *A Portrait*

of the Artist, shows the precision with which Joyce reworked and compressed his material for maximum effect.

From the beginning, Joyce had trouble getting his writing into print. The release of *Dubliners* was held up for many years while he fought with both English and Irish editors about words and phrases that they wished to eliminate. Censorship cuts were made to *A Portrait of the Artist* when it was first issued, in serial form, and three European publishers rejected it before it was finally accepted by an American firm. Joyce's next novel, *Ulysses* (1922), was published in Paris by Sylvia Beach and immediately banned in Britain and America; its earlier serialization in an American magazine, *The Little Review* (March 1918–December 1920), had been stopped abruptly when the U.S. Post Office brought a charge of obscenity against the work. Fortunately Judge John Woolsey's history-making decision in a federal district court on December 6, 1933, resulted in the lifting of the ban and the free circulation of *Ulysses*, first in America and soon afterward in Britain.

Ulysses is an account of one day in the lives of Dubliners; it thus describes a limited number of events involving a limited number of people in a limited environment. Yet Joyce's ambition—which took him seven years to realize—is to give the events the depth and implication that can convey symbolic significance. The episodes in *Ulysses* correspond to incidents in Homer's ancient Greek epic *Odyssey*, although the Homeric names customarily given to the episodes, such as "Proteus," "Circe," and "Penelope," appear not in the book but in Joyce's schematic outline. Joyce regarded Odysseus, or Ulysses, as the most "complete" man in literature, shown in all his aspects—coward and hero, cautious and reckless, weak and strong, husband and philanderer, father and son, dignified and ridiculous; so he makes his hero, Leopold Bloom, an Irish Jew, into a modern Ulysses. The parallels between the Homeric archetypes and the modern-day characters and events create a host of interpretive complexities. They can seem tight or loose, deflating or ennobling, ironic or heroic, epic or mock-epic, depending on their specific application in a particular episode and, to some extent, on the propensities of the reader.

Joyce's final work, *Finnegans Wake* (1939), took more than fourteen years to write, and Joyce considered it his masterpiece, though some readers have found its dense, multilayered language impenetrable. For this work, Joyce invents a dream language in which words are combined, distorted, created from bits of other words fitted together, several meanings at once, often drawn from several languages, and fused in conveying a variety of ways to achieve whole clusters of meaning simultaneously. In *Ulysses* Joyce had made the symbolic aspect of the novel at least as important as the realistic aspect, but in *Finnegans Wake* he gave up realism altogether. This vast story of a symbolic Irishman's cosmic dream develops, by enormous reverberating puns, a continuous expansion of meaning, the elements in the puns deriving from every conceivable source in history, literature, mythology, and Joyce's personal experience.

Like his other novels, *Finnegans Wake* put Joyce's consummate craftsmanship at the service of a humanely comic vision. His innovations in organization, style, and narrative technique have influenced countless writers, but his works of fiction are unique.

Araby[1]

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School[2] set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*,[3] I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gantlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street light from the kitchen windows had

filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you*[4] about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of

my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: *O love! O love!* many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to *Araby.*[5] I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said; she would love to go.

—And why can't you? I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent.[6] Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

—It's well for you, she said.

—If I go, I said, I will bring you something.

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was

not some Freemason affair.[7] I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

—Yes, boy, I know.

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold empty gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old garrulous woman, a pawn-broker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late, as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

—I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord.

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the halldoor. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

—The people are in bed and after their first sleep now, he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

—Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is.

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: *All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.* He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed.*[8] When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin[9] tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized

a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Café Chantant*[1] were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

—O, I never said such a thing!

—O, but you did!

—O, but I didn't!

—Didn't she say that?

—Yes. I heard her.

—O, there's a . . . fib!

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

—No, thank you.

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

19051914

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The third of the fifteen stories in *Dubliners.* This tale of the frustrated quest for beauty in the midst of drabness is both meticulously realistic in its handling of details of Dublin life and the Dublin scene, and also highly symbolic in that almost every image and incident suggests some particular aspect of the theme (for example, the suggestion of the Holy Grail in the image of the chalice, mentioned in the fifth paragraph). Joyce was drawing on his own childhood recollections, and the uncle in the story is a reminiscence of Joyce's father. But in all the stories in *Dubliners* dealing with childhood, the child lives not with his parents but with an uncle and aunt—a symbol of that isolation and lack of proper relation between "consubstantial" (in the flesh) parents and children that is a major theme in Joyce's work.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Joyce family moved to 17 North Richmond Street, Dublin, in 1894; and Joyce had earlier briefly attended the Christian Brothers' school a few doors away (the Christian Brothers are a Catholic religious community). The details of the house described here correspond exactly to those of number 17. "Blind": that is, it was a dead-end street.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: François Eugéne Vidocq (1775–1857) had an extraordinary career as soldier, thief, chief of the French detective force, and private detective. *The Abbot* is a historical novel dealing with Mary, Queen of Scots. *The Devout Communicant* is a Catholic religious manual.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Street ballad, so called from its opening words. This one was about the 19th-century Irish nationalist Jeremiah Donovan, popularly known as O'Donovan Rossa.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: The bazaar, described by its "official catalogue" as a "Grand Oriental Fête," was actually held in Dublin on May 14–19, 1894.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, her convent school. "Retreat": period of seclusion from ordinary activities devoted to religious exercises.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: His aunt shares her church's distrust of the Freemasons, an old European secret society, reputedly anti-Catholic.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Once-popular sentimental poem by Caroline Norton.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A silver coin, now obsolete, worth two shillings.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Singing café (French; literal trans.); a café that provided musical entertainment, popular early in the 20th century.Return to reference 1

Clay[1]

The matron[2] had given her leave to go out as soon as the women's tea was over and Maria looked forward to her evening out. The kitchen was spick and span: the cook said you could see yourself in the big copper boilers. The fire was nice and bright and on one of the side-tables were four very big barmbracks.[3] These barmbracks seemed uncut; but if you went closer you would see that they had been cut into long thick even slices and were ready to be handed round at tea. Maria had cut them herself.

Maria was a very, very small person indeed but she had a very long nose and a very long chin. She talked a little through her nose, always soothingly: *"Yes, my dear,"* and *"No, my dear."* She was always sent for when the women quarrelled over their tubs and always succeeded in making peace. One day the matron had said to her:

"Maria, you are a veritable peace-maker!"

And the sub-matron and two of the Board ladies[4] had heard the compliment. And Ginger Mooney was always saying what she wouldn't do to the dummy[5] who had charge of the irons if it wasn't for Maria. Everyone was so fond of Maria.

The women would have their tea at six o'clock and she would be able to get away before seven. From Ballsbridge to the Pillar, twenty minutes; from the Pillar to Drumcondra,[6] twenty minutes; and twenty minutes to buy the things. She would be there before eight. She took out her purse with the silver clasps and read again the words *A Present from Belfast.*[7] She was very fond of that purse because Joe had brought it to her five years before when he and Alphy had gone to Belfast on a Whit-Monday[8] trip. In the purse were two half-crowns and some coppers.[9] She would have five shillings clear after paying tram fare. What a nice evening they would have,

all the children singing! Only she hoped that Joe wouldn't come in drunk. He was so different when he took any drink.

Often he had wanted her to go and live with them; but she would have felt herself in the way (though Joe's wife was ever so nice with her) and she had become accustomed to the life of the laundry. Joe was a good fellow. She had nursed[1] him and Alphy too; and Joe used often say:

"Mamma is mamma but Maria is my proper mother."

After the break-up at home the boys had got her that position in the *Dublin by Lamplight* laundry, and she liked it. She used to have such a bad opinion of Protestants but now she thought they were very nice people, a little quiet and serious, but still very nice people to live with. Then she had her plants in the conservatory and she liked looking after them. She had lovely ferns and wax-plants and, whenever anyone came to visit her, she always gave the visitor one or two slips[2] from her conservatory. There was one thing she didn't like and that was the tracts[3] on the walks; but the matron was such a nice person to deal with, so genteel.

When the cook told her everything was ready she went into the women's room and began to pull the big bell. In a few minutes the women began to come in by twos and threes, wiping their steaming hands in their petticoats and pulling down the sleeves of their blouses over their red steaming arms.[4] They settled down before their huge mugs which the cook and the dummy filled up with hot tea, already mixed with milk and sugar in huge tin cans. Maria superintended the distribution of the barmbrack and saw that every woman got her four slices. There was a great deal of laughing and joking during the meal. Lizzie Fleming said Maria was sure to get the ring and, though Fleming had said that for so many Hallow Eves,[5] Maria had to laugh and say she didn't want any ring or man either; and when she laughed her grey-green eyes sparkled with disappointed shyness and the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin. Then Ginger Mooney lifted up her mug of tea and proposed Maria's health while all the other women clattered with their mugs on the table, and said she was sorry she hadn't a sup of porter to

drink it in. And Maria laughed again till the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin and till her minute body nearly shook itself asunder because she knew that Mooney meant well though, of course, she had the notions of a common woman.

But wasn't Maria glad when the women had finished their tea and the cook and the dummy had begun to clear away the tea-things! She went into her little bedroom and, remembering that the next morning was a mass morning,[6] changed the hand of the alarm from seven to six. Then she took off her working skirt and her house-boots and laid her best skirt out on the bed and her tiny dress-boots beside the foot of the bed. She changed her blouse too and, as she stood before the mirror, she thought of how she used to dress for mass on Sunday morning when she was a young girl; and she looked with quaint affection at the diminutive body which she had so often adorned. In spite of its years she found it a nice tidy little body.

When she got outside the streets were shining with rain and she was glad of her old brown waterproof. The tram was full and she had to sit on the little stool at the end of the car, facing all the people, with her toes barely touching the floor. She arranged in her mind all she was going to do and thought how much better it was to be independent and to have your own money in your pocket. She hoped they would have a nice evening. She was sure they would but she could not help thinking what a pity it was Alphy and Joe were not speaking. They were always falling out now but when they were boys together they used to be the best of friends: but such was life.

She got out of her tram at the Pillar and ferreted her way quickly among the crowds. She went into Downes's cake-shop[7] but the shop was so full of people that it was a long time before she could get herself attended to. She bought a dozen of mixed penny cakes, and at last came out of the shop laden with a big bag. Then she thought what else would she buy: she wanted to buy something really nice. They would be sure to have plenty of apples and nuts. It was hard to know what to buy and all she could think of was cake. She decided to buy some plumcake but Downes's plumcake had not

enough almond icing on top of it so she went over to a shop in Henry Street.[8] Here she was a long time in suiting herself and the stylish young lady behind the counter, who was evidently a little annoyed by her, asked her was it wedding-cake she wanted to buy. That made Maria blush and smile at the young lady; but the young lady took it all very seriously and finally cut a thick slice of plumcake, parcelled it up and said:

"Two-and-four, please."[9]

She thought she would have to stand in the Drumcondra tram because none of the young men seemed to notice her but an elderly gentleman made room for her. He was a stout gentleman and he wore a brown hard hat; he had a square red face and a greyish moustache. Maria thought he was a colonel-looking gentleman and she reflected how much more polite he was than the young men who simply stared straight before them. The gentleman began to chat with her about Hallow Eve and the rainy weather. He supposed the bag was full of good things for the little ones and said it was only right that the youngsters should enjoy themselves while they were young. Maria agreed with him and favoured him with demure nods and hems. He was very nice with her, and when she was getting out at the Canal Bridge she thanked him and bowed, and he bowed to her and raised his hat and smiled agreeably; and while she was going up along the terrace, bending her tiny head under the rain, she thought how easy it was to know a gentleman even when he has a drop taken.[1]

Everybody said: *"O, here's Maria!"* when she came to Joe's house. Joe was there, having come home from business, and all the children had their Sunday dresses on. There were two big girls in from next door and games were going on. Maria gave the bag of cakes to the eldest boy, Alphy, to divide and Mrs. Donnelly said it was too good of her to bring such a big bag of cakes and made all the children say:

"Thanks, Maria."

But Maria said she had brought something special for papa and mamma, something they would be sure to like, and she began to

look for her plumcake. She tried in Downes's bag and then in the pockets of her waterproof and then on the hallstand but nowhere could she find it. Then she asked all the children had any of them eaten it—by mistake, of course—but the children all said no and looked as if they did not like to eat cakes if they were to be accused of stealing. Everybody had a solution for the mystery and Mrs. Donnelly said it was plain that Maria had left it behind her in the tram. Maria, remembering how confused the gentleman with the greyish moustache had made her, coloured with shame and vexation and disappointment. At the thought of the failure of her little surprise and of the two and four-pence she had thrown away for nothing she nearly cried outright.

But Joe said it didn't matter and made her sit down by the fire. He was very nice with her. He told her all that went on in his office, repeating for her a smart answer which he had made to the manager. Maria did not understand why Joe laughed so much over the answer he had made but she said that the manager must have been a very overbearing person to deal with. Joe said he wasn't so bad when you knew how to take him, that he was a decent sort so long as you didn't rub him the wrong way. Mrs. Donnelly played the piano for the children and they danced and sang. Then the two next-door girls handed round the nuts. Nobody could find the nutcrackers and Joe was nearly getting cross over it and asked how did they expect Maria to crack nuts without a nutcracker. But Maria said she didn't like nuts and that they weren't to bother about her. Then Joe asked would she take a bottle of stout and Mrs. Donnelly said there was port wine too in the house if she would prefer that. Maria said she would rather they didn't ask her to take anything: but Joe insisted.

So Maria let him have his way and they sat by the fire talking over old times and Maria thought she would put in a good word for Alphy. But Joe cried that God might strike him stone dead if ever he spoke a word to his brother again and Maria said she was sorry she had mentioned the matter. Mrs. Donnelly told her husband it was a great shame for him to speak that way of his own flesh and blood

but Joe said that Alphy was no brother of his and there was nearly being a row[2] on the head of it. But Joe said he would not lose his temper on account of the night it was and asked his wife to open some more stout. The two next-door girls had arranged some Hallow Eve games and soon everything was merry again. Maria was delighted to see the children so merry and Joe and his wife in such good spirits. The next-door girls put some saucers[3] on the table and then led the children up to the table, blindfold. One got the prayer-book and the other three got the water;[4] and when one of the next-door girls got the ring Mrs. Donnelly shook her finger at the blushing girl as much as to say: *O, I know all about it!* They insisted then on blindfolding Maria and leading her up to the table to see what she would get; and, while they were putting on the bandage, Maria laughed and laughed again till the tip of her nose nearly met the tip of her chin.

They led her up to the table amid laughing and joking and she put her hand out in the air as she was told to do. She moved her hand about here and there in the air and descended on one of the saucers. She felt a soft wet substance[5] with her fingers and was surprised that nobody spoke or took off her bandage. There was a pause for a few seconds; and then a great deal of scuffling and whispering. Somebody said something about the garden, and at last Mrs. Donnelly said something very cross to one of the next-door girls and told her to throw it out at once: that was no play. Maria understood that it was wrong that time and so she had to do it over again: and this time she got the prayer-book.

After that Mrs. Donnelly played Miss McCloud's Reel[6] for the children and Joe made Maria take a glass of wine. Soon they were all quite merry again and Mrs. Donnelly said Maria would enter a convent before the year was out because she had got the prayer-book. Maria had never seen Joe so nice to her as he was that night, so full of pleasant talk and reminiscences. She said they were all very good to her.

At last the children grew tired and sleepy and Joe asked Maria would she not sing some little song before she went, one of the old

songs. Mrs. Donnelly said *"Do, please, Maria!"* and so Maria had to get up and stand beside the piano. Mrs. Donnelly bade the children be quiet and listen to Maria's song. Then she played the prelude and said *"Now, Maria!"* and Maria, blushing very much, began to sing in a tiny quavering voice. She sang *I Dreamt that I Dwelt*,[7] and when she came to the second verse she sang again:

"I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls
With vassals and serfs at my side
And of all who assembled within those walls
That I was the hope and the pride.

"I had riches too great to count, could boast
Of a high ancestral name,
But I also dreamt, which pleased me most,
That you loved me still the same."

But no one tried to show her her mistake;[8] and when she had ended her song Joe was very much moved. He said that there was no time like the long ago and no music for him like poor old Balfe, whatever other people might say; and his eyes filled up so much with tears that he could not find what he was looking for and in the end he had to ask his wife to tell him where the corkscrew was.

1914

Endnotes

- Note 1: The tenth of fifteen stories in *Dubliners*. "Clay" is the story of a middle-aged Catholic woman, Maria, who is unmarried and works as a maid in a Protestant charitable institution called *Dublin by Lamplight* laundry. Its religious affiliation and staff, which includes former sex workers, initially causes Maria concern about working there.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Female supervisor.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: A bread with raisins and associated with the holiday of Hallows Eve (Halloween).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Members of the governing board of the institution that manages the laundry.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Outdated and offensive term for a mentally impaired or mute person.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Suburb north of Dublin. "Ballsbridge:" wealthy suburb in southeast Dublin; the location of embassies and diplomatic offices.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Souvenir from Belfast, a majority Protestant city in Northern Ireland. "Pillar": Nelson's Pillar, a tall granite tower topped with a statue of British naval officer Horatio Nelson. It was located in the center of Dublin and a reminder of the British colonial presence.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Also known as Pentecost Monday, a public holiday in Ireland observed fifty days after Easter Sunday. It marks the end of the Easter cycle.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Pence or pennies. "Half crown": British coin equal to two shillings and six pence.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Cared for.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Plant cuttings. "Wax plants:" plants with glossy leaves.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Scriptural verses intended as moral instruction for the women working in the laundry, especially those seeking penance for past behavior. An 1867 report from the historical *Dublin by Lamplight* laundry states its mission as "the eternal salvation of the unhappy ones who have been led captive by the devil, and have fallen through his devices."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Laundry was washed manually in this period by being stirred with paddles in heated tubs.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Irish holiday that accords with Halloween in the United States. "Ring": a traditional Hallows Eve game in which objects are used to predict a player's future. A ring baked into a cake and found by a girl might predict marriage.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: All Saints Day, the day after Hallows Eve, was considered a Holy Day of Obligation on which Catholics must

attend mass.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: A bakery near Nelson's Pillar.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A popular shopping street on the north side of Dublin.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Two shillings, four pence, or about half the money in Maria's purse.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Tipsy or slightly drunk.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Argument.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Another divination game in which objects are placed under saucers. Chosen objects determine the player's future.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Predicts travel across the sea. "Prayer-book": predicts joining a convent.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Crucially unspecified by Joyce, but it is clay, which predicts an early death.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Traditional Irish dance set to lively music.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From the 19th-century opera *The Bohemian Girl* by Irish composer Michael Balfe with libretto by Alfred Bunn. The full title is *I Dreamt that I Dwelt in Marble Halls.*Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Maria repeated the first verse instead of singing the second verse: "I dreamt that suitors sought my hand, / That knights, upon bended knee, / And with vows no maiden heart could withstand, / They pledg'd their faith to me. / And I dreamt that one of that noble host, / Came forth my heart to claim, / But I also dreamt, which charm'd me most, / That you lov'd me still the same."Return to reference 8

The Dead

Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also. But Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought of that and had converted the bathroom upstairs into a ladies' dressing-room. Miss Kate and Miss Julia were there, gossiping and laughing and fussing, walking after each other to the head of the stairs, peering down over the banisters and calling down to Lily to ask her who had come.

It was always a great affair, the Misses Morkan's annual dance. Everybody who knew them came to it, members of the family, old friends of the family, the members of Julia's choir, any of Kate's pupils that were grown up enough and even some of Mary Jane's pupils too. Never once had it fallen flat. For years and years it had gone off in splendid style as long as anyone could remember; ever since Kate and Julia, after the death of their brother Pat, had left the house in Stoney Batter and taken Mary Jane, their only niece, to live with them in the dark gaunt house on Usher's Island, the upper part of which they had rented from Mr Fulham, the cornfactor[1] on the ground floor. That was a good thirty years ago if it was a day. Mary Jane, who was then a little girl in short clothes, was now the main prop of the household for she had the organ in Haddington Road.[2] She had been through the Academy and gave a pupils' concert every year in the upper room of the Antient Concert Rooms.[3] Many of her pupils belonged to better-class families on the Kingstown and Dalkey line. Old as they were, her aunts also did their share. Julia, though she was quite grey, was still the leading soprano in Adam and Eve's, and Kate, being too feeble to go about much, gave music lessons to

beginners on the old square piano in the back room. Lily, the caretaker's daughter, did housemaid's work for them. Though their life was modest they believed in eating well; the best of everything: diamond-bone sirloins, three-shilling tea and the best bottled stout.[4] But Lily seldom made a mistake in the orders so that she got on well with her three mistresses. They were fussy, that was all. But the only thing they would not stand was back answers.

Of course they had good reason to be fussy on such a night. And then it was long after ten o'clock and yet there was no sign of Gabriel and his wife. Besides they were dreadfully afraid that Freddy Malins might turn up screwed.[5] They would not wish for worlds that any of Mary Jane's pupils should see him under the influence; and when he was like that it was sometimes very hard to manage him. Freddy Malins always came late but they wondered what could be keeping Gabriel: and that was what brought them every two minutes to the banisters to ask Lily had Gabriel or Freddy come.

—O, Mr Conroy, said Lily to Gabriel when she opened the door for him, Miss Kate and Miss Julia thought you were never coming. Good-night, Mrs Conroy.

—I'll engage[6] they did, said Gabriel, but they forget that my wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself.

He stood on the mat, scraping the snow from his goloshes, while Lily led his wife to the foot of the stairs and called out:

—Miss Kate, here's Mrs Conroy.

Kate and Julia came toddling down the dark stairs at once. Both of them kissed Gabriel's wife, said she must be perished alive and asked was Gabriel with her.

—Here I am as right as the mail, Aunt Kate! Go on up. I'll follow, called out Gabriel from the dark.

He continued scraping his feet vigorously while the three women went upstairs, laughing, to the ladies' dressing-room. A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes; and, as the buttons of his overcoat slipped with a squeaking noise through the snow-stiffened

frieze,[7] a cold fragrant air from out-of-doors escaped from crevices and folds.

—Is it snowing again, Mr Conroy? asked Lily.

She had preceded him into the pantry to help him off with his overcoat. Gabriel smiled at the three syllables she had given his surname and glanced at her. She was a slim, growing girl, pale in complexion and with hay-coloured hair. The gas in the pantry made her look still paler. Gabriel had known her when she was a child and used to sit on the lowest step nursing a rag doll.

—Yes, Lily, he answered, and I think we're in for a night of it.

He looked up at the pantry ceiling, which was shaking with the stamping and shuffling of feet on the floor above, listened for a moment to the piano and then glanced at the girl, who was folding his overcoat carefully at the end of a shelf.

—Tell me, Lily, he said in a friendly tone, do you still go to school?

—O no, sir, she answered. I'm done schooling this year and more.

—O, then, said Gabriel gaily, I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?

The girl glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness:

—The men that is now is only all palaver[8] and what they can get out of you.

Gabriel coloured as if he felt he had made a mistake and, without looking at her, kicked off his goloshes and flicked actively with his muffler at his patent-leather shoes.

He was a stout tallish young man. The high colour of his cheeks pushed upwards even to his forehead where it scattered itself in a few formless patches of pale red; and on his hairless face there scintillated restlessly the polished lenses and the bright gilt rims of the glasses which screened his delicate and restless eyes. His glossy black hair was parted in the middle and brushed in a long curve

behind his ears where it curled slightly beneath the groove left by his hat.

When he had flicked lustre into his shoes he stood up and pulled his waistcoat down more tightly on his plump body. Then he took a coin rapidly from his pocket.

—O Lily, he said, thrusting it into her hands, it's Christmas-time, isn't it? Just . . . here's a little. . . .

He walked rapidly towards the door.

—O no, sir! cried the girl, following him. Really, sir, I wouldn't take it.

—Christmas-time! Christmas-time! said Gabriel, almost trotting to the stairs and waving his hand to her in deprecation.

The girl, seeing that he had gained the stairs, called out after him:

—Well, thank you, sir.

He waited outside the drawing-room door until the waltz should finish, listening to the skirts that swept against it and to the shuffling of feet. He was still discomposed by the girl's bitter and sudden retort. It had cast a gloom over him which he tried to dispel by arranging his cuffs and the bows of his tie. Then he took from his waistcoat pocket a little paper and glanced at the headings he had made for his speech. He was undecided about the lines from Robert Browning for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation that they could recognise from Shakespeare or from the Melodies[9] would be better. The indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his. He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry. He had taken up a wrong tone. His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure.

Just then his aunts and his wife came out of the ladies' dressing-room. His aunts were two small plainly dressed old women. Aunt Julia was an inch or so the taller. Her hair, drawn low over the tops

of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face. Though she was stout in build and stood erect her slow eyes and parted lips gave her the appearance of a woman who did not know where she was or where she was going. Aunt Kate was more vivacious. Her face, healthier than her sister's, was all puckers and creases, like a shrivelled red apple, and her hair, braided in the same old-fashioned way, had not lost its ripe nut colour.

They both kissed Gabriel frankly. He was their favourite nephew, the son of their dead elder sister, Ellen, who had married T. J. Conroy of the Port and Docks.[1]

—Gretta tells me you're not going to take a cab back to Monkstown tonight, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate.

—No, said Gabriel, turning to his wife, we had quite enough of that last year, hadn't we? Don't you remember, Aunt Kate, what a cold Gretta got out of it? Cab windows rattling all the way, and the east wind blowing in after we passed Mention. Very jolly it was. Gretta caught a dreadful cold.

Aunt Kate frowned severely and nodded her head at every word.

—Quite right, Gabriel, quite right, she said. You can't be too careful.

—But as for Gretta there, said Gabriel, she'd walk home in the snow if she were let.

Mrs Conroy laughed.

—Don't mind him, Aunt Kate, she said. He's really an awful bother, what with green shades for Tom's eyes at night and making him do the dumb-bells, and forcing Eva to eat the stirabout.[2] The poor child! And she simply hates the sight of it! . . . O, but you'll never guess what he makes me wear now!

She broke out into a peal of laughter and glanced at her husband, whose admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to her face and hair. The two aunts laughed heartily too, for Gabriel's solicitude was a standing joke with them.

—Goloshes! said Mrs Conroy. That's the latest. Whenever it's wet underfoot I must put on my goloshes. To-night even he wanted me

to put them on, but I wouldn't. The next thing he'll buy me will be a diving suit.

Gabriel laughed nervously and patted his tie reassuringly while Aunt Kate nearly doubled herself, so heartily did she enjoy the joke. The smile soon faded from Aunt Julia's face and her mirthless eyes were directed towards her nephew's face. After a pause she asked:

—And what are goloshes, Gabriel?

—Goloshes, Julia! exclaimed her sister. Goodness me, don't you know what goloshes are? You wear them over your . . . over your boots, Gretta, isn't it?

—Yes, said Mrs Conroy. Guttapercha[3] things. We both have a pair now. Gabriel says everyone wears them on the continent.

—O, on the continent, murmured Aunt Julia, nodding her head slowly.

Gabriel knitted his brows and said, as if he were slightly angered:

—It's nothing very wonderful but Gretta thinks it very funny because she says the word reminds her of Christy Minstrels.[4]

—But tell me, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate, with brisk tact. Of course, you've seen about the room. Gretta was saying . . .

—O, the room is all right, replied Gabriel. I've taken one in the Gresham.[5]

—To be sure, said Aunt Kate, by far the best thing to do. And the children, Gretta, you're not anxious about them?

—O, for one night, said Mrs Conroy. Besides, Bessie will look after them.

—To be sure, said Aunt Kate again. What a comfort it is to have a girl like that, one you can depend on! There's that Lily, I'm sure I don't know what has come over her lately. She's not the girl she was at all.

Gabriel was about to ask his aunt some questions on this point but she broke off suddenly to gaze after her sister who had wandered down the stairs and was craning her neck over the banisters.

—Now, I ask you, she said, almost testily, where is Julia going? Julia! Julia! Where are you going?

Julia, who had gone halfway down one flight, came back and announced blandly:

—Here's Freddy.

At the same moment a clapping of hands and a final flourish of the pianist told that the waltz had ended. The drawing-room door was opened from within and some couples came out. Aunt Kate drew Gabriel aside hurriedly and whispered into his ear:

—Slip down, Gabriel, like a good fellow and see if he's all right, and don't let him up if he's screwed. I'm sure he's screwed. I'm sure he is.

Gabriel went to the stairs and listened over the banisters. He could hear two persons talking in the pantry. Then he recognised Freddy Malins' laugh. He went down the stairs noisily.

—It's such a relief, said Aunt Kate to Mrs Conroy, that Gabriel is here. I always feel easier in my mind when he's here. . . . Julia, there's Miss Daly and Miss Power will take some refreshment. Thanks for your beautiful waltz, Miss Daly. It made lovely time.

A tall wizen-faced man, with a stiff grizzled moustache and swarthy skin, who was passing out with his partner said:

—And may we have some refreshment, too, Miss Morkan?

—Julia, said Aunt Kate summarily, and here's Mr Browne and Miss Furlong. Take them in, Julia, with Miss Daly and Miss Power.

—I'm the man for the ladies, said Mr Browne, pursing his lips until his moustache bristled and smiling in all his wrinkles. You know, Miss Morkan, the reason they are so fond of me is—

He did not finish his sentence, but, seeing that Aunt Kate was out of earshot, at once led the three young ladies into the back room. The middle of the room was occupied by two square tables placed end to end, and on these Aunt Julia and the caretaker were straightening and smoothing a large cloth. On the sideboard were arrayed dishes and plates, and glasses and bundles of knives and forks and spoons. The top of the closed square piano served also as

a sideboard for viands and sweets. At a smaller sideboard in one corner two young men were standing, drinking hop-bitters.

Mr Browne led his charges thither and invited them all, in jest, to some ladies' punch, hot, strong and sweet. As they said they never took anything strong he opened three bottles of lemonade for them. Then he asked one of the young men to move aside, and, taking hold of the decanter, filled out for himself a goodly measure of whisky. The young men eyed him respectfully while he took a trial sip.

—God help me, he said, smiling, it's the doctor's orders.

His wizened face broke into a broader smile, and the three young ladies laughed in musical echo to his pleasantry, swaying their bodies to and fro, with nervous jerks of their shoulders. The boldest said:

—O, now, Mr Browne, I'm sure the doctor never ordered anything of the kind.

Mr Browne took another sip of his whisky and said, with sidling mimicry:

—Well, you see, I'm like the famous Mrs Cassidy, who is reported to have said: *Now, Mary Grimes, if I don't take it, make me take it, for I feel I want it.*

His hot face had leaned forward a little too confidentially and he had assumed a very low Dublin accent so that the young ladies, with one instinct, received his speech in silence. Miss Furlong, who was one of Mary Jane's pupils, asked Miss Daly what was the name of the pretty waltz she had played; and Mr Browne, seeing that he was ignored, turned promptly to the two young men who were more appreciative.

A red-faced young woman, dressed in pansy, came into the room, excitedly clapping her hands and crying:

—Quadrilles.[6] Quadrilles!

Close on her heels came Aunt Kate, crying:

—Two gentlemen and three ladies, Mary Jane!

—O, here's Mr Bergin and Mr Kerrigan, said Mary Jane. Mr Kerrigan, will you take Miss Power? Miss Furlong, may I get you a partner, Mr Bergin. O, that'll just do now.

—Three ladies, Mary Jane, said Aunt Kate.

The two young gentlemen asked the ladies if they might have the pleasure, and Mary Jane turned to Miss Daly.

—O, Miss Daly, you're really awfully good, after playing for the last two dances, but really we're so short of ladies to-night.

—I don't mind in the least, Miss Morkan.

—But I've a nice partner for you, Mr Bartell D'Arcy, the tenor. I'll get him to sing later on. All Dublin is raving about him.

—Lovely voice, lovely voice! said Aunt Kate.

As the piano had twice begun the prelude to the first figure Mary Jane led her recruits quickly from the room. They had hardly gone when Aunt Julia wandered slowly into the room, looking behind her at something.

—What is the matter, Julia? asked Aunt Kate anxiously. Who is it?

Julia, who was carrying in a column of table-napkins, turned to her sister and said, simply, as if the question had surprised her:

—It's only Freddy, Kate, and Gabriel with him.

In fact right behind her Gabriel could be seen piloting Freddy Malins across the landing. The latter, a young man of about forty, was of Gabriel's size and build, with very round shoulders. His face was fleshy and pallid, touched with colour only at the thick hanging lobes of his ears and at the wide wings of his nose. He had coarse features, a blunt nose, a convex and receding brow, tumid and protruded lips. His heavy-lidded eyes and the disorder of his scanty hair made him look sleepy. He was laughing heartily in a high key at a story which he had been telling Gabriel on the stairs and at the same time rubbing the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into his left eye.

—Good-evening, Freddy, said Aunt Julia.

Freddy Malins bade the Misses Morkan good-evening in what seemed an offhand fashion by reason of the habitual catch in his

voice and then, seeing that Mr Browne was grinning at him from the sideboard, crossed the room on rather shaky legs and began to repeat in an undertone the story he had just told to Gabriel.

—He's not so bad, is he? said Aunt Kate to Gabriel.

Gabriel's brows were dark but he raised them quickly and answered:

—O no, hardly noticeable.

—Now, isn't he a terrible fellow! she said. And his poor mother made him take the pledge[7] on New Year's Eve. But come on, Gabriel, into the drawing-room.

Before leaving the room with Gabriel she signalled to Mr Browne by frowning and shaking her forefinger in warning to and fro. Mr Browne nodded in answer and, when she had gone, said to Freddy Malins:

—Now, then, Teddy, I'm going to fill you out a good glass of lemonade just to buck you up.

Freddy Malins, who was nearing the climax of his story, waved the offer aside impatiently but Mr Browne, having first called Freddy Malins' attention to a disarray in his dress, filled out and handed him a full glass of lemonade. Freddy Malins' left hand accepted the glass mechanically, his right hand being engaged in the mechanical readjustment of his dress. Mr Browne, whose face was once more wrinkling with mirth, poured out for himself a glass of whisky while Freddy Malins exploded, before he had well reached the climax of his story, in a kink of high-pitched bronchitic laughter and, setting down his untasted and overflowing glass, began to rub the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into his left eye, repeating words of his last phrase as well as his fit of laughter would allow him.

Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages, to the hushed drawing-room. He liked music but the piece she was playing had no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners, though they had begged Mary Jane to play something.

Four young men, who had come from the refreshment-room to stand in the door-way at the sound of the piano, had gone away quietly in couples after a few minutes. The only persons who seemed to follow the music were Mary Jane herself, her hands racing along the key-board or lifted from it at the pauses like those of a priestess in momentary imprecation, and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to turn the page.

Gabriel's eyes, irritated by the floor, which glittered with beeswax under the heavy chandelier, wandered to the wall above the piano. A picture of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* hung there and beside it was a picture of the two murdered princes in the Tower[8] which Aunt Julia had worked in red, blue and brown wools when she was a girl. Probably in the school they had gone to as girls that kind of work had been taught, for one year his mother had worked for him as a birthday present a waistcoat of purple tabinet,[9] with little foxes' heads upon it, lined with brown satin and having round mulberry buttons. It was strange that his mother had had no musical talent though Aunt Kate used to call her the brains carrier of the Morkan family. Both she and Julia had always seemed a little proud of their serious and matronly sister. Her photograph stood before the pierglass.[1] She held an open book on her knees and was pointing out something in it to Constantine who, dressed in a man-o'-war suit,[2] lay at her feet. It was she who had chosen the names for her sons for she was very sensible of the dignity of family life. Thanks to her, Constantine was now senior curate[3] in Balbriggan and, thanks to her, Gabriel himself had taken his degree in the Royal University. A shadow passed over his face as he remembered her sullen opposition to his marriage. Some slighting phrases she had used still rankled in his memory; she had once spoken of Gretta as being country cute and that was not true of Gretta at all. It was Gretta who had nursed her during all her last long illness in their house at Monkstown.

He knew that Mary Jane must be near the end of her piece for she was playing again the opening melody with runs of scales after every bar and while he waited for the end the resentment died down

in his heart. The piece ended with a trill of octaves in the treble and a final deep octave in the bass. Great applause greeted Mary Jane as, blushing and rolling up her music nervously, she escaped from the room. The most vigorous clapping came from the four young men in the doorway who had gone away to the refreshment-room at the beginning of the piece but had come back when the piano had stopped.

Lancers[4] were arranged. Gabriel found himself partnered with Miss Ivors. She was a frank-mannered talkative young lady, with a freckled face and prominent brown eyes. She did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device.

When they had taken their places she said abruptly:

—I have a crow to pluck with you.

—With me? said Gabriel.

She nodded her head gravely.

—What is it? asked Gabriel, smiling at her solemn manner.

—Who is G. C.? answered Miss Ivors, turning her eyes upon him.

Gabriel coloured and was about to knit his brows, as if he did not understand, when she said bluntly:

—O, innocent Amy! I have found out that you write for *The Daily Express.* Now, aren't you ashamed of yourself?

—Why should I be ashamed of myself? asked Gabriel, blinking his eyes and trying to smile.

—Well, I'm ashamed of you, said Miss Ivors frankly. To say you'd write for a rag like that. I didn't think you were a West Briton.[5]

A look of perplexity appeared on Gabriel's face. It was true that he wrote a literary column every Wednesday in *The Daily Express*, for which he was paid fifteen shillings. But that did not make him a West Briton surely. The books he received for review were almost more welcome than the paltry cheque. He loved to feel the covers and turn over the pages of newly printed books. Nearly every day when his teaching in the college was ended he used to wander down the quays to the second-hand booksellers, to Hickey's on Bachelor's

Walk, to Webb's, or Massey's on Aston's Quay, or to O'Clohissey's in the by-street. He did not know how to meet her charge. He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her. He continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books.

When their turn to cross had come he was still perplexed and inattentive. Miss Ivors promptly took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft friendly tone:

—Of course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now.

When they were together again she spoke of the University question[6] and Gabriel felt more at ease. A friend of hers had shown her his review of Browning's poems. That was how she had found out the secret: but she liked the review immensely. Then she said suddenly:

—O, Mr Conroy, will you come for an excursion to the Aran Isles[7] this summer? We're going to stay there a whole month. It will be splendid out in the Atlantic. You ought to come. Mr Clancy is coming, and Mr Kilkelly and Kathleen Kearney. It would be splendid for Gretta too if she'd come. She's from Connach,[8] isn't she?

—Her people are, said Gabriel shortly.

—But you will come, won't you? said Miss Ivors, laying her warm hand eagerly on his arm.

—The fact is, said Gabriel, I have already arranged to go—

—Go where? asked Miss Ivors.

—Well, you know, every year I go for a cycling tour with some fellows and so—

—But where? asked Miss Ivors.

—Well, we usually go to France or Belgium or perhaps Germany, said Gabriel awkwardly.

—And why do you go to France and Belgium, said Miss Ivors, instead of visiting your own land?

—Well, said Gabriel, it's partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change.

—And haven't you your own language to keep in touch with—Irish? asked Miss Ivors.

—Well, said Gabriel, if it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language.

Their neighbours had turned to listen to the cross-examination. Gabriel glanced right and left nervously and tried to keep his good humour under the ordeal which was making a blush invade his forehead.

—And haven't you your own land to visit, continued Miss Ivors, that you know nothing of, your own people, and your own country?

—O, to tell you the truth, retorted Gabriel suddenly, I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!

—Why? asked Miss Ivors.

Gabriel did not answer for his retort had heated him.

—Why? repeated Miss Ivors.

They had to go visiting together and, as he had not answered her, Miss Ivors said warmly:

—Of course, you've no answer.

Gabriel tried to cover his agitation by taking part in the dance with great energy. He avoided her eyes for he had seen a sour expression on her face. But when they met in the long chain he was surprised to feel his hand firmly pressed. She looked at him from under her brows for a moment quizzically[9] until he smiled. Then, just as the chain was about to start again, she stood on tiptoe and whispered into his ear:

—West Briton!

When the lancers were over Gabriel went away to a remote corner of the room where Freddy Malins' mother was sitting. She was a stout feeble old woman with white hair. Her voice had a catch in it like her son's and she stuttered slightly. She had been told that Freddy had come and that he was nearly all right. Gabriel asked her whether she had had a good crossing. She lived with her married

daughter in Glasgow and came to Dublin on a visit once a year. She answered placidly that she had had a beautiful crossing and that the captain had been most attentive to her. She spoke also of the beautiful house her daughter kept in Glasgow, and of all the nice friends they had there. While her tongue rambled on Gabriel tried to banish from his mind all memory of the unpleasant incident with Miss Ivors. Of course the girl or woman, or whatever she was, was an enthusiast but there was a time for all things. Perhaps he ought not to have answered her like that. But she had no right to call him a West Briton before people, even in joke. She had tried to make him ridiculous before people, heckling him and staring at him with her rabbit's eyes.

He saw his wife making her way towards him through the waltzing couples. When she reached him she said into his ear:

—Gabriel, Aunt Kate wants to know won't you carve the goose as usual. Miss Daly will carve the ham and I'll do the pudding.

—All right, said Gabriel.

—She's sending in the younger ones first as soon as this waltz is over so that we'll have the table to ourselves.

—Were you dancing? asked Gabriel.

—Of course I was. Didn't you see me? What words had you with Molly Ivors?

—No words. Why? Did she say so?

—Something like that. I'm trying to get that Mr D'Arcy to sing. He's full of conceit, I think.

—There were no words, said Gabriel moodily, only she wanted me to go for a trip to the west of Ireland and I said I wouldn't.

His wife clasped her hands excitedly and gave a little jump.

—O, do go, Gabriel, she cried. I'd love to see Galway again.

—You can go if you like, said Gabriel coldly.

She looked at him for a moment, then turned to Mrs Malins and said:

—There's a nice husband for you, Mrs Malins.

While she was threading her way back across the room Mrs Malins, without adverting to the interruption, went on to tell Gabriel what beautiful places there were in Scotland and beautiful scenery. Her son-in-law brought them every year to the lakes and they used to go fishing. Her son-in-law was a splendid fisher. One day he caught a fish, a beautiful big big fish, and the man in the hotel boiled it for their dinner.

Gabriel hardly heard what she said. Now that supper was coming near he began to think again about his speech and about the quotation. When he saw Freddy Malins coming across the room to visit his mother Gabriel left the chair free for him and retired into the embrasure[1] of the window. The room had already cleared and from the back room came the clatter of plates and knives. Those who still remained in the drawing-room seemed tired of dancing and were conversing quietly in little groups. Gabriel's warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument.[2] How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!

He ran over the headings of his speech: Irish hospitality, sad memories, the Three Graces, Paris,[3] the quotation from Browning. He repeated to himself a phrase he had written in his review: *One feels that one is listening to a thought-tormented music.* Miss Ivors had praised the review. Was she sincere? Had she really any life of her own behind all her propagandism? There had never been any ill-feeling between them until that night. It unnerved him to think that she would be at the supper-table, looking up at him while he spoke with her critical quizzing eyes. Perhaps she would not be sorry to see him fail in his speech. An idea came into his mind and gave him courage. He would say, alluding to Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia: *Ladies and Gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had its faults but for my part I think it had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very*

serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us seems to me to lack. Very good: that was one for Miss Ivors. What did he care that his aunts were only two ignorant old women?

A murmur in the room attracted his attention. Mr Browne was advancing from the door, gallantly escorting Aunt Julia, who leaned upon his arm, smiling and hanging her head. An irregular musketry of applause escorted her also as far as the piano and then, as Mary Jane seated herself on the stool, and Aunt Julia, no longer smiling, half turned so as to pitch her voice fairly into the room, gradually ceased. Gabriel recognised the prelude. It was that of an old song of Aunt Julia's—*Arrayed for the Bridal.*[4] Her voice, strong and clear in tone, attacked with great spirit the runs which embellish the air and though she sang very rapidly she did not miss even the smallest of the grace notes. To follow the voice, without looking at the singer's face, was to feel and share the excitement of swift and secure flight. Gabriel applauded loudly with all the others at the close of the song and loud applause was borne in from the invisible supper-table. It sounded so genuine that a little colour struggled into Aunt Julia's face as she bent to replace in the music-stand the old leather-bound song-book that had her initials on the cover. Freddy Malins, who had listened with his head perched sideways to hear her better, was still applauding when everyone else had ceased and talking animatedly to his mother who nodded her head gravely and slowly in acquiescence. At last, when he could clap no more, he stood up suddenly and hurried across the room to Aunt Julia whose hand he seized and held in both his hands, shaking it when words failed him or the catch in his voice proved too much for him.

—I was just telling my mother, he said, I never heard you sing so well, never. No, I never heard your voice so good as it is to-night. Now! Would you believe that now? That's the truth. Upon my word and honour that's the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh and so . . . so clear and fresh, never.

Aunt Julia smiled broadly and murmured something about compliments as she released her hand from his grasp. Mr Browne extended his open hand towards her and said to those who were

near him in the manner of a showman introducing a prodigy to an audience:

—Miss Julia Morkan, my latest discovery!

He was laughing very heartily at this himself when Freddy Malins turned to him and said:

—Well, Browne, if you're serious you might make a worse discovery. All I can say is I never heard her sing half so well as long as I am coming here. And that's the honest truth.

—Neither did I, said Mr Browne. I think her voice has greatly improved.

Aunt Julia shrugged her shoulders and said with meek pride:

—Thirty years ago I hadn't a bad voice as voices go.

—I often told Julia, said Aunt Kate emphatically, that she was simply thrown away in that choir. But she never would be said by me.

She turned as if to appeal to the good sense of the others against a refractory child while Aunt Julia gazed in front of her, a vague smile of reminiscence playing on her face.

—No, continued Aunt Kate, she wouldn't be said or led by anyone, slaving there in that choir night and day, night and day. Six o'clock on Christmas morning! And all for what?

—Well, isn't it for the honour of God, Aunt Kate? asked Mary Jane, twisting round on the piano-stool and smiling.

Aunt Kate turned fiercely on her niece and said:

—I know all about the honour of God, Mary Jane, but I think it's not at all honourable for the pope to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there all their lives and put little whipper-snappers of boys over their heads. I suppose it is for the good of the Church if the pope does it. But it's not just, Mary Jane, and it's not right.

She had worked herself into a passion and would have continued in defence of her sister for it was a sore subject with her but Mary Jane, seeing that all the dancers had come back, intervened pacifically:

—Now, Aunt Kate, you're giving scandal to Mr Browne who is of the other persuasion.[5]

Aunt Kate turned to Mr Browne, who was grinning at this allusion to his religion, and said hastily:

—O, I don't question the pope's being right. I'm only a stupid old woman and I wouldn't presume to do such a thing. But there's such a thing as common everyday politeness and gratitude. And if I were in Julia's place I'd tell that Father Healy straight up to his face . . .

—And besides, Aunt Kate, said Mary Jane, we really are all hungry and when we are hungry we are all very quarrelsome.

—And when we are thirsty we are also quarrelsome, added Mr Browne.

—So that we had better go to supper, said Mary Jane, and finish the discussion afterwards.

On the landing outside the drawing-room Gabriel found his wife and Mary Jane trying to persuade Miss Ivors to stay for supper. But Miss Ivors, who had put on her hat and was buttoning her cloak, would not stay. She did not feel in the least hungry and she had already overstayed her time.

—But only for ten minutes, Molly, said Mrs Conroy. That won't delay you.

—To take a pick itself, said Mary Jane, after all your dancing.

—I really couldn't, said Miss Ivors.

—I am afraid you didn't enjoy yourself at all, said Mary Jane hopelessly.

—Ever so much, I assure you, said Miss Ivors, but you really must let me run off now.

—But how can you get home? asked Mrs Conroy.

—O, it's only two steps up the quay.

Gabriel hesitated a moment and said:

—If you will allow me, Miss Ivors, I'll see you home if you really are obliged to go.

But Miss Ivors broke away from them.

—I won't hear of it, she cried. For goodness sake go in to your suppers and don't mind me. I'm quite well able to take care of myself.

—Well, you're the comical girl, Molly, said Mrs Conroy frankly.

—*Beannacht libh,*[6] cried Miss Ivors, with a laugh, as she ran down the staircase.

Mary Jane gazed after her, a moody puzzled expression on her face, while Mrs Conroy leaned over the banisters to listen for the hall-door. Gabriel asked himself was he the cause of her abrupt departure. But she did not seem to be in ill humour: she had gone away laughing. He stared blankly down the staircase.

At that moment Aunt Kate came toddling out of the supper-room, almost wringing her hands in despair.

—Where is Gabriel? she cried. Where on earth is Gabriel? There's everyone waiting in there, stage to let, and nobody to carve the goose!

—Here I am, Aunt Kate! cried Gabriel, with sudden animation, ready to carve a flock of geese, if necessary.

A fat brown goose lay at one end of the table and at the other end, on a bed of creased paper strewn with sprigs of parsley, lay a great ham, stripped of its outer skin and peppered over with crust crumbs, a neat paper frill round its shin and beside this was a round of spiced beef. Between these rival ends ran parallel lines of side-dishes: two little minsters of jelly, red and yellow; a shallow dish full of blocks of blancmange[7] and red jam, a large green leaf-shaped dish with a stalk-shaped handle, on which lay bunches of purple raisins and peeled almonds, a companion dish on which lay a solid rectangle of Smyrna figs, a dish of custard topped with grated nutmeg, a small bowl full of chocolates and sweets wrapped in gold and silver papers and a glass vase in which stood some tall celery stalks. In the centre of the table there stood, as sentries to a fruit-stand which upheld a pyramid of oranges and American apples, two squat old-fashioned decanters of cut glass, one containing port and the other dark sherry. On the closed square piano a pudding in a huge yellow dish lay in waiting and behind it were three squads of

bottles of stout and ale and minerals, drawn up according to the colours of their uniforms, the first two black, with brown and red labels, the third and smallest squad white, with transverse green sashes.

Gabriel took his seat boldly at the head of the table and, having looked to the edge of the carver, plunged his fork firmly into the goose. He felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table.

—Miss Furlong, what shall I send you? he asked. A wing or a slice of the breast?

—Just a small slice of the breast.

—Miss Higgins, what for you?

—O, anything at all, Mr Conroy.

While Gabriel and Miss Daly exchanged plates of goose and plates of ham and spiced beef Lily went from guest to guest with a dish of hot floury potatoes wrapped in a white napkin. This was Mary Jane's idea and she had also suggested apple sauce for the goose but Aunt Kate had said that plain roast goose without apple sauce had always been good enough for her and she hoped she might never eat worse. Mary Jane waited on her pupils and saw that they got the best slices and Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia opened and carried across from the piano bottles of stout and ale for the gentlemen and bottles of minerals for the ladies. There was a great deal of confusion and laughter and noise, the noise of orders and counter-orders, of knives and forks, of corks and glass-stoppers. Gabriel began to carve second helpings as soon as he had finished the first round without serving himself. Everyone protested loudly so that he compromised by taking a long draught of stout for he had found the carving hot work. Mary Jane settled down quietly to her supper but Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia were still toddling round the table, walking on each other's heels, getting in each other's way and giving each other unheeded orders. Mr Browne begged of them to sit down and eat their suppers and so did Gabriel but they said there was time enough so that, at last, Freddy Malins stood up and,

capturing Aunt Kate, plumped her down on her chair amid general laughter.

When everyone had been well served Gabriel said, smiling:

—Now, if anyone wants a little more of what vulgar people call stuffing let him or her speak.

A chorus of voices invited him to begin his own supper and Lily came forward with three potatoes which she had reserved for him.

—Very well, said Gabriel amiably, as he took another preparatory draught, kindly forget my existence, ladies and gentlemen, for a few minutes.

He set to his supper and took no part in the conversation with which the table covered Lily's removal of the plates. The subject of talk was the opera company which was then at the Theatre Royal. Mr Bartell D'Arcy, the tenor, a dark-complexioned young man with a smart moustache, praised very highly the leading contralto of the company but Miss Furlong thought she had a rather vulgar style of production. Freddy Malins said there was a negro chieftain singing in the second part of the Gaiety pantomime who had one of the finest tenor voices he had ever heard.

—Have you heard him? he asked Mr Bartell D'Arcy across the table.

—No, answered Mr Bartell D'Arcy carelessly.

—Because, Freddy Malins explained, now I'd be curious to hear your opinion of him. I think he has a grand voice.

—It takes Teddy to find out the really good things, said Mr Browne familiarly to the table.

—And why couldn't he have a voice too? asked Freddy Malins sharply. Is it because he's only a black?

Nobody answered this question and Mary Jane led the table back to the legitimate opera. One of her pupils had given her a pass for *Mignon*.[8] Of course it was very fine, she said, but it made her think of poor Georgina Burns. Mr Browne could go back farther still, to the old Italian companies that used to come to Dublin—Tietjens, Ilma de Murzka, Campanini, the great Trebelli, Giuglini, Ravelli, Aramburo.

Those were the days, he said, when there was something like singing to be heard in Dublin. He told too of how the top gallery of the old Royal used to be packed night after night, of how one night an Italian tenor had sung five encores to *Let Me Like a Soldier Fall*,[9] introducing a high C every time, and of how the gallery boys would sometimes in their enthusiasm unyoke the horses from the carriage of some great *prima donna* and pull her themselves through the streets to her hotel. Why did they never play the grand old operas now, he asked, *Dinorah*, *Lucrezia Borgia?*[1] Because they could not get the voices to sing them: that was why.

—O, well, said Mr Bartell D'Arcy, I presume there are as good singers today as there were then.

—Where are they? asked Mr Browne defiantly.

—In London, Paris, Milan, said Mr Bartell d'Arcy warmly. I suppose Caruso[2] for example, is quite as good, if not better than any of the men you have mentioned.

—Maybe so, said Mr Browne. But I may tell you I doubt it strongly.

—O, I'd give anything to hear Caruso sing, said Mary Jane.

—For me, said Aunt Kate, who had been picking a bone, there was only one tenor. To please me, I mean. But I suppose none of you ever heard of him.

—Who was he, Miss Morkan? asked Mr Bartell D'Arcy politely.

—His name, said Aunt Kate, was Parkinson. I heard him when he was in his prime and I think he had then the purest tenor voice that was ever put into a man's throat.

—Strange, said Mr Bartell d'Arcy. I never even heard of him.

—Yes, yes, Miss Morkan is right, said Mr Browne. I remember hearing of old Parkinson but he's too far back for me.

—A beautiful pure sweet mellow English tenor, said Aunt Kate with enthusiasm.

Gabriel having finished, the huge pudding was transferred to the table. The clatter of forks and spoons began again. Gabriel's wife served out spoonfuls of the pudding and passed the plates down the

table. Midway down they were held up by Mary Jane, who replenished them with raspberry or orange jelly or with blancmange and jam. The pudding was of Aunt Julia's making and she received praises for it from all quarters. She herself said that it was not quite brown enough.

—Well, I hope, Miss Morkan, said Mr Browne, that I'm brown enough for you because, you know, I'm all brown.

All the gentlemen, except Gabriel, ate some of the pudding out of compliment to Aunt Julia. As Gabriel never ate sweets the celery had been left for him. Freddy Malins also took a stalk of celery and ate it with his pudding. He had been told that celery was a capital thing for the blood and he was just then under doctor's care. Mrs Malins, who had been silent all through the supper, said that her son was going down to Mount Melleray in a week or so. The table then spoke of Mount Melleray, how bracing the air was down there, how hospitable the monks were and how they never asked for a penny-piece from their guests.

—And do you mean to say, asked Mr Browne incredulously, that a chap can go down there and put up there as if it were a hotel and live on the fat of the land and then come away without paying a farthing?

—O, most people give some donation to the monastery when they leave, said Mary Jane.

—I wish we had an institution like that in our Church, said Mr Browne candidly.

He was astonished to hear that the monks never spoke, got up at two in the morning and slept in their coffins. He asked what they did it for.

—That's the rule of the order, said Aunt Kate firmly.

—Yes, but why? asked Mr Browne.

Aunt Kate repeated that it was the rule, that was all. Mr Browne still seemed not to understand. Freddy Malins explained to him, as best he could, that the monks were trying to make up for the sins committed by all the sinners in the outside world. The explanation was not very clear for Mr Browne grinned and said:

—I like that idea very much but wouldn't a comfortable spring bed do them as well as a coffin?

—The coffin, said Mary Jane, is to remind them of their last end.

As the subject had grown lugubrious it was buried in a silence of the table during which Mrs Malins could be heard saying to her neighbour in an indistinct undertone:

—They are very good men, the monks, very pious men.

The raisins and almonds and figs and apples and oranges and chocolates and sweets were now passed about the table and Aunt Julia invited all the guests to have either port or sherry. At first Mr Bartell D'Arcy refused to take either but one of his neighbours nudged him and whispered something to him upon which he allowed his glass to be filled. Gradually as the last glasses were being filled the conversation ceased. A pause followed, broken only by the noise of the wine and by unsettlings of chairs. The Misses Morkan, all three, looked down at the tablecloth. Someone coughed once or twice and then a few gentlemen patted the table gently as a signal for silence. The silence came and Gabriel pushed back his chair and stood up.

The patting at once grew louder in encouragement and then ceased altogether. Gabriel leaned his ten trembling fingers on the tablecloth and smiled nervously at the company. Meeting a row of upturned faces he raised his eyes to the chandelier. The piano was playing a waltz tune and he could hear the skirts sweeping against the drawing-room door. People, perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music. The air was pure there. In the distance lay the park where the trees were weighted with snow. The Wellington Monument wore a gleaming cap of snow that flashed westward over the white field of Fifteen Acres.

He began:

—Ladies and Gentlemen.

—It has fallen to my lot this evening, as in years past, to perform a very pleasing task but a task for which I am afraid my poor powers as a speaker are all too inadequate.

—No, no! said Mr Browne.

—But, however that may be, I can only ask you to-night to take the will for the deed and to lend me your attention for a few moments while I endeavour to express to you in words what my feelings are on this occasion.

—Ladies and Gentlemen. It is not the first time that we have gathered together under this hospitable roof, around this hospitable board. It is not the first time that we have been the recipients—or perhaps, I had better say, the victims—of the hospitality of certain good ladies.

He made a circle in the air with his arm and paused. Everyone laughed or smiled at Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia and Mary Jane who all turned crimson with pleasure. Gabriel went on more boldly:

—I feel more strongly with every recurring year that our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its hospitality. It is a tradition that is unique as far as my experience goes (and I have visited not a few places abroad) among the modern nations. Some would say, perhaps, that with us it is rather a failing than anything to be boasted of. But granted even that, it is, to my mind, a princely failing, and one that I trust will long be cultivated among us. Of one thing, at least, I am sure. As long as this one roof shelters the good ladies aforesaid—and I wish from my heart it may do so for many and many a long year to come—the tradition of genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality, which our forefathers have handed down to us and which we in turn must hand down to our descendants, is still alive among us.

A hearty murmur of assent ran round the table. It shot through Gabriel's mind that Miss Ivors was not there and that she had gone away discourteously: and he said with confidence in himself:

—Ladies and Gentlemen.

—A new generation is growing up in our midst, a generation actuated by new ideas and new principles. It is serious and enthusiastic for these new ideas and its enthusiasm, even when it is misdirected, is, I believe, in the main sincere. But we are living in a

sceptical and, if I may use the phrase, a thought-tormented age: and sometimes I fear that this new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day. Listening to-night to the names of all those great singers of the past it seemed to me, I must confess, that we were living in a less spacious age. Those days might, without exaggeration, be called spacious days: and if they are gone beyond recall let us hope, at least, that in gatherings such as this we shall still speak of them with pride and affection, still cherish in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die.

—Hear, hear! said Mr Browne loudly.

—But yet, continued Gabriel, his voice falling into a softer inflection, there are always in gatherings such as this sadder thoughts that will recur to our minds: thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces that we miss here to-night. Our path through life is strewn with many such sad memories: and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living. We have all of us living duties and living affections which claim, and rightly claim, our strenuous endeavours.

—Therefore, I will not linger on the past. I will not let any gloomy moralising intrude upon us here to-night. Here we are gathered together for a brief moment from the bustle and rush of our everyday routine. We are met here as friends, in the spirit of good-fellowship, as colleagues, also to a certain extent, in the true spirit of *camaraderie*, and as the guests of—what shall I call them?—the Three Graces of the Dublin musical world.

The table burst into applause and laughter at this sally. Aunt Julia vainly asked each of her neighbours in turn to tell her what Gabriel had said.

—He says we are the Three Graces,[3] Aunt Julia, said Mary Jane.

Aunt Julia did not understand but she looked up, smiling, at Gabriel, who continued in the same vein:

—Ladies and Gentlemen.

—I will not attempt to play to-night the part that Paris played on another occasion. I will not attempt to choose between them. The task would be an invidious one and one beyond my poor powers. For when I view them in turn, whether it be our chief hostess herself, whose good heart, whose too good heart, has become a byword with all who know her, or her sister, who seems to be gifted with perennial youth and whose singing must have been a surprise and a revelation to us all to-night, or, last but not least, when I consider our youngest hostess, talented, cheerful, hard-working and the best of nieces, I confess, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I do not know to which of them I should award the prize.

Gabriel glanced down at his aunts and, seeing the large smile on Aunt Julia's face and the tears which had risen to Aunt Kate's eyes, hastened to his close. He raised his glass of port gallantly, while every member of the company fingered a glass expectantly, and said loudly:

—Let us toast them all three together. Let us drink to their health, wealth, long life, happiness and prosperity and may they long continue to hold the proud and self-won position which they hold in their profession and the position of honour and affection which they hold in our hearts.

All the guests stood up, glass in hand, and, turning towards the three seated ladies, sang in unison, with Mr Browne as leader:

For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
Which nobody can deny.

Aunt Kate was making frank use of her handkerchief and even Aunt Julia seemed moved. Freddy Malins beat time with his pudding-fork and the singers turned towards one another, as if in melodious conference, while they sang, with emphasis:

Unless he tells a lie,

Unless he tells a lie.

Then, turning once more towards their hostesses, they sang:

For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
Which nobody can deny.

The acclamation which followed was taken up beyond the door of the supper-room by many of the other guests and renewed time after time, Freddy Malins acting as officer with his fork on high.

The piercing morning air came into the hall where they were standing so that Aunt Kate said:

—Close the door, somebody. Mrs Malins will get her death of cold.

—Browne is out there, Aunt Kate, said Mary Jane.

—Browne is everywhere, said Aunt Kate, lowering her voice.

Mary Jane laughed at her tone.

—Really, she said archly, he is very attentive.

—He has been laid on here like the gas, said Aunt Kate in the same tone, all during the Christmas.

She laughed herself this time good-humouredly and then added quickly:

—But tell him to come in, Mary Jane, and close the door. I hope to goodness he didn't hear me.

At that moment the hall-door was opened and Mr Browne came in from the doorstep, laughing as if his heart would break. He was dressed in a long green overcoat with mock astrakhan cuffs and collar and wore on his head an oval fur cap. He pointed down the snow-covered quay from where the sound of shrill prolonged whistling was borne in.

—Teddy will have all the cabs in Dublin out, he said.

Gabriel advanced from the little pantry behind the office, struggling into his overcoat and, looking round the hall, said:

—Gretta not down yet?

—She's getting on her things, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate.

—Who's playing up there? asked Gabriel.

—Nobody. They're all gone.

—O no, Aunt Kate, said Mary Jane. Bartell D'Arcy and Miss O'Callaghan aren't gone yet.

—Someone is strumming at the piano, anyhow, said Gabriel.

Mary Jane glanced at Gabriel and Mr Browne and said with a shiver:

—It makes me feel cold to look at you two gentlemen muffled up like that. I wouldn't like to face your journey home at this hour.

—I'd like nothing better this minute, said Mr Browne stoutly, than a rattling fine walk in the country or a fast drive with a good spanking goer between the shafts.

—We used to have a very good horse and trap[4] at home, said Aunt Julia sadly.

—The never-to-be-forgotten Johnny, said Mary Jane, laughing.

Aunt Kate and Gabriel laughed too.

—Why, what was wonderful about Johnny? asked Mr Browne.

—The late lamented Patrick Morkan, our grandfather, that is, explained Gabriel, commonly known in his later years as the old gentleman, was a glue-boiler.[5]

—O, now, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate, laughing, he had a starch mill.

—Well, glue or starch, said Gabriel, the old gentleman had a horse by the name of Johnny. And Johnny used to work in the old gentleman's mill, walking round and round in order to drive the mill. That was all very well; but now comes the tragic part about Johnny. One fine day the old gentleman thought he'd like to drive out with the quality[6] to a military review in the park.

—The Lord have mercy on his soul, said Aunt Kate compassionately.

—Amen, said Gabriel. So the old gentleman, as I said, harnessed Johnny and put on his very best tall hat and his very best stock collar and drove out in grand style from his ancestral mansion somewhere near Back Lane, I think.

Everyone laughed, even Mrs Malins, at Gabriel's manner and Aunt Kate said:

—O now, Gabriel, he didn't live in Back Lane, really. Only the mill was there.

—Out from the mansion of his forefathers, continued Gabriel, he drove with Johnny. And everything went on beautifully until Johnny came in sight of King Billy's statue[7] and whether he fell in love with the horse King Billy sits on or whether he thought he was back again in the mill, anyhow he began to walk round the statue.

Gabriel paced in a circle round the hall in his goloshes amid the laughter of the others.

—Round and round he went, said Gabriel, and the old gentleman, who was a very pompous old gentleman, was highly indignant. *Go on, sir! What do you mean, sir? Johnny! Johnny! Most extraordinary conduct! Can't understand the horse!*

The peals of laughter which followed Gabriel's imitation of the incident were interrupted by a resounding knock at the hall-door. Mary Jane ran to open it and let in Freddy Malins. Freddy Malins, with his hat well back on his head and his shoulders humped with cold, was puffing and steaming after his exertions.

—I could only get one cab, he said.

—O, we'll find another along the quay, said Gabriel.

—Yes, said Aunt Kate. Better not keep Mrs Malins standing in the draught.

Mrs Malins was helped down the front steps by her son and Mr Browne and, after many manœuvres, hoisted into the cab. Freddy Malins clambered in after her and spent a long time settling her on the seat, Mr Browne helping him with advice. At last she was settled comfortably and Freddy Malins invited Mr Browne into the cab. There was a good deal of confused talk, and then Mr Browne got into the cab. The cabman settled his rug over his knees, and bent

down for the address. The confusion grew greater and the cabman was directed differently by Freddy Malins and Mr Browne, each of whom had his head out through a window of the cab. The difficulty was to know where to drop Mr Browne along the route and Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia and Mary Jane helped the discussion from the doorstep with cross-directions and contradictions and abundance of laughter. As for Freddy Malins he was speechless with laughter. He popped his head in and out of the window every moment, to the great danger of his hat, and told his mother how the discussion was progressing till at last Mr Browne shouted to the bewildered cabman above the din of everybody's laughter:

—Do you know Trinity College?

—Yes, sir, said the cabman.

—Well, drive bang up against Trinity College gates, said Mr Browne, and then we'll tell you where to go. You understand now?

—Yes, sir, said the cabman.

—Make like a bird for Trinity College.

—Right, sir, cried the cabman.

The horse was whipped up and the cab rattled off along the quay amid a chorus of laughter and adieus.

Gabriel had not gone to the door with the others. He was in a dark part of the hall gazing up the staircase. A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow also. He could not see her face but he could see the terracotta and salmonpink panels of her skirt which the shadow made appear black and white. It was his wife. She was leaning on the banisters, listening to something. Gabriel was surprised at her stillness and strained his ear to listen also. But he could hear little save the noise of laughter and dispute on the front steps, a few chords struck on the piano and a few notes of a man's voice singing.

He stood still in the gloom of the hall, trying to catch the air that the voice was singing and gazing up at his wife. There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter

he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter.

The hall-door was closed; and Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia and Mary Jane came down the hall, still laughing.

—Well, isn't Freddy terrible? said Mary Jane. He's really terrible.

Gabriel said nothing but pointed up the stairs towards where his wife was standing. Now that the hall-door was closed the voice and the piano could be heard more clearly. Gabriel held up his hand for them to be silent. The song seemed to be in the old Irish tonality and the singer seemed uncertain both of his words and of his voice. The voice, made plaintive by distance and by the singer's hoarseness, faintly illuminated the cadence of the air with words expressing grief:

O, the rain falls on my heavy locks
And the dew wets my skin,
My babe lies cold ...

—O, exclaimed Mary Jane. It's Bartell D'Arcy singing and he wouldn't sing all the night. O, I'll get him to sing a song before he goes.

—O do, Mary Jane, said Aunt Kate.

Mary Jane brushed past the others and ran to the staircase but before she reached it the singing stopped and the piano was closed abruptly.

—O, what a pity! she cried. Is he coming down, Gretta?

Gabriel heard his wife answer yes and saw her come down towards them. A few steps behind her were Mr Bartell D'Arcy and Miss O'Callaghan.

—O, Mr D'Arcy, cried Mary Jane, it's downright mean of you to break off like that when we were all in raptures listening to you.

—I have been at him all the evening, said Miss O'Callaghan, and Mrs Conroy too and he told us he had a dreadful cold and couldn't sing.

—O, Mr D'Arcy, said Aunt Kate, now that was a great fib to tell.

—Can't you see that I'm as hoarse as a crow? said Mr D'Arcy roughly.

He went into the pantry hastily and put on his overcoat. The others, taken aback by his rude speech, could find nothing to say. Aunt Kate wrinkled her brows and made signs to the others to drop the subject. Mr D'Arcy stood swathing his neck carefully and frowning.

—It's the weather, said Aunt Julia, after a pause.

—Yes, everybody has colds, said Aunt Kate readily, everybody.

—They say, said Mary Jane, we haven't had snow like it for thirty years; and I read this morning in the newspapers that the snow is general all over Ireland.

—I love the look of snow, said Aunt Julia sadly.

—So do I, said Miss O'Callaghan. I think Christmas is never really Christmas unless we have the snow on the ground.

—But poor Mr D'Arcy doesn't like the snow, said Aunt Kate, smiling.

Mr D'Arcy came from the pantry, full swathed and buttoned, and in a repentant tone told them the history of his cold. Everyone gave him advice and said it was a great pity and urged him to be very careful of his throat in the night air. Gabriel watched his wife who did not join in the conversation. She was standing right under the dusty fanlight and the flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair which he had seen her drying at the fire a few days before. She was in the same attitude and seemed unaware of the talk about her. At last she turned towards them and Gabriel saw that there was colour on her cheeks and that her eyes were shining. A sudden tide of joy went leaping out of his heart.

—Mr D'Arcy, she said, what is the name of that song you were singing?

—It's called *The Lass of Aughrim*,[8] said Mr D'Arcy, but I couldn't remember it properly. Why? Do you know it?

—*The Lass of Aughrim*, she repeated. I couldn't think of the name.

—It's a very nice air, said Mary Jane. I'm sorry you were not in voice tonight.

—Now, Mary Jane, said Aunt Kate, don't annoy Mr D'Arcy. I won't have him annoyed.

Seeing that all were ready to start she shepherded them to the door where good-night was said:

—Well, good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks for the pleasant evening.

—Good-night, Gabriel. Good-night, Gretta!

—Good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks ever so much. Good-night, Aunt Julia.

—O, good-night, Gretta, I didn't see you.

—Good-night, Mr D'Arcy. Good-night, Miss O'Callaghan.

—Good-night, Miss Morkan.

—Good-night, again.

—Good-night, all. Safe home.

—Good-night. Good-night.

The morning was still dark. A dull yellow light brooded over the houses and the river; and the sky seemed to be descending. It was slushy underfoot; and only streaks and patches of snow lay on the roofs, on the parapets of the quay and on the area railings. The lamps were still burning redly in the murky air and, across the river, the palace of the Four Courts stood out menacingly against the heavy sky.

She was walking on before him with Mr Bartell D'Arcy, her shoes in a brown parcel tucked under one arm and her hands holding her skirt up from the slush. She had no longer any grace of attitude but Gabriel's eyes were still bright with happiness. The blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, valorous.

She was walking on before him so lightly and so erect that he longed to run after her noiselessly, catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and affectionate into her ear. She seemed to him so frail that he longed to defend her against something and then to be alone with her. Moments of their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory. A heliotrope[9] envelope was lying beside his breakfast-cup and he was caressing it with his hand. Birds were twittering in the ivy and the sunny web of the curtain was shimmering along the floor: he could not eat for happiness. They were standing on the crowded platform and he was placing a ticket inside the warm palm of her glove. He was standing with her in the cold, looking in through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace. It was very cold. Her face, fragrant in the cold air, was quite close to his; and suddenly she called out to the man at the furnace:

—Is the fire hot, sir?

But the man could not hear her with the noise of the furnace. It was just as well. He might have answered rudely.

A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart and went coursing in warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fires of stars moments of their life together, that no one knew of or would ever know of, broke upon and illumined his memory. He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy. For the years, he felt, had not quenched his soul or hers. Their children, his writing, her household cares had not quenched all their souls' tender fire. In one letter that he had written to her then he had said: *Why is it that words like these seem to me so dull and cold? Is it because there is no word tender enough to be your name?*

Like distant music these words that he had written years before were borne towards him from the past. He longed to be alone with her. When the others had gone away, when he and she were in their room in the hotel, then they would be alone together. He would call her softly:

—Gretta!

Perhaps she would not hear at once: she would be undressing. Then something in his voice would strike her. She would turn and look at him. . . .

At the corner of Winetavern Street they met a cab. He was glad of its rattling noise as it saved him from conversation. She was looking out of the window and seemed tired. The others spoke only a few words, pointing out some building or street. The horse galloped along wearily under the murky morning sky, dragging his old rattling box after his heels, and Gabriel was again in a cab with her, galloping to catch the boat, galloping to their honeymoon.

As the cab drove across O'Connell[1] Bridge Miss O'Callaghan said:

—They say you never cross O'Connell Bridge without seeing a white horse.

—I see a white man this time, said Gabriel.

—Where? asked Mr Bartell D'Arcy.

Gabriel pointed to the statue, on which lay patches of snow. Then he nodded familiarly to it and waved his hand.

—Good-night, Dan, he said gaily.

When the cab drew up before the hotel Gabriel jumped out and, in spite of Mr Bartell D'Arcy's protest, paid the driver. He gave the man a shilling over his fare. The man saluted and said:

—A prosperous New Year to you, sir.

—The same to you, said Gabriel cordially.

She leaned for a moment on his arm in getting out of the cab and while standing at the curbstone, bidding the others good-night. She leaned lightly on his arm, as lightly as when she had danced with him a few hours before. He had felt proud and happy then, happy that she was his, proud of her grace and wifely carriage. But now, after the kindling again of so many memories, the first touch of her body, musical and strange and perfumed, sent through him a keen pang of lust. Under cover of her silence he pressed her arm closely to his side; and, as they stood at the hotel door, he felt that they had escaped from their lives and duties, escaped from home

and friends and run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure.

An old man was dozing in a great hooded chair in the hall. He lit a candle in the office and went before them to the stairs. They followed him in silence, their feet falling in soft thuds on the thickly carpeted stairs. She mounted the stairs behind the porter, her head bowed in the ascent, her frail shoulders curved as with a burden, her skirt girt tightly about her. He could have flung his arms about her hips and held her still for his arms were trembling with desire to seize her and only the stress of his nails against the palms of his hands held the wild impulse of his body in check. The porter halted on the stairs to settle his guttering candle. They halted too on the steps below him. In the silence Gabriel could hear the falling of the molten wax into the tray and the thumping of his own heart against his ribs.

The porter led them along a corridor and opened a door. Then he set his unstable candle down on a toilet-table and asked at what hour they were to be called in the morning.

—Eight, said Gabriel.

The porter pointed to the tap of the electric-light and began a muttered apology but Gabriel out him short.

—We don’t want any light. We have light enough from the street. And I say, he added, pointing to the candle, you might remove that handsome article, like a good man.

The porter took up his candle again, but slowly for he was surprised by such a novel idea. Then he mumbled good-night and went out. Gabriel shot the lock to.

A ghostly light from the street lamp lay in a long shaft from one window to the door. Gabriel threw his overcoat and hat on a couch and crossed the room towards the window. He looked down into the street in order that his emotion might calm a little. Then he turned and leaned against a chest of drawers with his back to the light. She had taken off her hat and cloak and was standing before a large swinging mirror, unhooking her waist.[2] Gabriel paused for a few moments, watching her, and then said:

—Gretta!

She turned away from the mirror slowly and walked along the shaft of light towards him. Her face looked so serious and weary that the words would not pass Gabriel's lips. No, it was not the moment yet.

—You looked tired, he said.

—I am a little, she answered.

—You don't feel ill or weak?

—No, tired: that's all.

She went on to the window and stood there, looking out. Gabriel waited again and then, fearing that diffidence was about to conquer him, he said abruptly:

—By the way, Gretta!

—What is it?

—You know that poor fellow Malins? he said quickly.

—Yes. What about him?

—Well, poor fellow, he's a decent sort of chap after all, continued Gabriel in a false voice. He gave me back that sovereign I lent him and I didn't expect it really. It's a pity he wouldn't keep away from that Browne, because he's not a bad fellow at heart.

He was trembling now with annoyance. Why did she seem so abstracted? He did not know how he could begin. Was she annoyed, too, about something? If she would only turn to him or come to him of her own accord! To take her as she was would be brutal. No, he must see some ardour in her eyes first. He longed to be master of her strange mood.

—When did you lend him the pound? she asked, after a pause.

Gabriel strove to restrain himself from breaking out into brutal language about the sottish Malins and his pound. He longed to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her. But he said:

—O, at Christmas, when he opened that little Christmas-card shop in Henry Street.

He was in such a fever of rage and desire that he did not hear her come from the window. She stood before him for an instant, looking at him strangely. Then, suddenly raising herself on tiptoe and resting her hands lightly on his shoulders, she kissed him.

—You are a very generous person, Gabriel, she said.

Gabriel, trembling with delight at her sudden kiss and at the quaintness of her phrase, put his hands on her hair and began smoothing it back, scarcely touching it with his fingers. The washing had made it fine and brilliant. His heart was brimming over with happiness. Just when he was wishing for it she had come to him of her own accord. Perhaps her thoughts had been running with his. Perhaps she had felt the impetuous desire that was in him and then the yielding mood had come upon her. Now that she had fallen to him so easily he wondered why he had been so diffident.

He stood, holding her head between his hands. Then, slipping one arm swiftly about her body and drawing her towards him, he said softly:

—Gretta dear, what are you thinking about?

She did not answer nor yield wholly to his arm. He said again, softly:

—Tell me what it is, Gretta. I think I know what is the matter. Do I know?

She did not answer at once. Then she said in an outburst of tears:

—O, I am thinking about that song, *The Lass of Aughrim.*

She broke loose from him and ran to the bed and, throwing her arms across the bed-rail, hid her face. Gabriel stood stock-still for a moment in astonishment and then followed her. As he passed in the way of the cheval-glass[3] he caught sight of himself in full length, his broad, well-filled shirt-front, the face whose expression always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror and his glimmering gilt-rimmed eyeglasses. He halted a few paces from her and said:

—What about the song? Why does that make you cry?

She raised her head from her arms and dried her eyes with the back of her hand like a child. A kinder note than he had intended went into his voice.

—Why, Gretta? he asked.

—I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song.

—And who was the person long ago? asked Gabriel, smiling.

—It was a person I used to know in Galway when I was living with my grandmother, she said.

The smile passed away from Gabriel's face. A dull anger began to gather again at the back of his mind and the dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins.

—Someone you were in love with? he asked ironically.

—It was a young boy I used to know, she answered, named Michael Furey. He used to sing that song, *The Lass of Aughrim.* He was very delicate.

Gabriel was silent. He did not wish her to think that he was interested in this delicate boy.

—I can see him so plainly, she said after a moment. Such eyes as he had: big dark eyes! And such an expression in them—an expression!

—O then, you were in love with him? said Gabriel.

—I used to go out walking with him, she said, when I was in Galway.

A thought flew across Gabriel's mind.

—Perhaps that was why you wanted to go to Galway with that Ivors girl? he said coldly.

She looked at him and asked in surprise:

—What for?

Her eyes made Gabriel feel awkward. He shrugged his shoulders and said:

—How do I know! To see him perhaps.

She looked away from him along the shaft of light towards the window in silence.

—He is dead, she said at length. He died when he was only seventeen. Isn't it a terrible thing to die so young as that?

—What was he? asked Gabriel, still ironically.

—He was in the gasworks,[4] she said.

Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead, a boy in the gasworks. While he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. Instinctively he turned his back more to the light lest she might see the shame that burned upon his forehead.

He tried to keep up his tone of cold interrogation but his voice when he spoke was humble and indifferent.

—I suppose you were in love with this Michael Furey, Gretta, he said.

—I was great with him at that time, she said.

Her voice was veiled and sad. Gabriel, feeling now how vain it would be to try to lead her whither he had purposed, caressed one of her hands and said, also sadly:

—And what did he die of so young, Gretta? Consumption, was it?

—I think he died for me, she answered.

A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world. But he shook himself free of it with an effort of reason and continued to caress her hand. He did not question her again for he felt that she would tell him of herself. Her hand was warm and moist: it did not respond to his touch but he continued to caress it just as he had caressed her first letter to him that spring morning.

—It was in the winter, she said, about the beginning of the winter when I was going to leave my grandmother's and come up here to the convent. And he was ill at the time in his lodgings in Galway and wouldn't be let out and his people in Oughterard were written to. He was in decline, they said, or something like that. I never knew rightly.

She paused for a moment and sighed.

—Poor fellow, she said. He was very fond of me and he was such a gentle boy. We used to go out together, walking, you know, Gabriel, like the way they do in the country. He was going to study singing only for his health. He had a very good voice, poor Michael Furey.

—Well; and then? asked Gabriel.

—And then when it came to the time for me to leave Galway and come up to the convent he was much worse and I wouldn't be let see him so I wrote a letter saying I was going up to Dublin and would be back in the summer and hoping he would be better then.

She paused for a moment to get her voice under control and then went on:

—Then the night before I left I was in my grandmother's house in Nuns' Island, packing up, and I heard gravel thrown up against the window. The window was so wet I couldn't see so I ran downstairs as I was and slipped out the back into the garden and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering.

—And did you not tell him to go back? asked Gabriel.

—I implored him to go home at once and told him he would get his death in the rain. But he said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree.

—And did he go home? asked Gabriel.

—Yes, he went home. And when I was only a week in the convent he died and he was buried in Oughterard where his people came from. O, the day I heard that, that he was dead!

She stopped, choking with sobs, and overcome by emotion, flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held

her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window.

She was fast asleep.

Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, looked for a few moments unresentfully on her tangled hair and half-open mouth, listening to her deep-drawn breath. So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife. His curious eyes rested long upon her face and on her hair: and, as he thought of what she must have been then, in that time of her first girlish beauty, a strange friendly pity for her entered his soul. He did not like to say even to himself that her face was no longer beautiful but he knew that it was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death.

Perhaps she had not told him all the story. His eyes moved to the chair over which she had thrown some of her clothes. A petticoat string dangled to the floor. One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it lay upon its side. He wondered at his riot of emotions of an hour before. From what had it proceeded? From his aunt's supper, from his own foolish speech, from the wine and dancing, the merry-making when saying good-night in the hall, the pleasure of the walk along the river in the snow. Poor Aunt Julia! She, too, would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon her face for a moment when she was singing *Arrayed for the Bridal.* Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon.

The air of the room chilled his shoulders. He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife. One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age. He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live.

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling.

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen[5] and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

1914

Endnotes

- Note 1: Grain merchant.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Haddington Road, like Adam and Eve's below, is a church.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Concert hall in Dublin. The academy was the Royal Irish Academy of Music.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A dark brown malt liquor, akin to beer.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Drunk.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Bet.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A kind of coarse woolen cloth.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Empty and deceptive talk.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: *Irish Melodies* by Dublin-born Thomas Moore (1779–1852), a collection of songs—including one called "O Ye Dead"—that was extremely popular in late 19th- and early 20th-century Ireland.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Board managing the Port of Dublin.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Porridge made by stirring oatmeal in boiling milk or water.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A natural kind of latex that comes from the gutta-percha tree of Southeast Asia.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Originally the name of a troupe of White entertainers, founded in 1943 by George Christy of New York, who wore blackface to perform musical, dance, and comedic skits grounded in stereotypical representations of Black Americans. By Joyce's time the meaning had been extended to any group who blackened their faces to perform as stock plantation characters, based on caricatures.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Gresham Hotel, still one of the best hotels in Dublin.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A square dance usually performed by four couples.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Sign a solemn promise not to drink alcohol.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Probably Edward V and his brother Richard, Duke of York, reputedly murdered in 1483 by their uncle and successor, Richard III.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Silk and wool fabric made chiefly in Ireland.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Large tall mirror.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Sailor suit, favorite wear for children of both sexes early in the 20th century.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Clergyman appointed to assist a parish priest.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A sequence of five quadrilles (square dances).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A pejorative term for one who denies a separate Irish nationality and sees Ireland as simply a western extension of Great Britain.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Namely, whether Ireland's elite Protestant universities should be open to Catholics.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Three small islands lying across the entrance to Galway Bay, on the west coast of Ireland.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Or Connaught, a rural region on the west coast of Ireland.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Teasingly.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Opening for a window in a thick wall.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tribute to Arthur Wellesley (1769–1852), 1st Duke of Wellington, Dublin-born hero of the British army. The obelisk stands in Dublin's Phoenix Park.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek mythology, Paris was selected by Zeus to choose which of three goddesses was the most beautiful. The Graces were three sister-goddesses—Aglaia, splendor; Euphrosyne, festivity; and Thalia, rejoicing—who together represented loveliness and joy. Gabriel is making a mental note to refer to his two aunts and Mary Jane in a complimentary way.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: This old song (beginning "Arrayed for the bridal, in beauty behold her") "is replete with long and complicated runs, requiring a sophisticated and gifted singer" (Bowen, *Musical Allusions in the Works of James Joyce*, 1974); the suggestion is that Aunt Julia was a really accomplished singer.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, Protestant.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Blessing on you (Gaelic; literal trans.); goodbye.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Sweet almond-flavored pudding.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Opera by Ambroise Thomas first produced in Paris in 1866 and in London in 1870.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This song, from the opera *Montana* by W. Wallace (it actually begins "Yes! let me like a soldier fall"), ends on middle C; it would be a piece of exhibitionism to end on a high C, as Joyce's father, who had a good voice, used to do. Joyce's brother Stanislaus remembered the song as insufferable rubbish. Mr. Browne is not to be taken seriously as a music critic.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An opera by Donizetti, first produced at La Scala, Milan, in 1833. *Dinorah* is an opera by Meyerbeer, first produced in Paris in 1859.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Enrico Caruso (1873–1921), the great Italian dramatic tenor.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See p. 432, n. 3.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage on springs.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Glue was made by boiling animal hides and hoofs.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: People of rank or high social position.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Statue of King William III of England in front of Trinity College, Dublin. He defeated predominantly Irish Catholic forces in the 1690 Battle of the Boyne.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An Irish version of a ballad about a girl deserted by her lover, whom she later tries to find, bringing the baby she had by

him. Other versions are called “Love Gregory” and “Lord Gregory” (the name of the deserting lover), “The Lass of Lochryan,” and “The Lass of Ocram.”Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Grayish purple.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Daniel O’Connell (1775–1847), Irish nationalist, statesman, and orator. His statue stands by O’Connell Bridge in Dublin.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Shirtwaist; a tailored blouse.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Full-length mirror that can be tilted.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Factory where coal gas for heating and lighting is produced.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The name given to many separate peat bogs between the rivers Liffey (which runs through Dublin) and Shannon (which runs through the central plain of Ireland).Return to reference 5

Ulysses From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, *Ulysses* (1922) is often singled out as the greatest novel of the twentieth century, and so it may be hard to understand the scandal it aroused upon publication. After parts of it first appeared serially in the American journal *The Little Review* from 1918 and the English journal *The Egoist* in 1919, instances in the novel of coarse language, masturbation, and other sexual content led to legal prosecution and to the banning of *Ulysses* as obscene in both the United States and the United Kingdom until the 1930s. New York district judge John M. Woolsey's 1933 ruling that the book, "in spite of its unusual frankness," was not pornographic but an "amazing *tour de force*" set an important precedent in obscenity law. In his perceptive appraisal of *Ulysses*, Woolsey explained Joyce's sexual frankness by saying that the novelist had attempted "to show exactly how the minds of his characters operate" and "to tell fully what his characters think about," conveying "the screen of consciousness with its ever-shifting kaleidoscopic impressions"—that is, not only each character's observations of the present but also the residue of "past impressions, some recent and some drawn up by association from the domain of the subconscious."

Ulysses opens at eight o'clock in the morning of June 16, 1904. Stephen Dedalus (the same character as in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, but two years after the last glimpse of him there) has been summoned back to Dublin by his mother's fatal illness. The first three episodes of *Ulysses* concentrate on Stephen, the aloof, uncompromising artist, but the fourth introduces the novel's central character, Leopold Bloom. A somewhat frustrated and confused Jewish outsider in Irish society, Bloom emerges as a humane champion of kindness and justice. We follow closely his every activity: attending a funeral, transacting business, eating lunch, walking through the Dublin streets, worrying about his wife's infidelity with Blazes Boylan, even defecating and masturbating—and at each point the contents of his mind, including retrospect and anticipation, are revealed. Finally, late at night, Bloom and Stephen, who have been just missing each other all day, get together,

Stephen having had too much to drink. Bloom is moved by a paternal feeling toward Stephen, in part because his own son, Rudy, died in infancy, and in a symbolic way Stephen takes Rudy's place; Bloom follows Stephen during subsequent adventures in the role of fatherly protector. The climax of the book comes when Stephen, far gone in drink, and Bloom, worn out with fatigue, succumb to a series of hallucinations, during which their unconscious minds surface in dramatic form and their personalities are disclosed with extraordinary frankness. Then Bloom takes the unresponsive Stephen home and gives him a meal. After Stephen's departure Bloom retires to bed, while his wife, Molly, lying in bed, ends the novel with a long monologue in which she recalls her romantic and other experiences.

On the level of realistic description, *Ulysses* pulses with life and can be enjoyed for its evocation of early twentieth-century Dublin. On the psychological level, it profoundly and movingly reveals the personalities and consciousnesses of Leopold Bloom, Stephen Dedalus, and Molly Bloom. It explores the paradoxes of human loneliness and sociability (Bloom is both Jew and Dubliner, both exile and citizen), and it examines problems in the relations between parent and child, between the generations, and between the sexes. On the level of style, it shimmers with linguistic virtuosity, with many an episode written in a distinctive way that reflects its subject—for example, headlines intruding in a chapter set in a newspaper office (the "Aeolus" episode); the sentimental language of women's magazines dominating a chapter set on a beach where girls are playing ("Nausicaa"); and the pastiche of styles of English literature from its Anglo-Saxon birth to the twentieth century in a chapter set in a maternity hospital ("Oxen of the Sun"). Through its use of themes from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and from other works of literature, and from philosophy and history, the book weaves a subtle pattern of allusion and suggestion.

Those who come to *Ulysses* with narrative expectations drawn from Victorian novels or even twentieth-century novelists such as Conrad and Lawrence will find much that is at first puzzling. In the

novel's stream-of-consciousness method, also known as interior monologue, Joyce presents the consciousness of his characters directly, often without authorial comment. Past and present mingle in the texture of the prose because they mingle in the texture of consciousness; this interweaving can be indicated by puns, by sudden breaks in style or subject matter, or by other devices for keeping the reader constantly in sight of the shifting, multilayered nature of human awareness.

"Penelope" is the last of the eighteen episodes that make up *Ulysses.* It is two o'clock in the morning on June 17, 1904, and Bloom has returned home and joined his wife, Molly, in bed. His return both parallels and differs from Odysseus's return after twenty years' absence to Ithaca, in book 23 of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which he slays all the suitors who have occupied his house and attempted to woo his patient and faithful wife, Penelope. In Joyce's novel, the "Penelope" episode shifts the narrative focus of *Ulysses* from Stephen's and Bloom's male voices to the female voice of Molly Bloom, whose thoughts appear as an interior monologue, unpunctuated until the very end. In this episode, as also at the diaristic end of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, there is no third-person narrator. The monologue, often called "Molly Bloom's soliloquy," unfolds in eight flowing, run-on sentences, including the final sentence (or paragraph) printed below, which culminates at the book's end in a resonant affirmation, a memory of her response to Bloom's marriage proposal and ultimately to life itself: "and yes I said yes I will Yes."

In this excerpt, Molly, lying head to toe in bed with the sleeping Bloom, contemplates her relationships with men and often shifts from one "he" to another, from past to present, reality to fantasy, without explicitly marking the change in reference. Although she intermittently tries to quiet her mind ("let me see if I can doze off 1 2 3 4 5"), her thoughts often rapidly tumble forward over memories and hopes and worries, sometimes slowing down to linger over a single point. She revisits the details of her adulterous tryst that afternoon with Blazes Boylan, laments an insufficiently appreciative

Bloom's shortcomings as a lover, and fantasizes about finding romantic and sexual fulfillment. She worries about Stephen's family life, spinning out both maternal and erotic fantasies about him, and she remembers the conception and death of her son, Rudy, a deeply felt loss ten years earlier that has stymied her and Bloom's sexual relationship. She also recalls her girlhood in the colorful, culturally diverse Gibraltar. Reflecting on men and women, she contemplates the differences in their anatomies, sexual natures, freedoms and constraints, and capacities to bring world peace. She decides to give Bloom one more chance to prove himself sexually, and if he cannot pass her test, she will tell him about her affair with Boylan (in Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope also tests the returning Odysseus to prove he is who he claims to be; her final tests involve knowledge of their bed's construction). Finally, Molly returns to the memory of the day she first gave fully of herself to Bloom, when they lay together on Howth Hill and Bloom proposed to her and she agreed to marry him, a memory infiltrated by and layered with memories of other love interests. All these thoughts and remembrances highlight the differences between Molly and the novel's two other main characters, since Molly's thoughts are neither as abstract as Stephen's nor as concrete as Bloom's, but combine elements of the two, as well as a measure of frank sexuality. Joyce provides an exquisitely detailed and textured portrait of the intricate movements of human consciousness, perhaps more so than can be found in any previous literary work, as Molly swings from the imaginative to the mundane, from regret and longing to a rhapsodic embrace of the world in all its multifariousness, her vital and passionate voice bringing *Ulysses* to a resounding culmination.

From Ulysses

FROM [PENELOPE]

no thats no way for him[1] has he no manners nor no refinement nor no nothing in his nature slapping us behind like that on my bottom because I didnt call him Hugh the ignoramus that doesnt know poetry from a cabbage thats what you get for not keeping them in their proper place pulling off his shoes and trousers there on the chair before me so barefaced without even asking permission and standing out that vulgar way in the half of a shirt they wear to be admired like a priest or a butcher or those old hypocrites in the time of Julius Caesar[2] of course hes right enough in his way to pass the time as a joke sure you might as well be in bed with what with a lion God Im sure hed have something better to say for himself an old Lion would[3] O well I suppose its because they were so plump and tempting in my short petticoat he couldnt resist they excite myself sometimes its well for men all the amount of pleasure they get off a womans body were so round and white for them always I wished I was one myself for a change just to try with that thing they have swelling upon you so hard and at the same time so soft when you touch it my uncle John has a thing long I heard those cornerboys saying passing the corner of Marrowbone lane my aunt Mary has a thing hairy because it was dark and they knew a girl was passing it didnt make me blush why should it either its only nature and he puts his thing long into my aunt Marys hairy etcetera and turns out to be you put the handle in a sweepingbrush[4] men again all over they can pick and choose what they please a married woman or a fast widow or a girl for their different tastes like those houses round behind Irish street[5] no but were to be always chained up theyre not going to be chaining me up no damn fear once I start I tell you for stupid husbands jealousy why cant we all remain friends over it instead of quarrelling her husband found it out what they did together well

naturally and if he did can he undo it hes coronado anyway whatever he does and then he going to the other mad extreme about the wife in Fair Tyrants[6] of course the man never even casts a 2nd thought on the husband or wife either its the woman he wants and he gets her what else were we given all those desires for Id like to know I cant help it if Im young still can I its a wonder Im not an old shrivelled hag before my time living with him[7] so cold never embracing me except sometimes when hes asleep the wrong end of me not knowing I suppose who he has any man thatd kiss a womans bottom Id throw my hat at him after that hed kiss anything unnatural where we havent 1 atom of any kind of expression in us all of us the same 2 lumps of lard before ever Id do that to a man pfooh the dirty brutes the mere thought is enough I kiss the feet of you senorita theres some sense in that didnt he kiss our halldoor[8] yes he did what a madman nobody understands his cracked ideas but me still of course a woman wants to be embraced 20 times a day almost to make her look young no matter by who so long as to be in love or loved by somebody if the fellow you want isnt there sometimes by the Lord God I was thinking would I go around by the quays there some dark evening where nobodyd know me and pick up a sailor off the sea thatd be hot on for it and not care a pin whose I was only to do it off up in a gate somewhere or one of those wildlooking gipsies in Rathfarnham had their camp pitched near the Bloomfield laundry to try and steal our things if they could I only sent mine there a few times for the name model laundry[9] sending me back over and over some old ones odd stockings that blackguardlooking fellow with the fine eyes peeling a switch attack me in the dark and ride me up against the wall without a word or a murderer anybody what they do themselves the fine gentlemen in their silk hats that K. C. lives up somewhere this way coming out of Hardwicke lane[1] the night he gave us the fish supper on account of winning over the boxing match of course it was for me he gave it I knew him by his gaiters[2] and the walk and when I turned round a minute after just to see there was a woman after coming out of it too some filthy prostitute then he goes home to his wife after that

only I suppose the half of those sailors are rotten again with disease O move over your big carcass out of that for the love of Mike listen to him the winds that waft my sighs to thee so well he may sleep and sigh the great Suggester Don Poldo de la Flora[3] if he knew how he came out on the cards this morning hed have something to sigh for a dark man in some perplexity between 2 7s[4] too in prison for Lord knows what he does that I dont know and Im to be slooching around down in the kitchen to get his lordship his breakfast while hes rolled up like a mummy will I indeed did you ever see me running Id just like to see myself at it show them attention and they treat you like dirt I dont care what anybody says itd be much better for the world to be governed by the women in it you wouldnt see women going and killing one another and slaughtering when do you ever see women rolling around drunk like they do or gambling every penny they have and losing it on horses yes because a woman whatever she does she knows where to stop sure they wouldnt be in the world at all only for us they dont know what it is to be a woman and a mother how could they where would they all of them be if they hadnt all a mother to look after them what I never had thats why I suppose hes[5] running wild now out at night away from his books and studies and not living at home on account of the usual rowy[6] house I suppose well its a poor case that those that have a fine son like that theyre not satisfied and I none was he[7] not able to make one it wasnt my fault we came together when I was watching the two dogs up in her behind in the middle of the naked street that disheartened me altogether I suppose I oughtnt to have buried him[8] in that little woolly jacket I knitted crying as I was but give it to some poor child but I knew well Id never have another our 1st death too it was we were never the same since O Im not going to think myself into the glooms about that any more I wonder why he[9] wouldnt stay the night I felt all the time it was somebody strange he[1] brought in instead of roving around the city meeting God knows who nightwalkers and pickpockets his poor mother wouldnt like that if she was alive ruining himself for life perhaps still its a lovely hour so silent I used to love coming home after dances the air of the

night they have friends they can talk to weve none either he wants what he wont get or its some woman ready to stick her knife in you I hate that in women no wonder they treat us the way they do we are a dreadful lot of bitches I suppose its all the troubles we have makes us so snappy Im not like that he could easy have slept in there on the sofa in the other room I suppose he was as shy as a boy he being so young hardly 20 of me in the next room hed have heard me on the chamber arrah[2] what harm Dedalus I wonder its like those names in Gibraltar Delapaz Delagracia they had the devils queer names there father Vial plana of Santa Maria that gave me the rosary Rosales y O'Reilly in the Calle las Siete Revueltas and Pisimbo and Mrs Opisso in Governor street[3] O what a name Id go and drown myself in the first river if I had a name like her O my and all the bits of streets Paradise ramp and Bedlam ramp and Rodgers ramp and Crutchetts ramp and the devils gap steps[4] well small blame to me if I am a harumscarum[5] I know I am a bit I declare to God I dont feel a day older than then I wonder could I get my tongue round any of the Spanish como esta usted muy bien gracias y usted[6] see I havent forgotten it all I thought I had only for the grammar a noun is the name of any person place or thing pity I never tried to read that novel cantankerous Mrs Rubio lent me by Valera with the questions in it all upside down[7] the two ways I always knew wed go away in the end I can tell him[8] the Spanish and he tell me the Italian then hell see Im not so ignorant what a pity he didnt stay Im sure the poor fellow was dead tired and wanted a good sleep badly I could have brought him in his breakfast in bed with a bit of toast so long as I didnt do it on the knife for bad luck[9] or if the woman was going her rounds with the watercress and something nice and tasty there are a few olives in the kitchen he might like I never could bear the look of them in Abrines I could do the criada[1] the room looks all right since I changed it the other way you see something was telling me all the time Id have to introduce myself not knowing me from Adam very funny wouldnt it Im his wife or pretend we were in Spain with, him half awake without a Gods notion where he is dos huevos

estrellados senor[2] Lord the cracked things come into my head sometimes itd be great fun supposing he stayed with us why not theres the room upstairs empty and Millys[3] bed in the back room he could do his writing and studies at the table in there for all the scribbling he does at it and if he wants to read in bed in the morning like me as hes making the breakfast for 1 he can make it for 2 Im sure Im not going to take in lodgers off the street for him if he takes a gesabo[4] of a house like this Id love to have a long talk with an intelligent welleducated person Id have to get a nice pair of red slippers like those Turks with the fez used to sell or yellow and a nice semitransparent morning gown that I badly want or a peachblossom dressing jacket like the one long ago in Walpoles only 8/6 or 18/6[5] I'll just give him one more chance Ill get up early in the morning Im sick of Cohens[6] old bed in any case I might go over to the markets to see all the vegetables and cabbages and tomatoes and carrots and all kinds of splendid fruits all coming in lovely and fresh who knows whod be the 1st man Id meet theyre out looking for it in the morning Mamy Dillon used to say they are and the night too that was her massgoing Id love a big juicy pear now to melt in your mouth like when I used to be in the longing way then Ill throw him up his eggs and tea in the moustachecup[7] she gave him to make his mouth bigger I suppose hed like my nice cream too I know what Ill do Ill go about rather gay not too much singing a bit now and then mi fa pieta Masetto then Ill start dressing myself to go out presto non son più forte[8] Ill put on my best shift and drawers let him have a good eyeful out of that to make his micky stand for him Ill let him know if thats what he wanted that his wife is fucked yes and damn well fucked too up to my neck nearly not by him 5 or 6 times handrunning theres the mark of his spunk on the clean sheet I wouldnt bother to even iron it out that ought to satisfy him if you dont believe me feel my belly unless I made him stand there and put him into me Ive a mind to tell him every scrap and make him do it in front of me serve him right its all his own fault if I am an adulteress as the thing in the gallery said O much about it if thats all the harm ever we did in this vale of tears[9] God knows its not much doesnt

everybody only they hide it I suppose thats what a woman is supposed to be there for or He wouldn't have made us the way He did so attractive to men then if he wants to kiss my bottom Ill drag open my drawers and bulge it right out in his face as large as life he can stick his tongue 7 miles up my hole as hes there my brown part then Ill tell him I want £ 1 or perhaps 30/[1] Ill tell him I want to buy underclothes then if he gives me that well he wont be too bad I dont want to soak it all out of him like other women do I could often have written out a fine cheque for myself and write his name on it for a couple of pounds a few times he forgot to lock it up besides he wont spend it Ill let him do it off on me behind provided he doesnt smear all my good drawers O I suppose that cant be helped Ill do the indifferent 1 or 2 questions Ill know by the answers when hes like that he cant keep a thing back I know every turn in him Ill tighten my bottom well and let out a few smutty words smellrump or lick my shit or the first mad thing comes into my head then Ill suggest about yes O wait now sonny my turn is coming Ill be quite gay and friendly over it O but I was forgetting this bloody pest of a thing[2] pfooh you wouldnt know which to laugh or cry were such a mixture of plum and apple[3] no Ill have to wear the old things so much the better itll be more pointed hell never know whether he did it or not there thats good enough for you any old thing at all then Ill wipe him off me just like a business his omission[4] then Ill go out Ill have him eying up at the ceiling where is she gone now make him want me thats the only way a quarter after[5] what an unearthly hour I suppose theyre just getting up in China now combing out their pigtails for the day well soon have the nuns ringing the angelus[6] theyve nobody coming in to spoil their sleep except an odd priest or two for his night office the alarmclock next door at cockshout clattering the brains out of itself let me see if I can doze off 1 2 3 4 5 what kind of flowers are those they invented like the stars the wallpaper in Lombard street[7] was much nicer the apron he gave me was like that[8] something only I only wore it twice better lower this lamp and try again so as I can get up early Ill go to Lambes there beside Findlaters[9] and get them to send us some flowers to put about the

place in case he brings him[1] home tomorrow today I mean no no Fridays an unlucky day first I want to do the place up someway the dust grows in it I think while Im asleep then we can have music and cigarettes I can accompany him first I must clean the keys of the piano with milk whatll I wear shall I wear a white rose or those fairy cakes in Liptons[2] I love the smell of a rich big shop at 7 1/2 d a lb or the other ones with the cherries in them and the pinky sugar 11 d a couple of lbs[3] of course a nice plant for the middle of the table Id get that cheaper in wait wheres this I saw them not long ago I love flowers Id love to have the whole place swimming in roses God of heaven theres nothing like nature the wild mountains then the sea and the waves rushing then the beautiful country with fields of oats and wheat and all kinds of things and all the fine cattle going about that would do your heart good to see rivers and lakes and flowers all sorts of shapes and smells and colours springing up even out of the ditches primroses and violets nature it is as for them saying theres no God I wouldnt give a snap of my two fingers for all their learning why dont they go and create something I often asked him atheists or whatever they call themselves go and wash the cobbles[4] off themselves first then they go howling for the priest and they dying and why why because theyre afraid of hell on account of their bad conscience ah yes I know them well who was the first person in the universe before there was anybody that made it all who ah that they dont know neither do I so there you are they might as well try to stop the sun from rising tomorrow the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head[5] in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leapyear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldnt

answer first only looked out over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things he didnt know of Mulvey and Mr Stanhope and Hester and father and old captain Groves and the sailors playing all birds fly and I say stoop[6] and washing up dishes they called it on the pier and the sentry in front of the governors house with the thing round his white helmet poor devil half roasted and the Spanish girls laughing in their shawls and their tall combs and the auctions in the morning[7] the Greeks and the jews and the Arabs and the devil knows who else from all the ends of Europe and Duke street and the fowl market all clucking outside Larby Sharons and the poor donkeys slipping half asleep and the vague fellows in the cloaks asleep in the shade on the steps and the big wheels of the carts of the bulls and the old castle[8] thousands of years old yes and those handsome Moors all in white and turbans like kings asking you to sit down in their little bit of a shop and Ronda with the old windows of the posadas glancing eyes a lattice hid for her lover to kiss the iron and the wineshops half open at night and the castanets and the night we missed the boat at Algeciras[9] the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens[1] yes and all the queer little streets and pink and blue and yellow houses and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used[2] or shall I wear a red[3] yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall[4] and I thought well as well him[5] as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

Trieste-Zurich-Paris,
1914–1921.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Blazes Boylan.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Perhaps Julius Caesar's assassins. Toga-wearing Marcus Brutus, together with other conspirators, killed his close friend Caesar and then stood before the public professing his love for him, as dramatized in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (3.1–2).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Penelope calls Odysseus "my lord, my lion heart" in Homer's *Odyssey.*Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Molly recalls a dirty riddle about Uncle John putting his "thing long" into Aunt Mary's "thing hairy," which actually turns out to be about putting a handle in a sweeping brush. "Marrowbone Lane": a street in southeastern Dublin.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, Irish Town in Gibraltar, which Molly implies was the location of prostitutes' houses.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Supposed title of a novel by James Lovebirch, who published under this pseudonym in the early twentieth century but is not known to have written anything with this title. "Coronado": tonsured (Spanish), but Molly probably means "cornudo," or cuckolded.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Leopold Bloom.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Customary Jewish gesture of kissing or touching the mezuzah, a parchment inscribed with religious text and attached to the doorpost of the house. Since there appears to be no parchment affixed to the Blooms' door, it seems that Bloom has secularized the custom. "I kiss the feet of you senorita" [for *señorita*]: translation of a Spanish expression of courtesy or thanks.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Model Laundry, Bloomfield Steam Laundry Company, Ltd., in Rathfarnham, a village four miles south of the Dublin city center.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: A street to the east of the Blooms' house in Dublin. "K. C.": King's Counsel, a senior barrister, or lawyer.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Coverings of cloth or leather for the ankle and lower leg.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Molly once pretended to be engaged to a Spanish nobleman named Don Miguel de la Flora, and here she combines his name with her husband's first name, Leopold. "Flora," which means flower, also corresponds to Leopold's last name, Bloom. "The winds that waft my sighs to thee": title of a song by lyricist H. W. Challis and composer William V. Wallace.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Molly has been telling fortunes with cards, and in her reading, Bloom is represented by the king of clubs ("a dark man"), and his position between two sevens indicates perplexity about how he can "benefit by his own integrity."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Stephen Dedalus.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Characterized by rows, or arguments.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Leopold Bloom.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Blooms' son, Rudy, who was born on December 29, 1893, and died eleven days later.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Stephen Dedalus.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Leopold Bloom.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Well, indeed (Irish). "On the chamber": on the chamber pot.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Mrs. Catherine Opisso, dressmaker whose shop was on Governor's Street in Gibraltar. "Delapaz Delagracia": de la Paz and de Gracia are common Spanish surnames. "Father Vial plana of Santa Maria": according to Don Gifford, the Reverend J. Vilaplana was associated with the Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of St. Mary the Crowned, but this association does not appear in the directory in Gibraltar until 1912. "Calle las Siete Revueltas": Street of the Seven Turnings (Spanish), known in

English-speaking Gibraltar as City Mill Lane. “Pisimbo”: reference unknown.
Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Ravine that separates the upper slopes of Gibraltar from the southern plateau. “Paradise ramp and Bedlam ramp and Rodgers ramp and Crutchetts ramp”: all stairway streets that slope up the Rock in Gibraltar.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A reckless person.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Basic Spanish conversation: “How are you?” “Very well, thank you. And you?”Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In Spanish, question marks appear upside down at the beginning of the sentence and right side up at the end. “Mrs Rubio”: Molly’s family’s housekeeper in Gibraltar. “Valera”: Juan Valera y Alcalá Galiano (1824–1905), Spanish novelist.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Stephen Dedalus.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Using a knife instead of a spoon was considered bad luck.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Servant (Spanish). “Abrines”: name of a bakery in Gibraltar.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Two fried eggs, sir (Spanish).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Blooms’ teenage daughter, who is away learning photography.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: According to Gifford, “a vaguely pejorative term, as in ‘the whole gesabo,’ meaning the whole show or mess.”Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Eight shillings, six pence, or eighteen shillings, six pence. “Fez”: hat in the form of a flat-topped cone, usually made of wool or felt. “Walpoles”: Walpole Brothers was a store selling cloth in Dublin.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: David Cohen, a boot and shoe salesman, from whom Molly’s father purchased the bed in Gibraltar before they moved to Dublin.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Cup with a partial cover meant to protect a mustache during drinking.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Quick, my strength is failing (Italian). "Mi fa pieta Masetto": I'm sorry for Masetto (Italian). Lines from the opera *Don Giovanni* (1787) by Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791), which Molly practices in her capacity as a professional singer.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  Phrase from Psalms 84:6 (or Psalm 83 in the Douay Bible). "As the thing in the gallery said": during a performance of the play *The Wife of Scarli* (1897), which Molly attended and which she recalls earlier in "Penelope," a man sitting in the gallery hissed at the protagonist, calling her "a woman adulteress." The play—an English version by G. A. Greene of an Italian drama, *Tristi amore*, by Giuseppe Giacosa (1847–1906)—appears to condone the title character's adultery by making her husband an unsympathetic character.
  Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Thirty shillings; that is, one pound, ten shillings.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Her menstrual period.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A mixture of good and bad things. In slang usage, a plum is a desirable thing, and the apple is the apple plucked by Eve that caused the fall of humankind.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, Bloom's emission, or ejaculation.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A clock rings a quarter after the hour: it is now 2:15 A.M., and Molly ruminates on the activities of various people at this hour.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Devotional exercise commemorating the Incarnation, announced by the ringing of a bell.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A street in Dublin where the Blooms had their first house, which Molly remembers fondly.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The apron Bloom gave her when they lived at Lombard Street.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Alexander Findlater and Company, Ltd., the tea, wine, and spirits store on Sackville Street Upper in Dublin. "Lambes":

the fruit and flower shop next to Findlater's store.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Bloom brings Stephen.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Lipton's Ltd., a grocery store in Dublin. "Shall I wear a white rose": lyrics from the song "Shall I Wear a White Rose or Shall I Wear a Red?" by H. S. Clarke and E. B. Farmer, quoted by Molly earlier in the episode. "Fairy cakes": cupcakes.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Eleven pence for two pounds. "7½ d a lb": seven and a half pence per pound.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Lumps or blemishes (dialect English).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Headland on Dublin Bay, about 9 miles northeast of Dublin, where Leopold and Molly were picnicking on September 10, 1888, the day he proposed to her. Bloom recalls the same moment with the seedcake in "Lestrygonians."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A game, which probably depends, like "all birds fly," on the players' ability to obey commands. "Mulvey": Lieutenant Jack Mulvey, Molly's first suitor, whom she recalls at length earlier in the episode. "Mr. Stanhope and Hester": a girlhood friend of Molly's and the friend's husband. "Father": Molly's father, Major Brian Cooper Tweedy of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. "Old captain Groves": a friend of Molly's father.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The daily auction in Commercial Square in Gibraltar. "The thing round his white helmet": a band marking the sentry as a military policeman.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Moorish castle on the Rock of Gibraltar, built in 725 C.E. "Poor donkeys": donkeys were used for carrying supplies up the slopes of the Rock. "Carts of the bulls": carts used for transporting animals for bullfighting.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  Town in Spain on the opposite side of the Bay of Algeciras from Gibraltar. "Ronda": a town in southern Spain about 40 miles northeast of Gibraltar, with well-preserved Moorish architecture.

"Posadas": inns (Spanish). "Eyes a lattice hid": lyrics from the song "In Old Madrid," with words by Clifton Bingham (1859–1913) and music by Henry Trotere (1855–1912). "For her lover to kiss the iron": according to Gifford, "a Spanish colloquialism for a conventional gesture of courtship, since the ground-floor windows of Spanish town houses were usually defended by iron grilles."
Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Garden promenade on Gibraltar.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Girls from Andalusia, the southern region of Spain ruled by Muslims, or Moors, in the Middle Ages but also including Christians and Jews.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: More lyrics from the song "Shall I Wear a White Rose or Shall I Wear a Red?"Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Wall at the center of the plateau on the upper slopes of the Rock of Gibraltar and the site of Molly's first kiss from Lieutenant Mulvey, which she recalls earlier in the episode: "he was the first man kissed me under the Moorish wall."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Leopold Bloom.Return to reference 5

D. H. LAWRENCE
1885–1930

David Herbert Lawrence was born in the midland mining village of Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. His father was a miner; his mother, better educated than her husband and self-consciously genteel, fought, all her married life, to lift her children out of the working class. Lawrence was aware from a young age of the struggle between his parents, and allied himself with his mother's delicacy and refinement, resenting his father's coarse and sometimes drunken behavior. In his early novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913), against a background of paternal coarseness conflicting with maternal refinement, Lawrence sets the theme of the demanding mother who has given up the prospect of achieving a true emotional life with her husband and turns to her sons with a stultifying and possessive love. Many years later, Lawrence came to feel that he had failed to appreciate his father's vitality and wholeness, even if they were distorted by the culture in which he lived.

Spurred on by his mother, Lawrence escaped the mining world through education. He won a scholarship to Nottingham high school and later, after working as a clerk and then as an elementary-school teacher, studied for two years at University College, Nottingham, where he obtained his teacher's certificate. Meanwhile he was reading a great deal of literature and some philosophy and was working on his first novel. Publishing a group of poems in 1909, his first short story and his first novel, *The White Peacock*, in 1910, he

was regarded in London literary circles as a promising young writer. He taught school from 1908 to 1912 in Croydon, a suburb of London, but he gave this up after falling in love with Frieda von Richthofen Weekley, the German wife of a professor at Nottingham. They went to Germany together and married in 1914, after Frieda's divorce.

Abroad with Frieda, Lawrence finished *Sons and Lovers*, at which he had been working off and on for years. The war brought them back to England, where Frieda's German origins and Lawrence's pacifist objection to the war gave him trouble with the authorities. More and more—especially after the almost immediate banning, for indecency, of his next novel, *The Rainbow*, in 1915—Lawrence came to feel that the forces of modern civilization were arrayed against him. As soon as he could leave England after the war, he sought refuge in Italy, Australia, Mexico, then again in Italy, and finally in the south of France, often desperately ill, restlessly searching for an ideal, or at least a tolerable, community in which to live. He died of tuberculosis in the south of France at the age of forty-four.

In his poetry and his fiction, Lawrence seeks to express the deep-rooted, the elemental, the instinctual in people and nature. He is at constant war with the mechanical and artificial, with the constraints and hypocrisies that civilization imposes. Because he had new things to say and a new way of saying them, he was not easily or quickly appreciated. Although his early novels are more conventional in style and treatment, from the publication of *The Rainbow* the critics turned away in bewilderment and condemnation. The rest of his life, during which he produced about a dozen more novels and many poems, short stories, sketches, and miscellaneous articles, was, in his own words, "a savage enough pilgrimage," marked by incessant struggle and by periods of frustration and despair. Phrases such as "supreme impulse" and "quickening spontaneous emotion" were characteristic of Lawrence's belief in intuition, in the dark forces of the inner self, that must not be allowed to be swamped by the rational faculties but must be brought into a harmonious relation with them.

The genteel culture of his mother came more and more to represent death for Lawrence. In much of his later work, and especially in some of his short stories, he sets the deadening restrictiveness of conventional middle-class living against the forces of liberation that are often represented by an outsider—a peasant, a gypsy, a worker, a primitive of some kind, someone free by circumstance or personal effort. The recurring theme of his short stories—which contain some of his best work—is the distortion of love by possessiveness or gentility or a false romanticism or a false conception of the life of the artist and the achievement of a living relation between a man and a woman against the pressure of class-feeling or tradition or habit or prejudice.

In his two masterpieces, *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* (both of which developed out of what was originally conceived as a single novel to be called *The Sisters*), Lawrence probes, with both subtlety and power, into various aspects of relationship—the relationship between humans and their environment, the relationship between the generations, the relationship between man and woman, the relationship between instinct and intellect, and above all the proper basis for the marriage relationship as he conceived it. Lawrence's view of marriage as a struggle, bound up with the deepest rhythms and most profound instincts, derived from his own relationship with his strong-minded wife. He explores this and other kinds of human relationships with a combination of uncanny psychological precision and intense poetic feeling. His novels have an acute surface realism, a sharp sense of time and place, and brilliant topographical detail; at the same time their high symbolism, both of the total pattern of action and of incidents and objects within it, establishes a formal and emotional rhythm.

In poetry as in fiction, Lawrence sought out new modes of expression. He began writing in traditional verse forms but, especially after 1912, came to feel that poetry had to be unshackled from habit and fixed form if it is to make contact with what he called the "insurgent naked throb of the instant moment." Harkening back to the experiments of the American poet Walt Whitman and

anticipating the more "open" and "organic" forms of the later twentieth century, Lawrence claimed poetry must be spontaneous, flexible, alive, "direct utterance from the instant, whole man," and should express the "pulsating, carnal self" ("The Poetry of the Present," 1919). To convey the dynamism of animals and people, the emotional intensity of human relationships, his poems repeat and develop symbols or layer clauses in ritualistic cadences or unfold parallels with ancient myths. Vehemently autobiographical, the vital and even ecstatic encounters with nature, sex, and raw feeling in his poems assert the primacy of the unconscious and instinctual self, from which he felt the cerebral-intellectual self had alienated the English middle classes.

In the late 1950s the critic A. Alvarez judged: "The only native English poet of any importance to survive the First World War was D. H. Lawrence." Although there are complex reasons for the posthumous critical triumph of this writer who was so much reviled in his lifetime, there is also a simple and striking reason that must not be forgotten. Lawrence had vision; he responded intensely to life; he had a keen ear and a piercing eye for vitality and color and sound, for landscape—be it of England or Italy or New Mexico—for the individuality and concreteness of things in nature, and for the individuality and concreteness of people. His travel sketches are as impressive in their way as his novels and poems; he seizes both on the symbolic incident and on the concrete reality, and each is interpreted in terms of the other. He looked at the world freshly, with his own eyes, avoiding formulas and clichés; and he forged for himself a kind of utterance that, at his best, was able to convey powerfully and vividly what his original vision showed him. A restless pilgrim, he had uncanny perceptions into the depths of physical things and an uncompromising honesty in his view of human beings and the world.

Odour of Chrysanthemums

I

The small locomotive engine, Number 4, came clanking, stumbling down from Selston with seven full wagons. It appeared round the corner with loud threats of speed, but the colt that it startled from among the gorse,[1] which still flickered indistinctly in the raw afternoon, out-distanced it at a canter. A woman, walking up the railway line to Underwood, drew back into the hedge, held her basket aside, and watched the footplate of the engine advancing. The trucks[2] thumped heavily past, one by one, with slow inevitable movement, as she stood insignificantly trapped between the jolting black wagons and the hedge; then they curved away towards the coppice[3] where the withered oak leaves dropped noiselessly, while the birds, pulling at the scarlet hips beside the track, made off into the dusk that had already crept into the spinney.[4] In the open, the smoke from the engine sank and cleaved to the rough grass. The fields were dreary and forsaken, and in the marshy strip that led to the whimsey,[5] a reedy pit-pond, the fowls had already abandoned their run among the alders, to roost in the tarred fowl-house. The pit-bank loomed up beyond the pond, flames like red sores licking its ashy sides, in the afternoon's stagnant light. Just beyond rose the tapering chimneys and the clumsy black headstocks of Brinsley Colliery.[6] The two wheels were spinning fast up against the sky, and the winding engine rapped out its little spasms. The miners were being turned up.

The engine whistled as it came into the wide bay of railway lines beside the colliery, where rows of trucks stood in harbour.

Miners, single, trailing and in groups, passed like shadows diverging home. At the edge of the ribbed level of sidings squat a low cottage, three steps down from the cinder track. A large bony

vine clutched at the house, as if to claw down the tiled roof. Round the bricked yard grew a few wintry primroses. Beyond, the long garden sloped down to a bush-covered brook course. There were some twiggy apple trees, winter-crack trees, and ragged cabbages. Beside the path hung disheveled pink chrysanthemums, like pink cloths hung on bushes. A woman came stooping out of the felt-covered fowl-house, half-way down the garden. She closed and padlocked the door, then drew herself erect, having brushed some bits from her white apron.

She was a tall woman of imperious mien, handsome, with definite black eyebrows. Her smooth black hair was parted exactly. For a few moments she stood steadily watching the miners as they passed along the railway: then she turned towards the brook course. Her face was calm and set, her mouth was closed with disillusionment. After a moment she called:

"John!" There was no answer. She waited, and then said distinctly:

"Where are you?"

"Here!" replied a child's sulky voice from among the bushes. The woman looked piercingly through the dusk.

"Are you at that brook?" she asked sternly.

For answer the child showed himself before the raspberry-canes that rose like whips. He was a small, sturdy boy of five. He stood quite still, defiantly.

"Oh!" said the mother, conciliated. "I thought you were down at that wet brook—and you remember what I told you——"

The boy did not move or answer.

"Come, come on in," she said more gently, "it's getting dark. There's your grandfather's engine coming down the line!"

The lad advanced slowly, with resentful, taciturn movement. He was dressed in trousers and waistcoat of cloth that was too thick and hard for the size of the garments. They were evidently cut down from a man's clothes.

As they went slowly towards the house he tore at the ragged wisps of chrysanthemums and dropped the petals in handfuls along

the path.

"Don't do that—it does look nasty," said his mother. He refrained, and she, suddenly pitiful, broke off a twig with three or four wan flowers and held them against her face. When mother and son reached the yard her hand hesitated, and instead of laying the flower aside, she pushed it in her apron-band. The mother and son stood at the foot of the three steps looking across the bay of lines at the passing home of the miners. The trundle of the small train was imminent. Suddenly the engine loomed past the house and came to a stop opposite the gate.

The engine-driver, a short man with round grey beard, leaned out of the cab high above the woman.

"Have you got a cup of tea?" he said in a cheery, hearty fashion.

It was her father. She went in, saying she would mash.[7] Directly, she returned.

"I didn't come to see you on Sunday," began the little grey-bearded man.

"I didn't expect you," said his daughter.

The engine-driver winced; then, reassuming his cheery, airy manner, he said:

"Oh, have you heard then? Well, and what do you think——?"

"I think it is soon enough," she replied.

At her brief censure the little man made an impatient gesture, and said coaxingly, yet with dangerous coldness:

"Well, what's a man to do? It's no sort of life for a man of my years, to sit at my own hearth like a stranger. And if I'm going to marry again it may as well be soon as late—what does it matter to anybody?"

The woman did not reply, but turned and went into the house. The man in the engine-cab stood assertive, till she returned with a cup of tea and a piece of bread and butter on a plate. She went up the steps and stood near the footplate of the hissing engine.

"You needn't 'a' brought me bread an' butter," said her father. "But a cup of tea"—he sipped appreciatively—"it's very nice." He

sipped for a moment or two, then: "I hear as Walter's got another bout[8] on," he said.

"When hasn't he?" said the woman bitterly.

"I heerd tell of him in the 'Lord Nelson' braggin' as he was going to spend that b——afore he went: half a sovereign[9] that was."

"When?" asked the woman.

"A' Sat'day night—I know that's true."

"Very likely," she laughed bitterly. "He gives me twenty-three shillings."

"Aye, it's a nice thing, when a man can do nothing with his money but make a beast of himself!" said the grey-whiskered man. The woman turned her head away. Her father swallowed the last of his tea and handed her the cup.

"Aye," he sighed, wiping his mouth. "It's a settler,[1] it is——"

He put his hand on the lever. The little engine strained and groaned, and the train rumbled towards the crossing. The woman again looked across the metals. Darkness was settling over the spaces of the railway and trucks: the miners, in grey somber groups, were still passing home. The winding engine pulsed hurriedly, with brief pauses. Elizabeth Bates looked at the dreary flow of men, then she went indoors. Her husband did not come.

The kitchen was small and full of firelight; red coals piled glowing up the chimney mouth. All the life of the room seemed in the white, warm hearth and the steel fender reflecting the red fire. The cloth was laid for tea; cups glinted in the shadows. At the back, where the lowest stairs protruded into the room, the boy sat struggling with a knife and a piece of white wood. He was almost hidden in the shadow. It was half-past four. They had but to await the father's coming to begin tea. As the mother watched her son's sullen little struggle with the wood, she saw herself in his silence and pertinacity; she saw the father in her child's indifference to all but himself. She seemed to be occupied by her husband. He had probably gone past his home, slunk past his own door, to drink before he came in, while his dinner spoiled and wasted in waiting.

She glanced at the clock, then took the potatoes to strain them in the yard. The garden and fields beyond the brook were closed in uncertain darkness. When she rose with the saucepan, leaving the drain steaming into the night behind her, she saw the yellow lamps were lit along the high road that went up the hill away beyond the space of the railway lines and the field.

Then again she watched the men trooping home, fewer now and fewer.

Indoors the fire was sinking and the room was dark red. The woman put her saucepan on the hob,[2] and set a batter-pudding near the mouth of the oven. Then she stood unmoving. Directly, gratefully, came quick young steps to the door. Someone hung on the latch a moment, then a little girl entered and began pulling off her outdoor things, dragging a mass of curls, just ripening from gold to brown, over her eyes with her hat.

Her mother chid her for coming late from school, and said she would have to keep her at home the dark winter days.

"Why, mother, it's hardly a bit dark yet. The lamp's not lighted, and my father's not home."

"No, he isn't. But it's a quarter to five! Did you see anything of him?"

The child became serious. She looked at her mother with large, wistful blue eyes.

"No, mother, I've never seen him. Why? Has he come up an' gone past, to Old Brinsley? He hasn't, mother, 'cos I never saw him."

"He'd watch that," said the mother bitterly, "he'd take care as you didn't see him. But you may depend upon it, he's seated in the 'Prince o' Wales.'[3] He wouldn't be this late."

The girl looked at her mother piteously.

"Let's have our teas, mother, should we?" said she.

The mother called John to table. She opened the door once more and looked out across the darkness of the lines. All was deserted: she could not hear the winding-engines.

"Perhaps," she said to herself, "he's stopped to get some ripping[4] done."

They sat down to tea. John, at the end of the table near the door, was almost lost in the darkness. Their faces were hidden from each other. The girl crouched against the fender[5] slowly moving a thick piece of bread before the fire. The lad, his face a dusky mark on the shadow, sat watching her who was transfigured in the red glow.

"I do think it's beautiful to look in the fire," said the child.

"Do you?" said her mother. "Why?"

"It's so red, and full of little caves—and it feels so nice, and you can fair smell it."

"It'll want mending directly," replied her mother, "and then if your father comes he'll carry on and say there never is a fire when a man comes home sweating from the pit. A public-house is always warm enough."

There was silence till the boy said complainingly: "Make haste, our Annie."

"Well, I am doing! I can't make the fire do it no faster, can I?"

"She keeps wafflin' it about so's to make 'er slow," grumbled the boy.

"Don't have such an evil imagination, child," replied the mother.

Soon the room was busy in the darkness with the crisp sound of crunching. The mother ate very little. She drank her tea determinedly, and sat thinking. When she rose her anger was evident in the stern unbending of her head. She looked at the pudding in the fender, and broke out:

"It is a scandalous thing as a man can't even come home to his dinner! If it's crozzled[6] up to a cinder I don't see why I should care. Past his very door he goes to get to a public-house, and here I sit with his dinner waiting for him——"

She went out. As she dropped piece after piece of coal on the red fire, the shadows fell on the walls, till the room was almost in total darkness.

"I canna see," grumbled the invisible John. In spite of herself, the mother laughed.

"You know the way to your mouth," she said. She set the dust pan outside the door. When she came again like a shadow on the hearth, the lad repeated, complaining sulkily:

"I canna see."

"Good gracious!" cried the mother irritably, "you're as bad as your father if it's a bit dusk!"

Nevertheless, she took a paper spill from a sheaf on the mantelpiece and proceeded to light the lamp that hung from the ceiling in the middle of the room. As she reached up, her figure displayed itself just rounding with maternity.

"Oh, mother——!" exclaimed the girl.

"What?" said the woman, suspended in the act of putting the lamp-glass over the flame. The copper reflector shone handsomely on her, as she stood with uplifted arm, turning to face her daughter.

"You've got a flower in your apron!" said the child, in a little rapture at this unusual event.

"Goodness me!" exclaimed the woman, relieved. "One would think the house was afire." She replaced the glass and waited a moment before turning up the wick. A pale shadow was seen floating vaguely on the floor.

"Let me smell!" said the child, still rapturously, coming forward and putting her face to her mother's waist.

"Go along, silly!" said the mother, turning up the lamp. The light revealed their suspense so that the woman felt it almost unbearable. Annie was still bending at her waist. Irritably, the mother took the flowers out from her apron-band.

"Oh, mother—don't take them out!" Annie cried, catching her hand and trying to replace the sprig.

"Such nonsense!" said the mother, turning away. The child put the pale chrysanthemums to her lips, murmuring:

"Don't they smell beautiful!"

Her mother gave a short laugh.

"No," she said, "not to me. It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he'd got brown chrysanthemums in his buttonhole."

She looked at the children. Their eyes and their parted lips were wondering. The mother sat rocking in silence for some time. Then she looked at the clock.

"Twenty minutes to six!" In a tone of fine bitter carelessness she continued: "Eh, he'll not come now till they bring him. There he'll stick! But he needn't come rolling in here in his pit-dirt, for *I* won't wash him. He can lie on the floor——Eh, what a fool I've been, what a fool! And this is what I came here for, to this dirty hole, rats and all, for him to slink past his very door. Twice last week—he's begun now——"

She silenced herself and rose to clear the table.

While for an hour or more the children played, subduedly intent, fertile of imagination, united in fear of the mother's wrath, and in dread of their father's home-coming, Mrs Bates sat in her rocking chair making a "singlet" of thick cream-coloured flannel, which gave a dull wounded sound as she tore off the grey edge. She worked at her sewing with energy, listening to the children, and her anger wearied itself, lay down to rest, opening its eyes from time to time and steadily watching, its ears raised to listen. Sometimes even her anger quailed and shrank, and the mother suspended her sewing, tracing the footsteps that thudded along the sleepers[7] outside; she would lift her head sharply to bid the children "hush," but she recovered herself in time, and the footsteps went past the gate, and the children were not flung out of their play-world.

But at last Annie sighed, and gave in. She glanced at her wagon of slippers, and loathed the game. She turned plaintively to her mother.

"Mother!"—but she was inarticulate.

John crept out like a frog from under the sofa. His mother glanced up.

"Yes," she said, "just look at those shirt-sleeves!"

The boy held them out to survey them, saying nothing. Then somebody called in a hoarse voice away down the line, and suspense bristled in the room, till two people had gone by outside, talking.

"It is time for bed," said the mother.

"My father hasn't come," wailed Annie plaintively. But her mother was primed with courage.

"Never mind. They'll bring him when he does come—like a log." She meant there would be no scene. "And he may sleep on the floor till he wakes himself. I know he'll not go to work to-morrow after this!"

The children had their hands and faces wiped with a flannel. They were very quiet. When they had put on their night-dresses, they said their prayers, the boy mumbling. The mother looked down at them, at the brown silken bush of intertwining curls in the nape of the girl's neck, at the little black head of the lad, and her heart burst with anger at their father, who caused all three such distress. The children hid their faces in her skirts for comfort.

When Mrs Bates came down, the room was strangely empty, with a tension of expectancy. She took up her sewing and stitched for some time without raising her head. Meantime her anger was tinged with fear.

II

The clock struck eight and she rose suddenly, dropping her sewing on her chair. She went to the stair-foot door, opened it, listening. Then she went out, locking the door behind her.

Something scuffled in the yard, and she started, though she knew it was only the rats with which the place was over-run. The night was very dark. In the great bay of railway lines, bulked with trucks, there was no trace of light, only away back she could see a few yellow lamps at the pit-top, and the red smear of the burning pit-bank on the night. She hurried along the edge of the track, then, crossing the converging lines, came to the stile by the white gates, whence she emerged on the road. Then the fear which had led her

shrank. People were walking up to New Brinsley; she saw the lights in the houses; twenty yards farther on were the broad windows of the "Prince of Wales," very warm and bright, and the loud voices of men could be heard distinctly. What a fool she had been to imagine that anything had happened to him! He was merely drinking over there at the "Prince of Wales." She faltered. She had never yet been to fetch him, and she never would go. So she continued her walk towards the long straggling line of houses, standing back on the highway. She entered a passage between the dwellings.

"Mr Rigley?—Yes! Did you want him? No, he's not in at this minute."

The raw-boned woman leaned forward from her dark scullery[8] and peered at the other, upon whom fell a dim light through the blind of the kitchen window.

"Is it Mrs Bates?" she asked in a tone tinged with respect.

"Yes. I wondered if your Master was at home. Mine hasn't come yet."

" 'Asn't 'e! Oh, Jack's been 'ome an' 'ad 'is dinner an' gone out. 'E's just gone for 'alf an hour afore bed-time. Did you call at the 'Prince of Wales'?"

"No——"

"No, you didn't like——! It's not very nice." The other woman was indulgent. There was an awkward pause. "Jack never said nothink about—about your Master," she said.

"No!—I expect he's stuck in there!"

Elizabeth Bates said this bitterly, and with recklessness. She knew that the woman across the yard was standing at her door listening, but she did not care. As she turned:

"Stop a minute! I'll just go an' ask Jack if 'e knows anythink," said Mrs Rigley.

"Oh no—I wouldn't like to put——!"

"Yes, I will, if you'll just step inside an' see as th' childer doesn't come downstairs and set theirselves afire."

Elizabeth Bates, murmuring a remonstrance, stepped inside. The other woman apologised for the state of the room.

The kitchen needed apology. There were little frocks and trousers and childish undergarments on the squab[9] and on the floor, and a litter of playthings everywhere. On the black American cloth[1] of the table were pieces of bread and cake, crusts, slops, and a teapot with cold tea.

"Eh, ours is just as bad," said Elizabeth Bates, looking at the woman, not at the house. Mrs Rigley put a shawl over her head and hurried out, saying:

"I shanna be a minute."

The other sat, noting with faint disapproval the general untidiness of the room. Then she fell to counting the shoes of various sizes scattered over the floor. There were twelve. She sighed and said to herself: "No wonder!"—glancing at the litter. There came the scratching of two pairs of feet on the yard, and the Rigleys entered. Elizabeth Bates rose. Rigley was a big man, with very large bones. His head looked particularly bony. Across his temple was a blue scar, caused by a wound got in the pit, a wound in which the coal dust remained blue like tattooing.

" 'Asna 'e come whoam yit?" asked the man, without any form of greeting, but with deference and sympathy. "I couldna say wheer he is—'e's non ower theer!"—he jerked his head to signify the "Prince of Wales."

" 'E's 'appen gone up to th' Yew,"[2] said Mrs Rigley.

There was another pause. Rigley had evidently something to get off his mind:

"Ah left 'im finishin' a stint," he began. "Loose-all[3] 'ad bin gone about ten minutes when we com'n away, an' I shouted: 'Are ter comin', Walt?' an' 'e said: 'Go on, Ah shanna be but a'ef a minnit,' so we com'n ter th' bottom, me an' Bowers, thinkin' as 'e wor just behint, an' 'ud come up i' th' next bantle[4]——"

He stood perplexed, as if answering a charge of deserting his mate. Elizabeth Bates, now again certain of disaster, hastened to

reassure him:

"I expect 'e's gone up to th' 'Yew Tree,' as you say. It's not the first time. I've fretted myself into a fever before now. He'll come home when they carry him."

"Ay, isn't it too bad!" deplored the other woman.

"I'll just step up to Dick's an' see if 'e *is* theer," offered the man, afraid of appearing alarmed, afraid of taking liberties.

"Oh, I wouldn't think of bothering you that far," said Elizabeth Bates, with emphasis, but he knew she was glad of his offer.

As they stumbled up the entry, Elizabeth Bates heard Rigley's wife run across the yard and open her neighbour's door. At this, suddenly all the blood in her body seemed to switch away from her heart.

"Mind!" warned Rigley. "Ah've said many a time as Ah'd fill up them ruts in this entry, sumb'dy 'll be breakin' their legs yit."

She recovered herself and walked quickly along with the miner.

"I don't like leaving the children in bed, and nobody in the house," she said.

"No, you dunna!" he replied courteously. They were soon at the gate of the cottage.

"Well, I shanna be many minnits. Dunna you be frettin' now, 'e'll be all right," said the butty.[5]

"Thank you very much, Mr Rigley," she replied.

"You're welcome!" he stammered, moving away. "I shanna be many minnits."

The house was quiet. Elizabeth Bates took off her hat and shawl, and rolled back the rug. When she had finished, she sat down. It was a few minutes past nine. She was startled by the rapid chuff of the winding-engine at the pit, and the sharp whirr of the brakes on the rope as it descended. Again she felt the painful sweep of her blood, and she put her hand to her side, saying aloud: "Good gracious!—it's only the nine o'clock deputy[6] going down," rebuking herself.

She sat still, listening. Half an hour of this, and she was wearied out.

"What am I working myself up like this for?" she said pitiably to herself, "I s'll only be doing myself some damage."

She took out her sewing again.

At a quarter to ten there were footsteps. One person! She watched for the door to open. It was an elderly woman, in a black bonnet and a black woollen shawl—his mother. She was about sixty years old, pale, with blue eyes, and her face all wrinkled and lamentable. She shut the door and turned to her daughter-in-law peevishly.

"Eh, Lizzie, whatever shall we do, whatever shall we do!" she cried.

Elizabeth drew back a little, sharply.

"What is it, mother?" she said.

The elder woman seated herself on the sofa.

"I don't know, child, I can't tell you!"—she shook her head slowly. Elizabeth sat watching her, anxious and vexed.

"I don't know," replied the grandmother, sighing very deeply. "There's no end to my troubles, there isn't. The things I've gone through, I'm sure it's enough——!" She wept without wiping her eyes, the tears running.

"But, mother," interrupted Elizabeth, "what do you mean? What is it?"

The grandmother slowly wiped her eyes. The fountains of her tears were stopped by Elizabeth's directness. She wiped her eyes slowly.

"Poor child! Eh, you poor thing!" she moaned. "I don't know what we're going to do, I don't—and you as you are—it's a thing, it is indeed!"

Elizabeth waited.

"Is he dead?" she asked, and at the words her heart swung violently, though she felt a slight flush of shame at the ultimate

extravagance of the question. Her words sufficiently frightened the old lady, almost brought her to herself.

"Don't say so, Elizabeth! We'll hope it's not as bad as that; no, may the Lord spare us that, Elizabeth. Jack Rigley came just as I was sittin' down to a glass afore going to bed, an' 'e said: ` 'Appen you'll go down th' line, Mrs. Bates. Walt's had an accident. 'Appen you'll go an' sit wi' 'er till we can get him home.' I hadn't time to ask him a word afore he was gone. An' I put my bonnet on an' come straight down, Lizzie. I thought to myself: `Eh, that poor blessed child, if anybody should come an' tell her of a sudden, there's no knowin' what'll 'appen to 'er.' You mustn't let it upset you, Lizzie—or you know what to expect. How long is it, six months—or is it five, Lizzie? Ay!"—the old woman shook her head—"time slips on, it slips on! Ay!"

Elizabeth's thoughts were busy elsewhere. If he was killed—would she be able to manage on the little pension and what she could earn?—she counted up rapidly. If he was hurt—they wouldn't take him to the hospital—how tiresome he would be to nurse!—but perhaps she'd be able to get him away from the drink and his hateful ways. She would—while he was ill. The tears offered to come to her eyes at the picture. But what sentimental luxury was this she was beginning? She turned to consider the children. At any rate she was absolutely necessary for them. They were her business.

"Ay!" repeated the old woman, "it seems but a week or two since he brought me his first wages. Ay—he was a good lad, Elizabeth, he was, in his way. I don't know why he got to be such a trouble, I don't. He was a happy lad at home, only full of spirits. But there's no mistake he's been a handful of trouble, he has! I hope the Lord'll spare him to mend his ways. I hope so, I hope so. You've had a sight o' trouble with him, Elizabeth, you have indeed. But he was a jolly enough lad wi' me, he was, I can assure you. I don't know how it is. . . ."

The old woman continued to muse aloud, a monotonous irritating sound, while Elizabeth thought concentratedly, startled once, when she heard the winding-engine chuff quickly, and the brakes skirr with

a shriek. Then she heard the engine more slowly, and the brakes made no sound. The old woman did not notice. Elizabeth waited in suspense. The mother-in-law talked, with lapses into silence.

"But he wasn't your son, Lizzie, an' it makes a difference. Whatever he was, I remember him when he was little, an' I learned to understand him and to make allowances. You've got to make allowances for them——"

It was half-past ten, and the old woman was saying: "But it's trouble from beginning to end; you're never too old for trouble, never too old for that——" when the gate banged back, and there were heavy feet on the steps.

"I'll go, Lizzie, let me go," cried the old woman, rising. But Elizabeth was at the door. It was a man in pit-clothes.

"They're bringin' 'im, Missis," he said. Elizabeth's heart halted a moment. Then it surged on again, almost suffocating her.

"Is he—is it bad?" she asked.

The man turned away, looking at the darkness:

"The doctor says 'e'd been dead hours. 'E saw 'im i' th' lamp-cabin."

The old woman, who stood just behind Elizabeth, dropped into a chair, and folded her hands, crying: "Oh, my boy, my boy!"

"Hush!" said Elizabeth, with a sharp twitch of a frown. "Be still, mother, don't waken th' children: I wouldn't have them down for anything!"

The old woman moaned softly, rocking herself. The man was drawing away. Elizabeth took a step forward.

"How was it?" she asked.

"Well, I couldn't say for sure," the man replied, very ill at ease. " 'E wor finishin' a stint an' th' butties 'ad gone, an' a lot o' stuff come down atop 'n 'im."

"And crushed him?" cried the widow, with a shudder.

"No," said the man, "it fell at th' back of 'im. 'E wor under th' face an' it niver touched 'im. It shut 'im in. It seems 'e wor smothered."

Elizabeth shrank back. She heard the old woman behind her cry:

"What?—what did 'e say it was?"

The man replied, more loudly: " 'E wor smothered!"

Then the old woman wailed aloud, and this relieved Elizabeth.

"Oh, mother," she said, putting her hand on the old woman, "don't waken th' children, don't waken th' children."

She wept a little, unknowing, while the old mother rocked herself and moaned. Elizabeth remembered that they were bringing him home, and she must be ready. "They'll lay him in the parlour," she said to herself, standing a moment pale and perplexed.

Then she lighted a candle and went into the tiny room. The air was cold and damp, but she could not make a fire, there was no fireplace. She set down the candle and looked round. The candlelight glittered on the lustre-glasses, on the two vases that held some of the pink chrysanthemums, and on the dark mahogany. There was a cold, deathly smell of chrysanthemums in the room. Elizabeth stood looking at the flowers. She turned away, and calculated whether there would be room to lay him on the floor, between the couch and the chiffonier. She pushed the chairs aside. There would be room to lay him down and to step round him. Then she fetched the old red tablecloth, and another old cloth, spreading them down to save her bit of carpet. She shivered on leaving the parlour; so, from the dresser drawer she took a clean shirt and put it at the fire to air. All the time her mother-in-law was rocking herself in the chair and moaning.

"You'll have to move from there, mother," said Elizabeth. "They'll be bringing him in. Come in the rocker."

The old mother rose mechanically, and seated herself by the fire, continuing to lament. Elizabeth went into the pantry for another candle, and there, in the little pent-house under the naked tiles, she heard them coming. She stood still in the pantry doorway, listening. She heard them pass the end of the house, and come awkwardly down the three steps, a jumble of shuffling footsteps and muttering voices. The old woman was silent. The men were in the yard.

Then Elizabeth heard Matthews, the manager of the pit, say: "You go in first, Jim. Mind!"

The door came open, and the two women saw a collier backing into the room, holding one end of a stretcher, on which they could see the nailed pit-boots of the dead man. The two carriers halted, the man at the head stooping to the lintel of the door.

"Wheer will you have him?" asked the manager, a short, white-bearded man.

Elizabeth roused herself and came from the pantry carrying the unlighted candle.

"In the parlour," she said.

"In there, Jim!" pointed the manager, and the carriers backed round into the tiny room. The coat with which they had covered the body fell off as they awkwardly turned through the two doorways, and the women saw their man, naked to the waist, lying stripped for work. The old woman began to moan in a low voice of horror.

"Lay th' stretcher at th' side," snapped the manager, "an' put 'im on th' cloths. Mind now, mind! Look you now——!"

One of the men had knocked off a vase of chrysanthemums. He stared awkwardly, then they set down the stretcher. Elizabeth did not look at her husband. As soon as she could get in the room, she went and picked up the broken vase and the flowers.

"Wait a minute!" she said.

The three men waited in silence while she mopped up the water with a duster.

"Eh, what a job, what a job, to be sure!" the manager was saying, rubbing his brow with trouble and perplexity. "Never knew such a thing in my life, never! He'd no business to ha' been left. I never knew such a thing in my life! Fell over him clean as a whistle, an' shut him in. Not four foot of space, there wasn't—yet it scarce bruised him."

He looked down at the dead man, lying prone, half naked, all grimed with coal-dust.

" ' 'Sphyxiated,' the doctor said. It *is* the most terrible job I've ever known. Seems as if it was done o' purpose. Clean over him, an' shut 'im in, like a mouse-trap"—he made a sharp, descending gesture with his hand.

The colliers standing by jerked aside their heads in hopeless comment.

The horror of the thing bristled upon them all.

Then they heard the girl's voice upstairs calling shrilly: "Mother, mother—who is it? Mother, who is it?"

Elizabeth hurried to the foot of the stairs and opened the door:

"Go to sleep!" she commanded sharply. "What are you shouting about? Go to sleep at once—there's nothing——"

Then she began to mount the stairs. They could hear her on the boards, and on the plaster floor of the little bedroom. They could hear her distinctly:

"What's the matter now?—what's the matter with you, silly thing?"—her voice was much agitated, with an unreal gentleness.

"I thought it was some men come," said the plaintive voice of the child. "Has he come?"

"Yes, they've brought him. There's nothing to make a fuss about. Go to sleep now, like a good child."

They could hear her voice in the bedroom, they waited whilst she covered the children under the bedclothes.

"Is he drunk?" asked the girl, timidly, faintly.

"No! No—he's not! He—he's asleep."

"Is he asleep downstairs?"

"Yes—and don't make a noise."

There was silence for a moment, then the men heard the frightened child again:

"What's that noise?"

"It's nothing, I tell you, what are you bothering for?"

The noise was the grandmother moaning. She was oblivious of everything, sitting on her chair rocking and moaning. The manager put his hand on her arm and bade her "Sh—sh!!"

The old woman opened her eyes and looked at him. She was shocked by this interruption, and seemed to wonder.

"What time is it?" the plaintive thin voice of the child, sinking back unhappily into sleep, asked this last question.

"Ten o'clock," answered the mother more softly. Then she must have bent down and kissed the children.

Matthews beckoned to the men to come away. They put on their caps and took up the stretcher. Stepping over the body, they tiptoed out of the house. None of them spoke till they were far from the wakeful children.

When Elizabeth came down she found her mother alone on the parlour floor, leaning over the dead man, the tears dropping on him.

"We must lay him out," the wife said. She put on the kettle, then returning knelt at the feet, and began to unfasten the knotted leather laces. The room was clammy and dim with only one candle, so that she had to bend her face almost to the floor. At last she got off the heavy boots and put them away.

"You must help me now," she whispered to the old woman. Together they stripped the man.

When they arose, saw him lying in the naïve dignity of death, the women stood arrested in fear and respect. For a few moments they remained still, looking down, the old mother whimpering. Elizabeth felt countermanded.[7] She saw him, how utterly inviolable he lay in himself. She had nothing to do with him. She could not accept it. Stooping, she laid her hand on him, in claim. He was still warm, for the mine was hot where he had died. His mother had his face between her hands, and was murmuring incoherently. The old tears fell in succession as drops from wet leaves; the mother was not weeping, merely her tears flowed. Elizabeth embraced the body of her husband, with cheek and lips. She seemed to be listening, inquiring, trying to get some connection. But she could not. She was driven away. He was impregnable.

She rose, went into the kitchen where she poured warm water into a bowl, brought soap and flannel and a soft towel. "I must wash him," she said.

Then the old mother rose stiffly, and watched Elizabeth as she carefully washed his face, carefully brushing his big blond moustache from his mouth with the flannel. She was afraid with a bottomless fear, so she ministered to him. The old woman, jealous, said:

"Let me wipe him!"—and she kneeled on the other side drying slowly as Elizabeth washed, her big black bonnet sometimes brushing the dark head of her daughter-in-law. They worked thus in silence for a long time. They never forgot it was death, and the touch of the man's dead body gave them strange emotions, different in each of the women; a great dread possessed them both, the mother felt the lie was given to her womb, she was denied; the wife felt the utter isolation of the human soul, the child within her was a weight apart from her.

At last it was finished. He was a man of handsome body, and his face showed no traces of drink. He was blond, full-fleshed, with fine limbs. But he was dead.

"Bless him," whispered his mother, looking always at his face, and speaking out of sheer terror. "Dear lad—bless him!" She spoke in a faint, sibilant ecstasy of fear and mother love.

Elizabeth sank down again to the floor, and put her face against his neck, and trembled and shuddered. But she had to draw away again. He was dead, and her living flesh had no place against his. A great dread and weariness held her: she was so unavailing. Her life was gone like this.

"White as milk he is, clear as a twelve-month baby, bless him, the darling!" the old mother murmured to herself. "Not a mark on him, clear and clean and white, beautiful as ever a child was made," she murmured with pride. Elizabeth kept her face hidden.

"He went peaceful, Lizzie—peaceful as sleep. Isn't he beautiful, the lamb? Ay—he must ha' made his peace, Lizzie. 'Appen he made it all right, Lizzie, shut in there. He'd have time. He wouldn't look like this if he hadn't made his peace. The lamb, the dear lamb. Eh, but he had a hearty laugh. I loved to hear it. He had the heartiest laugh, Lizzie, as a lad——"

Elizabeth looked up. The man's mouth was fallen back, slightly open under the cover of the moustache. The eyes, half shut, did not show glazed in the obscurity. Life with its smoky burning gone from him, had left him apart and utterly alien to her. And she knew what a stranger he was to her. In her womb was ice of fear, because of

this separate stranger with whom she had been living as one flesh. Was this what it all meant—utter, intact separateness, obscured by heat of living? In dread she turned her face away. The fact was too deadly. There had been nothing between them, and yet they had come together, exchanging their nakedness repeatedly. Each time he had taken her, they had been two isolated beings, far apart as now. He was no more responsible than she. The child was like ice in her womb. For as she looked at the dead man, her mind, cold and detached, said clearly: "Who am I? What have I been doing? I have been fighting a husband who did not exist. *He* existed all the time. What wrong have I done? What was that I have been living with? There lies the reality, this man." And her soul died in her for fear: she knew she had never seen him, he had never seen her, they had met in the dark and had fought in the dark, not knowing whom they met or whom they fought. And now she saw, and turned silent in seeing. For she had been wrong. She had said he was something he was not; she had felt familiar with him. Whereas he was apart all the while, living as she never lived, feeling as she never felt.

In fear and shame she looked at his naked body, that she had known falsely. And he was the father of her children. Her soul was torn from her body and stood apart. She looked at his naked body and was ashamed, as if she had denied it. After all, it was itself. It seemed awful to her. She looked at his face, and she turned her own face to the wall. For his look was other than hers, his way was not her way. She had denied him what he was—she saw it now. She had refused him as himself. And this had been her life, and his life. She was grateful to death, which restored the truth. And she knew she was not dead.

And all the while her heart was bursting with grief and pity for him. What had he suffered? What stretch of horror for this helpless man! She was rigid with agony. She had not been able to help him. He had been cruelly injured, this naked man, this other being, and she could make no reparation. There were the children—but the children belonged to life. This dead man had nothing to do with them. He and she were only channels through which life had flowed

to issue in the children. She was a mother—but how awful she knew it now to have been a wife. And he, dead now, how awful he must have felt it to be a husband. She felt that in the next world he would be a stranger to her. If they met there, in the beyond, they would only be ashamed of what had been before. The children had come, for some mysterious reason, out of both of them. But the children did not unite them. Now he was dead, she knew how eternally he was apart from her, how eternally he had nothing more to do with her. She saw this episode of her life closed. They had denied each other in life. Now he had withdrawn. An anguish came over her. It was finished then: it had become hopeless between them long before he died. Yet he had been her husband. But how little!

"Have you got his shirt, 'Lizabeth?"

Elizabeth turned without answering, though she strove to weep and behave as her mother-in-law expected. But she could not, she was silenced. She went into the kitchen and returned with the garment.

"It is aired," she said, grasping the cotton shirt here and there to try. She was almost ashamed to handle him; what right had she or anyone to lay hands on him; but her touch was humble on his body. It was hard work to clothe him. He was so heavy and inert. A terrible dread gripped her all the while: that he could be so heavy and utterly inert, unresponsive, apart. The horror of the distance between them was almost too much for her—it was so infinite a gap she must look across.

At last it was finished. They covered him with a sheet and left him lying, with his face bound. And she fastened the door of the little parlour, lest the children should see what was lying there. Then, with peace sunk heavy on her heart, she went about making tidy the kitchen. She knew she submitted to life, which was her immediate master. But from death, her ultimate master, she winced with fear and shame.

1911, 1914

Endnotes

- Note 1: Common prickly bush with yellow flowers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Open freight cars.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A wood of small trees or shrubs.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Thicket.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Machine for raising ore or water from a mine.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Coal mine. “Headstocks” support revolving parts of a machine.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Steep the tea.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Session; that is, bout of drinking.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Gold coin worth twenty shillings. Half a sovereign is worth ten. “Lord Nelson”: name of a public house (pub).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Crushing (or final) blow.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Part of the fireplace.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Name of a pub.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Taking out or cutting away coal or stone (a mining and quarrying term).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Frame that keeps coals in the fireplace.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Curled.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Railroad ties.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Back kitchen.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Couch.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Oilcloth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, the Yew Tree (a pub).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Signal for end of work.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Group.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Workmate, “buddy.” Among English coal miners it means a supervisor intermediary between the employers and the men.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Minor coal-mine official.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Contradicted.Return to reference 7

The Horse Dealer's Daughter

"Well, Mabel, and what are you going to do with yourself?" asked Joe, with foolish flippancy. He felt quite safe himself. Without listening for an answer, he turned aside, worked a grain of tobacco to the tip of his tongue, and spat it out. He did not care about anything, since he felt safe himself.

The three brothers and the sister sat round the desolate breakfast-table, attempting some sort of desultory consultation. The morning's post had given the final tap to the family fortunes, and all was over. The dreary dining-room itself, with its heavy mahogany furniture, looked as if it were waiting to be done away with.

But the consultation amounted to nothing. There was a strange air of ineffectuality about the three men, as they sprawled at table, smoking and reflecting vaguely on their own condition. The girl was alone, a rather short, sullen-looking young woman of twenty-seven. She did not share the same life as her brothers. She would have been good-looking, save for the impressive fixity of her face, "bull-dog," as her brothers called it.

There was a confused tramping of horses' feet outside. The three men all sprawled round in their chairs to watch. Beyond the dark holly bushes that separated the strip of lawn from the high-road, they could see a cavalcade of shire horses swinging out of their own yard, being taken for exercise. This was the last time. These were the last horses that would go through their hands. The young men watched with critical, callous look. They were all frightened at the collapse of their lives, and the sense of disaster in which they were involved left them no inner freedom.

Yet they were three fine, well-set fellows enough. Joe, the eldest, was a man of thirty-three, broad and handsome in a hot, flushed way. His face was red, he twisted his black moustache over a thick finger, his eyes were shallow and restless. He had a sensual way of

uncovering his teeth when he laughed, and his bearing was stupid. Now he watched the horses with a glazed look of helplessness in his eyes, a certain stupor of downfall.

The great draught horses swung past. They were tied head to tail, four of them, and they heaved along to where a lane branched off from the high-road, planting their great hoofs floutingly in the fine black mud, swinging their great rounded haunches sumptuously, and trotting a few sudden steps as they were led into the lane, round the corner. Every movement showed a massive, slumbrous strength, and a stupidity which held them in subjection. The groom at the head looked back, jerking the leading rope. And the cavalcade moved out of sight up the lane, the tail of the last horse, bobbed up tight and stiff, held out taut from the swinging great haunches as they rocked behind the hedges in a motion-like sleep.

Joe watched with glazed hopeless eyes. The horses were almost like his own body to him. He felt he was done for now. Luckily he was engaged to a woman as old as himself, and therefore her father, who was steward of a neighbouring estate, would provide him with a job. He would marry and go into harness. His life was over, he would be a subject animal now.

He turned uneasily aside, the retreating steps of the horses echoing in his ears. Then, with foolish restlessness, he reached for the scraps of bacon-rind from the plates, and making a faint whistling sound, flung them to the terrier that lay against the fender. He watched the dog swallow them, and waited till the creature looked into his eyes. Then a faint grin came on his face, and in a high, foolish voice he said:

"You won't get much more bacon, shall you, you little b——?"

The dog faintly and dismally wagged its tail, then lowered its haunches, circled round, and lay down again.

There was another helpless silence at the table. Joe sprawled uneasily in his seat, not willing to go till the family conclave was dissolved. Fred Henry, the second brother, was erect, clean-limbed, alert. He had watched the passing of the horses with more *sang-froid.*[1] If he was an animal, like Joe, he was an animal which

controls, not one which is controlled. He was master of any horse, and he carried himself with a well-tempered air of mastery. But he was not master of the situations of life. He pushed his coarse brown moustache upwards, off his lip, and glanced irritably at his sister, who sat impassive and inscrutable.

"You'll go and stop with Lucy for a bit, shan't you?" he asked. The girl did not answer.

"I don't see what else you can do," persisted Fred Henry.

"Go as a skivvy,"[2] Joe interpolated laconically.

The girl did not move a muscle.

"If I was her, I should go in for training for a nurse," said Malcolm, the youngest of them all. He was the baby of the family, a young man of twenty-two, with a fresh, jaunty *museau.*[3]

But Mabel did not take any notice of him. They had talked at her and round her for so many years, that she hardly heard them at all.

The marble clock on the mantelpiece softly chimed the half-hour, the dog rose uneasily from the hearth-rug and looked at the party at the breakfast-table. But still they sat in an ineffectual conclave.

"Oh, all right," said Joe suddenly, apropos of nothing. "I'll get a move on."

He pushed back his chair, straddled his knees with a downward jerk, to get them free, in horsey fashion, and went to the fire. Still he did not go out of the room; he was curious to know what the others would do or say. He began to charge his pipe, looking down at the dog and saying in a high, affected voice:

"Going wi' me? Going wi' me are ter? Tha'rt goin' further than tha counts on just now, dost hear?"

The dog faintly wagged his tail, the man stuck out his jaw and covered his pipe with his hands, and puffed intently, losing himself in the tobacco, looking down all the while at the dog with an absent brown eye. The dog looked up at him in mournful distrust. Joe stood with his knees stuck out, in real horsey fashion.

"Have you had a letter from Lucy?" Fred Henry asked of his sister.

"Last week," came the neutral reply.

"And what does she say?"

There was no answer.

"Does she *ask* you to go and stop there?" persisted Fred Henry.

"She says I can if I like."

"Well, then, you'd better. Tell her you'll come on Monday."

This was received in silence.

"That's what you'll do then, is it?" said Fred Henry, in some exasperation.

But she made no answer. There was a silence of futility and irritation in the room. Malcolm grinned fatuously.

"You'll have to make up your mind between now and next Wednesday," said Joe loudly, "or else find yourself lodgings on the kerbstone."

The face of the young woman darkened, but she sat on immutable.

"Here's Jack Ferguson!" exclaimed Malcolm, who was looking aimlessly out of the window.

"Where?" exclaimed Joe loudly.

"Just gone past."

"Coming in?"

Malcolm craned his neck to see the gate.

"Yes," he said.

There was a silence. Mabel sat on like one condemned, at the head of the table. Then a whistle was heard from the kitchen. The dog got up and barked sharply. Joe opened the door and shouted:

"Come on."

After a moment a young man entered. He was muffled up in overcoat and a purple woollen scarf, and his tweed cap, which he did not remove, was pulled down on his head. He was of medium height, his face was rather long and pale, his eyes looked tired.

"Hello, Jack! Well, Jack!" exclaimed Malcolm and Joe. Fred Henry merely said: "Jack."

"What's doing?" asked the newcomer, evidently addressing Fred Henry.

"Same. We've got to be out by Wednesday. Got a cold?"

"I have—got it bad, too."

"Why don't you stop in?"

"*Me* stop in? When I can't stand on my legs, perhaps I shall have a chance." The young man spoke huskily. He had a slight Scotch accent.

"It's a knock-out, isn't it," said Joe, boisterously, "if a doctor goes round croaking with a cold. Looks bad for the patients, doesn't it?"

The young doctor looked at him slowly.

"Anything the matter with *you*, then?" he asked sarcastically.

"Not as I know of. Damn your eyes, I hope not. Why?"

"I thought you were very concerned about the patients, wondered if you might be one yourself."

"Damn it, no, I've never been patient to no flaming doctor, and hope I never shall be," returned Joe.

At this point Mabel rose from the table, and they all seemed to become aware of her existence. She began putting the dishes together. The young doctor looked at her, but did not address her. He had not greeted her. She went out of the room with the tray, her face impassive and unchanged.

"When are you off then, all of you?" asked the doctor.

"I'm catching the eleven-forty," replied Malcolm. "Are you goin' down wi' th' trap, Joe?"

"Yes, I've told you I'm going down wi' th' trap, haven't I?"

"We'd better be getting her in then. So long Jack, if I don't see you before I go," said Malcolm, shaking hands.

He went out, followed by Joe, who seemed to have his tail between his legs.

"Well, this is the devil's own," exclaimed the doctor, when he was left alone with Fred Henry. "Going before Wednesday, are you?"

"That's the orders," replied the other.

"Where, to Northampton?"

"That's it."

"The devil!" exclaimed Ferguson, with quiet chagrin.

And there was silence between the two.

"All settled up, are you?" asked Ferguson.

"About."

There was another pause.

"Well, I shall miss yer, Freddy, boy," said the young doctor.

"And I shall miss thee, Jack," returned the other.

"Miss you like hell," mused the doctor.

Fred Henry turned aside. There was nothing to say. Mabel came in again, to finish clearing the table.

"What are *you* going to do, then, Miss Pervin?" asked Ferguson. "Going to your sister's, are you?"

Mabel looked at him with her steady, dangerous eyes, that always made him uncomfortable, unsettling his superficial ease.

"No," she said.

"Well, what in the name of fortune *are* you going to do? Say what you mean to do," cried Fred Henry, with futile intensity.

But she only averted her head, and continued her work. She folded the white table-cloth, and put on the chenille cloth.

"The sulkiest bitch that ever trod!" muttered her brother.

But she finished her task with perfectly impassive face, the young doctor watching her interestedly all the while. Then she went out.

Fred Henry stared after her, clenching his lips, his blue eyes fixing in sharp antagonism, as he made a grimace of sour exasperation.

"You could bray[4] her into bits, and that's all you'd get out of her," he said, in a small, narrowed tone.

The doctor smiled faintly.

"What's she *going* to do, then?" he asked.

"Strike me if *I* know!" returned the other.

There was a pause. Then the doctor stirred.

"I'll be seeing you tonight, shall I?" he said to his friend.

"Ay—where's it to be? Are we going over to Jessdale?"

"I don't know. I've got such a cold on me. I'll come round to the 'Moon and Stars,'[5] anyway."

"Let Lizzie and May miss their night for once, eh?"

"That's it—if I feel as I do now."

"All's one——"

The two young men went through the passage and down to the back door together. The house was large, but it was servantless now, and desolate. At the back was a small bricked house-yard and beyond that a big square, gravelled fine and red, and having stables on two sides. Sloping, dank, winter-dark fields stretched away on the open sides.

But the stables were empty. Joseph Pervin, the father of the family, had been a man of no education, who had become a fairly large horse dealer. The stables had been full of horses, there was a great turmoil and come-and-go of horses and of dealers and grooms. Then the kitchen was full of servants. But of late things had declined. The old man had married a second time, to retrieve his fortunes. Now he was dead and everything was gone to the dogs,[6] there was nothing but debt and threatening.

For months, Mabel had been servantless in the big house, keeping the home together in penury for her ineffectual brothers. She had kept house for ten years. But previously it was with unstinted means. Then, however brutal and coarse everything was, the sense of money had kept her proud, confident. The men might be foul-mouthed, the women in the kitchen might have had reputations, her brothers might have illegitimate children. But so long as there was money, the girl felt herself established, and brutally proud, reserved.

No company came to the house, save dealers and coarse men. Mabel had no associates of her own sex, after her sister went away. But she did not mind. She went regularly to church, she attended to her father. And she lived in the memory of her mother, who had died when she was fourteen, and whom she had loved. She had loved her father, too, in a different way, depending upon him, and feeling secure in him, until at the age of fifty-four, he married again. And

then she had set hard against him. Now he had died and left them all hopelessly in debt.

She had suffered badly during the period of poverty. Nothing, however, could shake the curious, sullen, animal pride that dominated each member of the family. Now, for Mabel, the end had come. Still she would not cast about her. She would follow her own way just the same. She would always hold the keys of her own situation. Mindless and persistent, she endured from day to day. Why should she think? Why should she answer anybody? It was enough that this was the end, and there was no way out. She need not pass any more darkly along the main street of the small town, avoiding every eye. She need not demean herself any more, going into the shops and buying the cheapest food. This was at an end. She thought of nobody, not even of herself. Mindless and persistent, she seemed in a sort of ecstasy to be coming nearer to her fulfilment, her own glorification, approaching her dead mother, who was glorified.

In the afternoon, she took a little bag, with shears and sponge and a small scrubbing-brush, and went out. It was a grey, wintry day, with saddened, dark green fields and an atmosphere blackened by the smoke of foundries not far off. She went quickly, darkly along the causeway, heeding nobody, through the town to the churchyard.

There she always felt secure, as if no one could see her, although as a matter of fact she was exposed to the stare of everyone who passed along under the churchyard wall. Nevertheless, once under the shadow of the great looming church, among the graves, she felt immune from the world, reserved within the thick churchyard wall as in another country.

Carefully she clipped the grass from the grave, and arranged the pinky-white, small chrysanthemums in the tin cross. When this was done, she took an empty jar from a neighbouring grave, brought water, and carefully, most scrupulously sponged the marble headstone and the coping-stone.

It gave her sincere satisfaction to do this. She felt in immediate contact with the world of her mother. She took minute pains, went

through the park in a state bordering on pure happiness, as if in performing this task she came into a subtle, intimate connection with her mother. For the life she followed here in the world was far less real than the world of death she inherited from her mother.

The doctor's house was just by the church. Ferguson, being a mere hired assistant, was slave to the country-side. As he hurried now to attend to the out-patients in the surgery, glancing across the graveyard with his quick eye, he saw the girl at her task at the grave. She seemed so intent and remote, it was like looking into another world. Some mystical element was touched in him. He slowed down as he walked, watching her as if spellbound.

She lifted her eyes, feeling him looking. Their eyes met. And each looked away again at once, each feeling, in some way, found out by the other. He lifted his cap and passed on down the road. There remained distinct in his consciousness, like a vision, the memory of her face, lifted from the tombstone in the churchyard, and looking at him with slow, large, portentous eyes. It *was* portentous, her face. It seemed to mesmerise him. There was a heavy power in her eyes which laid hold of his whole being, as if he had drunk some powerful drug. He had been feeling weak and done before. Now the life came back into him, he felt delivered from his own fretted, daily self.

He finished his duties at the surgery as quickly as might be, hastily filling up the bottles of the waiting people with cheap drugs. Then, in perpetual haste, he set off again to visit several cases in another part of his round, before tea-time. At all times he preferred to walk if he could, but particularly when he was not well. He fancied the motion restored him.

The afternoon was falling. It was grey, deadened, and wintry, with a slow, moist, heavy coldness sinking in and deadening all the faculties. But why should he think or notice? He hastily climbed the hill and turned across the dark green fields, following the black cinder-track. In the distance, across a shallow dip in the country, the small town was clustered like smouldering ash, a tower, a spire, a heap of low, raw, extinct houses. And on the nearest fringe of the

town, sloping into the dip, was Oldmeadow, the Pervins' house. He could see the stables and the outbuildings distinctly, as they lay towards him on the slope. Well, he would not go there many more times! Another resource would be lost to him, another place gone: the only company he cared for in the alien, ugly little town he was losing. Nothing but work, drudgery, constant hastening from dwelling to dwelling among the colliers and the iron-workers. It wore him out, but at the same time he had a craving for it. It was a stimulant to him to be in the homes of the working people, moving, as it were, through the innermost body of their life. His nerves were excited and gratified. He could come so near, into the very lives of the rough, inarticulate, powerfully emotional men and women. He grumbled, he said he hated the hellish hole. But as a matter of fact it excited him, the contact with the rough, strongly-feeling people was a stimultant applied direct to his nerves.

Below Oldmeadow, in the green, shallow, soddened hollow of fields, lay a square, deep pond. Roving across the landscape, the doctor's quick eye detected a figure in black passing through the gate of the field, down towards the pond. He looked again. It would be Mabel Pervin. His mind suddenly became alive and attentive.

Why was she going down there? He pulled up on the path on the slope above, and stood staring. He could just make sure of the small black figure moving in the hollow of the failing day. He seemed to see her in the midst of such obscurity, that he was like a clairvoyant, seeing rather with the mind's eye than with ordinary sight. Yet he could see her positively enough, whilst he kept his eye attentive. He felt, if he looked away from her, in the thick, ugly falling dusk, he would lose her altogether.

He followed her minutely as she moved, direct and intent, like something transmitted rather than stirring in voluntary activity, straight down the field towards the pond. There she stood on the bank for a moment. She never raised her head. Then she waded slowly into the water.

He stood motionless as the small black figure walked slowly and deliberately towards the centre of the pond, very slowly, gradually

moving deeper into the motionless water, and still moving forward as the water got up to her breast. Then he could see her no more in the dusk of the dead afternoon.

"There!" he exclaimed. "Would you believe it?"

And he hastened straight down, running over the wet, soddened fields, pushing through the hedges, down into the depression of callous wintry obscurity. It took him several minutes to come to the pond. He stood on the bank, breathing heavily. He could see nothing. His eyes seemed to penetrate the dead water. Yes, perhaps that was the dark shadow of her black clothing beneath the surface of the water.

He slowly ventured into the pond. The bottom was deep, soft clay, he sank in, and the water clasped dead cold round his legs. As he stirred he could smell the cold, rotten clay that fouled up into the water. It was objectionable in his lungs. Still, repelled and yet not heeding, he moved deeper into the pond. The cold water rose over his thighs, over his loins, upon his abdomen. The lower part of his body was all sunk in the hideous cold element. And the bottom was so deeply soft and uncertain, he was afraid of pitching with his mouth underneath. He could not swim, and was afraid.

He crouched a little, spreading his hands under the water and moving them round, trying to feel for her. The dead cold pond swayed upon his chest. He moved again, a little deeper, and again, with his hands underneath, he felt all around under the water. And he touched her clothing. But it evaded his fingers. He made a desperate effort to grasp it.

And so doing he lost his balance and went under, horribly, suffocating in the foul earthy water, struggling madly for a few moments. At last, after what seemed an eternity, he got his footing, rose again into the air and looked around. He gasped, and knew he was in the world. Then he looked at the water. She had risen near him. He grasped her clothing, and drawing her nearer, turned to take his way to land again.

He went very slowly, carefully, absorbed in the slow progress. He rose higher, climbing out of the pond. The water was now only about

his legs; he was thankful, full of relief to be out of the clutches of the pond. He lifted her and staggered on to the bank, out of the horror of wet, grey clay.

He laid her down on the bank. She was quite unconscious and running with water. He made the water come from her mouth, he worked to restore her. He did not have to work very long before he could feel the breathing begin again in her; she was breathing naturally. He worked a little longer. He could feel her live beneath his hands; she was coming back. He wiped her face, wrapped her in his overcoat, looked round into the dim, dark grey world, then lifted her and staggered down the bank and across the fields.

It seemed an unthinkably long way, and his burden so heavy he felt he would never get to the house. But at last he was in the stable-yard, and then in the house-yard. He opened the door and went into the house. In the kitchen he laid her down on the hearth-rug and called. The house was empty. But the fire was burning in the grate.

Then again he kneeled to attend to her. She was breathing regularly, her eyes were wide open and as if conscious, but there seemed something missing in her look. She was conscious in herself, but unconscious of her surroundings.

He ran upstairs, took blankets from a bed, and put them before the fire to warm. Then he removed her saturated, earthy-smelling clothing, rubbed her dry with a towel, and wrapped her naked in the blankets. Then he went into the dining room, to look for spirits. There was a little whisky. He drank a gulp himself, and put some into her mouth.

The effect was instantaneous. She looked full into his face, as if she had been seeing him for some time, and yet had only just become conscious of him.

"Dr. Ferguson?" she said.

"What?" he answered.

He was divesting himself of his coat, intending to find some dry clothing upstairs. He could not bear the smell of the dead, clayey water, and he was mortally afraid for his own health.

"What did I do?" she asked.

"Walked into the pond," he replied. He had begun to shudder like one sick, and could hardly attend to her. Her eyes remained full on him, he seemed to be going dark in his mind, looking back at her helplessly. The shuddering became quieter in him, his life came back to him, dark and unknowing, but strong again.

"Was I out of my mind?" she asked, while her eyes were fixed on him all the time.

"Maybe, for the moment," he replied. He felt quiet, because his strength had come back. The strange fretful strain had left him.

"Am I out of my mind now?" she asked.

"Are you?" he reflected a moment. "No," he answered truthfully. "I don't see that you are." He turned his face aside. He was afraid now, because he felt dazed, and felt dimly that her power was stronger than his, in this issue. And she continued to look at him fixedly all the time. "Can you tell me where I shall find some dry things to put on?" he asked.

"Did you dive into the pond for me?" she asked.

"No," he answered. "I walked in. But I went in overhead as well."

There was silence for a moment. He hesitated. He very much wanted to go upstairs to get into dry clothing. But there was another desire in him. And she seemed to hold him. His will seemed to have gone to sleep, and left him, standing there slack before her. But he felt warm inside himself. He did not shudder at all, though his clothes were sodden on him.

"Why did you?" she asked.

"Because I didn't want you to do such a foolish thing," he said.

"It wasn't foolish," she said, still gazing at him as she lay on the floor, with a sofa cushion under her head. "It was the right thing to do. *I* knew best, then."

"I'll go and shift these wet things," he said. But still he had not the power to move out of her presence, until she sent him. It was as if she had the life of his body in her hands, and he could not extricate himself. Or perhaps he did not want to.

Suddenly she sat up. Then she became aware of her own immediate condition. She felt the blankets about her, she knew her own limbs. For a moment it seemed as if her reason were going. She looked round, with wild eye, as if seeking something. He stood still with fear. She saw her clothing lying scattered.

"Who undressed me?" she asked, her eyes resting full and inevitable on his face.

"I did," he replied, "to bring you round."

For some moments she sat and gazed at him awfully, her lips parted.

"Do you love me, then?" she asked.

He only stood and stared at her, fascinated. His soul seemed to melt.

She shuffled forward on her knees, and put her arms round him, round his legs, as he stood there, pressing her breasts against his knees and thighs, clutching him with strange, convulsive certainty, pressing his thighs against her, drawing him to her face, her throat, as she looked up at him with flaring, humble eyes of transfiguration, triumphant in first possession.

"You love me," she murmured, in strange transport, yearning and triumphant and confident. "You love me. I know you love me, I know."

And she was passionately kissing his knees, through the wet clothing, passionately and indiscriminately kissing his knees, his legs, as if unaware of everything.

He looked down at the tangled wet hair, the wild, bare, animal shoulders. He was amazed, bewildered, and afraid. He had never thought of loving her. He had never wanted to love her. When he rescued her and restored her, he was a doctor, and she was a patient. He had had no single personal thought of her. Nay, this introduction of the personal element was very distasteful to him, a violation of his professional honour. It was horrible to have her there embracing his knees. It was horrible. He revolted from it, violently. And yet—and yet—he had not the power to break away.

She looked at him again, with the same supplication of powerful love, and that same transcendent, frightening light of triumph. In view of the delicate flame which seemed to come from her face like a light, he was powerless. And yet he had never intended to love her. He had never intended. And something stubborn in him could not give way.

"You love me," she repeated, in a murmur of deep, rhapsodic assurance. "You love me."

Her hands were drawing him, drawing him down to her. He was afraid, even a little horrified. For he had, really, no intention of loving her. Yet her hands were drawing him towards her. He put out his hand quickly to steady himself, and grasped her bare shoulder. A flame seemed to burn the hand that grasped her soft shoulder. He had no intention of loving her: his whole will was against his yielding. It was horrible. And yet wonderful was the touch of her shoulders, beautiful the shining of her face. Was she perhaps mad? He had a horror of yielding to her. Yet something in him ached also.

He had been staring away at the door, away from her. But his hand remained on her shoulder. She had gone suddenly very still. He looked down at her. Her eyes were now wide with fear, with doubt, the light was dying from her face, a shadow of terrible greyness was returning. He could not bear the touch of her eyes' question upon him, and the look of death behind the question.

With an inward groan he gave way, and let his heart yield towards her. A sudden gentle smile came on his face. And her eyes, which never left his face, slowly, slowly filled with tears. He watched the strange water rise in her eyes, like some slow fountain coming up. And his heart seemed to burn and melt away in his breast.

He could not bear to look at her any more. He dropped on his knees and caught her head with his arms and pressed her face against his throat. She was very still. His heart, which seemed to have broken, was burning with a kind of agony in his breast. And he felt her slow, hot tears wetting his throat. But he could not move.

He felt the hot tears wet his neck and the hollows of his neck, and he remained motionless, suspended through one of man's

eternities. Only now it had become indispensable to him to have her face pressed close to him; he could never let her go again. He could never let her head go away from the close clutch of his arm. He wanted to remain like that for ever, with his heart hurting him in a pain that was also life to him. Without knowing, he was looking down on her damp, soft brown hair.

Then, as it were suddenly, he smelt the horrid stagnant smell of that water. And at the same moment she drew away from him and looked at him. Her eyes were wistful and unfathomable. He was afraid of them, and he fell to kissing her, not knowing what he was doing. He wanted her eyes not to have that terrible, wistful, unfathomable look.

When she turned her face to him again, a faint delicate flush was glowing, and there was again dawning that terrible shining of joy in her eyes, which really terrified him, and yet which he now wanted to see, because he feared the look of doubt still more.

"You love me?" she said, rather faltering.

"Yes." The word cost him a painful effort. Not because it wasn't true. But because it was too newly true, the *saying* seemed to tear open again his newly-torn heart. And he hardly wanted it to be true, even now.

She lifted her face to him, and he bent forward and kissed her on the mouth, gently, with the one kiss that is an eternal pledge. And as he kissed her his heart strained again in his breast. He never intended to love her. But now it was over. He had crossed over the gulf to her, and all that he had left behind had shrivelled and become void.

After the kiss, her eyes again slowly filled with tears. She sat still, away from him, with her face drooped aside, and her hands folded in her lap. The tears fell very slowly. There was complete silence. He too sat there motionless and silent on the hearth-rug. The strange pain of his heart that was broken seemed to consume him. That he should love her? That this was love! That he should be ripped open in this way! Him, a doctor! How they would all jeer if they knew! It was agony to him to think they might know.

In the curious naked pain of the thought he looked again to her. She was sitting there drooped into a muse. He saw a tear fall, and his heart flared hot. He saw for the first time that one of her shoulders was quite uncovered, one arm bare, he could see one of her small breasts; dimly, because it had become almost dark in the room.

"Why are you crying?" he asked, in an altered voice.

She looked up at him, and behind her tears the consciousness of her situation for the first time brought a dark look of shame to her eyes.

"I'm not crying, really," she said, watching him, half frightened.

He reached his hand, and softly closed it on her bare arm.

"I love you! I love you!" he said in a soft, low vibrating voice, unlike himself.

She shrank, and dropped her head. The soft, penetrating grip of his hand on her arm distressed her. She looked up at him.

"I want to go," she said. "I want to go and get you some dry things."

"Why?" he said. "I'm all right."

"But I want to go," she said. "And I want you to change your things."

He released her arm, and she wrapped herself in the blanket, looking at him, rather frightened. And still she did not rise.

"Kiss me," she said wistfully.

He kissed her, but briefly, half in anger.

Then, after a second, she rose nervously, all mixed up in the blanket. He watched her in her confusion as she tried to extricate herself and wrap herself up so that she could walk. He watched her relentlessly, as she knew. And as she went, the blanket trailing, and as he saw a glimpse of her feet and her white leg, he tried to remember her as she was when he had wrapped her in the blanket. But then he didn't want to remember, because she had been nothing to him then, and his nature revolted from remembering her as she was when she was nothing to him.

A tumbling muffled noise from within the dark house startled him. Then he heard her voice: "There are clothes." He rose and went to the foot of the stairs, and gathered up the garments she had thrown down. Then he came back to the fire, to rub himself down and dress. He grinned at his own appearance when he had finished.

The fire was sinking, so he put on coal. The house was now quite dark, save for the light of a street-lamp that shone in faintly from beyond the holly trees. He lit the gas with matches he found on the mantelpiece. Then he emptied the pockets of his own clothes, and threw all his wet things in a heap into the scullery. After which he gathered up her sodden clothes, gently, and put them in a separate heap on the copper-top in the scullery.

It was six o'clock on the clock. His own watch had stopped. He ought to go back to the surgery. He waited, and still she did not come down. So he went to the foot of the stairs and called:

"I shall have to go."

Almost immediately he heard her coming down. She had on her best dress of black voile, and her hair was tidy, but still damp. She looked at him—and in spite of herself, smiled.

"I don't like you in those clothes," she said.

"Do I look a sight?" he answered.

They were shy of one another.

"I'll make you some tea," she said.

"No, I must go."

"Must you?" And she looked at him again with the wide, strained, doubtful eyes. And again, from the pain of his breast, he knew how he loved her. He went and bent to kiss her, gently, passionately, with his heart's painful kiss.

"And my hair smells so horrible," she murmured in distraction. "And I'm so awful, I'm so awful! Oh no, I'm too awful." And she broke into bitter, heartbroken sobbing. "You can't want to love me, I'm horrible."

"Don't be silly, don't be silly," he said, trying to comfort her, kissing her, holding her in his arms. "I want you, I want to marry you, we're going to be married, quickly, quickly—to-morrow if I can."

But she only sobbed terribly, and cried:

"I feel awful. I feel awful. I feel I'm horrible to you."

"No, I want you, I want you," was all he answered, blindly, with that terrible intonation which frightened her almost more than her horror lest he should *not* want her.

1922

Endnotes

- Note 1: Cold blood (French; literal trans.); here, calm detachment.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Servant girl.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Muzzle (French); here, face.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Grind.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Name of a public house (pub).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Gone wrong (slang).Return to reference 6

Why the Novel Matters

We have curious ideas of ourselves. We think of ourselves as a body with a spirit in it, or a body with a soul in it, or a body with a mind in it. *Mens sana in corpore sano.*[1] The years drink up the wine, and at last throw the bottle away, the body, of course, being the bottle.

It is a funny sort of superstition. Why should I look at my hand, as it so cleverly writes these words, and decide that it is a mere nothing compared to the mind that directs it? Is there really any huge difference between my hand and my brain? Or my mind? My hand is alive, it flickers with a life of its own. It meets all the strange universe in touch, and learns a vast number of things, and knows a vast number of things. My hand, as it writes these words, slips gaily along, jumps like a grasshopper to dot an *i*, feels the table rather cold, gets a little bored if I write too long, has its own rudiments of thought, and is just as much *me* as is my brain, my mind, or my soul. Why should I imagine that there is a *me* which is more *me* than my hand is? Since my hand is absolutely alive, me alive.

Whereas, of course, as far as I am concerned, my pen isn't alive at all. My pen *isn't me* alive. Me alive ends at my finger tips.

Whatever is me alive is me. Every tiny bit of my hands is alive, every little freckle and hair and fold of skin. And whatever is me alive is me. Only my finger-nails, those ten little weapons between me and an inanimate universe, they cross the mysterious Rubicon[2] between me alive and things like my pen, which are not alive, in my own sense.

So, seeing my hand is all alive, and me alive, wherein is it just a bottle, or a jug, or a tin can, or a vessel of clay, or any of the rest of that nonsense? True, if I cut it it will bleed, like a can of cherries. But then the skin that is cut, and the veins that bleed, and the bones that should never be seen, they are all just as alive as the blood that flows. So the tin can business, or vessel of clay, is just bunk.

And that's what you learn, when you're a novelist. And that's what you are very liable *not* to know, if you're a parson, or a philosopher, or a scientist, or a stupid person. If you're a parson, you talk about souls in heaven. If you're a novelist, you know that paradise is in the palm of your hand, and on the end of your nose, because both are alive; and alive, and man alive, which is more than you can say, for certain, of paradise. Paradise is after life, and I for one am not keen on anything that is *after* life. If you are a philosopher, you talk about infinity, and the pure spirit which knows all things. But if you pick up a novel, you realise immediately that infinity is just a handle to this self-same jug of a body of mine; while as for knowing, if I find my finger in the fire, I know that fire burns, with a knowledge so emphatic and vital, it leaves Nirvana[3] merely a conjecture. Oh, yes, my body, me alive, *knows*, and knows intensely. And as for the sum of all knowledge, it can't be anything more than an accumulation of all the things I know in the body, and you, dear reader, know in the body.

These damned philosophers, they talk as if they suddenly went off in steam, and were then much more important than they are when they're in their shirts. It is nonsense. Every man, philosopher included, ends in his own finger-tips. That's the end of his man alive. As for the words and thoughts and sighs and aspirations that fly from him, they are so many tremulations in the ether, and not alive at all. But if the tremulations reach another man alive, he may receive them into his life, and his life may take on a new colour, like a chameleon creeping from a brown rock on to a green leaf. All very well and good. It still doesn't alter the fact that the so-called spirit, the message or teaching of the philosopher or the saint, isn't alive at all, but just a tremulation upon the ether, like a radio message. All this spirit stuff is just tremulations upon the ether. If you, as man alive, quiver from the tremulation of the ether into new life, that is because you are man alive, and you take sustenance and stimulation into your alive man in a myriad ways. But to say that the message, or the spirit which is communicated to you, is more important than

your living body, is nonsense. You might as well say that the potato at dinner was more important.

Nothing is important but life. And for myself, I can absolutely see life nowhere but in the living. Life with a capital L is only man alive. Even a cabbage in the rain is cabbage alive. All things that are alive are amazing. And all things that are dead are subsidiary to the living. Better a live dog than a dead lion. But better a live lion than a live dog. *C'est la vie!*

It seems impossible to get a saint, or a philosopher, or a scientist, to stick to this simple truth. They are all, in a sense, renegades. The saint wishes to offer himself up as spiritual food for the multitude. Even Francis of Assisi[4] turns himself into a sort of angel-cake, of which anyone may take a slice. But an angel-cake is rather less than man alive. And poor St Francis might well apologise to his body, when he is dying: "Oh, pardon me, my body, the wrong I did you through the years!" It was no wafer,[5] for others to eat.

The philosopher, on the other hand, because he can think, decides that nothing but thoughts matter. It is as if a rabbit, because he can make little pills, should decide that nothing but little pills matter. As for the scientist, he has absolutely no use for me so long as I am man alive. To the scientist, I am dead. He puts under the microscope a bit of dead me, and calls it me. He takes me to pieces, and says first one piece, and then another piece, is me. My heart, my liver, my stomach have all been scientifically me, according to the scientist; and nowadays I am either a brain, or nerves, or glands, or something more up-to-date in the tissue line.

Now I absolutely flatly deny that I am a soul, or a body, or a mind, or an intelligence, or a brain, or a nervous system, or a bunch of glands, or any of the rest of these bits of me. The whole is greater than the part. And therefore, I, who am man alive, am greater than my soul, or spirit, or body, or mind, or consciousness, or anything else that is merely a part of me. I am a man, and alive. I am man alive, and as long as I can, I intend to go on being man alive.

For this reason I am a novelist. And being a novelist, I consider myself superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all great masters of different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog.

The novel is the one bright book of life. Books are not life. They are only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or any other book-tremulation can do.

The novel is the book of life. In this sense, the Bible is a great confused novel. You may say, it is about God. But it is really about man alive. Adam, Eve, Sarai, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Samuel, David, Bath-Sheba, Ruth, Esther, Solomon, Job, Isaiah, Jesus, Mark, Judas, Paul, Peter: what is it but man alive, from start to finish? Man alive, not mere bits. Even the Lord is another man alive, in a burning bush, throwing the tablets of stone at Moses's head.

I do hope you begin to get my idea, why the novel is supremely important, as a tremulation on the ether. Plato makes the perfect ideal being tremble in me. But that's only a bit of me. Perfection is only a bit, in the strange makeup of man alive. The Sermon on the Mount[6] makes the selfless spirit of me quiver. But that, too, is only a bit of me. The Ten Commandments set the old Adam shivering in me, warning me that I am a thief and a murderer, unless I watch it. But even the old Adam is only a bit of me.

I very much like all these bits of me to be set trembling with life and the wisdom of life. But I do ask that the whole of me shall tremble in its wholeness, some time or other.

And this, of course, must happen in me, living.

But as far as it can happen from a communication, it can only happen when a whole novel communicates itself to me. The Bible—but *all* the Bible—and Homer, and Shakespeare: these are the supreme old novels. These are all things to all men. Which means that in their wholeness they affect the whole man alive, which is the man himself, beyond any part of him. They set the whole tree trembling with a new access of life, they do not just stimulate growth in one direction.

I don't want to grow in any one direction any more. And, if I can help it, I don't want to stimulate anybody else into some particular direction. A particular direction ends in a *cul-de-sac.* We're in a *cul-de-sac* at present.

I don't believe in any dazzling revelation, or in any supreme Word. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of the Lord shall stand for ever."[7] That's the kind of stuff we've drugged ourselves with. As a matter of fact, the grass withereth, but comes up all the greener for that reason, after the rains. The flower fadeth, and therefore the bud opens. But the Word of the Lord, being man-uttered and a mere vibration on the ether, becomes staler and staler, more and more boring, till at last we turn a deaf ear and it ceases to exist, far more finally than any withered grass. It is grass that renews its youth like the eagle, not any Word.

We should ask for no absolutes, or absolute. Once and for all and for ever, let us have done with the ugly imperialism of any absolute. There is no absolute good, there is nothing absolutely right. All things flow and change, and even change is not absolute. The whole is a strange assembly of apparently incongruous parts, slipping past one another.

Me, man alive, I am a very curious assembly of incongruous parts. My yea! of today is oddly different from my yea! of yesterday. My tears of to-morrow will have nothing to do with my tears of a year ago. If the one I love remains unchanged and unchanging, I shall cease to love her. It is only because she changes and startles me into change and defies my inertia, and is herself staggered in her inertia by my changing, that I can continue to love her. If she stayed put, I might as well love the pepper pot.

In all this change, I maintain a certain integrity. But woe betide me if I try to put my finger on it. If I say of myself, I am this, I am that!—then, if I stick to it, I turn into a stupid fixed thing like a lamp-post. I shall never know wherein lies my integrity, my individuality, my me. I *can* never know it. It is useless to talk about my ego. That only means that I have made up an *idea* of myself, and that I am trying to cut myself out to pattern. Which is no good. You can cut

your cloth to fit your coat, but you can't clip bits off your living body, to trim it down to your idea. True, you can put yourself into ideal corsets. But even in ideal corsets, fashions change.

Let us learn from the novel. In the novel, the characters can do nothing but *live.* If they keep on being good, according to pattern, or bad, according to pattern, or even volatile, according to pattern, they cease to live, and the novel falls dead. A character in a novel has got to live, or it is nothing.

We, likewise, in life have got to live, or we are nothing.

What we mean by living is, of course, just as indescribable as what we mean by *being.* Men get ideas into their heads, of what they mean by Life, and they proceed to cut life out to pattern. Sometimes they go into the desert to seek God, sometimes they go into the desert to seek cash, sometimes it is wine, woman, and song, and again it is water, political reform, and votes. You never know what it will be next: from killing your neighbour with hideous bombs and gas that tears the lungs, to supporting a Foundlings' Home[8] and preaching infinite Love, and being co-respondent in a divorce.

In all this wild welter, we need some sort of guide. It's no good inventing Thou Shalt Nots!

What then? Turn truly, honourably to the novel, and see wherein you are man alive, and wherein you are dead man in life. You may love a woman as man alive, and you may be making love to a woman as sheer dead man in life. You may eat your dinner as man alive, or as a mere masticating corpse. As man alive you may have shot at your enemy. But as a ghastly simulacrum of life you may be firing bombs into men who are neither your enemies nor your friends, but just things you are dead to. Which is criminal, when the things happen to be alive.

To be alive, to be man alive, to be whole man alive: that is the point. And at its best, the novel, and the novel supremely, can help you. It can help you not to be dead man in life. So much of a man walks about dead and a carcass in the street and house, to-day: so

much of women is merely dead. Like a pianoforte with half the notes mute.

But the novel you can see, plainly, when the man goes dead, the woman goes inert. You can develop an instinct for life, if you will, instead of a theory of right and wrong, good and bad.

In life, there is right and wrong, good and bad, all the time. But what is right in one case is wrong in another. And in the novel you see one man becoming a corpse, because of his so-called goodness, another going dead because of his so-called wickedness. Right and wrong is an instinct: but an instinct of the whole consciousness in a man, bodily, mental, spiritual at once. And only in the novel are *all* things given full play, or at least, they may be given full play, when we realize that life itself, and not inert safety, is the reason for living. For out of the full play of all things emerges the only thing that is anything, the wholeness of a man, the wholeness of a woman, man live, and live woman.

1936

Endnotes

- Note 1: A healthy mind in a healthy body (Latin).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: When Julius Caesar crossed the river Rubicon (near Rimini, Italy) in 49 B.C.E., in defiance of the Senate, he indicated his intention of advancing against Pompey and thus involving the country in civil war. Hence to "cross the Rubicon" means to take an important and irrevocable decision.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Buddhist theology, the extinction of the self and its desires and the attainment of perfect beatitude.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Roman Catholic saint (1181 or 1182–1226).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Host, consumed as Christ's body in Roman Catholic Communion.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See Matthew 5:7.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Isaiah 40:8.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Orphanage.Return to reference 8

Love on the Farm[1]

What large, dark hands are those at the window
Grasping in the golden light
Which weaves its way through the evening wind
    At my heart's delight?

Ah, only the leaves! But in the west
I see a redness suddenly come
Into the evening's anxious breast—
    'Tis the wound of love goes home!

The woodbine° creeps abroad
Calling low to her lover:
  The sunlit flirt who all the day
  Has poised above her lips in play
  And stolen kisses, shallow and gay
  Of pollen, now has gone away—
  She woos the moth with her sweet, low word;
And when above her his moth-wings hover
Then her bright breast she will uncover
And yield her honey-drop to her lover.

Into the yellow, evening glow
Saunters a man from the farm below;
Leans, and looks in at the low-built shed
Where the swallow has hung her marriage bed.
  The bird lies warm against the wall.
  She glances quick her startled eyes
  Towards him, then she turns away
  Her small head, making warm display
  Of red upon the throat. Her terrors sway
  Her out of the nest's warm, busy ball,

Whose plaintive cry is heard as she flies
In one blue stoop from out the sties°
Into the twilight's empty hall.

Oh, water-hen, beside the rushes
Hide your quaintly scarlet blushes,
Still your quick tail, lie still as dead,
Till the distance folds over his ominous tread!

The rabbit presses back her ears,
Turns back her liquid, anguished eyes
And crouches low; then with wild spring
Spurts from the terror of *his* oncoming;
To be choked back, the wire ring
Her frantic effort throttling:
Piteous brown ball of quivering fears!

Ah, soon in his large, hard hands she dies,
And swings all loose from the swing of his walk!
Yet calm and kindly are his eyes
And ready to open in brown surprise
Should I not answer to his talk
Or should he my tears surmise.

I hear his hand on the latch, and rise from my chair
Watching the door open; he flashes bare
His strong teeth in a smile, and flashes his eyes
In a smile like triumph upon me; then careless-wise
He flings the rabbit soft on the table board
And comes towards me: ah! the uplifted sword
Of his hand against my bosom! and oh, the broad
Blade of his glance that asks me to applaud
His coming! With his hand he turns my face to him
And caresses me with his fingers that still smell grim
Of the rabbit's fur! God, I am caught in a snare!
I know not what fine wire is round my throat;

I only know I let him finger there
My pulse of life, and let him nose like a stoat°
Who sniffs with joy before he drinks the blood.

And down his mouth comes to my mouth! and down
His bright dark eyes come over me, like a hood
Upon my mind! his lips meet mine, and a flood
Of sweet fire sweeps across me, so I drown
Against him, die, and find death good.

1913, 1928

Endnotes

- Note 1: Called "Cruelty and Love" when first published in 1913 and "Love on the Farm" when it appeared in *Collected Poems* (1928).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *honeysuckle*Return to reference °
- °: *pens for animals*Return to reference °
- °: *weasel*Return to reference °

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cozy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato.° The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

1918

Notes

- °: *played with passion*Return to reference °

Snake

A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree°
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,

Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning
bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna° smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the
gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and
finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to
drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has
drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the
air, so black;

Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him;
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross,[1]
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate;
A pettiness.

1923

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *Mediterranean evergreen*Return to reference °
- °: *the volcano*Return to reference °

How Beastly the Bourgeois Is

How beastly the bourgeois is
especially the male of the species—

Presentable, eminently presentable—
shall I make you a present of him?

Isn't he handsome? Isn't he healthy? Isn't he a fine specimen?
Doesn't he look the fresh clean englishman, outside?
Isn't it god's own image? tramping his thirty miles a day
after partridges, or a little rubber ball?
wouldn't you like to be like that, well off, and quite the thing?

Oh, but wait!
Let him meet a new emotion, let him be faced with another man's need,
let him come home to a bit of moral difficulty, let life face him with a new demand on his understanding
and then watch him go soggy, like a wet meringue.
Watch him turn into a mess, either a fool or a bully.
Just watch the display of him, confronted with a new demand on his intelligence,
a new life-demand.

How beastly the bourgeois is
especially the male of the species—
Nicely groomed, like a mushroom
standing there so sleek and erect and eyeable—

and like a fungus, living on the remains of bygone life
sucking his life out of the dead leaves of greater life than his own.

And even so, he's stale, he's been there too long.
Touch him, and you'll find he's all gone inside
just like an old mushroom, all wormy inside, and hollow
under a smooth skin and an upright appearance.

Full of seething, wormy, hollow feelings
rather nasty—
How beastly the bourgeois is!

Standing in their thousands, these appearances, in damp England
what a pity they can't all be kicked over
like sickening toadstools, and left to melt back, swiftly
into the soil of England.

1929

T. S. ELIOT
1888–1965

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, of New England stock. He entered Harvard in 1906 and was influenced there by the anti-Romanticism of Irving Babbitt and the philosophical and critical interests of George Santayana, as well as by the enthusiastic study of Renaissance literature and of South Asian religions. He wrote his Harvard dissertation on the English idealist philosopher F. H. Bradley, whose emphasis on the private nature of individual experience, "a circle enclosed on the outside," influenced Eliot's poetry considerably. He also studied literature and philosophy in France and Germany before going to England shortly after the outbreak of World War I in 1914. He studied Greek philosophy at Oxford, taught school in London, and then obtained a position with Lloyds Bank. In 1915 he married an English writer, Vivienne Haigh-Wood, but the marriage was not a success. She suffered from poor emotional and physical health. The strain affected Eliot, too. By November 1921 distress and worry had brought him to the verge of a nervous breakdown, and on medical advice he went to recuperate in a Swiss sanitorium. Two months later he returned, pausing in Paris long enough to give his early supporter and adviser Ezra Pound the manuscript of *The Waste Land.* Eliot left his wife in 1933, and she was eventually committed against her will to a psychiatric hospital, where she died in 1947. Ten years later he married his secretary, Valerie Fletcher. In the years between his separation and

remarriage, Eliot maintained a deep correspondence with Emily Hale, a woman with whom he had fallen in chaste love while a graduate student at Harvard. Eliot's letters to Hale, located in the Princeton University library, were unsealed in 2020, after more than sixty years of restriction. They gave literary scholars and the public a new angle on Eliot's private life as he was writing his later works, including *Four Quartets* (1943).

Eliot started writing literary and philosophical reviews soon after settling in London and was assistant editor of *The Egoist* magazine from 1917 to 1919. In 1922 he founded the influential quarterly *The Criterion*, which he edited until it ceased publication in 1939. His poetry first appeared in 1915, when, at Pound's urging, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" was printed in *Poetry* magazine (Chicago), and a few other short poems were published in the short-lived periodical *Blast.* His first published collection of poems was *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917); two other small collections followed in 1919 and 1920; in 1922 *The Waste Land* appeared, first in *The Criterion* in October, then in *The Dial* (in America) in November, and finally in book form. Meanwhile he was also publishing collections of his critical essays. In 1925 he joined the London publishing firm Faber & Gwyer, and he was made a director when the firm was renamed Faber & Faber. He became a British subject and joined the Church of England in 1927.

"Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning." This remark, from Eliot's essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), gives one clue to his poetic method from "Prufrock" through *The Waste Land.* When he settled in London he saw poetry in English as exhausted, with no verbal excitement or original craftsmanship. He sought to make poetry more subtle, more suggestive, and at the same time more precise. Like the imagists, he emphasized the necessity of clear and precise images. From the philosopher poet T.

E. Hulme and from Pound, he learned to fear what was seen as Romantic self-indulgence and vagueness, and to regard the poetic medium rather than the poet's personality as the important factor. At the same time the "hard, dry" images advocated by Hulme were not enough for him; he wanted wit, allusiveness, irony. He saw in the Metaphysical poets how wit and passion could be combined, and he saw in the French symbolists, such as Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, and Arthur Rimbaud, how an image could be both absolutely precise in what it referred to physically and endlessly suggestive in its meanings because of its relationship to other images. The combination of precision, symbolic suggestion, and ironic mockery in the poetry of the late-nineteenth-century French poet Jules Laforgue attracted and influenced him, as did Laforgue's verse technique that Eliot described in an interview as "rhyming lines of irregular length, with the rhymes coming in irregular places." He also found in the Jacobean dramatists, such as Thomas Middleton, Cyril Tourneur, and John Webster, a flexible blank verse with overtones of colloquial movement, a way of counterpointing the accent of conversation and the note of terror. Eliot's fluency in French and German, his study of Western and non-Western literary and religious texts in their original languages, his rigorous knowledge of philosophy, his exacting critical intellect, his keen sensitivity to colloquial rhythm and idiom, his ability to fuse anguished emotional states with sharply etched intellectual satire—all of these contributed to his crafting one of the twentieth century's most distinctive and influential bodies of poetry.

Hulme's protests against the Romantic concept of poetry reinforced what Eliot had learned from Babbitt at Harvard; yet for all his severity with poets such as Percy Shelley and Walt Whitman, for all his cultivation of a classical viewpoint and his insistence on order and discipline rather than on mere self-expression in art, one side of Eliot's poetic genius is Romantic. The symbolist influence on his imagery, his elegiac lamentation over loss and fragmentation, his interest in the evocative and the suggestive, lines such as "And fiddled whisper music on those strings / And bats with baby faces in

the violet light / Whistled, and beat their wings," and recurring images such as the hyacinth girl and the rose garden show what could be called a Romantic element in his poetry. But it is combined with a dry ironic allusiveness, a play of wit and satire, and a colloquial element, which are not normally found in poets of the Romantic tradition.

Eliot's real novelty—and the cause of much bewilderment when his poems first appeared—was his deliberate elimination of all merely connective and transitional passages, his building up of the total pattern of meaning through the immediate juxtaposition of images without overt explanation of what they are doing, together with his use of oblique references to other works of literature (some of them quite obscure to most readers of his time). "Prufrock" presents a symbolic landscape where the meaning emerges from the mutual interaction of the images, and that meaning is enlarged by echoes, often ironic, of Hesiod and Dante and Shakespeare. *The Waste Land* is a series of scenes and images with no author's voice intervening to tell us where we are but with the implications developed through multiple contrasts and through analogies with older literary works often referred to in a distorted quotation or half-concealed allusion. Furthermore, the works referred to are not necessarily central in the Western literary tradition: besides Dante and Shakespeare there are pre-Socratic philosophers; major and minor seventeenth-century poets and dramatists; works of anthropology, history, and philosophy; texts of Buddhism and Hinduism; even popular songs and vaudeville. Ancient and modern voices, high and low art, Western and non-Western languages clash, coincide, jostle alongside one another. In a culture where the poet's public might lack a common cultural heritage, a shared knowledge of works of the past, Eliot felt it necessary to accumulate his own body of references. In this his use of earlier literature differs from, say, John Milton's. Both poets are difficult for the modern reader, who needs editorial assistance in recognizing and understanding many of the allusions—but Milton was drawing on a body of knowledge common to educated people in his day. Nevertheless, this aspect of

Eliot can be exaggerated; his imagery and the movement of his verse set the tone he requires, establish the area of meaning to be developed, so that even a reader ignorant of most of the literary allusions can often get the feel of the poem and achieve some understanding of what it says.

Eliot's early poetry, until at least the middle 1920s, is mostly concerned in one way or another with the Waste Land, with aspects of cultural decay in the modern Western world. After his formal acceptance of Anglican Christianity, a penitential note appears in much of his verse, a note of quiet searching for spiritual peace, with considerable allusion to biblical, liturgical, and mystical religious literature and to Dante. *Ash Wednesday* (1930), a poem in six parts, much less fiercely concentrated in style than the earlier poetry, explores with gentle insistence a mood both penitential and questioning. The Ariel poems (so called because published in Faber's Ariel pamphlet series) present or explore aspects of religious doubt or discovery or revelation, sometimes, as in "Journey of the Magi," drawing on biblical incident. In *Four Quartets* (of which the first, "Burnt Norton," appeared in the *Collected Poems* of 1936, though all four were not completed until 1943, when they were published together), Eliot further explored essentially religious moods, dealing with the relation between time and eternity and the cultivation of that selfless passivity that can yield the moment of timeless revelation in the midst of time. The mocking irony, the savage humor, the collage of quotations, the deliberately startling juxtaposition of the sordid and the romantic give way in these later poems to a quieter poetic idiom that is less jagged and more abstract, less fragmentary and more formally patterned.

As a critic Eliot worked out in his reading of older literature what he needed as a poet to hold and to admire. He lent the growing weight of his authority to a shift in literary taste that replaced Milton with John Donne as the great seventeenth-century English poet and replaced Alfred, Lord Tennyson in the nineteenth century with Gerard Manley Hopkins. Rewriting English literary history, he saw the late seventeenth-century "dissociation of sensibility"—the

segregation of intellect and emotion—as determining the course of English poetry throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This theory also explained what he was aiming at in his own poetry: the reestablishment of that *unified* sensibility he found in Donne and other early seventeenth-century poets and dramatists, who were able, he suggests in "The Metaphysical Poets," to "feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose." His view of tradition, his dislike of the poetic exploitation of the author's personality, his advocacy of what he called "orthodoxy," made him suspicious of what he considered eccentric geniuses such as William Blake and D. H. Lawrence. On the other side, his dislike of the grandiloquent and his insistence on complexity and on the mingling of the formal with the conversational made him distrust Milton's influence on English poetry. He considered himself a "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and Anglo-Catholic in religion" (*For Lancelot Andrewes*, 1928), in favor of order against chaos, tradition against eccentricity, authority against rampant individualism; yet his own poetry is in many respects untraditional and certainly highly individual in tone. His conservative and even authoritarian habit of mind, his anti-Semitic remarks and missionary zeal, alienated some who admire—and some whose own poetry has been much influenced by—his poetry.

Eliot's plays address, directly or indirectly, religious themes. *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) deals in an appropriately ritual manner with the killing of Archbishop Thomas à Becket, using a chorus and presenting its central speech as a sermon by the archbishop. *The Family Reunion* (1939) deals with the problem of guilt and redemption in a modern upper-class English family; combining choric devices from Greek tragedy with a poetic idiom subdued to the accents of drawing-room conversation. In his three later plays, all written in the 1950s, *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk*, and *The Elder Statesman*, he achieved popular success by casting a serious religious theme in the form of a sophisticated modern social comedy, using a verse that is so

conversational in movement that when spoken in the theater it does not sound like verse at all.

Critics differ on the degree to which Eliot succeeded in his last plays in combining box-office success with dramatic effectiveness. But there is no disagreement on his importance as one of the great renovators of poetry in English, whose influence on a whole generation of poets, critics, and intellectuals was enormous. His range as a poet is limited, and his interest in the great middle ground of human experience (as distinct from the extremes of saint and sinner) deficient; but when in 1948 he was awarded the rare honor of the Order of Merit by King George VI and also gained the Nobel Prize in literature, his positive qualities were widely and fully recognized—his poetic cunning, his fine craftsmanship, his original accent, his historical importance as *the* poet of the modern symbolist-Metaphysical tradition.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
a persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
questa fiamma staria senza più scosse.
Ma per ciò che giammai di questo fondo
non tornò vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.[1]

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question . . .
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,

Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time[2]
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands[3]
That lift and drop a question on your plate;
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time
To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—
(They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
(They will say: 'But how his arms and legs are thin!')
Do I dare
Disturb the universe?
In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all—
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall[4]
Beneath the music from a farther room.
  So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all
  —
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
  And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all
  —
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
  And should I then presume?
  And how should I begin?

• • • • •

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow
  streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of
  windows? . . .
I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas,[5]

• • • • •

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,[6]
I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball[7]
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,
To say: 'I am Lazarus,[8] come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all'—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: 'That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all.'

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,

After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts
that trail along the floor—
And this, and so much more?—
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in
patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
'That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all.'

• • • • •

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress,[9] start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence,[1] but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old . . . I grow old . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a
peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon
the beach.
I have heard the mermaids, singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves

Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

1910–111915, 1917

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  "If I thought that my reply would be to one who would ever return to the world, this flame would stay without further movement; but since none has ever returned alive from this depth, if what I hear is true, I answer you without fear of infamy" (Dante, *Inferno* 27.61–66). Guido da Montefeltro, shut up in his flame (the punishment given to false counselors), tells the shame of his evil life to Dante because he believes Dante will never return to Earth to report it.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress," line 1: "Had we but world enough, and time."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *Works and Days* is a poem about the farming year by the Greek poet Hesiod (8th century B.C.E.). Eliot contrasts useful agricultural labor with the futile "works and days of hands" engaged in meaningless social gesturing.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* 1.1.4: "That strain again, it had a dying fall."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, he would have been better as a crab on the ocean bed.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Like that of John the Baptist. See Mark 6:17–28 and Matthew 14:3–11.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See "To His Coy Mistress," lines 41–44: "Let us roll all our strength and all / Our sweetness up into one ball, / And tear

our pleasures with rough strife / Thorough the iron gates of life.”Return to reference 7

- Note 8: One Lazarus was raised by Jesus from the dead (John 11:1–44). In a parable, a different Lazarus is a beggar who goes to heaven, in contrast to a rich man who goes to hell. The rich man wishes Lazarus could return from the dead to warn the living, but his wish is refused (Luke 16:19–31).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In the Elizabethan sense of a state journey made by a royal or noble person. Elizabethan plays sometimes showed such “progresses” crossing the stage.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In its older meanings: “opinions,” “sententiousness.” See Chaucer’s *General Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales*, line 308.Return to reference 1

Sweeney among the Nightingales

ὤμοι, πε´πληγμαι καιρι´αν πληγη`ν ἔσω[1]

Apeneck Sweeney spreads his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate° giraffe.

The circles of the stormy moon
Slide westward toward the River Plate,[2]
Death and the Raven[3] drift above
And Sweeney guards the hornèd gate.[4]

Gloomy Orion and the Dog
Are veiled;[5] and hushed the shrunken seas;
The person in the Spanish cape
Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees

Slips and pulls the table cloth
Overturns a coffee-cup,
Reorganized upon the floor
She yawns and draws a stocking up;

The silent man in mocha brown
Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes;
The waiter brings in oranges
Bananas figs and hothouse grapes;

The silent vertebrate in brown
Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;
Rachel *née* Rabinovitch
Tears at the grapes with murderous paws;

She and the lady in the cape
Are suspect, thought to be in league;
Therefore the man with heavy eyes
Declines the gambit, shows fatigue,

Leaves the room and reappears
Outside the window, leaning in,
Branches of wistaria
Circumscribe a golden grin;

The host with someone indistinct
Converses at the door apart,
The nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud[6]
And let their liquid sittings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

1918, 1919

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Alas, I am struck with a mortal blow within" (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, line 1343); the voice of Agamemnon heard crying out from the palace as he is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Or Rio de la Plata, an estuary on the South American coast between Argentina and Uruguay, formed by the Uruguay and Paraná rivers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The constellation Corvus.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The gates of horn, in Hades, through which true dreams come to the upper world.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: For Sweeney and his female friend, the gate of vision is blocked and the great myth-making constellations—"Orion and

the Dog”—are “veiled.”Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Agamemnon is murdered not in a “bloody wood” but in his bath. Eliot here telescopes Agamemnon’s murder with the wood where, in Greek myth, Philomela was raped by her sister’s husband, Tereus (she was subsequently turned into a nightingale), and also with the ancient “bloody wood” of Nemi, where the old priest was slain by his successor (as described in the first chapter of Sir James Frazer’s *Golden Bough*).Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *spotted, stained*Return to reference °

The Waste Land In the essay "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth" (1923), Eliot hinted at the ambitions of *The Waste Land* when he declared that others would follow James Joyce "in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity. . . . It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. . . . It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible in art." Eliot labeled this new technique "the mythical method."

He gave another clue to the theme and structure of *The Waste Land* in a general note, in which he stated that "not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance* [1920]." He further acknowledged a general indebtedness to Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough* (thirteen volumes, 1890–1915), "especially the . . . volumes *Adonis*, *Attis*, *Osiris*," in which Frazer deals with ancient vegetation myths and fertility ceremonies. Drawing on material from Frazer and other anthropologists, Weston traces the relationship of these myths and rituals to Christianity and especially to the legend of the Holy Grail. She finds an archetypal fertility myth in the story of the Fisher King, whose death, infirmity, or impotence (there are many forms of the myth) brought drought and desolation to the land and failure of the power to reproduce themselves among both humans and beasts. This symbolic Waste Land can be revived only if a "questing knight" goes to the Chapel Perilous, situated in the heart of it, and there asks certain ritual questions about the Grail (or Cup) and the Lance —originally fertility symbols, female and male, respectively. The proper asking of these questions revives the king and restores fertility to the land. The relation of this original Grail myth to fertility cults and rituals found in many different civilizations, and represented by stories of a god who dies and is later resurrected (for instance, Tammuz, Adonis, Attis), shows their common origin in a response to the cyclical movement of the seasons, with vegetation dying in winter to be resurrected again in the spring. Christianity,

according to Weston, gave its own spiritual meaning to the myth; it "did not hesitate to utilize the already existing medium of instruction, but boldly identified the Deity of Vegetation, regarded as Life Principle, with the God of the Christian Faith." The Fisher King is related to the use of the fish symbol in early Christianity. Weston states "with certainty that the Fish is a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity, and that the title of Fisher has, from the earliest ages, been associated with the Deities who were held to be specially connected with the origin and preservation of Life." Eliot, following Weston, thus uses a great variety of mythological and religious material, both Western and Eastern, to paint a symbolic picture of the modern Waste Land and the need for regeneration. He vividly presents the terror of that desiccated life—its loneliness, emptiness, and irrational apprehensions—as well as its misuse of sexuality, but he paradoxically ends the poem with a benediction. The mass death and social collapse of World War I inform the poem's vision of a Waste Land strewn with corpses, wreckage, and ruin. Another significant general source for the poem is the German composer Richard Wagner's operas *Götterdämmerung* (*Twilight of the Gods*), *Parsifal*, *Das Rheingold*, and *Tristan und Isolde.*

The poem as published owes a great deal to the severe pruning by Ezra Pound; the original manuscript, with Pound's excisions and comments, provides fascinating information about the genesis and development of the poem, and was reproduced in facsimile in 1971, edited by Eliot's widow, Valerie Eliot. Reprinted below is the text as first published in book form in December 1922, including Eliot's notes, which are supplemented by the present editors' notes.

The Waste Land

"NAM Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: σι´βυλλα τι´ Θε´λεισ; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν Θε´λω."[1]

FOR EZRA POUND
il miglior fabbro[2]

I. The Burial of the Dead[3]

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee[4]
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,[5]
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.[6]
And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,[7]
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,[8]
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,[9]
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu,
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilest du?[1]

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
"They called me the hyacinth girl."
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth[2] garden,
Yours arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Oed' und leer das Meer.[3]

Madame Sosostris,[4] famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless
Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,

With a wicked pack of cards.[5] Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,[6]
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna,[7] the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.
Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,[8]
And here is the one-eyed merchant,[9] and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Hanged Man.[1] Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone,
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City.[2]
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,[3]
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,[4]
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.[5]
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: "Stetson![6]
"You who were with me in the ships at Mylae![7]
"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
"Has it begun to sprout?[8] Will it bloom this year?
"Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
"Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
"Or with his nails he'll dig it up again![9]

"You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable—mon frère!"[1]

Endnotes

- Note 3: The title comes from the Anglican burial service.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  Lake a few miles south of Munich, where the "mad" King Ludwig II of Bavaria drowned in 1886 in mysterious circumstances. This romantic, melancholy king passionately admired Richard Wagner and especially Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*, which plays a significant part in *The Waste Land.* Ludwig's suffering of "death by water" in the Starnbergersee thus evokes a cluster of themes central to the poem. Eliot had met King Ludwig's second cousin Countess Marie Larisch and talked with her. Although he had probably not read the countess's book *My Past*, which discusses King Ludwig at length, he got information about her life and times from her in person, and the remarks made in lines 8–18 are hers.
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A small public park in Munich.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: I am not Russian at all; I come from Lithuania, a true German (German).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Cf. Ezekiel II, i [*Eliot's note*]. God, addressing Ezekiel, continues: "stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Cf. Ecclesiastes XII, v [*Eliot's note*]. The verse Eliot cites is part of the preacher's picture of the desolation of old age, "when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: See Isaiah 32:2: the "righteous king" "shall be . . . as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a

weary land."Return to reference 9

- Note 1: V. [see] *Tristan und Isolde*, I, verses 5–8 [*Eliot's note*]. In Wagner's opera a sailor recalls the girl he has left behind: "Fresh blows the wind to the homeland; my Irish child, where are you waiting?"Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Name of a young man loved and accidentally killed by Apollo in Greek mythology; from his blood sprang the flower named for him, inscribed with "AI," a cry of grief.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Id. [Ibid] III, verse 24 [*Eliot's note*]. In act 3 of *Tristan und Isolde*, Tristan lies dying. He is waiting for Isolde to come to him from Cornwall, but a shepherd, appointed to watch for her sail, can report only, "Waste and empty is the sea." *Oed'* (or *Öd'*) was originally misspelled *Od'*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A mock Egyptian name (suggested to Eliot by "Sesostris, the Sorceress of Ecbatana," the name assumed by a character in Aldous Huxley's novel *Crome Yellow* [1921] who dresses up as a gypsy to tell fortunes at a fair).Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  That is, the deck of Tarot cards. The four suits of the Tarot pack, discussed by Jessie Weston in *From Ritual to Romance*, are the cup, lance, sword, and dish—the life symbols found in the Grail story. Weston noted that "today the Tarot has fallen somewhat into disrepute, being principally used for purposes of divination." Some of the cards mentioned in lines 46–56 are discussed by Eliot in his note to this passage: "I am not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards, from which I have obviously departed to suit my own convenience. The Hanged Man, a member of the traditional pack, fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in part V. The Phoenician Sailor and the Merchant appear later; also the 'crowds of people,' and Death by Water is executed in part IV.

The Man with Three Staves (an authentic member of the Tarot pack) I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself." Return to reference 5

- Note 6:
  See part IV. Phlebas the Phoenician and Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant—both of whom appear later in the poem—are different phases of the same symbolic character, here identified as the "Phoenician Sailor." Mr. Eugenides exports "currants" (line 210); the drowned Phlebas floats in the "current" (line 315). Line 48 draws from Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1.2.400–08) to the shipwrecked Ferdinand, who was "sitting on a bank / Weeping again the King my father's wrack," when "this music crept by me on the waters." The song is about the supposed drowning of Ferdinand's father, Alonso. *The Waste Land* contains many references to *The Tempest.* Ferdinand is associated with Phlebas and Mr. Eugenides and, therefore, with the "drowned Phoenician Sailor."
  Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Beautiful lady (Italian). The word also suggests Madonna (the Virgin Mary) and, therefore, the Madonna of the Rocks (as in Leonardo da Vinci's painting); the rocks symbolize the Church. Belladonna is also an eye cosmetic and a poison—the deadly nightshade.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, the wheel of fortune, whose turning represents the reversals of human life.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, Mr. Eugenides, "one-eyed" because the figure is in profile on the card. Unlike the man with three staves and the wheel, which are Tarot cards, he is Eliot's creation.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: On his card in the Tarot pack he is shown hanging by one foot from a T-shaped cross. He symbolizes the self-sacrifice of the fertility god who is killed so that his resurrection may restore fertility to land and people.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Cf. Baudelaire: "Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves, / Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant" [*Eliot's note*]. The

lines are quoted from "Les Sept Vieillards" ("The Seven Old Men") of *Les Fleurs du Mal (The Flowers of Evil)*, by the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867): "Swarming city, city full of dreams, / Where the specter in broad daylight accosts the passerby." The word *rêve* was originally misspelled *rève.* Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Cf. Inferno III, 55–57 [*Eliot's note*]. The note goes on to quote Dante's lines, which may be translated: "So long a train of people, / that I should never have believed / That death had undone so many." Dante, just outside the gate of hell, has seen "the wretched souls of those who lived without disgrace and without praise."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Cf. Inferno IV, 25–27 [*Eliot's note*]. In Limbo, the first circle of hell, Dante has found the virtuous heathens, who lived before Christianity and are, therefore, eternally unable to achieve their desire of seeing God. Dante's lines, cited by Eliot, mean "Here, so far as I could tell by listening, / there was no lamentation except sighs, / which caused the eternal air to tremble."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A phenomenon which I have often noticed [*Eliot's note*]. St. Mary Woolnoth is a church in the City of London (the financial district); the crowd is flowing across London Bridge to work in the City. According to the Bible, Jesus died at the ninth hour.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Presumably representing the "average businessman."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Battle of Mylae (260 B.C.E.) in the First Punic War, which, in some measure like World War I, was fought for economic reasons.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A distortion of the fertility god's ritual death, which heralded rebirth.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Cf. the Dirge in Webster's *White Devil* [*Eliot's note*]. In the play by John Webster (d. 1625), the dirge, sung by Cornelia, has the lines "But keep the wolf far thence, that's foe to men, / For with his nails he'll dig them up again." Eliot makes the "wolf"

into a "dog," which is not a foe but a friend to humans.Return to reference 9

- Note 1:
  V. Baudelaire, Preface to *Fleurs du Mal* [*Eliot's note*]. The passage is the last line of the introductory poem "Au Lecteur" ("To the Reader"), in Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*; it may be translated: "Hypocrite reader!—my likeness—my brother!" "Au Lecteur" describes humans as sunk in stupidity, sin, and evil, but the worst in "each man's foul menagerie of sin" is boredom, the *"monstre délicat"*—"You know him; reader."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 1:
  From the *Satyricon* of Petronius (1st century C.E.): "For once I myself saw with my own eyes the Sibyl at Cumae hanging in a cage, and when the boys said to her 'Sibyl, what do you want?' she replied, 'I want to die.' " (The Greek may be transliterated, "Síbylla tí théleis?" and "apothanéin thélo.") The Cumaean Sibyl was the most famous of the Sibyls, the prophetic old women of Greek mythology; she guided Aeneas through Hades in Virgil's *Aeneid.* She had been granted immortality by Apollo, but because she forgot to ask for perpetual youth, she shrank into withered old age and her authority declined.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The better craftsman (Italian); a tribute originally paid to the Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel in Dante's *Purgatorio* 26.117. Ezra Pound (1885–1972), American expatriate poet who was a key figure in the modern movement in poetry, helped Eliot massively revise the manuscript.Return to reference 2

II. A Game of Chess[2]

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,[3]
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,[4]
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene[5]
The change of Philomel,[6] by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
"Jug Jug"[7] to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley[8]
Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"
The wind under the door.[9]
"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
Nothing again nothing.
"Do

"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
"Nothing?"

I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.[1]
"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"
But
O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag[2]—
It's so elegant
So intelligent

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"
"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
"With my hair down, so. What shall we do tomorrow?
"What shall we ever do?"

The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four.
And we shall play a game of chess,[3]
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

When Lil's husband got demobbed,[4] I said—
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME[5]
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
And if you dont give it him, there's others will, I said.
Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
If you dont like it you can get on with it, I said,
Others can pick and choose if you can't.
But if Albert makes off, it wont be for lack of telling.
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off,[6] she said.
(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be alright, but I've never been the same.
You *are* a proper fool, I said.

Well, if Albert wont leave you alone, there it is, I said,
What you get married for if you dont want children?
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,°
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot—
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.[7]

Endnotes

- Note 2: The title suggests two plays by Thomas Middleton (1580–1627): *A Game at Chess* and, more significant, *Women Beware Women*, which has a scene in which a mother-in-law is distracted by a game of chess while her daughter-in-law is seduced: every move in the chess game represents a move in the seduction.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, II, ii, 1. 190 [*Eliot's note*]. In Shakespeare's play, Enobarbus's famous description of the first meeting of Antony and Cleopatra begins, "The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne, / Burn'd on the water." Eliot's language in the opening lines of part 2 echoes ironically Enobarbus's speech.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Laquearia. V. *Aeneid*, I, 726 [*Eliot's note*]. *Laquearia* means "a paneled ceiling," and Eliot's note quotes the passage in the *Aeneid* that was his source for the word. The passage may be translated: "Blazing torches hang from the gold-paneled ceiling [*laquearibus aureis*], and torches conquer the night with

flames." Virgil is describing the banquet given by Dido, queen of Carthage, for Aeneas, with whom she fell in love.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Sylvan scene. V. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, 140 [*Eliot's note*]. The phrase is part of the first description of Eden, seen through Satan's eyes.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: V. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, Philomela [*Eliot's note*]. Philomela was raped by "the barbarous king" Tereus, husband of her sister, Procne. Philomela was then transformed into a nightingale. Eliot's note for line 100 refers ahead to his elaboration of the nightingale's song.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Conventional representation of nightingale's song in Elizabethan poetry.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Cf. Part III, 1. 195 [*Eliot's note*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Cf. Webster: "Is the wind in that door still?" [*Eliot's note*]. In John Webster's *The Devil's Law Case* (3.2.162), a physician asks this question on finding that the victim of a murderous attack is still breathing, meaning "Is he still alive?"Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Cf. Part I, 1. 37, 48 [*Eliot's note*].Return to reference 1
- Note 2: American ragtime song; a hit of Ziegfeld's Follies in 1912. The chorus is "That Shakespearian Rag, most intelligent, very elegant."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cf. the game of chess in Middleton's *Women Beware Women* [*Eliot's note*]. The significance of this chess game is discussed in the first note to part 2.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: British slang for *demobilized*—discharged from the army, particularly after World War I.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The traditional call of the British bartender at closing time.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The "chemist" (line 161) is a pharmacist. To cause an abortion.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See the mad Ophelia's departing words (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 4.5.69–70). Ophelia, too, met "death by water." See also the popular song lyric "Good night ladies, we're going to leave you now."Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *ham, bacon*Return to reference °

III. The Fire Sermon[8]

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song,[9]
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.
By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept,[1] . . .
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear[2]
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him,[3]
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors,[4] which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.[5]
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water[6]
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole![7]

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug
So rudely forc'd.
Tereu[8]

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter noon
Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna[9] merchant
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
C.i.f.[1] London: documents at sight,
Asked me in demotic° French
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.[2]

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias,[3] though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,[4]
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations° touched by the sun's last rays,
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.°

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest—
I too awaited the expected guest.
He, the young man carbuncular,° arrives,
A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
One of the low on whom assurance sits
As a silk hat on a Bradford[5] millionaire.
The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference.
(And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thebes[6] below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
Bestows one final patronising kiss,
And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
"Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.[7]

"This music crept by me upon the waters"[8]
And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
O City, City, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,

The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.[9]

The river sweats[1]
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.[2]
Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

Elizabeth and Leicester[3]
Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
Southwest wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers
Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

"Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew

Undid me.[4] By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."

"My feet are at Moorgate,[5] and my heart
Under my feet. After the event
He wept. He promised 'a new start.'
I made no comment. What should I resent?"

"On Margate[6] Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.
The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
My people humble people who expect
Nothing."
la la

To Carthage then I came[7]

Burning burning burning burning[8]
O Lord Thou pluckest me out[9]
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning

Endnotes

- Note 8: The Buddha preached the Fire Sermon, against the fires of lust and other passions that destroy people and prevent their regeneration.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: V. Spenser, *Prothalamion* [*Eliot's note*]. Eliot's line is the refrain from Edmund Spenser's marriage song, which is also set by the river Thames in London.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: See Psalms 137:1, in which the exiled Hebrews mourn for their homeland: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." Lake Leman

is another name for Lake Geneva, in Switzerland; Eliot wrote *The Waste Land* in Lausanne, by that lake. The noun *leman* is an archaic word meaning lover.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: An ironic distortion of Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," lines 21–22: "But at my back I always hear / Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near." See lines 196–97.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Cf. *The Tempest*, I, ii [*Eliot's note*]. See line 48.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Cf. Marvell, *To His Coy Mistress* [*Eliot's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Cf. Day, *Parliament of Bees:* "When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear, / A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring / Actaeon to Diana in the spring, / Where all shall see her naked skin" [*Eliot's note*]. Actaeon was changed to a stag and hunted to death after he saw Diana, the goddess of chastity, bathing with her nymphs. John Day (1574–ca. 1640), English poet.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken; it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia [*Eliot's note*]. One of the less bawdy versions of the song, which was popular among Australian troops in World War I, went as follows: "O the moon shines bright on Mrs. Porter / And on the daughter / Of Mrs. Porter. / They wash their feet in soda water / And so they oughter / To keep them clean."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: V. Verlaine, *Parsifal* [*Eliot's note*]: "And O those children's voices singing in the dome!" The sonnet by the French poet Paul Verlaine (1844–1896) describes Parsifal, the questing knight, resisting all sensual temptations to keep himself pure for the Grail and heal the Fisher King; Wagner's Parsifal had his feet washed before entering the castle of the Grail.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A reference to Tereus, who "rudely forc'd" Philomela; it was also a word for a nightingale's song in Elizabethan poetry. See the song from John Lyly's *Campaspe* (1584): "Oh, 'tis the

ravished nightingale. / *Jug, jug, jug, jug, tereu!* she cries." See also lines 100ff.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: Now Izmir, a seaport in western Turkey; here associated with Carthage and the ancient Phoenician and Syrian merchants, who spread the old mystery cults.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The currants were quoted at a price "carriage and insurance free to London"; and the Bill of Lading etc. were to be handed to the buyer upon payment of the sight draft [*Eliot's note*]. Another gloss of *C.i.f.* is "cost, insurance and freight."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Luxury hotel in the seaside resort of Brighton. Cannon Street Hotel, near the station that was then chief terminus for travelers to the Continent, was a favorite meeting place for businesspeople going or coming from abroad; it was also a locale for homosexual liaisons.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem. The whole passage from Ovid is of great anthropological interest [*Eliot's note*]. The note then quotes, from the Latin text of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the story of Tiresias's change of sex: "[The story goes that once Jove, having drunk a great deal,] jested with Juno. He said, 'Your pleasure in love is really greater than that enjoyed by men.' She denied it; so they decided to seek the opinion of the wise Tiresias, for he knew both aspects of love. For once, with a blow of his staff, he had committed violence on two huge snakes as they copulated in the green forest; and—wonderful to tell—was turned from a man into a woman and thus spent seven years. In the eighth year he saw the same snakes again and said: 'If a blow struck at you is so

powerful that it changes the sex of the giver, I will now strike at you again.' With these words she struck the snakes, and again became a man. So he was appointed arbitrator in the playful quarrel, and supported Jove's statement. It is said that Saturnia [that is, Juno] was quite disproportionately upset, and condemned the arbitrator to perpetual blindness. But the almighty father (for no god may undo what has been done by another god), in return for the sight that was taken away, gave him the power to know the future and so lightened the penalty paid by the honor."
Return to reference 3

- Note 4:
  This may not appear as exact as Sappho's lines, but I had in mind the "longshore" or "dory" fisherman, who returns at nightfall [*Eliot's note*]. Sappho's poem addressed Hesperus, the evening star, as the star that brings everyone home from work to evening rest; her poem is here distorted by Eliot. There is also an echo of the 19th-century Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson's "Requiem," line 221: "Home is the sailor, home from sea."
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Either the Yorkshire woolen manufacturing town, where many fortunes were made in World War I, or the pioneer oil town of Bradford, Pennsylvania, the home of one of Eliot's wealthy Harvard contemporaries, T. E. Hanley.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: For many generations, Tiresias lived in Thebes, where he witnessed the tragic fates of Oedipus and Creon; he prophesied in the marketplace by the wall of Thebes.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  V. Goldsmith, the song in *The Vicar of Wakefield* [*Eliot's note*]. Olivia, a character in Oliver Goldsmith's 1766 novel, sings the following song when she returns to the place where she was seduced: "When lovely woman stoops to folly / And finds too late that men betray / What charm can soothe her melancholy, /

What art can wash her guilt away? / The only art her guilt to cover, / To hide her shame from every eye, / To give repentance to her lover / And wring his bosom—is to die."
Return to reference 7

- Note 8: V. *The Tempest*, as above [*Eliot's note*]. See line 48. The line is from Ferdinand's speech, continuing after "weeping again the King my father's wrack."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The interior of St. Magnus Martyr is to my mind one of the finest among [Sir Christopher] Wren's interiors. See *The Proposed Demolition of Nineteen City Churches:* (P. S. King & Son, Ltd.) [*Eliot's note*]. In these lines the "pleasant" music, the "fishmen" resting after labor, and the splendor of the church interior suggest a world of true values, where work and relaxation are both real and take place in a context of religious meaning.Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  The Song of the (three) Thames-daughters begins here. From line 292 to 306 inclusive they speak in turn. V. *Götterdämmerung*, III, i: the Rhinedaughters [*Eliot's note*]. Eliot parallels the Thames-daughters with the Rhinemaidens in Wagner's opera *Götterdämmerung* (*The Twilight of the Gods*), who lament that, with the gold of the Rhine stolen, the beauty of the river is gone. The refrain in lines 277–78 is borrowed from Wagner.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Greenwich is a borough in London on the south side of the Thames; opposite is the Isle of Dogs (a peninsula).Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  The fruitless love of Queen Elizabeth and the Earl of Leicester (Robert Dudley) is recalled in Eliot's note: "V. [J. A.] Froude, *Elizabeth*, Vol. I, ch. iv, letter of De Quadra to Philip of Spain: 'In the afternoon we were in a barge, watching the games on the river. (The queen) was alone with Lord Robert and myself on the poop, when they began to talk nonsense, and went so far that Lord Robert at last said, as I was on the spot there was no

reason why they should not be married if the queen pleased.' " Queen Elizabeth I was born in the old Greenwich House, by the river, where Greenwich Hospital now stands.
Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Cf. *Purgatorio*, V, 133 [*Eliot's note*]. The *Purgatorio* lines, which Eliot here parodies, may be translated: "Remember me, who am La Pia. / Siena made me, Maremma undid me." "Highbury": a residential London suburb. "Richmond": a pleasant part of London westward up the Thames, with boating and riverside hotels. "Kew": adjoining Richmond, has the famous Kew Gardens.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Underground (that is, subway) station Eliot used daily while working at Lloyds Bank.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Popular seaside resort on the Thames estuary.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: V. St. Augustine's *Confessions:* "to Carthage then I came, where a caldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears" [*Eliot's note*]. The passage from the *Confessions* quoted here occurs in St. Augustine's account of his youthful life of lust. See line 92 and its note.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  The complete text of the Buddha's Fire Sermon (which corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount) from which these words are taken, will be found translated in the late Henry Clarke Warren's *Buddhism in Translation* (Harvard Oriental Series). Mr. Warren was one of the great pioneers of Buddhist studies in the occident [*Eliot's note*]. In the sermon, the Buddha instructs his priests that all things "are on fire. . . . The eye . . . is on fire; forms are on fire; eye-consciousness is on fire; impressions received by the eye are on fire; and whatever sensation, pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent, originates in dependence on impressions received by the eye, that also is on fire. And with what are these on fire? With the fire of passion, say I, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation." For Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, see Matthew 5–7.

Return to reference 8

- Note 9: From St. Augustine's *Confessions* again. The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident [*Eliot's note*].Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *colloquial*Return to reference °
- °: *undergarments*Return to reference °
- °: *corset*Return to reference °
- °: *pimply*Return to reference °

IV. Death by Water[1]

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

V. What the Thunder Said[2]

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead[3]
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock

Dead mountain mouth of carious° teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses
If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada[4]
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush[5] sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water

Who is the third who walks always beside you?[6]
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
—But who is that on the other side of you?

What is that sound high in the air[7]
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and
  exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.[8]
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the rooftree
Co co rico co co rico[9]
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain

Ganga[1] was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.[2]
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder
DA[3]

Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider[4]
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor[°]
In our empty rooms
DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key[5]
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, æthereal rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus[6]
DA
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands

I sat upon the shore
Fishing[7] with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?[8]

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down[9]
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina[1]
Quando fiam uti chelidon[2]—O swallow swallow[3]
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie[4]
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.[5]
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

Shantih shantih shantih[6]

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Endnotes

- Note 1: This section has been interpreted as signifying death by water without resurrection or as symbolizing the sacrificial death that precedes rebirth.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In the first part of Part V three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston's book), and the present decay of eastern Europe [*Eliot's note*]. On the journey to Emmaus, the resurrected Jesus walks alongside and converses with two disciples, who think he is a stranger until he reveals his identity (Luke 24:13–14).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: These lines allude to Jesus's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, his trial, and his crucifixion.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Ecclesiastes' prophecy "the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail." See also line 23 and its note.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  This is *Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*, the hermit-thrush which I have heard in Quebec County. Chapman says (*Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America*) "it is most at home in secluded woodland and thickety retreats. . . . Its notes are not remarkable for variety or volume, but in purity and sweetness of tone and exquisite modulation they are unequaled." Its "water-dripping song" is justly celebrated [*Eliot's note*].
  Return to reference 5
- Note 6:
  The following lines were stimulated by the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, but I think one of Shackleton's): it was related that the party of explorers, at the extremity of their strength, had the constant delusion that there was *one more member* than could actually be counted [*Eliot's*

note]. This reminiscence is associated with Jesus's unrecognized presence on the way to Emmaus.
Return to reference 6

- Note 7:
  Eliot's note for lines 367–77 is: "Cf. Herman Hesse, *Blick ins Chaos* ["A Glimpse into Chaos"]." The note then quotes a passage from the German text, which is translated: "Already half of Europe, already at least half of Eastern Europe, on the way to Chaos, drives drunk in sacred infatuation along the edge of the precipice, sings drunkenly, as though hymn singing, as Dmitri Karamazov [in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*] sang. The offended bourgeois laughs at the songs; the saint and the seer hear them with tears."
  Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Suggesting the moment of near despair before the Chapel Perilous, when the questing knight sees nothing there but decay. This illusion of nothingness is the knight's final test.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The crowing of the cock signals the departure of ghosts and evil spirits. See *Hamlet* 1.1.157ff. In Matthew 26, 34, and 74 the cock crows after Peter betrays Jesus three times.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Sanskrit name for the major sacred river in India.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, snowy mountain (Sanskrit); usually applied to the Himalayas.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:
  Datta, dayadhvam, damyata (Give, sympathize, control). The fable of the meaning of the Thunder is found in the *Brihadaranyaka—Upanishad*, 5, 1. A translation is found in Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, p. 489 [*Eliot's note*]. In the Old Indian fable "The Three Great Disciplines," the Creator God Prajapati utters the enigmatic syllable *DA* to three groups. Lesser gods, naturally unruly, interpret it as "Control yourselves" *(Damyata);* humans, naturally greedy, as "Give" (*Datta*); demons, naturally cruel, as "Be compassionate" (*Dayadhvam*);

"That very thing is repeated even today by the heavenly voice, in the form of thunder as *'DA' 'DA' 'DA,'* which means 'Control yourselves,' 'Give,' and 'Have compassion.' Therefore one should practice these three things: self-control, giving, and mercy." The Upanishads are ancient philosophical dialogues in Sanskrit. They are primary texts for an early form of Hinduism sometimes called Brahminism.
Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Cf. Webster, *The White Devil*, V, vi: ". . . they'll remarry / Ere the worm pierce your winding-sheet, ere the spider / Make a thin curtain for your epitaphs" [*Eliot's note*].Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  Cf. *Inferno*, XXXIII, 46 [*Eliot's note*]. In this passage from the *Inferno*, Ugolino recalls his imprisonment in the tower with his children, where they starved to death: "And I heard below the door of the horrible tower being nailed shut." Eliot's note for this line goes on to quote F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, p. 346: " 'My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and, with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it. . . . In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul.' " Eliot wrote his doctoral thesis on Bradley's philosophy.
  Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Coriolanus, who acted out of pride rather than duty, exemplifies a man locked in the prison of himself. He led the enemy against his native city out of injured pride (see Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: V. Weston: *From Ritual to Romance*; chapter on the Fisher King [*Eliot's note*].Return to reference 7
- Note 8: See Isaiah 38:1: "Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live."Return to reference 8

- Note 9: One of the later lines of this nursery rhyme is "Take the key and lock her up, my fair lady."Return to reference 9
- Note 1:
  V. *Purgatorio*, XXVI, 148 [*Eliot's note*]. The note goes on to quote lines 145–148 of the *Purgatorio*, in which the Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel addresses Dante: " 'Now I pray you, by that virtue which guides you to the summit of the stairway, be mindful in due time of my pain.' " Then (in the line Eliot quotes here) "he hid himself in the fire which refines them."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  V. *Pervigilium Veneris.* Cf. Philomela in parts II and III [*Eliot's note*]. The Latin phrase in the text, originally misquoting *uti* as *ceu*, means, "When shall I be as the swallow?" It comes from the late Latin poem "*Pervigilium Veneris*" ("Vigil of Venus"): "When will my spring come? When shall I be as the swallow that I may cease to be silent? I have lost the Muse in silence, and Apollo regards me not."
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See A. C. Swinburne's "Itylus," which begins, "Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow, / How can thine heart be full of spring?" and Tennyson's lyric in *The Princess*: "O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying south."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: V. Gerard de Nerval, Sonnet *El Desdichado* [*Eliot's note*]. The French line may be translated: "The Prince of Aquitaine in the ruined tower." One of the cards in the Tarot pack is "the tower struck by lightning."Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  V. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* [*Eliot's note*]. Subtitled *Hieronymo's Mad Againe*, Kyd's play (1594) is an early example of the Elizabethan tragedy of revenge. Hieronymo, driven mad by the murder of his son, has his revenge when he is asked to write a court entertainment. He replies, "Why then Ile fit you!" (that is, accommodate you), and assigns the parts in the entertainment so that, in the course of the action, his son's murderers are killed.

Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Shantih. Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad. “The Peace which passeth understanding” is a feeble translation of the content of this word [*Eliot’s note*]. On the Upanishads see the note to line 401 above.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *decayed*Return to reference °
- °: *lawyer*Return to reference °

The Hollow Men

Mistah Kurtz—he dead[1]

A penny for the Old Guy[2]

I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar[3]

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom[4]

These do not appear:
There, the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There, is a tree swinging
And voices are
In the wind's singing
More distant and more solemn
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer
In death's dream kingdom
Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field[5]
Behaving as the wind behaves
No nearer—

Not that final meeting
In the twilight kingdom[6]

III

This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images[7]
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss

Form prayers to broken stone.

IV

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river[8]

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose[9]
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men.

V

Here we go round the prickly pear
Prickly pear prickly pear
Here we go round the prickly pear
At five o'clock in the morning.[1]

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act[2]
Falls the Shadow[3]

For Thine is the Kingdom[4]

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is
Life is
For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: From Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (see p. 121).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Every year on Nov. 5, British children build bonfires, on which they burn a scarecrow effigy of the traitor Guido [Guy] Fawkes, who in 1605 attempted to blow up the Parliament

buildings. For some days before this, they ask people in the streets for pennies with which to buy fireworks.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: See *The Waste Land*, lines 115 and 195.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: At the end of Dante's *Purgatorio* and in *Paradiso* 4, he cannot meet the gaze of Beatrice (see Eliot's 1929 essay "Dante"). In some printings, Part II ends with an additional line: "With eyes I dare not meet in dreams."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The traditional British scarecrow is made from two sticks tied in the form of a cross (the vertical one stuck in the ground), dressed in cast-off clothes, and sometimes draped with dead vermin.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Perhaps a reference to Dante's meeting with Beatrice after he has crossed the river Lethe. There reminded of his sins, he is allowed to proceed to Paradise (*Purgatorio* 30).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See *The Waste Land*, line 22.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Dante's Acheron, which encircles hell, and the Congo of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.*Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The image of heaven in Dante's *Paradiso* 32.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Parodic version of the children's rhyme ending "Here we go round the mulberry bush / On a cold and frosty morning."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* 2.1.63–65: "Between the acting of a dreadful thing / And the first motion, all the interim is / Like a phantasma or a hideous dream."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See Ernest Dowson's "*Non sum qualis eram bonae sub regno Cynarae*," lines 1–2: "Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine / There fell thy shadow, Cynara!"Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See the Lord's Prayer.Return to reference 4

Journey of the Magi[1]

'A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'[2]
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky[3]

And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

1927

Endnotes

- Note 1: One of the wise men who came from the east to Jerusalem to do homage to the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:1–12) is recalling in old age the meaning of the experience.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Adapted from a passage in a 1622 Christmas sermon by Bishop Lancelot Andrewes: "A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in. The ways deep, the

weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, *in solstitio brumali*, 'the very dead of winter.' "Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The "three trees" suggest the three crosses, with Jesus crucified on the center one; the men "dicing for pieces of silver" (line 27) suggest the soldiers dicing for Jesus's garments and Judas's betrayal of him for thirty pieces of silver; the empty wineskins recall one of Jesus's parables of old and new (Mark 2:22).Return to reference 3

From Four Quartets

Little Gidding[1]

I

Midwinter spring is its own season
Sempiternal° though sodden towards sundown,
Suspended in time, between pole and tropic,
When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,
Reflecting in a watery mirror
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or
brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire[2]
In the dark time of the year. Between melting and
freezing
The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing. This is the springtime
But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom
Of snow, a bloom more sudden
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
Not in the scheme of generation.
Where is the summer, the unimaginable
Zero summer?

If you came this way,
Taking the route you would be likely to take

From the place you would be likely to come from,
If you came this way in may time, you would find the hedges
White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness.
It would be the same at the end of the journey,
If you came at night like a broken king,[3]
If you came by day not knowing what you came for,
It would be the same, when you leave the rough road
And turn behind the pig-sty to the dull façade
And the tombstone. And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all. Either you had no purpose
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
And is altered in fulfilment. There are other places
Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city[4]—
But this is the nearest, in place and time,
Now and in England.

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation

Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice
praying.
And what the dead had no speech for, when living,
They can tell you, being dead: the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the
language of the living.
Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

II

Ash on an old man's sleeve
Is all the ash the burnt roses leave.
Dust in the air suspended
Marks the place where a story ended.[5]
Dust inbreathed was a house—
The wall, the wainscot, and the mouse.
The death of hope and despair,
This is the death of air.[6]

There are flood and drouth
Over the eyes and in the mouth,
Dead water and dead sand
Contending for the upper hand.
The parched eviscerate soil
Gapes at the vanity of toil,
Laughs without mirth.
This is the death of earth.

Water and fire succeed
The town, the pasture, and the weed.
Water and fire deride
The sacrifice that we denied.
Water and fire shall rot
The marred foundations we forgot,
Of sanctuary and choir.

This is the death of water and fire.

In the uncertain hour before the morning[7]
Near the ending of interminable night
At the recurrent end of the unending
After the dark dove with the flickering tongue[8]
Had passed below the horizon of his homing
While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
Over the asphalt where no other sound was
Between three districts whence the smoke arose
I met one walking, loitering and hurried
As if blown towards me like the metal leaves
Before the urban dawn wind unresisting.
And as I fixed upon the down-turned face
That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge
The first-met stranger in the waning dusk
I caught the sudden look of some dead master
Whom I had known, forgotten, half recalled
Both one and many; in the brown baked features
The eyes of a familiar compound ghost[9]
Both intimate and unidentifiable.
So I assumed a double part, and cried
And heard another's voice cry: 'What! are *you* here?'
Although we were not. I was still the same,
Knowing myself yet being someone other—
And he a face still forming; yet the words sufficed
To compel the recognition they preceded.
And so, compliant to the common wind,
Too strange to each other for misunderstanding,
In concord at this intersection time
Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,
We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.
I said: 'The wonder that I feel is easy,
Yet ease is cause of wonder. Therefore speak:

I may not comprehend, may not remember.'
And he: 'I am not eager to rehearse
My thought and theory which you have forgotten.
These things have served their purpose: let them be.
So with your own, and pray they be forgiven
By others, as I pray you to forgive
Both bad and good. Last season's fruit is eaten
And the fullfed beast shall kick the empty pail.
For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.
But, as the passage now presents no hindrance
To the spirit unappeased and peregrine°
Between two worlds become much like each other,
So I find words I never thought to speak
In streets I never thought I should revisit
When I left my body on a distant shore.[1]
Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us
To purify the dialect of the tribe[2]
And urge the mind to aftersight and foresight,
Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage[3]
At human folly, and the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.[4]
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done, and been;[5] the shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm

Which once you took for exercise of virtue.
Then fools' approval stings, and honour stains.
From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire[6]
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.'[7]
The day was breaking. In the disfigured street
He left me, with a kind of valediction,
And faded on the blowing of the horn.[8]

III

There are three conditions which often look alike
Yet differ completely, flourish in the same hedgerow:
Attachment to self and to things and to persons, detachment
From self and from things and from persons; and, growing between them, indifference
Which resembles the others as death resembles life,
Being between two lives—unflowering, between
The live and the dead nettle.[9] This is the use of memory:
For liberation—not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past. Thus, love of a country
Begins as attachment to our own field of action
And comes to find that action of little importance
Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,
History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

Sin is Behovely, but

All shall be well, and
All manner of thing shall be well.[1]
If I think, again, of this place,
And of people, not wholly commendable,
Of no immediate kin or kindness,
But some of peculiar genius,
All touched by a common genius,
United in the strife which divided them;
If I think of a king at nightfall,[2]
Of three men, and more, on the scaffold
And a few who died forgotten
In other places, here and abroad,
And of one who died blind and quiet[3]
Why should we celebrate
These dead men more than the dying?
It is not to ring the bell backward
Nor is it an incantation
To summon the spectre of a Rose.
We cannot revive old factions
We cannot restore old policies
Or follow an antique drum.
These men, and those who opposed them
And those whom they opposed
Accept the constitution of silence
And are folded in a single party.
Whatever we inherit from the fortunate
We have taken from the defeated
What they had to leave us—a symbol:
A symbol perfected in death.
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
By the purification of the motive
In the ground of our beseeching.[4]

IV

The dove[5] descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
  Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
  To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame[6]
Which human power cannot remove.
  We only live, only suspire°
  Consumed by either fire or fire.

V

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at
    home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
And easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort[7] dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a
    beginning,
Every poem an epitaph. And any action
Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's
    throat
Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.

We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.
The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree[8]
Are of equal duration. A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails
On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel
History is now and England.

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling[9]

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea[1]
Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

19421942, 1943

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  This is the last of Eliot's *Four Quartets*, four related poems each divided into five "movements" in a manner reminiscent of the structure of a quartet or a sonata and each dealing with some aspect of the relation of time and eternity, the meaning of history, the achievement of the moment of timeless insight. Although the *Four Quartets* constitute a unified sequence, they were written separately and can be read as individual poems. "*Little Gidding* can be understood by itself, without reference to the preceding poems, which it yet so beautifully completes" (Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*). Each of the four is named after a place. Little Gidding is a village in Huntingdonshire, where, in 1625, Nicholas Ferrar established an Anglican religious community; the community was broken up in 1647, toward the end of the English Civil War, by the victorious Puritans; the chapel, however, was rebuilt in the 19th century and still exists. Eliot wrote the poem in 1942, when he was taking his turn as a nighttime fire watcher during the incendiary bombings of London in World War II.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: On the Pentecost day after the death and resurrection of Jesus, there appeared to his apostles "cloven tongues like as of fire . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King Charles I visited Ferrar's community more than once and is said to have paid his last visit in secret after his final defeat at the Battle of Naseby in the Civil War.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "The 'sea jaws' [Eliot] associated with Iona and St. Columba and with Lindisfarne and St. Cuthbert: the 'dark lake' with the lake of Glendalough and St Kevin's hermitage in County

Wicklow: the desert with the hermits of the Thebaid and St. Antony: the city with Padua and the other St. Antony" (Gardner).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Eliot wrote to a friend: "During the Blitz [bombing] the accumulated debris was suspended in the London air for hours after a bombing. Then it would slowly descend and cover one's sleeves and coat with a fine white ash."Return to reference 5
- Note 6: "The death of air," like that of "earth" and of "water and fire" in the succeeding stanzas, recalls the theory of the creative strife of the four elements propounded by Heraclitus (Greek philosopher of 4th and 5th centuries B.C.E.): "Fire lives in the death of air; water lives in the death of earth; and earth lives in the death of water."Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The pattern of indentation in the left margin of lines 78–149, their movement and elevated diction, are meant to suggest the terza rima of Dante's *Divine Comedy.*Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The German dive bomber.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This encounter with a ghost "compounded" of W. B. Yeats and his fellow Irishman Jonathan Swift is modeled on Dante's meeting with Brunette Latini (*Inferno* 15), including a direct translation (line 98) of Dante's cry of horrified recognition: "*Siete voi qui, ser Brunetto?*" See also Shakespeare's sonnet 86, line 9: "that affable familiar ghost."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Yeats died on Jan. 28, 1939, at Roquebrune in the south of France.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A rendering of the line *"Dormer un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu"* in Stéphane Mallarmé's 1877 sonnet "Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe" ("The Tomb of Edgar Poe").Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See Yeats's "The Spur": "You think it horrible that lust and rage / Should dance attendance upon my old age."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Yeats's "Swift's Epitaph" (translated from Swift's own Latin): "Savage indignation there / Cannot lacerate his breast."Return to reference 4

- Note 5: See Yeats's "Man and the Echo": "All that I have said and done, / Now that I am old and ill, / Turns into a question till / I lie awake night after night / And never get the answer right. / Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?"Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See *The Waste Land,* line 428 and its note; also the refining fire in Yeats's "Byzantium," lines 25–32.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See Yeats's "Among School Children," line 64: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  See *Hamlet* 1.2.157: "It faded on the crowing of the cock." The horn is the all-clear signal after an air raid (the dialogue has taken place between the dropping of the last bomb and the sounding of the all clear). Eliot called the section that ends with this line "the nearest equivalent to a canto of the *Inferno* or *Purgatorio*" that he could achieve and spoke of his intention to present "a parallel, by means of contrast, between the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* . . . and a hallucinated scene after an air raid."
  Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Eliot wrote to a friend: "The dead nettle is the family of flowering plants of which the White Archangel is one of the commonest and closely resembles the stinging nettle and is found in its company."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A quotation from the 14th-century English mystic Julian of Norwich: "Sin is behovabil [inevitable and fitting], but all shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, Charles I. He died "on the scaffold" in 1649, while his principal advisers, Archbishop Laud and Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, were both executed earlier by the victorious parliamentary forces.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, Milton, who sided with Cromwell against the king.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Julian of Norwich was instructed in a vision that "the ground of our beseeching" is love.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Both a dive bomber and the Holy Spirit with its Pentecostal tongues of fire.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Out of love for her husband, Hercules, Deianira gave him the poisoned shirt of Nessus. She had been told that it would increase his love for her, but instead it so corroded his flesh that in his agony he mounted a funeral pyre and burned himself to death.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Company; also harmony of sounds.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Traditional symbol of death and grief.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This line is from the *Cloud of Unknowing*, an anonymous 14th-century mystical work.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The voices of the children in the apple tree symbolize the sudden moment of insight. See the conclusion to "Burnt Norton" (the first of the *Four Quartets*), where the laughter of the children in the garden has a like meaning: "Sudden in a shaft of sunlight / Even while the dust moves / There rises the hidden laughter / Of children in the foliage / Quick now, here, now, always."Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *eternal, everlasting*Return to reference °
- °: *foreign, wandering*Return to reference °
- °: *breathe, sigh*Return to reference °

Tradition and the Individual Talent[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: First published in *The Egoist* magazine (1919) and later collected in *The Sacred Wood* (1920).Return to reference 1

I

In English writing we seldom speak of tradition, though we occasionally apply its name in deploring its absence. We cannot refer to 'the tradition' or to 'a tradition'; at most, we employ the adjective in saying that the poetry of So-and-so is 'traditional' or even 'too traditional.' Seldom, perhaps, does the word appear except in a phrase of censure. If otherwise, it is vaguely approbative, with the implication, as to the work approved, of some pleasing archaeological reconstruction. You can hardly make the word agreeable to English ears without this comfortable reference to the reassuring science of archæology.

Certainly the word is not likely to appear in our appreciations of living or dead writers. Every nation, every race, has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind; and is even more oblivious of the shortcomings and limitations of its critical habits than of those of its creative genius. We know, or think we know, from the enormous mass of critical writing that has appeared in the French language the critical method or habit of the French; we only conclude (we are such unconscious people) that the French are 'more critical' than we, and sometimes even plume ourselves a little with the fact, as if the French were the less spontaneous. Perhaps they are; but we might remind ourselves that criticism is as inevitable as breathing, and that we should be none the worse for articulating what passes in our minds when we read a book and feel an emotion about it, for criticizing our own minds in their work of criticism. One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most

individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. And I do not mean the impressionable period of adolescence, but the period of full maturity.

Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, 'tradition' should positively be discouraged. We have seen many such simple currents soon lost in the sand; and novelty is better than repetition. Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to any one who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.

No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the

new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.

In a peculiar sense he will be aware also that he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past. I say judged, not amputated, by them; not judged to be as good as, or worse or better than, the dead; and certainly not judged by the canons of dead critics. It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other. To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art. And we do not quite say that the new is more valuable because it fits in; but its fitting in is a test of its value—a test, it is true, which can only be slowly and cautiously applied, for we are none of us infallible judges of conformity. We say: it appears to conform, and is perhaps individual, or it appears individual, and may conform; but we are hardly likely to find that it is one and not the other.

To proceed to a more intelligible exposition of the relation of the poet to the past: he can neither take the past as a lump, an indiscriminate bolus,[2] nor can he form himself wholly on one or two private admirations, nor can he form himself wholly upon one preferred period. The first course is inadmissible, the second is an important experience of youth, and the third is a pleasant and highly desirable supplement. The poet must be very conscious of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much

more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian[3] draftsmen. That this development, refinement perhaps, complication certainly, is not, from the point of view of the artist, any improvement. Perhaps not even an improvement from the point of view of the psychologist or not to the extent which we imagine; perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery. But the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show.

Someone said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know.

I am alive to a usual objection to what is clearly part of my programme for the *métier*[4] poetry. The objection is that the doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pedantry), a claim which can be rejected by appeal to the lives of poets in any pantheon. It will even be affirmed that much learning deadens or perverts poetic sensibility. While, however, we persist in believing that a poet ought to know as much as will not encroach upon his necessary receptivity and necessary laziness, it is not desirable to confine knowledge to whatever can be put into a useful shape for examinations, drawing-rooms, or the still more pretentious modes of publicity. Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch[5] than most men could from the whole British Museum. What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career.

What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.

There remains to define this process of depersonalisation and its relation to the sense of tradition. It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science. I, therefore, invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated[6] platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide.

Endnotes

- Note 2: A round mass of anything: a large pill.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The most advanced culture of the European Paleolithic period (from discoveries at La Madeleine, France).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Vocation (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Greek biographer (1st century C.E.) of famous Greeks and Romans; from his work Shakespeare drew the plots of his Roman plays.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Drawn out like a thread.Return to reference 6

II

Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry. If we attend to the confused cries of the newspaper critics and the susurrus[7] of popular repetition that follows, we shall hear the names of poets in great numbers; if we seek not Blue-book[8] knowledge but the enjoyment of poetry, and ask for a poem, we shall seldom find it. I have tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written. The other aspect of this Impersonal theory of poetry is the relation of the poem to its author. And I hinted, by an analogy, that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature one not precisely in any valuation of 'personality,' not being necessarily more interesting, or having 'more to say,' but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.

The analogy was that of the catalyst.[9] When the two gases previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material.

The experience, you will notice, the elements which enter the presence of the transforming catalyst, are of two lands: emotions and feelings. The effect of a work of art upon the person who enjoys it is an experience different in kind from any experience not of art. It may be formed out of one emotion, or may be a combination of several; and various feelings, inhering for the writer in particular

words or phrases or images, may be added to compose the final result. Or great poetry may be made without the direct use of any emotion whatever composed out of feelings solely. Canto XV of the *Inferno* (Brunetto Latini)[1] is a working up of the emotion evident in the situation; but the effect, though single as that of any work of art, is obtained by considerable complexity of detail. The last quatrain gives an image, a feeling attaching to an image, which 'came,' which did not develop simply out of what precedes, but which was probably in suspension in the poet's mind until the proper combination arrived for it to add itself to.[2] The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.

If you compare several representative passages of the greatest poetry you see how great is the variety of types of combination, and also how completely any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark. For it is not the 'greatness,' the intensity, of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts. The episode of Paolo and Francesca[3] employs a definite emotion, but the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of. It is no more intense, furthermore, than Canto XXVI,[4] the voyage of Ulysses, which has not the direct dependence upon an emotion. Great variety is possible in the process of transmutation of emotion: the murder of Agamemnon, or the agony of Othello,[5] gives an artistic effect apparently closer to a possible original than the scenes from Dante. In the *Agamemnon*, the artistic emotion approximates to the emotion of an actual spectator; in *Othello* to the emotion of the protagonist himself. But the difference between art and the event is always absolute; the combination which is the murder of Agamemnon is probably as complex as that which is the voyage of Ulysses. In either case there has been a fusion of elements. The ode of Keats contains a number of feelings which have nothing particular to do with the nightingale, but which the

nightingale, partly, perhaps, because of its attractive name, and partly because of its reputation, served to bring together.

The point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.

I will quote a passage which is unfamiliar enough to be regarded with fresh attention in the light—or darkness—of these observations:

> And now methinks I could e'en chide myself
> For doating on her beauty, though her death
> Shall be revenged after no common action.
> Does the silkworm expend her yellow labours
> For thee? For thee does she undo herself?
> Are lordships solid to maintain ladyships
> For the poor benefit of a bewildering minute?
> Why does yon fellow falsify highways,
> And put his life between the judge's lips,
> To refine such a thing—keeps horse and men
> To beat their valours for her? . . . [6]

In this passage (as is evident if it is taken in its context) there is a combination of positive and negative emotions: an intensely strong attraction toward beauty and an equally intense fascination by the ugliness which is contrasted with it and which destroys it. This balance of contrasted emotion is in the dramatic situation to which the speech is pertinent, but that situation alone is inadequate to it. This is, so to speak, the structural emotion, provided by the drama. But the whole effect, the dominant tone, is due to the fact that a number of floating feelings, having an affinity to this emotion by no

means superficially evident, have combined with it to give us a new art emotion.

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting. His particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat. The emotion in his poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life. One error, in fact, of eccentricity in poetry is to seek for new human emotions to express; and in this search for novelty in the wrong place it discovers the perverse. The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all. And emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently, we must believe that 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'[7] is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquility. It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation. These experiences are not 'recollected,' and they finally unite in an atmosphere which is 'tranquil' only in that it is a passive attending upon the event. Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him 'personal.' Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

Endnotes

- Note 7: Murmuring, buzzing (Latin).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: British government publication.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Substance that triggers a chemical change without being affected by the reaction.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In hell Dante meets his old master, Brunetto Latini, suffering eternal punishment for unnatural lust yet still loved and admired by Dante, who addresses him with affectionate courtesy.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Dante's strange interview with Brunetto is over, and Brunetto moves off to continue his punishment: "Then he turned round, and seemed like one of those / Who run for the green cloth [in the footrace] at Verona / In the field; and he seemed among them / Not the loser but the winner."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Illicit lovers whom Dante meets in the second circle of hell (*Inferno* 5) and at whose punishment and sorrows he swoons with pity.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Of the *Inferno.* Ulysses, suffering in hell for "false counseling," tells Dante of his final voyage.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Shakespeare's character kills himself after being duped into jealously murdering his wife. In Aeschylus's play *Agamemnon*, the title character is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From Cyril Tourneur's *Revenger's Tragedy* 3.4 (1607).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (2nd ed., 1800), Wordsworth writes that poetry "takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility."Return to reference 7

III

ὁ δὲ νοῦσ ἴσωσ Θειότερόν τι καὶ ἀπαθε´σ ἐστιν.[8]

This essay proposes to halt at the frontier of metaphysics or mysticism, and confine itself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry. To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad. There are many people who appreciate the expression of sincere emotion in verse, and there is a smaller number of people who can appreciate technical excellence. But very few know when there is an expression of *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living.

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Endnotes

- Note 8: Aristotle's "De Anima" ("On the Soul") 1.4: "The mind is doubtless something more divine and unimpressionable."Return to reference 8

The Metaphysical Poets

By collecting these poems[1] from the work of a generation more often named than read, and more often read than profitably studied, Professor Grierson has rendered a service of some importance. Certainly the reader will meet with many poems already preserved in other anthologies, at the same time that he discovers poems such as those of Aurelian Townshend or Lord Herbert of Cherbury here included. But the function of such an anthology as this is neither that of Professor Saintsbury's admirable edition of Caroline poets nor that of the *Oxford Book of English Verse.* Mr. Grierson's book is in itself a piece of criticism and a provocation of criticism; and we think that he was right in including so many poems of Donne, elsewhere (though not in many editions) accessible, as documents in the case of 'metaphysical poetry.' The phrase has long done duty as a term of abuse or as the label of a quaint and pleasant taste. The question is to what extent the so-called metaphysicals formed a school (in our own time we should say a 'movement'), and how far this so-called school or movement is a digression from the main current.

Not only is it extremely difficult to define metaphysical poetry, but difficult to decide what poets practise it and in which of their verses. The poetry of Donne (to whom Marvell and Bishop King are sometimes nearer than any of the other authors) is late Elizabethan, its feeling often very close to that of Chapman. The 'courtly' poetry is derivative from Jonson, who borrowed liberally from the Latin; it expires in the next century with the sentiment and witticism of Prior. There is finally the devotional verse of Herbert, Vaughan, and Crashaw (echoed long after by Christina Rossetti and Francis Thompson); Crashaw, sometimes more profound and less sectarian than the others, has a quality which returns through the Elizabethan period to the early Italians. It is difficult to find any precise use of metaphor, simile, or other conceit, which is common to all the poets and at the same time important enough as an element of style to

isolate these poets as a group. Donne, and often Cowley, employ a device which is sometimes considered characteristically 'metaphysical'; the elaboration (contrasted with the condensation) of a figure of speech to the furthest stage to which ingenuity can carry it. Thus Cowley develops the commonplace comparison of the world to a chess-board through long stanzas (*To Destiny*), and Donne, with more grace, in *A Valediction*,[2] the comparison of two lovers to a pair of compasses. But elsewhere we find, instead of the mere explication of the content of a comparison, a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader.

> *On a round ball*
> *A workeman that hath copies by, can lay*
> *An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia,*
> *And quickly make that, which was nothing, All,*
> *So doth each teare,*
> *Which thee doth weare,*
> *A globe, yea world by that impression grow,*
> *Till thy tears mixt with mine doe overflow*
> *This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so.*[3]

Here we find at least two connexions which are not implicit in the first figure, but are forced upon it by the poet: from the geographer's globe to the tear, and the tear to the deluge. On the other hand, some of Donne's most successful and characteristic effects are secured by brief words and sudden contrasts:

> *A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,*[4]

where the most powerful effect is produced by the sudden contrast of associations of 'bright hair' and of 'bone'. This telescoping of images and multiplied associations is characteristic of the phrase of some of the dramatists of the period which Donne knew: not to

mention Shakespeare, it is frequent in Middleton, Webster, and Tourneur, and is one of the sources of the vitality of their language.

Johnson, who employed the term 'metaphysical poets', apparently having Donne, Cleveland, and Cowley chiefly in mind, remarks of them that 'the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together'[5] The force of this impeachment lies in the failure of the conjunction, the fact that often the ideas are yoked but not united; and if we are to judge of styles of poetry by their abuse, enough examples, may be found in Cleveland to justify Johnson's condemnation. But a degree of heterogeneity of material compelled into unity by the operation of the poet's mind is omnipresent in poetry. We need not select for illustration such a line as:

Notre âme est un trois-mâts cherchant son Icarie;[6]

we may find it in some of the best lines of Johnson himself (*The Vanity of Human Wishes*):

His fate was destined to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
He left a name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

where the effect is due to a contrast of ideas, different in degree but the same in principle, as that which Johnson mildly reprehended. And in one of the finest poems of the age (a poem which could not have been written in any other age), the *Exequy* of Bishop King, the extended comparison is used with perfect success: the idea and the simile become one, in the passage in which the Bishop illustrates his impatience to see his dead wife, under the figure of a journey:

Stay for me there; I will not faile
To meet thee in that hollow Vale.
And think not much of my delay;
I am already on the way,
And follow thee with all the speed

Desire can make, or sorrows breed.
Each minute is a short degree,
And ev'ry hour a step towards thee,
At night when I betake to rest,
Next morn I rise nearer my West
Of life, almost by eight houres sail,
Than when sleep breath'd his drowsy gale. . . .
But heark! My Pulse, like a soft Drum
Beats my approach, tells Thee I come;
And slow howere my marches be,
I shall at last sit down by Thee.

(In the last few lines there is that effect of terror which is several times attained by one of Bishop King's admirers, Edgar Poe.) Again, we may justly take these quatrains from Lord Herbert's Ode,[7] stanzas which would, we think, be immediately pronounced to be of the metaphysical school:

So when from hence we shall be gone,
And be no more, nor you, nor I,
As one another's mystery,
Each shall be both, yet both but one.

This said, in her up-lifted face,
Her eyes, which did that beauty crown,
Were like two stars, that having faln down,
Look up again to find their place:

While such a moveless silent peace
Did seize on their becalmed sense,
One would have thought some influence
Their ravished spirits did possess.

There is nothing in these lines (with the possible exception of the stars, a simile not at once grasped, but lovely and justified) which fits Johnson's general observations on the metaphysical poets in his

essay on Cowley. A good deal resides in the richness of association which is at the same time borrowed from and given to the word 'becalmed'; but the meaning is clear, the language simple and elegant. It is to be observed that the language of these poets is as a rule simple and pure; in the verse of George Herbert this simplicity is carried as far as it can go—a simplicity emulated without success by numerous modern poets. The *structure* of the sentences, on the other hand, is sometimes far from simple, but this is not a vice; it is a fidelity to thought and feeling. The effect, at its best, is far less artificial than that of an ode by Gray. And as this fidelity induces variety of thought and feeling, so it induces variety of music. We doubt whether, in the eighteenth century, could be found two poems in nominally the same metre, so dissimilar as Marvell's *Coy Mistress* and Crashaw's *Saint Teresa*; the one producing an effect of great speed by the use of short syllables, and the other an ecclesiastical solemnity by the use of long ones:

Love, thou art absolute sole lord
Of life and death.

If so shrewd and sensitive (though so limited) a critic as Johnson failed to define metaphysical poetry by its faults, it is worth while to inquire whether we may not have more success by adopting the opposite method: by assuming that the poets of the seventeenth century (up to the Revolution)[8] were the direct and normal development of the precedent age; and, without prejudicing their case by the adjective 'metaphysical', consider whether their virtue was not something permanently valuable, which subsequently disappeared, but ought not to have disappeared. Johnson has hit, perhaps by accident, on one of their peculiarities, when he observes that 'their attempts were always analytic'; he would not agree that, after the dissociation, they put the material together again in a new unity.

It is certain that the dramatic verse of the later Elizabethan and early Jacobean poets expresses a degree, of development of

sensibility which is not found in any of the prose, good as it often is. If we except Marlowe, a man of prodigious intelligence, these dramatists were directly or indirectly (it is at least a tenable theory) affected by Montaigne.[9] Even if we except also Jonson and Chapman, these two were probably erudite, and were notably men who incorporated their erudition into their sensibility: their mode of feeling was directly and freshly altered by their reading and thought. In Chapman especially there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne:

> *in this one thing, all the discipline*
> *Of manners and of manhood is contained;*
> *A man to join himself with th' Universe*
> *In his main sway, and make in all things fit*
> *One with that All, and go on, round as it;*
> *Not plucking from the whole his wretched part,*
> *And into straits, or into nought revert,*
> *Wishing the complete Universe might be*
> *Subject to such a rag of it as he;*
> *But to consider great Necessity.*[1]

We compare this with some modern passage:

> *No, when the fight begins within himself,*
> *A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,*
> *Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—*
> *He's left, himself, i' the middle; the soul wakes*
> *And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!*[2]

It is perhaps somewhat less fair, though very tempting (as both poets are concerned with the perpetuation of love by offspring), to compare with the stanzas already quoted from Lord Herbert's Ode the following from Tennyson:

> *One walked between his wife and child,*

With measured footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.
The prudent partner of his blood
Leaned on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.
And in their double love secure,
The little maiden walked demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.
These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat.[3]

The difference is not a simple difference of degree between poets. It is something which had happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet. Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza,[4] and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.

We may express the difference by the following theory: The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience. They are simple, artificial, difficult, or fantastic, as their predecessors were; no less nor more than Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, Guinicelli, or Cino.[5] In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered; and this dissociation, as is natural, was aggravated by the influence of the two most powerful poets of the century, Milton and

Dryden. Each of these men performed certain poetic functions so magnificently well that the magnitude of the effect concealed the absence of others. The language went on and in some respects improved; the best verse of Collins, Gray, Johnson, and even Goldsmith satisfies some of our fastidious demands better than that of Donne or Marvell or King. But while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude. The feeling, the sensibility, expressed in the *Country Churchyard*[6] (to say nothing of Tennyson and Browning) is cruder than that in the *Coy Mistress.*

The second effect of the influence of Milton and Dryden followed from the first, and was therefore slow in manifestation. The sentimental age began early in the eighteenth century, and continued. The poets revolted against the ratiocinative, the descriptive; they thought and felt by fits, unbalanced; they reflected. In one or two passages of Shelley's *Triumph of Life*, in the second *Hyperion*, there are traces of a struggle toward unification of sensibility. But Keats and Shelley died, and Tennyson and Browning ruminated.

After this brief exposition of a theory—too brief, perhaps, to carry conviction—we may ask, what would have been the fate of the 'metaphysical' had the current of poetry descended in a direct line from them, as it descended in a direct line to them? They would not, certainly, be classified as metaphysical. The possible interests of a poet are unlimited; the more intelligent he is the better; the more intelligent he is the more likely that he will have interests: our only condition is that he turn them into poetry, and not merely meditate on them poetically. A philosophical theory which has entered into poetry is established, for its truth or falsity in one sense ceases to matter, and its truth in another sense is proved. The poets in question have, like other poets, various faults. But they were, at best, engaged in the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling. And this means both that they are more mature, and that they wear better, than later poets of certainly not less literary ability.

It is not a permanent necessity that poets should be interested in philosophy, or in any other subject. We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult.* Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning. (A brilliant and extreme statement of this view, with which it is not requisite to associate oneself, is that of M Jean Epstein, *La Poésie d'aujourd'hui.*[7] Hence we get something which looks very much like the conceit—we get, in fact, a method curiously similar to that of the 'metaphysical poets', similar also in its use of obscure words and of simple phrasing.

> *O géraniums diaphanes, guerroyeurs sortilèges,*
> *Sacrilèges monomanes!*
> *Emballages, dévergondages, douches! O pressoirs*
> *Des vendanges des grands soirs!*
> *Layettes aux abois,*
> *Thyrses au fond des bois!*
> *Transfusions, représailles,*
> *Relevailles, compresses et l'éternal potion*,
> *Angélus! n'en pouvoir plus*
> *De débâcles nuptiales! de débâcles nuptiales!*[8]

The same poet could write also simply:

> *Elle est bien loin, elle pleure*,
> *Le grand vent se lamente aussi* . . . [9]

Jules Laforgue, and Tristan Corbière[1] in many of his poems, are nearer to the 'school of Donne' than any modern English poet. But poets more classical than they have the same essential quality of transmuting ideas into sensations, of transforming an observation into a state of mind.

Pour l'enfant, amoureux de cartes et d'estampes,
L'univers est égal à son vaste appétit.
Ah, que le monde est grand à la clarté des lampes!
Aux yeux du souvenir que le monde est petit![2]

In French literature the great master of the seventeenth century—Racine—and the great master of the nineteenth—Baudelaire—are in some ways more like each other than they are like anyone else. The greatest two masters of diction are also the greatest two psychologists, the most curious explorers of the soul. It is interesting to speculate whether it is not a misfortune that two of the greatest masters of diction in our language, Milton and Dryden, triumph with a dazzling disregard of the soul. If we continued to produce Miltons and Drydens it might not so much matter, but as things are it is a pity that English poetry has remained so incomplete. Those who object to the 'artificiality' of Milton or Dryden sometimes tell us to 'look into our hearts and write.'[3] But that is not looking deep enough; Racine or Donne looked into a good deal more than the heart. One must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts.

May we not conclude, then, that Donne, Crashaw, Vaughan, Herbert and Lord Herbert, Marvell, King, Cowley at his best, are in the direct current of English poetry, and that their faults should be reprimanded by this standard rather than coddled by antiquarian affection? They have been enough praised in terms which are implicit limitations because they are 'metaphysical' or 'witty,' 'quaint' or 'obscure,' though at their best they have not these attributes more than other serious poets. On the other hand, we must not reject the criticism of Johnson (a dangerous person to disagree with) without having mastered it, without having assimilated the Johnsonian canons of taste. In reading the celebrated passage in his essay on Cowley we must remember that by wit he clearly means something more serious than we usually mean to-day; in his criticism of their versification we must remember in what a narrow discipline he was trained, but also how well trained; we must remember that Johnson

tortures chiefly the chief offenders, Cowley and Cleveland. It would be a fruitful work, and one requiring a substantial book, to break up the classification of Johnson (for there has been none since) and exhibit these poets in all their difference of kind and of degree, from the massive music of Donne to the faint, pleasing tinkle of Aurelian Townshend—whose *Dialogue between a Pilgrim and Time* is one of the few regrettable omissions from the excellent anthology of Professor Grierson.

1921

Endnotes

- Note 1: *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century: Donne to Butler* (1921), selected and edited, with an essay, by Herbert J. C. Grierson. Eliot's essay was originally a review of this book in the London *Times Literary Supplement.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Donne's "A Valediction: Of Weeping," lines 10–18.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "The Relic," line 6.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: See Samuel Johnson's *Cowley.*Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From Charles Baudelaire's "Le Voyage": "Our soul is a three-masted ship searching for her Icarie"; "Icarie": an imaginary utopia in *Voyage en Icarie* (1840), a novel by the French socialist Etienne Cabet.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), brother of George Herbert. The "Ode" is his "Ode upon a Question moved, whether Love should continue forever?"Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Of 1688; when James II was replaced by William and Mary.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), French essayist.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: From *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* (4.1.137–46).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Robert Browning, "Bishop Blougram's Apology," lines 693–97.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "The Two Voices," lines 412–23.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: These last three poets, all of whom lived in the 13th century, were members of the Tuscan school of lyric love poets. Guido Guinicelli was hailed by Dante in the *Purgatorio* as "father of Italian poets." Cino da Pistoia was a friend of Dante and Petrarch.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, "An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," by Thomas Gray (1716–1771).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Poetry of today (French).Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  From *Derniers Vers* (*Last Poems*, 1890) 10, by Jules Laforgue (1860–1887): "O transparent geraniums, warrior incantations, / Monomaniac sacrileges! / Packing materials, shamelessnesses, shower baths! O wine presses / Of great evening vintages! / Hard-pressed baby linen, / Thyrsis in the depths of the woods! / Transfusions, reprisals, / Churchings, compresses, and the eternal potion, / Angelus! no longer to be borne [are] / Catastrophic marriages! catastrophic marriages!"
  Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From *Derniers Vers* 11, "Sur une Défunte" ("On a Dead Woman"): "She is far away, she weeps / The great wind mourns also."Return to reference 9
- Note 1: French symbolist poet (1845–1875).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From Charles Baudelaire's "Le Voyage": "For the child, in love with maps and prints, / The universe matches his vast appetite. / Ah, how big the world is by lamplight! How small the world is to the eyes of memory!"Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An adaptation of the last line of the first sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*, by Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586).Return to

reference 3

KATHERINE MANSFIELD
1888–1923

Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp was born in Wellington, New Zealand, daughter of a respected businessman who was later knighted. In 1903 the family moved to London, where Kathleen and her sisters entered Queen's College, the first institution in England founded expressly for the higher education of women. The family returned to New Zealand, leaving the girls in London, but the Beauchamps brought their daughters home in 1906. By this time Kathleen had written a number of poems, sketches, and stories; and after experimenting with different pen names, she adopted that of Katherine Mansfield. She was restless and ambitious and chafed against the narrowness of middle-class life in New Zealand, at that time still very much a new country in the shadow of the British Empire.

In July 1908 Mansfield left again for London; she never returned to New Zealand. In 1909 she suddenly married G. C. Bowden, a teacher of singing and elocution, but left him the same evening. Shortly afterward she became pregnant by another man and went to Germany to await the birth, but she had a miscarriage there. Her experiences in Germany are told in carefully observed sketches full of ironic detail in her first published book, *In a German Pension* (1911).

In 1910 she briefly resumed life with Bowden, who put her in touch with A. R. Orage, editor of the avant-garde periodical *The New*

Age. There she published a number of her stories and sketches. At the end of 1911 she met the critic John Middleton Murry, editor of the modernist magazine *Rhythm*, and eventually married him. She developed intense but conflicted friendships with D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and other writers of the day. During all this time Mansfield experimented in technique and refined her art, attempting within the short story to illuminate the ambivalences and complexities of friendship and family, gender and class. The death in World War I, in October 1915, of her much-loved younger brother sent her imagination back to their childhood days in New Zealand and in doing so gave a fresh charge and significance to her writing. Using her newly developed style with an ever greater subtlety and sensitivity, she now produced her best stories, including "Prelude," "Daughters of the Late Colonel," "At the Bay," and "The Garden Party." With the publication of *The Garden Party and Other Stories* in February 1922, Mansfield's place as a master of the modern short story was ensured. But she was gravely ill with tuberculosis and died suddenly at the age of thirty-four in Fontainebleau, France, where she had gone to try to find a cure by adopting the methods of the controversial mystic George Ivanovich Gurdjieff.

Mansfield produced her best and most characteristic work in her last years, when she combined incident, image, symbol, and structure in a way comparable with, yet interestingly different from, James Joyce's method in *Dubliners*, the two writers sharing an influence in the precise and understated art of the Russian writer Anton Chekhov. "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," a story of two middle-aged sisters and their devotion to a tyrannical father, shows her working characteristically through suggestion rather than explicit development to illuminate a late-Victorian world, with the subdued elegiac sense of female lives wasted in the service of an outmoded patriarchal order, although the story's ironic surface is restrained comedy. The meaning is achieved most of all through the atmosphere, built up by the accumulation of small strokes, none of which seems more than a shrewdly observed realistic detail. Mansfield also manipulates time masterfully: she makes particularly

effective use of the unobtrusive flashback, where we find ourselves in an earlier phase of the action without quite knowing how we got there but fully aware of its relevance to the total action and atmosphere.

The Daughters of the Late Colonel

I

The week after was one of the busiest weeks of their lives. Even when they went to bed it was only their bodies that lay down and rested; their minds went on, thinking things out, talking things over, wondering, deciding, trying to remember where . . .

Constantia lay like a statue, her hands by her sides, her feet just overlapping each other, the sheet up to her chin. She stared at the ceiling.

'Do you think father would mind if we gave his top-hat to the porter?'

'The porter?' snapped Josephine. 'Why ever the porter? What a very extraordinary idea!'

'Because,' said Constantia slowly, 'he must often have to go to funerals. And I noticed at—at the cemetery that he only had a bowler.' She paused. 'I thought then how very much he'd appreciate a top-hat. We ought to give him a present, too. He was always very nice to father.'

'But,' cried Josephine, flouncing on her pillow and staring across the dark at Constantia, 'father's head!' And suddenly, for one awful moment, she nearly giggled. Not, of course, that she felt in the least like giggling. It must have been habit. Years ago, when they had stayed awake at night talking, their beds had simply heaved. And now the porter's head, disappearing, popped out, like a candle, under father's hat. . . . The giggle mounted, mounted; she clenched her hands; she fought it down; she frowned fiercely at the dark and said 'Remember' terribly sternly.

'We can decide tomorrow,' she sighed.

Constantia had noticed nothing; she sighed.

‘Do you think we ought to have our dressing-gowns dyed as well?’

‘Black?’ almost shrieked Josephine.

‘Well, what else?’ said Constantia. ‘I was thinking—it doesn’t seem quite sincere, in a way, to wear black out of doors and when we’re fully dressed, and then when we’re at home—’

‘But nobody sees us,’ said Josephine. She gave the bedclothes such a twitch that both her feet became uncovered and she had to creep up the pillows to get them well under again.

‘Kate does,’ said Constantia. ‘And the postman very well might.’

Josephine thought of her dark-red slippers, which matched her dressing-gown, and of Constantia’s favourite indefinite green ones which went with hers. Black! Two black dressing-gowns and two pairs of black woolly slippers, creeping off to the bathroom like black cats.

‘I don’t think it’s absolutely necessary,’ said she.

Silence. Then Constantia said, ‘We shall have to post the papers with the notice in them tomorrow to catch the Ceylon mail. . . . How many letters have we had up till now?’

‘Twenty-three.’

Josephine had replied to them all, and twenty-three times when she came to ‘We miss our dear father so much’ she had broken down and had to use her handkerchief, and on some of them even to soak up a very light-blue tear with an edge of blotting-paper. Strange! She couldn’t have put it on—but twenty-three times. Even now, though, when she said over to herself sadly ‘We miss our dear father *so* much,’ she could have cried if she’d wanted to.

‘Have you got enough stamps?’ came from Constantia.

‘Oh, how can I tell?’ said Josephine crossly. ‘What’s the good of asking me that now?’

‘I was just wondering,’ said Constantia mildly.

Silence again. There came a little rustle, a scurry, a hop.

‘A mouse,’ said Constantia.

‘It can’t be a mouse because there aren’t any crumbs,’ said Josephine.

‘But it doesn’t know there aren’t,’ said Constantia.

A spasm of pity squeezed her heart. Poor little thing! She wished she’d left a tiny piece of biscuit on the dressing-table. It was awful to think of it not finding anything. What would it do?

‘I can’t think how they manage to live at all,’ she said slowly.

‘Who?’ demanded Josephine.

And Constantia said more loudly than she meant to, ‘Mice.’

Josephine was furious. ‘Oh, what nonsense, Con!’ she said. ‘What have mice got to do with it? You’re asleep.’

‘I don’t think I am,’ said Constantia. She shut her eyes to make sure. She was.

Josephine arched her spine, pulled up her knees, folded her arms so that her fists came under her ears, and pressed her cheek hard against the pillow.

II

Another thing which complicated matters was they had Nurse Andrews staying on with them that week. It was their own fault; they had asked her. It was Josephine’s idea. On the morning—well, on the last morning, when the doctor had gone, Josephine had said to Constantia, ‘Don’t you think it would be rather nice if we asked Nurse Andrews to stay on for a week as our guest?’

‘Very nice,’ said Constantia.

‘I thought,’ went on Josephine quickly, ‘I should just say this afternoon, after I’ve paid her, ‘My sister and I would be very pleased, after all you’ve done for us, Nurse Andrews, if you would stay on for a week as our guest.’ I’d have to put that in about being our guest in case—’

‘Oh, but she could hardly expect to be paid!’ cried Constantia.

‘One never knows,’ said Josephine sagely.

Nurse Andrews had, of course, jumped at the idea. But it was a bother. It meant they had to have regular sit-down meals at the

proper times, whereas if they'd been alone they could just have asked Kate if she wouldn't have minded bringing them a tray wherever they were. And meal-times now that the strain was over were rather a trial.

Nurse Andrews was simply fearful about butter. Really they couldn't help feeling that about butter, at least, she took advantage of their kindness. And she had that maddening habit of asking for just an inch more bread to finish what she had on her plate, and then, at the last mouthful, absent-mindedly—of course it wasn't absent-mindedly—taking another helping. Josephine got very red when this happened, and she fastened her small, bead-like eyes on the tablecloth as if she saw a minute strange insect creeping through the web of it. But Constantia's long, pale face lengthened and set, and she gazed away—away—far over the desert, to where that line of camels unwound like a thread of wool. . . .

'When I was with Lady Tukes,' said Nurse Andrews, 'she had such a dainty little contrayvance for the buttah. It was a silvah cupid balanced on the—on the bordah of a glass dish, holding a tayny fork. And when you wanted some buttah you simply pressed his foot and he bent down and speared you a piece. It was quite a gayme.'

Josephine could hardly bear that. But 'I think those things are very extravagant' was all she said.

'But whey?' asked Nurse Andrews, beaming through her eyeglasses. 'No one, surely, would take more buttah than one wanted—would one?'

'Ring, Con,' cried Josephine. She couldn't trust herself to reply.

And proud young Kate, the enchanted princess, came in to see what the old tabbies wanted now. She snatched away their plates of mock something or other and slapped down a white terrified blancmange.[1]

'Jam, please, Kate,' said Josephine kindly.

Kate knelt and burst open the sideboard, lifted the lid of the jam-pot, saw it was empty, put it on the table, and stalked off.

'I'm afraid,' said Nurse Andrews a moment later, 'there isn't any.'

‘Oh, what a bother!’ said Josephine. She bit her lip. ‘What had we better do?’

Constantia looked dubious. ‘We can’t disturb Kate again,’ she said softly.

Nurse Andrews waited, smiling at them both. Her eyes wandered, spying at everything behind her eyeglasses. Constantia in despair went back to her camels. Josephine frowned heavily—concentrated. If it hadn’t been for this idiotic woman she and Con would, of course, have eaten their blancmange without. Suddenly the idea came.

‘I know,’ she said. ‘Marmalade. There’s some marmalade in the sideboard. Get it, Con.’

‘I hope,’ laughed Nurse Andrews—and her laugh was like a spoon tinkling against a medicine glass—‘I hope it’s not very bittah marmalayde.’

III

But, after all, it was not long now, and then she’d be gone for good. And there was no getting over the fact that she had been very kind to father. She had nursed him day and night at the end. Indeed, both Constantia and Josephine felt privately she had rather overdone the not leaving him at the very last. For when they had gone in to say goodbye Nurse Andrews had sat beside his bed the whole time, holding his wrist and pretending to look at her watch. It couldn’t have been necessary. It was so tactless, too. Supposing father had wanted to say something—something private to them. Not that he had. Oh, far from it! He lay there, purple, a dark, angry purple in the face, and never even looked at them when they came in. Then, as they were standing there, wondering what to do, he had suddenly opened one eye. Oh, what a difference it would have made, what a difference to their memory of him, how much easier to tell people about it, if he had only opened both! But no—one eye only. It glared at them a moment and then . . . went out.

IV

It had made it very awkward for them when Mr Farolles, of St John's, called the same afternoon.

'The end was quite peaceful, I trust?' were the first words he said as he glided towards them through the dark drawing-room.

'Quite,' said Josephine faintly. They both hung their heads. Both of them felt certain that eye wasn't at all a peaceful eye.

'Won't you sit down?' said Josephine.

'Thank you, Miss Pinner,' said Mr Farolles gratefully. He folded his coattails and began to lower himself into father's armchair, but just as he touched it he almost sprang up and slid into the next chair instead.

He coughed. Josephine clasped her hands; Constantia looked vague.

'I want you to feel, Miss Pinner,' said Mr Farolles, 'and you, Miss Constantia, that I'm trying to be helpful. I want to be helpful to you both, if you will let me. These are the times,' said Mr Farolles, very simply and earnestly, 'when God means us to be helpful to one another.'

'Thank you very much, Mr Farolles,' said Josephine and Constantia.

'Not at all,' said Mr Farolles gently. He drew his kid gloves through his fingers and leaned forward. 'And if either of you would like a little Communion, either or both of you, here and now, you have only to tell me. A little Communion is often very help—a great comfort,' he added tenderly.

But the idea of a little Communion terrified them. What! In the drawing room by themselves—with no—no altar or anything! The piano would be much too high, thought Constantia, and Mr Farolles could not possibly lean over it with the chalice. And Kate would be sure to come bursting in and interrupt them, thought Josephine. And supposing the bell rang in the middle? It might be somebody important—about their mourning. Would they get up reverently and go out, or would they have to wait . . . in torture?

'Perhaps you will send round a note by your good Kate if you would care for it later,' said Mr Farolles.

‘Oh yes, thank you very much!’ they both said.

Mr Farolles got up and took his black straw hat from the round table.

‘And about the funeral,’ he said softly. ‘I may arrange that—as your dear father’s old friend and yours, Miss Pinner—and Miss Constantia?’

Josephine and Constantia got up too.

‘I should like it to be quite simple,’ said Josephine firmly, ‘and not too expensive. At the same time, I should like—’

‘A good one that will last,’ thought dreamy Constantia, as if Josephine were buying a nightgown. But of course Josephine didn’t say that. ‘One suitable to our father’s position.’ She was very nervous.

‘I’ll run round to our good friend Mr Knight,’ said Mr Farolles soothingly. ‘I will ask him to come and see you. I am sure you will find him very helpful indeed.’

V

Well, at any rate, all that part of it was over, though neither of them could possibly believe that father was never coming back. Josephine had had a moment of absolute terror at the cemetery, while the coffin was lowered, to think that she and Constantia had done this thing without asking his permission. What would father say when he found out? For he was bound to find out sooner or later. He always did. ‘Buried. You two girls had me buried?’ She heard his stick thumping. Oh, what would they say? What possible excuse could they make? It sounded such an appallingly heartless thing to do. Such a wicked advantage to take of a person because he happened to be helpless at the moment. The other people seemed to treat it all as a matter of course. They were strangers; they couldn’t be expected to understand that father was the very last person for such a thing to happen to. No, the entire blame for it all would fall on her and Constantia. And the expense, she thought, stepping into the tight-buttoned cab. When she had to show him the bills. What would he say then?

She heard him absolutely roaring, ‘And do you expect me to pay for this gimcrack excursion of yours?’

‘Oh,’ groaned poor Josephine aloud, ‘we shouldn’t have done it, Con!’

And Constantia, pale as a lemon in all that blackness, said in a frightened whisper, ‘Done what, Jug?’

‘Let them bu-bury father like that,’ said Josephine, breaking down and crying into her new, queer-smelling mourning handkerchief.

‘But what else could we have done?’ asked Constantia wonderingly. ‘We couldn’t have kept him unburied. At any rate, not in a flat that size.’

Josephine blew her nose; the cab was dreadfully stuffy.

‘I don’t know,’ she said forlornly. ‘It is all so dreadful. I feel we ought to have tried to, just for a time at least. To make perfectly sure. One thing’s certain’—and her tears sprang out again—‘father will never forgive us for this—never!’

VI

Father would never forgive them. That was what they felt more than ever when, two mornings later, they went into his room to go through his things. They had discussed it quite calmly. It was even down on Josephine’s list of things to be done. Go through father’s things and settle about them. But that was a very different matter from saying after breakfast:

‘Well, are you ready, Con?’

‘Yes, Jug—when you are.’

‘Then I think we’d better get it over.’

It was dark in the hall. It had been a rule for years never to disturb father in the morning, whatever happened. And now they were going to open the door without knocking even. . . . Constantia’s eyes were enormous at the idea; Josephine felt weak in the knees.

‘You—you go first,’ she gasped, pushing Constantia.

But Constantia said, as she always had said on those occasions, ‘No, Jug, that’s not fair. You’re the eldest.’

Josephine was just going to say—what at other times she wouldn’t have owned to for the world—what she kept for her very last weapon, ‘But you’re the tallest,’ when they noticed that the kitchen door was open, and there stood Kate. . . .

‘Very stiff,’ said Josephine, grasping the door-handle and doing her best to turn it. As if anything ever deceived Kate!

It couldn’t be helped. That girl was . . . Then the door was shut behind them, but—but they weren’t in father’s room at all. They might have suddenly walked through the wall by mistake into a different flat altogether. Was the door just behind them? They were too frightened to look. Josephine knew that if it was it was holding itself tight shut; Constantia felt that, like the doors in dreams, it hadn’t any handle at all. It was the coldness which made it so awful. Or the whiteness—which? Everything was covered. The blinds were down, a cloth hung over the mirror, a sheet hid the bed, a huge fan of white paper filled the fireplace. Constantia timidly put out her hand; she almost expected a snowflake to fall. Josephine felt a queer tingling in her nose, as if her nose was freezing. Then a cab klop-klopped over the cobbles below, and the quiet seemed to shake into little pieces.

‘I had better pull up a blind,’ said Josephine bravely.

‘Yes, it might be a good idea,’ whispered Constantia.

They only gave the blind a touch, but it flew up and the cord flew after, rolling round the blind-stick, and the little tassel tapped as if trying to get free. That was too much for Constantia.

‘Don’t you think—don’t you think we might put it off for another day?’ she whispered.

‘Why?’ snapped Josephine, feeling, as usual, much better now that she knew for certain that Constantia was terrified. ‘It’s got to be done. But I do wish you wouldn’t whisper, Con.’

‘I didn’t know I was whispering,’ whispered Constantia.

‘And why do you keep on staring at the bed?’ said Josephine, raising her voice almost defiantly. ‘There’s nothing on the bed.’

‘Oh, Jug, don’t say so!’ said poor Connie. ‘At any rate, not so loudly.’

Josephine felt herself that she had gone too far. She took a wide swerve over to the chest of drawers, put out her hand, but quickly drew it back again.

‘Connie!’ she gasped, and she wheeled round and leaned with her back against the chest of drawers.

‘Oh, Jug—what?’

Josephine could only glare. She had the most extraordinary feeling that she had just escaped something simply awful. But how could she explain to Constantia that father was in the chest of drawers? He was in the top drawer with his handkerchiefs and neckties, or in the next with his shirts and pyjamas, or in the lowest of all with his suits. He was watching there, hidden away—just behind the door-handle—ready to spring.

She pulled a funny old-fashioned face at Constantia, just as she used to in the old days when she was going to cry.

‘I can’t open,’ she nearly wailed.

‘No, don’t, Jug,’ whispered Constantia earnestly. ‘It’s much better not to. Don’t let’s open anything. At any rate, not for a long time.’

‘But—but it seems so weak,’ said Josephine, breaking down.

‘But why not be weak for once, Jug?’ argued Constantia, whispering quite fiercely. ‘If it is weak.’ And her pale stare flew from the locked writing-table—so safe—to the huge glittering wardrobe, and she began to breathe in a queer, panting way. ‘Why shouldn’t we be weak for once in our lives, Jug? It’s quite excusable. Let’s be weak—be weak, Jug. It’s much nicer to be weak than to be strong.’

And then she did one of those amazingly bold things that she’d done about twice before in their lives: she marched over to the wardrobe, turned the key, and took it out of the lock. Took it out of the lock and held it up to Josephine, showing Josephine by her extraordinary smile that she knew what she’d done—she’d risked deliberately father being in there among his overcoats.

If the huge wardrobe had lurched forward, had crashed down on Constantia, Josephine wouldn’t have been surprised. On the

contrary, she would have thought it the only suitable thing to happen. But nothing happened. Only the room seemed quieter than ever, and bigger flakes of cold air fell on Josephine's shoulders and knees. She began to shiver.

'Come, Jug,' said Constantia, still with that awful callous smile; and Josephine followed just as she had that last time, when Constantia had pushed Benny into the round pond.

VII

But the strain told on them when they were back in the dining-room. They sat down, very shaky, and looked at each other.

'I don't feel I can settle to anything,' said Josephine, 'until I've had something. Do you think we could ask Kate for two cups of hot water?'

'I really don't see why we shouldn't,' said Constantia carefully. She was quite normal again. 'I won't ring. I'll go to the kitchen door and ask her.'

'Yes, do,' said Josephine, sinking down into a chair. 'Tell her, just two cups, Con, nothing else—on a tray.'

'She needn't even put the jug on, need she?' said Constantia, as though Kate might very well complain if the jug had been there.

'Oh, no, certainly not! The jug's not at all necessary. She can pour it direct out of the kettle,' cried Josephine, feeling that would be a labour-saving indeed.

Their cold lips quivered at the greenish brims. Josephine curved her small red hands round the cup; Constantia sat up and blew on the wavy stream, making it flutter from one side to the other.

'Speaking of Benny,' said Josephine.

And though Benny hadn't been mentioned Constantia immediately looked as though he had.

'He'll expect us to send him something of father's, of course. But it's so difficult to know what to send to Ceylon.'

'You mean things get unstuck so on the voyage,' murmured Constantia.

'No, lost,' said Josephine sharply. 'You know there's no post. Only runners.'

Both paused to watch a black man in white linen drawers running through the pale fields for dear life, with a large brown-paper parcel in his hands. Josephine's black man was tiny; he scurried along glistening like an ant. But there was something blind and tireless about Constantia's tall, thin fellow, which made him, she decided, a very unpleasant person indeed. . . . On the veranda, dressed all in white and wearing a cork helmet, stood Benny. His right hand shook up and down, as father's did when he was impatient. And behind him, not in the least interested, sat Hilda, the unknown sister-in-law. She swung in a cane rocker and flicked over the leaves of the *Tatler.*

'I think his watch would be the most suitable present,' said Josephine.

Constantia looked up; she seemed surprised.

'Oh, would you trust a gold watch to a native?'

'But of course I'd disguise it,' said Josephine. 'No one would know it was a watch.' She liked the idea of having to make a parcel such a curious shape that no one could possibly guess what it was. She even thought for a moment of hiding the watch in a narrow cardboard corset-box that she'd kept by her for a long time, waiting for it to come in for something. It was such beautiful firm cardboard. But, no, it wouldn't be appropriate for this occasion. It had lettering on it: *Medium Women's 28. Extra Firm Busks.* It would be almost too much of a surprise for Benny to open that and find father's watch inside.

'And of course it isn't as though it would be going—ticking, I mean,' said Constantia, who was still thinking of the native love of jewelery. 'At least,' she added, 'it would be very strange if after all that time it was.'

VIII

Josephine made no reply. She had flown off on one of her tangents. She had suddenly thought of Cyril. Wasn't it more usual for the only grandson to have the watch? And then dear Cyril was so

appreciative and a gold watch meant so much to a young man. Benny, in all probability, had quite got out of the habit of watches; men so seldom wore waistcoats in those hot climates. Whereas Cyril in London wore them from year's end to year's end. And it would be so nice for her and Constantia, when he came to tea, to know it was there. 'I see you've got on grandfather's watch, Cyril.' It would be somehow so satisfactory.

Dear boy! What a blow his sweet, sympathetic little note had been! Of course they quite understood; but it was most unfortunate.

'It would have been such a point, having him,' said Josephine.

'And he would have enjoyed it so,' said Constantia, not thinking what she was saying.

However, as soon as he got back he was coming to tea with his aunties. Cyril to tea was one of their rare treats.

'Now, Cyril, you mustn't be frightened of our cakes. Your Auntie Con and I bought them at Buszard's this morning. We know what a man's appetite is. So don't be ashamed of making a good tea.'

Josephine cut recklessly into the rich dark cake that stood for her winter gloves or the soling and heeling of Constantia's only respectable shoes. But Cyril was most unmanlike in appetite.

'I say, Aunt Josephine, I simply can't. I've only just had lunch, you know.'

'Oh, Cyril, that can't be true! It's after four,' cried Josephine. Constantia sat with her knife poised over the chocolate-roll.

'It is, all the same,' said Cyril. 'I had to meet a man at Victoria,[2] and he kept me hanging about till . . . there was only time to get lunch and to come on here. And he gave me—phew'—Cyril put his hand to his forehead—'a terrific blow-out,'[3] he said.

It was disappointing—today of all days. But still he couldn't be expected to know.

'But you'll have a meringue, won't you, Cyril?' said Aunt Josephine. 'These meringues were bought specially for you. Your dear father was so fond of them. We were sure you are, too.'

‘I *am*, Aunt Josephine,’ cried Cyril ardently. ‘Do you mind if I take half to begin with?’

‘Not at all, dear boy; but we mustn’t let you off with that.’

‘Is your dear father still so fond of meringues?’ asked Auntie Con gently. She winced faintly as she broke through the shell of hers.

‘Well, I don’t quite know, Auntie Con,’ said Cyril breezily.

At that they both looked up.

‘Don’t know?’ almost snapped Josephine. ‘Don’t know a thing like that about your own father, Cyril?’

‘Surely,’ said Auntie Con softly.

Cyril tried to laugh it off. ‘Oh, well,’ he said, ‘it’s such a long time since—’ He faltered. He stopped. Their faces were too much for him.

‘Even *so,*’ said Josephine.

And Auntie Con looked.

Cyril put down his teacup. ‘Wait a bit,’ he cried. ‘Wait a bit, Aunt Josephine. What am I thinking of?’

He looked up. They were beginning to brighten. Cyril slapped his knee.

‘Of course,’ he said, ‘it was meringues. How could I have forgotten? Yes, Aunt Josephine, you’re perfectly right. Father’s most frightfully keen on meringues.’

They didn’t only beam. Aunt Josephine went scarlet with pleasure; Auntie Con gave a deep, deep sigh.

‘And now, Cyril, you must come and see father,’ said Josephine. ‘He knows you were coming today.’

‘Right,’ said Cyril, very firmly and heartily. He got up from his chair; suddenly he glanced at the clock.

‘I say, Auntie Con, isn’t your clock a bit slow? I’ve got to meet a man at—at Paddington[4] just after five. I’m afraid I shan’t be able to stay very long with grandfather.’

‘Oh, he won’t expect you to stay *very* long!’ said Aunt Josephine.

Constantia was still gazing at the clock. She couldn’t make up her mind if it was fast or slow. It was one or the other, she felt almost certain of that. At any rate, it had been.

Cyril still lingered. ‘Aren’t you coming along, Auntie Con?’

‘Of course,’ said Josephine, ‘we shall all go. Come on, Con.’

IX

They knocked at the door, and Cyril followed his aunts into grandfather’s hot, sweetish room.

‘Come on,’ said Grandfather Pinner. ‘Don’t hang about. What is it? What’ve you been up to?’

He was sitting in front of a roaring fire, clasping his stick. He had a thick rug over his knees. On his lap there lay a beautiful pale yellow silk handkerchief.

‘It’s Cyril, father,’ said Josephine shyly. And she took Cyril’s hand and led him forward.

‘Good afternoon, grandfather,’ said Cyril, trying to take his hand out of Aunt Josephine’s. Grandfather Pinner shot his eyes at Cyril in the way he was famous for. Where was Auntie Con? She stood on the other side of Aunt Josephine; her long arms hung down in front of her; her hands were clasped. She never took her eyes off grandfather.

‘Well,’ said Grandfather Pinner, beginning to thump, ‘what have you got to tell me?’

What had he, what had he got to tell him? Cyril felt himself smiling like a perfect imbecile. The room was stifling, too.

But Aunt Josephine came to his rescue. She cried brightly, ‘Cyril says his father is still very fond of meringues, father dear.’

‘Eh?’ said Grandfather Pinner, curving his hand like a purple meringue-shell over one ear.

Josephine repeated, ‘Cyril says his father is still very fond of meringues.’

‘Can’t hear,’ said old Colonel Pinner. And he waved Josephine away with his stick, then pointed with his stick to Cyril. ‘Tell me what she’s trying to say,’ he said.

(My God!) ‘Must I?’ said Cyril, blushing and staring at Aunt Josephine.

‘Do, dear,’ she smiled. ‘It will please him so much.’

‘Come on, out with it!’ cried Colonel Pinner testily, beginning to thump again.

And Cyril leaned forward and yelled, ‘Father’s still very fond of meringues.’

At that Grandfather Pinner jumped as though he had been shot.

‘Don’t shout!’ he cried. ‘What’s the matter with the boy? Meringues! What about ’em?’

‘Oh, Aunt Josephine, must we go on?’ groaned Cyril desperately.

‘It’s quite all right, dear boy,’ said Aunt Josephine, as though he and she were at the dentist’s together. ‘He’ll understand in a minute.’ And she whispered to Cyril, ‘He’s getting a bit deaf, you know.’ Then she leaned forward and really bawled at Grandfather Pinner, ‘Cyril only wanted to tell you, father dear, that his father is still very fond of meringues.’

Colonel Pinner heard that time, heard and brooded, looking Cyril up and down.

‘What an esstrordinary thing!’ said old Grandfather Pinner. ‘What an esstrordinary thing to come all this way here to tell me!’

And Cyril felt it *was.*

‘Yes, I shall send Cyril the watch,’ said Josephine.

‘That would be very nice,’ said Constantia. ‘I seem to remember last time he came there was some little trouble about the time.’

X

They were interrupted by Kate bursting through the door in her usual fashion, as though she had discovered some secret panel in the wall.

‘Fried or boiled?’ asked the bold voice.

Fried or boiled? Josephine and Constantia were quite bewildered for the moment. They could hardly take it in.

‘Fried or boiled what, Kate?’ asked Josephine, trying to begin to concentrate.

Kate gave a loud sniff. ‘Fish.’

‘Well, why didn’t you say so immediately?’ Josephine reproached her gently. ‘How could you expect us to understand, Kate? There are a great many things in this world, you know, which are fried or boiled.’ And after such a display of courage she said quite brightly to Constantia, ‘Which do you prefer, Con?’

‘I think it might be nice to have it fried,’ said Constantia. ‘On the other hand, of course boiled fish is very nice. I think I prefer both equally well . . . Unless you . . . In that case—’

‘I shall fry it,’ said Kate, and she bounced back, leaving their door open and slamming the door of her kitchen.

Josephine gazed at Constantia; she raised her pale eyebrows until they rippled away into her pale hair. She got up. She said in a very lofty, imposing way, ‘Do you mind following me into the drawing-room, Constantia? I’ve something of great importance to discuss with you.’

For it was always to the drawing-room they retired when they wanted to talk over Kate.

Josephine closed the door meaningly. ‘Sit down, Constantia,’ she said, still very grand. She might have been receiving Constantia for the first time. And Con looked round vaguely for a chair, as though she felt indeed quite a stranger.

‘Now the question is,’ said Josephine, bending forward, ‘whether we shall keep her or not.’

‘That is the question,’ agreed Constantia.

‘And this time,’ said Josephine firmly, ‘we must come to a definite decision.’

Constantia looked for a moment as though she might begin going over all the other times, but she pulled herself together and said, ‘Yes, Jug.’

‘You see, Con,’ explained Josephine, ‘everything is so changed now.’ Constantia looked up quickly. ‘I mean,’ went on Josephine, ‘we’re not dependent on Kate as we were.’ And she blushed faintly. ‘There’s not father to cook for.’

‘That is perfectly true,’ agreed Constantia. ‘Father certainly doesn’t want any cooking now, whatever else—’

Josephine broke in sharply, ‘You’re not sleepy, are you, Con?’

‘Sleepy, Jug?’ Constantia was wide-eyed.

‘Well, concentrate more,’ said Josephine sharply, and she returned to the subject. ‘What it comes to is, if we did’—and this she barely breathed, glancing at the door—‘give Kate notice’—she raised her voice again—‘we could manage our own food.’

‘Why not?’ cried Constantia. She couldn’t help smiling. The idea was so exciting. She clasped her hands. ‘What should we live on, Jug?’

‘Oh, eggs in various forms!’ said Jug, lofty again. ‘And, besides, there are all the cooked foods.’

‘But I’ve always heard,’ said Constantia, ‘they are considered so very expensive.’

‘Not if one buys them in moderation,’ said Josephine. But she tore herself away from this fascinating bypath and dragged Constantia after her.

‘What we’ve got to decide now, however, is whether we really do trust Kate or not.’

Constantia leaned back. Her flat little laugh flew from her lips.

‘Isn’t it curious, Jug,’ said she, ‘that just on this one subject I’ve never been able to quite make up my mind?’

XI

She never had. The whole difficulty was to prove anything. How did one prove things, how could one? Suppose Kate had stood in front of her and deliberately made a face. Mightn’t she very well have been in pain? Wasn’t it impossible, at any rate, to ask Kate if she was making a face at her? If Kate answered ‘No’—and of course she would say ‘No’—what a position! How undignified! Then again Constantia suspected, she was almost certain that Kate went to her chest of drawers when she and Josephine were out, not to take things but to spy. Many times she had come back to find her

amethyst cross in the most unlikely places, under her lace ties or on top of her evening Bertha.[5] More than once she had laid a trap for Kate. She had arranged things in a special order and then called Josephine to witness.

'You see, Jug?'

'Quite, Con.'

'Now we shall be able to tell.'

But, oh dear, when she did go to look, she was as far off from a proof as ever! If anything was displaced, it might so very well have happened as she closed the drawer; a jolt might have done it so easily.

'You come, Jug, and decide. I really can't. It's too difficult.'

But after a pause and a long glare Josephine would sigh. 'Now you've put the doubt into my mind, Con, I'm sure I can't tell myself.'

'Well, we can't postpone it again,' said Josephine. 'If we postpone it this time—'

XII

But at that moment in the street below a barrel-organ struck up. Josephine and Constantia sprang to their feet together.

'Run, Con,' said Josephine. 'Run quickly. There's sixpence on the —'

Then they remembered. It didn't matter. They would never have to stop the organ-grinder again. Never again would she and Constantia be told to make that monkey take his noise somewhere else. Never would sound that loud, strange bellow when father thought they were not hurrying enough. The organ-grinder might play there all day and the stick would not thump.

It never will thump again,
It never will thump again,

played the barrel-organ.

What was Constantia thinking? She had such a strange smile; she looked different. She couldn't be going to cry.

‘Jug, Jug,’ said Constantia softly, pressing her hands together. ‘Do you know what day it is? It’s Saturday. It’s a week today, a whole week.’

A week since father died,
A week since father died,

cried the barrel-organ. And Josephine, too, forgot to be practical and sensible; she smiled faintly, strangely. On the Indian carpet there fell a square of sunlight, pale red; it came and went and came—and stayed, deepened—until it shone almost golden.

‘The sun’s out,’ said Josephine, as though it really mattered.

A perfect fountain of bubbling notes shook from the barrel-organ, round, bright notes, carelessly scattered.

Constantia lifted her big, cold hands as if to catch them, and then her hands fell again. She walked over to the mantelpiece to her favourite Buddha. And the stone and gilt image, whose smile always gave her such a queer feeling, almost a pain and yet a pleasant pain, seemed today to be more than smiling. He knew something; he had a secret. ‘I know something that you don’t know,’ said her Buddha. Oh, what was it, what could it be? And yet she had always felt there was . . . something.

The sunlight pressed through the windows, thieved its way in, flashed its light over the furniture and the photographs. Josephine watched it. When it came to mother’s photograph, the enlargement over the piano, it lingered as though puzzled to find so little remained of mother, except the ear-rings shaped like tiny pagodas and a black feather boa. Why did the photographs of dead people always fade so? wondered Josephine. As soon as a person was dead their photograph died too. But, of course, this one of mother was very old. It was thirty-five years old. Josephine remembered standing on a chair and pointing out that feather boa to Constantia and telling her that it was a snake that had killed their mother in Ceylon. . . . Would everything have been different if mother hadn’t died? She didn’t see why. Aunt Florence had lived with them until they had left school, and they had moved three times and had their

yearly holiday and . . . and there'd been changes of servants, of course.

Some little sparrows, young sparrows they sounded, chirped on the window-ledge. *Yeep—eyeep—yeep.* But Josephine felt they were not sparrows, not on the window-ledge. It was inside her, that queer little crying noise. *Yeep–eyeep—yeep.* Ah, what was it crying, so weak and forlorn?

If mother had lived, might they have married? But there had been nobody for them to marry. There had been father's Anglo-Indian friends before he quarreled with them. But after that she and Constantia never met a single man except clergymen. How did one meet men? Or even if they'd met them, how could they have got to know men well enough to be more than strangers? One read of people having adventures, being followed, and so on. But nobody had ever followed Constantia and her. Oh yes, there had been one year at Eastbourne[6] a mysterious man at their boarding-house who had put a note on the jug of hot water outside their bedroom door! But by the time Connie had found it the steam had made the writing too faint to read; they couldn't even make out to which of them it was addressed. And he had left next day. And that was all. The rest had been looking after father and at the same time keeping out of father's way. But now? But now? The thieving sun touched Josephine gently. She lifted her face. She was drawn over to the window by gentle beams. . . .

Until the barrel-organ stopped playing Constantia stayed before the Buddha, wondering, but not as usual, not vaguely. This time her wonder was like longing. She remembered the times she had come in here, crept out of bed in her nightgown when the moon was full, and lain on the floor with her arms outstretched, as though she was crucified. Why? The big, pale moon had made her do it. The horrible dancing figures on the carved screen had leered at her and she hadn't minded. She remembered too how, whenever they were at the seaside, she had gone off by herself and got as close to the sea as she could, and sung something, something she had made up, while she gazed all over that restless water. There had been this

other life, running out, bringing things home in bags, getting things on approval, discussing them with Jug, and taking them back to get more things on approval, and arranging father's trays and trying not to annoy father. But it all seemed to have happened in a kind of tunnel. It wasn't real. It was only when she came out of the tunnel into the moonlight or by the sea or into a thunderstorm that she really felt herself. What did it mean? What was it she was always wanting? What did it all lead to? Now? Now?

She turned away from the Buddha with one of her vague gestures. She went over to where Josephine was standing. She wanted to say something to Josephine, something frightfully important, about—about the future and what . . .

'Don't you think perhaps—' she began.

But Josephine interrupted her. 'I was wondering if now—' she murmured. They stopped; they waited for each either.

'Go on, Con,' said Josephine.

'No, no, Jug; after you,' said Constantia.

'No, say what you were going to say. You began,' said Josephine.

'I . . . I'd rather hear what you were going to say first,' said Constantia.

'Don't be absurd, Con.'

'Really, Jug.'

'Connie!'

'Oh, *Jug!*'

A pause. Then Constantia said faintly, 'I can't say what I was going to say, Jug, because I've forgotten what it was . . . that I was going to say.'

Josephine was silent for a moment. She stared at a big cloud where the sun had been. Then she replied shortly, 'I've forgotten too.'

19201922

Endnotes

- Note 1: A gelatinous dessert.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: London railroad station, connecting with the Channel ports.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Feast.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: London railroad station, serving the west of England and Wales.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Detachable lace collar for low-necked dresses.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Seaside resort on Sussex coast.Return to reference 6

The Garden Party[1]

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

'Where do you want the marquee put, mother?'

'My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest.'

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

'You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one.'

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and

they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she had not got the bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

'Good morning,' she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, 'Oh—er—have you come—is it about the marquee?'

'That's right, miss,' said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. 'That's about it.'

His smile was so easy, so friendly that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. 'Cheer up, we won't bite,' their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

'Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?'

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

'I don't fancy it,' said he. 'Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee,' and he turned to Laura in his easy way, 'you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me.'

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

'A corner of the tennis-court,' she suggested. 'But the band's going to be in one corner.'

'H'm, going to have a band, are you?' said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

'Only a very small band,' said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow

interrupted.

'Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine.'

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that—caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom . . . And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Some one whistled, some one sang out, 'Are you right there, matey?' 'Matey!' The friendliness of it, the—the—Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

'Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!' a voice cried from the house.

'Coming!' Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

‘I say, Laura,’ said Laurie very fast, ‘you might just give a squiz[2] at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing.’

‘I will,’ said she. Suddenly she couldn’t stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. ‘Oh, I do love parties, don’t you?’ gasped Laura.

‘Ra-ther,’ said Laurie’s warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. ‘Dash off to the telephone, old girl.’

The telephone. ‘Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal—just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what’s left over. Yes, isn’t it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment—hold the line. Mother’s calling.’ And Laura sat back. ‘What, mother? Can’t hear.’

Mrs Sheridan’s voice floated down the stairs. ‘Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday.’

‘Mother says you’re to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o’clock. Bye-bye.’

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. ‘Huh,’ she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize[3] door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie’s print skirt on the stairs. A man’s voice murmured; Sadie

answered, careless, ‘I’m sure I don’t know. Wait. I’ll ask Mrs Sheridan.’

‘What is it, Sadie?’ Laura came into the hall.

‘It’s the florist, Miss Laura.’

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies—canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

‘O-oh, Sadie!’ said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

‘It’s some mistake,’ she said faintly. ‘Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother.’

But at that moment Mrs Sheridan joined them.

‘It’s quite right,’ she said calmly. ‘Yes, I ordered them. Aren’t they lovely?’ She pressed Laura’s arm. ‘I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden party will be a good excuse.’

‘But I thought you said you didn’t mean to interfere,’ said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist’s man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother’s neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother’s ear.

‘My darling child, you wouldn’t like a logical mother, would you? Don’t do that. Here’s the man.’

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

‘Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please,’ said Mrs Sheridan. ‘Don’t you agree, Laura?’

‘Oh, I *do* mother.’

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

‘Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don’t you think?’

‘Quite.’

‘Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and—one moment, Hans —’ Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. ‘Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once.’

‘Very good, Miss Jose.’

She turned to Meg. ‘I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I’m asked to sing this afternoon. Let’s try over “This Life is Weary.” ’

Pom! Ta-ta-ta *Tee*-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose’s face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

> This Life is *Wee*-ary,
> A Tear—a Sigh.
> A Love that *Chan*-ges,
> This Life is *Wee*-ary,
> A Tear—a Sigh.
> A Love that *Chan*-ges,
> And then . . . Good-bye!

But at the word ‘Good-bye,’ and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

‘Aren’t I in good voice, mummy?’ she beamed.

> This Life is *Wee*-ary,
> Hope comes to Die.
> A Dream—a *Wa*-kening.

But now Sadie interrupted them. ‘What is it, Sadie?’

‘If you please, m’m, cook says have you got the flags[4] for the sandwiches?’

‘The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?’ echoed Mrs Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn’t got

them. ‘Let me see.’ And she said to Sadie firmly, ‘Tell cook I’ll let her have them in ten minutes.’

Sadie went.

‘Now, Laura,’ said her mother quickly. ‘Come with me into the smoking-room. I’ve got the names[5] somewhere on the back of an envelope. You’ll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And—and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I’m terrified of her this morning.’

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs Sheridan could not imagine.

‘One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly—cream cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?’

‘Yes.’

‘Egg and—’ Mrs Sheridan held the envelope away from her. ‘It looks like mice. It can’t be mice, can it?’

‘Olive, pet,’ said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

‘Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive.’

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

‘I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches,’ said Jose’s rapturous voice. ‘How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?’

‘Fifteen, Miss Jose.’

‘Well, cook, I congratulate you.’

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife and smiled broadly.

‘Godber’s has come,’ announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.

That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

'Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl,' ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

'Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?' said Laura.

'I suppose they do,' said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. 'They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say.'

'Have one each, my dears,' said cook in her comfortable voice. 'Yer ma won't know.'

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

'Let's go into the garden, out by the back way,' suggested Laura. 'I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men.'

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened.

'Tuk-tuk-tuk,' clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself; it was his story.

'What's the matter? What's happened?'

'There's been a horrible accident,' said cook. 'A man killed.'

'A man killed! Where? How? When?'

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

'Know those little cottages just below here, miss?' Know them? Of course, she knew them. 'Well, there's a young chap living there,

name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed.'

'Dead!' Laura stared at Godber's man.

'Dead when they picked him up,' said Godber's man with relish. 'They were taking the body home as I come up here.' And he said to the cook, 'He's left a wife and five little ones.'

'Jose, come here.' Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. 'Jose!' she said, horrified, 'however are we going to stop everything?'

'Stop everything, Laura!' cried Jose in astonishment. 'What do you mean?'

'Stop the garden party, of course.' Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. 'Stop the garden party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant.'

'But we can't possibly have a garden party with a man dead just outside the front gate.'

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a

shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

'And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman,' said Laura.

'Oh, Laura!' Jose began to be seriously annoyed. 'If you're going to stop a band playing every time some one has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic.' Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. 'You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental,' she said softly.

'Drunk! Who said he was drunk?' Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said, just as they had used to say on those occasions, 'I'm going straight up to tell mother.'

'Do, dear,' cooed Jose.

'Mother, can I come into your room?' Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

'Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?' And Mrs Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

'Mother, a man's been killed,' began Laura.

'Not in the garden?' interrupted her mother.

'No, no!'

'Oh, what a fright you gave me!' Mrs Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

'But listen, mother,' said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. 'Of course, we can't have our party, can we?' she pleaded. 'The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!'

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

'But, my dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If some one had died there normally—and I can't

understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes—we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?'

Laura had to say 'yes' to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

'Mother, isn't it really terribly heartless of us?' she asked.

'Darling!' Mrs Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. 'My child!' said her mother, 'the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!' And she held up her hand-mirror.

'But, mother,' Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside.

This time Mrs Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

'You are being very absurd, Laura,' she said coldly. 'People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now.'

'I don't understand,' said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan . . .

Lunch was over by half past one. By half past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

'My dear!' trilled Kitty Maitland, 'aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf.'

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

'Laurie!'

'Hallo!' He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. 'My word, Laura! You do look stunning,' said Laurie. 'What an absolutely topping hat!'

Laura said faintly 'Is it?' and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to—where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

'Darling Laura, how well you look!'

'What a becoming hat, child!'

'Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking.'

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, 'Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special.' She ran to her father and begged him. 'Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?'

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

'Never a more delightful garden party . . .' 'The greatest success . . .' 'Quite the most . . .'

Laura helped her mother with the goodbyes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

'All over, all over, thank heaven,' said Mrs Sheridan. 'Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted.

Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!' And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

'Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag.'

'Thanks.' Mr Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. 'I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened today?' he said.

'My dear,' said Mrs Sheridan, holding up her hand, 'we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off.'

'Oh, mother!' Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

'It was a horrible affair all the same,' said Mr Sheridan. 'The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say.'

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father . . .

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all un-eaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

'I know,' she said. 'Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura!' She jumped up. 'Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard.'

'But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?' said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

'Of course! What's the matter with you today? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now—'

Oh well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

'Take it yourself, darling,' said she. 'Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies.'

‘The stems will ruin her lace frock,’ said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. ‘Only the basket, then. And, Laura!’—her mother followed her out of the marquee—‘don’t on any account—’

‘What mother?’

No, better not put such ideas into the child’s head! ‘Nothing! Run along.’

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn’t realize it. Why couldn’t she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, ‘Yes, it was the most successful.’

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men’s tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer—if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, ‘Is this Mrs Scott’s

house?' and the woman, smiling queerly, said, 'It is, my lass.'

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, 'Help me, God,' as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, 'Are you Mrs Scott?' But to her horror the woman answered, 'Walk in please, miss,' and she was shut in the passage.

'No,' said Laura, 'I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent—'

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. 'Step this way, please, miss,' she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

'Em,' said the little creature who had let her in. 'Em! It's a young lady.' She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, 'I'm her sister, Miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?'

'Oh, but of course!' said Laura. 'Please, please don't disturb her. I —I only want to leave—'

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

'All right, my dear,' said the other. 'I'll thenk the young lady.'

And again she began, 'You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure,' and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom where the dead man was lying.

‘You’d like a look at ’im, wouldn’t you?’ said Em’s sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. ‘Don’t be afraid, my lass,’—and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet—‘ ’e looks a picture. There’s nothing to show. Come along, my dear.’

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy . . . happy . . . All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn’t go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

‘Forgive my hat,’ she said.

And this time she didn’t wait for Em’s sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. ‘Is that you, Laura?’

‘Yes.’

‘Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?’

‘Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!’ She took his arm, she pressed up against him.

‘I say, you’re not crying, are you?’ asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. ‘Don’t cry,’ he said in his warm, loving voice. ‘Was it awful?’

‘No,’ sobbed Laura. ‘It was simply marvellous. But, Laurie—’ She stopped, she looked at her brother. ‘Isn’t life,’ she stammered, ‘isn’t

life—’ But what life was she couldn’t explain. No matter. He quite understood.

‘*Isn’t* it, darling?’ said Laurie.

19211922

Endnotes

- Note 1: This story draws on an incident from Mansfield’s life. In March 1907 her mother gave a party in their Wellington house; that morning a man living in a more modest area nearby was killed in a street accident.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Glance.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Coarse woolen.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Little paper flags stuck in a plate of small triangular sandwiches indicating what is inside the sandwiches on each plate—an English custom adopted by the New Zealand middle class as a sign of gentility.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, the names of the sandwich fillings to be written on each flag.Return to reference 5

JEAN RHYS
1890–1979

Jean Rhys was born Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams on the small island of Dominica in the West Indies. Her father was a Welsh doctor; her mother, a Creole (that is, a White West Indian) descended from wealthy plantation owners who were also enslavers. Rhys was educated at a convent school in Roseau, Dominica, before, at the age of seventeen, leaving the island to attend the Perse School in Cambridge, England; she returned to her birthplace only once, in 1936. Her feelings toward her Caribbean background and childhood were mixed: she deeply appreciated the rich sensations and cross-racial engagements of her tropical experience; haunted by the knowledge of her violent heritage, however, she carried a heavy burden of historical guilt. As a West Indian she felt estranged from mainstream European culture and identified with the suffering of African Caribbeans, yet as a White Creole she grew up feeling out of place amid the predominantly Black population of Dominica.

After studying briefly at the Academy of Dramatic Art in London, Rhys worked as a traveling chorus girl, model, film extra, and—during World War I—volunteer cook. In 1919 she left England to marry the first of three husbands, and for many years she lived abroad, mainly in Paris, where she began to write the stories of her first book, *The Left Bank: Sketches and Studies of Present-Day Bohemian Paris* (1927). It was published with an introduction by the established novelist and poet Ford Madox Ford, who was for a time

her lover. Ford grasped the link between Rhys's vulnerability as a person and her strength as a writer; he perceived her "terrifying insight . . . and passion for stating the case of the underdog." Rhys declared, "I have only ever written about myself," and indeed much of her writing is semiautobiographical. Her fiction frequently depicts single, economically precarious women, rootless outsiders living in bohemian London or Paris. Her early sketches were followed by her first novel, *Postures* (1928, reprinted as *Quartet* in 1969), in part an account of her affair with Ford; *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1930), about sexual betrayal; *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), the story of a nineteen-year-old chorus girl in London who has come from Dominica; and *Good Morning, Midnight* (1939), another first-person narrative of a lonely drifter, this time in Paris.

For many years Rhys published nothing more, dropping out of sight and often living in poverty, until, following the enthusiastic reception of a radio adaptation of *Good Morning, Midnight* in 1957, she began to work in earnest on her masterpiece, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). In this novel, set in Jamaica and Dominica in the 1830s and 1840s, Rhys returns to her Caribbean childhood and, in a brilliant act of imaginative sympathy, creates a West Indian prehistory for the first Mrs. Rochester, the "madwoman in the attic" of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre.* Altogether Rhys worked on the novel for twenty-one years, amid bouts of depression, loneliness, and alcoholism, but its immediate acclaim gave her the recognition she had so long been denied. She continued to publish works of fiction and autobiography, and in the year before her death received the Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Like *Wide Sargasso Sea*, some of Rhys's published short stories draw on her Caribbean youth. Books, narratives, and fiction itself figure prominently in some of these stories. In "The Day They Burned the Books," set in the West Indies, a White girl who only partly understands the painful entanglements of class, race, and prejudice tells how a lower-class Englishman has accumulated a trove of books he values for their cultural prestige, while his mixed-race wife, embittered by her husband's racism, comes to despise

them as emblems of British imperial oppression. In "On Not Shooting Sitting Birds," the narrator recalls an awkward date when she was twenty-two years old and tried to impress a snooty young Englishman with a story from her childhood in Dominica. Tailoring her story within a story to fit ideas about Englishmen in novels she has read, the narrator finds herself trapped in a lie.

Rhys is one of the great prose stylists of the twentieth century, her language spare yet lyrical, her sentences exactingly written and rewritten to suggest the most in the fewest possible words. Her writing is almost painfully alert to sensory detail, sensitive to the fears and longings of marginalized people, and fierce in its unmasking of the social and psychic consequences of cruelty and injustice.

The Day They Burned the Books

My friend Eddie was a small, thin boy. You could see the blue veins in his wrists and temples. People said that he had consumption[1] and wasn't long for this world. I loved, but sometimes despised him.

His father, Mr Sawyer, was a strange man. Nobody could make out what he was doing in our part of the world at all. He was not a planter or a doctor or a lawyer or a banker. He didn't keep a store. He wasn't a schoolmaster or a government official. He wasn't—that was the point—a gentleman. We had several resident romantics who had fallen in love with the moon on the Caribees[2]—they were all gentlemen and quite unlike Mr Sawyer who hadn't an 'h' in his composition.[3] Besides, he detested the moon and everything else about the Caribbean and he didn't mind telling you so.

He was agent for a small steamship line which in those days linked up Venezuela and Trinidad[4] with the smaller islands, but he couldn't make much out of that. He must have a private income, people decided, but they never decided why he had chosen to settle in a place he didn't like and to marry a coloured woman. Though a decent, respectable, nicely educated coloured woman, mind you.

Mrs Sawyer must have been very pretty once but, what with one thing and another, that was in days gone by.

When Mr Sawyer was drunk—this often happened—he used to be very rude to her. She never answered him.

'Look at the nigger showing off,' he would say; and she would smile as if she knew she ought to see the joke but couldn't. 'You damned, long-eyed, gloomy half-caste,[5] you don't smell right,' he would say; and she never answered, not even to whisper, 'You don't smell right to me, either.'

The story went that once they had ventured to give a dinner party and that when the servant, Mildred, was bringing in coffee, he had pulled Mrs Sawyer's hair. 'Not a wig, you see,' he bawled. Even

then, if you can believe it, Mrs Sawyer had laughed and tried to pretend that it was all part of the joke, this mysterious, obscure, sacred English joke.

But Mildred told the other servants in the town that her eyes had gone wicked, like a soucriant's[6] eyes, and that afterwards she had picked up some of the hair he pulled out and put it in an envelope, and that Mr Sawyer ought to look out (hair is obeah[7] as well as hands).

Of course, Mrs Sawyer had her compensations. They lived in a very pleasant house in Hill Street. The garden was large and they had a fine mango tree, which bore prolifically. The fruit was small, round, very sweet and juicy—a lovely, red-and-yellow colour when it was ripe. Perhaps it was one of the compensations, I used to think.

Mr Sawyer built a room on to the back of this house. It was unpainted inside and the wood smelt very sweet. Bookshelves lined the walls. Every time the Royal Mail steamer[8] came in it brought a package for him, and gradually the empty shelves filled.

Once I went there with Eddie to borrow *The Arabian Nights.*[9] That was on a Saturday afternoon, one of those hot, still afternoons when you felt that everything had gone to sleep, even the water in the gutters. But Mrs Sawyer was not asleep. She put her head in at the door and looked at us, and I knew that she hated the room and hated the books.

It was Eddie with the pale blue eyes and straw-coloured hair—the living image of his father, though often as silent as his mother—who first infected me with doubts about 'home', meaning England. He would be so quiet when others who had never seen it—none of us had ever seen it—were talking about its delights, gesticulating freely as we talked—London, the beautiful, rosy-cheeked ladies, the theatres, the shops, the fog, the blazing coal fires in winter, the exotic food (whitebait[1] eaten to the sound of violins), strawberries and cream—the word 'strawberries' always spoken with a guttural and throaty sound which we imagined to be the proper English pronunciation.

‘I don’t like strawberries,’ Eddie said on one occasion.

‘You *don’t like* strawberries?’

‘No, and I don’t like daffodils either. Dad’s always going on about them. He says they lick the flowers here into a cocked hat[2] and I bet that’s a lie.’

We were all too shocked to say, ‘You don’t know a thing about it.’ We were so shocked that nobody spoke to him for the rest of the day. But I for one admired him. I also was tired of learning and reciting poems in praise of daffodils, and my relations with the few ‘real’ English boys and girls I had met were awkward. I had discovered that if I called myself English they would snub me haughtily: ‘You’re not English; you’re a horrid colonial.’ ‘Well, I don’t much want to be English,’ I would say. ‘It’s much more fun to be French or Spanish or something like that—and, as a matter of fact, I am a bit.’ Then I was too killingly funny, quite ridiculous. Not only a horrid colonial, but also ridiculous. Heads I win, tails you lose—that was the English. I had thought about all this, and thought hard, but I had never dared to tell anybody what I thought and I realized that Eddie had been very bold.

But he was bold, and stronger than you would think. For one thing, he never felt the heat; some coldness in his fair skin resisted it. He didn’t burn red or brown, he didn’t freckle much.

Hot days seemed to make him feel especially energetic. ‘Now we’ll run twice round the lawn and then you can pretend you’re dying of thirst in the desert and that I’m an Arab chieftain bringing you water.’

‘You must drink slowly,’ he would say, ‘for if you’re very thirsty and you drink quickly you die.’

So I learnt the voluptuousness of drinking slowly when you are very thirsty—small mouthful by small mouthful, until the glass of pink, iced Coca-Cola was empty.

Just after my twelfth birthday Mr Sawyer died suddenly, and as Eddie’s special friend I went to the funeral, wearing a new white dress. My straight hair was damped with sugar and water the night

before and plaited into tight little plaits, so that it should be fluffy for the occasion.

When it was all over everybody said how nice Mrs Sawyer had looked, walking like a queen behind the coffin and crying her eyeballs out at the right moment, and wasn't Eddie a funny boy? He hadn't cried at all.

After this Eddie and I took possession of the room with the books. No one else ever entered it, except Mildred to sweep and dust in the mornings, and gradually the ghost of Mr Sawyer pulling Mrs Sawyer's hair faded, though this took a little time. The blinds were always halfway down and going in out of the sun was like stepping into a pool of brown-green water. It was empty except for the bookshelves, a desk with a green baize[3] top and a wicker rocking-chair.

'My room,' Eddie called it. 'My books,' he would say, 'my books.'

I don't know how long this lasted. I don't know whether it was weeks after Mr Sawyer's death or months after, that I see myself and Eddie in the room. But there we are and there, unexpectedly, are Mrs Sawyer and Mildred. Mrs Sawyer's mouth tight, her eyes pleased. She is pulling all the books out of the shelves and piling them into two heaps. The big, fat glossy ones—the good-looking ones, Mildred explains in a whisper—lie in one heap. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica, British Flowers, Birds and Beasts*, various histories, books with maps, Froude's *English in the West Indies*[4] and so on—they are going to be sold. The unimportant books, with paper covers or damaged covers or torn pages, lie in another heap. They are going to be burnt—yes, burnt.

Mildred's expression was extraordinary as she said that—half hugely delighted, half shocked, even frightened. And as for Mrs Sawyer—well, I knew bad temper (I had often seen it), I knew rage, but this was hate. I recognized the difference at once and stared at her curiously. I edged closer to her so that I could see the titles of the books she was handling.

It was the poetry shelf. *Poems*, Lord Byron, *Poetical Works*, Milton, and so on. Vlung, vlung, vlung—all thrown into the heap that

were to be sold. But a book by Christina Rossetti, though also bound in leather, went into the heap that was to be burnt, and by a flicker in Mrs Sawyer's eyes I knew that worse than men who wrote books were women who wrote books—infinitely worse. Men could be mercifully shot; women must be tortured.

Mrs Sawyer did not seem to notice that we were there, but she was breathing free and easy and her hands had got the rhythm of tearing and pitching. She looked beautiful, too—beautiful as the sky outside which was a very dark blue, or the mango tree, long sprays of brown and gold.

When Eddie said 'no', she did not even glance at him.

'No,' he said again in a high voice. 'Not that one. I was reading that one.'

She laughed and he rushed at her, his eyes starting out of his head, shrieking, 'Now I've got to hate you too. Now I hate you too.'

He snatched the book out of her hand and gave her a violent push. She fell into the rocking-chair.

Well, I wasn't going to be left out of all this, so I grabbed a book from the condemned pile and dived under Mildred's outstretched arm.

Then we were both in the garden. We ran along the path, bordered with crotons.[5] We pelted down the path though they did not follow us and we could hear Mildred laughing—kyah, kyah, kyah, kyah. As I ran I put the book I had taken into the loose front of my brown holland dress. It felt warm and alive.

When we got into the street we walked sedately, for we feared the black children's ridicule. I felt very happy, because I had saved this book and it was my book and I would read it from the beginning to the triumphant words 'The End'. But I was uneasy when I thought of Mrs Sawyer.

'What will she do?' I said.

'Nothing,' Eddie said. 'Not to me.'

He was white as a ghost in his sailor suit, a blue-white even in the setting sun, and his father's sneer was clamped on his face.

‘But she’ll tell your mother all sorts of lies about you,’ he said. ‘She’s an awful liar. She can’t make up a story to save her life, but she makes up lies about people all right.’

‘My mother won’t take any notice of her,’ I said. Though I was not at all sure.

‘Why not? Because she’s . . . because she isn’t white?’

Well, I knew the answer to that one. Whenever the subject was brought up—people’s relations and whether they had a drop of coloured blood or whether they hadn’t—my father would grow impatient and interrupt. ‘Who’s white?’ he would say. ‘Damned few.’

So I said, ‘Who’s white? Damned few.’

‘You can go to the devil,’ Eddie said. ‘She’s prettier than your mother. When she’s asleep her mouth smiles and she has your curling eyelashes and quantities and quantities and *quantities* of hair.’

‘Yes,’ I said truthfully. ‘She’s prettier than my mother.’

It was a red sunset that evening, a huge, sad, frightening sunset.

‘Look, let’s go back,’ I said. ‘If you’re sure she won’t be vexed with you, let’s go back. It’ll be dark soon.’

At his gate he asked me not to go. ‘Don’t go yet, don’t go yet.’

We sat under the mango tree and I was holding his hand when he began to cry. Drops fell on my hand like the water from the dripstone in the filter[6] in our yard. Then I began to cry too and when I felt my own tears on my hand I thought, ‘Now perhaps we’re married.’

‘Yes, certainly, now we’re married,’ I thought. But I didn’t say anything. I didn’t say a thing until I was sure he had stopped. Then I asked, ‘What’s your book?’

‘It’s *Kim*,’[7] he said. ‘But it got torn. It starts at page twenty now. What’s the one you took?’

‘I don’t know, it’s too dark to see,’ I said.

When I got home I rushed into my bedroom and locked the door because I knew that this book was the most important thing that

had ever happened to me and I did not want anybody to be there when I looked at it.

But I was very disappointed, because it was in French and seemed dull. *Fort Comme La Mort*,[8] it was called. . . .

1960

Endnotes

- Note 1: Wasting of the body associated with tuberculosis.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Or *Caribbees*: old term for the group of islands in the southeastern West Indies, now called the "Lesser Antilles."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, his pronunciation marks him as lower class.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Formerly British, Caribbean island off northeast Venezuela.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Offensive term for a person of mixed racial descent.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Female vampire, in Caribbean legend.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A charm or fetish used in Afro-Caribbean witchcraft or sorcery.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Ship, owned by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, that ferried mail from London to the West Indies beginning in 1841.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Also called *The Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of old stories, largely Persian, Arabian, and Indian in origin.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Young of a small fish, such as herring, considered a delicacy when cooked whole.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From *knocked into a cocked hat*: make them look terrible by comparison. Daffodils are common in English poetry, but do not grow in the West Indies.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Feltlike fabric.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Published in 1888 by the English historian James Anthony Froude (1818–1894).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Tropical plants.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Dripstone is a sandstone used as a filter to clean water for household use.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Novel (1901) by the English writer Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), about an Irish orphan boy growing up in India.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Strong as Death*, 1889 novel by the French writer Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893).Return to reference 8

On Not Shooting Sitting Birds[1]

There is no control over memory. Quite soon you find yourself being vague about an event which seemed so important at the time that you thought you'd never forget it. Or unable to recall the face of someone whom you could have sworn was there for ever. On the other hand, trivial and meaningless memories may stay with you for life. I can still shut my eyes and see Victoria grinding coffee on the pantry steps, the glass bookcase and the books in it, my father's pipe-rack, the leaves of the sandbox tree, the wallpaper of the bedroom in some shabby hotel, the hairdresser in Antibes.[2] It's in this way that I remember buying the pink milanese[3] silk underclothes, the assistant who sold them to me and coming into the street holding the parcel.

I had started out in life trusting everyone and now I trusted no one. So I had few acquaintances and no close friends. It was perhaps in reaction against the inevitable loneliness of my life that I'd find myself doing bold, risky, even outrageous things without hesitation or surprise. I was usually disappointed in these adventures and they didn't have much effect on me, good or bad, but I never quite lost the hope of something better or different.

One day, I've forgotten now where, I met this young man who smiled at me and when we had talked a bit I agreed to have dinner with him in a couple of days' time. I went home excited, for I'd liked him very much, and began to plan what I should wear. I had a dress I quite liked, an evening cloak, shoes, stockings, but my underclothes weren't good enough for the occasion, I decided. Next day I went out and bought the milanese silk chemise[4] and drawers.

So there we were seated at a table having dinner with a bedroom very obvious in the background. He was younger than I'd thought and stiffer and I didn't like him much after all. He kept eyeing me in such a wary, puzzled way. When we had finished our soup and the

waiter had taken the plates away, he said: ‘But you’re a lady, aren’t you?’ exactly as he might have said, ‘But you’re really a snake or a crocodile, aren’t you?’

‘Oh no, not that you’d notice,’ I said, but this didn’t work. We looked glumly at each other across the gulf that had yawned between us.

Before I came to England I’d read many English novels and I imagined I knew all about the thoughts and tastes of various sorts of English people. I quickly decided that to distract or interest this man I must talk about shooting.

I asked him if he knew the West Indies at all. He said no, he didn’t and I told him a long story of having been lost in the Dominican forest when I was a child. This wasn’t true. I’d often been in the woods but never alone. ‘There are no parrots now,’ I said, ‘or very few. There used to be. There’s a Dominican parrot in the zoo—have you ever seen it?—a sulky bird, very old I think. However, there are plenty of other birds and we do have shooting parties. Perdrix are very good to eat, but ramiers[5] are rather bitter.’

Then I began describing a fictitious West Indian shooting party and all the time I talked I was remembering the real thing. An old shotgun leaning up in one corner of the room, the round table in the middle where we would sit to make cartridges, putting the shot in, ramming it down with a wad of paper. Gunpowder? There was that too, for I remember the smell. I suppose the boys were trusted to be careful.

The genuine shooting party consisted of my two brothers, who shared the shotgun, some hangers-on and me at the end of the procession, for then I couldn’t bear to be left out of anything. As soon as the shooting was about to start I would stroll away casually and when I was out of sight run as hard as I could, crouch down behind a bush and put my fingers in my ears. It wasn’t that I was sorry for the birds, but I hated and feared the noise of the gun. When it was all over I’d quietly join the others. I must have done this unobtrusively or probably my brothers thought me too

insignificant to worry about, for no one ever remarked on my odd behaviour or teased me about it.

On and on I went, almost believing what I was saying, when he interrupted me. 'Do you mean to say that your brothers shot sitting birds?' His voice was cold and shocked.

I stared at him. How could I convince this man that I hadn't the faintest idea whether my brothers shot sitting birds or not? How could I explain now what really happened? If I did he'd think me a liar. Also a coward and there he'd be right, for I was afraid of many things, not only the sound of gunfire. But by this time I wasn't sure that I liked him at all so I was silent and felt my face growing as stiff and unsmiling as his.

It was a most uncomfortable dinner. We both avoided looking at the bedroom and when the last mouthful was swallowed he announced that he was going to take me home. The way he said this rather puzzled me. Then I told myself that probably he was curious to see where I lived. Neither of us spoke in the taxi except to say, 'Well, goodnight.' 'Goodnight.'

I felt regretful when it came to taking off my lovely pink chemise, but I could still think: Some other night perhaps, another sort of man.

I slept at once.

1976

Endnotes

- Note 1: Game-bird hunters traditionally consider the shooting of sitting (rather than flying) birds shockingly unsportsmanlike.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Resort town on the south coast of France.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Made in Milan, Italy.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Loose-fitting undergarment hanging straight from the shoulders.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Pigeons of the eastern Caribbean.Return to reference 5

CLAUDE McKAY
1889–1948

Claude McKay was born into a farm-working family in Sunny Ville, Clarendon Parish, Jamaica, and spent the first half of his life on the British Caribbean island. His family belonged to the Black peasantry, a class descended from enslaved people who left the coastal plantations for the mountainous interior of the country. Family legend suggested that McKay's maternal ancestors hailed from Madagascar and his father's ancestors from the Ashanti region of modern-day Ghana. McKay grew up in a Christian family that valued education, but struggled within the racialized structure of Jamaican society, where White landowners and mixed-race peoples still made up the upper classes. At age sixteen McKay applied and was accepted to a trade school in Kingston. He never matriculated because the school was destroyed in the great earthquake of 1907. Instead McKay was apprenticed to a cabinetmaker and then a wheelwright and served for less than a year as a police constable. It was during this period that McKay met English linguist and folklorist Walter Jekyll, who encouraged his poetic aspirations and advised him to write in Jamaican dialect, or Creole. Drawing on the example of the Scottish-dialect poet Robert Burns, McKay harnessed the Jamaican idiom in poems collected in two books published in 1912, *Constab Ballads* and *Songs of Jamaica*. The latter collection includes "Old England," a seemingly reverent imaginative journey, in a new literary language, to the imperial "homeland," and "A Midnight

Woman to the Bobby," in which a sex worker humorously dresses down a young police officer who threatens to arrest her. The first major poet to make effective literary use of Jamaican English, McKay influenced many later African Caribbean poets who went further with vernacular forms of English, such as Louise Bennett.

For his poetry McKay won a prize that enabled him to travel to the United States and study at Alabama's Tuskegee Institute and at Kansas State College, before moving to Harlem in 1914. Switching in his poetry from Jamaican to Standardized English, he helped precipitate the Harlem Renaissance with his collection *Harlem Shadows* (1922), which included sonnets addressing the vexed racial experience of a Caribbean immigrant. "Outcast" gives voice to the Black diasporic experience of alienation from one's African origins and sometimes relies on primitive imagery to differentiate this lost world from the ills of modern civilization. McKay's sonnet "If We Must Die," written in response to the American anti-Black riots of the summer of 1919, offers a tragic and forceful expression of solidarity with African Americans. The poem has often been quoted as a rallying cry, without attribution, in other contexts.

For most of the 1920s and into the mid-1930s, McKay, identifying with the radical left, lived and wrote novels and short stories mainly in England, France, and Morocco. From his first novel, *Home to Harlem* (1928), onward, McKay took an interest in the Black underclasses and adopted an experimental approach to plot that mirrored the experiences of his wandering vagabond protagonists. McKay's alter-ego in *Home to Harlem* and its sequel, *Banjo: A Story without a Plot* (1929), is a Haitian immigrant named Ray who has read James Joyce, Sherwood Anderson, and all of D. H. Lawrence and wonders "if there was not a great Lawrence reservoir of words too terrible and too terrifying for nice printing." McKay's sympathy for the down-and-out and his willingness to delve into the recesses of desire brought him into tension with Black middle-class values and respectability politics. *Banjo* takes Ray to the "Ditch," where he meets the eponymous Banjo, an African American musician and a hard-drinking, pleasure-loving drifter who dreams of starting an

orchestra but refuses to play for money. The novel unfolds through a series of loosely related vignettes that blend bawdy scenes with lively debate about racial injustice, the plight of Black peoples across various nations, and international socialist politics.

"Jelly Roll" exemplifies the pulsating prose and exuberant refusal of decorum in *Banjo*. Set in the Café African, it intermingles the lyrics of "Shake That Thing" (a popular song by American blues musician Papa Charlie Jackson) with vivid descriptions of dancing, flirting, and "jazzing." McKay also intermingles characters from around the Black world, and he precisely catalogs the countries and skin colors of various clubgoers. Such a strategy is typical of McKay, for it allows him to address variation and division within the African diasporic community even as he stages a coming together of Black peoples. He complicates what it means to be "Black" and takes apart unified racial identities while nonetheless acknowledging commonly shared forms of oppression and loss. Making music of narrative and narrative of music, McKay courts the improvisatory, sensuous, and sometimes reckless stylings of jazz to offer a vision of life at the margins.

McKay would go on to publish several more major works: *Gingertown* (1932), *Banana Bottom* (1933), and his autobiography, *A Long Way from Home* (1937). He returned to the United States in 1934, but struggled financially and emotionally. He converted to Catholicism toward the end of his life and died in Chicago of congestive heart failure. He was in search of a publisher for his second autobiographical work, *My Green Hills of Jamaica*, when he died. It was published posthumously in 1979 as were two more novels, *Amiable with Big Teeth* (2017) and *Romance in Marseilles* (2020), the latter of which featured openly gay characters and was judged too controversial to be published in its own time.

A Midnight Woman to the Bobby[1]

No palm me up,[2] you dutty brute,
You' jam mout' mash[3] like ripe bread-fruit;
You fas'n now, but wait lee ya,[4]
I'll see you grunt under de law.

You t'ink you wise, but we wi' see;
You not de fus' one fas' wid me;
I'll lib fe see dem tu'n you out,
As sure as you got dat mash' mout'.

I born right do'n beneat' de clack[5]
(You ugly brute, you tu'n you' back?)
Don't t'ink dat I'm a come-aroun',[6]
I born right 'way in 'panish Town.[7]

Care how you try, you caan' do mo'
Dan many dat was hyah befo';
Yet whe' dey all o' dem te-day?
De buccra[8] dem no kick dem 'way?

Ko 'pon you' jam samplatta[9] nose:
'Cos you wear Mis'r Koshaw clo'es.[1]
You t'ink say you's de only man,[2]
Yet fus' time ko how you be'n 'tan'.[3]

You big an' ugly ole tu'n-foot[4]
Be'n neber know fe wear a boot;
An' chigger nyam you' tumpa toe,[5]
Till nit full i' like herrin' roe.[6]

You come from mountain naked-'kin,[7]
An' Lard a mussy! you be'n thin,
For all de bread-fruit dem be'n done,
Bein' 'poil' up by de tearin' sun:

De coco[8] couldn' bear at all,
For, Lard! de groun' was pure white-marl;[9]
An' t'rough de rain part o' de year
De mango tree dem couldn' bear.

An' when de pinch o' time you feel
A 'pur you a you' chigger heel,[1]
You lef' you' district, big an' coarse,
An' come join buccra Police Force.

An' now you don't wait fe you' glass,[2]
But trouble me wid you' jam fas';[3]
But wait, me frien', you' day wi' come,
I'll see you go same lak a some.[4]

Say wha'?—'res' me?[5]—you go to hell!
You t'ink Judge don't know unno[6] well?
You t'ink him gwin' go sentance me
Widout a soul fe witness i'?

1912

Endnotes

- Note 1: Police constable.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Don't put your hands on me (Jamaican English); the entire poem is in Jamaican English: the notes present standardized translations of dialect.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Your damn mouth is all awry.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: You are fast (meddling) now, but wait a little, do you hear?Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The clock on the public buildings at Spanish Town.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Day-laborer.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: City in central Jamaica. Spanish Town was the capital of British Jamaica from 1692–1872.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: White man.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Refers to a piece of leather tied like a sandal to the foot. "Ko": look.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Police uniform. Colonel Kershaw was inspector general of police in 1911 when the poem was written.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A fine fellow.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Yet when I first knew you, see how you looked.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Turned-in foot.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: And chiggers had eaten into your maimed toe.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Herring fish eggs.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: With holes in your clothing.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Edible root.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Earthy deposit rich in calcium carbonate.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: When you felt hard times spur you in your chigger-eaten heel.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The right moment.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Meddling and officiousness.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Same like some; just like others before you did.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Arrest me?Return to reference 5
- Note 6: You.Return to reference 6

Old England

I've longin' in me dept's of heart dat I can conquer not,
'Tis a wish dat I've been havin' from since I could form a t'o't,°
'Tis to sail athwart the ocean an' to hear de billows roar,
When dem ride aroun' de steamer,[1] when dem beat on England's shore.

Just to view de homeland England, in de streets of London walk,
An' to see de famous sights dem 'bouten which dere's so much talk,
An' to watch de fact'ry chimneys pourin' smoke up to de sky,
An' to see de matches-children, dat I hear 'bout, passin' by.[2]

I would see Saint Paul's Cathedral,[3] an' would hear some of de great
Learnin' comin' from de bishops, preachin' relics of old fait';
I would ope me mout' wid wonder at de massive organ soun',
An' would 'train me eyes to see de beauty lyin' all aroun'.

I'd go to de City Temple,[4] where de old fait' is a wreck,
An' de parson is a-preachin' views dat most folks will not tek;

I'd go where de men of science meet togeder in deir hall,
To give light unto de real truths, to obey king Reason's call.

I would view Westminster Abbey,[5] where de great of England sleep,
An' de solemn marble statues o'er deir ashes vigil keep;
I would see immortal Milton an' de wul'-famous Shakespeare,
Past'ral Wordswort', gentle Gray,[6] an' all de great souls buried dere.

I would see de ancient chair where England's kings deir crowns put on,
Soon to lay dem by again when all de vanity is done;
An' I'd go to view de lone spot where in peaceful solitude
Rests de body of our Missis Queen,[7] Victoria de Good.

An' dese places dat I sing of now shall afterwards impart
All deir solemn sacred beauty to a weary searchin' heart;
So I'll rest glad an' contented in me min'° for evermore,
When I sail across de ocean back to my own native shore.

1912

Endnotes

- Note 1: Steamship.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: See the short story “The Little-Match Seller,” by the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875), and the poem “The Little Match Girl,” by the Scottish writer William McGonagall (1830?–1902), both about a poor match-selling girl who freezes to death on New Year’s Eve.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In London, cathedral of the Anglican bishop.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Victorian church in central London.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: London church where monarchs are crowned and the famous, including poets, are buried.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Thomas Gray (1716–1771), English poet and author of “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.”Return to reference 6
- Note 7: So called in Jamaica, Victoria reigned during the emancipation of slaves in 1837.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *thought*Return to reference °
- °: *mind*Return to reference °

If We Must Die

If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

1919, 1922

Outcast

For the dim regions whence my fathers came
My spirit, bondaged by the body, longs.
Words felt, but never heard, my lips would frame;
My soul would sing forgotten jungle songs.
I would go back to darkness and to peace,
But the great western world holds me in fee,
And I may never hope for full release
While to its alien gods I bend my knee.
Something in me is lost, forever lost,
Some vital thing has gone out of my heart,
And I must walk the way of life a ghost
Among the sons of earth, a thing apart;
For I was born, far from my native clime,
Under the white man's menace, out of time.

1922

From Banjo: A Story without a Plot

V. "Jelly Roll"

Shake That Thing. The opening of the Café African by a Senegalese had brought all the joy-lovers of darkest color together to shake that thing. Never was there such a big black-throated guzzling of red wine, white wine, and close, indiscriminate jazzing[1] of all the Negroes of Marseilles.

For the Negro-Negroid[2] population of the town divides sharply into groups. The Martiniquans and Guadeloupans,[3] regarding themselves as constituting the dark flower of all Marianne's blacks, make a little aristocracy of themselves. The Madagascans with their cousins from the little dots of islands around their big island and the North African Negroes, whom the pure Arabs despise, fall somewhere between the Martiniquans and the Senegalese,[4] who are the savages. Senegalese is the geographically inaccurate term generally used to designate all the Negroes from the different parts of French West Africa.

The magic thing had brought all shades and grades of Negroes together. Money. A Senegalese had emigrated to the United States, and after some years had returned with a few thousand dollars. And he had bought a café on the quay. It was a big café, the first that any Negro in the town ever owned.

The tiny group of handsomely-clothed Senegalese were politely proud of the bar, and all the blue overall boys of the docks and the ships were boisterously glad of a spacious place to spread joy in.

All shades of Negroes came together there. Even the mulattoes[5] took a step down from their perch to mix in. For, as in the British West Indies[6] and South Africa, the mulattoes of the French colonies do not usually intermingle with the blacks.

But the magic had brought them all together to shake that thing and drink red wine, white wine, sweet wine. All the British West African blacks, Portuguese blacks,[7] American blacks, all who had drifted into this port that the world goes through.

A great event! And to Banjo it had brought a unique feeling of satisfaction. He did not miss it, as he never missed anything rich that came within his line of living. There was music at the bar and Banjo made much of it. He got a little acquainted with the *patron*, who often chatted with him. The *patron* was proud of his English and liked to display it when there was any distinguished-appearing person at the café.

"Shake That Thing!" That was the version of the "Jelly-Roll Blues"[8] that Banjo loved and always played. And the Senegalese boys loved to shake to it. Banjo was treated to plenty of red wine and white wine when he played that tune. And he would not think of collecting sous.[9] Latnah had gone about once and collected sous in her tiny jade tray. But she never went again. She loved Banjo, but she could not enter into the spirit of that all-Negro-atmosphere of the bar. Banjo was glad she stayed away. He did not want to collect sous from a crowd of fellows just like himself. He preferred to play for them and be treated to wine. Sous! How could he respect sous? He who had burnt up dollars. Why should he care, with a free bed, free love, and wine?

His plan of an orchestra filled his imagination now. Maybe he could use the Café African as a base to get some fellows together. Malty could play the guitar right splendid, but he had no instrument. If that Senegalese *patron* had a little imagination, he might buy Malty a guitar and they would start a little orchestra that would make the bar unique and popular.

Many big things started in just such a little way. Only give him a chance and he would make this dump sit up and take notice—show it how to be sporty and game. How he would love to see a couple of brown chippies from Gawd's own show this Ditch[1] some decent movement—turn themselves jazzing loose in a back-home, brown-

skin Harlem way. Oh, Banjo's skin was itching to make some romantic thing.

And one afternoon he walked straight into a dream—a cargo boat with a crew of four music-making colored boys, with banjo, ukelele, mandolin, guitar, and horn. That evening Banjo and Malty, mad with enthusiam, literally carried the little band to the Vieux Port.[2] It was the biggest evening ever at the Senegalese bar. They played several lively popular tunes, but the Senegalese boys yelled for "Shake That Thing." Banjo picked it off and the boys from the boat quickly got it. Then Banjo keyed himself up and began playing in his own wonderful wild way.

> "Old Uncle Jack, the jelly-roll king,
> Just got back from shaking that thing!
> He can shake that thing, he can shake that thing
> For he's a jelly-roll king. Oh, shake that thing!"

It roused an Arab-black girl from Algeria[3] into a shaking-mad mood. And she jazzed right out into the center of the floor and shook herself in a low-down African shimmying way. The mandolin player, a stocky, cocky lad of brown-paper complexion, the lightest-skinned of the playing boys, had his eyes glued on her. Her hair was cropped and stood up shiny, crinkly like a curiously-wrought bird's nest. She was big-boned and well-fleshed and her full lips were a savage challenge. Oh, shake that thing!

"Cointreau!"[4] The Negroid girl called when, the music ceasing, the paper-brown boy asked her to take a drink.

"That yaller[5] nigger's sure gone on her," Malty said to Banjo.

"And she knows he's got a roll can reach right up to her figure," said Banjo. "Looka them eyes she shines on him! Oh, boy! it was the same for you and I when we first landed—every kind of eyes in the chippies' world shining for us!"

"Yes, but you ain't got nothing to kick about. The goodest eyes in this burg[6] ain't shining for anybody else but you."

"Hheh-hheh," Banjo giggled. "I'll be dawggone, Malty, ef I don't think sometimes youse getting soft. Takem as they come, easy and jolly, ole boh."

He poured out a glass of red wine, chinked his glass against Malty's, and toasted, "Oh, you Dixieland,[7] here's praying for you' soul salvation."

"And here is joining you," said Malty.

> "Dry land will nevah be my land,
> Gimme a wet wide-open land for mine."

Handsome, happy brutes. The music is on again. The Senegalese boys crowd the floor, dancing with one another. They dance better male with male or individually, than with the girls, putting more power in their feet, dancing more wildly, more natively, more savagely. Senegalese in blue overalls, Madagascan soldiers in khaki, dancing together. A Martiniquan with his mulattress flashing her gold teeth. A Senegalese sergeant goes round with his fair blonde. A Congo boxer struts it with his Marguerite.[8] And Banjo, grinning, singing, white teeth, great mouth, leads the band. . . . Shake that thing.

The banjo[9] dominates the other instruments; the charming, pretty sound of the ukelele, the filigree notes of the mandolin, the sensuous color of the guitar. And Banjo's face shows that he feels that his instrument is first. The Negroes and Spanish Negroids[1] of the evenly-warm, ever-green and ever-flowering Antilles may love the rich chords of the guitar, but the banjo is preëminently the musical instrument of the American Negro. The sharp, noisy notes of the banjo belong to the American Negro's loud music of life—an affirmation of his hardy existence in the midst of the biggest, the most tumultuous civilization of modern life.

Sing, Banjo! Play, Banjo! Here I is, Big Boss, keeping step, sure step, right long with you in some sort a ways. He-ho, Banjo! Play that thing! Shake that thing!

"Old Brother Mose[2] is sick in bed.
Doctor says he is almost dead
From shaking that thing, shaking that thing.
He was a jelly-roll king. Oh, shake that thing!"

A little flock of pinks[3] from the Ditch floated into the bar. Seamen from Senegal. Soldiers from Madagascar. Pimps from Martinique. Pimps from everywhere. Pimps from Africa. Seamen fed up with the sea. Young men weary of the work of the docks, scornful of the meager reward—doing that now. Black youth close to the bush and the roots of jungle trees, trying to live the precarious life of the poisonous orchids of civilization.

Shake That Thing! . . .

The slim, slate-colored Martiniquan dances with a gold-brown Arab girl in a purely sensual way. His dog's mouth shows a tiny, protruding bit of pink tongue. Oh, he jazzes like a lizard with his girl. A dark-brown lizard and a gold-brown lizard. . . .

"Oh, shake that thing,
He's a jelly-roll king."

A coffee-black boy from Cameroon and a chocolate-brown from Dakar[4] stand up to each other to dance a native sex-symbol dance. Bending knee and nodding head, they dance up to each other. As they almost touch, the smaller boy spins suddenly round and dances away. Oh, exquisite movement! Like a ram goat and a ram kid. Hands and feet! Shake that thing!

Black skin itching, black flesh warm with the wine of life, the music of life, the love and deep meaning of life. Strong smell of healthy black bodies in a close atmosphere, generating sweat and waves of heat. Oh, shake that thing!

Suddenly in the thick joy of it there was a roar and a rush and sheering apart as a Senegalese leaped like a leopard bounding through the jazzers, and, gripping an antagonist, butted him clean

on the forehead once, twice, and again, and turned him loose to fall heavily on the floor like a felled tree.

The *patron* dashed from behind the bar. A babel[5] of different dialects broke forth. Policemen appeared and the musicians slipped outside, followed by most of the Martiniquans.

"Hheh-hheh," Banjo laughed. "The music so good it put them French fellahs in a fighting mood."

"Niggers is niggers all ovah the wul'," said the tall, long-faced chocolate who played the guitar. "Always spoil a good thing. Always the same no matter what color their hide is or what langwidge they talk."

"And I was fixing for that fair brown. I wonder where at she is?" said the mandolin-player.

"Don't worry," said Banjo. "Theah's always some'n' better or as good as what you miss. You should do like me whenevah you hit a new port. Always try to make something as different from what you know as a Leghorn is from a Plymouth Rock."[6]

"Hi-ee! But youse one chicken-knowing fool," said Malty.

Banjo did a little strut-jig. "You got mah number all right, boh. And what wese gwine to do now? The night ain't begin yet at all foh mine. I want to do some moh playing and do some moh wine and what not do?"

A Martinique guide, who had had them under surveillance for a long while, now stepped up and said that he knew of a love shop where they could play music and have some real fun.

"You sure?" asked Banjo. "Don't fool us now, for I lives right down here in this dump and know most a them. And if that joint you know ain't a place that we can lay around in for a while, nothing doing I tell you straight. I'll just take all mah buddies right outa there."

The guide assured the boys that his place was all right. They all went into another bar on the quay and the guitar-player paid for a round of drinks. From there they turned up the Rue de la Mairie and west along the Rue de la Loge to find the Martiniquan's rendezvous.

They went by the Rue de la Reynarde, where a loud jarring cluster of colored lights was shouting its trade. Standing in the slimy litter of a narrow turning, an emaciated, middle-aged, watery-eyed woman was doing a sort of dance and singing in a thin streaky voice. She was advertising the house in whose shadow she danced, and was much like a poorly-feathered hen pecking and clucking on a dunghill.

The boys hesitated a little before the appearance of the drab-fronted building that their escort indicated. Then they entered and were surprised at finding themselves in a showy love shop of methodically assorted things. It was very international. European, African, Asiatic. Contemporary feminine styles competed with old and forgotten. Rose-petal pajamas, knee-length frocks, silken shifts, the nude, the boyish bob contrasted with shimmering princess gowns, country-girl dresses of striking freshness, severe glove-fitting black setting off a demure lady with Italian-rich, thick, long hair, the piquant semi-nude and Spanish-shawled shoulders.

Banjo saw his first flame of the Ditch between two sailors with batik-like kerchiefs curiously knotted on their heads. They were Malay,[7] perhaps. This time he was not aroused. The Martiniquan talked to a strangely attractive girl. She had almond eyes that were painted in a unique manner to emphasize their exotic effect. Evidently she was not pure Mongolian,[8] but perhaps some casual crossing of Occident and Orient, commerce-spanned, dropped on the shore of the wonderful sea of the world.

There were half a dozen touts.[9] One seemed a person of authority in the place. He was this side of forty, above average height, of meager form, Spanish type, with a face rather disgusting, because, although dark, it was sallow and deep-sunken under the cheek bones. He wore a blue suit, white scarf, heavy gold chain, and patent-leather shoes. The other five were youths. Three sported bright suits and fancy shoes of two and three colors, and two were in ordinary proletarian blue. The proletarian suits among all the striking feminine finery gave a certain elusive tone of distinction to the atmosphere, and one dressed thus was particularly conspicuous,

reclining on a red-cushioned seat, under the lavish and intimate caresses of a Negress from the Antilles.[1] Her face was like that of a Pekinese.[2] She wore a bit of orange chiffon and had a green fan, which she opened at intervals against her mouth as she grinned deliciously.

Sitting like a queen in prim fatness, quite high up against a desk near the staircase that led to the regions above, a lady ruled over the scene with smiling business efficiency. When the Martiniquan spoke to her, introducing his evening's catch by a wave of the hand toward where the boys had seated themselves, and explaining that they wanted to play their own music, she smiled a gay acquiescence.

> "Oh, shake, shake, shake that thing!"
> He's a jelly-roll king. . . ."

When Banjo and his fellows entered, many eyes had followed them. And now as they played and hummed and swayed, all eyes were fixed on them, and soon the whole shop was right out on the floor, shaking that thing. Oh, shake that thing!

The little black girl was all in a wild heat of movement as she went rearing up and down with her young Provençal.[3] But he seemed unequal to catch and keep up with her motion, so she exchanged him for the Martiniquan, who went prancing into it. And round and round they went, bounding in and out among the jazzers, rearing and riding together with the speed and freedom of two wild goats. Oh, shake that wonderful thing!

The players paused and some girls tried to order champagne on them, but the Martiniquan intervened and demanded wine and spirits.

"He knows his business," the mandolin-player said to Banjo.

"He's gotta," Banjo replied, "because he's got himself to look out for and me to reckin with."

Suddenly the air was full of a terrible tenseness and gravity as an altercation between the lady at the desk and the meager, sallow-faced man seemed at the point of developing into a fateful affair.

The man was leaning against the desk, looking into the woman's face with cold, ghastly earnestness, his hand resting a little in his hip pocket. The woman's face fell flat like paste and all the girls stood tiptoe in silence and trembling excitement. Abruptly, without a word, the man turned and left the room with murder in his stride.

"That must be the boss-man," the mandolin-player said.

"And he looks like a mean mastiff,"[4] said the guitar-player.

"Sure seems lak he's just that thing," agreed Banjo.

Tem, tem, ti-tum, tim ti-tim, tum, tem. Banjo and the boys were chording up. Back . . . thing . . . bed . . . black . . . dead. . . . Oh, shake that thing. . . . Jelly-r-o-o-o-o-oll! Again all the shop was out on the floor. No graceful sliding and gliding, but strutting, jigging, shimmying, shuffling, humping, standing-swaying, dogging, doing, shaking that thing. The girls were now tiptoeing to another kind of excitement. Blood had crept back up into the face of the woman at the desk. . . .

The sallow-faced man appeared in the entrance and strode through the midst of it to the desk. Bomb! The fearful report snuffed out the revel and the dame tumbled fatly to the floor. The murderer gloated over the sad mess of flesh for an instant, then with a wild leap he lanced himself like a rat through the paralyzed revelers and disappeared.

The bewildered music-makers halted hesitantly at the foot of the alley.

"Let's all go in here and take a stiff drink." Banjo indicated a little bistro at the corner.

"Better let's leg it a li'l' ways longer," said the ukelele-player, "so the police won't come fooling around us now that wese good and well away outa there. I don't wanta have no truck with the police."

"And they ain't gwineta mess around us, pardner," said Malty. "We don't speak that there lingo a theirn and they ain't studying us. Ise been in on a dozen shooting-ups in this here Ditch, ef Ise been in on one, with the bullets them jest burning pass mah black buttum, and Ise nevah been asked by the police, 'What did you miss?' nor 'What did you see?' "

"Did you say a dozen?" cried the ukelele-player.

"Just that I did, boh, which was what I was pussonally attached to. But that ain't nothing at all, for theah's a shooting-up or a cutting-up—and sometimes moh—every day in this here burg."

"Malty," said Banjo, "vouse sure one eggsigirating spade."[5]

"Doughnuts on that there eggsigirating. It's the same crap to me whether there was a dozen or a thousand. They ain't nevah made a hole in me, for Ise got magic in mah skin foh protection, when you done got you souvenir there on you' wrist, Banjo boy."

"Gawd! But it was a bloody affair, all right," said the guitar-player. "I was so frightened I didn't really know what was happening. Bam! Biff! And the big boss-lady was undertaker's business before you could squint."

"Jest spoiled the whole sport," said the ukelele-player. "I kinda liked the nifty dump. It was the goods, all right."

"You said it, boh," the mandolin-player grinned, scratching his person. "It was some moh collection. All the same, I gotta plug."

"With you, buddy," cried Banjo. "Right there with you I sure indeed is."

"Let's go back to the African Bar," suggested the mandolin-player. The picture of the North African girl shaking that jelly-roll thing was still warmly working in his blood.

They found the African Bar closed. Again they left the quay[6] and Banjo took them up one of the somber, rubbish-strewn alleys of the Ditch. On both sides of the alley were the dingy cubicles whose only lights were the occupants who filled the fronts, gesturing and calling in ludicrous tones: "Viens ici, viens ici,"[7] and repeating pridefully the raw expressions of the low love shops that they had learned from English-speaking seamen.

Out of a drinking hole-in-the-wall came the creaky jangling notes of a small, upright and ancient pianola.[8] The place was chock-full of a mixed crowd of girls, seamen, and dockers, with two man-of-war[9] sailors and three soldiers among them.

"What about this here dump?" asked Banjo.

The mandolin-player looked lustfully up and down the alley and into the bistro, where wreaths of smoke settled heavily upon the frowsy air. "Suits me all right," he drawled. "What about you fellows?"

"Well, I hope it won't turn into another bloody mess of a riot this time," said the ukelele-player.

"Here youse just like you would be at home. This is *my* street," said Banjo. A girl came up and, patting him on the shoulder with a familiar phrase, she pushed him into the bistro.

As they entered a Senegalese who had been dancing to their voluptuous playing at the African Bar, exclaimed: "Here they are! Now we're going to hear some real music—something ravishing." And he begged Banjo to play the "Jelly-Roll."

One of the soldiers was evidently "slumming." There was a neat elegance about his uniform and shoes that set him apart from the ambiguous dandies of military service, the *habituées*[1] of shady places. His features and his manner betrayed class distinction. He offered Banjo and his companions a round of drinks, saying in slow English: "Please play. You American? I like much *les Negres* play the jazz American. I hear them in Paris. *Epatant!*"[2]

Banjo grinned and tossed off his Cap Corse.[3] "All right, fellows. Let's play them that thing first."

"And then the once-over," said the mandolin-player.

Shake That Thing! That jelly-roll Thing!

Shake to the loud music of life playing to the primeval round of life. Rough rhythm of darkly-carnal life. Strong surging flux of profound currents forced into shallow channels. Play that thing! One movement of the thousand movements of the eternal life-flow. Shake that thing! In the face of the shadow of Death. Treacherous hand of murderous Death, lurking in sinister alleys, where the shadows of life dance, nevertheless, to their music of life. Death over there! Life over here! Shake down Death and forget his commerce, his purpose, his haunting presence in a great shaking orgy. Dance down the Death of these days, the Death of these ways in shaking that thing. Jungle jazzing, Orient wriggling, civilized

stepping. Shake that thing! Sweet dancing thing of primitive joy, perverse pleasure, prostitute ways, many-colored variations of the rhythm, savage, barbaric, refined—eternal rhythm of the mysterious, magical, magnificent—the dance divine of life. . . . Oh, Shake That Thing!

1929

Endnotes

- Note 1: Playing and/or dancing to jazz music. It can also mean to thrill, intoxicate, or agitate.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Offensive and now obsolete racial grouping for Indigenous Africans.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Inhabitants or natives of Guadeloupe, an archipelago in the Caribbean and territory of France. "Martiniquais": inhabitants or natives of Martinique, an island in the Caribbean and territory of France.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Inhabitants or natives of Senegal, a West African country. "North African": from the North African region of Africa, including Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, and Egypt. "Madagascans": inhabitants or natives of Madagascar, an island off the coast of Africa and formally part of the French colonial empire.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Offensive and dated term for people of mixed-race ancestry, particularly of White and Black ancestry.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The former name for the colonial territories of the United Kingdom in the Caribbean, before many became independent countries.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Portuguese African colonies included Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique. "British West African": inhabitant or native of British West Africa, a former name for the colonies of the United Kingdom in West Africa, before they became independent countries.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Jazz fox-trot composed by American musician Ferdinand Joseph LaMothe (stage name: Jelly Roll Morton) in 1924.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A small amount of money.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A run-down but lively area frequented by Black residents and transients in the city of Marseille, France. "Chippies": dated and derogatory term for prostitutes or promiscuous women.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Literally "old port" (French); a harbor in the city of Marseille, France.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Country in North Africa.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An orange-flavored liqueur.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pronunciation spelling of *yellow* (outdated slang referring to a light-skinned Black person).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A town or city.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Style of jazz music developed in New Orleans in the early 20th century.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A typically French name that may imply an interracial relationship between the boxer and a White French woman. "Congo": an inhabitant or native of the Congo, a country in central Africa.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A stringed musical instrument originally created by enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and North America. Its construction and sounds drew on enslaved people's memories of African musical traditions, and the instrument is foundational to both African American and American folk culture.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Dated and offensive racial grouping for Black people living in or from Spain.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Possibly a reference to the play *Meek Mose* (1928) by Frank Wilson. Its protagonist is a Black preacher who believes the meek will inherit the earth. It was one of the first plays by an African American author to be staged on Broadway, and it was restaged by the Federal Theater in 1934 under the title *Brother Mose*.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Possibly slang for sex workers.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Capital and largest city of Senegal. “Cameroon”: country in West-central Africa.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Reference to the Tower of Babel, a biblical myth explaining the origin of different languages. Humans sharing a common language attempted to build a tower tall enough to reach heaven, leading God to scatter the people and disrupt their ability to understand one another.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Location in Massachusetts, United States, where the *Mayflower* carrying pilgrims from England landed in 1620. “Leghorn”: an Italian port city.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Inhabitant or native of Malaysia.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Inhabitant or native of Mongolia.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: People soliciting business.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: An archipelago in the Caribbean. “Negress”: dated and offensive term for a woman or girl of Black African ancestry.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An inhabitant or native of Peking, a former English name for Beijing.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An inhabitant or native of Provence, a region of France.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A large breed of dog.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An offensive term for a Black person. “Eggsigirating”: pronunciation spelling of “exaggerating.”Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Platform alongside water used for a landing place and loading or unloading ships.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: “Come here” (French).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Also known as a “player piano,” a mechanical self-playing piano.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A powerful warship.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Regular visitors (French).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: “Amazing” (French).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A kind of aperitif wine.Return to reference 3

STEVIE SMITH
1902–1971

Stevie Smith's real name was Florence Margaret Smith, but she was nicknamed "Stevie" after a famous jockey because of her small stature. She was born in Hull, Yorkshire, but at the age of three went with her mother and sister to live with an aunt in Palmer's Green, a suburb north of London. She worked as a secretary at the magazine-publishing firm of Newnes, Pearson, while continuing to live with her aunt, to whom she was devoted. When her aunt grew old and infirm, Smith gave up her job to look after her, although she herself was often in ill health. At the same time, she managed to lead a lively social life in London and was known for the vividness and range of her conversation.

Smith brought out her first novel, *Novel on Yellow Paper* (1936), at the suggestion of a publisher who rejected a collection of poems. This was followed by her first volume of poetry, *A Good Time Was Had by All* (1937), and in due course by eight further poetry collections and two more novels.

Smith's work is utterly original, fitting into no category and showing none of the characteristic influences of the age. Her poetry sometimes seems to be light verse, and it draws on nursery rhyme and often employs simple language, but its humor can shade into dread, its whimsy into metaphysical pondering. She illustrated many of her poems with line drawings (she called them "doodles") that reinforce the effect of mock-naïveté. This stance is akin to the

cunning innocence of the fool or the trickster, and can be seen, in part, as a gendered deflection and subversion of masculine cultural norms. Her diction ranges from the matter-of-fact to the archaic, from colloquialism ("Poor chap"), slang ("you ass"), and nonsense ("Our Bog Is Dood") to didacticism ("My point which upon this has been obscured") and foreign phrases ("Sunt Leones"). Her verse moves from free conversational rhythms to traditional verse patterns, on occasion becoming—to ironic effect—almost doggerel. Her tone can be satiric, solemn, or both at once. A poem such as "Not Waving but Drowning" belies the apparent guilelessness of Smith's art. Like the dying man's ambiguous gesture here, her poetry waves to us, with its songlike lyricism and comedy, and yet also reveals much about "drowning"—about death, suicide, and other painful human issues. A religious skeptic, Smith said she was always in danger of falling into belief, and her poetry shows her to be fascinated by theological speculation, the language of the Bible, and religious experience.

Sunt Leones[1]

The lions who ate the Christians on the sands of the arena
By indulging native appetites played what has now been seen a
Not entirely negligible part
In consolidating at the very start
The position of the Early Christian Church.
Initiatory rites are always bloody
And the lions, it appears
From contemporary art, made a study
Of dyeing Coliseum sands a ruddy
Liturgically sacrificial hue
And if the Christians felt a little blue—
Well people being eaten often do.
Theirs was the death, and theirs the crown undying,[2]
A state of things which must be satisfying.
My point which up to this has been obscured
Is that it was the lions who procured
By chewing up blood gristle flesh and bone
The martyrdoms on which the Church has grown.
I only write this poem because I thought it rather looked
As if the part the lions played was being overlooked.
By lions' jaws great benefits and blessings were begotten
And so our debt to Lionhood must never be forgotten.

1937

Endnotes

- Note 1: There be lions (Latin). Christians were attacked and eaten by lions in the public games held in the Colosseum during the Roman Empire.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, of martyrdom, in heaven. The Christian liturgy, or system of worship, prescribes certain colors for certain festivals (line 10).Return to reference 2

Our Bog Is Dood

Our Bog is dood, our Bog is dood,
They lisped in accents mild,
But when I asked them to explain
They grew a little wild.
How do you know your Bog is dood
My darling little child?

We know because we wish it so
That is enough, they cried,
And straight within each infant eye
Stood up the flame of pride,
And if you do not think it so
You shall be crucified.

Then tell me, darling little ones,
What's dood, suppose Bog is?
Just what we think, the answer came,
Just what we think it is.
They bowed their heads. Our Bog is ours
And we are wholly his.

But when they raised them up again
They had forgotten me
Each one upon each other glared
In pride and misery
For what was dood, and what their Bog
They never could agree.

Oh sweet it was to leave them then,
And sweeter not to see,
And sweetest of all to walk alone

Beside the encroaching sea,
The sea that soon should drown them all,
That never yet drowned me.

1950

Not Waving but Drowning

Nobody heard him, the dead man,
But still he lay moaning:
I was much further out than you thought
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking
And now he's dead
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave
way,
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always
(Still the dead one lay moaning)
I was much too far out all my life
And not waving but drowning.

1957

Thoughts About the Person from Porlock[1]

Coleridge received the Person from Porlock
And ever after called him a curse,
Then why did he hurry to let him in?
He could have hid in the house.

It was not right of Coleridge in fact it was wrong
(But often we all do wrong)
As the truth is I think he was already stuck
With Kubla Khan.

He was weeping and wailing: I am finished, finished,
I shall never write another word of it,
When along comes the Person from Porlock
And takes the blame for it.

It was not right, it was wrong,
But often we all do wrong.

• • •

May we inquire the name of the Person from
Porlock?
Why, Porson, didn't you know?
He lived at the bottom of Porlock Hill
So had a long way to go,

He wasn't much in the social sense
Though his grandmother was a Warlock,
One of the Ruthlandshire ones I fancy
And nothing to do with Porlock.

And he lived at the bottom of the hill as I said
And had a cat named Flo,
And had a cat named Flo.

I long for the Person from Porlock
To bring my thoughts to an end,
I am becoming impatient to see him
I think of him as a friend,

Often I look out of the window
Often I run to the gate
I think, He will come this evening,
I think it is rather late.

I am hungry to be interrupted
Forever and ever amen
O Person from Porlock come quickly
And bring my thoughts to an end.

• • •

I felicitate the people who have a Person from
Porlock
To break up everything and throw it away
Because then there will be nothing to keep them
And they need not stay.

• • •

Why do they grumble so much?
He comes like a benison
They should be glad he has not forgotten them
They might have had to go on.

• • •

These thoughts are depressing I know. They are depressing,
I wish I was more cheerful, it is more pleasant,
Also it is a duty, we should smile as well as submitting
To the purpose of One Above who is experimenting

With various mixtures of human character which goes best,
All is interesting for him it is exciting, but not for us.
There I go again, Smile, smile, and get some work to do
Then you will be practically unconscious without positively having to go.

1962

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In the prefatory note to his poem "Kubla Khan" (1816), Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote that he had dreamed the poem's vision under the effects of opium, and that, on awakening, he immediately started to write the poem. "At this moment," Coleridge says (referring to himself in the third person), "he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour"; afterward, trying to finish the poem, Coleridge found, "to his no small surprise and mortification," that the vision had vanished "like the images on the surface of a stream."
  Return to reference 1

Pretty

Why is the word pretty so underrated?
In November the leaf is pretty when it falls
The stream grows deep in the woods after rain
And in the pretty pool the pike stalks

He stalks his prey, and this is pretty too,
The prey escapes with an underwater flash
But not for long, the great fish has him now
The pike is a fish who always has his prey

And this is pretty. The water rat is pretty
His paws are not webbed, he cannot shut his nostrils
As the otter can and the beaver, he is torn between
The land and water, Not "torn," he does not mind.

The owl hunts in the evening and it is pretty
The lake water below him rustles with ice
There is frost coming from the ground, in the air
mist
All this is pretty, it could not be prettier.

Yes, it could always be prettier, the eye abashes
It is becoming an eye that cannot see enough,
Out of the wood the eye climbs. This is prettier
A field in the evening, tilting up.

The field tilts to the sky. Though it is late
The sky is lighter than the hill field
All this looks easy but really it is extraordinary
Well, it is extraordinary to be so pretty.

And it is careless, and that is always pretty

This field, this owl, this pike, this pool are careless,
As Nature is always careless and indifferent
Who sees, who steps, means nothing, and this is pretty.

So a person can come along like a thief—pretty!—
Stealing a look, pinching the sound and feel,
Lick the icicle broken from the bank
And still say nothing at all, only cry pretty.

Cry pretty, pretty, pretty and you'll be able
Very soon not even to cry pretty
And so be delivered entirely from humanity
This is prettiest of all, it is very pretty.

1966

GEORGE ORWELL
1903–1950

"George Orwell" was the pseudonym of Eric Blair, who was born in the village of Motihari in Bengal, India, where his father was a British civil servant. He was sent to private school in England and won a scholarship to Eton, the foremost "public school" (that is, private boarding school) in the country. At these schools he became conscious of the difference between his own background and the wealthy backgrounds of many of his schoolmates. On leaving school he joined the Imperial Police in Burma (both Burma—now called Myanmar—and India were then still part of the British Empire). His service in Burma from 1922 to 1927 produced a sense of guilt about British colonialism and a feeling that he had to make some personal expiation for it. This he would later do with an anticolonial novel, *Burmese Days* (1934), and essays such as "Shooting an Elephant" (1936), which subordinates lingering colonial attitudes to fiercely anti-imperial insights. He returned to England determined to be a writer and adopted his pseudonym as one way of escaping from the class position in which his elite education placed him. He went to Paris to try to earn a living by teaching while he made his first attempts at writing. His extremely difficult time in Paris was followed by a spell as a tramp in England, and he vividly recorded both experiences in his first book, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). Orwell did not have to suffer the dire poverty that he seems to have courted (he had influential friends who would have been

glad to help him); he wanted, however, to learn firsthand about the life of the poor, both out of humane curiosity and because, as he wrote, if he did so "part of my guilt would drop from me."

The Road to Wigan Pier (1937) discusses the experiences Orwell shared with unemployed miners in the north of England. The book pleased neither the left nor the right, for by now Orwell was showing what was to become his characteristic independence of mind on political and social questions: he wrote of what he knew firsthand to be true and was contemptuous of ideologies. He never joined a political party but regarded himself as a man of the uncommitted and independent left.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936 after General Franco raised his military rebellion against the elected government, Orwell went there as a reporter and stayed to fight on the Republican side, rising to the rank of second lieutenant and suffering a throat wound. His *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) strongly criticized the Communist part in the civil war and showed from his own experience how the Communist Party in Spain was out to destroy anarchists, Trotskyists, and any others on the Republican side who were suspected of not toeing the Stalinist line; it aroused great indignation on the left in Britain and elsewhere, for many leftists believed that they should solidly support the Soviet Union and the Communist Party as the natural leaders in the struggle against international fascism. Orwell never wavered in his belief that while profound social change was necessary and desirable in capitalist countries of the West, the so-called socialism established in Soviet Russia was a perversion of socialism and a wicked tyranny. In *Animal Farm* (1945) he wrote a fable showing how such a perversion of socialism could develop, while in *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* (1949), when he was an embittered man dying of tuberculosis, he wrote a savagely powerful novel depicting a totalitarian future, where the government uses the language of socialism to cover a tyranny that systematically destroys the human spirit. In that vision of hell on Earth, language has become one of the principal instruments of oppression. The Ministry of Truth is concerned with the transmission

of untruth, and the white face of its pyramidal structure proclaims in "Newspeak" the three slogans of the party: "WAR IS PEACE / FREEDOM IS SLAVERY / IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH." Three years before Orwell formulated "Newspeak," "doublespeak," and "Big Brother is watching you," he had explored in one of his most influential essays, "Politics and the English Language," the decay of language and the ways in which that decay might be resisted. The decades that have passed since he wrote the piece have only confirmed the accuracy of its diagnosis and the value of its prescription.

Orwell was an outstanding journalist, and the essays he wrote regularly for the left-wing British journal *Tribune* and other periodicals include some of his best work. His independent eye made him both a permanent misfit politically and a brilliantly original writer.

Shooting an Elephant

In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people—the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel[1] juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically—and secretly, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British

Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, *in saecula saeculorum*,[2] upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism—the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful *in terrorem*.[3] Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone "must."[4] It had been chained up as tame elephants always are when their attack of "must" is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout,[5] the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but he had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van, and, when the driver jumped out and

took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violence upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palm-leaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone, and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalised cry of "Go away, child! Go away this instant!" and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something there that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie,[6] almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I

sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelled the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of their houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides, they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant—I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary—and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eighty yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant—it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery—and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of "must" was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in

the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes—faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjuror about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realised that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalised figure of a sahib.[7] For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives" and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing—no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a *large* animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks—five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged I could shoot, if he took no notice of me it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of "natives"; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from

innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one should shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole; actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick—one never does when a shot goes home—but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time—it might have been five seconds, I dare say—he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upwards like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open—I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did

not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were arriving with dahs[8] and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee[9] coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

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Endnotes

- Note 1: Leaf and seed of a plant chewed as a stimulant in Burma and other Eastern countries.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: For ever and ever (Latin). “Raj”: rule (Hindi).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: To frighten it (Latin).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A state of sexual frenzy to which certain animals are subject at irregular intervals.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Elephant driver (Hindi).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Hired laborer (disputed origin). “Dravidian”: a South Asian people.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: White gentleman (Urdu).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Short heavy swords (Burmese).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: From the seaport Coringa, on the east coast of Madras in British India.Return to reference 9

Politics and the English Language

Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilisation is decadent, and our language—so the argument runs—must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes.

Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers. I will come back to this presently, and I hope that by that time the meaning of what I have said here will have become clearer. Meanwhile, here are five specimens of the English language as it is now habitually written.

These five passages have not been picked out because they are especially bad—I could have quoted far worse if I had chosen—but

because they illustrate various of the mental vices from which we now suffer. They are a little below the average, but are fairly representative samples. I number them so that I can refer back to them when necessary:

1. I am not, indeed, sure whether it is not true to say that the Milton who once seemed not unlike a seventeenth-century Shelley had not become, out of an experience ever more bitter in each year, more alien (sic)[1] the founder of that Jesuit sect which nothing could induce him to tolerate.

Professor Harold Laski (Essay in *Freedom of Expression*).

2. Above all, we cannot play ducks and drakes with a native battery of idioms which prescribes such egregious collocations of vocables as the Basic *put up with* for *tolerate* or *put at a loss* for *bewilder.*

Professor Lancelot Hogben (*Interglossa*).

3. On the one side we have the free personality: by definition it is not neurotic, for it has neither conflict nor dream. Its desires, such as they are, are transparent, for they are just what institutional approval keeps in the forefront of consciousness; another institutional pattern would alter their number and intensity; there is little in them that is natural, irreducible, or culturally dangerous. But *on the other side*, the social bond itself is nothing but the mutual reflection of these self-secure integrities. Recall the definition of love. Is not this the very picture of a small academic? Where is there a place in this hall of mirrors for either personality or fraternity?

Essay on psychology in *Politics* (New York).

4. All the "best people" from the gentlemen's clubs, and all the frantic Fascist captains, united in common hatred of Socialism and bestial horror of the rising tide of the mass revolutionary movement, have turned to acts of provocation, to foul incendiarism, to medieval legends of poisoned wells, to legalise

their own destruction to proletarian organisations, and rouse the agitated petty-bourgeoisie to chauvinistic fervour on behalf of the fight against the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

Communist pamphlet.

5. If a new spirit *is* to be infused into this old country, there is one thorny and contentious reform which must be tackled, and that is the humanisation and galvanisation of the BBC.[2] Timidity here will bespeak canker and atrophy of the soul. The heart of Britain may be sound and of strong beat, for instance, but the British lion's roar at present is like that of Bottom in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*—as gentle as any sucking dove. A virile new Britain cannot continue indefinitely to be traduced in the eyes, or rather ears, of the world by the effete languors of Langham Place, brazenly masquerading as "standard English." When the Voice of Britain is heard at nine o'clock, better far and infinitely less ludicrous to hear aitches[3] honestly dropped than the present priggish, inflated, inhibited, school-ma'amish arch braying of blameless bashful mewing maidens!

Letter in *Tribune.*

Each of these passages has faults of its own, but, quite apart from avoidable ugliness, two qualities are common to all of them. The first is staleness of imagery: the other is lack of precision. The writer either has a meaning and cannot express it, or he inadvertently says something else, or he is almost indifferent as to whether his words mean anything or not. This mixture of vagueness and sheer incompetence is the most marked characteristic of modern English prose, and especially of any kind of political writing. As soon as certain topics are raised, the concrete melts into the abstract and no one seems able to think of turns of speech that are not hackneyed: prose consists less and less of *words* chosen for the sake of their meaning, and more of *phrases* tacked together like the sections of a prefabricated hen-house. I list below, with notes and examples, various of the tricks by means of which the work of prose construction is habitually dodged:

Dying metaphors. A newly invented metaphor assists thought by evoking a visual image, while on the other hand a metaphor which is technically "dead" (e.g., *iron resolution*) has in effect reverted to being an ordinary word and can generally be used without loss of vividness. But in between these two classes there is a huge dump of worn-out metaphors which have lost all evocative power and are merely used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves. Examples are: *Ring the changes on*, *take up the cudgels for*, *toe the line*, *ride roughshod over*, *stand shoulder to shoulder with*, *play into the hands of*, *no axe to grind, grist to the mill*, *fishing in troubled waters*, *rift within the lute*, *on the order of the day*, *Achilles' heel*, *swan song*, *hotbed.* Many of these are used without knowledge of their meaning (What is a "rift," for instance?), and incompatible metaphors are frequently mixed, a sure sign that the writer is not interested in what he is saying. Some metaphors now current have been twisted out of their original meaning without those who use them even being aware of the fact. For example, *toe the line* is sometimes written *tow the line.* Another example is *the hammer and the anvil*, now always used with the implication that the anvil gets the worst of it. In real life it is always the anvil that breaks the hammer, never the other way about: a writer who stopped to think what he was saying would be aware of this, and would avoid perverting the original phrase.

Operators, or *verbal false limbs.* These save the trouble of picking out appropriate verbs and nouns, and at the same time pad each sentence with extra syllables which give it an appearance of symmetry. Characteristic phrases are: *render inoperative*, *militate against*, *prove unacceptable*, *make contact with*, *be subjected to*, *give rise to*, *give grounds for*, *have the effect of*, *play a leading part* (*rôle*) *in*, *make itself felt*, *take effect*, *exhibit a tendency to*, *serve the purpose of*, etc etc. The keynote is the elimination of simple verbs. Instead of being a single word, such as *break*, *stop*, *spoil*, *mend*, *kill*, a verb becomes a *phrase*, made up of a noun or adjective tacked on to some general-purposes verb such as *prove*, *serve*, *form*, *play*,

render. In addition, the passive voice is wherever possible used in preference to the active, and noun constructions are used instead of gerunds (*by examination of* instead of *by examining*). The range of verbs is further cut down by means of the *-ise* and *de-* formations, and banal statements are given an appearance of profundity by means of the *not un*formation. Simple conjunctions and prepositions are replaced by such phrases as *with respect to, having regard to*, *the fact that*, *by dint of*, *in view of*, *in the interests of*, *on the hypothesis that*; and the ends of sentences are saved from anticlimax by such resounding commonplaces as *greatly to be desired*, *cannot be left out of account*, *a development to be expected in the near future*, *deserving of serious consideration*, *brought to a satisfactory conclusion*, and so on and so forth.

Pretentious diction. Words like *phenomenon*, *element*, *individual* (as noun), *objective*, *categorical*, *effective*, *virtual*, *basic*, *primary*, *promote*, *constitute*, *exhibit*, *exploit*, *utilise*, *eliminate*, *liquidate*, are used to dress up simple statements and give an air of scientific impartiality to biassed judgements. Adjectives like *epoch-making*, *epic*, *historic*, *unforgettable*, *triumphant*, *age-old*, *inevitable, inexorable, veritable,* are used to dignify the sordid processes of international politics, while writing that aims at glorifying war usually takes on an archaic colour, its characteristic words being: *realm*, *throne*, *chariot*, *mailed fist*, *trident*, *sword*, *shield*, *buckler*, *banner*, *jackboot*, *clarion.* Foreign words and expressions such as *cul de sac*, *ancien régime*, *deus ex machina*, *mutatis mutandis*, *status quo*, *Gleichschaltung*, *Weltanschauung*,[4] are used to give an air of culture and elegance. Except for the useful abbreviations *i.e.*, *e.g.*, and *etc.*, there is no real need for any of the hundreds of foreign phrases now current in English. Bad writers, and especially scientific, political and sociological writers, are nearly always haunted by the notion that Latin or Greek words are grander than Saxon ones, and unnecessary words like *expedite*, *ameliorate*, *predict*, *extraneous*, *deracinated*, *clandestine*, *sub-aqueous* and hundreds of others constantly gain ground from their Anglo-Saxon opposite numbers.[5] The jargon

peculiar to Marxist writing (*hyena*, *hangman*, *cannibal*, *petty bourgeois*, *these gentry*, *lacquey*, *flunkey*, *mad dog*, *White Guard*, etc.) consists largely of words and phrases translated from Russian, German or French; but the normal way of coining a new word is to use a Latin or Greek root with the appropriate affix and, where necessary, the *-ise* formation. It is often easier to make up words of this kind (*deregionalise*, *impermissible*, *extramarital*, *non-fragmentatory* and so forth) than to think up the English words that will cover one's meaning. The result, in general, is an increase in slovenliness and vagueness.

Meaningless words. In certain lands of writing, particularly in art criticism and literary criticism, it is normal to come across long passages which are almost completely lacking in meaning.[6] Words like *romantic*, *plastic*, *values*, *human*, *dead*, *sentimental*, *natural*, *vitality*, as used in art criticism, are strictly meaningless, in the sense that they not only do not point to any discoverable object, but are hardly even expected to do so by the reader. When one critic writes, "The outstanding features of Mr X's work is its living quality," while another writes, "The immediately striking thing about Mr X's work is its peculiar deadness," the reader accepts this as a simple difference of opinion. If words like *black* and *white* were involved, instead of the jargon words *dead* and *living*, he would see at once that language was being used in an improper way. Many political words are similarly abused. The word *Fascism* has now no meaning except in so far as it signifies "something not desirable." The words *democracy*, *socialism*, *freedom*, *patriotic*, *realistic*, *justice*, have each of them several different meanings which cannot be reconciled with one another. In the case of a word like *democracy*, not only is there no agreed definition, but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides. It is almost universally felt that when we call a country democratic we are praising it: consequently the defenders of every kind of régime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using the word if it were tied down to any one meaning. Words of this kind are often used in a consciously dishonest way. That is, the person who uses them has his own

private definition, but allows his hearer to think he means something quite different. Statements like *Marshal Pétain*[7] was a true patriot, The Soviet press is the freest in the world, The Catholic Church is opposed to persecution, are almost always made with intent to deceive. Other words used in variable meanings, in most cases more or less dishonestly, are: *class*, *totalitarian*, *science*, *progressive*, *reactionary*, *bourgeois*, *equality.*

Now that I have made this catalogue of swindles and perversions, let me give another example of the kind of writing that they lead to. This time it must of its nature be an imaginary one. I am going to translate a passage of good English into modern English of the worst sort. Here is a well-known verse from *Ecclesiastes*:

> I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Here it is in modern English:

> Objective consideration of contemporary phenomena compels the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

This is a parody, but not a very gross one. Exhibit 3, above, for instance, contains several patches of the same kind of English. It will be seen that I have not made a full translation. The beginning and ending of the sentence follow the original meaning fairly closely, but in the middle the concrete illustrations—race, battle, bread—dissolve into the vague phrase "success or failure in competitive activities". This had to be so, because no modern writer of the kind I am discussing—no one capable of using phrases like "objective consideration of contemporary phenomena"—would ever tabulate his thoughts in that precise and detailed way. The whole tendency of

modern prose is away from concreteness. Now analyse these two sentences a little more closely. The first contains 49 words but only 60 syllables, and all its words are those of everyday life. The second contains 38 words of 90 syllables: 18 of its words are from Latin roots, and one from Greek. The first sentence contains six vivid images, and only one phrase ("time and chance") that could be called vague. The second contains not a single fresh, arresting phrase, and in spite of its 90 syllables it gives only a shortened version of the meaning contained in the first. Yet without a doubt it is the second kind of sentence that is gaining ground in modern English. I do not want to exaggerate. This kind of writing is not yet universal, and outcrops of simplicity will occur here and there in the worst-written page. Still, if you or I were told to write a few lines on the uncertainty of human fortunes, we should probably come much nearer to my imaginary sentence than to the one from *Ecclesiastes.*

As I have tried to show, modern writing at its worst does not consist in picking out words for the sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer. It consists in gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else, and making the results presentable by sheer humbug. The attraction of this way of writing is that it is easy. It is easier—even quicker, once you have the habit—to say *In my opinion it is a not unjustifiable assumption that* than to say *I think.* If you use ready-made phrases, you not only don't have to hunt about for words; you also don't have to bother with the rhythms of your sentences, since these phrases are generally so arranged as to be more or less euphonious. When you are composing in a hurry—when you are dictating to a stenographer, for instance, or making a public speech—it is natural to fall into a pretentious, latinised style. Tags like *a consideration which we should do well to bear in mind* or *a conclusion to which all of us would readily assent* will save many a sentence from coming down with a bump. By using stale metaphors, similes and idioms, you save much mental effort, at the cost of leaving your meaning vague, not only for your reader but for yourself. This is the significance of mixed metaphors. The sole aim of

a metaphor is to call up a visual image. When these images clash—as in *The Fascist octopus has sung its swan song*, *the jackboot is thrown into the melting-pot*—it can be taken as certain that the writer is not seeing a mental image of the objects he is naming; in other words he is not really thinking. Look again at the examples I gave at the beginning of this essay. Professor Laski (1) uses five negatives in 53 words. One of these is superfluous, making nonsense of the whole passage, and in addition there is the slip *alien* for akin, making further nonsense, and several avoidable pieces of clumsiness which increase the general vagueness. Professor Hogben (2) plays ducks and drakes with a battery which is able to write prescriptions, and, while disapproving of the everyday phrase *put up with*, is unwilling to look *egregious* up in the dictionary and see what it means. (3), if one takes an uncharitable attitude towards it, is simply meaningless: probably one could work out its intended meaning by reading the whole of the article in which it occurs. In (4) the writer knows more or less what he wants to say, but an accumulation of stale phrases chokes him like tea-leaves blocking a sink. In (5) words and meaning have almost parted company. People who write in this manner usually have a general emotional meaning—they dislike one thing and want to express solidarity with another—but they are not interested in the detail of what they are saying. A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly? But you are not obliged to go to all this trouble. You can shirk it by simply throwing your mind open and letting the ready-made phrases come crowding in. They will construct your sentences for you—even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent—and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself. It is at this point that the special connection between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear.

In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions, and not a "party line." Orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestos, White Papers and the speeches of Under-Secretaries[8] do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, homemade turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases—*bestial atrocities*, *iron heel*, *blood-stained tyranny*, *free peoples of the world*, *stand shoulder to shoulder*—one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them. And this is not altogether fanciful. A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church. And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity.

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India,[9] the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with

incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification.* Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population* or *rectification of frontiers.* People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements.* Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. Consider for instance some comfortable English professor defending Russian totalitarianism. He cannot say outright, "I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results by doing so." Probably, therefore, he will say something like this:

> While freely conceding that the Soviet régime exhibits certain features which the humanitarian may be inclined to deplore, we must, I think, agree that a certain curtailment of the right to political opposition is an unavoidable concomitant of transitional periods, and that the rigours which the Russian people have been called upon to undergo have been amply justified in the sphere of concrete achievement.

The inflated style is itself a kind of euphemism. A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outlines and covering up all the details. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink. In our age there is no such thing as "keeping out of politics." All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. I should expect to find—this is a guess which I have not sufficient knowledge to verify—that the German, Russian and Italian languages have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship.

But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation, even

among people who should and do know better. The debased language that I have been discussing is in some ways very convenient. Phrases like a *not unjustifiable assumption*, *leaves much to be desired*, *would serve no good purpose*, *a consideration which we should do well to bear in mind*, are a continuous temptation, a packet of aspirins always at one's elbow. Look back through this essay, and for certain you will find that I have again and again committed the very faults I am protesting against. By this morning's post I have received a pamphlet dealing with conditions in Germany. The author tells me that he "felt impelled" to write it. I open it at random, and here is almost the first sentence that I see: "(The Allies) have an opportunity not only of achieving a radical transformation of Germany's social and political structure in such a way as to avoid a nationalistic reaction in Germany itself, but at the same time of laying the foundations of a co-operative and unified Europe." You see, he "feels impelled" to write—feels, presumably, that he has something new to say—and yet his words, like cavalry horses answering the bugle, group themselves automatically into the familiar dreary pattern. This invasion of one's mind by ready-made phrases (*lay the foundations*, *achieve a radical transformation*) can only be prevented if one is constantly on guard against them, and every such phrase anaesthetises a portion of one's brain.

I said earlier that the decadence of our language is probably curable. Those who deny this would argue, if they produced an argument at all, that language merely reflects existing social conditions, and that we cannot influence its development by any direct tinkering with words and constructions. So far as the general tone or spirit of a language goes, this may be true, but it is not true in detail. Silly words and expressions have often disappeared, not through any evolutionary process but owing to the conscious action of a minority. Two recent examples were *explore every avenue* and *leave no stone unturned*, which were killed by the jeers of a few journalists. There is a long list of fly-blown metaphors which could similarly be got rid of if enough people would interest themselves in the job; and it should also be possible to laugh the *not un*formation

out of existence,[1] to reduce the amount of Latin and Greek in the average sentence, to drive out foreign phrases and strayed scientific words, and, in general, to make pretentiousness unfashionable. But all these are minor points. The defence of the English language implies more than this, and perhaps it is best to start by saying what it does *not* imply.

To begin with, it has nothing to do with archaism, with the salvaging of obsolete words and turns of speech, or with the setting-up of a "standard English" which must never be departed from. On the contrary, it is especially concerned with the scrapping of every word or idiom which has outworn its usefulness. It has nothing to do with correct grammar and syntax, which are of no importance so long as one makes one's meaning clear, or with the avoidance of Americanisms, or with having what is called a "good prose style." On the other hand it is not concerned with fake simplicity and the attempt to make written English colloquial. Nor does it even imply in every case preferring the Saxon word to the Latin one, though it does imply using the fewest and shortest words that will cover one's meaning. What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about. In prose, the worst thing one can do with words is to surrender to them. When you think of a concrete object, you think wordlessly, and then, if you want to describe the thing you have been visualising, you probably hunt about till you find the exact words that seem to fit it. When you think of something abstract you are more inclined to use words from the start, and unless you make a conscious effort to prevent it, the existing dialect will come rushing in and do the job for you, at the expense of blurring or even changing your meaning. Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one's meaning as clear as one can through pictures or sensations. Afterwards one can choose—not simply *accept*—the phrases that will best cover the meaning, and then switch round and decide what impression one's words are likely to make on another person. This last effort of the mind cuts out all stale or mixed images, all prefabricated phrases, needless repetitions, and humbug and

vagueness generally. But one can often be in doubt about the effect of a word or a phrase, and one needs rules that one can rely on when instinct fails. I think the following rules will cover most cases:

i. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.

ii. Never use a long word where a short one will do.

iii. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

iv. Never use the passive where you can use the active.

v. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

vi. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

These rules sound elementary, and so they are, but they demand a deep change of attitude in anyone who has grown used to writing in the style now fashionable. One could keep all of them and still write bad English, but one could not write the kind of stuff that I quoted in those five specimens at the beginning of this article.

I have not here been considering the literary use of language, but merely language as an instrument for expressing and not for concealing or preventing thought. Stuart Chase and others have come near to claiming that all abstract words are meaningless, and have used this as a pretext for advocating a kind of political quietism. Since you don't know what Fascism is, how can you struggle against Fascism? One need not swallow such absurdities as this, but one ought to recognise that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end. If you simplify your English, you are freed from the worst follies of orthodoxy. You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects, and when you make a stupid remark its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself. Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a moment, but one can at least change one's own habits, and from

time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase—some *jackboot*, *Achilles' heel*, *hotbed*, *melting pot*, *acid test*, *veritable inferno* or other lump of verbal refuse—into the dustbin where it belongs.

1946, 1947

Endnotes

- Note 1: Thus (Latin), that is, that's the way it was written.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British Broadcasting Corporation.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, *h* sounds, which are not aspirated in the colloquial speech of some English accents. During—and for some time after—World War II, few programs had a larger audience than the evening nine o'clock news. "Langham Place": the location of the BBC's main offices in London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Respectively: dead end (French), former system of government (French), the god from the machine (Latin), with the necessary changes (Latin), the existing state of things (Latin), standardization of political institutions among authoritarian states (German), and philosophy of life (German).Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  An interesting illustration of this is the way in which the English flower names which were in use till very recently are being ousted by Greek ones, *snapdragon* becoming *antirrhinum*, *forget-me-not* becoming *myosotis*, etc. It is hard to see any practical reason for this change of fashion: it is probably due to an instinctive turning-away from the more homely word and a vague feeling that the Greek word is scientific [*Orwell's note*].
  Return to reference 5
- Note 6:
  Example: "Comfort's catholicity of perception and image, strangely Whitmanesque in range, almost the exact opposite in

aesthetic compulsion, continues to evoke that trembling atmospheric accumulative hinting at a cruel, an inexorably serene timelessness . . . Wrey Gardiner scores by aiming at simple bullseyes with precision. Only they are not so simple, and through this contented sadness runs more than the surface bitter-sweet of resignation." (*Poetry Quarterly.*) [*Orwell's note*]. Return to reference 6

- Note 7: French army officer (1856–1951), head of the Vichy government that collaborated with Germany in World War II.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Senior British civil servants. "White Papers": official documents, each on a particular topic, issued by the British government.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: This ended in 1947.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: One can cure oneself of the *not un-* formation by memorising this sentence: *A not unblack dog was chasing a not unsmall rabbit across a not ungreen field* [*Orwell's note*].Return to reference 1

MULK RAJ ANAND
1905–2004

Mulk Raj Anand was born in Peshawar, a region of British India that is now part of Pakistan. His father was from a family of coppersmiths, but left the trade to work as a clerk in the British Army. Anand attended a cantonment (military base) school in his youth before heading to Khalsa College in Amritsar, the city in northern India that had been the site of the infamous 1919 massacre during which unarmed and peaceful Indian protesters were shot by British soldiers. Anand graduated from Khalsa in 1924 and traveled to London, where he completed a doctorate in philosophy at University College London. Anand's literary career spanned more than seventy-five years. He wrote thirteen novels, nine short story collections, and four memoirs, as well as hundreds of essays on the topics of Indian literature, politics, philosophy, and art. He is one of the foundational figures of the Indian novel in English.

Despite his father's work in the British army, Anand held strong anticolonial views, which shaped his various circles of friends in London. He worked part-time as a copy editor at the Hogarth Press, owned by Virginia and Leonard Woolf, and this job led him to formative encounters with the elite Bloomsbury Group. There he met E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot, Lytton Strachey, and art critic Roger Fry. Anand also lectured part-time at the Workers Educational Association, the largest provider of adult education to working

people in Britain. Leftist politics, social realism, and a dash of modernism shaped his first novel, *Untouchable* (1935), which portrays one day in the life of Bakha, a street sweeper and member of the stigmatized "untouchable" class that fell outside and below the Hindu caste system organizing much of Indian society. Anand employed the day-novel structure first associated with James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, but he turned it to specifically political and reformist ends. Representing the interiority of a member of an outcast group was itself groundbreaking in its moment, and Anand brought the plight of the downtrodden to life in order to unite the fight for Indian independence from Britain and the campaign for civil rights within Indian society.

Anand was founding president of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association, a leading organization in the independence movement. The manifesto of the organization sought to wrest literature away from academics and authority figures in order to bring fiction closer to the lives and experiences of working-class people. His proletarian novels *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) centered on child labor and the exploitation of workers on Indian tea plantations. His war novel *Across Black Waters* (1940), published during World War II, explored the oft-erased histories of Indian soldiers fighting on behalf of Britain in World War I, and drew on Anand's own wartime experiences fighting with the anti-fascist Republican movement during the Spanish Civil War.

Anand moved between India and Europe throughout the 1930s and 1940s, but returned to India after the dissolution of his first marriage and ensuing mental distress. He recovered with the aid of classical dancer and later wife Shirin Vajibdar, who advised him to write about his inner turmoil. Departing from his proletarian fiction, Anand adopted a more autobiographical mode and wrote an unfinished series of novels inspired by William Shakespeare's reference to the seven ages of man. In these novels, Anand creates an alter-ego, Krishan Chander Azad, who experiences each age of life against the background of major historical events, including World War I and the massacre at Amritsar. Anand published his last

major novel, *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*, in 1957, using the royal court as a setting through which to explore the foibles of a rich prince who abuses his constituency out of misguided love for his mistress. The novel is distinct in Anand's oeuvre for its detailed attention to a damaged psyche.

Anand's short stories are more richly folkloric than his novels, and draw on the oral traditions of the Punjab (North India) as channeled through the childhood memories of his mother's storytelling. Anand published several collections of folk tales and fairy tales, but referred to his ideal short stories as "neo-folk tales" that would combine ancient myth and local custom with modern forms of character and psychology. "The Liar" exemplifies the neo-folk tale in which the ordinary art of storytelling both illuminates and suspends the social divisions of caste. The narrator, a young upper-caste child, forms a friendship with the low-caste hunter Labhu, whose fantastic tales are dismissed by the privileged men whom he leads on hunting trips. Anand treats the character of Labhu with sympathy and suggests that outlandish stories can be a necessary response to real-world indignities.

The Liar

Labhu, the old shikari[1] of my village, was a born liar. Therefore he had won the reputation of being the best storyteller in our parts. And though a sweeper of low caste,[2] he was honoured by all and sundry. He was tolerated even to the extent of being given a seat at the foot of the banyan tree. And my mother did not insist too harshly on the necessity of my taking a bath to purify myself every time I had been seen listening to one of his uncanny tales with the other village boys.

Labhu was a thin, little man, with the glint of a lance and the glide of an arrow. His wiry, weather-beaten frame must have had immense reserves of energy, to judge by the way he could chase stags up the steep crags of the hills behind our village and run abreast of the bay mare of Subedar[3] Deep Singh to whose household he was attached as a shikari, except when some English official, a rich white merchant, or a guest of the subedar, engaged him for a season. It was perhaps this wonderful physical agility of his that had persuaded him to adopt the profession of a shikari. Labhu had also a sensitive, dark face, of which the lower lip trembled as it pronounced the first accents of a poignant verse or the last words of a gruesome hunting story. And it was the strange spell that his tragic verses and weird stories cast on me that made me his devoted follower through childhood. He taught me to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds; he taught me the way to track all the wild animals; and he taught me how to concoct a cock-and-bull story to tell my father if I had to make an excuse for not being at home during the reign of the hot sun.

His teaching was, of course, by example, as I was rather a critical pupil.

'Labhu,' I would say, 'I am sure it is impossible to track any prey when you are half up the side of a hillock.'

'Acha,' he would say, 'I will show you. Stand still and listen.'

I did so and we both heard a pebble drop. Up he darted on the stony ridge in the direction whence the sound had come, jumping from crag to crag, securing a precarious foothold on a small stone here and a sure one on a boulder there, till he was tearing through a flock of sheep, towards a little gully where a ram had taken shelter in a cave, secure in the belief that it would escape its pursuer.

'All right,' I would say. 'You may have been able to track this ram, but I don't believe that yarn of yours about the devil-ram you saw when you were hunting with the subedar.'

'I swear by God Almighty,' he said, 'it is true. The subedar will tell you that he saw this terrible apparition with me. It was a beast about the size of an elephant, with eyes as big as hen's eggs and a beard as long as that of Maulvi Shah Din, the priest of the mosque, only not henna-dyed and red, but blue-black; it had huge ears as big as an elephant's, which did not flap, however, but pricked up like the ears of the subedar's horse; it had a nose like that of the wife of the Missionary sahib,[4] and it had square jaws which showed teeth almost as big as the chunks of marble which lie outside the temple, as it laughed at the subedar. It appeared unexpectedly near the peak of Devi Parbat.[5] The subedar and I had ascended about twelve thousand feet up the mountain in search of game, when suddenly, out of the spirit world that always waits about us in the living air, there was the clattering of stones and boulders, the whistling of sharp winds, the gurgling of thunder and a huge crack on the side of the mountain. Then an enormous figure seemed to rise. From a distance it seemed to both of us like a dark patch, and we thought it was an oorial[6] and began to stalk towards it. What was our surprise, however, when, as soon as we saw it stand there, facing us with its glistening, white eyes as big as a hen's eggs, it sneezed and ripped the mountainside with a kick of its forefeet and disappeared. The mountain shook and the subedar trembled, while I stood bravely where I was and laughed till I wept with joy at my good luck in having seen so marvellous a manifestation of the devil-god of the

tribe of rams. I tell you, son, please God I shall show him to you one of these days.'

'Labhu, you don't mean to say so!' I said, half incredulous, though I was fascinated by the chimera.[7]

'Of course I mean to say so, silly boy,' said Labhu. 'This is nothing compared to the other vision that was vouchsafed to me, praise be to God, when I was on the journey to Ladakh, hunting with Jolly John Sahib.' And he began to relate a fantastic story of a colossal snake, which was so improbable that even I did not believe it.

'Oh, you are a fool, Labhu,' I said. 'And you are a liar. Everybody says so. And I don't believe you at all. My mother says I am silly to believe your tales.'

'All right, then, if you don't believe my stories why do you come here to listen to them?' he said, with wounded pride. 'Go, I shall never teach you anything more, and I shall certainly not let you accompany me to the hunts.'

'All right,' I said, chagrined and stubborn. 'I don't want to speak to you either.'

And I ran home bursting with indignation at having forced a quarrel upon Labhu, when really he only told me his stories for my amusement.

Labhu went away for a while on a hunting tour with the subedar. He didn't come back to the village when this tour finished, because Subedar Deep Singh's eldest son, Kuldeep Singh, who was a lieutenant in the army, took him for a trip across the Himalayas to Nepal.

During this time, though I regretted Labhu's absence, I lent my ear readily to the malicious misrepresentation of his character that the subedar and his employers, and occasionally also my father, indulged in; because, though superior to Labhu by caste, they were not such good shots as he was.

'He can only wait by a forest pool or a safe footpath to shoot at some unfortunate beast, this Labhu!' said the subedar. 'And often he shoots in the dark with that inefficient powder-gun[8] of his. He is no good except for tracking.'

'Yes,' said my father, 'he is a vain boaster and a liar. The only beast he dared to shoot at while he was with me was a hare, and even that he hit in the leg.'

I waited eagerly for Labhu's return to confirm from his very mouth these stories of his incompetence, because, though incredulous of this scandal, I had been driven to a frenzy of chagrin by his insulting dismissal of me. I thought I would ask him point-blank whether he was really as bad a hunter as the subedar and my father made him out to be.

When Labhu came back, however, he limped about and seemed ill. I was very sad to see him broken and dispirited. And I forgot all the scandal I had heard about him in my bafflement at the sudden change that had come into his character, for he was now no longer the garrulous man who sat telling stories to old men and young boys, but a strangely reticent creature who lay in a stupor all day, moaning and murmuring to himself in a prolonged delirium, except that he occasionally hobbled out with a huge staff in his hand in the evenings.

I was afraid to go near him, because he always wore a forbidding, angry look. But the villagers didn't seem to think there was anything the matter with Labhu, as I heard them say, 'Now that we have no patience with him and his stories, he spends most of his time telling them to himself, the fool!'

I owed a loyalty to Labhu, for I had discovered a kinship in my make-up for all those extravagances for which the shikari was so well known.

So I went up to him one day, as he lay on a broken string bed near his mud hut, under the precarious shelter which a young pipal[9] gave him.

'You have returned then, Master Labhu,' I said.

'Yes,' he said, 'I have been back some time, son. I looked for you, but you did not seem to be about. But you know, the man who is slain cannot walk even to his own house. This leg of mine pains me and I can't get about as I used to.'

‘What happened to your leg, then?’ I asked, realizing that he had forgotten all about our past quarrels and was as kind and communicative to me as before. ‘Did you fall down a cliff or something?’

‘No,’ he said in a tired voice. And he kept quiet for a long while.

‘What happened, then?’ I persisted.

‘You know, son,’ Labhu began, at first pale and hesitant, then smiling and lifting his eyebrows in the familiar manner of the old days, ‘I went away on a hunting tour in the pay of the subedar’s eldest son, Kuldeep Singh, and some of his friends. Well, we went to Nepal through the Kulu valley. They had no experience of hunting in this or in any other part of the world, and I led them across such trails as I knew and such as the local shikaris told me about. That boy, Kuldeep, I don’t know what he does in the army, but he can’t shoot at any range, and the sahibs with him were clumsy, purblind white men. I would point to a beast with my stick, and, though they could see the hide before their eyes, they bungled with their guns or were too noisy on their feet, and away crashed the bull which we had been tracking. I would grunt, shrug my shoulders and did not mind, because they were like children. They had finished hundreds of cartridges and had not shot anything, and daily begged me to help them to secure some game.

‘At first I told them that game doesn’t taste sweet unless it is shot by oneself. But at length I took pity on them and thought that I would secure them a good mixed bag. I shot twelve tigers with my gun and fifteen panthers in the course of seven days, and many stags.

‘On the eighth day we saw a monster which had the body of a bear, the head of a reindeer, the feet of a goat, the tail of a wild bull and a glistening, fibrous tissue all round it like the white silken veil which the Rani[1] of Boondi wore when she came to visit Subedar Deep Singh’s wife. Kuldeep Singh and the sahibs were very frightened of this apparition and said it was the devil himself who had the shape of an earthly being and who would soon breathe a breath which would mix with the still air of the night and poison life.

‘They were all for killing it outright, while I was sure that it was only a princess of the royal house of Nepal who had been transformed by some magician into this fantastic shape and size. And I wanted to catch it alive and bring it home to be my bride.’

Labhu went on to relate how beautiful she was and how he resolved to restore her to her normal self by reading magical incantations.

‘I told her I loved her,’ he continued, ‘and she smiled shyly. But some fool, I think it was the subedar’s son, fired a volley of shots, which frightened her so that she ran, became one with the air and began to ascend the snowy peaks of Kailash Parbat.[2]

‘I was bent on rescuing my beloved, and I leapt from one mountain to another, calling after her to stop. But that idiot Kuldeep and the sahibs kept on shooting and roused the magician who kept guard over her. And this evil sage threw a huge mountain of snow at me to kill me.

‘I just blew a hot breath and the mountain of snow cracked into a million pieces and hung about the sky like glittering stars.

‘Then the magician struck the earth with his feet and opened up a grave to bury me alive. I leapt right across the fissure and found myself on a peak in the land of the lama[3] who never dies.

‘By now, of course, the magician had hidden the beauty away in some cave. So I gave up the chase, as there was the doom of death about this beauty, anyhow, and I made one leap across the Himalayas for home . . .’

‘And as you landed this side of the mountains you sprained your foot,’ I said.

Labhu lifted his eyebrows funnily in the manner of the old days and, laughing, said, ‘Have I told you this story before, then?’

1944

Endnotes

- Note 1: A professional hunter or guide.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A division of society. In India the caste system was a varied and fluid hierarchy whose boundaries became more rigid and defined under British colonialism. The four main caste divisions in British India were Brahmin (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (farmers/traders/merchants), and Shudras (laborers and commoners). In addition, a fifth group, once considered outcast or "untouchable," existed below and outside the system.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The second-highest rank of an Indian officer in the military of British India.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A title of respect or polite address for a man.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: This likely refers to Nanda Devi, the second-highest mountain in India.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A horned sheep native to the Himalayas.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: From the Greek monster with a lion's head, a goat's body, and a serpent's tail; any mythical animal made up of parts from other animals.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Historical gun loaded from the open end of the barrel as opposed to side-loading guns with bullets.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A type of tree also known as the sacred fig, considered to have religious significance in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and often used for meditation.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A queen; the female title for rulers in India, like the wife of a Raja.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Mount Kailash, a sacred mountain in Tibet. In Hinduism, it is the home of the god Shiva. It is also important in Buddhism and Jainism.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Tibet. In Buddhism, the Dalai Lama never dies; his spirit is passed on to another human.Return to reference 3

SAMUEL BECKETT
1906–1989

Samuel Beckett was born near Dublin. Like W. B. Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, and Oscar Wilde, he came from an Anglo-Irish Protestant family. He received a B.A. from Trinity College, Dublin, and after teaching English at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris for two years, returned to Trinity College to take his M.A. in 1931. A year later he gave up teaching to write, and having produced an insightful essay on the early stages of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, Beckett also worked as Joyce's amanuensis (secretary) and translator. In 1937 he settled permanently in Paris. There, during World War II, he joined an underground group in the anti-Nazi resistance and, after the group was betrayed, barely escaped into unoccupied France. From the mid-1940s he generally wrote in French and subsequently translated some of his work into an eloquent, Irish-inflected English. His early novels—*Murphy* (1938; Eng. trans., 1957); *Watt* (1953); and the trilogy, *Molloy* (1951; 1955), *Malone Dies* (1951; 1956), and *The Unnameable* (1953; 1958)—have been hailed as masterpieces and precursors of postmodern fiction; but he is best known for his plays, especially *Waiting for Godot* (1952; 1954) and *Endgame* (1957; 1958). He received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1969.

Not much happens in a Beckett play; there is little characterization, little plot, and little incident. Characters engage in dialogue or dialectical monologues that go nowhere. There is no progression, no development, no resolution. Rambling exchanges

and repetitive actions enact the lack of a fixed center, of meaning, of purpose, in the lives depicted. Yet the characters persist in their habitual, almost ritualistic, activities; they go on talking, even if only to themselves. In spite of the reiterated theme of nonexistence, the characters go on existing—if minimally: a stream of discourse, of thought and will, a consciousness questioning its own meaning and purpose. In *Waiting for Godot* the main characters wait for an arrival that is constantly deferred. They inhabit a bleak landscape seemingly confined to one road, one tree; they talk of moving on, yet never leave. In *Endgame* the main characters—irritable and peevish—live inside a room with two small, high windows, outside of which everything may or may not be dead. Two of their parents live inside garbage cans and appear only from the shoulders up. Subsequent plays restrict the acting space to smaller spaces, such as urns or a mound in which the actor is buried; characters are physically confined or disabled, until *Not I* (1973) presents the most minimal embodiment of human consciousness available to theatrical representation: a disembodied mouth.

***Waiting for Godot* at the Théâtre Hebertot in Paris, 1956.** Like the 1953 premiere in French and 1955 in English, the Paris revival of *Waiting for Godot* had a spare, minimalist set. Pozzo (far right) holds a whip and a rope that goes around Lucky's neck, while Lucky holds a bag, picnic basket, folding stool, and greatcoat. The play's central characters, Vladimir and Estragon, look on in puzzlement.

Beckett focuses his work on fundamental questions of existence and nonexistence, the mind and the body, the self as known from within and as seen from the outside or in retrospect. Joyce's artistic

integrity and stream of consciousness technique influenced him, but the minimalism of Beckett's plays and fiction contrast with the maximalism of Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake.* "I realised that Joyce had gone as far as one could in the direction of knowing more, in control of one's material," he told the biographer James Knowlson. "I realised my own way was in impoverishment, in lack of knowledge and in taking away, in subtracting rather than adding."

The daring minimalism of *Waiting for Godot*—its radically diminished setting, clownish characters, and circular plot—is often seen as having transformed serious theater for the second half of the twentieth century. Because Act II of the play largely repeats Act I, with subtle variations, the Irish critic Vivian Mercier famously called *Waiting for Godot* "a play in which nothing happens, twice." As they wait for an appointment with the mysteriously indeterminate Godot, the play's central characters, Vladimir and Estragon, nicknamed Didi and Gogo, haplessly amuse, comfort, and annoy each other. The play implicitly contrasts their affable, if vexed, friendship with the master-slave relation between another pair of characters who appear twice on the scene: the sometimes brutal Pozzo and the ironically named Lucky, whipped and driven like an animal by his master. As in subsequent Beckett plays, this one juxtaposes vaudeville, slapstick, and other comic traditions with stark insight into the meaningless void beneath our feet, however we may try to cover it up by speech and action. Blinded and humbled by the second act, Pozzo cries out, "one day we were born, one day we shall die," adding, "They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more." Combining such bleak pathos with horseplay, banter, pranks, juggling, and crude puns, *Waiting for Godot* shares its tragicomic quality with absurdist drama, which disrupts the conventions of realist drama, draws attention to its own fictionality, and refuses to provide hierarchies of significance. Reduced to bare essentials, desperately seeking ways to pass the time during their seemingly interminable wait, the characters in *Waiting for Godot*—though often behaving as if bumbling protagonists of a farce—raise unsettling questions about meaning and absurdity, power and dependency, time and repetition, language and death.

Waiting for Godot

A Tragicomedy in Two Acts

CHARACTERS

ESTRAGON POZZO

VLADIMIR A BOY

LUCKY

Act 1

A country road. A tree.
Evening.

[ESTRAGON, *sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before.*]

[*Enter* VLADIMIR.]

ESTRAGON [*giving up again*] Nothing to be done.

VLADIMIR [*advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart*] I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. [*He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to* ESTRAGON.] So there you are again.

ESTRAGON Am I?

VLADIMIR I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone for ever.

ESTRAGON Me too.

VLADIMIR Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? [*He reflects.*] Get up till I embrace you.

ESTRAGON [*irritably*] Not now, not now.

VLADIMIR [*hurt, coldly*] May one enquire where His Highness spent the night?

ESTRAGON In a ditch.

VLADIMIR [*admiringly*] A ditch! Where?

ESTRAGON [*without gesture*] Over there.

VLADIMIR And they didn't beat you?

ESTRAGON Beat me? Certainly they beat me.

VLADIMIR The same lot as usual?

ESTRAGON The same? I don't know.

VLADIMIR When I think of it . . . all these years . . . but for me . . . where would you be . . . [*Decisively.*] You'd be nothing

more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it.

ESTRAGON And what of it?

VLADIMIR [*gloomily*] It's too much for one man. [*Pause. Cheerfully.*] On the other hand what's the good of losing heart now, that's what I say. We should have thought of it a million years ago, in the nineties.[1]

ESTRAGON Ah stop blathering and help me off with this bloody thing.

VLADIMIR Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower, among the first.[2] We were respectable in those days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even let us up. [ESTRAGON *tears at his boot.*] What are you doing?

ESTRAGON Taking off my boot. Did that never happen to you?

VLADIMIR Boots must be taken off every day, I'm tired telling you that. Why don't you listen to me?

ESTRAGON [*feebly*] Help me!

VLADIMIR It hurts?

ESTRAGON [*angrily*] Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

VLADIMIR [*angrily*] No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have.

ESTRAGON It hurts?

VLADIMIR [*angrily*] Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!

ESTRAGON [*pointing*] You might button it all the same.

VLADIMIR [*stooping*] True. [*He buttons his fly.*] Never neglect the little things of life.

ESTRAGON What do you expect, you always wait till the last moment.

VLADIMIR [*musingly*] The last moment . . . [*He meditates.*] Hope deferred maketh the something sick, who said that?[3]

ESTRAGON Why don't you help me?

VLADIMIR Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. [*He takes off his hat, peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, puts it on again.*] How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time . . . [*He searches for the word.*] . . .

appalled. [*With emphasis.*] AP-PALLED. [*He takes off his hat again, peers inside it.*] Funny. [*He knocks on the crown as though to dislodge a foreign body, peers into it again, puts it on again.*] Nothing to be done. [ESTRAGON *with a supreme effort succeeds in pulling off his boot. He peers inside it, feels about inside it, turns it upside down, shakes it, looks on the ground to see if anything has fallen out, finds nothing, feels inside it again, staring sightlessly before him.*] Well?

ESTRAGON Nothing.

VLADIMIR Show.

ESTRAGON There's nothing to show.

VLADIMIR Try and put it on again.

ESTRAGON [*examining his foot*] I'll air it for a bit.

VLADIMIR There's man all over for you, blaming on his boots the faults of his feet. [*He takes off his hat again, peers inside it, feels about inside it, knocks on the crown, blows into it, puts it on again.*] This is getting alarming. [*Silence. Vladimir deep in thought, Estragon pulling at his toes.*] One of the thieves was saved.[4] [*Pause.*] It's a reasonable percentage. [*Pause.*] Gogo.

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR Suppose we repented.

ESTRAGON Repented what?

VLADIMIR Oh . . . [*He reflects.*] We wouldn't have to go into the details.

ESTRAGON Our being born?

[VLADIMIR *breaks into a hearty laugh which he immediately stifles, his hand pressed to his pubis, his face contorted.*]

VLADIMIR One daren't even laugh any more.

ESTRAGON Dreadful privation.

VLADIMIR Merely smile. [*He smiles suddenly from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly.*] It's not the same thing. Nothing to be done. [*Pause.*] Gogo.

ESTRAGON [*irritably*] What is it?

VLADIMIR Did you ever read the Bible?

ESTRAGON The Bible . . . [*He reflects.*] I must have taken a look at it.

VLADIMIR Do you remember the Gospels?

ESTRAGON I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea[5] was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.

VLADIMIR You should have been a poet.

ESTRAGON I was. [*Gesture towards his rags.*] Isn't that obvious?

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR Where was I . . . How's your foot?

ESTRAGON Swelling visibly.

VLADIMIR Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?

ESTRAGON No.

VLADIMIR Shall I tell it to you?

ESTRAGON No.

VLADIMIR It'll pass the time. [*Pause.*] Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One—

ESTRAGON Our what?

VLADIMIR Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . [*he searches for the contrary of saved*] . . . damned.

ESTRAGON Saved from what?

VLADIMIR Hell.

ESTRAGON I'm going.

[*He does not move.*]

VLADIMIR And yet . . . [*pause*] . . . how is it—this is not boring you I hope—how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there—or thereabouts—and only one speaks of a thief being saved. [*Pause.*] Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?

ESTRAGON [*with exaggerated enthusiasm*] I find this really most extraordinarily interesting.

VLADIMIR One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.[6]

ESTRAGON Who?

VLADIMIR What?

ESTRAGON What's all this about? Abused who?

VLADIMIR The Saviour.

ESTRAGON Why?

VLADIMIR Because he wouldn't save them.

ESTRAGON From hell?

VLADIMIR Imbecile! From death.

ESTRAGON I thought you said hell.

VLADIMIR From death, from death.

ESTRAGON Well what of it?

VLADIMIR Then the two of them must have been damned.

ESTRAGON And why not?

VLADIMIR But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.

ESTRAGON Well? They don't agree and that's all there is to it.

VLADIMIR But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others?

ESTRAGON Who believes him?

VLADIMIR Everybody. It's the only version they know.

ESTRAGON People are bloody ignorant apes.

[*He rises painfully, goes limping to extreme left, halts, gazes into distance off with his hand screening his eyes, turns, goes to extreme right, gazes into distance*, VLADIMIR *watches him, then goes and picks up the boot, peers into it, drops it hastily.*]

VLADIMIR Pah!

[*He spits.* ESTRAGON *moves to center, halts with his back to auditorium.*]

ESTRAGON Charming spot. [*He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.*] Inspiring prospects. [*He turns to* VLADIMIR.] Let's go.

VLADIMIR We can't.
ESTRAGON Why not?
VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON [*despairingly*] Ah! [*Pause.*] You're sure it was here?
VLADIMIR What?
ESTRAGON That we were to wait.
VLADIMIR He said by the tree. [*They look at the tree.*] Do you see any others?
ESTRAGON What is it?
VLADIMIR I don't know. A willow.[7]
ESTRAGON Where are the leaves?
VLADIMIR It must be dead.
ESTRAGON No more weeping.
VLADIMIR Or perhaps it's not the season.
ESTRAGON Looks to me more like a bush.
VLADIMIR A shrub.
ESTRAGON A bush.
VLADIMIR A—. What are you insinuating? That we've come to the wrong place?
ESTRAGON He should be here.
VLADIMIR He didn't say for sure he'd come.
ESTRAGON And if he doesn't come?
VLADIMIR We'll come back tomorrow.
ESTRAGON And then the day after tomorrow.
VLADIMIR Possibly.
ESTRAGON And so on.
VLADIMIR The point is—
ESTRAGON Until he comes.
VLADIMIR You're merciless.
ESTRAGON We came here yesterday.
VLADIMIR Ah no, there you're mistaken.
ESTRAGON What did we do yesterday?
VLADIMIR What did we do yesterday?
ESTRAGON Yes.

VLADIMIR Why . . . [*Angrily.*] Nothing is certain when you're about.

ESTRAGON In my opinion we were here.

VLADIMIR [*looking round*] You recognize the place?

ESTRAGON I didn't say that.

VLADIMIR Well?

ESTRAGON That makes no difference.

VLADIMIR All the same . . . that tree . . . [*turning towards auditorium*] that bog . . .

ESTRAGON You're sure it was this evening?

VLADIMIR What?

ESTRAGON That we were to wait.

VLADIMIR He said Saturday. [*Pause.*] I think.

ESTRAGON You think.

VLADIMIR I must have made a note of it. [*He fumbles in his pockets, bursting with miscellaneous rubbish.*]

ESTRAGON [*very insidious*] But what Saturday? And is it Saturday? Is it not rather Sunday? [*Pause.*] Or Monday? [*Pause.*] Or Friday?

VLADIMIR [*looking wildly about him, as though the date was inscribed in the landscape*] It's not possible!

ESTRAGON Or Thursday?

VLADIMIR What'll we do?

ESTRAGON If he came yesterday and we weren't here you may be sure he won't come again today.

VLADIMIR But you say we were here yesterday.

ESTRAGON I may be mistaken. [*Pause.*] Let's stop talking for a minute, do you mind?

VLADIMIR [*feebly*] All right. [ESTRAGON *sits down on the mound.* VLADIMIR *paces agitatedly to and fro, halting from time to time to gaze into distance off.* ESTRAGON *falls asleep.* VLADIMIR *halts finally before* ESTRAGON.] Gogo! . . . Gogo! . . . GOGO!

[ESTRAGON *wakes with a start.*]

ESTRAGON [*restored to the horror of his situation*] I was asleep! [*Despairingly.*] Why will you never let me sleep?

VLADIMIR I felt lonely.

ESTRAGON I had a dream.

VLADIMIR Don't tell me!

ESTRAGON I dreamt that—

VLADIMIR DON'T TELL ME!

ESTRAGON [*gesture towards the universe*] This one is enough for you? [*Silence.*] It's not nice of you, Didi. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?

VLADIMIR Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that.

ESTRAGON [*coldly*] There are times when I wonder if it wouldn't be better for us to part.

VLADIMIR You wouldn't go far.

ESTRAGON That would be too bad, really too bad. [*Pause.*] Wouldn't it, Didi, be really too bad? [*Pause.*] When you think of the beauty of the way. [*Pause.*] And the goodness of the wayfarers. [*Pause. Wheedling.*] Wouldn't it, Didi?

VLADIMIR Calm yourself.

ESTRAGON [*voluptuously*] Calm . . . calm . . . The English say cawm. [*Pause.*] You know the story of the Englishman in the brothel?

VLADIMIR Yes.

ESTRAGON Tell it to me.

VLADIMIR Ah stop it!

ESTRAGON An Englishman having drunk a little more than usual proceeds to a brothel. The bawd asks him if he wants a fair one, a dark one or a red-haired one.[8] Go on.

VLADIMIR STOP IT!

[*Exit* VLADIMIR *hurriedly*. ESTRAGON *gets up and follows him as far as the limit of the stage. Gestures of* ESTRAGON *like those of a spectator encouraging a pugilist.*[9] *Enter* VLADIMIR. *He brushes past* ESTRAGON, *crosses the stage with bowed head*. ESTRAGON *takes a step towards him, halts.*]

ESTRAGON [*gently*] You wanted to speak to me? [*Silence*. ESTRAGON *takes a step forward.*] You had something to say to me? [*Silence. Another step forward.*] Didi . . .

VLADIMIR [*without turning*] I've nothing to say to you.

ESTRAGON [*step forward*] You're angry? [*Silence. Step forward.*] Forgive me. [*Silence. Step forward*. ESTRAGON *lays his hand on* VLADIMIR*'s shoulder.*] Come, Didi. [*Silence.*] Give me your hand. [VLADIMIR *half turns.*] Embrace me! [VLADIMIR *stiffens.*] Don't be stubborn! [VLADIMIR *softens. They embrace*. ESTRAGON *recoils.*] You stink of garlic!

VLADIMIR It's for the kidneys. [*Silence*. ESTRAGON *looks attentively at the tree.*] What do we do now?

ESTRAGON Wait.

VLADIMIR Yes, but while waiting.

ESTRAGON What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR Hmm. It'd give us an erection.

ESTRAGON [*highly excited*] An erection!

VLADIMIR With all that follows. Where it falls mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up.[1] Did you not know that?

ESTRAGON Let's hang ourselves immediately!

VLADIMIR From a bough? [*They go towards the tree.*] I wouldn't trust it.

ESTRAGON We can always try.

VLADIMIR Go ahead.

ESTRAGON After you.

VLADIMIR No no, you first.

ESTRAGON Why me?

VLADIMIR You're lighter than I am.

ESTRAGON Just so!

VLADIMIR I don't understand.

ESTRAGON Use your intelligence, can't you?

[VLADIMIR *uses his intelligence.*]

VLADIMIR [*finally*] I remain in the dark.

ESTRAGON This is how it is. [*He reflects.*] The bough . . . the bough . . .

[*Angrily.*] Use your head, can't you?

VLADIMIR You're my only hope.

ESTRAGON [*with effort*] Gogo light—bough not break—Gogo dead. Didi heavy—bough break—Didi alone. Whereas—

VLADIMIR I hadn't thought of that.

ESTRAGON If it hangs you it'll hang anything.

VLADIMIR But am I heavier than you?

ESTRAGON So you tell me. I don't know. There's an even chance. Or nearly.

VLADIMIR Well? What do we do?

ESTRAGON Don't let's do anything. It's safer.

VLADIMIR Let's wait and see what he says.

ESTRAGON Who?

VLADIMIR Godot.

ESTRAGON Good idea.

VLADIMIR Let's wait till we know exactly how we stand.

ESTRAGON On the other hand it might be better to strike the iron before it freezes.[2]

VLADIMIR I'm curious to hear what he has to offer. Then we'll take it or leave it.

ESTRAGON What exactly did we ask him for?

VLADIMIR Were you not there?

ESTRAGON I can't have been listening.

VLADIMIR Oh . . . Nothing very definite.

ESTRAGON A kind of prayer.

VLADIMIR Precisely.

ESTRAGON A vague supplication.

VLADIMIR Exactly.

ESTRAGON And what did he reply?

VLADIMIR That he'd see.

ESTRAGON That he couldn't promise anything.

VLADIMIR That he'd have to think it over.

ESTRAGON In the quiet of his home.

VLADIMIR Consult his family.

ESTRAGON His friends.

VLADIMIR His agents.

ESTRAGON His correspondents.

VLADIMIR His books.
ESTRAGON His bank account.
VLADIMIR Before taking[3] a decision.
ESTRAGON It's the normal thing.
VLADIMIR Is it not?
ESTRAGON I think it is.
VLADIMIR I think so too.
[*Silence.*]
ESTRAGON [*anxious*] And we?
VLADIMIR I beg your pardon?
ESTRAGON I said, And we?
VLADIMIR I don't understand.
ESTRAGON Where do we come in?
VLADIMIR Come in?
ESTRAGON Take your time.
VLADIMIR Come in? On our hands and knees.
ESTRAGON As bad as that?
VLADIMIR Your Worship wishes to assert his prerogatives?
ESTRAGON We've no rights any more?
[*Laugh of* VLADIMIR, *stifled as before, less the smile.*]
VLADIMIR You'd make me laugh if it wasn't prohibited.
ESTRAGON We've lost our rights?
VLADIMIR [*distinctly*] We got rid of them.
[*Silence. They remain motionless, arms dangling, heads sunk, sagging at the knees.*]
ESTRAGON [*feebly*] We're not tied? [*Pause.*] We're not—
VLADIMIR Listen!
[*They listen, grotesquely rigid.*]
ESTRAGON I hear nothing.
VLADIMIR Hsst! [*They listen*. ESTRAGON *loses his balance, almost falls. He clutches the arm of* VLADIMIR, *who totters. They listen, huddled together.*] Nor I.
[*Sighs of relief. They relax and separate.*]
ESTRAGON You gave me a fright.
VLADIMIR I thought it was he.

ESTRAGON Who?
VLADIMIR Godot.
ESTRAGON Pah! The wind in the reeds.
VLADIMIR I could have sworn I heard shouts.
ESTRAGON And why would he shout?
VLADIMIR At his horse.
[*Silence.*]
ESTRAGON [*violently*] I'm hungry!
VLADIMIR Do you want a carrot?
ESTRAGON Is that all there is?
VLADIMIR I might have some turnips.
ESTRAGON Give me a carrot. [VLADIMIR *rummages in his pockets, takes out a turnip and gives it to* ESTRAGON *who takes a bite out of it. Angrily.*] It's a turnip!
VLADIMIR Oh pardon! I could have sworn it was a carrot. [*He rummages again in his pockets, finds nothing but turnips.*] All that's turnips. [*He rummages.*] You must have eaten the last. [*He rummages.*] Wait, I have it. [*He brings out a carrot and gives it to* ESTRAGON.] There, dear fellow. [ESTRAGON *wipes the carrot on his sleeve and begins to eat it.*] Make it last, that's the end of them.
ESTRAGON [*chewing*] I asked you a question.
VLADIMIR Ah.
ESTRAGON Did you reply?
VLADIMIR How's the carrot?
ESTRAGON It's a carrot.
VLADIMIR So much the better, so much the better. [*Pause.*] What was it you wanted to know?
ESTRAGON I've forgotten. [*Chews.*] That's what annoys me. [*He looks at the carrot appreciatively, dangles it between finger and thumb.*] I'll never forget this carrot. [*He sucks the end of it meditatively.*] Ah yes, now I remember.
VLADIMIR Well?
ESTRAGON [*his mouth full, vacuously*] We're not tied?
VLADIMIR I don't hear a word you're saying.
ESTRAGON [*chews, swallows*] I'm asking you if we're tied.

VLADIMIR Tied?

ESTRAGON Ti-ed.

VLADIMIR How do you mean tied?

ESTRAGON Down.

VLADIMIR But to whom? By whom?

ESTRAGON To your man.

VLADIMIR To Godot? Tied to Godot! What an idea! No question of it. [*Pause.*] For the moment.

ESTRAGON His name is Godot?

VLADIMIR I think so.

ESTRAGON Fancy that. [*He raises what remains of the carrot by the stub of leaf, twirls it before his eyes.*] Funny, the more you eat the worse it gets.

VLADIMIR With me it's just the opposite.

ESTRAGON In other words?

VLADIMIR I get used to the muck as I go along.

ESTRAGON [*after prolonged reflection*] Is that the opposite?

VLADIMIR Question of temperament.

ESTRAGON Of character.

VLADIMIR Nothing you can do about it.

ESTRAGON No use struggling.

VLADIMIR One is what one is.

ESTRAGON No use wriggling.

VLADIMIR The essential doesn't change.

ESTRAGON Nothing to be done. [*He proffers the remains of the carrot to* VLADIMIR.] Like to finish it?

[*A terrible cry, close at hand.* ESTRAGON *drops the carrot. They remain motionless, then together make a sudden rush towards the wings*. ESTRAGON *stops halfway, runs back, picks up the carrot, stuffs it in his pocket, runs to rejoin* VLADIMIR *who is waiting for him, stops again, runs back, picks up his boot, runs to rejoin* VLADIMIR. *Huddled together, shoulders hunched, cringing away from the menace, they wait.*]

[*Enter* POZZO *and* LUCKY. POZZO *drives* LUCKY *by means of a rope passed round his neck, so that* LUCKY *is the first to enter, followed by the rope which is long enough to let him reach the middle of the stage before* POZZO *appears*. LUCKY *carries a heavy bag, a folding stool, a picnic basket and a greatcoat,*[4] POZZO *a whip.*]

POZZO [*off*] On! [*Crack of whip*. POZZO *appears. They cross the stage*. LUCKY *passes before* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *and exit*. POZZO *at the sight of* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *stops short. The rope tautens*. POZZO *jerks at it violently.*] Back!

[*Noise of* LUCKY *falling with all his baggage*. VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *turn towards him, half wishing half fearing to go to his assistance.* VLADIMIR *takes a step towards Lucky*, ESTRAGON *holds him back by the sleeve.*]

VLADIMIR Let me go!

ESTRAGON Stay where you are!

POZZO Be careful! He's wicked. [VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *turn towards* POZZO.] With strangers.

ESTRAGON [*undertone*] Is that him?

VLADIMIR Who?

ESTRAGON [*trying to remember the name*] Er . . .

VLADIMIR Godot?

ESTRAGON Yes.

POZZO I present myself: Pozzo.

VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] Not at all!

ESTRAGON He said Godot.

VLADIMIR Not at all!

ESTRAGON [*timidly, to* POZZO] You're not Mr. Godot, Sir?

POZZO [*terrifying voice*] I am Pozzo! [*Silence.*] Pozzo! [*Silence.*] Does that name mean nothing to you? [*Silence.*] I say does that name mean nothing to you?

[VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *look at each other questioningly.*]

ESTRAGON [*pretending to search*] Bozzo . . . Bozzo . . .

VLADIMIR [*ditto*] Pozzo . . . Pozzo . . .

POZZO PPPOZZZO!

ESTRAGON Ah! Pozzo . . . let me see . . . Pozzo . . .
VLADIMIR Is it Pozzo or Bozzo?
ESTRAGON Pozzo . . . no . . . I'm afraid I . . . no . . . I don't seem to . . . [POZZO *advances threateningly.*]
VLADIMIR [*conciliating*] I once knew a family called Cozzo. The mother had the clap.[5]
ESTRAGON [*hastily*] We're not from these parts, Sir.
POZZO [*halting*] You are human beings none the less. [*He puts on his glasses.*] As far as one can see. [*He takes off his glasses.*] Of the same species as myself. [*He bursts into an enormous laugh.*] Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image!
VLADIMIR Well you see—
POZZO [*peremptory*] Who is Godot?
ESTRAGON Godot?
POZZO You took me for Godot.
VLADIMIR Oh no, Sir, not for an instant, Sir.
POZZO Who is he?
VLADIMIR Oh he's a . . . he's a kind of acquaintance.
ESTRAGON Nothing of the kind, we hardly know him.
VLADIMIR True . . . we don't know him very well . . . but all the same . . .
ESTRAGON Personally I wouldn't even know him if I saw him.
POZZO You took me for him.
ESTRAGON [*recoiling before* POZZO] That's to say . . . you understand . . . the dusk . . . the strain . . . waiting . . . I confess . . . I imagined . . . for a second . . .
POZZO Waiting? So you were waiting for him?
VLADIMIR Well you see—
POZZO Here? On my land?
VLADIMIR We didn't intend any harm.
ESTRAGON We meant well.
POZZO The road is free to all.
VLADIMIR That's how we looked at it.
POZZO It's a disgrace. But there you are.

ESTRAGON Nothing we can do about it.

POZZO [*with magnanimous gesture*] Let's say no more about it. [*He jerks the rope.*] Up pig! [*Pause.*] Every time he drops he falls asleep. [*Jerks the rope.*] Up hog! [*Noise of* LUCKY *getting up and picking up his baggage.* POZZO *jerks the rope.*] Back! [*Enter* LUCKY *backwards.*] Stop! [LUCKY *stops.*] Turn! [LUCKY *turns. To* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON, *affably.*] Gentlemen, I am happy to have met you. [*Before their incredulous expression.*] Yes yes, sincerely happy. [*He jerks the rope.*] Closer! [LUCKY *advances.*] Stop! [LUCKY *stops.*] Yes, the road seems long when one journeys all alone for . . . [*he consults his watch*] . . . yes . . . [*he calculates*] . . . yes, six hours, that's right, six hours on end, and never a soul in sight. [*To* LUCKY.] Coat! [LUCKY *puts down the bag, advances, gives the coat, goes back to his place, takes up the bag.*] Hold that! [POZZO *holds out the whip*. LUCKY*advances and, both his hands being occupied, takes the whip in his mouth, then goes back to his place*. POZZO*begins to put on his coat, stops.*] Coat! [LUCKY *puts down the bag, basket and stool, helps* POZZO *on with his coat, goes back to his place and takes up bag, basket and stool.*] Touch of autumn in the air this evening. [POZZO*finishes buttoning his coat, stoops, inspects himself, straightens up.*] Whip! [LUCKY *advances, stoops*, POZZO *snatches the whip from his mouth*, LUCKY *goes back to his place.*] Yes, gentlemen, I cannot go for long without the society of my likes [*he puts on his glasses and looks at the two likes*] even when the likeness is an imperfect one. [*He takes off his glasses.*] Stool! [LUCKY *puts down bag and basket, advances, opens stool, puts it down, goes back to his place, takes up bag and basket.*] Closer! [LUCKY *puts down bag and basket, advances, moves stool, goes back to his place, takes up bag and basket*. POZZO*sits down, places the butt of his whip against* LUCKY*'s chest and pushes.*] Back! [LUCKY *takes a step back.*] Further! [LUCKY *takes another step back.*] Stop! [LUCKY *stops. To* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON.] That is why, with your permission, I propose to dally with you a moment, before I venture any

further. Basket! [LUCKY *advances, gives the basket, goes back to his place.*] The fresh air stimulates the jaded appetite. [*He opens the basket, takes out a piece of chicken and a bottle of wine.*] Basket! [LUCKY *advances, picks up the basket and goes back to his place.*] Further! [LUCKY *takes a step back.*] He stinks. Happy days!

[*He drinks from the bottle, puts it down and begins to eat. Silence.* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON, *cautiously at first, then more boldly, begin to circle about* LUCKY, *inspecting him up and down*. POZZO *eats his chicken voraciously, throwing away the bones after having sucked them*. LUCKY *sags slowly, until bag and basket touch the ground, then straightens up with a start and begins to sag again. Rhythm of one sleeping on his feet.*]

ESTRAGON What ails him?

VLADIMIR He looks tired.

ESTRAGON Why doesn't he put down his bags?

VLADIMIR How do I know? [*They close in on him.*] Careful!

ESTRAGON Say something to him.

VLADIMIR Look!

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR [*pointing*] His neck!

ESTRAGON [*looking at the neck*] I see nothing.

VLADIMIR Here.

[ESTRAGON *goes over beside* VLADIMIR.]

ESTRAGON Oh I say!

VLADIMIR A running sore![6]

ESTRAGON It's the rope.

VLADIMIR It's the rubbing.

ESTRAGON It's inevitable.

VLADIMIR It's the knot.

ESTRAGON It's the chafing.

[*They resume their inspection, dwell on the face.*]

VLADIMIR [*grudgingly*] He's not bad looking.

ESTRAGON [*shrugging his shoulders, wry face*] Would you say so?

VLADIMIR A trifle effeminate.

ESTRAGON Look at the slobber.

VLADIMIR It's inevitable.

ESTRAGON Look at the slaver.[7]

VLADIMIR Perhaps he's a halfwit.

ESTRAGON A cretin.

VLADIMIR [*looking closer*] Looks like a goiter.[8]

ESTRAGON [*ditto*] It's not certain.

VLADIMIR He's panting.

ESTRAGON It's inevitable.

VLADIMIR And his eyes!

ESTRAGON What about them?

VLADIMIR Goggling out of his head.

ESTRAGON Looks at his last gasp to me.

VLADIMIR It's not certain. [*Pause.*] Ask him a question.

ESTRAGON Would that be a good thing?

VLADIMIR What do we risk?

ESTRAGON [*timidly*] Mister . . .

VLADIMIR Louder.

ESTRAGON [*louder*] Mister . . .

POZZO Leave him in peace! [*They turn towards* POZZO *who, having finished eating, wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.*] Can't you see he wants to rest? Basket! [*He strikes a match and begins to light his pipe*. ESTRAGON *sees the chicken bones on the ground and stares at them greedily. As* LUCKY *does not move* POZZO *throws the match angrily away and jerks the rope.*] Basket! [LUCKY *starts, almost falls, recovers his senses, advances, puts the bottle in the basket and goes back to his place*. ESTRAGON *stares at the bones*. POZZO *strikes another match and lights his pipe.*] What can you expect, it's not his job. [*He pulls at his pipe, stretches out his legs.*] Ah! That's better.

ESTRAGON [*timidly*] Please Sir . . .

POZZO What is it, my good man?

ESTRAGON Er . . . you've finished with the . . . er . . . you don't need the . . . er . . . bones, Sir?

VLADIMIR [*scandalized*] You couldn't have waited?

POZZO No no, he does well to ask. Do I need the bones? [*He turns them over with the end of his whip.*] No, personally I do not need them any more. [ESTRAGON *takes a step towards the bones.*] But . . . [ESTRAGON *stops short.*] . . . but in theory the bones go to the carrier. He is therefore the one to ask. [ESTRAGON *turns towards* LUCKY, *hesitates.*] Go on, go on, don't be afraid, ask him, he'll tell you.

[ESTRAGON *goes towards* LUCKY, *stops before him.*]

ESTRAGON Mister . . . excuse me, Mister . . .

POZZO You're being spoken to, pig! Reply! [*To* ESTRAGON.] Try him again.

ESTRAGON Excuse me, Mister, the bones, you won't be wanting the bones?

[LUCKY *looks long at* ESTRAGON.]

POZZO [*in raptures*] Mister! [LUCKY *bows his head.*] Reply! Do you want them or don't you? [*Silence of* LUCKY. *To* ESTRAGON.] They're yours. [ESTRAGON *makes a dart at the bones, picks them up and begins to gnaw them.*] I don't like it. I've never known him refuse a bone before. [*He looks anxiously at* LUCKY.] Nice business it'd be if he fell sick on me! [*He puffs at his pipe.*]

VLADIMIR [*exploding*] It's a scandal!

[*Silence. Flabbergasted*, ESTRAGON *stops gnawing, looks at* POZZO *and* VLADIMIR *in turn*. POZZO *outwardly calm*. VLADIMIR *embarrassed.*]

POZZO [*to* VLADIMIR] Are you alluding to anything in particular?

VLADIMIR [*stutteringly resolute*] To treat a man . . . [*Gesture towards* LUCKY] . . . like that . . . I think that . . . no . . . a human being . . . no . . . it's a scandal!

ESTRAGON [*not to be outdone*] A disgrace! [*He resumes his gnawing.*]

POZZO You are severe. [*To* VLADIMIR.] What age are you, if it's not a rude question? [*Silence.*] Sixty? Seventy? [*To* ESTRAGON.] What age would you say he was?

ESTRAGON Eleven.

POZZO I am impertinent. [*He knocks out his pipe against the whip, gets up.*] I must be getting on. Thank you for your society. [*He reflects.*] Unless I smoke another pipe before I go. What do you say? [*They say nothing.*] Oh I'm only a small smoker, a very small smoker, I'm not in the habit of smoking two pipes one on top of the other, it makes [*hand to heart, sighing*] my heart go pit-a-pat. [*Silence.*] It's the nicotine, one absorbs it in spite of one's precautions. [*Sighs.*] You know how it is. [*Silence.*] But perhaps you don't smoke? Yes? No? It's of no importance. [*Silence.*] But how am I to sit down now, without affectation, now that I have risen? Without appearing to—how shall I say—without appearing to falter. [*To* VLADIMIR.] I beg your pardon? [*Silence.*] Perhaps you didn't speak? [*Silence.*] It's of no importance. Let me see . . . [*He reflects.*]

ESTRAGON Ah! That's better. [*He puts the bones in his pocket.*]

VLADIMIR Let's go.

ESTRAGON So soon?

POZZO One moment! [*He jerks the rope.*] Stool! [*He points with his whip.* LUCKY *moves the stool.*] More! There! [*He sits down*. LUCKY *goes back to his place.*] Done it! [*He fills his pipe.*]

VLADIMIR [*vehemently*] Let's go!

POZZO I hope I'm not driving you away. Wait a little longer, you'll never regret it.

ESTRAGON [*scenting charity*] We're in no hurry.

POZZO [*having lit his pipe*] The second is never so sweet . . . [*he takes the pipe out of his mouth, contemplates it*] . . . as the first I mean. [*He puts the pipe back in his mouth.*] But it's sweet just the same.

VLADIMIR I'm going.

POZZO He can no longer endure my presence. I am perhaps not particularly human, but who cares? [*To* VLADIMIR.] Think twice before you do anything rash. Suppose you go now while it is still day, for there is no denying it is still day. [*They all look up at the sky.*] Good. [*They stop looking at the sky.*] What happens in that case—[*he takes the pipe out of his mouth, examines it*]—I'm out—[*he relights his pipe*]—in that case—[*puff*]—in that case—[*puff*]—what happens in that case to your appointment with this . . . Godet . . . Godot . . . Godin . . . anyhow you see who I mean, who has your future in his hands . . . [*pause*] . . . at least your immediate future?

VLADIMIR Who told you?

POZZO He speaks to me again! If this goes on much longer we'll soon be old friends.

ESTRAGON Why doesn't he put down his bags?

POZZO I too would be happy to meet him. The more people I meet the happier I become. From the meanest creature one departs wiser, richer, more conscious of one's blessings. Even you . . . [*he looks at them ostentatiously in turn to make it clear they are both meant*] . . . even you, who knows, will have added to my store.

ESTRAGON Why doesn't he put down his bags?

POZZO But that would surprise me.

VLADIMIR You're being asked a question.

POZZO [*delighted*] A question! Who? What? A moment ago you were calling me Sir, in fear and trembling. Now you're asking me questions. No good will come of this!

VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] I think he's listening.

ESTRAGON [*circling about* LUCKY] What?

VLADIMIR You can ask him now. He's on the alert.

ESTRAGON Ask him what?

VLADIMIR Why he doesn't put down his bags.

ESTRAGON I wonder.

VLADIMIR Ask him, can't you?

POZZO [*who has followed these exchanges with anxious attention, fearing lest the question get lost*] You want to

know why he doesn't put down his bags, as you call them.

VLADIMIR That's it.

POZZO [*to* ESTRAGON] You are sure you agree with that?

ESTRAGON He's puffing like a grampus.[9]

POZZO The answer is this. [*To* ESTRAGON.] But stay still, I beg of you, you're making me nervous!

VLADIMIR Here.

ESTRAGON What is it?

VLADIMIR He's about to speak.

[ESTRAGON *goes over beside* VLADIMIR. *Motionless, side by side, they wait.*]

POZZO Good. Is everybody ready? Is everybody looking at me? [*He looks at* LUCKY, *jerks the rope*. LUCKY *raises his head.*] Will you look at me, pig! [LUCKY *looks at him.*] Good. [*He puts the pipe in his pocket, takes out a little vaporizer and sprays his throat, puts back the vaporizer in his pocket, clears his throat, spits, takes out the vaporizer again, sprays his throat again, puts back the vaporizer in his pocket.*] I am ready. Is everybody listening? Is everybody ready? [*He looks at them all in turn, jerks the rope.*] Hog! [LUCKY *raises his head.*] I don't like talking in a vacuum. Good. Let me see. [*He reflects.*]

ESTRAGON I'm going.

POZZO What was it exactly you wanted to know?

VLADIMIR Why he—

POZZO [*angrily*] Don't interrupt me! [*Pause. Calmer.*] If we all speak at once we'll never get anywhere. [*Pause.*] What was I saying? [*Pause. Louder.*] What was I saying?

[VLADIMIR *mimics one carrying a heavy burden*, POZZO *looks at him, puzzled.*]

ESTRAGON [*forcibly*] Bags. [*He points at* LUCKY.] Why? Always hold. [*He sags, panting.*] Never put down. [*He opens his hands, straightens up with relief.*] Why?

POZZO Ah! Why couldn't you say so before? Why he doesn't make himself comfortable? Let's try and get this clear. Has he

not the right to? Certainly he has. It follows that he doesn't want to. There's reasoning for you. And why doesn't he want to? [*Pause.*] Gentlemen, the reason is this.

VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] Make a note of this.

POZZO He wants to impress me, so that I'll keep him.

ESTRAGON What?

POZZO Perhaps I haven't got it quite right. He wants to mollify me, so that I'll give up the idea of parting with him. No, that's not exactly it either.

VLADIMIR You want to get rid of him?

POZZO He wants to cod[1] me, but he won't.

VLADIMIR You want to get rid of him?

POZZO He imagines that when I see how well he carries I'll be tempted to keep him on in that capacity.

ESTRAGON You've had enough of him?

POZZO In reality he carries like a pig. It's not his job.

VLADIMIR You want to get rid of him?

POZZO He imagines that when I see him indefatigable I'll regret my decision. Such is his miserable scheme. As though I were short of slaves! [*All three look at* LUCKY.] Atlas, son of Jupiter![2] [*Silence.*] Well, that's that I think. Anything else?

[*Vaporizer.*]

VLADIMIR You want to get rid of him?

POZZO Remark that I might just as well have been in his shoes and he in mine. If chance had not willed otherwise. To each one his due.

VLADIMIR You waagerrim?

POZZO I beg your pardon?

VLADIMIR You want to get rid of him?

POZZO I do. But instead of driving him away as I might have done, I mean instead of simply kicking him out on his arse, in the goodness of my heart I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him. The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them.

[LUCKY *weeps.*]

ESTRAGON He's crying!

POZZO Old dogs have more dignity. [*He proffers his handkerchief to* ESTRAGON.] Comfort him, since you pity him. [ESTRAGON *hesitates.*] Come on. [ESTRAGON *takes the handkerchief.*] Wipe away his tears, he'll feel less forsaken.

[ESTRAGON *hesitates.*]

VLADIMIR Here, give it to me, I'll do it.

[ESTRAGON *refuses to give the handkerchief. Childish gestures.*]

POZZO Make haste, before he stops. [ESTRAGON *approaches* LUCKY *and makes to wipe his eyes*. LUCKY *kicks him violently in the shins*. ESTRAGON *drops the handkerchief, recoils, staggers about the stage howling with pain.*] Hanky!

[LUCKY *puts down bag and basket, picks up handkerchief and gives it to* POZZO, *goes back to his place, picks up bag and basket.*]

ESTRAGON Oh the swine! [*He pulls up the leg of his trousers.*] He's crippled me!

POZZO I told you he didn't like strangers.

VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] Show. [ESTRAGON *shows his leg. To* POZZO, *angrily*] He's bleeding!

POZZO It's a good sign.

ESTRAGON [*on one leg*] I'll never walk again!

VLADIMIR [*tenderly*] I'll carry you. [*Pause.*] If necessary.

POZZO He's stopped crying. [*To* ESTRAGON.] You have replaced him as it were. [*Lyrically.*] The tears of the world are a constant quantity. For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops. The same is true of the laugh. [*He laughs.*] Let us not then speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. [*Pause.*] Let us not speak well of it either. [*Pause.*] Let us not speak of it at all. [*Pause. Judiciously.*] It is true the population has increased.

VLADIMIR Try and walk.

[ESTRAGON *takes a few limping steps, stops before* LUCKY *and spits on him, then goes and sits down on the*

mound.]

POZZO Guess who taught me all these beautiful things. [*Pause. Pointing to* LUCKY.] My Lucky!

VLADIMIR [*looking at the sky*] Will night never come?

POZZO But for him all my thoughts, all my feelings, would have been of common things. [*Pause. With extraordinary vehemence.*] Professional worries! [*Calmer.*] Beauty, grace, truth of the first water,[3] I knew they were all beyond me. So I took a knook.[4]

VLADIMIR [*startled from his inspection of the sky*] A knook?

POZZO That was nearly sixty years ago . . . [*he consults his watch*] . . . yes, nearly sixty. [*Drawing himself up proudly.*] You wouldn't think it to look at me, would you? Compared to him I look like a young man, no? [*Pause.*] Hat! [LUCKY *puts down the basket and takes off his hat. His long white hair falls about his face. He puts his hat under his arm and picks up the basket.*] Now look. [POZZO *takes off his hat.*[5] *He is completely bald. He puts on his hat again.*] Did you see?

VLADIMIR And now you turn him away? Such an old and faithful servant!

ESTRAGON Swine!

[POZZO *more and more agitated.*]

VLADIMIR After having sucked all the good out of him you chuck him away like a . . . like a banana skin. Really . . .

POZZO [*groaning, clutching his head*] I can't bear it . . . any longer . . . the way he goes on . . . you've no idea . . . it's terrible . . . he must go . . . [*he waves his arms*] . . . I'm going mad . . . [*he collapses, his head in his hands*] . . . I can't bear it . . . any longer . . .

[*Silence. All look at* POZZO.]

VLADIMIR He can't bear it.

ESTRAGON Any longer.

VLADIMIR He's going mad.

ESTRAGON It's terrible.

VLADIMIR [*to* LUCKY] How dare you! It's abominable! Such a good master! Crucify him like that! After so many years! Really!

POZZO [*sobbing*] He used to be so kind . . . so helpful . . . and entertaining . . . my good angel . . . and now . . . he's killing me.

ESTRAGON [*to* VLADIMIR] Does he want to replace him?

VLADIMIR What?

ESTRAGON Does he want someone to take his place or not?

VLADIMIR I don't think so.

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR I don't know.

ESTRAGON Ask him.

POZZO [*calmer*] Gentlemen, I don't know what came over me. Forgive me. Forget all I said. [*More and more his old self.*] I don't remember exactly what it was, but you may be sure there wasn't a word of truth in it. [*Drawing himself up, striking his chest.*] Do I look like a man that can be made to suffer? Frankly? [*He rummages in his pockets.*] What have I done with my pipe?

VLADIMIR Charming evening we're having.

ESTRAGON Unforgettable.

VLADIMIR And it's not over.

ESTRAGON Apparently not.

VLADIMIR It's only beginning.

ESTRAGON It's awful.

VLADIMIR Worse than the pantomime.[6]

ESTRAGON The circus.

VLADIMIR The music-hall.[7]

ESTRAGON The circus.

POZZO What can I have done with that briar?

ESTRAGON He's a scream. He's lost his dudeen.[8] [*Laughs noisily.*]

VLADIMIR I'll be back. [*He hastens towards the wings.*]

ESTRAGON End of the corridor, on the left.

VLADIMIR Keep my seat. [*Exit* VLADIMIR.]

POZZO [*on the point of tears*] I've lost my Kapp and Peterson![9]

ESTRAGON [*convulsed with merriment*] He'll be the death of me!

POZZO You didn't see by any chance—. [*He misses* VLADIMIR.] Oh! He's gone! Without saying goodbye! How could he! He might have waited!

ESTRAGON He would have burst.

POZZO Oh! [*Pause.*] Oh well then of course in that case . . .

ESTRAGON Come here.

POZZO What for?

ESTRAGON You'll see.

POZZO You want me to get up?

ESTRAGON Quick! [POZZO *gets up and goes over beside* ESTRAGON. ESTRAGON *points off.*] Look!

POZZO [*having put on his glasses*] Oh I say!

ESTRAGON It's all over.

[*Enter* VLADIMIR, *somber. He shoulders* LUCKY *out of his way, kicks over the stool, comes and goes agitatedly.*]

POZZO He's not pleased.

ESTRAGON [*to* VLADIMIR] You missed a treat. Pity.

[VLADIMIR *halts, straightens the stool, comes and goes, calmer.*]

POZZO He subsides. [*Looking round.*] Indeed all subsides. A great calm descends. [*Raising his hand.*] Listen! Pan sleeps.[1]

VLADIMIR Will night never come?

[*All three look at the sky.*]

POZZO You don't feel like going until it does?

ESTRAGON Well you see—

POZZO Why it's very natural, very natural. I myself in your situation, if I had an appointment with a Godin . . . Godet . . . Godot . . . anyhow you see who I mean, I'd wait till it was black night before I gave up. [*He looks at the stool.*] I'd very much like to sit down, but I don't quite know how to go about it.

ESTRAGON Could I be of any help?

POZZO If you asked me perhaps.

ESTRAGON What?

POZZO If you asked me to sit down.

ESTRAGON Would that be a help?

POZZO I fancy so.

ESTRAGON Here we go. Be seated, Sir, I beg of you.

POZZO No no, I wouldn't think of it! [*Pause. Aside.*] Ask me again.

ESTRAGON Come come, take a seat I beseech you, you'll get pneumonia.

POZZO You really think so?

ESTRAGON Why it's absolutely certain.

POZZO No doubt you are right. [*He sits down.*] Done it again! [*Pause.*] Thank you, dear fellow. [*He consults his watch.*] But I must really be getting along, if I am to observe my schedule.

VLADIMIR Time has stopped.

POZZO [*cuddling his watch to his ear*] Don't you believe it, Sir, don't you believe it. [*He puts his watch back in his pocket.*] Whatever you like, but not that.

ESTRAGON [*to* POZZO] Everything seems black to him today.

POZZO Except the firmament.[2] [*He laughs, pleased with this witticism.*] But I see what it is, you are not from these parts, you don't know what our twilights can do. Shall I tell you? [*Silence*. ESTRAGON *is fiddling with his boot again*, VLADIMIR *with his hat.*] I can't refuse you. [*Vaporizer.*] A little attention, if you please. [VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *continue their fiddling*, LUCKY *is half asleep*. POZZO *cracks his whip feebly.*] What's the matter with this whip? [*He gets up and cracks it more vigorously, finally with success*. LUCKY *jumps*. VLADIMIR*'s hat*, ESTRAGON*'s boot*, LUCKY*'s hat, fall to the ground.* POZZO *throws down the whip.*] Worn out, this whip. [*He looks at* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON.] What was I saying?

VLADIMIR Let's go.

ESTRAGON But take the weight off your feet, I implore you, you'll catch your death.

POZZO True. [*He sits down. To* ESTRAGON.] What is your name?
ESTRAGON Adam.
POZZO [*who hasn't listened*] Ah yes! The night. [*He raises his head.*] But be a little more attentive, for pity's sake, otherwise we'll never get anywhere. [*He looks at the sky.*] Look! [*All look at the sky except* LUCKY *who is dozing off again*. POZZO *jerks the rope.*] Will you look at the sky, pig! [LUCKY *looks at the sky.*] Good, that's enough. [*They stop looking at the sky.*] What is there so extraordinary about it? Qua sky.[3] It is pale and luminous like any sky at this hour of the day. [*Pause.*] In these latitudes. [*Pause.*] When the weather is fine. [*Lyrical.*] An hour ago [*he looks at his watch, prosaic*] roughly [*lyrical*] after having poured forth even since [*he hesitates, prosaic*] say ten o'clock in the morning [*lyrical*] tirelessly torrents of red and white light it begins to lose its effulgence, to grow pale [*gesture of the two hands lapsing by stages*] pale, ever a little paler, a little paler until [*dramatic pause, ample gesture of the two hands flung wide apart*] pppfff! finished! it comes to rest. But—[*hand raised in admonition*]—but behind this veil of gentleness and peace night is charging [*vibrantly*] and will burst upon us [*snaps his fingers.*] pop! like that! [*His inspiration leaves him.*] just when we least expect it. [*Silence. Gloomily.*] That's how it is on this bitch of an earth.

[*Long silence.*]

ESTRAGON So long as one knows.
VLADIMIR One can bide one's time.
ESTRAGON One knows what to expect.
VLADIMIR No further need to worry.
ESTRAGON Simply wait.
VLADIMIR We're used to it. [*He picks up his hat, peers inside it, shakes it, puts it on.*]
POZZO How did you find me? [VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *look at him blankly.*] Good? Fair? Middling? Poor? Positively bad?
VLADIMIR [*first to understand*] Oh very good, very very good.
POZZO [*to* ESTRAGON] And you, Sir?

ESTRAGON Oh tray bong, tray tray tray bong.[4]

POZZO [*fervently*] Bless you, gentlemen, bless you! [*Pause.*] I have such need of encouragement! [*Pause.*] I weakened a little towards the end, you didn't notice?

VLADIMIR Oh perhaps just a teeny weeny little bit.

ESTRAGON I thought it was intentional.

POZZO You see my memory is defective.

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON In the meantime nothing happens.

POZZO You find it tedious?

ESTRAGON Somewhat.

POZZO [*to* VLADIMIR] And you, Sir?

VLADIMIR I've been better entertained.

[*Silence.* POZZO *struggles inwardly.*]

POZZO Gentlemen, you have been . . . civil to me.

ESTRAGON Not at all!

VLADIMIR What an idea!

POZZO Yes yes, you have been correct. So that I ask myself is there anything I can do in my turn for these honest fellows who are having such a dull, dull time.

ESTRAGON Even ten francs[5] would be a help.

VLADIMIR We are not beggars!

POZZO Is there anything I can do, that's what I ask myself, to cheer them up? I have given them bones, I have talked to them about this and that, I have explained the twilight, admittedly. But is it enough, that's what tortures me, is it enough?

ESTRAGON Even five.

VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON, *indignantly*] That's enough!

ESTRAGON I couldn't accept less.

POZZO Is it enough? No doubt. But I am liberal. It's my nature. This evening. So much the worse for me. [*He jerks the rope.* LUCKY *looks at him.*] For I shall suffer, no doubt about that. [*He picks up the whip.*] What do you prefer? Shall we have him dance, or sing, or recite, or think, or—

ESTRAGON Who?

POZZO Who! You know how to think, you two?

VLADIMIR He thinks?

POZZO Certainly. Aloud. He even used to think very prettily once, I could listen to him for hours. Now . . . [*He shudders.*] So much the worse for me. Well, would you like him to think something for us?

ESTRAGON I'd rather he'd dance, it'd be more fun.

POZZO Not necessarily.

ESTRAGON Wouldn't it, Didi, be more fun?

VLADIMIR I'd like well to hear him think.

ESTRAGON Perhaps he could dance first and think afterwards, if it isn't too much to ask him.

VLADIMIR [*to* POZZO] Would that be possible?

POZZO By all means, nothing simpler. It's the natural order. [*He laughs briefly.*]

VLADIMIR Then let him dance.

[*Silence.*]

POZZO Do you hear, hog?

ESTRAGON He never refuses?

POZZO He refused once. [*Silence.*] Dance, misery!

[LUCKY *puts down bag and basket, advances towards front, turns to* POZZO. LUCKY *dances. He stops.*]

ESTRAGON Is that all?

POZZO Encore!

[LUCKY *executes the same movements, stops.*]

ESTRAGON Pooh! I'd do as well myself. [*He imitates* LUCKY, *almost falls.*] With a little practice.

POZZO He used to dance the farandole, the fling, the brawl, the jig, the fandango and even the hornpipe.[6] He capered. For joy. Now that's the best he can do. Do you know what he calls it?

ESTRAGON The Scapegoat's Agony.

VLADIMIR The Hard Stool.

POZZO The Net. He thinks he's entangled in a net.

VLADIMIR [*squirming like an aesthete*] There's something about it . . .

[LUCKY *makes to return to his burdens.*]

POZZO Woaa!

[LUCKY *stiffens.*]

ESTRAGON Tell us about the time he refused.

POZZO With pleasure, with pleasure. [*He fumbles in his pockets.*] Wait. [*He fumbles.*] What have I done with my spray? [*He fumbles.*] Well now isn't that . . . [*He looks up, consternation on his features. Faintly.*] I can't find my pulverizer![7]

ESTRAGON [*faintly*] My left lung is very weak! [*He coughs feebly. In ringing tones.*] But my right lung is as sound as a bell!

POZZO [*normal voice*] No matter! What was I saying. [*He ponders.*] Wait.

[*Ponders.*] Well now isn't that . . . [*He raises his head.*] Help me!

ESTRAGON Wait!

VLADIMIR Wait!

POZZO Wait!

[*All three take off their hats simultaneously, press their hands to their foreheads, concentrate.*]

ESTRAGON [*triumphantly*] Ah!

VLADIMIR He has it.

POZZO [*impatient*] Well?

ESTRAGON Why doesn't he put down his bags?

VLADIMIR Rubbish!

POZZO Are you sure?

VLADIMIR Damn it haven't you already told us?

POZZO I've already told you?

ESTRAGON He's already told us?

VLADIMIR Anyway he has put them down.

ESTRAGON [*glance at* LUCKY] So he has. And what of it?

VLADIMIR Since he has put down his bags it is impossible we should have asked why he does not do so.

POZZO Stoutly reasoned!
ESTRAGON And why has he put them down?
POZZO Answer us that.
VLADIMIR In order to dance.
ESTRAGON True!
POZZO True!
[*Silence. They put on their hats.*]
ESTRAGON Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!
VLADIMIR [*to* POZZO] Tell him to think.
POZZO Give him his hat.
VLADIMIR His hat?
POZZO He can't think without his hat.
VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] Give him his hat.
ESTRAGON Me! After what he did to me! Never!
VLADIMIR I'll give it to him. [*He does not move.*]
ESTRAGON [*to* POZZO] Tell him to go and fetch it.
POZZO It's better to give it to him.
VLADIMIR I'll give it to him.
[*He picks up the hat and tenders it at arm's length to* LUCKY, *who does not move.*]
POZZO You must put it on his head.
ESTRAGON [*to* POZZO] Tell him to take it.
POZZO It's better to put it on his head.
VLADIMIR I'll put it on his head.
[*He goes round behind* LUCKY, *approaches him cautiously, puts the hat on his head and recoils smartly.* LUCKY *does not move. Silence.*]
ESTRAGON What's he waiting for?
POZZO Stand back! [VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *move away from* LUCKY. POZZO *jerks the rope*, LUCKY *looks at* POZZO.] Think, pig! [*Pause*. LUCKY *begins to dance.*] Stop! [LUCKY *stops.*] Forward! [LUCKY *advances.*] Stop! [LUCKY *stops.*] Think!
[*Silence.*]
LUCKY On the other hand with regard to—

POZZO Stop! [LUCKY *stops.*] Back! [LUCKY *moves back.*] Stop! [LUCKY *stops.*] Turn! [LUCKY *turns towards auditorium.*] Think!

LUCKY Given the existence as uttered forth in the public, works of Puncher and Wattmann[8] of a personal God quaquaquaqua[9] with white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia[1] loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and

[VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *all attention,* POZZO *dejected and disgusted.*] suffers like the divine Miranda[2] with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast and considering what is more that as a result of the labors left unfinished crowned by the Acacacacademy of Anthropopopometry of Essy-in-Possy of Testew and [3] of Testew and Cunard[4] it is established beyond all doubt all other doubt

[VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *begin to protest,* POZZO's *sufferings increase*.] than that which clings to the labors of men that as a result of the labors unfinished of Testew and Cunard it is established as hereinafter but not so fast for reasons unknown that as a result of the public works of Puncher and Wattmann it is established beyond all doubt that in view of the labors of Fartov and Belcher[5] left unfinished for reasons unknown of Testew and Cunard left unfinished it is established what many deny that man in Possy of Testew and Cunard that man in Essy that man in short that man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation[6]and defecation wastes and pines wastes and pines and

[VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *attentive again,* POZZO *more and more agitated and groaning.*] concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the strides of physical

culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie[7] skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn summer winter winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts penicillin and succedanea[8] in a word I resume flying gliding golf over nine and eighteen holes tennis of all sorts in a word for reasons unknown in Feckham Peckham Fulham Clapham[9] namely concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown but time will tell fades away I resume Fulham Clapham in a word the dead loss per head since the death of Bishop Berkeley[1] being to the tune of one inch four ounce per head approximately by and large more or less to the nearest

[VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *protest violently.* POZZO *jumps up, pulls on the rope. General outcry.* LUCKY *pulls on the rope, staggers, shouts his text. All three throw themselves on* LUCKY *who struggles and shouts his text*.] decimal good measure round figures stark naked in the stockinged feet in Connemara[2] in a word for reasons unknown no matter what matter the facts are there and considering what is more much more grave that in the light of the labors lost of Steinweg and Peterman[3] it appears what is more much more grave that in the light the light the light of the labors lost of Steinweg and Peterman that in the plains in the mountains by the seas by the rivers running water running fire the air is the same and then the earth namely the air and then the earth in the great cold the great dark the air and the earth abode of stones in the great cold alas alas in the year of their Lord six hundred and something the air the earth the sea the earth abode of stones in the great deeps the great cold on sea on land and in the air I resume for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis the facts are there but time will tell I resume alas alas on on in short in fine on on abode of stones who can doubt it I resume but not so fast I resume the skull fading fading fading and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons

unknown in spite of the tennis on on the beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labors abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard [*mêlée, final vociferations*] tennis . . . the stones . . . so calm . . . Cunard . . . unfinished . . .

POZZO His hat!

[VLADIMIR *seizes* LUCKY*'s hat. Silence of* LUCKY. *He falls. Silence. Panting of the victors.*]

ESTRAGON Avenged!

[VLADIMIR *examines the hat, peers inside it.*]

POZZO Give me that! [*He snatches the hat from* VLADIMIR, *throws it on the ground, tramples on it.*] There's an end to his thinking!

VLADIMIR But will he be able to walk?

POZZO Walk or crawl! [*He kicks* LUCKY.] Up pig!

ESTRAGON Perhaps he's dead.

VLADIMIR You'll kill him.

POZZO Up scum! [*He jerks the rope.*] Help me!

VLADIMIR How?

POZZO Raise him up!

[VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *hoist* LUCKY *to his feet, support him an instant, then let him go. He falls.*]

ESTRAGON He's doing it on purpose!

POZZO You must hold him. [*Pause.*] Come on, come on, raise him up.

ESTRAGON To hell with him!

VLADIMIR Come on, once more.

ESTRAGON What does he take us for?

[*They raise* LUCKY, *hold him up.*]

POZZO Don't let him go! [VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *totter.*] Don't move!

POZZO [*fetches bag and basket and brings them towards* LUCKY.] Hold him tight! [*He puts the bag in* LUCKY*'s hand*. LUCKY *drops*

it immediately.] Don't let him go! [*He puts back the bag in* LUCKY*'s hand. Gradually, at the feel of the bag,* LUCKY *recovers his senses and his fingers finally close round the handle.*] Hold him tight! [*As before with basket.*] Now! You can let him go. [VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *move away from* LUCKY*who totters, reels, sags, but succeeds in remaining on his feet, bag and basket in his hands*. POZZO *steps back, cracks his whip.*] Forward! [LUCKY *totters forward.*] Back! [LUCKY *totters back.*] Turn! [LUCKY *turns.*] Done it! He can walk. [*Turning to* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON.] Thank you, gentlemen, and let me . . . [*he fumbles in his pockets*] . . . let me wish you . . . [*fumbles.*] . . . wish you . . . [*fumbles.*] . . . what have I done with my watch? [*fumbles.*] A genuine half-hunter, gentlemen, with deadbeat escapement![4] [*Sobbing.*] Twas my granpa gave it to me! [*He searches on the ground*, VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *likewise*. POZZO *turns over with his foot the remains of* LUCKY's *hat.*] Well now isn't that just—

VLADIMIR Perhaps it's in your fob.[5]

POZZO Wait! [*He doubles up in an attempt to apply his ear to his stomach, listens. Silence.*] I hear nothing. [*He beckons them to approach*, VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *go over to him, bend over his stomach.*] Surely one should hear the tick-tick.

VLADIMIR Silence!

[*All listen, bent double.*]

ESTRAGON I hear something.

POZZO Where?

VLADIMIR It's the heart.

POZZO [*disappointed*] Damnation!

VLADIMIR Silence!

ESTRAGON Perhaps it has stopped.

[*They straighten up.*]

POZZO Which of you smells so bad?

ESTRAGON He has stinking breath and I have stinking feet.

POZZO I must go.

ESTRAGON And your half-hunter?

POZZO I must have left it at the manor.

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON Then adieu.

POZZO Adieu.

VLADIMIR Adieu.

POZZO Adieu.

[*Silence. No one moves.*]

VLADIMIR Adieu.

POZZO Adieu.

ESTRAGON Adieu.

[*Silence.*]

POZZO And thank you.

VLADIMIR Thank *you.*

POZZO Not at all.

ESTRAGON Yes yes.

POZZO No no.

VLADIMIR Yes yes.

ESTRAGON No no.

[*Silence.*]

POZZO I don't seem to be able . . . [*long hesitation*] . . . to depart.

ESTRAGON Such is life.

[POZZO *turns, moves away from* LUCKY *towards the wings, paying out the rope as he goes.*]

VLADIMIR You're going the wrong way.

POZZO I need a running start. [*Having come to the end of the rope, i.e. off stage, he stops, turns and cries.*] Stand back! [VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *stand back, look towards* POZZO. *Crack of whip.*] On! On!

ESTRAGON On!

VLADIMIR On!

[LUCKY *moves off.*]

POZZO Faster! [*He appears, crosses the stage preceded by* LUCKY. VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *wave their hats. Exit* LUCKY.] On! On! [*On the point of disappearing in his turn he stops and turns. The rope tautens. Noise of* LUCKY *falling off.*] Stool!

[VLADIMIR *fetches stool and gives it to* POZZO *who throws it to* LUCKY.] Adieu!

VLADIMIR
ESTRAGON
} [*waving*] Adieu! Adieu!

POZZO Up! Pig! [*Noise of* LUCKY *getting up.*] On! [*Exit* POZZO.] Faster! On! Adieu! Pig! Yip! Adieu!

[*Long silence.*]

VLADIMIR That passed the time.

ESTRAGON It would have passed in any case.

VLADIMIR Yes, but not so rapidly.

[*Pause.*]

ESTRAGON What do we do now?

VLADIMIR I don't know.

ESTRAGON Let's go.

VLADIMIR We can't.

ESTRAGON Why not?

VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON [*despairingly*] Ah!

[*Pause.*]

VLADIMIR How they've changed!

ESTRAGON Who?

VLADIMIR Those two.

ESTRAGON That's the idea, let's make a little conversation.

VLADIMIR Haven't they?

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR Changed.

ESTRAGON Very likely. They all change. Only we can't.

VLADIMIR Likely! It's certain. Didn't you see them?

ESTRAGON I suppose I did. But I don't know them.

VLADIMIR Yes you do know them.

ESTRAGON No I don't know them.

VLADIMIR We know them, I tell you. You forget everything. [*Pause. To himself.*] Unless they're not the same . . .

ESTRAGON Why didn't they recognize us then?

VLADIMIR That means nothing. I too pretended not to recognize them. And then nobody ever recognizes us.
ESTRAGON Forget it. What we need—ow! [VLADIMIR *does not react.*] Ow!
VLADIMIR [*to himself*] Unless they're not the same . . .
ESTRAGON Didi! It's the other foot! [*He goes hobbling towards the mound.*]
VLADIMIR Unless they're not the same . . .
BOY [*off*] Mister!
[ESTRAGON *halts. Both look towards the voice.*]
ESTRAGON Off we go again.
VLADIMIR Approach, my child.
[*Enter* BOY, *timidly. He halts.*]
BOY Mister Albert . . . ?
VLADIMIR Yes.
ESTRAGON What do you want?
VLADIMIR Approach!
[*The* BOY *does not move.*]
ESTRAGON [*forcibly*] Approach when you're told, can't you?
[*The* BOY *advances timidly, halts.*]
VLADIMIR What is it?
BOY Mr. Godot . . .
VLADIMIR Obviously . . . [*Pause.*] Approach.
ESTRAGON [*violently*] Will you approach! [*The* BOY *advances timidly.*] What kept you so late?
VLADIMIR You have a message from Mr. Godot?
BOY Yes Sir.
VLADIMIR Well, what is it?
ESTRAGON What kept you so late?
[*The* BOY *looks at them in turn, not knowing to which he should reply.*]
VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] Let him alone.
ESTRAGON [*violently*] You let me alone. [*Advancing, to the* BOY .] Do you know what time it is?
BOY [*recoiling*] It's not my fault, Sir.
ESTRAGON And whose is it? Mine?

BOY I was afraid, Sir.
ESTRAGON Afraid of what? Of us? [*Pause.*] Answer me!
VLADIMIR I know what it is, he was afraid of the others.
ESTRAGON How long have you been here?
BOY A good while, Sir.
VLADIMIR You were afraid of the whip?
BOY Yes Sir.
VLADIMIR The roars?
BOY Yes Sir.
VLADIMIR The two big men.
BOY Yes Sir.
VLADIMIR Do you know them?
BOY No Sir.
VLADIMIR Are you a native of these parts? [*Silence.*] Do you belong to these parts?
BOY Yes Sir.
ESTRAGON That's all a pack of lies. [*Shaking the* BOY *by the arm.*] Tell us the truth!
BOY [*trembling*] But it is the truth, Sir!
VLADIMIR Will you let him alone! What's the matter with you? [ESTRAGON *releases the* BOY, *moves away, covering his face with his hands*. VLADIMIR *and the* BOY *observe him.* ESTRAGON *drops his hands. His face is convulsed.*] What's the matter with you?
ESTRAGON I'm unhappy.
VLADIMIR Not really! Since when?
ESTRAGON I'd forgotten.
VLADIMIR Extraordinary the tricks that memory plays! [ESTRAGON *tries to speak, renounces, limps to his place, sits down and begins to take off his boots. To* BOY] Well?
BOY Mr. Godot—
VLADIMIR I've seen you before, haven't I?
BOY I don't know, Sir.
VLADIMIR You don't know me?
BOY No Sir.

VLADIMIR It wasn't you came yesterday?
BOY No Sir.
VLADIMIR This is your first time?
BOY Yes Sir.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR Words words. [*Pause.*] Speak.
BOY [*in a rush*] Mr. Godot told me to tell you he won't come this evening but surely tomorrow.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR Is that all?
BOY Yes Sir.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR You work for Mr. Godot?
BOY Yes Sir.
VLADIMIR What do you do?
BOY I mind the goats, Sir.
VLADIMIR Is he good to you?
BOY Yes Sir.
VLADIMIR He doesn't beat you?
BOY No Sir, not me.
VLADIMIR Whom does he beat?
BOY He beats my brother, Sir.
VLADIMIR Ah, you have a brother?
BOY Yes Sir.
VLADIMIR What does he do?
BOY He minds the sheep, Sir.[6]
VLADIMIR And why doesn't he beat you?
BOY I don't know, Sir.
VLADIMIR He must be fond of you.
BOY I don't know, Sir.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR Does he give you enough to eat? [*The* BOY *hesitates.*] Does he feed you well?
BOY Fairly well, Sir.

VLADIMIR You're not unhappy? [*The* BOY *hesitates.*] Do you hear me?

BOY Yes Sir.

VLADIMIR Well?

BOY I don't know, Sir.

VLADIMIR You don't know if you're unhappy or not?

BOY No Sir.

VLADIMIR You're as bad as myself. [*Silence.*] Where do you sleep?

BOY In the loft, Sir.

VLADIMIR With your brother?

BOY Yes Sir.

VLADIMIR In the hay?

BOY Yes Sir.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR All right, you may go.

BOY What am I to tell Mr. Godot, Sir?

VLADIMIR Tell him . . . [*he hesitates.*] . . . tell him you saw us. [*Pause.*] You did see us, didn't you?

BOY Yes Sir.

[*He steps back, hesitates, turns and exits running. The light suddenly fails. In a moment it is night. The moon rises at back, mounts in the sky, stands still, shedding a pale light on the scene.*]

VLADIMIR At last! [ESTRAGON *gets up and goes towards* VLADIMIR, *a boot in each hand. He puts them down at edge of stage, straightens and contemplates the moon.*] What are you doing?

ESTRAGON Pale for weariness.

VLADIMIR Eh?

ESTRAGON Of climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us.

VLADIMIR Your boots, what are you doing with your boots?

ESTRAGON [*turning to look at the boots*] I'm leaving them there. [*Pause.*] Another will come, just as . . . as . . . as me, but with smaller feet, and they'll make him happy.

VLADIMIR But you can't go barefoot!

ESTRAGON Christ did.
VLADIMIR Christ! What has Christ got to do with it? You're not going to compare yourself to Christ!
ESTRAGON All my life I've compared myself to him.
VLADIMIR But where he lived it was warm, it was dry!
ESTRAGON Yes. And they crucified quick.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR We've nothing more to do here.
ESTRAGON Nor anywhere else.
VLADIMIR Ah Gogo, don't go on like that. Tomorrow everything will be better.
ESTRAGON How do you make that out?
VLADIMIR Did you not hear what the child said?
ESTRAGON No.
VLADIMIR He said that Godot was sure to come tomorrow. [*Pause.*] What do you say to that?
ESTRAGON Then all we have to do is to wait on here.
VLADIMIR Are you mad? We must take cover. [*He takes* ESTRAGON *by the arm.*] Come on.
[*He draws* ESTRAGON *after him.* ESTRAGON *yields, then resists. They halt.*]
ESTRAGON [*looking at the tree*] Pity we haven't got a bit of rope.
VLADIMIR Come on. It's cold.
[*He draws* ESTRAGON *after him. As before.*]
ESTRAGON Remind me to bring a bit of rope tomorrow.
VLADIMIR Yes. Come on.
[*He draws him after him. As before.*]
ESTRAGON How long have we been together all the time now?
VLADIMIR I don't know. Fifty years maybe.
ESTRAGON Do you remember the day I threw myself into the Rhône?[7]
VLADIMIR We were grape harvesting.
ESTRAGON You fished me out.
VLADIMIR That's all dead and buried.
ESTRAGON My clothes dried in the sun.

VLADIMIR There's no good harking back on that. Come on.

[*He draws him after him. As before.*]

ESTRAGON Wait!

VLADIMIR I'm cold!

ESTRAGON Wait! [*He moves away from* VLADIMIR.] I sometimes wonder if we wouldn't have been better off alone, each one for himself. [*He crosses the stage and sits down on the mound.*] We weren't made for the same road.

VLADIMIR [*without anger*] It's not certain.

ESTRAGON No, nothing is certain.

[VLADIMIR *slowly crosses the stage and sits down beside* ESTRAGON.]

VLADIMIR We can still part, if you think it would be better.

ESTRAGON It's not worth while now.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR No, it's not worth while now.

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON Well, shall we go?

VLADIMIR Yes, let's go.

[*They do not move.*]

Curtain.

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, the 1890s. "It": suicide.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, they should have jumped from the Eiffel Tower, completed in 1889; it was the tallest human-built structure in the world until 1930.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (Proverbs 13:12).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That is, one of the thieves crucified at the same time as Jesus. See Luke 23:32–43.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The salt lake, or inland sea, between Israel and Jordan. "Gospels": the four books of the Bible written by the four

Evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Verbally attacked him, or used foul language toward him. "The other three": Matthew, Mark, and John. In fact, all the Gospels mention the thieves. John calls them "two others," and both Matthew and Mark say that the thieves verbally attacked Jesus. See John 19:18, Matthew 27:38–44, and Mark 15:27–32.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A tree often associated with sadness or grief.Return to reference 7
- Note 8:
  In one version of the rest of the bawdy story, the Englishman replies that he wants a boy. Taken aback, the bawd threatens to call a policeman, to which the Englishman replies, "Oh, no, they're too gritty." In another version, he is shown through a series of doors, marked by hair color and size of private parts, and finally selects one marked "Grands Cons" (in French slang, literally, large vaginas; figuratively, big idiots). Confirming him as *con*, or idiot, his choice lands him back on the street.
  Return to reference 8
- Note 9: That is, a boxer.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The mandrake is a plant with a forked root that resembles the human body, which, according to medieval European folklore, was said to grow from the semen ejaculated by hanged men and to shriek when uprooted. Hearing the shriek was said to be fatal, or to make the listener go mad.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Compare with the proverb "Strike while the iron is hot."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, making.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An overcoat.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A venereal disease, usually gonorrhea (slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A wound producing a discharge (hence, figuratively, constant irritation).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Saliva running out of the mouth.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A swelling of the thyroid gland, in the neck.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A dolphin.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: To fool (Irish slang).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In classical mythology, his father was the Titan Iapetus, not Jupiter, the chief god of the Roman pantheon. Atlas had to hold the heavens on his shoulders.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Of the highest order.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Invented word, apparently referring to Lucky's position as servant; it may echo the Russian word *knout*, or "whip."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: All four wear bowlers [*Beckett's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A kind of theater involving music and slapstick comedy, usually based on fairy tales and performed for children around Christmastime in Britain, Ireland, France, and elsewhere.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Vaudeville, or popular entertainment including comedy, singing, and dancing.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A short clay pipe (Irish). "Briar": a pipe made from briar wood.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A brand of pipe from Dublin's most famous tobacco shop.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Greek god of shepherds, flocks, fields, and herds. His appearance was said to create terror similar to that of a stampeding herd, and the word *panic* is derived from his name. Thus, his sleep here may connote an absence of panic.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The sky or the heavens.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: As sky—that is, in the capacity of sky.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A play on the French phrase "*oui très bon*," meaning "yes, very good." "Oui! Tray bong!" was also the title of a popular music-hall song performed at the end of the 19th century by Charles Chaplin Sr. (1863–1901).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Ten French francs were then worth about three dollars.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: All lively dances, associated, respectively, with Provence, the Scottish Highlands, France, Ireland, Spain, and England.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: That is, his vaporizer.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Made-up scholars' names.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Repetition of the Latin word *qua*, meaning "in the capacity of," or "as being," in philosophy.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Partial or total loss of speech. "Apathia": apathy, or the absence of emotion. "Athambia": absence of fear or surprise. All Greek words, of which only "aphasia" is common in English.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The heroine of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), who empathizes with the victims of a shipwreck: "O, I have suffered / With those that I saw suffer!" (1.2.5–6).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A fictitious place, with a name that echoes the Latin words *esse* (to be) and *posse* (to be able to). "Acacacacademy": a play on the words *academy* and *caca*, a children's word for excrement in French. "Anthropopopometry": that is, anthropometry, the measurement of the human body.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Made-up scholars' names, playing on words for male and female sexual organs.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Made-up scholars' names, with puns on bodily functions.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Nourishment, or feeding.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Women's version of Irish sport of hurling, played with sticks and a ball. "Conating": attempting or desiring (a word created by Beckett from *conation*).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Substitutes.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The last three names are neighborhoods in south London, the first a vulgar pun ("fuck 'em").Return to reference 9
- Note 1: George Berkeley (1685–1753), Irish philosopher and bishop, who theorized that objects exist only insofar as they are perceived.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A region in western Ireland.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Made-up scholars' names.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A check-and-release mechanism in watches; here, *deadbeat* because it does not work. "Half-hunter": a kind of pocket watch with a hinged metal cover, in the center of which is a small glass window allowing the hands to be seen.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A small front pocket for a watch.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: See the parable in Matthew 25, in which the goats (the damned) are punished and the sheep (the saved) are blessed.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A major river in southeastern France.Return to reference 7

Act 2

Next day. Same time.
Same place.

[ESTRAGON*'s boots front center, heels together, toes splayed.*LUCKY*'s hat at same place.*]

[*The tree has four or five leaves.*]

[*Enter* VLADIMIR *agitatedly. He halts and looks long at the tree, then suddenly begins to move feverishly about the stage. He halts before the boots, picks one up, examines it, sniffs it, manifests disgust, puts it back carefully. Comes and goes. Halts extreme right and gazes into distance off, shading his eyes with his hand. Comes and goes. Halts extreme left, as before. Comes and goes. Halts suddenly and begins to sing loudly.*]

VLADIMIR A dog came in—

[*Having begun too high he stops, clears his throat, resumes:*]

A dog came in the kitchen
And stole a crust of bread.
Then cook up with a ladle[8]
And beat him till he was dead.

Then all the dogs came running
And dug the dog a tomb—

[*He stops, broods, resumes:*]

Then all the dogs came running
And dug the dog a tomb
And wrote upon the tombstone
For the eyes of dogs to come:

A dog came in the kitchen
And stole a crust of bread.

Then cook up with a ladle
And beat him till he was dead.

Then all the dogs came running
And dug the dog a tomb—

[*He stops, broods, resumes:*]
Then all the dogs came running
And dug the dog a tomb—

[*He stops, broods. Softly.*]
And dug the dog a tomb . . .

[*He remains a moment silent and motionless, then begins to move feverishly about the stage. He halts before the tree, comes and goes, before the boots, comes and goes, halts extreme right, gazes into distance, extreme left, gazes into distance. Enter* ESTRAGON *right, barefoot, head bowed. He slowly crosses the stage.* VLADIMIR *turns and sees him.*]

VLADIMIR You again! [ESTRAGON *halts but does not raise his head*. VLADIMIR *goes towards him.*] Come here till I embrace you.

ESTRAGON Don't touch me!

[VLADIMIR *holds back, pained.*]

VLADIMIR Do you want me to go away? [*Pause.*] Gogo! [*Pause*. VLADIMIR *observes him attentively.*] Did they beat you? [*Pause.*] Gogo! [ESTRAGON *remains silent, head bowed.*] Where did you spend the night?

ESTRAGON Don't touch me! Don't question me! Don't speak to me! Stay with me!

VLADIMIR Did I ever leave you?

ESTRAGON You let me go.

VLADIMIR Look at me. [ESTRAGON *does not raise his head. Violently.*] Will you look at me!

[ESTRAGON *raises his head. They look long at each other, then suddenly embrace, clapping each other on the back.*

End of the embrace. ESTRAGON, *no longer supported, almost falls.*]

ESTRAGON What a day!

VLADIMIR Who beat you? Tell me.

ESTRAGON Another day done with.

VLADIMIR Not yet.

ESTRAGON For me it's over and done with, no matter what happens. [*Silence.*] I heard you singing.

VLADIMIR That's right, I remember.

ESTRAGON That finished me. I said to myself, He's all alone, he thinks I'm gone for ever, and he sings.

VLADIMIR One is not master of one's moods. All day I've felt in great form. [*Pause.*] I didn't get up in the night, not once!

ESTRAGON [*sadly*] You see, you piss better when I'm not there.

VLADIMIR I missed you . . . and at the same time I was happy. Isn't that a queer thing?

ESTRAGON [*shocked*] Happy?

VLADIMIR Perhaps it's not quite the right word.

ESTRAGON And now?

VLADIMIR Now? . . . [*Joyous.*] There you are again . . . [*Indifferent.*] There we are again . . . [*Gloomy.*] There I am again.

ESTRAGON You see, you feel worse when I'm with you. I feel better alone too.

VLADIMIR [*vexed*] Then why do you always come crawling back?

ESTRAGON I don't know.

VLADIMIR No, but I do. It's because you don't know how to defend yourself. I wouldn't have let them beat you.

ESTRAGON You couldn't have stopped them.

VLADIMIR Why not?

ESTRAGON There was ten of them.

VLADIMIR No, I mean before they beat you. I would have stopped you from doing whatever it was you were doing.

ESTRAGON I wasn't doing anything.

VLADIMIR Then why did they beat you?

ESTRAGON I don't know.
VLADIMIR Ah no, Gogo, the truth is there are things escape you that don't escape me, you must feel it yourself.
ESTRAGON I tell you I wasn't doing anything.
VLADIMIR Perhaps you weren't. But it's the way of doing it that counts, the way of doing it, if you want to go on living.
ESTRAGON I wasn't doing anything.
VLADIMIR You must be happy too, deep down, if you only knew it.
ESTRAGON Happy about what?
VLADIMIR To be back with me again.
ESTRAGON Would you say so?
VLADIMIR Say you are, even if it's not true.
ESTRAGON What am I to say?
VLADIMIR Say, I am happy.
ESTRAGON I am happy.
VLADIMIR So am I.
ESTRAGON So am I.
VLADIMIR We are happy.
ESTRAGON We are happy. [*Silence.*] What do we do now, now that we are happy?
VLADIMIR Wait for Godot. [ESTRAGON *groans. Silence.*] Things have changed here since yesterday.
ESTRAGON And if he doesn't come.
VLADIMIR [*after a moment of bewilderment*] We'll see when the time comes. [*Pause.*] I was saying that things have changed here since yesterday.
ESTRAGON Everything oozes.
VLADIMIR Look at the tree.
ESTRAGON It's never the same pus from one second to the next.[9]
VLADIMIR The tree, look at the tree.
[ESTRAGON *looks at the tree.*]
ESTRAGON Was it not there yesterday?

VLADIMIR Yes of course it was there. Do you not remember? We nearly hanged ourselves from it. But you wouldn't. Do you not remember?

ESTRAGON You dreamt it.

VLADIMIR Is it possible you've forgotten already?

ESTRAGON That's the way I am. Either I forget immediately or I never forget.

VLADIMIR And Pozzo and Lucky, have you forgotten them too?

ESTRAGON Pozzo and Lucky?

VLADIMIR He's forgotten everything!

ESTRAGON I remember a lunatic who kicked the shins off me. Then he played the fool.

VLADIMIR That was Lucky.

ESTRAGON I remember that. But when was it?

VLADIMIR And his keeper, do you not remember him?

ESTRAGON He gave me a bone.

VLADIMIR That was Pozzo.

ESTRAGON And all that was yesterday, you say?

VLADIMIR Yes of course it was yesterday.

ESTRAGON And here where we are now?

VLADIMIR Where else do you think? Do you not recognize the place?

ESTRAGON [*suddenly furious*] Recognize! What is there to recognize? All my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud! And you talk to me about scenery! [*Looking wildly about him.*] Look at this muckheap! I've never stirred from it!

VLADIMIR Calm yourself, calm yourself.

ESTRAGON You and your landscapes! Tell me about the worms!

VLADIMIR All the same, you can't tell me that this [*gesture*] bears any resemblance to . . . [*he hesitates.*] . . . to the Mâcon country[1] for example. You can't deny there's a big difference.

ESTRAGON The Mâcon country! Who's talking to you about the Mâcon country?

VLADIMIR But you were there yourself, in the Mâcon country.

ESTRAGON No I was never in the Mâcon country! I've puked my puke of a life away here, I tell you! Here! In the Cackon country![2]

VLADIMIR But we were there together, I could swear to it! Picking grapes for a man called . . . [*he snaps his fingers*] . . . can't think of the name of the man, at a place called . . . [*snaps his fingers*] . . . can't think of the name of the place, do you not remember?

ESTRAGON [*a little calmer*] It's possible. I didn't notice anything.

VLADIMIR But down there everything is red!

ESTRAGON [*exasperated*] I didn't notice anything, I tell you!

[*Silence*. VLADIMIR *sighs deeply.*]

VLADIMIR You're a hard man to get on with, Gogo.

ESTRAGON It'd be better if we parted.

VLADIMIR You always say that and you always come crawling back.

ESTRAGON The best thing would be to kill me, like the other.

VLADIMIR What other? [*Pause.*] What other?

ESTRAGON Like billions of others.

VLADIMIR [*sententious*] To every man his little cross. [*He sighs.*] Till he dies. [*Afterthought.*] And is forgotten.

ESTRAGON In the meantime let us try and converse calmly, since we are incapable of keeping silent.

VLADIMIR You're right, we're inexhaustible.

ESTRAGON It's so we won't think.

VLADIMIR We have that excuse.

ESTRAGON It's so we won't hear.

VLADIMIR We have our reasons.

ESTRAGON All the dead voices.

VLADIMIR They make a noise like wings.

ESTRAGON Like leaves.

VLADIMIR Like sand.

ESTRAGON Like leaves.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR They all speak at once.

ESTRAGON Each one to itself.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR Rather they whisper.

ESTRAGON They rustle.

VLADIMIR They murmur.

ESTRAGON They rustle.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR What do they say?

ESTRAGON They talk about their lives.

VLADIMIR To have lived is not enough for them.

ESTRAGON They have to talk about it.

VLADIMIR To be dead is not enough for them.

ESTRAGON It is not sufficient.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR They make a noise like feathers.

ESTRAGON Like leaves.

VLADIMIR Like ashes.

ESTRAGON Like leaves.

[*Long silence.*]

VLADIMIR Say something!

ESTRAGON I'm trying.

[*Long silence.*]

VLADIMIR [*in anguish*] Say anything at all!

ESTRAGON What do we do now?

VLADIMIR Wait for Godot.

ESTRAGON Ah!

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR This is awful!

ESTRAGON Sing something.

VLADIMIR No no! [*He reflects.*] We could start all over again perhaps.

ESTRAGON That should be easy.

VLADIMIR It's the start that's difficult.

ESTRAGON You can start from anything.

VLADIMIR Yes, but you have to decide.

ESTRAGON True.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR Help me!

ESTRAGON I'm trying.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR When you seek you hear.

ESTRAGON You do.

VLADIMIR That prevents you from finding.

ESTRAGON It does.

VLADIMIR That prevents you from thinking.

ESTRAGON You think all the same.

VLADIMIR No no, impossible.

ESTRAGON That's the idea, let's contradict each other.

VLADIMIR Impossible.

ESTRAGON You think so?

VLADIMIR We're in no danger of ever thinking any more.

ESTRAGON Then what are we complaining about?

VLADIMIR Thinking is not the worst.

ESTRAGON Perhaps not. But at least there's that.

VLADIMIR That what?

ESTRAGON That's the idea, let's ask each other questions.

VLADIMIR What do you mean, at least there's that?

ESTRAGON That much less misery.

VLADIMIR True.

ESTRAGON Well? If we gave thanks for our mercies?

VLADIMIR What is terrible is to *have* thought.

ESTRAGON But did that ever happen to us?

VLADIMIR Where are all these corpses from?

ESTRAGON These skeletons.

VLADIMIR Tell me that.

ESTRAGON True.

VLADIMIR We must have thought a little.

ESTRAGON At the very beginning.

VLADIMIR A charnel-house! A charnel-house![3]

ESTRAGON You don't have to look.

VLADIMIR You can't help looking.

ESTRAGON True.
VLADIMIR Try as one may.
ESTRAGON I beg your pardon?
VLADIMIR Try as one may.
ESTRAGON We should turn resolutely towards Nature.
VLADIMIR We've tried that.
ESTRAGON True.
VLADIMIR Oh it's not the worst, I know.
ESTRAGON What?
VLADIMIR To have thought.
ESTRAGON Obviously.
VLADIMIR But we could have done without it.
ESTRAGON Que voulez-vous?[4]
VLADIMIR I beg your pardon?
ESTRAGON Que voulez-vous.
VLADIMIR Ah! que voulez-vous. Exactly.

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON That wasn't such a bad little canter.
VLADIMIR Yes, but now we'll have to find something else.
ESTRAGON Let me see. [*He takes off his hat, concentrates.*]
VLADIMIR Let me see. [*He takes off his hat, concentrates. Long silence.*] Ah!

[*They put on their hats, relax.*]

ESTRAGON Well?
VLADIMIR What was I saying, we could go on from there.
ESTRAGON What were you saying when?
VLADIMIR At the very beginning.
ESTRAGON The very beginning of WHAT?
VLADIMIR This evening . . . I was saying . . . I was saying . . .
ESTRAGON I'm not a historian.
VLADIMIR Wait . . . we embraced . . . we were happy . . . happy . . . what do we do now that we're happy . . . go on waiting . . . waiting . . . let me think . . . it's coming . . . go on waiting . . . now that we're happy . . . let me see . . . ah! The tree!
ESTRAGON The tree?

VLADIMIR Do you not remember?
ESTRAGON I'm tired.
VLADIMIR Look at it.
[*They look at the tree.*]
ESTRAGON I see nothing.
VLADIMIR But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it's covered with leaves.
ESTRAGON Leaves?
VLADIMIR In a single night.
ESTRAGON It must be the Spring.
VLADIMIR But in a single night!
ESTRAGON I tell you we weren't here yesterday. Another of your nightmares.
VLADIMIR And where were we yesterday evening according to you?
ESTRAGON How would I know? In another compartment. There's no lack of void.
VLADIMIR [*sure of himself*] Good. We weren't here yesterday evening. Now what did we do yesterday evening?
ESTRAGON Do?
VLADIMIR Try and remember.
ESTRAGON Do . . . I suppose we blathered.
VLADIMIR [*controlling himself*] About what?
ESTRAGON Oh . . . this and that I suppose, nothing in particular. [*With assurance.*] Yes, now I remember, yesterday evening we spent blathering about nothing in particular. That's been going on now for half a century.
VLADIMIR You don't remember any fact, any circumstance?
ESTRAGON [*weary*] Don't torment me, Didi.
VLADIMIR The sun. The moon. Do you not remember?
ESTRAGON They must have been there, as usual.
VLADIMIR You didn't notice anything out of the ordinary?
ESTRAGON Alas!
VLADIMIR And Pozzo? And Lucky?
ESTRAGON Pozzo?
VLADIMIR The bones.

ESTRAGON They were like fishbones.
VLADIMIR It was Pozzo gave them to you.
ESTRAGON I don't know.
VLADIMIR And the kick.
ESTRAGON That's right, someone gave me a kick.
VLADIMIR It was Lucky gave it to you.
ESTRAGON And all that was yesterday?
VLADIMIR Show your leg.
ESTRAGON Which?
VLADIMIR Both. Pull up your trousers. [ESTRAGON *gives a leg to* VLADIMIR, *staggers*. VLADIMIR *takes the leg. They stagger.*] Pull up your trousers.
ESTRAGON I can't.

[VLADIMIR *pulls up the trousers, looks at the leg, lets it go.* ESTRAGON *almost falls.*]

VLADIMIR The other. [ESTRAGON *gives the same leg.*] The other, pig! [ESTRAGON *gives the other leg. Triumphantly.*] There's the wound! Beginning to fester!
ESTRAGON And what about it?
VLADIMIR [*letting go the leg*] Where are your boots?
ESTRAGON I must have thrown them away.
VLADIMIR When?
ESTRAGON I don't know.
VLADIMIR Why?
ESTRAGON [*exasperated*] I don't know why I don't know!
VLADIMIR No, I mean why did you throw them away?
ESTRAGON [*exasperated*] Because they were hurting me!
VLADIMIR [*triumphantly, pointing to the boots*] There they are! [ESTRAGON *looks at the boots.*] At the very spot where you left them yesterday!

[ESTRAGON *goes towards the boots, inspects them closely.*]

ESTRAGON They're not mine.
VLADIMIR [*stupefied*] Not yours!
ESTRAGON Mine were black. These are brown.
VLADIMIR You're sure yours were black?
ESTRAGON Well they were a kind of grey.

VLADIMIR And these are brown. Show.
ESTRAGON [*picking up a boot*] Well they're a kind of green.
VLADIMIR Show. [ESTRAGON *hands him the boot.* VLADIMIR *inspects it, throws it down angrily.*] Well of all the—
ESTRAGON You see, all that's a lot of bloody—
VLADIMIR Ah! I see what it is. Yes, I see what's happened.
ESTRAGON All that's a lot of bloody—
VLADIMIR It's elementary. Someone came and took yours and left you his.
ESTRAGON Why?
VLADIMIR His were too tight for him, so he took yours.
ESTRAGON But mine were too tight.
VLADIMIR For you. Not for him.
ESTRAGON [*having tried in vain to work it out*] I'm tired! [*Pause.*] Let's go.
VLADIMIR We can't.
ESTRAGON Why not?
VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON Ah! [*Pause. Despairing.*] What'll we do, what'll we do!
VLADIMIR There's nothing we can do.
ESTRAGON But I can't go on like this!
VLADIMIR Would you like a radish?
ESTRAGON Is that all there is?
VLADIMIR There are radishes and turnips.
ESTRAGON Are there no carrots?
VLADIMIR No. Anyway you overdo it with your carrots.
ESTRAGON Then give me a radish. [VLADIMIR *fumbles in his pockets, finds nothing but turnips, finally brings out a radish and hands it to* ESTRAGON *who examines it, sniffs it.*] It's black!
VLADIMIR It's a radish.
ESTRAGON I only like the pink ones, you know that!
VLADIMIR Then you don't want it?
ESTRAGON I only like the pink ones!
VLADIMIR Then give it back to me. [ESTRAGON *gives it back.*]
ESTRAGON I'll go and get a carrot. [*He does not move.*]

VLADIMIR This is becoming really insignificant.
ESTRAGON Not enough.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR What about trying them.
ESTRAGON I've tried everything.
VLADIMIR No, I mean the boots.
ESTRAGON Would that be a good thing?
VLADIMIR It'd pass the time. [ESTRAGON *hesitates.*] I assure you, it'd be an occupation.
ESTRAGON A relaxation.
VLADIMIR A recreation.
ESTRAGON A relaxation.
VLADIMIR Try.
ESTRAGON You'll help me?
VLADIMIR I will of course.
ESTRAGON We don't manage too badly, eh Didi, between the two of us?
VLADIMIR Yes yes. Come on, we'll try the left first.
ESTRAGON We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?
VLADIMIR [*impatiently*] Yes yes, we're magicians. But let us persevere in what we have resolved, before we forget. [*He picks up a boot.*] Come on, give me your foot. [ESTRAGON *raises his foot.*] The other, hog! [ESTRAGON *raises the other foot.*] Higher! [*Wreathed together they stagger about the stage.* VLADIMIR *succeeds finally in getting on the boot.*] Try and walk. [ESTRAGON *walks.*] Well?
ESTRAGON It fits.
VLADIMIR [*taking string from his pocket*] We'll try and lace it.
ESTRAGON [*vehemently*] No no, no laces, no laces!
VLADIMIR You'll be sorry. Let's try the other. [*As before.*] Well?
ESTRAGON [*grudgingly*] It fits too.
VLADIMIR They don't hurt you?
ESTRAGON Not yet.
VLADIMIR Then you can keep them.
ESTRAGON They're too big.

VLADIMIR Perhaps you'll have socks some day.
ESTRAGON True.
VLADIMIR Then you'll keep them?
ESTRAGON That's enough about these boots.
VLADIMIR Yes, but—
ESTRAGON [*violently*] Enough! [*Silence.*] I suppose I might as well sit down. [*He looks for a place to sit down, then goes and sits down on the mound.*]
VLADIMIR That's where you were sitting yesterday evening.
ESTRAGON If I could only sleep.
VLADIMIR Yesterday you slept.
ESTRAGON I'll try. [*He resumes his foetal posture, his head between his knees.*]
VLADIMIR Wait. [*He goes over and sits down beside* ESTRAGON *and begins to sing in a loud voice.*]

Bye bye bye bye
Bye bye—

ESTRAGON [*looking up angrily*] Not so loud!
VLADIMIR [*softly*]

Bye bye bye bye
Bye bye bye bye
Bye bye bye bye
Bye bye . . .

[ESTRAGON *sleeps*. VLADIMIR *gets up softly, takes off his coat and lays it across* ESTRAGON*'s shoulders, then starts walking up and down, swinging his arms to keep himself warm.* ESTRAGON *wakes with a start, jumps up, casts*[5] *about wildly.* VLADIMIR *returns to him, puts his arms round him.*]

There . . . there . . . Didi is there . . . don't be afraid . . .

ESTRAGON Ah!
VLADIMIR There . . . there . . . it's all over.
ESTRAGON I was falling—
VLADIMIR It's all over, it's all over.
ESTRAGON I was on top of a—
VLADIMIR Don't tell me! Come, we'll walk it off.
[*He takes* ESTRAGON *by the arm and walks him up and down until* ESTRAGON *refuses to go any further.*]
ESTRAGON That's enough. I'm tired.
VLADIMIR You'd rather be stuck there doing nothing?
ESTRAGON Yes.
VLADIMIR Please yourself.
[*He releases* ESTRAGON, *picks up his coat and puts it on.*]
ESTRAGON Let's go.
VLADIMIR We can't.
ESTRAGON Why not?
VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON Ah! [VLADIMIR *walks up and down.*] Can you not stay still?
VLADIMIR I'm cold.
ESTRAGON We came too soon.
VLADIMIR It's always at nightfall.
ESTRAGON But night doesn't fall.
VLADIMIR It'll fall all of a sudden, like yesterday.
ESTRAGON Then it'll be night.
VLADIMIR And we can go.
ESTRAGON Then it'll be day again. [*Pause. Despairing.*] What'll we do, what'll we do!
VLADIMIR [*halting, violently*] Will you stop whining! I've had about my bellyful of your lamentations!
ESTRAGON I'm going.
VLADIMIR [*seeing* LUCKY*'s hat*] Well!
ESTRAGON Farewell.
VLADIMIR Lucky's hat. [*He goes towards it.*] I've been here an hour and never saw it. [*Very pleased.*] Fine!
ESTRAGON You'll never see me again.

VLADIMIR I knew it was the right place. Now our troubles are over. [*He picks up the hat, contemplates it, straightens it.*] Must have been a very fine hat. [*He puts it on in place of his own which he hands to* ESTRAGON.] Here.

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR Hold that.

[ESTRAGON *takes* VLADIMIR*'s hat.* VLADIMIR *adjusts* LUCKY*'s hat on his head.* ESTRAGON *puts on* VLADIMIR*'s hat in place of his own which he hands to* VLADIMIR. VLADIMIR *takes* ESTRAGON*'s hat.* ESTRAGON *adjusts* VLADIMIR*'s hat on his head.* VLADIMIR *puts on* ESTRAGON*'s hat in place of* LUCKY*'s which he hands to* ESTRAGON. ESTRAGON *takes* LUCKY*'s hat.* VLADIMIR *adjusts* ESTRAGON*'s hat on his head.* ESTRAGON *puts on* LUCKY*'s hat in place of* VLADIMIR*'s which he hands to* VLADIMIR. VLADIMIR *takes his hat,* ESTRAGON *adjusts* LUCKY*'s hat on his head.* VLADIMIR *puts on his hat in place of* ESTRAGON*'s which he hands to* ESTRAGON. ESTRAGON *takes his hat.* VLADIMIR *adjusts his hat on his head.* ESTRAGON *puts on his hat in place of* LUCKY*'s which he hands to* VLADIMIR. VLADIMIR *takes* LUCKY*'s hat.* ESTRAGON *adjusts his hat on his head.* VLADIMIR *puts on* LUCKY*'s hat in place of his own which he hands to* ESTRAGON. ESTRAGON *takes* VLADIMIR*'s hat.* VLADIMIR *adjusts* LUCKY*'s hat on his head.* ESTRAGON *hands* VLADIMIR*'s hat back to* VLADIMIR *who takes it and hands it back to* ESTRAGON *who takes it and hands it back to* VLADIMIR *who takes it and throws it down.*]

How does it fit me?

ESTRAGON How would I know?

VLADIMIR No, but how do I look in it? [*He turns his head coquettishly to and fro, minces like a mannequin.*[6]]

ESTRAGON Hideous.

VLADIMIR Yes, but not more so than usual?

ESTRAGON Neither more nor less.

VLADIMIR Then I can keep it. Mine irked me. [*Pause.*] How shall I say? [*Pause.*] It itched me. [*He takes off* LUCKY*'s hat, peers*

into it, shakes it, knocks on the crown, puts it on again.]

ESTRAGON I'm going.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR Will you not play?

ESTRAGON Play at what?

VLADIMIR We could play at Pozzo and Lucky.

ESTRAGON Never heard of it.

VLADIMIR I'll do Lucky, you do Pozzo. [*He imitates* LUCKY *sagging under the weight of his baggage.* ESTRAGON *looks at him with stupefaction.*] Go on.

ESTRAGON What am I to do?

VLADIMIR Curse me!

ESTRAGON [*after reflection*] Naughty!

VLADIMIR Stronger!

ESTRAGON Gonococcus! Spirochete![7]

[VLADIMIR *sways back and forth, doubled in two.*]

VLADIMIR Tell me to think.

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR Say, Think, pig!

ESTRAGON Think, pig!

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR I can't!

ESTRAGON That's enough of that.

VLADIMIR Tell me to dance.

ESTRAGON I'm going.

VLADIMIR Dance, hog! [*He writhes. Exit* ESTRAGON *left, precipitately.*] I can't! [*He looks up, misses* ESTRAGON.] Gogo! [*He moves wildly about the stage. Enter* ESTRAGON *left, panting. He hastens towards* VLADIMIR, *falls into his arms.*] There you are again at last!

ESTRAGON I'm accursed!

VLADIMIR Where were you? I thought you were gone for ever.

ESTRAGON They're coming!

VLADIMIR Who?

ESTRAGON I don't know.

VLADIMIR How many?

ESTRAGON I don't know.

VLADIMIR [*triumphantly*] It's Godot! At last! Gogo! It's Godot! We're saved! Let's go and meet him! [*He drags* ESTRAGON *towards the wings.* ESTRAGON *resists, pulls himself free, exits right.*] Gogo! Come back! [VLADIMIR *runs to extreme left, scans the horizon. Enter* ESTRAGON *right, he hastens towards* VLADIMIR, *falls into his arms.*] There you are again again!

ESTRAGON I'm in hell!

VLADIMIR Where were you?

ESTRAGON They're coming there too!

VLADIMIR We're surrounded! [ESTRAGON *makes a rush towards back.*] Imbecile! There's no way out there. [*He takes* ESTRAGON *by the arm and drags him towards front. Gesture towards front.*] There! Not a soul in sight! Off you go! Quick! [*He pushes* ESTRAGON *towards auditorium.* ESTRAGON *recoils in horror.*] You won't? [*He contemplates auditorium.*] Well I can understand that. Wait till I see. [*He reflects.*] Your only hope left is to disappear.

ESTRAGON Where?

VLADIMIR Behind the tree. [ESTRAGON *hesitates.*] Quick! Behind the tree. [ESTRAGON *goes and crouches behind the tree, realizes he is not hidden, comes out from behind the tree.*] Decidedly this tree will not have been the slightest use to us.

ESTRAGON [*calmer*] I lost my head. Forgive me. It won't happen again. Tell me what to do.

VLADIMIR There's nothing to do.

ESTRAGON You go and stand there. [*He draws* VLADIMIR *to extreme right and places him with his back to the stage.*] There, don't move, and watch out. [VLADIMIR *scans horizon, screening his eyes with his hand.* ESTRAGON*runs and takes up same position extreme left. They turn their heads and look at each other.*] Back to back like in the good old days. [*They continue to look at each other for a moment, then resume their watch. Long silence.*] Do you see anything coming?

VLADIMIR [*turning his head.*] What?

ESTRAGON [*louder*] Do you see anything coming?
VLADIMIR No.
ESTRAGON Nor I.
[*They resume their watch. Silence.*]
VLADIMIR You must have had a vision.
ESTRAGON [*turning his head*] What?
VLADIMIR [*louder*] You must have had a vision.
ESTRAGON No need to shout!
[*They resume their watch. Silence.*]
VLADIMIR
ESTRAGON
} [*turning simultaneously*] Do you—
VLADIMIR Oh pardon!
ESTRAGON Carry on.
VLADIMIR No no, after you.
ESTRAGON No no, you first.
VLADIMIR I interrupted you.
ESTRAGON On the contrary.
[*They glare at each other angrily.*]
VLADIMIR Ceremonious ape!
ESTRAGON Punctilious pig!
VLADIMIR Finish your phrase, I tell you!
ESTRAGON Finish your own!
[*Silence. They draw closer, halt.*]
VLADIMIR Moron!
ESTRAGON That's the idea, let's abuse each other.
[*They turn, move apart, turn again and face each other.*]
VLADIMIR Moron!
ESTRAGON Vermin!
VLADIMIR Abortion!
ESTRAGON Morpion![8]
VLADIMIR Sewer-rat!
ESTRAGON Curate!
VLADIMIR Cretin!

ESTRAGON [*with finality*] Crritic!
VLADIMIR Oh! [*He wilts, vanquished, and turns away.*]
ESTRAGON Now let's make it up.
VLADIMIR Gogo!
ESTRAGON Didi!
VLADIMIR Your hand!
ESTRAGON Take it!
VLADIMIR Come to my arms!
ESTRAGON Your arms?
VLADIMIR My breast!
ESTRAGON Off we go!
[*They embrace. They separate. Silence.*]
VLADIMIR How time flies when one has fun!
[*Silence.*]
ESTRAGON What do we do now?
VLADIMIR While waiting.
ESTRAGON While waiting.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR We could do our exercises.
ESTRAGON Our movements.
VLADIMIR Our elevations.
ESTRAGON Our relaxations.
VLADIMIR Our elongations.
ESTRAGON Our relaxations.
VLADIMIR To warm us up.
ESTRAGON To calm us down.
VLADIMIR Off we go.
[VLADIMIR *hops from one foot to the other.* ESTRAGON *imitates him.*]
ESTRAGON [*stopping*] That's enough. I'm tired.
VLADIMIR [*stopping*] We're not in form. What about a little deep breathing?
ESTRAGON I'm tired breathing.
VLADIMIR You're right. [*Pause.*] Let's just do the tree, for the balance.
ESTRAGON The tree?

[VLADIMIR *does the tree, staggering about on one leg.*]

VLADIMIR [*stopping*] Your turn.

[ESTRAGON *does the tree, staggers.*]

ESTRAGON Do you think God sees me?

VLADIMIR You must close your eyes.

[ESTRAGON *closes his eyes, staggers worse.*]

ESTRAGON [*stopping, brandishing his fists, at the top of his voice*] God have pity on me!

VLADIMIR [*vexed*] And me?

ESTRAGON On me! On me! Pity! On me!

[*Enter* POZZO *and* LUCKY. POZZO *is blind.* LUCKY *burdened as before. Rope as before, but much shorter, so that* POZZO *may follow more easily.* LUCKY *wearing a different hat. At the sight of* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *he stops short.* POZZO, *continuing on his way, bumps into him.*]

VLADIMIR Gogo!

POZZO [*clutching on to* LUCKY *who staggers*] What is it? Who is it?

[LUCKY *falls, drops everything and brings down* POZZO *with him. They lie helpless among the scattered baggage.*]

ESTRAGON Is it Godot?

VLADIMIR At last! [*He goes towards the heap.*] Reinforcements at last!

POZZO Help!

ESTRAGON Is it Godot?

VLADIMIR We were beginning to weaken. Now we're sure to see the evening out.

POZZO Help!

ESTRAGON Do you hear him?

VLADIMIR We are no longer alone, waiting for the night, waiting for Godot, waiting for . . . waiting. All evening we have struggled, unassisted. Now it's over. It's already tomorrow.

POZZO Help!

VLADIMIR Time flows again already. The sun will set, the moon rise, and we away . . . from here.

POZZO Pity!

VLADIMIR Poor Pozzo!
ESTRAGON I knew it was him.
VLADIMIR Who?
ESTRAGON Godot.
VLADIMIR But it's not Godot.
ESTRAGON It's not Godot?
VLADIMIR It's not Godot.
ESTRAGON Then who is it?
VLADIMIR It's Pozzo.
POZZO Here! Here! Help me up!
VLADIMIR He can't get up.
ESTRAGON Let's go.
VLADIMIR We can't.
ESTRAGON Why not?
VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot.
ESTRAGON Ah!
VLADIMIR Perhaps he has another bone for you.
ESTRAGON Bone?
VLADIMIR Chicken. Do you not remember?
ESTRAGON It was him?
VLADIMIR Yes.
ESTRAGON Ask him.
VLADIMIR Perhaps we should help him first.
ESTRAGON To do what?
VLADIMIR To get up.
ESTRAGON He can't get up?
VLADIMIR He wants to get up.
ESTRAGON Then let him get up.
VLADIMIR He can't.
ESTRAGON Why not?
VLADIMIR I don't know.

[POZZO *writhes, groans, beats the ground with his fists.*]

ESTRAGON We should ask him for the bone first. Then if he refuses we'll leave him there.
VLADIMIR You mean we have him at our mercy?
ESTRAGON Yes.

VLADIMIR And that we should subordinate our good offices to certain conditions?

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR That seems intelligent all right. But there's one thing I'm afraid of.

POZZO Help!

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR That Lucky might get going all of a sudden. Then we'd be ballocksed.[9]

ESTRAGON Lucky?

VLADIMIR The one that went for you yesterday.

ESTRAGON I tell you there was ten of them.

VLADIMIR No, before that, the one that kicked you.

ESTRAGON Is he there?

VLADIMIR As large as life. [*Gesture towards* LUCKY.] For the moment he is inert. But he might run amuck any minute.

POZZO Help!

ESTRAGON And suppose we gave him a good beating the two of us?

VLADIMIR You mean if we fell on him in his sleep?

ESTRAGON Yes.

VLADIMIR That seems a good idea all right. But could we do it? Is he really asleep? [*Pause.*] No, the best would be to take advantage of Pozzo's calling for help—

POZZO Help!

VLADIMIR To help him—

ESTRAGON *We* help *him?*

VLADIMIR In anticipation of some tangible return.

ESTRAGON And suppose he—

VLADIMIR Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! [*Pause. Vehemently.*] Let us do something, while we have the chance! It is not every day that we are needed. Not indeed that we personally are needed. Others would meet the case equally well, if not better. To all mankind they were addressed, those cries for help still ringing in our ears! But at this place, at this

moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not. Let us make the most of it, before it is too late! Let us represent worthily for once the foul brood to which a cruel fate consigned us! What do you say? [ESTRAGON *says nothing.*] It is true that when with folded arms we weigh the pros and cons we are no less a credit to our species. The tiger bounds to the help of his congeners[1] without the least reflexion, or else he slinks away into the depths of the thickets. But that is not the question. What are we doing here, *that* is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come—

ESTRAGON Ah!

POZZO Help!

VLADIMIR Or for night to fall. [*Pause.*] We have kept our appointment and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many people can boast as much?

ESTRAGON Billions.

VLADIMIR You think so?

ESTRAGON I don't know.

VLADIMIR You may be right.

POZZO Help!

VLADIMIR All I know is that the hours are long, under these conditions, and constrain us to beguile them with proceedings which—how shall I say—which may at first sight seem reasonable, until they become a habit. You may say it is to prevent our reason from foundering. No doubt. But has it not long been straying in the night without end of the abyssal depths? That's what I sometimes wonder. You follow my reasoning?

ESTRAGON [*aphoristic for once*] We are all born mad. Some remain so.

POZZO Help! I'll pay you!

ESTRAGON How much?

POZZO One hundred francs![2]

ESTRAGON It's not enough.

VLADIMIR I wouldn't go so far as that.

ESTRAGON You think it's enough?

VLADIMIR No, I mean so far as to assert that I was weak in the head when I came into the world. But that is not the question.

POZZO Two hundred!

VLADIMIR We wait. We are bored. [*He throws up his hand.*] No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come, let's get to work! [*He advances towards the heap, stops in his stride.*] In an instant all will vanish and we'll be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness! [*He broods.*]

POZZO Two hundred!

VLADIMIR We're coming!

[*He tries to pull* POZZO *to his feet, fails, tries again, stumbles, falls, tries to get up, fails.*]

ESTRAGON What's the matter with you all?

VLADIMIR Help!

ESTRAGON I'm going.

VLADIMIR Don't leave me! They'll kill me!

POZZO Where am I?

VLADIMIR Gogo!

POZZO Help!

VLADIMIR Help!

ESTRAGON I'm going.

VLADIMIR Help me up first, then we'll go together.

ESTRAGON You promise?

VLADIMIR I swear it!

ESTRAGON And we'll never come back?

VLADIMIR Never!

ESTRAGON We'll go to the Pyrenees.[3]

VLADIMIR Wherever you like.
ESTRAGON I've always wanted to wander in the Pyrenees.
VLADIMIR You'll wander in them.
ESTRAGON [*recoiling*] Who farted?
VLADIMIR Pozzo.
POZZO Here! Here! Pity!
ESTRAGON It's revolting!
VLADIMIR Quick! Give me your hand!
ESTRAGON I'm going. [*Pause. Louder.*] I'm going.
VLADIMIR Well I suppose in the end I'll get up by myself. [*He tries, fails.*] In the fullness of time.
ESTRAGON What's the matter with you?
VLADIMIR Go to hell.
ESTRAGON Are you staying there?
VLADIMIR For the time being.
ESTRAGON Come on, get up, you'll catch a chill.
VLADIMIR Don't worry about me.
ESTRAGON Come on, Didi, don't be pig-headed!

[*He stretches out his hand which* VLADIMIR *makes haste to seize.*]

VLADIMIR Pull!

[ESTRAGON *pulls, stumbles, falls. Long silence.*]

POZZO Help!
VLADIMIR We've arrived.
POZZO Who are you?
VLADIMIR We are men.

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON Sweet mother earth!
VLADIMIR Can you get up?
ESTRAGON I don't know.
VLADIMIR Try.
ESTRAGON Not now, not now.

[*Silence.*]

POZZO What happened?
VLADIMIR [*violently*] Will you stop it, you! Pest! He can think of nothing but himself!

ESTRAGON What about a little snooze?
VLADIMIR Did you hear him? He wants to know what happened!
ESTRAGON Don't mind him. Sleep.
[*Silence.*]
POZZO Pity! Pity!
ESTRAGON [*with a start*] What is it?
VLADIMIR Were you asleep?
ESTRAGON I must have been.
VLADIMIR It's this bastard Pozzo at it again.
ESTRAGON Make him stop it. Kick him in the crotch.
VLADIMIR [*striking Pozzo*] Will you stop it! Crablouse! [POZZO *extricates himself with cries of pain and crawls away. He stops, saws the air blindly, calling for help*. VLADIMIR, *propped on his elbow, observes his retreat.*] He's off! [POZZO *collapses.*] He's down!
ESTRAGON What do we do now?
VLADIMIR Perhaps I could crawl to him.
ESTRAGON Don't leave me!
VLADIMIR Or I could call to him.
ESTRAGON Yes, call to him.
VLADIMIR Pozzo! [*Silence.*] Pozzo! [*Silence.*] No reply.
ESTRAGON Together.
VLADIMIR
ESTRAGON
} Pozzo! Pozzo!
VLADIMIR He moved.
ESTRAGON Are you sure his name is Pozzo?
VLADIMIR [*alarmed*] Mr. Pozzo! Come back! We won't hurt you!
[*Silence.*]
ESTRAGON We might try him with other names.
VLADIMIR I'm afraid he's dying.
ESTRAGON It'd be amusing.
VLADIMIR What'd be amusing?
ESTRAGON To try him with other names, one after the other. It'd pass the time. And we'd be bound to hit on the right one

sooner or later.

VLADIMIR I tell you his name is Pozzo.

ESTRAGON We'll soon see. [*He reflects.*] Abel! Abel!

POZZO Help!

ESTRAGON Got it in one!

VLADIMIR I begin to weary of this motif.

ESTRAGON Perhaps the other is called Cain.[4] Cain! Cain!

POZZO Help!

ESTRAGON He's all humanity. [*Silence.*] Look at the little cloud.

VLADIMIR [*raising his eyes*] Where?

ESTRAGON There. In the zenith.[5]

VLADIMIR Well? [*Pause.*] What is there so wonderful about it?

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON Let's pass on now to something else, do you mind?

VLADIMIR I was just going to suggest it.

ESTRAGON But to what?

VLADIMIR Ah!

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON Suppose we got up to begin with?

VLADIMIR No harm trying.

[*They get up.*]

ESTRAGON Child's play.

VLADIMIR Simple question of will-power.

ESTRAGON And now?

POZZO Help!

ESTRAGON Let's go.

VLADIMIR We can't.

ESTRAGON Why not?

VLADIMIR We're waiting for Godot.

ESTRAGON Ah! [*Despairing.*] What'll we do, what'll we do!

POZZO Help!

VLADIMIR What about helping him?

ESTRAGON What does he want?

VLADIMIR He wants to get up.

ESTRAGON Then why doesn't he?

VLADIMIR He wants us to help him to get up.
ESTRAGON Then why don't we? What are we waiting for?
[*They help* POZZO *to his feet, let him go. He falls.*]
VLADIMIR We must hold him. [*They get him up again.* POZZO *sags between them, his arms round their necks.*] Feeling better?
POZZO Who are you?
VLADIMIR Do you not recognize us?
POZZO I am blind.
[*Silence.*]
ESTRAGON Perhaps he can see into the future.[6]
VLADIMIR Since when?
POZZO I used to have wonderful sight—but are you friends?
ESTRAGON [*laughing noisily*] He wants to know if we are friends!
VLADIMIR No, he means friends of his.
ESTRAGON Well?
VLADIMIR We've proved we are, by helping him.
ESTRAGON Exactly. Would we have helped him if we weren't his friends?
VLADIMIR Possibly.
ESTRAGON True.
VLADIMIR Don't let's quibble about that now.
POZZO You are not highwaymen?
ESTRAGON Highwaymen! Do we look like highwaymen?
VLADIMIR Damn it can't you see the man is blind!
ESTRAGON Damn it so he is. [*Pause.*] So he says.
POZZO Don't leave me!
VLADIMIR No question of it.
ESTRAGON For the moment.
POZZO What time is it?
VLADIMIR [*inspecting the sky*] Seven o'clock . . . eight o'clock . . .
ESTRAGON That depends what time of year it is.
POZZO Is it evening?
[*Silence.* VLADIMIR *and* ESTRAGON *scrutinize the sunset.*]

ESTRAGON It's rising.
VLADIMIR Impossible.
ESTRAGON Perhaps it's the dawn.
VLADIMIR Don't be a fool. It's the west over there.
ESTRAGON How do you know?
POZZO [*anguished*] Is it evening?
VLADIMIR Anyway it hasn't moved.
ESTRAGON I tell you it's rising.
POZZO Why don't you answer me?
ESTRAGON Give us a chance.
VLADIMIR [*reassuring*] It's evening, Sir, it's evening, night is drawing nigh. My friend here would have me doubt it and I must confess he shook me for a moment. But it is not for nothing I have lived through this long day and I can assure you it is very near the end of its repertory. [*Pause.*] How do you feel now?
ESTRAGON How much longer are we to cart him around? [*They half release him, catch him again as he falls.*] We are not caryatids![7]
VLADIMIR You were saying your sight used to be good, if I heard you right.
POZZO Wonderful! Wonderful, wonderful sight!
[*Silence.*]
ESTRAGON [*irritably*] Expand! Expand!
VLADIMIR Let him alone. Can't you see he's thinking of the days when he was happy. [*Pause.*] *Memoria praeteritorum bonorum*[8]—that must be unpleasant.
ESTRAGON We wouldn't know.
VLADIMIR And it came on you all of a sudden?
POZZO Quite wonderful!
VLADIMIR I'm asking you if it came on you all of a sudden.
POZZO I woke up one fine day as blind as Fortune.[9] [*Pause.*] Sometimes I wonder if I'm not still asleep.
VLADIMIR And when was that?
POZZO I don't know.

VLADIMIR But no later than yesterday—
POZZO [*violently*] Don't question me! The blind have no notion of time. The things of time are hidden from them too.
VLADIMIR Well just fancy that! I could have sworn it was just the opposite.
ESTRAGON I'm going.
POZZO Where are we?
VLADIMIR I couldn't tell you.
POZZO It isn't by any chance the place known as the Board?[1]
VLADIMIR Never heard of it.
POZZO What is it like?
VLADIMIR [*looking round*] It's indescribable. It's like nothing. There's nothing. There's a tree.
POZZO Then it's not the Board.
ESTRAGON [*sagging*] Some diversion!
POZZO Where is my menial?
VLADIMIR He's about somewhere.
POZZO Why doesn't he answer when I call?
VLADIMIR I don't know. He seems to be sleeping. Perhaps he's dead.
POZZO What happened exactly?
ESTRAGON Exactly!
VLADIMIR The two of you slipped. [*Pause.*] And fell.
POZZO Go and see is he hurt.
VLADIMIR We can't leave you.
POZZO You needn't both go.
VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] You go.
ESTRAGON After what he did to me? Never!
POZZO Yes yes, let your friend go, he stinks so. [*Silence.*] What is he waiting for?
VLADIMIR What you waiting for?
ESTRAGON I'm waiting for Godot.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR What exactly should he do?

POZZO Well to begin with he should pull on the rope, as hard as he likes so long as he doesn't strangle him. He usually responds to that. If not he should give him a taste of his boot, in the face and the privates as far as possible.

VLADIMIR [*to* ESTRAGON] You see, you've nothing to be afraid of. It's even an opportunity to revenge yourself.

ESTRAGON And if he defends himself?

POZZO No no, he never defends himself.

VLADIMIR I'll come flying to the rescue.

ESTRAGON Don't take your eyes off me. [*He goes towards* LUCKY.]

VLADIMIR Make sure he's alive before you start. No point in exerting yourself if he's dead.

ESTRAGON [*bending over* LUCKY] He's breathing.

VLADIMIR Then let him have it.

[*With sudden fury* ESTRAGON *starts kicking* LUCKY, *hurling abuse at him as he does so. But he hurts his foot and moves away, limping and groaning.* LUCKY *stirs.*]

ESTRAGON Oh the brute!

[*He sits down on the mound and tries to take off his boot. But he soon desists and disposes himself for sleep, his arms on his knees and his head on his arms.*]

POZZO What's gone wrong now?

VLADIMIR My friend has hurt himself.

POZZO And Lucky?

VLADIMIR So it is he?

POZZO What?

VLADIMIR It is Lucky?

POZZO I don't understand.

VLADIMIR And you are Pozzo?

POZZO Certainly I am Pozzo.

VLADIMIR The same as yesterday?

POZZO Yesterday?

VLADIMIR We met yesterday. [*Silence.*] Do you not remember?

POZZO I don't remember having met anyone yesterday. But tomorrow I won't remember having met anyone today. So don't count on me to enlighten you.

VLADIMIR But—

POZZO Enough! Up pig!

VLADIMIR You were bringing him to the fair to sell him. You spoke to us. He danced. He thought. You had your sight.

POZZO As you please. Let me go! [VLADIMIR *moves away.*] Up! [LUCKY *gets up, gathers up his burdens.*]

VLADIMIR Where do you go from here?

POZZO On. [LUCKY, *laden down, takes his place before* POZZO.] Whip! [LUCKY *puts everything down, looks for whip, finds it, puts it into* POZZO*'s hand, takes up everything again.*] Rope!

[LUCKY *puts everything down, puts end of rope into* POZZO*'s hand, takes up everything again.*]

VLADIMIR What is there in the bag?

POZZO Sand. [*He jerks the rope.*] On!

VLADIMIR Don't go yet.

POZZO I'm going.

VLADIMIR What do you do when you fall far from help?

POZZO We wait till we can get up. Then we go on. On!

VLADIMIR Before you go tell him to sing.

POZZO Who?

VLADIMIR Lucky.

POZZO To sing?

VLADIMIR Yes. Or to think. Or to recite.

POZZO But he is dumb.

VLADIMIR Dumb!

POZZO Dumb. He can't even groan.

VLADIMIR Dumb! Since when?

POZZO [*suddenly furious*] Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time! It's abominable! When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? [*Calmer.*] They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more. [*He jerks the rope.*] On!

[*Exeunt*[2] POZZO *and* LUCKY*.* VLADIMIR *follows them to the edge of the stage, looks after them. The noise of falling, reinforced by mimic of* VLADIMIR*, announces that they are down again. Silence.* VLADIMIR *goes towards* ESTRAGON*, contemplates him a moment, then shakes him awake.*]

ESTRAGON [*wild gestures, incoherent words. Finally.*] Why will you never let me sleep?

VLADIMIR I felt lonely.

ESTRAGON I was dreaming I was happy.

VLADIMIR That passed the time.

ESTRAGON I was dreaming that—

VLADIMIR [*violently*] Don't tell me! [*Silence.*] I wonder is he really blind.

ESTRAGON Blind? Who?

VLADIMIR Pozzo.

ESTRAGON Blind?

VLADIMIR He told us he was blind.

ESTRAGON Well what about it?

VLADIMIR It seemed to me he saw us.

ESTRAGON You dreamt it. [*Pause.*] Let's go. We can't. Ah! [*Pause.*] Are you sure it wasn't him?

VLADIMIR Who?

ESTRAGON Godot.

VLADIMIR But who?

ESTRAGON Pozzo.

VLADIMIR Not at all! [*Less sure.*] Not at all! [*Still less sure.*] Not at all!

ESTRAGON I suppose I might as well get up. [*He gets up painfully.*] Ow! Didi!

VLADIMIR I don't know what to think any more.

ESTRAGON My feet! [*He sits down again and tries to take off his boots.*] Help me!

VLADIMIR Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today? That with Estragon my friend, at this

place, until the fall of night, I waited for Godot? That Pozzo passed, with his carrier, and that he spoke to us? Probably. But in all that what truth will there be? [ESTRAGON, *having struggled with his boots in vain, is dozing off again.* VLADIMIR *looks at him.*] He'll know nothing. He'll tell me about the blows he received and I'll give him a carrot. [*Pause.*] Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the grave-digger puts on the forceps.[3] We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. [*He listens.*] But habit is a great deadener. [*He looks again at* ESTRAGON.] At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, He is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. [*Pause.*] I can't go on! [*Pause.*] What have I said?

[*He goes feverishly to and fro, halts finally at extreme left, broods. Enter* BOY *right. He halts. Silence.*]

BOY Mister . . . [VLADIMIR *turns.*] Mister Albert . . .

VLADIMIR Off we go again. [*Pause.*] Do you not recognize me?

BOY No Sir.

VLADIMIR It wasn't you came yesterday.

BOY No Sir.

VLADIMIR This is your first time.

BOY Yes Sir.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR You have a message from Mr. Godot.

BOY Yes Sir.

VLADIMIR He won't come this evening.

BOY No Sir.

VLADIMIR But he'll come tomorrow.

BOY Yes Sir.

VLADIMIR Without fail.

BOY Yes Sir.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR Did you meet anyone?

BOY No Sir.

VLADIMIR Two other . . . [*he hesitates.*] . . . men?

BOY I didn't see anyone, Sir.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR What does he do, Mr. Godot? [*Silence.*] Do you hear me?

BOY Yes Sir.

VLADIMIR Well?

BOY He does nothing, Sir.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR How is your brother?

BOY He's sick, Sir.

VLADIMIR Perhaps it was he came yesterday.

BOY I don't know, Sir.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR [*softly*] Has he a beard, Mr. Godot?

BOY Yes Sir.

VLADIMIR Fair or . . . [*he hesitates.*] . . . or black?

BOY I think it's white, Sir.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR Christ have mercy on us!

[*Silence.*]

BOY What am I to tell Mr. Godot, Sir?

VLADIMIR Tell him . . . [*he hesitates*] . . . tell him you saw me and that . . . [*he hesitates*] . . . that you saw me. [*Pause.* VLADIMIR *advances, the* BOY *recoils.* VLADIMIR *halts, the* BOY *halts. With sudden violence.*] You're sure you saw me, you won't come and tell me tomorrow that you never saw me!

[*Silence.* VLADIMIR *makes a sudden spring forward, the* BOY*avoids him and exits running. Silence. The sun sets, the moon rises. As in Act 1.* VLADIMIR *stands motionless and bowed.* ESTRAGON *wakes, takes off his boots, gets up with one in each hand and goes and puts them down center front, then goes towards* VLADIMIR.]

ESTRAGON What's wrong with you?

VLADIMIR Nothing.

ESTRAGON I'm going.

VLADIMIR So am I.

ESTRAGON Was I long asleep?
VLADIMIR I don't know.
[*Silence.*]
ESTRAGON Where shall we go?
VLADIMIR Not far.
ESTRAGON Oh yes, let's go far away from here.
VLADIMIR We can't.
ESTRAGON Why not?
VLADIMIR We have to come back tomorrow.
ESTRAGON What for?
VLADIMIR To wait for Godot.
ESTRAGON Ah! [*Silence.*] He didn't come?
VLADIMIR No.
ESTRAGON And now it's too late.
VLADIMIR Yes, now it's night.
ESTRAGON And if we dropped him? [*Pause.*] If we dropped him?
VLADIMIR He'd punish us. [*Silence. He looks at the tree.*]
Everything's dead but the tree.
ESTRAGON [*looking at the tree*] What is it?
VLADIMIR It's the tree.
ESTRAGON Yes, but what kind?
VLADIMIR I don't know. A willow.
[ESTRAGON *draws* VLADIMIR *towards the tree. They stand motionless before it. Silence.*]
ESTRAGON Why don't we hang ourselves?
VLADIMIR With what?
ESTRAGON You haven't got a bit of rope?
VLADIMIR No.
ESTRAGON Then we can't.
[*Silence.*]
VLADIMIR Let's go.
ESTRAGON Wait, there's my belt.
VLADIMIR It's too short.
ESTRAGON You could hang onto my legs.
VLADIMIR And who'd hang on to mine?
ESTRAGON True.

VLADIMIR Show all the same. [ESTRAGON *loosens the cord that holds up his trousers which, much too big for him, fall about his ankles. They look at the cord.*] It might do at a pinch. But is it strong enough?

ESTRAGON We'll soon see. Here.

[*They each take an end of the cord and pull. It breaks. They almost fall.*]

VLADIMIR Not worth a curse.

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON You say we have to come back tomorrow?

VLADIMIR Yes.

ESTRAGON Then we can bring a good bit of rope.

VLADIMIR Yes.

[*Silence.*]

ESTRAGON Didi.

VLADIMIR Yes.

ESTRAGON I can't go on like this.

VLADIMIR That's what you think.

ESTRAGON If we parted? That might be better for us.

VLADIMIR We'll hang ourselves tomorrow. [*Pause.*] Unless Godot comes.

ESTRAGON And if he comes?

VLADIMIR We'll be saved.

[VLADIMIR *takes off his hat (* LUCKY*'s), peers inside it, feels about inside it, shakes it, knocks on the crown, puts it on again.*]

ESTRAGON Well? Shall we go?

VLADIMIR Pull on your trousers.

ESTRAGON What?

VLADIMIR Pull on your trousers.

ESTRAGON You want me to pull off my trousers?

VLADIMIR Pull ON your trousers.

ESTRAGON [*realizing his trousers are down*] True. [*He pulls up his trousers.*]

VLADIMIR Well? Shall we go?

ESTRAGON Yes, let's go.

[*They do not move.*]

Curtain.

1952; 1954

Endnotes

- Note 8: That is, the cook took up a ladle. Vladimir sings a round song.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: See "You can never step into the same river twice," a statement on flux by the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus (active ca. 500 B.C.E.).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A wine-producing area in the Burgundy region of eastern France.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Punning on *caca*, children's word in French for excrement.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A vault for the bodies or bones of the dead.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: What do you want? (formal French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Looks.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A person employed to model clothes.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: One of a group of bacteria, usually the one that causes syphilis. "Gonococcus": the bacterium that causes gonorrhea.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Crab louse (a common French word, now obsolete in English).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Screwed (slang); from *bollocks*, or testicles.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Members of his kind.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Then worth about thirty dollars.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Mountain range along the border between France and Spain.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The older son of Adam and Eve, who murdered his brother, Abel. See Genesis 4:1–15.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: The point of the sky directly overhead.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Perhaps a reference to Tiresias, a figure in Greek mythology and literature who, although blind, possessed the gift of prophecy.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Female figures serving as support columns in classical buildings.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The memory of past good (Latin, quoting the *Summa Theologica Secunda* 2.2.36.1, by theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas [1225–1274]).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The Roman goddess of chance or luck, sometimes depicted as blindfolded.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The stage, or the profession of acting, is often called "the boards."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: [They] exit (Latin).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An instrument used in obstetrics to pull the baby out of the birth canal.Return to reference 3

W. H. AUDEN
1907–1973

Wystan Hugh Auden was born in York, England, the son of a doctor and of a former nurse. He was educated at private schools and Christ Church, Oxford. After graduation from Oxford he traveled abroad, taught school in England from 1930 to 1935, and later worked for a government film unit. His sympathies in the 1930s were with the left, like those of most intellectuals of his age, and he went to Spain during its civil war, intending to serve as an ambulance driver on the left-wing Republican side. To his surprise he felt so disturbed by the sight of the many Roman Catholic churches gutted and looted by the Republicans that he returned to England without fulfilling his ambition. He traveled in Iceland and China before moving to the United States in 1939; in 1946 he became an American citizen. He taught at a number of American colleges and was professor of poetry at Oxford from 1956 to 1960. Most of his later life was shared between residences in New York City and in Europe—first in southern Italy, then in Austria.

Auden was the most prominent of the young English poets who, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, saw themselves bringing new techniques and attitudes to English poetry. Stephen Spender, C. Day-Lewis, and Louis MacNeice were other liberal and leftist poets in this loosely affiliated group. Auden learned metrical and verbal techniques from Gerard Manley Hopkins and Wilfred Owen, and from T. S. Eliot he took a conversational and ironic tone, an acute

inspection of cultural decay. Thomas Hardy's metrical variety, formal irregularity, and fusion of panoramic and intimate perspectives also proved a useful example, and Auden admired W. B. Yeats's "serious reflective" poems of "personal and public interest," though he later came to disavow Yeats's grand aspirations and rhetoric. Auden's English studies at Oxford familiarized him with the rhythms and long alliterative line of Anglo-Saxon poetry. He learned, too, from popular and folk culture, particularly the songs of the English music hall and, later, American blues singers.

The Depression that hit America in 1929 hit England soon afterward, and Auden and his contemporaries looked out at an England of industrial stagnation and mass unemployment, seeing not Eliot's metaphorical Waste Land but a more literal Waste Land of poverty and "depressed areas." Auden's early poetry diagnoses the ills of his country. This diagnosis, conducted in a verse that combines irreverence with craftsmanship, draws on both Freud and Marx to show England now as a nation of neurotic invalids, now as the victim of an antiquated economic system. The intellectual liveliness and nervous force of this work made a great impression, even though the compressed, elliptical, impersonal style created difficulties of interpretation.

Gradually Auden sought to clarify his imagery and syntax, and in the late 1930s he produced "Lullaby," "Musée des Beaux Arts," "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," and other poems of finely disciplined movement, pellucid clarity, and deep yet unsentimental feeling. Some of the poems he wrote at this time, such as "Spain" and "September 1, 1939," aspire to a visionary perspective on political and social change; but as Auden became increasingly skeptical of poetry in the grand manner, of poetry as revelation or as a tool for political change, he removed these poems from his canon. (He came to see as false his claim in "September 1, 1939" that "We must love one another or die.") "Poetry is not magic," he said in the essay "Writing," but a form of truth telling that should "disenchant and disintoxicate." As he continued to remake his style during World War II, he created a voice that, in contrast not only to Romanticism but

also to the authoritarianism devastating Europe, was increasingly flat, ironic, and conversational. He never lost his ear for popular speech or his ability to combine elements from popular art with technical formality. He daringly mixed the grave and the flippant, vivid detail and allegorical abstraction. He always experimented, particularly in ways of bringing together high artifice and a colloquial tone.

The poems of Auden's last phase are increasingly personal in tone and combine an air of offhand informality with remarkable technical skill in versification. He turned out, as if effortlessly, poems in numerous verse forms, including sestinas, sonnets, ballads, canzones, syllabics, haiku, the blues, even limericks. As he became evermore mistrustful of a prophetic role for the poet, he embraced the ordinary—the hours of the day, the rooms of a house, a changeable landscape. He took refuge in love and friendship, particularly the love and friendship he shared with the American writer Chester Kallmann. Like Eliot, Auden became a member of the Church of England, and the emotions of his late poetry—sometimes comic, sometimes solemn—were grounded in an ever deepening but rarely obtrusive religious feeling. In the last year of his life he returned to England to live in Oxford, feeling the need to be part of a university community as a protection against loneliness. Auden is now generally recognized as one of the masters of twentieth-century English poetry, a thoughtful, seriously playful poet, combining extraordinary intelligence and immense craftsmanship.

A note on the texts: Auden heavily revised his poems, sometimes omitting stanzas (as in "Spain" and "In Memory of W. B. Yeats") or even entire poems ("Spain" and "September 1, 1939"). The texts below are reprinted as they first appeared in book form and again in his *Selected Poems: A New Edition*, ed. Edward Mendelson (1989).

Petition[1]

Sir, no man's enemy, forgiving all
But will his negative inversion, be prodigal:
Send to us power and light, a sovereign touch[2]
Curing the intolerable neural itch,
The exhaustion of weaning, the liar's quinsy,°
And the distortions of ingrown virginity.
Prohibit sharply the rehearsed response
And gradually correct the coward's stance;
Cover in time with beams those in retreat
That, spotted, they turn though the reverse were great;
Publish each healer that in city lives
Or country houses at the end of drives;
Harrow the house of the dead; look shining at
New styles of architecture, a change of heart.

Oct. 19291930

Endnotes

- Note 1: This title, by which the poem is widely known, is from Auden's later collections. Many of his early poems first appeared without titles.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The king's touch was often regarded as miraculous cure for disease (that is, *sovereign* as an adjective, meaning "supreme, all-dominating").Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *tonsillitis*Return to reference °

On This Island[1]

Look, stranger, at this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
Where the chalk wall falls to the foam, and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck
And knock of the tide,
And the shingle scrambles after the sucking surf, and the gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands;
And the full view
Indeed may enter
And move in memory as now these clouds do,
That pass the harbour mirror
And all the summer through the water saunter.

Nov. 19351936

Endnotes

- Note 1: The title is from Auden's later collections.Return to reference 1

Lullaby[1]

Lay your sleeping head, my love,
Human on my faithless arm;
Time and fevers burn away
Individual beauty from
Thoughtful children, and the grave
Proves the child ephemeral:
But in my arms till break of day
Let the living creature lie,
Mortal, guilty, but to me
The entirely beautiful.

Soul and body have no bounds:
To lovers as they lie upon
Her tolerant enchanted slope
In their ordinary swoon,
Grave the vision Venus° sends
Of supernatural sympathy,
Universal love and hope;
While an abstract insight wakes
Among the glaciers and the rocks
The hermit's sensual ecstasy.

Certainty, fidelity
On the stroke of midnight pass
Like vibrations of a bell,
And fashionable madmen raise
Their pedantic boring cry:
Every farthing[2] of the cost,
All the dreaded cards foretell,
Shall be paid, but from this night
Not a whisper, not a thought,

Not a kiss nor look be lost.

Beauty, midnight, vision dies:
Let the winds of dawn that blow
Softly round your dreaming head
Such a day of sweetness show
Eye and knocking heart may bless,
Find the mortal world enough;
Noons of dryness see you fed
By the involuntary powers,
Nights of insult let you pass
Watched by every human love.

Jan. 19371937, 1940

Endnotes

- Note 1: Title from Auden's later collections.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A quarter-penny, at one time the smallest and least valuable British coin.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *Roman goddess of love*Return to reference °

Spain[1]

Yesterday all the past. The language of size
Spreading to China along the trade-routes; the diffusion
Of the counting-frame and the cromlech;[2]
Yesterday the shadow-reckoning in the sunny climates.

Yesterday the assessment of insurance by cards,
The divination of water; yesterday the invention
Of cartwheels and clocks, the taming of
Horses. Yesterday the bustling world of the navigators.

Yesterday the abolition of fairies and giants,
The fortress like a motionless eagle eyeing the valley,
The chapel built in the forest;
Yesterday the carving of angels and alarming gargoyles;

The trial of heretics among the columns of stone;
Yesterday the theological feuds in the taverns
And the miraculous cure at the fountain;
Yesterday the Sabbath of witches; but to-day the struggle.

Yesterday the installation of dynamos and turbines,
The construction of railways in the colonial desert;
Yesterday the classic lecture
On the origin of Mankind. But to-day the struggle.

Yesterday the belief in the absolute value of Greek,
The fall of the curtain upon the death of a hero;
Yesterday the prayer to the sunset
And the adoration of madmen. But to-day the struggle.

As the poet whispers, startled among the pines,
Or where the loose waterfall sings compact, or upright
On the crag by the leaning tower:
"O my vision. O send me the luck of the sailor."

And the investigator peers through his instruments
At the inhuman provinces, the virile bacillus
Or enormous Jupiter finished:
"But the lives of my friends. I inquire. I inquire."

And the poor in their fireless lodgings, dropping the sheets
Of the evening paper: "Our day is our loss, O show us
History the operator, the
Organiser, Time the refreshing river."

And the nations combine each cry, invoking the life
That shapes the individual belly and orders
The private nocturnal terror:
"Did you not found the city state of the sponge,

"Raise the vast military empires of the shark
And the tiger, establish the robin's plucky canton?°
Intervene. O descend as a dove or
A furious papa or a mild engineer,[3] but descend."

And the life, if it answers at all, replies from the heart

And the eyes and the lungs, from the shops and
squares of the city
"O no, I am not the mover;
Not to-day; not to you. To you, I'm the

"Yes-man, the bar-companion, the easily-duped;
I am whatever you do. I am your vow to be
Good, your humorous story.
I am your business voice. I am your marriage.

"What's your proposal? To build the just city? I will.
I agree. Or is it the suicide pact, the romantic
Death? Very well, I accept, for
I am your choice, your decision. Yes, I am Spain."

Many have heard it on remote peninsulas,
On sleepy plains, in the aberrant fishermen's islands
Or the corrupt heart of the city,
Have heard and migrated like gulls or the seeds of a
flower.

They clung like burrs to the long expresses that lurch
Through the unjust lands, through the night, through
the alpine tunnel;
They floated over the oceans;
They walked the passes. All presented their lives.

On that arid square, that fragment nipped off from
hot
Africa, soldered so crudely to inventive Europe;
On that tableland scored by rivers,
Our thoughts have bodies; the menacing shapes of
our fever

Are precise and alive. For the fears which made us
respond

To the medicine ad. and the brochure of winter
cruises
Have become invading battalions;
And our faces, the institute-face, the chain-store, the
ruin

Are projecting their greed as the firing squad and the
bomb.
Madrid is the heart. Our moments of tenderness
blossom
As the ambulance and the sandbag;
Our hours of friendship into a people's army.

To-morrow, perhaps the future. The research on
fatigue
And the movements of packers; the gradual
exploring of all the
Octaves of radiation;
To-morrow the enlarging of consciousness by diet
and breathing.

To-morrow the rediscovery of romantic love,
The photographing of ravens; all the fun under
Liberty's masterful shadow;
To-morrow the hour of the pageant-master and the
musician,

The beautiful roar of the chorus under the dome;
To-morrow the exchanging of tips on the breeding of
terriers,
The eager election of chairmen
By the sudden forest of hands. But to-day the
struggle.

To-morrow for the young the poets exploding like
bombs,

The walks by the lake, the weeks of perfect communion;
To-morrow the bicycle races
Through the suburbs on summer evenings. But to-day the struggle.

To-day the deliberate increase in the chances of death,
The conscious acceptance of guilt in the necessary murder;[4]
To-day the expending of powers
On the flat ephemeral pamphlet and the boring meeting.

To-day the makeshift consolations: the shared cigarette,
The cards in the candlelit barn, and the scraping concert,
The masculine jokes; to-day the
Fumbled and unsatisfactory embrace before hurting.

The stars are dead. The animals will not look.
We are left alone with our day, and the time is short, and
History to the defeated
May say Alas but cannot help nor pardon.

Mar. 19371937

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The Spanish Civil War, which began in 1936 as a rebellion by General Franco's right-wing army against the left-wing, elected Spanish government, was viewed by British liberal intellectuals as a testing struggle between fascism and democracy. Written

while the war was raging, this poem appeared separately in 1937, the proceeds of its sale going to Medical Aid for Spain. In 1940 Auden retitled the poem "Spain 1937," deleted lines 69–76, and made other changes; later he removed the poem from his canon.
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Ancient stone circle.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Auden plays on the idea of a deus ex machina, literally a god from a machine, who appears suddenly in a play to resolve an impasse. "Dove": in the Bible, the form taken by the Holy Spirit when descending to Earth.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: After these two lines were criticized by George Orwell, Auden revised them to read "the inevitable increase" and "the fact of murder."Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *district*Return to reference °

As I Walked Out One Evening[1]

As I walked out one evening,
Walking down Bristol Street,
The crowds upon the pavement
Were fields of harvest wheat.

And down by the brimming river
I heard a lover sing
Under an arch of the railway:
"Love has no ending.

"I'll love you, dear, I'll love you
Till China and Africa meet
And the river jumps over the mountain
And the salmon sing in the street.

"I'll love you till the ocean
Is folded and hung up to dry
And the seven stars[2] go squawking
Like geese about the sky.

"The years shall run like rabbits
For in my arms I hold
The Flower of the Ages
And the first love of the world."

But all the clocks in the city
Began to whirr and chime:
"O let not Time deceive you,
You cannot conquer Time.

"In the burrows of the Nightmare

Where Justice naked is,
Time watches from the shadow
And coughs when you would kiss.

"In headaches and in worry
Vaguely life leaks away,
And Time will have his fancy
To-morrow or to-day.

"Into many a green valley
Drifts the appalling[3] snow;
Time breaks the threaded dances
And the diver's brilliant bow.

"O plunge your hands in water,
Plunge them in up to the wrist;
Stare, stare in the basin
And wonder what you've missed.

"The glacier knocks in the cupboard,
The desert sighs in the bed,
And the crack in the tea-cup opens
A lane to the land of the dead.

"Where the beggars raffle the banknotes
And the Giant is enchanting to Jack,
And the Lily-white Boy is a Roarer
And Jill goes down on her back.[4]

"O look, look in the mirror,
O look in your distress;
Life remains a blessing
Although you cannot bless.

"O stand, stand at the window
As the tears scald and start;

You shall love your crooked neighbour
With your crooked heart.”

It was late, late in the evening,
The lovers they were gone;
The clocks had ceased their chiming
And the deep river ran on.

Nov. 19371938, 1940

Endnotes

- Note 1: Title from Auden’s later collections.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The constellation of the Pleiades, supposed by the ancients to be seven sisters.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Literally, making white.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The giant of “Jack and the Bean Stalk” is trying to seduce Jack; the “lily-white Boy” (presumably pure) becomes a boisterous reveler; Jill, of “Jack and Jill,” is seduced.Return to reference 4

Musée des Beaux Arts[1]

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window
or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately
waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen,
skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its
course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the
torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's *Icarus*,[2] for instance: how everything
turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman
may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun
shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the
green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must
have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,

Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

20
Dec. 19381940

Endnotes

- Note 1: Museum of Fine Arts (French).Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  The Fall of Icarus, by the Flemish painter Pieter Brueghel (ca. 1525–1569), in the Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts in Brussels. In one corner of Brueghel's painting, Icarus's legs are seen disappearing into the sea, his wings having melted when he flew too close to the sun. Auden also alludes to other paintings by Brueghel: the nativity scene in *The Numbering at Bethlehem*, skaters in *Winter Landscape with Skaters and a Bird Trap*, and possibly animals in *The Massacre of the Innocents.*
  Return to reference 2

In Memory of W. B. Yeats[1]

(d. January 1939)

I

He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the air-ports almost
deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.
O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable
quays;
By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.

But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,
Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed: he became his
admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections;
To find his happiness in another kind of wood[2]
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.

The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of to-morrow
When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of the Bourse,[3]
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed,
And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom;
A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something slightly unusual.

O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

II

You were silly like us: your gift survived it all;
The parish of rich women,[4] physical decay,
Yourself; mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its saying where executives
Would never want to tamper; it flows south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

III[5]

Earth, receive an honoured guest;
William Yeats is laid to rest:
Let the Irish vessel lie

Emptied of its poetry.

Time that is intolerant
Of the brave and innocent,
And indifferent in a week
To a beautiful physique,

Worships language and forgives
Everyone by whom it lives;
Pardons cowardice, conceit,
Lays its honours at their feet.

Time that with this strange excuse
Pardoned Kipling[6] and his views,
And will pardon Paul Claudel,[7]
Pardons him for writing well.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,[8]
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
75 In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

Feb. 19391939, 1940

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Irish poet William Butler Yeats, born in 1865, died on January 29, 1939, in Roquebrune (southern France).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See the beginning of Dante's *Inferno*: "In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost" (1.1–3).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The French stock exchange.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Several wealthy women, including Lady Augusta Gregory (1852–1932), provided financial help to Yeats.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The stanza pattern of this section echoes that of Yeats's late poem "Under Ben Bulben." Auden later omitted the section's second, third, and fourth stanzas.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The British writer Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) championed imperialism.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: French author (1868–1955) with extremely conservative politics. Yeats was at times antidemocratic and appeared to favor dictatorship.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: World War II began in September 1939.Return to reference 8

The Unknown Citizen

To JS/07/M/378

This Marble Monument is Erected by the State

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of the
Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man;
A gramophone, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of
year;
When there was peace, he was for peace; when
there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the
population,
Which our Eugenist[1] says was the right number for a
parent of his generation,
And our teachers report that he never interfered with
their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have
heard.

Mar. 19391939, 1940

Endnotes

- Note 1: An expert in eugenics, a pseudoscience for the genetic "improvement" of humans.Return to reference 1

September 1, 1939[1]

I sit in one of the dives
On Fifty-Second Street[2]
Uncertain and afraid
As the clever hopes expire
Of a low dishonest decade:
Waves of anger and fear
Circulate over the bright
And darkened lands of the earth,
Obsessing our private lives;
The unmentionable odour of death
Offends the September night.

Accurate scholarship can
Unearth the whole offence
From Luther[3] until now
That has driven a culture mad,
Find what occurred at Linz,[4]
What huge imago[5] made
A psychopathic god:
I and the public know
What all schoolchildren learn,
Those to whom evil is done
Do evil in return.

Exiled Thucydides[6] knew
All that a speech can say
About Democracy,
And what dictators do,
The elderly rubbish they talk
To an apathetic grave;

Analysed all in his book,
The enlightenment driven away,
The habit-forming pain,
Mismanagement and grief:
We must suffer them all again.

Into this neutral air
Where blind skyscrapers use
Their full height to proclaim
The strength of Collective Man,
Each language pours its vain
Competitive excuse:
But who can live for long
In an euphoric dream;
Out of the mirror they stare,
Imperialism's face
And the international wrong.

Faces along the bar
Cling to their average day:
The lights must never go out,
The music must always play,
All the conventions conspire
To make this fort assume
The furniture of home;
Lest we should see where we are,
Lost in a haunted wood,
Children afraid of the night
Who have never been happy or good.

The windiest militant trash
Important Persons shout
Is not so crude as our wish:
What mad Nijinsky wrote
About Diaghilev[7]
Is true of the normal heart;

For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

From the conservative dark
Into the ethical life
The dense commuters come,
Repeating their morning vow,
"I *will* be true to the wife,
I'll concentrate more on my work,"
And helpless governors wake
To resume their compulsory game:
Who can release them now,
Who can reach the deaf,
Who can speak for the dumb?[8]

All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie,
The romantic lie in the brain
Of the sensual man-in-the-street
And the lie of Authority
Whose buildings grope the sky:
There is no such thing as the State
And no one exists alone;
Hunger allows no choice
To the citizen or the police;
We must love one another or die.[9]

Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:

May I, composed like them
Of Eros° and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.

Sept. 19391939, 1940

Endnotes

- Note 1: The date of Germany's invasion of Poland and the outbreak of World War II.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In New York City, where Auden was living.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Martin Luther (1483–1546), founder of the Protestant Reformation.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Austrian city where Hitler spent his childhood.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Psychoanalytic term for the unconscious representation of a parental figure.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Greek general (d. ca. 401 B.C.E.) and historian of the Peloponnesian War, exiled from Athens because he failed to prevent the Spartans from seizing a colony.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Russian dancer and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky (1890–1950) wrote that his former lover, the ballet impresario Sergey Diaghilev (1872–1929), "does not want universal love, but to be loved alone."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Proverbs 31:8.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Auden later revised this line, which struck him as "dishonest." In one version of the poem the line reads: "We must love one another and die." Another version leaves out the entire stanza.Return to reference 9

Notes

- °: *Greek god of desire*Return to reference °

In Praise of Limestone[1]

If it form the one landscape that we the inconstant ones
Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly
Because it dissolves in water. Mark these rounded slopes
With their surface fragrance of thyme and beneath
A secret system of caves and conduits; hear these springs
That spurt out everywhere with a chuckle
Each filling a private pool for its fish and carving
Its own little ravine whose cliffs entertain
The butterfly and the lizard; examine this region
Of short distances and definite places:
What could be more like Mother or a fitter background
For her son, for the nude young male who lounges
Against a rock displaying his dildo,° never doubting
That for all his faults he is loved, whose works are but
Extensions of his power to charm? From weathered outcrop
To hill-top temple, from appearing waters to
Conspicuous fountains, from a wild to a formal vineyard,
Are ingenious but short steps that a child's wish
To receive more attention than his brothers, whether
By pleasing or teasing, can easily take.

Watch, then, the band of rivals as they climb up and down

Their steep stone gennels[2] in twos and threes, sometimes
Arm in arm, but never, thank God, in step; or engaged
On the shady side of a square at midday in
Voluble discourse, knowing each other too well to think
There are any important secrets, unable
To conceive a god whose temper-tantrums are moral
And not to be pacified by a clever line
Or a good lay: for, accustomed to a stone that responds,
They have never had to veil their faces in awe
Of a crater whose blazing fury could not be fixed;
Adjusted to the local needs of valleys
Where everything can be touched or reached by walking,
Their eyes have never looked into infinite space
Through the lattice-work of a nomad's comb; born lucky,
Their legs have never encountered the fungi
And insects of the jungle, the monstrous forms and lives
With which we have nothing, we like to hope, in common.
So, when one of them goes to the bad, the way his mind works
Remains comprehensible: to become a pimp
Or deal in fake jewelry or ruin a fine tenor voice
For effects that bring down the house could happen to all
But the best and the worst of us . . .
That is why, I suppose,

The best and worst never stayed here long but sought
Immoderate soils where the beauty was not so external,
The light less public and the meaning of life
Something more than a mad camp. "Come!" cried the granite wastes,
"How evasive is your humor, how accidental
Your kindest kiss, how permanent is death." (Saints-to-be
Slipped away sighing.) "Come!" purred the clays and gravels
"On our plains there is room for armies to drill; rivers
Wait to be tamed and slaves to construct you a tomb
In the grand manner: soft as the earth is mankind and both
Need to be altered." (Intendant Caesars rose and
Left, slamming the door.) But the really reckless were fetched
By an older colder voice, the oceanic whisper:
"I am the solitude that asks and promises nothing;
That is how I shall set you free. There is no love;
There are only the various envies, all of them sad."

They were right, my dear, all those voices were right
And still are; this land is not the sweet home that it looks,
Nor its peace the historical calm of a site
Where something was settled once and for all: A backward
And dilapidated province, connected
To the big busy world by a tunnel, with a certain
Seedy appeal, is that all it is now? Not quite:
It has a worldly duty which in spite of itself
It does not neglect, but calls into question

All the Great Powers assume; it disturbs our rights.
The poet,
Admired for his earnest habit of calling
The sun the sun, his mind Puzzle, is made uneasy
By these solid statues which so obviously doubt
His antimythological myth; and these gamins,°
Pursuing the scientist down the tiled colonnade
With such lively offers, rebuke his concern for
Nature's
Remotest aspects: I, too, am reproached, for what
And how much you know. Not to lose time, not to
get caught,
Not to be left behind, not, please! to resemble
The beasts who repeat themselves, or a thing like
water
Or stone whose conduct can be predicted, these
Are our Common Prayer[3] whose greatest comfort is
music
Which can be made anywhere, is invisible,
And does not smell. In so far as we have to look
forward
To death as a fact, no doubt we are right: But if
Sins can be forgiven, if bodies rise from the dead,
These modifications of matter into
Innocent athletes and gesticulating fountains,
Made solely for pleasure, make a further point:
The blessed will not care what angle they are
regarded from,
Having nothing to hide. Dear, I know nothing of
Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone
landscape.

May 19481948, 1951

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Inspired by the limestone landscape outside Florence, Italy, where Auden and his longtime companion Chester Kallman (1921–1975) were staying; the poem also recalls the poet's native Yorkshire. In a letter to Elizabeth Mayer, Auden wrote: "I hadn't realised till I came how like Italy is to my 'Mutterland', the Pennines [hills in the north of England]. Am in fact starting on a poem, 'In Praise of Limestone', the theme of which is that rock creates the only truly human landscape."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Narrow passages between houses (Yorkshire dialect) or, as here, rocks.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: *The Book of Common Prayer* is the liturgical book of the Anglican Church.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *penis*Return to reference °
- °: *urchins*Return to reference °

The Shield of Achilles[1]

She looked over his shoulder
  For vines and olive trees,
Marble well-governed cities,
  And ships upon untamed seas,
But there on the shining metal
  His hands had put instead
An artificial wilderness
  And a sky like lead.

A plain without a feature, bare and brown,
  No blade of grass, no sign of neighborhood,
Nothing to eat and nowhere to sit down,
  Yet, congregated on its blankness, stood
  An unintelligible multitude,
A million eyes, a million boots in line,
Without expression, waiting for a sign.

Out of the air a voice without a face
  Proved by statistics that some cause was just
In tones as dry and level as the place:
  No one was cheered and nothing was discussed;
  Column by column in a cloud of dust
They marched away enduring a belief
Whose logic brought them, somewhere else, to grief.

She looked over his shoulder
  For ritual pieties,
White flower-garlanded heifers,
  Libation and sacrifice,[2]
But there on the shining metal
  Where the altar should have been,

She saw by his flickering forge-light
Quite another scene.

Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot
Where bored officials lounged (one cracked a joke)
And sentries sweated, for the day was hot:
A crowd of ordinary decent folk
Watched from without and neither moved nor spoke
As three pale figures were led forth and bound
To three posts driven upright in the ground.

The mass and majesty of this world, all
That carries weight and always weighs the same,
Lay in the hands of others; they were small
And could not hope for help and no help came:
What their foes liked to do was done, their shame
Was all the worst could wish; they lost their pride
And died as men before their bodies died.

She looked over his shoulder
For athletes at their games,
Men and women in a dance
Moving their sweet limbs
Quick, quick, to music,
But there on the shining shield
His hands had set no dancing-floor
But a weed-choked field.

A ragged urchin, aimless and alone,
Loitered about that vacancy; a bird
Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone:
That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,
Were axioms to him, who'd never heard
Of any world where promises were kept
Or one could weep because another wept.

The thin-lipped armorer,
Hephaestos, hobbled away;
Thetis of the shining breasts
Cried out in dismay
At what the god had wrought
To please her son, the strong
Iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles
Who would not live long.

19521952, 1955

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles, the chief Greek hero in the war with Troy, lends his armor to his great friend Patroclus and loses it when Patroclus is killed by Hector. While Achilles is mourning the death of his friend, his mother, the goddess Thetis, goes to Mt. Olympus to beg Hephaestos, the god of fire, to forge new armor for Achilles. The splendid shield of Achilles that Hephaestos then makes is described in book 18 (lines 478–608). On it he depicts Earth, the heavens, the sea, and the planets; a city in peace (with a wedding and a trial) and a city at war; scenes from country life, animal life, and the joyful life of young men and women. The ocean, as the outer border, flows around all these scenes.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820): "Who are these coming to the sacrifice? / To what green altar, O mysterious priest, / Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies, / And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?" "Libation": sacrifice of wine or other liquid.Return to reference 2

DYLAN THOMAS
1914–1953

Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea, Wales, and educated at Swansea Grammar School. After working for a time as a newspaper reporter, he was "discovered" as a poet in 1933 through a poetry contest in a popular newspaper. The following year his *Eighteen Poems* caused considerable excitement because of their powerfully suggestive obscurity and the strange violence of their imagery. It looked as though a new kind of visionary Romanticism had been restored to English poetry after the deliberately muted ironic tones of T. S. Eliot and his followers. Over time it became clear that Thomas was also a master of poetic craft, not merely a shouting rhapsodist. His verbal panache played against strict verse forms, such as the villanelle ("Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night"). "I am a painstaking, conscientious, involved and devious craftsman in words," he wrote in his "Poetic Manifesto." His images were carefully ordered in a patterned sequence, and his major theme was the unity of all life, the continuing *process* of life and death and new life that linked the generations. Thomas saw the workings of biology as a magical transformation producing unity out of diversity, and again and again in his poetry he sought a poetic ritual to celebrate this unity ("The force that through the green fuse drives the flower / Drives my green age"). He saw men and women locked in cycles of growth, love, procreation, new growth, death, and new life again. Hence each image engenders its opposite in what he called "my

dialectical method": "Each image holds within it the seed of its own destruction." Thomas derives his closely woven, sometimes self-contradictory images from the Bible, Welsh folklore and preaching, and Freud. In his poems of reminiscence and autobiographical emotion, such as "Poem in October," he communicates more immediately through compelling use of lyrical feeling and simple natural images. His autobiographical work *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog* (1940) and his radio play *Under Milk Wood* (1954) reveal a vividness of observation and a combination of violence and tenderness in expression that show he could handle prose as excitingly as verse.

Thomas was a brilliant talker, an alcoholic, and an impulsive man whose short life was packed with emotional ups and downs. His poetry readings in the United States between 1950 and 1953 were enormous successes, in spite of his sometimes reckless antics. He died suddenly in New York of what was diagnosed as "an insult to the brain," precipitated by alcohol. He played the part of the wild bohemian poet, and while some thought this behavior wonderful, others deplored it. He was a stirring reader of his own and others' poems, and many people who do not normally read poetry were drawn to Thomas's by the magic of his own reading. After his premature death a reaction set in: some critics declared that he had been overrated as a poet because of his sensational life. The "Movement" poets, such as Philip Larkin, repudiated his rhetorical extravagance. Even so, Thomas is still considered an original poet of great power and beauty.

The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

The force that drives the water through the rocks
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams
Turns mine to wax.
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

The hand that whirls the water in the pool[1]
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind
Hauls my shroud sail.
And I am dumb to tell the hanging man
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.[2]

The lips of time leech to the fountain head;
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood
Shall calm her sores.

And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.

1933

Endnotes

- Note 1: The hand of the angel who troubles the water of the pool Bethesda, thus rendering it curative, in John 5:1–4.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Quicklime was sometimes poured into the graves of public hangmen’s victims to accelerate decomposition.Return to reference 2

The Hunchback in the Park

The hunchback in the park
A solitary mister
Propped between trees and water
From the opening of the garden lock
That lets the trees and water enter
Until the Sunday sombre bell at dark[1]

Eating bread from a newspaper
Drinking water from the chained cup
That the children filled with gravel
In the fountain basin where I sailed my ship
Slept at night in a dog kennel
But nobody chained him up.

Like the park birds he came early
Like the water he sat down
And Mister they called Hey mister
The truant boys from the town
Running when he had heard them clearly
On out of sound

Past lake and rockery°
Laughing when he shook his paper
Hunchbacked in mockery
Through the loud zoo of the willow groves
Dodging the park keeper
With his stick that picked up leaves.

And the old dog sleeper
Alone between nurses and swans
While the boys among willows

Made the tigers jump out of their eyes
To roar on the rockery stones
And the groves were blue with sailors

Made all day until bell time
A woman figure without fault
Straight as a young elm
Straight and tall from his crooked bones
That she might stand in the night
After the locks and chains

All night in the unmade park
After the railings and shrubberies
The birds the grass the trees the lake
And the wild boys innocent as strawberries
Had followed the hunchback
To his kennel in the dark.

19411946

Endnotes

- Note 1: The bell indicates the park's closing for the night.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *rock garden*Return to reference °

Poem in October

It was my thirtieth year to heaven
Woke to my hearing from harbour and neighbour wood
And the mussel pooled and the heron
Priested shore
The morning beckon
With water praying and call of seagull and rook[1]
And the knock of sailing boats on the net webbed wall
Myself to set foot
That second
In the still sleeping town and set forth.

My birthday began with the water-
Birds and the birds of the winged trees flying my name
Above the farms and the white horses
And I rose
In rainy autumn
And walked abroad in a shower of all my days.
High tide and the heron dived when I took the road
Over the border
And the gates
Of the town closed as the town awoke.

A springful of larks in a rolling
Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming with whistling
Blackbirds and the sun of October
Summery
On the hill's shoulder,

Here were fond climates and sweet singers suddenly
Come in the morning where I wandered and listened
To the rain wringing
Wind blow cold
In the wood faraway under me.

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
And over the sea wet church the size of a snail
With its horns through mist and the castle
Brown as owls
But all the gardens
Of spring and summer were blooming in the tall tales
Beyond the border and under the lark full cloud.
There could I marvel
My birthday
Away but the weather turned around.

It turned away from the blithe country
And down the other air and the blue altered sky
Streamed again a wonder of summer
With apples
Pears and red currants
And I saw in the turning so clearly a child's
Forgotten mornings when he walked with his mother
Through the parables
Of sun light
And the legends of the green chapels

And the twice told fields of infancy
That his tears burned my cheeks and his heart
moved in mine.
These were the woods the river and sea
Where a boy
In the listening
Summertime of the dead whispered the truth of his
joy

To the trees and the stones and the fish in the tide.
And the mystery
Sang alive
Still in the water and singingbirds.

And there could I marvel my birthday
Away but the weather turned around. And the true
Joy of the long dead child sang burning
In the sun.
It was my thirtieth
Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved with October
blood.
O may my heart's truth
Still be sung
On this high hill in a year's turning.

19441946

Endnotes

- Note 1: A large type of crow.Return to reference 1

Fern Hill[1]

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
The night above the dingle[2] starry,
Time let me hail and climb
Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
Trail with daisies and barley
Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only,
Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
And the sabbath rang slowly
In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air

And playing, lovely and watery
And fire green as grass.
And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the night-jars[3]
Flying with the ricks,° and the horses
Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
Shining, it was Adam and maiden,[4]
The sky gathered again
And the sun grew round that very day.
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
Out of the whinnying green stable
On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
In the sun born over and over,
I ran my heedless ways,
My wishes raced through the house high hay
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden

Follow him out of grace,

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
In the moon that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

19451946

Endnotes

- Note 1: Name of the Welsh farmhouse, home of his aunt Ann Jones, where Thomas spent summer holidays as a boy.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Deep dell or hollow, usually wooded.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Species of bird.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See Genesis 1.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *haystacks*Return to reference °

Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

19511952

Voices from World War II

In December 1939, a few months after the start of World War II, a leading article in the *Times Literary Supplement* urged poets to do their duty: "it is for the poets to sound the trumpet call. . . . The monstrous threat to belief and freedom which we are fighting should urge new psalmists to fresh songs of deliverance." The biblical diction reveals the underlying expectation that the poets of 1940 would come forward, like those of 1914, to sanctify the cause with images of sacrifice derived from Jesus Christ's precedent and precept: "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Far from taking up trumpets, the poets responded bitterly—C. Day-Lewis with the poem "Where Are the War Poets?":

> They who in folly or mere greed
> Enslaved religion, markets, laws,
> Borrow our language now and bid
> Us to speak up in freedom's cause.
>
> It is the logic of our times,
> No subject for immortal verse—
> That we who lived by honest dreams
> Defend the bad against the worse.

With few exceptions the British poets of the 1930s had been born shortly before the outbreak of World War I, and those who were to be the poets of World War II were born during that earlier conflict. They grew up not, as Rupert Brooke, in the sunlit peace of Georgian England but amid wars and rumors of wars. They lived through the Great Depression and the rise of fascism. Introduced to the horrors of the last war—increased to mythic proportions by their fathers, uncles, and elder brothers—they were continually reminded of it by a flood of best-selling battle memoirs: Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1928), Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Siegfried

Sassoon's *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930) and *Sherston's Progress* (1936), and David Jones's *In Parenthesis* (1937). By then another myth, that of the Next War, was taking even more terrifying shape. Western intellectuals' last hope for the 1930s rested with the ragged troops of the left-wing Spanish Republic in their civil war against the right-wing Spanish army that had mutinied in 1936 against the country's elected government. Democracy and fascism were at last in the open, fighting a war that many thought would determine not simply the future of Spain but the future of Europe. With the final defeat of the Spanish Republicans in 1938, the Next War ceased to be a myth so much as an all-but-inescapable certainty.

World War I had been fought, for the most part, on the land, and its emblem in popular mythology was the trench. After the indiscriminate killing of civilians in a bombing raid—by German aircraft—on the Spanish town of Guernica in 1937, the emblem of the Next War was the bomb, the fire from heaven. Horrified by pictures of children bombed by Franco's fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War, Virginia Woolf was moved on the eve of World War II to write her long pacifist polemic, *Three Guineas* (1938). Subjecting nationalism to fierce irony and indicting the masculinist assertion of power, Woolf appealed for a cosmopolitanism, inflected by the experiences of women, in which one's country is the "whole world." In her diary she summed up what she considered her role as writer and intellectual in wartime: "Thinking is my fighting."

On September 1, 1939, Germany, in pursuit of imperial ambitions and without warning, launched a savage attack on Poland by land and air. Two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany. By the end of the month, Germany and its ally Russia had, between them, defeated and partitioned Poland. Russia then attacked Finland, and in April 1940 Germany invaded Denmark and Norway. For Britain and France the period of inactivity that came to be known as "The Phoney War" ended in May, when the German army overran Luxembourg and invaded the Netherlands and Belgium; their armored columns raced for the English Channel. Cut off, the British forces were evacuated by sea, with heavy losses, from Dunkirk, and

in June, France signed an armistice with Germany. In August, as prelude to an invasion, the German *Luftwaffe* (air force) attacked England. Over the months that followed, the fighter pilots of the Royal Air Force (RAF) challenged the enemy bombers' nightly blitz of London and other major cities. The Battle of Britain, as it came to be called, cost the *Luftwaffe* twenty-three hundred planes, and the RAF, nine hundred. The losses forced the Germans to postpone their plans for invasion.

The dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, 1940. Despite some direct hits, St. Paul's stands in the midst of smoke and flames caused by the German air force's nightly bombing, or blitz, of London and other major British cities. On December 29, more than ten thousand incendiary bombs fell on the capital.

In 1941, Woolf imagined the coming fury, which would be a factor in her suicide. At the end of Woolf's novel *Between the Acts*,

the village pageant of English history is over, and Mr. Streatfield's speech of thanks is interrupted: "A zoom severed it. Twelve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck came overhead." The following year Edith Sitwell depicted the blitz in "Still Falls the Rain," as did T. S. Eliot in part 2 of "Little Gidding." The Battle of Britain, however, was not the only battle, and British poets were already responding to war on land and at sea as well as in the air. The dominant mood of their poetry is strikingly unlike that from and about the trenches of the Western Front. Just as the heroics of 1914 were impossible in 1940 (although there was no lack of heroism), so too was the antipropagandist indignation of a Siegfried Sassoon. Now that everybody knew about the Battle of the Somme, the bombing of Guernica, London, and Dresden, who could be surprised by evidence of "Man's inhumanity to man"? In the draft preface to his poems, one of the more influential poetic manifestos of the twentieth century, Wilfred Owen had written: "All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true poets must be truthful." His warnings and those of his contemporaries had been uttered in vain, but the poets and novelists of World War II knew they must be truthful, true to their wartime experience of boredom and brutality, true to their humanity, and above all resistant to the murderous inhumanity of the machines.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

In 1938, the year before the outbreak of full-blown war, when battles were already raging in Spain and Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's fascism were extending their reach in Europe and Africa, Virginia Woolf wrote *Three Guineas* (see the introduction to Woolf [1882–1941] and the selection of her works earlier in this volume). In this long essay on war and gender, nationalism, and pacifism, she identifies the foundations of conflict in patriarchy and in the intimate connections among different forms of domination. Although Woolf doesn't believe that women are inherently pacifist, she argues that they must stand as ironic outsiders to the nationalism and militarism often mobilized, ostensibly, in their defense.

"This morning I got a packet of photographs from Spain, all of dead children, killed by bombs." So Woolf wrote to her nephew Julian Bell, on November 14, 1936. Within a year her nephew himself was dead, killed while driving an ambulance for the anti-fascist Republican forces in Spain. These war photographs and Bell's death, together with the pressure of the impending conflagration, spurred Woolf's meditation on war in relation to gender inequities and social power. The epistolary essay is written in the form of a freewheeling but hard-edged reply to a male correspondent who had asked her three years earlier, "How in your opinion are we to prevent war?" He had also invited her to join a society for war's prevention. Refusing his overture, she argues for the feminist cosmopolitan who has the courage to say, "as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."

From Three Guineas

[AS A WOMAN I HAVE NO COUNTRY]

* * *

To begin with an elementary distinction: a society is a conglomeration of people joined together for certain aims; while you, who write in your own person with your own hand are single. You the individual are a man whom we have reason to respect; a man of the brotherhood, to which, as biography proves, many brothers have belonged. Thus Anne Clough,[1] describing her brother, says: "Arthur is my best friend and adviser. . . . Arthur is the comfort and joy of my life; it is for him, and from him, that I am incited to seek after all that is lovely and of good report." To which William Wordsworth, speaking of his sister but answering the other as if one nightingale called to another in the forests of the past, replies:

> The Blessing of my later years
> Was with me when a Boy:
> She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
> And humble cares, and delicate fears;
> A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
> And love, and thought, and joy.[2]

Such was, such perhaps still is, the relationship of many brothers and sisters in private, as individuals. They respect each other and help each other and have aims in common. Why then, if such can be their private relationship, as biography and poetry prove, should their public relationship, as law and history prove, be so very different? And here, since you are a lawyer, with a lawyer's memory, it is not necessary to remind you of certain decrees of English law from its first records to the year 1919 by way of proving that the

public, the society relationship of brother and sister has been very different from the private. The very word "society" sets tolling in memory the dismal bells of a harsh music: shall not, shall not, shall not. You shall not learn; you shall not earn; you shall not own; you shall not—such was the society relationship of brother to sister for many centuries. And though it is possible, and to the optimistic credible, that in time a new society may ring a carillon[3] of splendid harmony, and your letter heralds it, that day is far distant. Inevitably we ask ourselves, is there not something in the conglomeration of people into societies that releases what is most selfish and violent, least rational and humane in the individuals themselves? Inevitably we look upon society, so kind to you, so harsh to us, as an ill-fitting form that distorts the truth; deforms the mind; fetters the will. Inevitably we look upon societies as conspiracies that sink the private brother, whom many of us have reason to respect, and inflate in his stead a monstrous male, loud of voice, hard of fist, childishly intent upon scoring the floor of the earth with chalk marks, within whose mystic boundaries human beings are penned, rigidly, separately, artificially; where, daubed red and gold, decorated like a savage with feathers he goes through mystic rites and enjoys the dubious pleasures of power and dominion while we, "his" women, are locked in the private house without share in the many societies of which his society is composed. For such reasons compact as they are of many memories and emotions—for who shall analyse the complexity of a mind that holds so deep a reservoir of time past within it?—it seems both wrong for us rationally and impossible for us emotionally to fill up your form and join your society. For by so doing we should merge our identity in yours; follow and repeat and score still deeper the old worn ruts in which society, like a gramophone whose needle has stuck, is grinding out with intolerable unanimity "Three hundred millions spent upon arms." We should not give effect to a view which our own experience of "society" should have helped us to envisage. Thus, Sir, while we respect you as a private person and prove it by giving you a guinea[4] to spend as you choose, we believe that we can help you most effectively by refusing

to join your society; by working for our common ends—justice and equality and liberty for all men and women—outside your society, not within.

But this, you will say, if it means anything, can only mean that you, the daughters of educated men, who have promised us your positive help, refuse to join our society in order that you may make another of your own. And what sort of society do you propose to found outside ours, but in co-operation with it, so that we may both work together for our common ends? That is a question which you have every right to ask, and which we must try to answer in order to justify our refusal to sign the form you send. Let us then draw rapidly in outline the kind of society which the daughters of educated men might found and join outside your society but in co-operation with its ends. In the first place, this new society, you will be relieved to learn, would have no honorary treasurer, for it would need no funds. It would have no office, no committee, no secretary; it would call no meetings; it would hold no conferences. If name it must have, it could be called the Outsiders' Society. That is not a resonant name, but it has the advantage that it squares with facts—the facts of history, of law, of biography; even, it may be, with the still hidden facts of our still unknown psychology. It would consist of educated men's daughters working in their own class—how indeed can they work in any other?[5] and by their own methods for liberty, equality and peace. Their first duty, to which they would bind themselves not by oath, for oaths and ceremonies have no part in a society which must be anonymous and elastic before everything, would be not to fight with arms. This is easy for them to observe, for in fact, as the papers inform us, "the Army Council have no intention of opening recruiting for any women's corps."[6] The country ensures it. Next they would refuse in the event of war to make munitions or nurse the wounded. Since in the last war both these activities were mainly discharged by the daughters of working men, the pressure upon them here too would be slight, though probably disagreeable. On the other hand the next duty to which they would pledge themselves is one of considerable difficulty, and calls not only for

courage and initiative, but for the special knowledge of the educated man's daughter. It is, briefly, not to incite their brothers to fight, or to dissuade them, but to maintain an attitude of complete indifference. But the attitude expressed by the word "indifference" is so complex and of such importance that it needs even here further definition. Indifference in the first place must be given a firm footing upon fact. As it is a fact that she cannot understand what instinct compels him, what glory, what interest, what manly satisfaction fighting provides for him—"without war there would be no outlet for the manly qualities which fighting develops"—as fighting thus is a sex characteristic which she cannot share, the counterpart some claim of the maternal instinct which he cannot share, so is it an instinct which she cannot judge. The outsider therefore must leave him free to deal with this instinct by himself, because liberty of opinion must be respected, especially when it is based upon an instinct which is as foreign to her as centuries of tradition and education can make it.[7] This is a fundamental and instinctive distinction upon which indifference may be based. But the outsider will make it her duty not merely to base her indifference upon instinct, but upon reason. When he says, as history proves that he has said, and may say again, "I am fighting to protect our country" and thus seeks to rouse her patriotic emotion, she will ask herself, "What does 'our country' mean to me an outsider?" To decide this she will analyse the meaning of patriotism in her own case. She will inform herself of the position of her sex and her class in the past. She will inform herself of the amount of land, wealth and property in the possession of her own sex and class in the present—how much of "England" in fact belongs to her. From the same sources she will inform herself of the legal protection which the law has given her in the past and now gives her. And if he adds that he is fighting to protect her body, she will reflect upon the degree of physical protection that she now enjoys when the words "Air Raid Precaution" are written on blank walls. And if he says that he is fighting to protect England from foreign rule, she will reflect that for her there are no "foreigners," since by law she becomes a foreigner if she

marries a foreigner. And she will do her best to make this a fact, not by forced fraternity, but by human sympathy. All these facts will convince her reason (to put it in a nutshell) that her sex and class has very little to thank England for in the past; not much to thank England for in the present; while the security of her person in the future is highly dubious. But probably she will have imbibed, even from the governess, some romantic notion that Englishmen, those fathers and grandfathers whom she sees marching in the picture of history, are "superior" to the men of other countries. This she will consider it her duty to check by comparing French historians with English; German with French; the testimony of the ruled—the Indians or the Irish, say—with the claims made by their rulers. Still some "patriotic" emotion, some ingrained belief in the intellectual superiority of her own country over other countries may remain. Then she will compare English painting with French painting; English music with German music; English literature with Greek literature, for translations abound. When all these comparisons have been faithfully made by the use of reason, the outsider will find herself in possession of very good reasons for her indifference. She will find that she has no good reason to ask her brother to fight on her behalf to protect "our" country. " 'Our country,' " she will say, "throughout the greater part of its history has treated me as a slave; it has denied me education or any share in its possessions. 'Our' country still ceases to be mine if I marry a foreigner. 'Our' country denies me the means of protecting myself, forces me to pay others a very large sum annually to protect me, and is so little able, even so, to protect me that Air Raid precautions are written on the wall. Therefore if you insist upon fighting to protect me, or 'our' country, let it be understood, soberly and rationally between us, that you are fighting to gratify a sex instinct which I cannot share; to procure benefits which I have not shared and probably will not share; but not to gratify my instincts, or to protect either myself or my country. For," the outsider will say, "in fact, as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world." And if, when reason has said its say, still some obstinate emotion remains, some love of England dropped into a child's ears

by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes, this drop of pure, if irrational, emotion she will make serve her to give to England first what she desires of peace and freedom for the whole world.

Such then will be the nature of her "indifference" and from this indifference certain actions must follow. She will bind herself to take no share in patriotic demonstrations; to assent to no form of national self-praise; to make no part of any claque[8] or audience that encourages war; to absent herself from military displays, tournaments, tattoos, prize-givings and all such ceremonies as encourage the desire to impose "our" civilization or "our" dominion upon other people. The psychology of private life, moreover, warrants the belief that this use of indifference by the daughters of educated men would help materially to prevent war. For psychology would seem to show that it is far harder for human beings to take action when other people are indifferent and allow them complete freedom of action, than when their actions are made the centre of excited emotion. The small boy struts and trumpets outside the window: implore him to stop; he goes on; say nothing; he stops. That the daughters of educated men then should give their brothers neither the white feather of cowardice nor the red feather of courage, but no feather at all; that they should shut the bright eyes that rain influence, or let those eyes look elsewhere when war is discussed—that is the duty to which outsiders will train themselves in peace before the threat of death inevitably makes reason powerless.

Such then are some of the methods by which the society, the anonymous and secret Society of Outsiders would help you, Sir, to prevent war and to ensure freedom.

* * *

1938

Endnotes

- Note 1: British promoter of women's education and the first principal of Newnham College, Cambridge (1820–1892). Her brother was Arthur Clough (1819–1861), English poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From "The Sparrows' Nest" by English poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850). His sister was Dorothy Wordsworth (1771–1855).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Melody played on bells.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A guinea is a gold coin worth a pound and a shilling; its name links it to the West African coast (a region once called Guinea) and the slave trade in which the coin originated. It was often the standard fee for subscription to a society.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:
  In a lengthy note, Woolf describes the benefits to women of the working class and the educated class who dedicate themselves to improving the social and economic standing of their class. She warns against glamorizing the working class. "The average housewife," reports a newspaper article Woolf cites, "washed an acre of dirty dishes, a mile of glass and three miles of clothes and scrubbed miles of floor yearly" (*Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 29, 1937).
  Return to reference 5
- Note 6: "It was stated yesterday at the War Office that the Army Council have no intention of opening recruiting for any women's corps." (*The Times*, October 22, 1937 [p. 13]). This marks a prime distinction between the sexes. Pacifism is enforced upon women. Men are still allowed liberty of choice [*Woolf's note*].Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  The following quotation shows, however, that if sanctioned the fighting instinct easily develops. "The eyes deeply sunk into the sockets, the features acute, the amazon keeps herself very

straight on the stirrups at the head of her squadron. . . . Five English parliamentaries look at this woman with the respectful and a bit restless admiration one feels for a 'fauve' of an unknown species. . . .

—Come nearer Amalia—orders the commandant. She pushes her horse towards us and salutes her chief with the sword.

—Sergeant Amalia Bonilla—continues the chief of the squadron—how old are you?—Thirty-six.—Where were you born?—In Granada.—Why have you joined the army?—My two daughters were militiawomen. The younger has been killed in the Alto de Leon. I thought I had to supersede her and avenge her.—And how many enemies have you killed to avenge her?—You know it, commandant, five. The sixth is not sure.—No, but you have taken his horse. The amazon Amalia rides in fact a magnificent dapple-grey horse, with glossy hair, which flatters like a parade horse. . . . This woman who has killed five men—but who feels not sure about the sixth—was for the envoys of the House of Commons an excellent introducer to the Spanish War." (*The Martyrdom of Madrid, Inedited Witnesses*, by Louis Delaprée, pp. 34, 5, 6. Madrid, 1937.) [Louis Delaprée (1902–1936) was a French journalist killed covering the Spanish Civil War; *Woolf's note*].

Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Group of subservient followers.Return to reference 8

PABLO PICASSO

Guernica

(p. 702)

Picasso painted the starkly black-white-and-gray, mural-size depiction of anguished and shattered human and animal figures after the German bombing and destruction of a Basque village in his native Spain in 1937. The attack by the warplanes in support of General Franco's Nationalist forces during the Civil War foreshadowed the widespread bombing of civilians in World War II. At the left of the painting, a woman mourns a dead child under a standing bull. At the center is a horse stabbed through by a spear and partly covered with newsprint; above the animal shines an eyelike light, and below it is the shattered body of a soldier. From the right, two female figures enter the room, one carrying a candle that contrasts with the harsh lightbulb, while a terrified person at the far right is surrounded by fire. The painting helped spread awareness of the Spanish Civil War's ravages, traveling to a large number of cities, including London, where it arrived in 1938 under the patronage in part of the novelists Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster.

Guernica, 1937, Pablo Picasso.

EDITH SITWELL

Edith Sitwell's father was an eccentric English baronet; her mother, the daughter of an earl. Sitwell (1887–1964), an eccentrically gifted poet, objected to the subdued rural descriptions and reflections of the Georgian poets (of whom Rupert Brooke was the most popular) and reacted in favor of a highly abstract verbal experimentation that exploited the sounds and rhythms and suggestions of words and phrases, often with remarkable pyrotechnic display. She edited and contributed to the six "cycles" of *Wheels* (1916–21), an annual anthology of modern poems in which she displayed her verbal and rhythmic virtuosity and encouraged others to follow her example. Her sequence *Façade* (1922), with its cunning exploration of rhymes and rhythms, was set to music by the composer Sir William Walton, whose sympathetic treatment of the words enhanced their impact. The 1923 performance in London's Aeolian Hall was a sensation: Sitwell intoned the poems from behind a screen, and Walton conducted the orchestra.

But Sitwell was more than a manipulator of surfaces. Throughout her poetry she hints at profounder meanings, sometimes with mocking laughter, sometimes with anguish, and in her later work she attacks the pettiness and philistinism of high society. In still later poems, influenced by William Blake, W. B. Yeats, and her friend Dylan Thomas, Sitwell wished to achieve, she said in her autobiography, "a greater expressiveness, a greater formality, and a return to rhetoric," rejecting "the outcry for understatement, for quietness, for neutral tints in poetry." These poems, such as "Still Falls the Rain," are much concerned with the horrors of war, the varieties of human suffering produced by modern civilization, and the healing powers of a faith in God, combined with a sense of the richness and variety of nature.

Still Falls the Rain

The Raids, 1940.[1] *Night and Dawn*

Still falls the Rain—
Dark as the world of man, black as our loss—
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails
Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain
With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is
changed to the hammer-beat
In the Potter's Field,[2] and the sound of the impious
feet
On the Tomb:
Still falls the Rain
In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed
and the human brain
Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of
Cain.[3]

Still falls the Rain
At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.
Christ that each day, each night, nails there, have
mercy on us—
On Dives and on Lazarus.[4]
Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain—
Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded
Side:
He bears in His Heart all wounds,—those of the light
that died,

The last faint spark
In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad uncomprehending dark,
The wounds of the baited bear,[5]—
The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat
On his helpless flesh . . . the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain—
Then—O Ile leape up to my God: who pulles me doune—
See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament:[6]
It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree
Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart
That holds the fires of the world,—dark-smirched with pain
As Caesar's laurel crown.[7]

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man
Was once a child who among beasts has lain—
"Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood, for thee."

1942

Endnotes

- Note 1: During the Battle of Britain, the German air force carried out many raids on London, often with incendiary bombs (see lines 27 and 30).Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  See Matthew 27:3–8: "Then Judas, which betrayed [Jesus], when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought back the 30 pieces of silver to the chief priests and

elders, saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, What is that to us? see thou to it. And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the pieces of silver . . . and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day."
Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The first murderer in the Bible (Genesis 4).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In Jesus's parable the rich man Dives was sent to hell, while the leprous beggar Lazarus went to heaven (Luke 16:19–31). This is not the same Lazarus who was raised from the dead.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A medieval and Elizabethan sport in which dogs fought a bear chained to a post.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Faustus's cry at the end of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1604), when he realizes that he has been damned for his pact with Mephistopheles.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Traditionally worn by victorious generals, and perhaps here associated with Jesus's crown of thorns (Matthew 27:29).Return to reference 7

HENRY REED

Henry Reed (1914–1986) was born and educated in Birmingham, at the King Edward VI School and at Birmingham University, where he gained a first-class degree in classics (having taught himself Greek) and began an M.A. thesis on Thomas Hardy. After leaving the university in 1934, he tried teaching, like other British writers of the 1930s, but, like most of them, hated it and left to make his way as a freelance writer and critic. During World War II he served—"or rather *studied*," as he put it—in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps for a year. A notable mimic, he entertained friends with a comic imitation of a sergeant instructing new recruits. After a few performances he noticed that the words of the weapon-training instructor, couched in the style of the military manual, fell into certain rhythmic patterns. His fascination with these patterns eventually informed his *Lessons of the War*, the first of which, "Naming of Parts," is probably the most anthologized poem prompted by World War II.

From 1942 to 1945, Reed worked as a cryptographer and translator at the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley. In the evenings he wrote much of his first radio play—an adaptation of Melville's *Moby-Dick*—and many of the poems to be published in *A Map of Verona* (1946). After the war, he produced a number of other successful—and often funny—radio plays, verse translations of the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), and more poems. Many of the best of these were found in manuscript at his death, and with the posthumous publication of his *Collected Poems* (1991), he emerged as a writer whose lifelong quest for lasting homosexual love—which he never found—led him through Edenic landscapes of desire, like the setting of "Naming of Parts."

From Lessons of the War

To Alan Michell

Vixi duellis nuper idoneus
Et militavi non sine gloria[1]

1. Naming of Parts

Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,
We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,
We shall have what to do after firing. But today,
Today we have naming of parts. Japonica[2]
Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens,
And today we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,
Which in your case you have not got. The branches
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this

Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this
Easing the spring.[3] And rapidly backwards and forwards
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:
They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy
If you have any strength in your thumb; like the bolt,
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,
Which in our case we have not got; and the almond-blossom
Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and forwards,
For today we have naming of parts.

1945

Endnotes

- Note 1: "Lately I have lived in the midst of battles, creditably enough, / and have soldiered, not without glory" (Horace's *Odes* 3.26.1–2, with the *p* of *puellis*—girls—turned upside down to produce *duellis*—battles; an emendation that encapsulates the theme of the *Lessons*).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A shrub with brilliant scarlet flowers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ejecting the bullets from the magazine of a rifle takes the pressure off the magazine spring.Return to reference 3

ELIZABETH BOWEN

Elizabeth Bowen (1899–1973) was a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry, a wealthy class descended from English Protestants in Ireland. They culturally identified with England, which led to tension with Irish Catholics, who supported the independence of Ireland. Bowen lived between Dublin and her family's country home in County Cork until the age of seven when, following her father's struggle with mental illness, she moved to London with her mother. At age thirteen, the loss of her mother to cancer led her to live with relatives. She began writing short stories at the age of twenty. She is the author of ten novels, the second of which, *The Last September* (1929), brought her early critical attention and praise. Set in a great Irish country house, modeled on her home in Cork, it chronicles the decline of an Anglo-Irish family against the backdrop of the Irish War of Independence. Bowen's later novels and short story collections drew inspiration from the political upheaval of World War II. *The Heat of the Day* (1949) is a tale of espionage and intrigue featuring two spies turned lovers, and *The Demon Lover and Other Stories* (1945) draws on supernatural imagery to represent the surreality of wartime experience in which death felt inescapable and ghosts closer than the living. Bowen worked for the English Ministry of Information during the war, and is as renowned for her wartime journalism as she is for her substantial body of fiction. "The Demon Lover," set during the Blitz (German air attacks on England), features a woman returning to her abandoned London home where she discovers a letter from her former fiancé. The letter triggers disturbing memories, and spurs the woman toward an ambiguous, but terrifying, encounter, made more frightening by the empty streets of wartime London.

The Demon Lover

Towards the end of her day in London Mrs. Drover went round to her shut-up house to look for several things she wanted to take away. Some belonged to herself, some to her family, who were by now used to their country life. It was late August; it had been a steamy, showery day: at the moment the trees down the pavement glittered in an escape of humid yellow afternoon sun. Against the next batch of clouds, already piling up ink-dark, broken chimneys and parapets stood out. In her once familiar street, as in any unused channel, an unfamiliar queerness had silted up; a cat wove itself in and out of railings, but no human eye watched Mrs. Drover's return. Shifting some parcels under her arm, she slowly forced round her latchkey in an unwilling lock, then gave the door, which had warped, a push with her knee. Dead air came out to meet her as she went in.

The staircase window having been boarded up, no light came down into the hall. But one door, she could just see, stood ajar, so she went quickly through into the room and unshuttered the big window in there. Now the prosaic woman, looking about her, was more perplexed than she knew by everything that she saw, by traces of her long former habit of life—the yellow smoke-stain up the white marble mantelpiece, the ring left by a vase on the top of the escritoire;[1] the bruise in the wallpaper where, on the door being thrown open widely, the china handle had always hit the wall. The piano, having gone away to be stored, had left what looked like claw-marks on its part of the parquet. Though not much dust had seeped in, each object wore a film of another kind; and, the only ventilation being the chimney, the whole drawing-room smelled of the cold hearth. Mrs. Drover put down her parcels on the escritoire and left the room to proceed upstairs; the things she wanted were in a bedroom chest.

She had been anxious to see how the house was—the part-time caretaker she shared with some neighbours was away this week on his holiday, known to be not yet back. At the best of times he did not look in often, and she was never sure that she trusted him. There were some cracks in the structure, left by the last bombing,[2] on which she was anxious to keep an eye. Not that one could do anything—

A shaft of refracted daylight now lay across the hall. She stopped dead and stared at the hall table—on this lay a letter addressed to her.

She thought first—then the caretaker *must* be back. All the same, who, seeing the house shuttered, would have dropped a letter in at the box? It was not a circular, it was not a bill. And the post office redirected, to the address in the country, everything for her that came through the post. The caretaker (even if he *were* back) did not know she was due in London to-day—her call here had been planned to be a surprise—so his negligence in the manner of this letter, leaving it to wait in the dusk and the dust, annoyed her. Annoyed, she picked up the letter, which bore no stamp. But it cannot be important, or they would know . . . She took the letter rapidly upstairs with her, without a stop to look at the writing till she reached what had been her bedroom, where she let in light. The room looked over the garden and other gardens: the sun had gone in; as the clouds sharpened and lowered, the trees and rank lawns seemed already to smoke with dark. Her reluctance to look again at the letter came from the fact that she felt intruded upon—and by someone contemptuous of her ways. However, in the tenseness preceding the fall of rain she read it: it was a few lines.

DEAR KATHLEEN,

You will not have forgotten that to-day is our anniversary, and the day we said. The years have gone by at once slowly and fast. In view of the fact that nothing has changed, I shall rely upon you to keep your promise. I was sorry to see you leave London, but was

satisfied that you would be back in time. You may expect me, therefore, at the hour arranged.

Until then . . .
K.

Mrs. Drover looked for the date: it was to-day's. She dropped the letter on to the bed-springs, then picked it up to see the writing again—her lips, beneath the remains of lipstick, beginning to go white. She felt so much the change in her own face that she went to the mirror, polished a clear patch in it and looked at once urgently and stealthily in. She was confronted by a woman of forty-four, with eyes starting out under a hat-brim that had been rather carelessly pulled down. She had not put on any more powder since she left the shop where she ate her solitary tea. The pearls her husband had given her on their marriage hung loose round her now rather thinner throat, slipping into the V of the pink wool jumper her sister knitted last autumn as they sat round the fire. Mrs. Drover's most normal expression was one of controlled worry, but of assent. Since the birth of the third of her little boys, attended by a quite serious illness, she had had an intermittent muscular flicker to the left of her mouth, but in spite of this she could always sustain a manner that was at once energetic and calm.

Turning from her own face as precipitately as she had gone to meet it, she went to the chest where the things were, unlocked it, threw up the lid and knelt to search. But as rain began to come crashing down she could not keep from looking over her shoulder at the stripped bed on which the letter lay. Behind the blanket of rain the clock of the church that still stood struck six—with rapidly heightening apprehension she counted each of the slow strokes. 'The hour arranged . . . My God,' she said, '*what* hour? How should I . . . ? After twenty-five years. . . .'

The young girl talking to the soldier in the garden had not ever completely seen his face. It was dark; they were saying good-bye under a tree. Now and then—for it felt, from not seeing him at this intense moment, as though she had never seen him at all—she

verified his presence for these few moments longer by putting out a hand, which he each time pressed, without very much kindness, and painfully, on to one of the breast buttons of his uniform. That cut of the button on the palm of her hand was, principally, what she was to carry away. This was so near the end of a leave from France that she could only wish him already gone. It was August 1916. Being not kissed, being drawn away from and looked at intimidated Kathleen till she imagined spectral glitters in the place of his eyes. Turning away and looking back up the lawn she saw, through branches of trees, the drawing-room window alight: she caught a breath for the moment when she could go running back there into the safe arms of her mother and sister, and cry: 'What shall I do, what shall I do? He has gone.'

Hearing her catch her breath, her fiancé said, without feeling: 'Cold?'

'You're going away such a long way.'

'Not so far as you think.'

'I don't understand?'

'You don't have to,' he said. 'You will. You know what we said.'

'But that was—suppose you—I mean, suppose.'

'I shall be with you,' he said, 'sooner or later. You won't forget that. You need do nothing but wait.'

Only a little more than a minute later she was free to run up the silent lawn. Looking in through the window at her mother and sister, who did not for the moment perceive her, she already felt that unnatural promise drive down between her and the rest of all human kind. No other way of having given herself could have made her feel so apart, lost and foresworn. She could not have plighted a more sinister troth.[3]

Kathleen behaved well when, some months later, her fiancé was reported missing, presumed killed. Her family not only supported her but were able to praise her courage without stint because they could not regret, as a husband for her, the man they knew almost nothing about. They hoped she would, in a year or two, console herself—and had it been only a question of consolation things might have gone

much straighter ahead. But her trouble, behind just a little grief, was a complete dislocation from everything. She did not reject other lovers, for these failed to appear: for years she failed to attract men—and with the approach of her 'thirties she became natural enough to share her family's anxiousness on this score. She began to put herself out, to wonder; and at thirty-two she was very greatly relieved to find herself being courted by William Drover. She married him, and the two of them settled down in this quiet, arboreal part of Kensington: in this house the years piled up, her children were born and they all lived till they were driven out by the bombs of the next war. Her movements as Mrs. Drover were circumscribed, and she dismissed any idea that they were still watched.

As things were—dead or living the letter-writer sent her only a threat. Unable, for some minutes, to go on kneeling with her back exposed to the empty room, Mrs. Drover rose from the chest to sit on an upright chair whose back was firmly against the wall. The desuetude[4] of her former bedroom, her married London home's whole air of being a cracked cup from which memory, with its reassuring power, had either evaporated or leaked away, made a crisis—and at just this crisis the letter-writer had, knowledgeably, struck. The hollowness of the house this evening cancelled years on years of voices, habits and steps. Through the shut windows she only heard rain fall on the roofs around. To rally herself, she said she was in a mood—and, for two or three seconds shutting her eyes, told herself that she had imagined the letter. But she opened them—there it lay on the bed.

On the supernatural side of the letter's entrance she was not permitting her mind to dwell. Who, in London, knew she meant to call at the house to-day? Evidently, however, this has been known. The caretaker, *had* he come back, had had no cause to expect her: he would have taken the letter in his pocket, to forward it, at his own time, through the post. There was no other sign that the caretaker had been in—but, if not? Letters dropped in at doors of deserted houses do not fly or walk to tables in halls. They do not sit on the dust of empty tables with the air of certainty that they will be

found. There is needed some human hand—but nobody but the caretaker had a key. Under circumstances she did not care to consider, a house can be entered without a key. It was possible that she was not alone now. She might be being waited for, downstairs. Waited for—until when? Until 'the hour arranged'. At least that was not six o'clock: six has struck.

She rose from the chair and went over and locked the door.

The thing was, to get out. To fly? No, not that: she had to catch her train. As a woman whose utter dependability was the keystone of her family life she was not willing to return to the country, to her husband, her little boys and her sister, without the objects she had come up to fetch. Resuming work at the chest she set about making up a number of parcels in a rapid, fumbling-decisive way. These, with her shopping parcels, would be too much to carry; these meant a taxi—at the thought of the taxi her heart went up and her normal breathing resumed. I will ring up the taxi now; the taxi cannot come too soon: I shall hear the taxi out there running its engine, till I walk calmly down to it through the hall. I'll ring up—But no: the telephone is cut off . . . She tugged at a knot she had tied wrong.

The idea of flight . . . He was never kind to me, not really. I don't remember him kind at all. Mother said he never considered me. He was set on me, that was what it was—not love. Not love, not meaning a person well. What did he do, to make me promise like that? I can't remember—But she found that she could.

She remembered with such dreadful acuteness that the twenty-five years since then dissolved like smoke and she instinctively looked for the weal left by the button on the palm of her hand. She remembered not only all that he said and did but the complete suspension of *her* existence during that August week. I was not myself—they all told me so at the time. She remembered—but with one white burning blank as where acid has dropped on a photograph: *under no conditions* could she remember his face.

So, wherever he may be waiting, I shall not know him. You have no time to run from a face you do not expect.

The thing was to get to the taxi before any clock struck what could be the hour. She would slip down the street and round the side of the square to where the square gave on the main road. She would return in the taxi, safe, to her own door, and bring the solid driver into the house with her to pick up the parcels from room to room. The idea of the taxi driver made her decisive, bold: she unlocked her door, went to the top of the staircase and listened down.

She heard nothing—but while she was hearing nothing the *passé*[5] air of the staircase was disturbed by a draught that travelled up to her face. It emanated from the basement: down there a door or window was being opened by someone who chose this moment to leave the house.

The rain had stopped; the pavements steamily shone as Mrs. Drover let herself out by inches from her own front door into the empty street. The unoccupied houses opposite continued to meet her look with their damaged stare. Making towards the thoroughfare and the taxi, she tried not to keep looking behind. Indeed, the silence was so intense—one of those creeks of London silence exaggerated this summer by the damage of war—that no tread could have gained on hers unheard. Where her street debouched on the square where people went on living, she grew conscious of, and checked, her unnatural pace. Across the open end of the square two buses impassively passed each other: women, a perambulator,[6] cyclists, a man wheeling a barrow signalized, once again, the ordinary flow of life. At the square's most populous corner should be —and was—the short taxi rank. This evening, only one taxi—but this, although it presented its blank rump, appeared already to be alertly waiting for her. Indeed, without looking round the driver started his engine as she panted up from behind and put her hand on the door. As she did so, the clock struck seven. The taxi faced the main road: to make the trip back to her house it would have to turn —she had settled back on the seat and the taxi *had* turned before she, surprised by its knowing movement, recollected that she had

not ‘said where’. She leaned forward to scratch at the glass panel that divided the driver’s head from her own.

The driver braked to what was almost a stop, turned round and slid the glass panel back: the jolt of this flung Mrs. Drover forward till her face was almost into the glass. Through the aperture driver and passenger, not six inches between them, remained for an eternity eye to eye. Mrs. Drover’s mouth hung open for some seconds before she could issue her first scream. After that she continued to scream freely and to beat with her gloved hands on the glass all round as the taxi, accelerating without mercy, made off with her into the hinterland of deserted streets.

1945

Endnotes

- Note 1: Small writing desk.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Reference to the Blitz, a German bombing campaign against the United Kingdom in World War II focused on London and other large cities and industrial targets.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A promise of marriage.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: To fall into disuse or be discontinued.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Dated, worn, disused (from French for *past*).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Baby carriage (British English).Return to reference 6

Nation, Race, and Language

Armies and navies, cannons and guns helped spread and consolidate British rule across vast areas of Earth's surface, but so too did the English language. Over many years, in various parts of the world, the language of the British Empire displaced or commingled with indigenous languages. Then the twentieth century witnessed the decolonization and devolution of the British Empire—from early-century Ireland; to mid-century South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean; to late-century Hong Kong. Those under colonial rule were often made to feel inferior because they had "a different complexion or slightly flatter noses," as Conrad's Marlow puts it in *Heart of Darkness.* When large numbers of non-White immigrants arrived in England after World War II, they were likely to find themselves stigmatized and discriminated against because of their race. Imaginative writers from the former colonies, as well as immigrants to Britain and their children, have thus had to wrestle with questions of nation, race, and language. Should they write stories, plays, and poems in the language and traditions of the colonizer, or should they repudiate English and return to their indigenous languages? Is English an enabling tool by which peoples of different races and nationalities can express their identities, or is it contaminated by a colonial history and racist mentality that it insidiously perpetuates? If English is chosen for imaginative writing, should it be the Standardized English of the imperial center or an English inflected by contact with indigenous languages—creole, patois, or pidgin? Since the power of the United States has sustained the global reach of English long after the withdrawal of British colonial armies and administrators, debates over such questions have persisted in many parts of the world where English still thrives in the aftermath of a dead empire.

Postwar immigrants to Britain from its former colonies have also brought these once faraway issues home to the "mother country." On

June 21, 1948, the first shipload of Caribbean immigrants, 492 passengers onboard the *Empire Windrush*, arrived at Tilbury Docks, near London. Many other Black and Asian immigrants from the Caribbean, from Asia, and from Africa soon followed, diversifying Britain until peoples of ethnic minorities made up 12.9 percent of the total population in 2011. Between the 1948 British Nationality Act, which allowed British subjects to immigrate, and the 1968 measure limiting immigration to citizens of British (that is, White) family origin, hundreds of thousands of Blacks and Asians were "colonizin / Englan in reverse," in Jamaican poet Louise Bennett's witty phrase.

The *Windrush* arrives, June 21, 1948. The *Empire Windrush* brought 492 passengers from Kingston, Jamaica, to Tilbury Docks, near London. Since Britain had just passed the 1948 British Nationality Act that granted citizenship to colonial subjects, West Indians sailed to Britain, many in search of job opportunities. Although they met with discrimination upon arrival, a large number of the Caribbean migrants stayed, becoming the

first members of what is sometimes called "the *Windrush* generation."

Assuming they would be welcomed as full-fledged British subjects, many of these immigrants, arriving in search of jobs and educational opportunities, were surprised by the racial discrimination they encountered. Bearing with them the dream England of Shakespeare, public monuments, and English civilization, many of these immigrants were refused housing because of their race and consigned to jobs below their skill level. In "Inglan Is a Bitch," Black British poet Linton Kwesi Johnson relates the job woes of one such hapless immigrant. These exclusionary racial attitudes were also felt by immigrant writers. Jamaican playwright and poet Una Marson reflects on the violation of hearing a racial epithet "flung" at her speaker in "Nigger." It is in this context that Salman Rushdie asserts the British Indian's right to lay claim to full membership in British society and to British, Indian, and a variety of transnational literary inheritances. From a "black" perspective, Daljit Nagra retells the *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, as Winston Churchill titled his monumental chronicle, to make room for an Asian Briton's ambivalent participation in that history, as an insider-outsider who reinhabits an English literary canon centered on Shakespeare. Bernardine Evaristo goes back even further in time in *The Emperor's Babe*, to the third century C.E., when African diasporic people like her were already living in Roman Londinium, contrary to the widespread misconception that Britain was racially homogeneous before 1948. Unmoored from the "calypso ways" of her native Guyana and feeling displaced in England's "misty greyness," immigrant poet Grace Nichols nevertheless declares, "Wherever I hang me knickers—that's my home." In her view, the new creolized English tongue she and other African Caribbeans have created after losing their African languages is a kind of linguistic home: "from the root of the old one / a new one has sprung." East Indian writer Samuel Selvon, who was raised in the West Indies before moving to England, writes about

Black men's resettlement with gentle humor and awareness of their vulnerability.

Such issues of nation, race, and language have a deep history in Britain's colonies, and not only its far-flung possessions in the global South. Irish immigrants to Britain had long found themselves discriminated against as racial "others." In Ireland itself, the British, having tried to subdue the local people for centuries, outlawed the use of the Irish language (or Gaelic). Because of Ireland's long and bloody colonial history and the flowering there of cultural nationalism, early-twentieth-century Irish writers were already expressing a powerful ambivalence toward English as both a vital literary inheritance and the language of colonial subjugation. Recalling the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English "wars of extermination" against the Irish, W. B. Yeats acknowledges a historical hatred of the English but then reminds himself that, as an English-language writer, "I owe my soul to Shakespeare, to Spenser and to Blake, perhaps to William Morris, and to the English language in which I think, speak and write, that everything I love has come to me through English; my hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate" (see his "Introduction," excerpted in this volume). In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce's autobiographical persona, Stephen Dedalus, reflects on his conversation with an academic dean, an Englishman: "The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. . . . I cannot speak or write these [English] words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language." Yet despite this vexed relation to the language, Yeats and Joyce wrote some of the most innovative English-language poetry and fiction of the twentieth century, ultimately influencing the very language that had so troubled them. Indeed, their conflicted relation to the English language and its literary inheritance—that "unrest of spirit" in its shadow—may, paradoxically, have impelled their massive literary achievements.

The BBC *Voice* radio program. Sitting in a recording studio in 1942 from left to right are Venu Chitale, M. J. Tambimuttu, T. S. Eliot, Una Marson, Mulk Raj Anand, Christopher Pemberton, and Narayana Menon. Standing are George Orwell, Nancy Barratt, and William Empson. This diverse set of writers collaborated on a poetry series that was broadcast to India on the BBC's Eastern Service. Radio programs such as *Voice* served as a cultural arm of the British Empire by connecting colonial audiences to England.

Transplanted to different parts of the world, English has sometimes seemed strange and estranging. When African and Caribbean schoolchildren with British colonial educations tried to write poems, as Kamau Brathwaite and other writers have attested, they would follow the conventions of English poetry, composing iambic pentameter verse about snowfall or daffodils, which they had never seen. English language and literature thus risked alienating colonized peoples from their local environments and distinctive cultural histories. The African Caribbean–Canadian poet M. NourbeSe

Philip writes of English as a "mother tongue" that is also a strangely violent and patriarchal "father tongue," used for the brutal suppression of her slave ancestors.

The feeling that the English language is alienating, inextricably bound to colonialism, has led some nativist writers, such as the Kenyan novelist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, to reject it outright. If language is a "collective memory bank," then a people cannot recover its colonially suppressed identity and history without returning to an indigenous language. But the novelist Salman Rushdie, who often writes in an Indianized, or "chutnified," English, takes the opposite stance: "The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago," he asserts. English has become a local language even in parts of the world, such as India, where it was once imposed by colonial rulers. Rushdie and other cosmopolitan writers reject the assumption that the English language has an inherent relationship to only one kind of national or racial experience. "The English language is nobody's special property," asserts the Caribbean poet Derek Walcott.

For the colonial, postcolonial, or immigrant writer who embraces English, the question remains, Which English? The imported Standardized English or a local vernacular? Or if both, should they be intermingled or kept apart? At one end of the spectrum are writers, such as Wole Soyinka and V. S. Naipaul, who think Standardized English, perhaps slightly altered, can bespeak a postcolonial experience of race, identity, and history. At the other end are vernacular writers who feel that the language of the center cannot do justice to their experience at the margins of empire. Louise Bennett, for example, gives voice to everyday Jamaican experience in her witty and wily use of Jamaican Creole, or patois; she mocks its denigration as a "corruption of the English language," pointing out that Standardized English is itself but an amalgam of dialects and foreign languages. "It was in language that the slave was perhaps most successfully imprisoned by his master," Kamau Brathwaite has written, "and it was in his (mis-)use of it that he perhaps most effectively rebelled." Linton Kwesi Johnson graphically emphasizes his

resistance to the norms of Standardized English by his phonetic (mis-)spelling of English words.

Between the Standardized English writer and the vernacular writer range a host of fiction writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Caryl Phillips, and Zadie Smith, and poets, such as Walcott, Brathwaite, and Nichols, who switch between standard and "dialect" within or across individual works, creating juxtapositions, tensions, and new relationships between languages that have traditionally been kept hierarchically discrete. They linguistically embody their interstitial experience of living in between metropolis and margin, canon and creole, schoolbooks and the street.

Whether using slightly or heavily creolized English, or a medley of the two, writers from across the world—Barbadians and Bengalis and Black Britons—have employed a diverse array of distinctive idioms, dialects, and creoles to defy imperial norms, express emerging cultural identities, and inaugurate rich new possibilities for literature in English.

UNA MARSON

Una Marson (1905–1965) was born in St. Elizabeth, Jamaica, a rural area on the southwest of the island. Her father was a well-respected preacher and influenced Marson's trajectory as a literary writer, journalist, and political activist. She earned a scholarship to attend Hampton High School, a predominantly White boarding school in Jamaica modeled on the English public school. Hampton introduced her to the canon of British literature and to overt and covert racism, which would follow her throughout her life. Marson began writing poetry and plays in Jamaica. The money she earned from her first play, *At What a Price* (pub. 1933), allowed her to travel to England in 1932, where she became the first colonial person of color to stage a play in London.

Marson's other plays include *London Calling* (1937) and *Pocomania* (1938), the latter of which became an influential early work of Jamaican theater. She published four poetry collections, which make use of traditional forms and straightforward verse to capture the experience of being Black and female in environments where one feels both invisible and hypervisible. She published the protest poem "Nigger" (1933) in *The Keys*, the newspaper of the League of Coloured Peoples, a civil rights group working toward racial equality for Black peoples in Britain. The poem captures the anger and pain inflicted by the racial epithet, and the movements of pronouns from "They" to "We" across stanzas emphasize the divisions sewn by the slur. "The Stranger," from Marson's collection *The Moth and the Star* (1937), offers a surprising twist on the dramatic monologue, as Marson combines two voices in the poem. The primary speaker is a Black woman, and she recounts a conversation with a White love interest who she thinks is drawn to her out of a desire for the exotic.

Marson lived in London from 1932 until 1936, but returned to Jamaica for a year in response to suffering from anxiety and

depression. When she returned to England, she took a job with the BBC and assisted on the radio show *Calling the West Indies*, which began in 1939 as a venue for West Indian soldiers fighting in World War II to read letters home to their families. Despite enduring racial discrimination and social isolation at the BBC, Marson rose to the position of producer and created the radio show *Caribbean Voices*, which would evolve into a major organ for the development of West Indian literature.

Nigger

They called me "Nigger"
Those little white urchins.
They laughed and shouted
As I passed along the street,
They flung it at me:
"Nigger! Nigger! Nigger!"

What made me keep my fingers
From choking the words in their throats?
What made my face grow hot,
The blood boil in my veins
And tears spring to my eyes?
What made me go to my room
And sob my heart away
Because white urchins
Called me "Nigger"?

What makes the dark West Indian[1]
Fight at being called a Nigger?
What is there in a word
That should strike like a dagger
To the heart of Coloured men
And make them wince?

You of the white skinned Race,
You who profess such innocence,
I'll tell you why 'tis a sin to tell
Your offspring Coloured folks are queer,
Black men are bogies[2] and inferior far
To any creature with a skin made white.

You who feel that you are "sprung
Of earth's first blood",[3] your eyes
Are blinded now with arrogance.
With ruthlessness you seared
My people's flesh, and now you still
Would crush their very soul,
Add fierce insult to vilest injury.

We will not be called "Niggers"
Since this was the favourite curse
Of those who drove the Negroes
To their death in days of slavery.
"A good for nothing Nigger",
"Only one more Nigger gone"
They would repeat as though
He were a chicken or a rat.
That word then meant contempt,
All that was low and base,
And too refined for lower animals.

In later years when singing Negroes
Caused white men to laugh,
And show some interest in their art
They talked of "Nigger Minstrels"[4]
And patronised the Negro,
And laughing at his songs
They could nowise see
The thorns that pierced his heart.
"Nigger" was raised then to a Burlesque Show[5]
And thus from Curse to Clown progressed
A coloured man was cause for merriment.
And though to-day he soars in every field
Some shrunken souls still say
"Look at that Nigger there
As though they saw a green bloodhound
Or a pink puppy.

God keep my soul from hating such mean souls,
God keep my soul from hating
Those who preach the Christ
And say with churlish smile
"This place is not for 'Niggers'."
God save their souls from this great sin
Of hurting human hearts that live
And think and feel in unison
With all humanity.

1933

Endnotes

- Note 1: Inhabitant or native of the West Indies, a historical term for the islands of the Caribbean.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An evil spirit or specter.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Line from William Wordsworth's patriotic sonnet "It is not to be thought of" (1815). It bears themes of racial and linguistic supremacy.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Entertainment popular in the 19th and early 20th century United States that was founded on racial stereotypes and commonly featured troupes of White actors, musicians, and dancers in blackface.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Variety shows based on parody and featuring bawdy comedy and stripteases.Return to reference 5

The Stranger

You liked talking to people like me
You said, with a wistful smile
That enchanted me, so the pause
That came before I spoke
Must have seemed strange to you,
And when I returned the compliment
So sweetly made, I still thought
Of the wistfulness of your smile.

So you like talking to people like me,
Friend with the wistful smile,
To foreign girls who are brown of skin
And have black kinky hair
And have strange black eyes.

You like to hear the tales I tell
Of a tropic Paradise,
Of sunkissed woods and mountains high
Of skies that are bluer than ever
Skies are blue in your nordic clime:
Of magic sunsets and marvellous seas,
Of waterfalls clattering down,
Stars so near, and the moon so large,
And fireflies, stars of the earth.

I like to listen to you,
Friend with the wistful smile.
It's not to hear of your great country
And tales of your marvellous land,
But to watch the wistful smile
That plays around your mouth,

The strange look in your eyes
And hear the calm sweet tone of your voice.

1937

LOUISE BENNETT

Louise Bennett (1919–2006), the preeminent West Indian poet of Creole verse, was born and grew up in Kingston, Jamaica, in the British West Indies, her mother a dressmaker, her father a baker. After she had published her first book of poetry, *Dialect Verses* (1942), she attended London's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. As "Miss Lou" she won a mass following in the Caribbean through her vibrant stage performances of her poetry and of folk song; her weekly "dialect" poems published from 1943 in Jamaica's national newspaper, the *Gleaner*; her radio show, "Miss Lou's Views" (1966–82); and her children's television program, "Ring Ding" (1970–82).

Bennett helped dismantle the view that Jamaican English is a corruption of Standardized English, a prejudice she lambasted in radio monologues such as "Jamaica Language" and in poems such as "Dry-Foot Bwoy," which humorously juxtaposes a metaphor-rich Creole with a hollowly imitative British English. From a young age she felt that the humor, wit, and vigor of Creole were largely untapped possibilities for writing and performing poetry, even though this commitment to Jamaican English prevented her from being recognized as a poet until after the Black cultural revolution of the late 1960s and 1970s. In her poetry she often assumes the perspective of a West Indian trickster, such as the woman who cunningly subverts gender and geographic hierarchies in "Jamaica Oman [Woman]." Bennett makes wily and ebullient use of received forms, employing the ironic possibilities of dramatic monologue, the contrasts and inversions afforded by the ballad stanza, and the time-tested wisdom and pith of Jamaican proverbs. Both on the page and in her recorded performances, Bennett's vital characters and robust imagination help win over readers unfamiliar with Jamaican English, who can join in the laughing seriousness of poems such as "Colonization in Reverse," which ironically inverts Britain's xenophobic apprehension at the postwar influx of Jamaican

immigrants, while also casting a suspicious eye on some Jamaicans' reverse exploitation of their exploiters. No one is safe from the multiple ironies and carnivalesque irreverence of Bennett's verse.

Jamaica Language[1]

Listen, na!

My Aunty Roachy seh dat it bwile[2] her temper an really bex[3] her fi true anytime she hear anybody a style we Jamaican dialec as "corruption of the English language." For if dat be de case, den dem shoulda call English Language corruption of Norman French an Latin an all dem tarra[4] language what dem seh dat English is derived from.

Oonoo[5] hear de wud? "Derived." English is a derivation but Jamaica Dialec is corruption! What a unfairity!

Aunty Roachy seh dat if Jamaican Dialec is corruption of de English Language, den it is also a corruption of de African Twi Language to, a oh!

For Jamaican Dialec did start when we English forefahders did start musan-boun[6] we African ancestors fi stop talk fi-dem African Language altogedder an learn fi talk so-so[7] English, because we English forefahders couldn understan what we African ancestors-dem wasa seh to dem one anodder when dem wasa talk eena dem African Language to dem one annodder!

But we African ancestors-dem pop[8] we English forefahders-dem. Yes! Pop dem an disguise up de English Language fi projec fi-dem African Language in such a way dat we English forefahders-dem still couldn understan what we African ancestors-dem wasa talk bout when dem wasa talk to dem one annodder!

Yes, bwoy!

So till now, aldoah plenty a we Jamaica Dialec wuds-dem come from English wuds, yet, still an for all, de talkin is so-so Jamaican, an when we ready we can meck it soun like it no got no English at all eena it! An no so-so English-talkin smaddy cyaan[9] understan weh we a seh if we doan want dem to understan weh we a seh, a oh!

An we fix up we dialec wud fi soun like whatsoever we a talk bout, look like! For instance, when we seh sinting "kooroo-kooroo"[1] up, yuh know seh dat it mark-up mark-up. An if we seh one house "rookoo-rookoo"[2] up, it is plain to see dat it ole an shaky-shaky. An when we seh smaddy "boogoo-yagga," everybody know seh dat him outa-order; an if we seh dem "boonoonoonoos,"[3] yuh know seh dat dem nice an we like dem. Mmmm.

Aunty Roachy seh dat Jamaica Dialec is more direc an to de point dan English. For all like how English smaddy would seh "Go away," Jamaican jus seh "Gweh!" An de only time we use more wuds dan English is when we want fi meck someting soun strong: like when dem seh sinting "batter-batter" up, it soun more expressive dan if yuh seh "it is battered." But most of all we fling weh all de bangarang an trimmins[4]-dem an only lef what wantin, an dat's why when English smaddy seh "I got stuck by a prickle" Jamaican jus seh "Macca[5] jook me"!

So fi-we Jamaica Language is not no English Language corruption at all, a oh! An we no haffi shame a it, like one gal who did go a Englan go represent we Jamaican folk-song "One shif me got" as "De sole underwear garment I possess," and go sing "Mumma, Mumma, dem ketch Puppa" as "Mother, Mother, they apprehended Father"!

Ay ya yie!

1979–811993

Endnotes

- Note 1: Originally broadcast sometime between 1979 and 1981, this radio monologue has been reprinted from *Aunty Roachy Seh* (1993), ed. Mervyn Morris.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Boils.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Vexes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Other.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: You (plural).Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Compel.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Only.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Outwitted.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Can’t. “Smaddy”: people.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Rough; rocky. “Sinting”: something.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Unsteady.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Beautiful; wonderful (term of endearment). “Boogoo-yagga”: ill-mannered.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Miscellaneous trash and trimmings.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A prickly plant.Return to reference 5

Dry-Foot Bwoy[1]

Wha wrong wid Mary dry-foot bwoy?
Dem gal got him fi mock,°
An when me meet him tarra night
De bwoy gi me a shock!

Me tell him seh him auntie an
Him cousin dem sen howdy[2]
An ask him how him getting awn.
Him seh, 'Oh, jolley, jolley!'

Me start fi feel so sorry fi
De po bad-lucky soul,
Me tink him come a foreign lan
Come ketch bad foreign cole!

Me tink him got a bad sore-troat,
But as him chat-chat gwan
Me fine out seh is foreign twang
De bwoy wasa put awn![3]

For me notice dat him answer
To nearly all me seh
Was 'Actually', 'What', 'Oh deah!'
An all dem sinting deh.°

Me gi a joke, de gal dem laugh;
But hear de bwoy, 'Haw-haw!
I'm sure you got that bally-dash°
Out of the cinema!'

Same time me laas me temper, an

Me holler, 'Bwoy, kirout![°]
No chat to me wid no hot pittata
Eena yuh mout!'

Him tan[°] up like him stunted, den
Hear him no, 'How silley!
I don't think that I really
Understand you, actually.'

Me seh, 'Yuh understan me, yaw!
No yuh name Cudjoe Scoop?
Always visit Nana kitchen an
Gi laugh fi gungoo soup![4]

'An now all yuh can seh is "actually"?
Bwoy, but tap!
Wha happen to dem sweet Jamaica
Joke yuh use fi pop?'

Him get bex[°] and walk tru de door,
Him head eena de air;
De gal-dem bawl out affa him,[5]
'Not going? What! Oh deah!'

An from dat night till tedeh, mah,
Dem all got him fi mock.
Miss Mary dry-foot bwoy!
Cyaan get over de shock!

1957

Endnotes

- Note 1: Thin-legged (inexperienced) boy.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: I told him that his auntie and his cousins sent [or send] greetings.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: But as he kept talking I realized his foreign accent was put on.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Chastising the boy for his pretensions, the speaker reminds him that he is African Jamaican. Cudjoe and Nana are African names used in Jamaica. “Gungoo”: congo pea.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The girls went crying after him.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *The girls are mocking him*Return to reference °
- °: *All of them things there*Return to reference °
- °: *nonsense, balderdash*Return to reference °
- °: *clear out*Return to reference °
- °: *stand*Return to reference °
- °: *vexed*Return to reference °

Colonization in Reverse

What a joyful news, Miss Mattie;
Ah feel like me heart gwine burs—
Jamaica people colonizin
Englan in reverse.[!]

By de hundred, by de tousan,
From country an from town,
By de ship-load, by de plane-load,
Jamaica is Englan boun.

Dem a pour out a Jamaica;
Everybody future plan
Is fi get a big-time job
An settle in de motherlan.

What a islan! What a people!
Man an woman, ole an young
Jussa pack dem bag an baggage
An tun history upside dung![°]

Some people doan like travel,
But fi show dem loyalty
Dem all a open up cheap-fare-
To-Englan agency;

An week by week dem shippin off
Dem countryman like fire
Fi immigrate an populate
De seat a de Empire.

Oonoo[°] se how life is funny,
Oonoo see de tunabout?

Jamaica live fi box bread
Out a English people mout.

For when dem catch a Englan
An start play dem different role
Some will settle down to work
An some will settle fi de dole.°

Jane seh de dole is not too bad
Because dey payin she
Two pounds a week fi seek a job
Dat suit her dignity.

Me seh Jane will never fine work
At de rate how she dah look
For all day she stay pon Aunt Fan couch
An read love-story book.

What a devilment a Englan!
Dem face war an brave de worse;
But ah wonderin how dem gwine stan
Colonizin in reverse.

1957

Endnotes

- Note l: Encouraged by the postwar labor shortage in England and the scarcity of work at home, three hundred thousand West Indians migrated to Britain from 1948 to 1962.Return to reference l

Notes

- °: *down*Return to reference °
- °: *you (plural)*Return to reference °

- °: *for unemployment benefits* Return to reference °

Jamaica Oman[1]

Jamaica oman cunny, sah![°]
Is how dem jinnal so?[°]
Look how long dem liberated
An de man dem never know!

Look how long Jamaica oman
—Modder, sister, wife, sweetheart—
Outa road an eena yard[°] deh pon
A dominate her part!

From Maroon Nanny[2] teck her body
Bounce bullet back pon man,
To when nowadays gal-pickney[°] tun
Spellin-Bee champion.

From de grass root to de hill-top,
In profession, skill an trade,
Jamaica oman teck her time
Dah mount an meck de grade.

Some backa man a push, some side-a
Man a hole him han,
Some a lick sense eena man head,
Some a guide him pon him plan!

Neck an neck an foot an foot wid man
She buckle hole[°] her own;
While man a call her 'so-so rib'
Oman a tun backbone![3]

An long before Oman Lib[4] bruck out

Over foreign lan
Jamaica female wasa work
Her liberated plan!

Jamaica oman know she strong,
She know she tallawah,°
But she no want her pickney° dem
Fi start call her 'Puppa'.°

So de cunny Jamma° oman
Gwan like pants-suit is a style,
An Jamaica man no know she wear
De trousiz all de while!

So Jamaica oman coaxin
Fambly budget from explode
A so Jamaica man a sing
'Oman a heaby load!'[5]

But de cunny Jamma oman
Ban her belly,[6] bite her tongue,
Ketch water, put pot pon fire
An jus dig her toe a grung.[7]

For 'Oman luck deh a dungle',[8]
Some rooted more dan some,
But as long as fowl a scratch dungle heap
Oman luck mus come!

Lickle by lickle man start praise her,
Day by day de praise a grow;
So him praise her, so it sweet her,
For she wonder if him know.

1975

Endnotes

- Note 1: Woman.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Jamaican national hero who led the Maroons, fugitive slaves, in battle during the 18th century. Bullets reputedly ricocheted off her and killed her enemies.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Eve is said to have come from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21–22).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Women's liberation movement.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A folk song often sung while working in the fields.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Binds her belly (a practice associated with grief; also a suggestion of belt tightening, as in hunger).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: And just digs her toes into the ground.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, woman's luck will be rediscovered (proverbial). "Dungle": garbage dump.Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *cunning, sir*Return to reference °
- °: *how are they so tricky?*Return to reference °
- °: *home*Return to reference °
- °: *girl-child*Return to reference °
- °: *she take hold*Return to reference °
- °: *sturdy*Return to reference °
- °: *children*Return to reference °
- °: *Papa*Return to reference °
- °: *Jamaican*Return to reference °

KAMAU BRATHWAITE

As a poet and historian, Kamau Brathwaite (1930–2020) was the most prominent West Indian spokesman for "the literature of reconnection": he sought to recover and revalue the African inheritance in the Caribbean—a religious, linguistic, and cultural legacy seen as embarrassing or taboo through most of the twentieth century. In *History of the Voice*, a lecture first delivered in 1979, Brathwaite argues that African Caribbeans, their ancestors uprooted by slavery, were further cut off from their specific history and their local environment by Standard English models of language and literature. He proposes "nation language," a creolized English saturated with African words, rhythms, even grammar, as a crucial tool for writers to recuperate African Caribbean history and experience. His own poetry draws on West Indian syncopations, orality, and musical traditions, but also adapts imported models, such as the modernist dislocations of persona, rhythm, and tone in T. S. Eliot's verse.

He was born Lawson Edward Brathwaite in Bridgetown, Barbados, at the eastern edge of the West Indies. His undergraduate studies in history were at Cambridge University; his graduate studies, at the University of Sussex. He worked as an education officer for the Ministry of Education in Ghana (1955–62) and taught history at the University of the West Indies, before taking a position in comparative literature at New York University in 1991. His many books of poetry include a work of epic scope and scale, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (1973), which gathers *Rights of Passage* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969). Toward the end of his career, his poetry became more engaged with the idea of writing as a recording technology in books such as *X/Self* (1987) and *ConVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (1999) (see p. 1094 in this volume).

[Nation Language][1]

What I am going to talk about this morning is language from the Caribbean, the process of using English in a different way from the "norm". English in a new sense as I prefer to call it. English in an ancient sense. English in a very traditional sense. And sometimes not English at all, but *language.*

I start my thoughts, taking up from the discussion that developed after Dennis Brutus's[2] very excellent presentation. Without logic, and through instinct, the people who spoke with Dennis from the floor yesterday brought up the question of language. * * * In his case, it was English, and English as spoken by Africans, and the native languages as spoken by Africans.

We in the Caribbean have a similar kind of plurality: we have English, which is the imposed language on much of the archipelago. English is an imperial language, as are French, Dutch, and Spanish. We have what we call creole English, which is a mixture of English and an adaptation that English took in the new environment of the Caribbean when it became mixed with the other imported languages. We have also what is called *nation language*, which is the kind of English spoken by the people who were brought to the Caribbean, not the official English now, but the language of slaves and labourers, the servants who were brought in by the conquistadors. Finally, we have the remnants of ancestral languages still persisting in the Caribbean. There is Amerindian, which is active in certain parts of Central America but not in the Caribbean because the Amerindians are a destroyed people, and their languages were practically destroyed. We have Hindi, spoken by some of the more traditional East Indians who live in the Caribbean, and there are also varieties of Chinese. And, miraculously, there are survivals of African languages still persisting in the Caribbean. So we have that spectrum —that prism—of languages similar to the kind of structure that

Dennis described for South Africa. Now, I have to give you some kind of background to the development of these languages, the historical development of this plurality, because I can't take it for granted that you know and understand the history of the Caribbean.

The Caribbean is a set of islands stretching out from Florida in a mighty curve. You must know of the Caribbean at least from television, at least now with hurricane David[3] coming right into it. The islands stretch out on an arc of some two thousand miles from Florida through the Atlantic to the South American coast, and they were originally inhabited by Amerindian people, Taino, Siboney, Carib, Arawak. In 1492, Columbus "discovered" (as it is said) the Caribbean, and with that discovery came the intrusion of European culture and peoples and a fragmentation of the original Amerindian culture. We had Europe "nationalizing" itself into Spanish, French, English and Dutch so that people had to start speaking (and *thinking*) in four metropolitan languages rather than possibly a single native language. Then, with the destruction of the Amerindians, which took place within 30 years of Columbus' discovery (one million dead a year), it was necessary for the Europeans to import new labour bodies into the Caribbean. And the most convenient form of labour was the labour on the very edge of the trade winds—the labour on the edge of the *slave* trade winds, the labour on the edge of the hurricane, the labour on the edge of West Africa—. And so the peoples of Ashanti,[4] Congo, Nigeria, from all that mighty coast of western Africa were imported into the Caribbean. And we had the arrival in that area of a new language structure. It consisted of many languages, but basically they had a common semantic and stylistic form. What these languages had to do, however, was to submerge themselves, because officially the conquering peoples—the Spaniards, the English, the French, and the Dutch—did not wish to hear people speaking Ashanti or any of the Congolese languages. So there was a submergence of this imported language. Its status became one of inferiority. Similarly, its speakers were slaves. They were conceived of as inferiors—nonhuman, in fact—. But this very submergence served an interesting intercultural purpose, because

although people continued to speak English as it was spoken in Elizabethan times and on through the Romantic and Victorian ages, that English was, nonetheless, still being influenced by the underground language, the submerged language that the slaves had brought. And that underground language was itself constantly transforming itself into new forms. It was moving from a purely African form to a form that was African, but which was adapting to the new environment and to the cultural imperatives of the European languages. And it was influencing the way in which the French, Dutch, and Spanish spoke their own languages. So there was a very complex process taking place which is now beginning to surface in our literature.

In the Caribbean, as in South Africa (and in any area of cultural imperialism for that matter), the educational system did not recognize the presence of these various languages. What our educational system did was to recognize and maintain the language of the conquistador—the language of the planter, the language of the official, the language of the Anglican preacher—. It insisted that not only would English be spoken in the anglophone Caribbean, but that the educational system would carry the contours of an English heritage. Hence, as Dennis said, Shakespeare, George Eliot, Jane Austen—British literature and literary forms, the models that were intimate to Great Britain, that had very little to do, really, with the environment and the reality of the Caribbean—were dominant in the Caribbean educational system. People were forced to learn things that had no relevance to themselves. Paradoxically, in the Caribbean (as in many other "cultural disaster" areas), the people educated in this system came to know more, even today, about English kings and queens than they do about our own national heroes, our own slave rebels—the people who helped to build and to destroy our society—. We are more excited by English literary models, by the concept of, say, Sherwood Forest and Robin Hood, than we are by Nanny of the Maroons,[5] a name some of us didn't even know until a few years ago. And in terms of what we write, our perceptual models, we are more conscious (in terms of sensibility) of the falling

of snow for instance—the models are all there for the falling of the snow—than of the force of the hurricanes that take place every year. In other words, we haven't got the syllables, the syllabic intelligence, to describe the hurricane, which is our own experience; whereas we can describe the imported alien experience of the snowfall. It is that kind of situation that we are in.

Now the creole adaptation to all this is the child who, instead of writing in an essay "The snow was falling on the fields of Shropshire"[6] (which is what our children literally were writing until a few years ago, below drawings they made of white snow fields and the corn-haired people who inhabited such a landscape), wrote "The snow was falling on the cane fields." The child had not yet reached the obvious statement that it wasn't snow at all, but rain that was probably falling on the cane fields. She was trying to have both cultures at the same time. But that is creolization.

What is even more important, as we develop this business of emergent language in the Caribbean, is the actual rhythm and the syllables, the very body work, in a way, of the language. What English has given us as a model for poetry, and to a lesser extent, prose (but poetry is the basic tool here), is the pentameter: "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day."[7] There have, of course, been attempts to break it. And there were other dominant forms like, for example, *Beowulf* (c. 750), *The Seafarer*,[8] and what Langland (1322?–1400) had produced:

> *For trewthe telleth that love. is triacle of hevene;*
> *May no synne be on him sene. that useth that spise,*
> *And alle his werkes he wrougte. with love as him liste.*

Or, from *Piers the Plowman* (which does not make it into *Palgrave's Golden Treasury*,[9] but which we all had to "do" at school) the haunting prologue:

> *In a somer seson. whan soft was the sonne*
> *I shope me into shroudes. as I a shepe were*

Which has recently inspired our own Derek Walcott to his first major nation language effort:

> *In idle August, while the sea soft,*
> *and leaves of brown islands stick to the rim*
> *of this Caribbean, I blow out the light*
> *by the dreamless face of Maria Concepcion*
> *to ship as a seaman on the schooner* Flight.[1]

But by the time we reach Chaucer (1345–1400), the pentameter prevails. Over in the New World, the Americans—Walt Whitman—tried to bridge or to break the pentameter through a cosmic movement, a large movement of sound. Cummings tried to fragment it. And Marianne Moore attacked it with syllabics.[2] But basically the pentameter remained, and it carries with it a certain kind of experience, which is not the experience of a hurricane. The hurricane does not roar in pentameter. And that's the problem: how do you get a rhythm that approximates the natural experience, the environmental experience. We have been trying to break out of the entire pentametric model in the Caribbean and to move into a system that more closely and intimately approaches our own experience. So that is what we are talking about now.

It is nation language in the Caribbean that, in fact, largely ignores the pentameter. Nation language is the language that is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of our New World/Caribbean heritage. English it may be in terms of its lexicon, but it is not English in terms of its syntax. And English it certainly is not in terms of its rhythm and timbre, its own sound explosion. In its contours, it is not English, even though the words, as you hear them, would be English to a greater or lesser degree. And this brings us back to the question that some of you raised yesterday: can English be a revolutionary language? And the lovely answer that came back was: it is not English that is the agent. It is not language, but people, who make revolutions.

I think, however, that language does really have a role to play here, certainly in the Caribbean. But it is an English that is not the standard, imported, educated English, but that of the submerged, surrealist experience and sensibility, which has always been there and which is now increasingly coming to the surface and influencing the perception of contemporary Caribbean people. It is what I call, as I say, *nation language.* I use the term in contrast to *dialect.* The word dialect has been bandied about for a long time, and it carries very pejorative overtones. Dialect is thought of as "bad" English. Dialect is "inferior" English. Dialect is the language when you want to make fun of someone. Caricature speaks in dialect. Dialect has a long history coming from the plantation where people's dignity was distorted through their languages and the descriptions that the dialect gave to them. Nation language, on the other hand, is the submerged area of that dialect that is much more closely allied to the African aspect of experience in the Caribbean. It may be in English, but often it is in an English which is like a howl, or a shout, or a machine-gun, or the wind, or a wave. It is also like the blues. And sometimes it is English and African at the same time.

* * *

The mainstream poets who were moving from standard English to nation language were influenced basically, I think (again the models are important), by T. S. Eliot. What T. S. Eliot did for Caribbean poetry and Caribbean literature was to introduce the notion of the speaking voice, the conversational tone.[3] That is what really attracted us to Eliot. And you can see how the Caribbean poets introduced here have been influenced by him, although they eventually went on to create their own environmental expression.

* * *

1979–81984, 1986

Endnotes

- Note 1: First printed separately in 1984, Brathwaite's lecture *History of the Voice* was slightly modified and incorporated in his essay collection *Roots* (1986, 1993), from which this selection is excerpted.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: South African poet (1924–2009).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A hurricane that killed over 2,000 people in the Caribbean in August 1979.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Region in present-day central Ghana.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The Maroons were Africans and escaped slaves who, after running away or participating in successful rebellions, set up autonomous societies throughout plantation America in marginal and certainly inaccessible areas outside European influence. . . . Nanny of the Maroons, an ex-Ashanti (?) Queen Mother, is regarded as one of the greatest of the Jamaican freedom fighters [*Brathwaite's note*].Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Region of western England on the Welsh border, written about by the English poet A. E. Housman (1859–1936).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The opening line of "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," by the English poet Thomas Gray (1716–1771).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Poem in Old English.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Collection of songs and lyric poems published in London. *Piers the Plowman*: Middle English poem believed to have been written by William Langland (ca. 1330–1387).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Beginning of "The Schooner *Flight,*" by the Saint Lucian poet Derek Walcott (1930–2017).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Verses based on the number of syllables, not accents, in a line. E. E. Cummings (1894–1962), American poet. Marianne Moore (1887–1972), American poet.Return to reference 2
- Note 3:

For those of us who really made the breakthrough, it was Eliot's actual voice—or rather his recorded voice, property of the British Council (Barbados)—reading "Preludes," "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *The Waste Land*, and later the *Four Quartets*—not the texts—which turned us on. In that dry deadpan delivery, the "riddims" of St. Louis (though we did not know the source then) were stark and clear for those of us who at the same time were listening to the dislocations of Bird, Dizzy, and Klook. And it is interesting that, on the whole, the establishment could not stand Eliot's voice—and far less jazz [*Brathwaite's note*]. "Bird": American jazz musician Charlie "Bird" Parker (1920–1955). "Dizzy": American jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (1917–1993). "Klook": American jazz drummer Kenny Clarke (1914–1985).
Return to reference 3

NGŨGĨ WA THIONG'O

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (b. 1938) was born in Limuru, Kenya, where his father was a peasant farmer. He was educated at the Alliance High School in Kikuyu, Kenya; Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda; and Leeds University in England. In the late 1960s, while teaching at University College, Nairobi, Kenya, he was one of the prime movers behind the abolition of the college's English department, arguing for its replacement by a Department of African Literature and Languages (two departments were formed, one of literature, the other of language). His novels include *Weep Not, Child* (1964), about the 1950s Mau Mau rebellion against British rule in Kenya, *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), about the war's aftermath, and *Petals of Blood* (1977), about the failure of the East African state, and he has written plays and novels in his native Gĩkũyũ, also sharply critical of post-independence Kenya, such as the novel *Matigarima Njiruungi* (1986). In 1982, after his imprisonment in Kenya and the banning of his books there, Ngũgĩ left to teach abroad, most recently at the University of California, Irvine.

At the beginning of *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ declares the book "my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gĩkũyũ and Kiswahili all the way." Although Ngũgĩ has subsequently modified this position, he lays out starkly the case against English language and literature as tools of colonialism, which continue to have insidious effects long after formal decolonization. As the student of a British colonial education, Ngũgĩ came to feel that, because of the close relation between language and cultural memory, the imposition of English language and literature severs colonized peoples from their cultural experience—an experience best recovered and explored in indigenous languages.

From Decolonising the Mind

From *The Language of African Literature*

III

I was born into a large peasant family: father, four wives and about twenty-eight children. I also belonged, as we all did in those days, to a wider extended family and to the community as a whole.

We spoke Gĩkũyũ[1] as we worked in the fields. We spoke Gĩkũyũ in and outside the home. I can vividly recall those evenings of story-telling around the fireside. It was mostly the grown-ups telling the children but everybody was interested and involved. We children would re-tell the stories the following day to other children who worked in the fields picking the pyrethrum flowers,[2] tea-leaves or coffee beans of our European and African landlords.

The stories, with mostly animals as the main characters, were all told in Gĩkũyũ. Hare, being small, weak but full of innovative wit and cunning, was our hero. We identified with him as he struggled against the brutes of prey like lion, leopard, hyena. His victories were our victories and we learnt that the apparently weak can outwit the strong. We followed the animals in their struggle against hostile nature—drought, rain, sun, wind—a confrontation often forcing them to search for forms of co-operation. But we were also interested in their struggles amongst themselves, and particularly between the beasts and the victims of prey. These twin struggles, against nature and other animals, reflected real-life struggles in the human world.

Not that we neglected stories with human beings as the main characters. There were two types of characters in such human-centred narratives: the species of truly human beings with qualities of courage, kindness, mercy, hatred of evil, concern for others; and a man-eat-man two-mouthed species with qualities of greed, selfishness, individualism and hatred of what was good for the larger co-operative community. Co-operation as the ultimate good in a community was a constant theme. It could unite human beings with animals against ogres and beasts of prey, as in the story of how dove, after being fed with castor-oil seeds, was sent to fetch a smith

working far away from home and whose pregnant wife was being threatened by these man-eating two-mouthed ogres.

There were good and bad story-tellers. A good one could tell the same story over and over again, and it would always be fresh to us, the listeners. He or she could tell a story told by someone else and make it more alive and dramatic. The differences really were in the use of words and images and the inflexion of voices to effect different tones.

We therefore learnt to value words for their meaning and nuances. Language was not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning. Our appreciation of the suggestive magical power of language was reinforced by the games we played with words through riddles, proverbs, transpositions of syllables, or through nonsensical but musically arranged words. So we learnt the music of our language on top of the content. The language, through images and symbols, gave us a view of the world, but it had a beauty of its own. The home and the field were then our pre-primary school but what is important, for this discussion, is that the language of our evening teach-ins, and the language of our immediate and wider community, and the language of our work in the fields were one.

And then I went to school, a colonial school, and this harmony was broken. The language of my education was no longer the language of my culture. I first went to Kamaandura, missionary run, and then to another called Maanguuũ run by nationalists grouped around the Gĩkũyũ Independent and Karinga Schools Association. Our language of education was still Gĩkũyũ. The very first time I was ever given an ovation for my writing was over a composition in Gĩkũyũ. So for my first four years there was still harmony between the language of my formal education and that of the Limuru peasant community.

It was after the declaration of a state of emergency over Kenya in 1952[3] that all the schools run by patriotic nationalists were taken over by the colonial regime and were placed under District Education Boards chaired by Englishmen. English became the language of my

formal education. In Kenya, English became more than a language: it was *the* language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference.

Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gĩkũyũ in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment—three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks—or was made to carry a metal plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford. And how did the teachers catch the culprits? A button was initially given to one pupil who was supposed to hand it over to whoever was caught speaking his mother tongue. Whoever had the button at the end of the day would sing who had given it to him and the ensuing process would bring out all the culprits of the day. Thus children were turned into witch-hunters and in the process were being taught the lucrative value of being a traitor to one's immediate community.

The attitude to English was the exact opposite: any achievement in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms. English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became *the* main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education.

As you may know, the colonial system of education in addition to its apartheid racial demarcation had the structure of a pyramid: a broad primary base, a narrowing secondary middle, and an even narrower university apex. Selections from primary into secondary were through an examination, in my time called Kenya African Preliminary Examination, in which one had to pass six subjects ranging from Maths to Nature Study and Kiswahili.[4] All the papers were written in English. Nobody could pass the exam who failed the English language paper no matter how brilliantly he had done in the other subjects. I remember one boy in my class of 1954 who had distinctions in all subjects except English, which he had failed. He was made to fail the entire exam. He went on to become a turn boy[5] in a bus company. I who had only passes but a credit in English got

a place at the Alliance High School, one of the most elitist institutions for Africans in colonial Kenya. The requirements for a place at the University, Makerere University College,[6] were broadly the same: nobody could go on to wear the undergraduate red gown, no matter how brilliantly they had performed in all the other subjects unless they had a credit—not even a simple pass!—in English. Thus the most coveted place in the pyramid and in the system was only available to the holder of an English language credit card. English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom.

Literary education was now determined by the dominant language while also reinforcing that dominance. Orature (oral literature) in Kenyan languages stopped. In primary school I now read simplified Dickens and Stevenson alongside Rider Haggard. Jim Hawkins, Oliver Twist, Tom Brown—not Hare, Leopard and Lion—were now my daily companions in the world of imagination.[7] In secondary school, Scott and G. B. Shaw vied with more Rider Haggard, John Buchan, Alan Paton, Captain W. E. Johns.[8] At Makerere I read English: from Chaucer to T. S. Eliot with a touch of Graham Greene.[9]

Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds.

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: Bantu language spoken in western Kenya by approximately five million people.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Flower used to produce a natural insecticide.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Mau Mau, militant African nationalists, led a revolt in 1952 that resulted in four years of British military operations and the deaths of more than 11,000 insurgents.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Swahili, a Bantu language that is the most widely understood language in Africa.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, the person who operates a turnstile.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: University in Kampala, Uganda, that was connected with the University of London in the 1950s and 1960s.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  The English novelist Charles Dickens (1812–1870) wrote *Oliver Twist*. Jim Hawkins is the hero of *Treasure Island*, by the Scottish fiction writer and essayist Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894). The English novelist Rider Haggard (1856–1925) wrote African adventure stories. *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is by the English novelist Thomas Hughes (1822–1896).
  Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832), Scottish novelist. George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), Anglo-Irish dramatist. John Buchan (1875–1940), Scottish author of adventure stories. Alan Paton (1903–1988), South African novelist. William Earl Johns (1893–1968), English author of children's fiction.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343–1400), English poet. T. S. Eliot (1888–1965), Anglo-American poet. Graham Greene (1904–1991), English novelist. "Read": here "majored in."Return to reference 9

IV

* * *

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world.

v

So what was the colonialist imposition of a foreign language doing to us children?

The real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; to control, in other words, the entire realm of the language of real life. Colonialism imposed its control of the social production of wealth through military conquest and subsequent political dictatorship. But its most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world. Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others.

For colonialism this involved two aspects of the same process: the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of a people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the coloniser. The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonised.

* * *

IX

I started writing in Gĩkũyũ language in 1977 after seventeen years of involvement in Afro-European literature, in my case Afro-English literature. * * * Wherever I have gone, particularly in Europe, I have been confronted with the question: why are you now writing in Gĩkũyũ? Why do you now write in an African language? In some academic quarters I have been confronted with the rebuke, 'Why have you abandoned us?' It was almost as if, in choosing to write in Gĩkũyũ, I was doing something abnormal. But Gĩkũyũ is my mother tongue! The very fact that what common sense dictates in the literary practice of other cultures is being questioned in an African writer is a measure of how far imperialism has distorted the view of African realities. It has turned reality upside down: the abnormal is viewed as normal and the normal is viewed as abnormal. Africa actually enriches Europe: but Africa is made to believe that it needs Europe to rescue it from poverty. Africa's natural and human resources continue to develop Europe and America: but Africa is made to feel grateful for aid from the same quarters that still sit on the back of the continent. Africa even produces intellectuals who now rationalise this upside-down way of looking at Africa.

I believe that my writing in Gĩkũyũ language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples. In schools and universities our Kenyan languages—that is the languages of the many nationalities which make up Kenya—were associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and punishment. We who went through that school system were meant to graduate with a hatred of the people and the culture and the values of the language of our daily humiliation and punishment. I do not want to see Kenyan children growing up in that imperialist-imposed tradition of contempt for the tools of communication developed by their communities and their history. I want them to transcend colonial alienation.

* * *

We African writers are bound by our calling to do for our languages what Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare did for English; what Pushkin and Tolstoy[1] did for Russian; indeed what all writers in world history have done for their languages by meeting the challenge of creating a literature in them, which process later opens the languages for philosophy, science, technology and all the other areas of human creative endeavours.

1986

Endnotes

- Note 1: Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), Russian novelist; Aleksandr Pushkin (1799–1837), Russian poet.Return to reference 1

SAMUEL SELVON

Samuel "Sam" Selvon (1923–1994) was born in San Fernando, Trinidad. His father was a cocoa merchant from India, and his mother was of mixed Indian and Scottish ancestry. Selvon attended Naparima College (a secondary school for boys) before joining the Trinidad Royal Navy reserve in 1939. He worked as a wireless radio operator for a brief period and then shifted to journalism and literary writing in Trinidad. He and his wife moved to London in 1950 as part of the Windrush Generation, a large wave of immigrants from the Caribbean colonies who sought job opportunities in the United Kingdom. This generation contributed to the growing racial diversity of post–World War II England and signaled demographic shifts in the population of the UK as former subjects of the British Empire settled in its metropolitan center.

As an East Indian growing up in the West Indies, Selvon was no stranger to resettlement, and he brought themes and styles of cultural mixture to his novels and short stories. *A Brighter Sun* (1952), published just after his arrival in England, explored the mutual distrust among Indians and Creoles (a group of mixed African and European ancestry) in Trinidad. Subsequent novels and short story collections explored the transition from the racial politics of the Caribbean islands to the de facto racial segregation of London, where newly arrived immigrants of color found themselves systemically isolated and marginalized by the predominantly White population. Selvon's most renowned novel, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), combined modernist techniques of narrative fragmentation with dialect writing to capture the collective disorientation and alienation of Black and Brown immigrants, mostly single men, in their own voices and accents. Its sequels, *Moses Ascending* (1975) and *Moses Migrating* (1983), followed one migrant in particular through the dream of owning a home and his return to his native Trinidad.

The short story included here, “Waiting for Aunty to Cough” from the collection *Ways of Sunlight* (1957), is representative of Selvon’s subtle humor and sensitivity to the male immigrant experience. The story is told by a first-person narrator, a migrant waiting for his friend Brackley to return from a date with a White local woman who lives on the outskirts of London. Throughout the “ballad,” as the narrator calls it, Selvon adopts the informal language and slang of his subjects so that dialect both estranges Standardized English and invites the reader into the thoughts and feelings of protagonists otherwise stigmatized within London. Brackley’s story, framed by the narrator, highlights the vulnerability and fear of Black migrants in London as well as the self-protective role that storytelling plays among young men struggling to establish themselves in a new place.

Waiting for Aunty to Cough

It had a late lime[1] what few of the boys acquainted with. That don't mean to say was anything exclusive, but as far as I know Brackley was the only fellar who get in with a thing[2] that living far from London, and had was to see the piece home every night, going out of the city and coming back late, missing bus and train and having to hustle or else stay stranded in one of them places behind God back.

I mean, some people might say a place like where Brackley used to go ain't far, and argue even that it still included in London, but to the city boys, as soon as you start to hit Clapham Common or Chiswick or Mile End or Highgate,[3] that mean you living in the country, and they out to give you tone, like: 'Mind you miss the last bus home, old man,' and, 'When next you coming to town?' or, 'You could get some fresh eggs for me where you living?'

Well Brackley in fact settle down nicely in Central, a two and ten room in Ladbroke Grove,[4] with easy communications[5] for liming out in the evenings after work, and the old Portobello road[6] near by to buy rations like saltfish and red beans and pig foot and pig tail. And almost every evening he would meet the boys and they would lime by the Arch, or the Gate,[7] and have a cup of coffee (it have place like stupidness now all over London selling coffee, you notice?) and coast a talk and keep a weather eye open for whatever might appear on the horizon.

But a time come, when the boys begin to miss Brackley.

'Anybody see Brackley?'

'I ain't see Brackley a long time, man. He must be move.'

'He uses to be in this coffee shop regular, but these days I can't see him at all.'

All this time, Brackley on one of them green trains you does catch in Charing Cross or Waterloo,[8] taking a ride and seeing the girl

home.

Though Brackley living in London for eight years, is as if he start to discover a new world. Brackley never hear name like what he reading as they pass them stations—Gypsy Hill, Penge West, Forest Hill.

'You sure we on the right train?' Brackley frighten like hell the first time, feeling as if they going to Scotland or something. 'How far from London you say this place is?'

'It is in London, I keep telling you,' the girl say patiently.

'All of this is London?' Brackley look out and see a station name Honor Oak Park. Houses fading away and down there real grim as if is a place far out in the country.

'Yes,' Beatrice say.

'And every day, you have to come all this way to work in London?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, you must be one of those commuter people I read about in the papers.'

Brackley look at his wristwatch. 'I don't like this lime,' he say.

'Oh, you'll get accustomed to it,' Beatrice say. 'It is like nothing to me now.'

'I wonder what the boys doing in the coffee shop in town,' Brackley mutter.

'That is all you ever worry about—wasting your time,' Beatrice start to sulk.

'It ain't have no high spots this side of the world?' Brackley ask. 'If it have, we could go out down here instead of staying in London and coming home late every night.'

'You know I like to go out in the city,' Beatrice pout. 'The only place we could go to down here is near to Croydon.'[9]

'Croydon!' Brackley repeat. 'Where the aeroplanes come from all over the world? You mean to say we so far from London?'

'There are frequent trains,' Beatrice say anxiously.

‘Frequent trains!’ Brackley repeat. ‘Frequent planes, you mean! I don’t like the lime at all.’

But all the same, Brackley like the thing and he was seeing she home every night.

Well he start to extend his geographical knowledge from the time he going out with Beatrice, and when he was explaining his absence from the city to the boys, he making it sound as if is a grand lime.

‘Man,’ he boasting, ‘you-all don’t know London! You think London is the Gate and the Arch and Trafalgar Square,[1] but them places is nothing. You ever hear about Honor Oak Rise?’

‘Which part that is, behind God back?’

‘That is a place in London, man! I mean, look at it this way. You live in London so long, and up to now you don’t know where that is. You see what I mean?’

‘Man Brackley, you only full of guile. This time so that woman have you stupid and travelling all over the country, when you could be liming here. You staying tonight? It have two sharp things does come for coffee here—I think they from Sweden, and you know over there ain’t have no inhibitation.’[2]

‘I can’t stay tonight.’

‘Today is Saturday, no night bus.’

But Brackley in hot with Beatrice at this stage and that ain’t worrying him. What happen that night was he find himself walking to Kent[3] afterwards, thinking that he was on the way to London, and he would have found himself picking hops[4] or something if a fellar didn’t put him right.

One night Brackley was taking a cuppa and a roll in a little place it have near Charing Cross, what does stay open all night for stragglers like him. The set-up is this: three-four frowsy women, and some tests who look as if they only come out at night. I mean, if you really want to meet some characters, is to lime out there by the Embankment after midnight, and you sure to meet some individuals.

That night, two fellars playing dominoes. A group stand up round a fire that they light with wood to keep warm. Suddenly a big

commotion start, because the police take Olive and a test say it serve her right.

A woman start to 'buse the fellar who say it serve Olive right.

'What do you know about it?' the woman snarl. 'Keep your ——— ing mouth shut.'

She start to scratch her thigh. Same time another woman come hustling up with the stale news that the police take Olive.

'Yes,' the first woman say, 'and this bastard here say that it served her right.' She turn to the fellar again, 'Keep your ———ing mouth shut,' she say, though the fellar ain't saying anything.

Suddenly she turn on Brackley and start to 'buse him, saying that he was responsible. Poor Brackley ain't have a clue what the woman talking about, but three-four frowsy-looking sports gather around him and want to beat him up.

Brackley ease away and start to go up by Whitehall, and the starlings kicking up hell on the sides of the tall buildings, and is almost three o'clock in the morning and he thinking what a hell of a thing life is, how he never ever hear about any Olive and look how them women wanted to beat him up.

Well to get back to the heart of the ballad, one rainy night Brackley and Beatrice went theatre, and theatre over late, and they catch the last train out of town. While they on the train—and Brackley like a regular commuter these days, reading the *Standard*[5] while Beatrice catching up on some knitting—Beatrice suddenly open her handbag and say: 'Gosh, I think I've lost my key!'

'You could always get another one,' Brackley say, reading How The Other Half Laughs.

'You don't understand,' Beatrice moan. 'Aunty is always complaining about my coming in late, and by the time we get home it will be long after midnight, and the door will be shut.'

'Ring the bell,' Brackley say, laughing at a joke in the paper.

'I daren't wake Aunty at that hour,' Beatrice say, putting aside the knitting to worry better.

'Don't worry, I will open a window for you,' Brackley say.

But when they get to where Beatrice living she was still worrying what to do. She tell Brackley to wait by the gate. She went inside and pick up a tiny pebble and throw at the window, which was on the first floor. It make a sound ping! but nothing happen. After a little while she throw another one ping! but still nothing happen.

Brackley stand up there watching her.

She turn to Brackley helplessly. 'I can't wake Aunty,' she say.

Brackley open the gate and come inside and pick up a big brick from the garden to pelt at the people glass window. Beatrice barely had time to hold his hand.

'Are you mad?' she say in a fierce whisper.

'Well,' Brackley say, 'you don't want to get inside?'

'You are making too much noise already,' Beatrice whisper. 'I will have to stay on the steps until Aunty gets up.'

'What time is that?' Brackley ask.

'About six o'clock,' Beatrice say. 'She is an early riser.'

'You mean to say,' Brackley say, 'you spending the night here in the damp? Why you don't make a big noise and wake she up?'

'No no,' Beatrice say quickly, 'we mustn't make any noise. The neighbours are very troublesome. Let us wait here until Aunty gets up. She is restless at night. When I hear her coughing I will throw another stone.'

So Brackley and Beatrice sit down on the wet steps, waiting for Aunty to cough.

One o'clock come and gone, two o'clock come and gone. Three o'clock rain start to pelt slantways and fall on the steps wetting Brackley. This time so, as Brackley look around, the world grim. Rain and fog around him, and Beatrice sleeping on his shoulder.

He shake her.

Beatrice open her eyes and say, 'What is it, did you hear Aunty cough?'

'No. It look as if her cold get better, I don't think she going to cough tonight at all.'

‘She always coughs in the night. As soon as she does I will throw some stones again.’

‘Why you don’t make a big noise and finish with it? Back home in Trinidad,[6] you think this could happen? Why—’

‘Hush, you are speaking too loudly. I told you it would cause trouble with the neighbours.’

‘Why you don’t wake up the people on the ground floor?’

‘Nobody is there—they work nights.’

‘I ain’t even have a cigarette,’ Brackley grumble, wondering what the boys doing, if they get in with the two girls from Sweden and gone to sleep in a nice warm room.

Beatrice went back to sleep, using poor Brackley as pillow.

Four o’clock come, five o’clock come, and still Brackley waiting for Aunty to cough and she wouldn’t cough. This time so he have a sizeable stone in his hand and he make up his mind that the moment Aunty cough he going to fling the stone at the window even if he wake up everybody in the street. Sleep killing Brackley but the doorway small and he bend up there like a piece of wire, catching cramp and unable to shift position. In fact, between five and halfpast Brackley think he hear Aunty cough and he make to get up and couldn’t move, all the joints frozen in the damp and cold.

He shake Beatrice roughly. ‘Aunty cough,’ he say.

‘I didn’t hear,’ Beatrice say.

‘I hear,’ Brackley say, and he stretch out slowly and get up.

Brackley augment the stone he had with three others and he fling his hand back and he pelt the stones on the people glass window before Beatrice know what he doing.

Well glass cracks and break and splinters fly all about and the noise sound as if the glasshouse in Kew Gardens[7] falling down. Same time Aunty start one set of coughing.

‘You see?’ Brackley say, ‘I tell you Aunty was coughing!’

‘You fool!’ Beatrice say. ‘Look what you have done! You had better go quickly before you cause further trouble.’

And before Brackley know what happening Beatrice hustle him out to the pavement and shut the gate.

Well a kind of fore-day light[8] was falling at that hour of the morning and when Aunty fling open the window to see what happening, she see Brackley stand up out there. Only, she not so sure, because Brackley blend in nicely with the kind of half-light half-dark. But all the same, Aunty begin to scream murder and thief.

Brackley take off as if he on the Ascot racecourse.[9]

Some nights later he tell the boys the episode, making it sound like a good joke though at the time he was frighten like hell. But that was a mistake he make, because since that time whenever the boys see him they hailing out:

'Brackley! You still waiting for Aunty to cough?'

1957

Endnotes

- Note 1: Hangout or gathering (slang).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Romantic encounter or date with a woman.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Area of north London; "Clapham Common": a park in south London; "Chiswick": area of west London; "Mile End": area of east London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Area in west London.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Public transport.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Site of a well-known antiques and secondhand market.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Possibly Marble Arch and Notting Hill Gate (which is a train station). Selvon often makes reference to London landmarks in his work.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Train stations.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Town in south London, a borough of London, and for a while was home to London's main airport.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Busy square in central London and a tourist attraction.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Inhibition. The migrants are reproducing stereotypes of Swedish women.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: County in southeast England.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: In the early to mid-20th century, Londoners would travel to Kent to pick hops (flowers that give beer its bitter taste) in the hop gardens.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The *Evening Standard* was a major newspaper with conservative leanings at the time.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Caribbean island under the rule of the British Empire until 1962.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Botanical garden in southwest London with large glass greenhouses.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: West Indian English for the nature of the light at sunrise.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Prestigious horse racing track in England.Return to reference 9

M. NOURBESE PHILIP

Marlene Nourbese Philip (b. 1947), publishing recently as M. NourbeSe Philip, was born on the island of Tobago and raised on the island of Trinidad. She received her B.Sc. in economics at the University of the West Indies (1968), before completing a master's degree in political science (1970) and a law degree (1973) at the University of Western Ontario. She practiced law for seven years in Toronto, where she still lives, before turning full-time to writing poetry, novels, essays, and plays. Her book-length poem *Zong!* (2008) reexamines a famous eighteenth-century case of enslaved people thrown overboard for insurance savings. Her poem "Discourse on the Logic of Language," from her third book of poetry, *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks* (1989), considers the estrangement of the postcolonial and female subject within the imposed colonial language of English. She experiments with typography, wordplay, multiple voices, and discourses to give visible form to this linguistic imprisonment—and to her witty and violent attempts at subversion.

Discourse on the Logic of Language

EN IT WAS BORN, THE MOTHER HELD HER NEWBORN CHILD CLOSE: SHE
AN THEN TO LICK IT ALL OVER. THE CHILD WHIMPERED A LITTLE, BUT
THE MOTHER'S TONGUE MOVED FASTER AND STRONGER OVER ITS BODY,
REW SILENT—THE MOTHER TURNING IT THIS WAY AND THAT UNDER
TONGUE, UNTIL SHE HAD TONGUED IT CLEAN OF THE CREAMY WHITE
STANCE COVERING ITS BODY.

English
is my mother tongue.
A mother tongue is not
not a foreign lan/an lang
language
l/anguish
anguish
—a foreign anguish.

English is
my father tongue.
A father tongue is
a foreign language,
therefore English is
a foreign language
not a mother tongue.

What is my mother
tongue
my mammy tongue
my mummy tongue
my momsy tongue
my modder tongue
my ma tongue?

I have no mother
tongue
no mother to tongue
no tongue to mother
to mother
tongue
me

I must therefore be tongu

dumb
dumb-tongued
dub[1]-tongued
damn dumb
tongue

EDICT I

Every owner of slaves shall, wherever possible, ensure that his slaves belong to as many ethno-linguistic groups as possible. If they cannot speak to each other, they cannot then foment rebellion and revolution.

Those parts of the brain chiefly responsible for speech are named after two learned nineteenth century doctors, the eponymous Doctors Wernicke and Broca[2] respectively.

Dr. Broca believed the size of the brain determined intelligence; he devoted much of his time to 'proving' that white males of the Caucasian race had larger brains than, and where therefore superior to, women, Blacks and other peoples of colour.

Understanding and recognition of the spoken word takes place in Wernicke's area—the left temporal lobe, situated next to the auditory cortex; from there relevant information passes to Broca's area—situated in the left frontal cortex—which then forms the response and passes it on to the motor cortex. The motor cortex controls the muscles of speech.

MOTHER THEN PUT HER FINGERS INTO HER CHILD'S MOUTH—GENTLY
CING IT OPEN; SHE TOUCHES HER TONGUE TO THE CHILD'S TONGUE,
HOLDING THE TINY MOUTH OPEN, SHE BLOWS INTO IT—HARD. SHE
S BLOWING WORDS—HER WORDS, HER MOTHER'S WORDS, THOSE OF
MOTHER'S MOTHER, AND ALL THEIR MOTHERS BEFORE—INTO HER
GHTER'S MOUTH.

but I have
a dumb tongue
tongue dumb
father tongue
and english is
my mother tongue
is
my father tongue
is a foreign lan lan lang
language
l/anguish
anguish
a foreign anguish
is english—
another tongue
my mother
mammy
mummy
moder
mater
macer
moder[3]
tongue
mothertongue

tongue mother
tongue me
mothertongue me
mother me
touch me
with the tongue of your
lan lan lang

language
l/anguish
anguish
english
is a foreign anguish

EDICT II

Every slave caught speaking his native language shall be severely punished. Where necessary, removal of the tongue is recommended. The offending organ, when removed, should be hung on high in a central place, so that all may see and tremble.

A tapering, blunt-tipped, muscular, soft and fleshy organ describes
(a) the penis.
(b) the tongue.
(c) neither of the above.
(d) both of the above.

In man the tongue is
(a) the principal organ of taste.

(b) the principal organ of articulate speech.
(c) the principal organ of oppression and exploitation.
(d) all of the above.

The tongue
(a) is an interwoven bundle of striated muscle running in three planes.
(b) is fixed to the jawbone.
(c) has an outer covering of a mucous membrane covered with papillae.
(d) contains ten thousand taste buds, none of which is sensitive to the taste of foreign words.

Air is forced out of the lungs up the throat to the larynx where it causes the vocal cords to vibrate and create sound. The metamorphosis from sound to intelligible word requires
(a) the lip, tongue and jaw all working together.
(b) a mother tongue.
(c) the overseer's whip.
(d) all of the above or none.

1989

Endnotes

- Note 1: Type of African Caribbean performance poetry, named after "dub music," or remixed reggae-style music.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Pierre Paul Broca (1824–1880), French physician; Carl Wernicke (1848–1905), German physician.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Mother (archaic Scots, Swedish, etc.). "Mater": mother (Latin). "Macer": lean, poor (Latin).Return to reference 3

SALMAN RUSHDIE

In these excerpts from two essays in his collection *Imaginary Homelands*, fiction writer Salman Rushdie (b. 1947; see the headnote to him and his story "The Prophet's Hair" later in this volume) claims both Britishness and the English language for immigrant writers in England. Lured by a dream-England, such writers have often been disappointed by exclusionary racial attitudes in their new homeland. Transplanted and culturally plural, they write out of multiple literary inheritances, including the literature of exile and displacement. Rushdie counters the nativist view of English as an imperial yoke that must be thrown off: he recounts the spread of English as a world language, describes its indigenization by the non-English, and claims it as a vital and expressive South Asian literary language, with its own history and tradition.

[The British Indian Writer and a Dream-England]

* * *

So if I am to speak for Indian writers in England I would say this, paraphrasing G. V. Desani's H. Hatterr: The migrations of the fifties and sixties happened. 'We are. We are here.'[1] And we are not willing to be excluded from any part of our heritage; which heritage includes both a Bradford-born Indian kid's right to be treated as a full member of British society, and also the right of any member of this post-diaspora community to draw on its roots for its art, just as all the world's community of displaced writers has always done. (I'm thinking, for instance, of Grass's Danzig-become-Gdansk, of Joyce's abandoned Dublin, of Isaac Bashevis Singer and Maxine Hong Kingston and Milan Kundera[2] and many others. It's a long list.)

Let me override at once the faintly defensive note that has crept into these last few remarks. The Indian writer, looking back at India, does so through guilt-tinted spectacles. (I am of course, once more, talking about myself.) I am speaking now of those of us who emigrated . . . and I suspect that there are times when the move seems wrong to us all, when we seem, to ourselves, post-lapsarian men and women. We are Hindus who have crossed the black water; we are Muslims who eat pork.[3] And as a result—as my use of the Christian notion of the Fall indicates—we are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may

provide us with such angles. Or it may be that that is simply what we must think in order to do our work.

* * *

England's Indian writers are by no means all the same type of animal. Some of us, for instance, are Pakistani. Others Bangladeshi. Others West, or East, or even South African. And V. S. Naipaul,[4] by now, is something else entirely. This word 'Indian' is getting to be a pretty scattered concept. Indian writers in England include political exiles, first-generation migrants, affluent expatriates whose residence here is frequently temporary, naturalized Britons, and people born here who may never have laid eyes on the subcontinent. Clearly, nothing that I say can apply across all these categories. But one of the interesting things about this diverse community is that, as far as Indo-British fiction is concerned, its existence changes the ball game, because that fiction is in future going to come as much from addresses in London, Birmingham and Yorkshire as from Delhi or Bombay.

One of the changes has to do with attitudes towards the use of English. Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the view that we can't simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes. Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free.

But the British Indian writer simply does not have the option of rejecting English, anyway. His children, her children, will grow up speaking it, probably as a first language; and in the forging of a British Indian identity the English language is of central importance. It must, in spite of everything, be embraced. (The word 'translation'

comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained.)

To be an Indian writer in this society is to face, every day, problems of definition. What does it mean to be 'Indian' outside India? How can culture be preserved without becoming ossified? How should we discuss the need for change within ourselves and our community without seeming to play into the hands of our racial enemies? What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical, of refusing to make any concessions to Western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and practices and turning away from the ones that came here with us? These questions are all a single, existential question: How are we to live in the world?

I do not propose to offer, prescriptively, any answers to these questions; only to state that these are some of the issues with which each of us will have to come to terms.

To turn my eyes outwards now, and to say a little about the relationship between the Indian writer and the majority white culture in whose midst he lives, and with which his work will sooner or later have to deal:

In common with many Bombay-raised middle-class children of my generation, I grew up with an intimate knowledge of, and even sense of friendship with, a certain kind of England: a dream-England composed of Test Matches at Lord's presided over by the voice of John Arlott, at which Freddie Trueman bowled unceasingly and without success at Polly Umrigar;[5] of Enid Blyton and Billy Bunter, in which we were even prepared to smile indulgently at portraits such as 'Hurree Jamset Ram Singh', 'the dusky nabob of Bhanipur'.[6] I wanted to come to England. I couldn't wait. And to be fair, England has done all right by me; but I find it a little difficult to be properly grateful. I can't escape the view that my relatively easy ride is not the result of the dream-England's famous sense of tolerance and fair

play, but of my social class, my freak fair skin and my 'English' English accent. Take away any of these, and the story would have been very different. Because of course the dream-England is no more than a dream.

Sadly, it's a dream from which too many white Britons refuse to awake. Recently, on a live radio programme, a professional humorist asked me, in all seriousness, why I objected to being called a wog.[7] He said he had always thought it a rather charming word, a term of endearment. 'I was at the zoo the other day,' he revealed, 'and a zoo keeper told me that the wogs were best with the animals; they stuck their fingers in their ears and wiggled them about and the animals felt at home.' The ghost of Hurree Jamset Ram Singh walks among us still.

As Richard Wright[8] found long ago in America, black and white descriptions of society are no longer compatible. Fantasy, or the mingling of fantasy and naturalism, is one way of dealing with these problems. It offers a way of echoing in the form of our work the issues faced by all of us: how to build a new, 'modern' world out of an old, legend-haunted civilization, an old culture which we have brought into the heart of a newer one. But whatever technical solutions we may find, Indian writers in these islands, like others who have migrated into the north from the south, are capable of writing from a kind of double perspective: because they, we, are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society. This stereoscopic vision is perhaps what we can offer in place of 'whole sight'.

* * *

Art is a passion of the mind. And the imagination works best when it is most free. Western writers have always felt free to be eclectic in their selection of theme, setting, form; Western visual artists have, in this century, been happily raiding the visual storehouses of Africa, Asia, the Philippines. I am sure that we must grant ourselves an equal freedom.

Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the culture and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacement, life in a minority group. We can quite legitimately claim as our ancestors the Huguenots,[9] the Irish, the Jews; the past to which we belong is an English past, the history of immigrant Britain. Swift, Conrad, Marx are as much our literary forebears as Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy.[1] America, a nation of immigrants, has created great literature out of the phenomenon of cultural transplantation, out of examining the ways in which people cope with a new world; it may be that by discovering what we have in common with those who preceded us into this country, we can begin to do the same.

I stress this is only one of many possible strategies. But we are inescapably international writers at a time when the novel has never been a more international form (a writer like Borges speaks of the influence of Robert Louis Stevenson on his work; Heinrich Böll[2] acknowledges the influence of Irish literature; cross-pollination is everywhere); and it is perhaps one of the more pleasant freedoms of the literary migrant to be able to choose his parents. My own—selected half consciously, half not—include Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville, Machado de Assis;[3] a polyglot family tree, against which I measure myself, and to which I would be honoured to belong.

There's a beautiful image in Saul Bellow's latest novel, *The Dean's December.*[4] The central character, the Dean, Corde, hears a dog barking wildly somewhere. He imagines that the barking is the dog's protest against the limit of dog experience. 'For God's sake,' the dog is saying, 'open the universe a little more!' And because Bellow is, of course, not really talking about dogs, or not only about dogs, I have the feeling that the dog's rage, and its desire, is also mine, ours, everyone's. 'For God's sake, open the universe a little more!'

1982

Endnotes

- Note 1: From *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) by the Indian novelist G. V. Desani (1909–2000).Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  Czech novelist (b. 1929). "Grass's Danzig-become-Gdansk": Polish city known until the end of World War II as Danzig (its German name) and known today as Gdansk; the city features prominently in a trilogy by the German novelist Günter Grass (1927–2015). "Joyce's abandoned Dublin": birthplace of the Irish writer James Joyce (1882–1941) and the setting for much of his work, although Joyce spent most of his adult life outside Dublin, in Paris, Trieste, and Zurich. "Isaac Bashevis Singer": Polish American writer (1904–1991). "Maxine Hong Kingston": Chinese American writer (b. 1940).
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Inverting, that is, the Muslim prohibition against eating pork as unclean and the Hindu prohibition against crossing the ocean ("black water").Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Trinidad-born English writer of Indian descent (1932–2018).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pahlan Ratanji Umrigar (1926–2006), Indian cricket player. "Test Matches at Lord's": cricket matches played at Lord's Cricket Ground in London. "John Arlott": English cricket commentator and writer (1914–1991). "Freddie Trueman": Fred Trueman (1931–2006), English cricket player.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Character who speaks stereotypically comic English in the "Famous Five" series of children's books by English author Enid Blyton (1897–1968), whose work has been criticized for its racism. "Billy Bunter": key character in the Greyfriars School stories published from 1908 to 1940 in the boys' weekly magazine *The Magnet* by Charles Hamilton (1876–1961), writing under the pen name Frank Richards.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Foreigner (derogatory term).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: American fiction writer and essayist (1908–1960).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Protestants who emigrated from France in the 16th and 17th centuries because of religious persecution.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Bengali intellectual and social and religious reformer (1772–1833). Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Anglo-Irish writer. Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), Polish novelist who lived in England and wrote in English. Karl Marx (1818–1883), German social theorist who spent much of his adult life in England. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Bengali poet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: German writer (1917–1985). Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986), Argentinean writer. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), Scottish writer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Joaquim María Machado de Assis (1839–1908), Brazilian writer. Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852), Russian writer. Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), Spanish writer. Franz Kafka (1883–1924), Czech writer. Herman Melville (1819–1891), American writer.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Novel (1982) by Bellow (1915–2005), American novelist.Return to reference 4

[English Is an Indian Literary Language]

I'll begin from an obvious starting place. English is by now the world language. It achieved this status partly as a result of the physical colonization of a quarter of the globe by the British, and it remains ambiguous but central to the affairs of just about all the countries to whom it was given, along with mission schools, trunk roads[1] and the rules of cricket, as a gift of the British colonizers.

But its present-day pre-eminence is not solely—perhaps not even primarily—the result of the British legacy. It is also the effect of the primacy of the United States of America in the affairs of the world. This second impetus towards English could be termed a kind of linguistic neo-colonialism, or just plain pragmatism on the part of many of the world's governments and educationists, according to your point of view.

As for myself, I don't think it is always necessary to take up the anti-colonial—or is it post-colonial?—cudgels against English. What seems to me to be happening is that those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it—assisted by the English language's enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers.

To take the case of India, only because it's the one with which I'm most familiar. The debate about the appropriateness of English in post-British India has been raging ever since 1947;[2] but today, I find, it is a debate which has meaning only for the older generation. The children of independent India seem not to think of English as being irredeemably tainted by its colonial provenance. They use it as an Indian language, as one of the tools they have to hand.

(I am simplifying, of course, but the point is broadly true.)

There is also an interesting North–South divide in Indian attitudes to English. In the North, in the so-called 'Hindi belt', where the capital, Delhi, is located, it is possible to think of Hindi as a future national language; but in South India, which is at present suffering from the attempts of central government to *impose* this national language on it, the resentment of Hindi is far greater than of English. After spending quite some time in South India, I've become convinced that English is an essential language in India, not only because of its technical vocabularies and the international communication which it makes possible, but also simply to permit two Indians to talk to each other in a tongue which neither party hates.

Incidentally, in West Bengal, where there is a State-led move against English, the following graffito, a sharp dig at the State's Marxist chief minister, Jyoti Basu, appeared on a wall, in English: it said, 'My son won't learn English; your son won't learn English; but Jyoti Basu will send his son abroad to learn English.'

One of the points I want to make is that what I've said indicates, I hope, that Indian society and Indian literature have a complex and developing relationship with the English language. * * *

English literature has its Indian branch. By this I mean the literature of the English language. This literature is also Indian literature. There is no incompatibility here. If history creates complexities, let us not try to simplify them.

So: English is an Indian literary language, and by now, thanks to writers like Tagore, Desani, Chaudhuri, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Anita Desai[3] and others, it has quite a pedigree.

* * *

In my own case, I have constantly been asked whether I am British, or Indian. The formulation 'Indian-born British writer' has been invented to explain me. But, as I said last night, my new book deals with Pakistan. So what now? 'British-resident Indo-Pakistani writer'? You see the folly of trying to contain writers inside passports.

One of the most absurd aspects of this quest for national authenticity is that—as far as India is concerned, anyway—it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw. The only people who seriously believe this are religious extremists. The rest of us understand that the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a *mélange* of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal[4] and contemporary Coca-Cola American. To say nothing of Muslim, Buddhist, Jain,[5] Christian, Jewish, British, French, Portuguese, Marxist, Maoist, Trotskyist, Vietnamese, capitalist, and of course Hindu elements. Eclecticism, the ability to take from the world what seems fitting and to leave the rest, has always been a hallmark of the Indian tradition, and today it is at the centre of the best work being done both in the visual arts and in literature.

* * *

As far as Eng. Lit. itself is concerned, I think that if *all* English literatures could be studied together, a shape would emerge which would truly reflect the new shape of the language in the world, and we could see that Eng. Lit. has never been in better shape, because the world language now also possesses a world literature, which is proliferating in every conceivable direction.

The English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago. * * *

1983

Endnotes

- Note 1: Main roads, such as the Grand Trunk Road, the immense highway between Calcutta and Amritsar constructed during the British Raj.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: When the British relinquished control of India.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), Bengali poet; G. V. Desani (1909–2000), Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897–1999), Mulk Raj Anand (1905–2004), Raja Rao (1909–2006), Anita Desai (b. 1937): Indian fiction and nonfiction writers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Dynasty of Muslim emperors who reigned in India, 1526–1858.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Jainism is one of India’s oldest religions.Return to reference 5

GRACE NICHOLS

Born and raised in British Guiana (now Guyana), Grace Nichols (b. 1950) worked as a freelance journalist after receiving a diploma in communications from the University of Guyana. She left the Caribbean for England in 1977.

In "Epilogue" and other poems, Nichols memorializes the uprooting of Africans and their languages when slavery brought these peoples to the West Indies, where a new tongue grew "from the root of the old one." The new tongue melded English with African and European languages, and despite the stigma that once attached to it, Nichols celebrates it as a vibrant medium for literature. Like Louise Bennett, she writes of black immigrants' reverse colonization of the English language and of English society. In *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) and other of her subsequent volumes, the speaker—appropriating and reversing cultural stereotypes—transforms London's landscape by virtue of her robust physical, verbal, and cultural presence. In 2021 Nichols won the Queen's Gold Medal for Poetry.

Epilogue

I have crossed an ocean
I have lost my tongue
from the root of the old one
a new one has sprung

1983

The Fat Black Woman Goes Shopping

Shopping in London winter
is a real drag for the fat black woman
going from store to store
in search of accommodating clothes
and de weather so cold

Look at the frozen thin mannequins
fixing her with grin
and de pretty face salesgals
exchanging slimming glances
thinking she don't notice

Lord is aggravating

Nothing soft and bright and billowing
to flow like breezy sunlight
when she walking

The fat black woman curses in Swahili/Yoruba
and nation language[1] under her breathing
all this journeying and journeying

The fat black woman could only conclude
that when it come to fashion
the choice is lean

Nothing much beyond size 14

1984

Endnotes

- Note 1: Term for creolized English coined by West Indian poet Kamau Brathwaite (1930–2020). “Swahili”: East African language. “Yoruba”: Nigerian language.Return to reference 1

Wherever I Hang

I leave me people, me land, me home
For reasons, I not too sure
I forsake de sun
And de humming-bird splendour
Had big rats in de floorboard
So I pick up me new-world-self
And come, to this place call England
At first I feeling like I in dream—
De misty greyness
I touching de walls to see if they real
They solid to de seam
And de people pouring from de underground system[1]
Like beans
And when I look up to de sky
I see Lord Nelson[2] high—too high to lie

And is so I sending home photos of myself
Among de pigeons and de snow
And is so I warding off de cold
And is so, little by little
I begin to change my calypso ways
Never visiting nobody
Before giving them clear warning
And waiting me turn in queue°
Now, after all this time
I get accustom to de English life
But I still miss back-home side
To tell you de truth
I don't know really where I belaang

Yes, divided to de ocean

Wherever I hang me knickers—that's my home.

1989

"Stop the Coloured Invasion" protest amid the lions of Trafalgar Square, London, January 1, 1959. After the British Nationality Act of 1948, citizens of the British colonies were allowed to enter and work in the United Kingdom without a visa. As people of African and Asian descent arrived from the British Empire and Commonwealth in the 1950s and 1960s, some Whites denounced the policies that permitted immigration. As a result, laws permitting entry were tightened in the 1960s, and politicians such as Member of Parliament Enoch Powell fomented anxieties that immigration was destroying Britain and would lead to civil strife.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The London subway system.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), whose naval victories are commemorated by a tall column surmounted by his statue in Trafalgar Square, London. There are also monuments to him in the Caribbean, where he spent much of his career.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *in line*Return to reference °

LINTON KWESI JOHNSON

Born in Jamaica in 1952, Linton Kwesi Johnson immigrated to England at the age of eleven. He grew up in Brixton, South London, where he was shocked by the racist hostility. After he graduated with a B.A. in sociology from Goldsmiths, University of London, he began to publish collections of poetry, beginning with *Voices of the Living and the Dead* (1974). His influential recordings of his poetry set to reggae music, such as his first album *Dread Beat an' Blood* (1977), reached a wide audience. In 2002 he became the second living poet published in the Penguin Modern Classics series.

Building on the example of poets such as Claude McKay and Louise Bennett but more fiercely assailing the norms of Standardized English, Johnson represents Black British speech in words spelled phonetically, sentences without punctuation, and rhythms surging with reggae and other African diasporic musical traditions. In stylized versions of the voices of working-class immigrants to Britain, poems such as "Inglan Is a Bitch" chronicle their relentless struggle with racism, violence, discrimination, incarceration, and police brutality. Although both Johnson's poem and Claude McKay's "Old England" (included earlier in this volume) draw on African Caribbean speech, McKay's buoyantly idealized London could hardly differ more from the grimly repressive London of "Inglan Is a Bitch."

Inglan Is a Bitch

wen mi jus come to Landan toun
mi use to work pan di andahgroun
but workin pan di andahgroun
yu dont get fi know your way aroun

Inglan is a bitch
dere's no escapin it
Inglan is a bitch
dere's no runin whe fram it

mi get a likkle° jab in a big otell
an awftah a while, mi woz doin quite well
dem staat mi awf as a dish-washah
but wen mi tek a stack, mi noh tun clack-watchah![1]

Inglan is a bitch
dere's no escapin it
Inglan is a bitch
noh baddah try fi hide fram it

wen dem gi you di likkle wage packit°
fus dem rab it wid dem big tax rackit°
yu haffi struggle fi mek enz meet
an wen yu goh a yu bed yu jus cant sleep

Inglan is a bitch
dere's no escapin it
Inglan is a bitch fi true
a noh lie mi a tell, a true

me use to work dig ditch wen it cowl noh bitch°
mi did° strang like a mule, but, bwoy, mi did fool

den awftah a while mi jus stap dhu owevahtime
den awftah a while mi jus phu dung° mi tool

Inglan is a bitch
dere's no escapin it
Inglan is a bitch
yu haffi know how fi suvive in it

well mi dhu° day wok an mi dhu nite wok
mi dhu clean wok and mi dhu dutty° wok
dem seh dat black man is very lazy
but if yu si how mi wok yu woodah seh mi crazy

Inglan is a bitch
dere's no escapin it
Inglan is a bitch
yu bettah face up to it

dem have a likkle facktri up inna Brackly
inna disya facktri all dem dhu is pack crackry
fi di laas fifteen years dem get mi laybah
now awftah fifteen years mi fall out a fayvah

Inglan is a bitch
dere's no escapin it
Inglan is a bitch
dere's no runin whe fram it

mi know dem have wok, wok in abundant
yet still, dem mek mi redundant°
now, at fifty-five mi getin quite ole
yet still, dem sen mi fi goh draw dole°

Inglan is a bitch
dere's no escapin it
Inglan is a bitch fi true
is whe wi a goh dhu bout it?

Endnotes

- Note 1: But when I started to make money, I didn’t turn into a clock-watcher (that is, a lazy worker).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *little*Return to reference °
- °: *check*Return to reference °
- °: *fraud*Return to reference °
- °: *cold, no shit*Return to reference °
- °: *was*Return to reference °
- °: *put down*Return to reference °
- °: *did*Return to reference °
- °: *dirty*Return to reference °
- °: *they laid me off*Return to reference °
- °: *welfare payments*Return to reference °

BERNARDINE EVARISTO

Born in London in 1959, the daughter of an English mother and Nigerian father, Bernardine Evaristo was educated at the Rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama and at the University of London, and was a founding member of the London-based Theatre of Black Women. The author of a number of books in prose and verse, she made her reputation with two novels-in-verse exploring hybrid identities and histories: the semiautobiographical *Lara* (1997), which traces its mixed-race heroine's English, Nigerian, Brazilian, and Irish roots, and *The Emperor's Babe* (2001), for which "Amo Amas Amat" is the prologue. In 2019 Evaristo became the first woman of Black British heritage to win the Booker Prize. She won it for her novel *Girl, Woman, Other*. She shared the honor with Margaret Atwood, who also won that year for *The Testaments*.

Set in a teeming multicultural London in the year 211 C.E., when Britain was a far-flung colony at the periphery of the Roman Empire, *The Emperor's Babe* tells the story of Zuleika, the hip, restless, playful daughter of Sudanese immigrants. Married at a young age to an often absent nobleman, she eventually has an affair with visiting Septimius Severus—a historical figure, an emperor of African origin who ruled over Rome and died in Britain's York. Delving into Britain's deep past, Evaristo's novel-in-verse humorously provincializes London, representing it not as the energizing hub of empire but, in the Roman scheme of things, as an underdeveloped backwater. Against the idea that Britain was racially or culturally homogeneous before the arrival of postwar, *Windrush*-era immigrants, Evaristo represents it as already richly multicultural in ancient times. In her verbal amalgamations, she zigzags from street slang to high diction and among multiple foreign tongues, highlighting the multinational roots of the English language. Both historical and humorously anachronistic, the poem's linguistic mix is emblematic of both the ancient and the contemporary cultural hybridization of Britain.

From The Emperor's Babe

Amo Amas Amat[1]

Who do you love? Who *do* you love,
when the man you married goes off

for months on end, quelling rebellions
at the frontiers, or playing hot-shot senator in Rome;

his flashy villa on the Palatine Hill,[2] home
to another woman, I hear,

one who has borne him offspring.
My days are spent roaming this house,

its vast mosaic walls full of the scenes on Olympus,
for my husband loves melodrama.

They say his mistress is an actress,
a flaxen-Fräulein type, from Germania Superior.[3]

Oh, everyone envied me, *Illa Bella Negreeta!*[4]
born in the back of a shop on Gracechurch Street,[5]

who got hitched to a Roman nobleman,
whose parents sailed out of Khartoum[6] on a barge,

no burnished throne, no poop of beaten gold,
but packed with vomiting brats

and cows releasing warm turds
on to their bare feet. Thus perfumed,

they made it to Londinium on a donkey,
with only a thin purse and a fat dream.

Here in the drizzle of this wild west town
Dad wandered the streets looking for work,

but there was no room at the inn,
so he set up shop on the kerb

and sold sweet cakes which Mum made.
(He's told me this story a mille° times.)

Now he owns several shops, selling everything
from vino to shoes, veggies to tools,

and he employs all sorts to work in them,
a Syrian, Tunisian, Jew, Persian,

hopefuls just off the olive barge from Gaul,[7]
in fact anyone who'll work for pebbles.

When Felix came after me, Dad was in ecstasy,
father-in-law to Lucius Aurelius Felix, no less.

I was spotted at the baths of Cheapside,[8]
just budding, and my fate was sealed

by a man thrice my age and thrice my girth,
all at sweet eleven—even then Dad

thought I was getting past it.
Then I was sent off to a snooty Roman bitch

called Clarissa for decorum classes,
learnt how to talk, eat and fart,

how to get my amo amas amat right, and ditch

my second-generation plebby creole.[9]

Zuleika accepta est.
Zuleika delicata est.[1]
Zuleika bloody goody-two-shoes est.

But I dreamt of creating mosaics,
of remaking my town with bright stones and glass.

But no! Numquam![°] It's not allowed.
Sure, Felix brings me presents, when he deigns

to come west. I've had Chinese silk, a marble
figurine from Turkey, gold earrings

shaped like dolphins, and I have the deepest
fondness for my husband, of course,

sort of, though he spills over me like dough
and I'm tempted to call Cook mid coitus

to come trim his sides so that he fits me.
Then it's puff and *Ciao, baby!*

Solitudoh, solitudee, solitudargh!

2001

Endnotes

- Note 1: I love, you love, he/she loves (Latin conjugations).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Historic center of ancient Rome.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Province of the Roman Empire (now parts of Switzerland, France, and Germany). "Fräulein": unmarried woman (German).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: *The Beautiful Negress!* (Italian).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A main road in modern London, site of the early Roman settlement called "Londinium" established around 43 C.E.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Now capital of Sudan.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Large region of Western Europe, including most of modern-day France, under Roman rule from 58 B.C.E. to 486 C.E.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Street in London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A hybrid language. "Plebby": vulgar (from *plebeian*, or lower-class).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Zuleika is accepted. Zuleika is delicate (Latin).Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *thousand (Latin)*Return to reference °
- °: *Never!*Return to reference °

DALJIT NAGRA

Look, We Have Coming to Dover! (2007) is Daljit Nagra's first, Forward Prize–winning collection of poems, its title alluding to Matthew Arnold and W. H. Auden and inflecting an iconic British site with Indianized English. Nagra was born in 1966 in Yiewsley, west London, to Sikh Punjabi parents who had come to England in the 1950s. He grew up in Britain between Punjabi and English cultures, and his work, including the poems in *Tippoo Sultan's Incredible White-Man-Eating Tiger Toy Machine!!!* (2011) and *British Museum* (2017), as well as an English retelling of the *Ramayana* (2013), weaves together his disparate inheritances.

His poem "A Black History of the English-Speaking Peoples"—a title that ironically recalls Winston Churchill's monumental *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*—meditates on Shakespeare's Globe from an Asian British perspective. Although some of Nagra's poetry is in an ebulliently performative Indian English, this poem and others are written in a Standard English richly threaded with literary allusions. Nagra lovingly and mockingly echoes poets who helped forge the language and forms of his poetry, writers such as Shakespeare, Tennyson, Walcott, and Auden (whose anvil-like stanza form Nagra adapts from the poem "Spain"). He writes in this high literary English as an insider-outsider: he self-consciously extends a literary canon that goes back to Shakespeare, even as he recalls, from within the heart of the former empire, Britain's sometimes exploitative and racist history. Combining insider and rebel, perpetuator and opponent, mimic and insurgent, Nagra acknowledges his complicity in colonialism even as he disavows it, resists the empire even as he renovates its language and literary traditions.

A Black History of the English-Speaking Peoples[1]

I

A king's invocations at the Globe Theatre[2]
spin me from my stand to a time when boyish
bravado and cannonade
and plunder were enough to woo the regal seat.

That the stuff of Elizabethan art and a nation
of walled gardens in a local one-upmanship
would tame the four-cornered
world for Empire's dominion seems inconceivable.

Between the birth and the fire and rebirth of the
Globe
the visions of Albion[3] led to a Rule Britannia
of trade-winds-and-Gulf-Stream
all-conquering fleets that aroused theatres

for lectures on Hottentots[4] and craniology,[5]
whilst Eden was paraded in Kew.[6]
Between *Mayflower* and *Windrush*[7]
(with each *necessary murder*[8]) the celebrated

embeddings of imperial gusto where jungles
were surmounted so the light of learning be spread
to help sobbing suttees[9]
give up the ghost of a husband's flaming pyre.

II

So much for yesterday,[1] but today's time-honoured
televised clashes repeat the flag of a book burning[2]
and May Day's Mohican
Churchill[3] and all that shock and awe[4]

that brings me back to Mr Wanamaker's[5] Globe.
An American's thatched throwback to the king
of the canon! I watch the actor
as king, from the cast of masterful Robeson.[6]

The crowd, too, seem a hotchpotch from the pacts
and sects of our ebb and flow.[7] My forbears played
their part for the Empire's quid°
pro quo by assisting the rule and divide[8] of their ilk.

Did such relations bear me to this stage?
Especially with Macaulay[9] in mind, who claimed the
passing
of the imperial sceptre would highlight
the imperishable empire of our arts . . . [1]

So does the red of Macaulay's map run through
my blood? Am I a noble scruff who hopes a proud
academy might canonise
his poems for their faith in canonical allusions?

Is my voice phoney over these oft-heard beats?
Well if my voice feels vexatious, what can I but pray
that it reign Bolshie[2]
through puppetry and hypocrisy full of gung-ho fury!

III

The heyday Globe incited brave new verse[3]
modelled on the past, where time's frictions

courted Shakespeare's corruptions
for tongue's mastery of the pageant subject. Perhaps

the Globe should be my muse! I'm happy digging
for my England's good garden[4] to bear again.
My garden's only a state
of mind, where it's easy aligning myself with a
'turncoat'

T. E. Lawrence[5] and a *half-naked fakir*[6] and always
the groundling. Perhaps to aid the succession
of this language of the world,
for the poet weeding the roots, for the debate

in ourselves, now we're bound to the wheels
of global power,[7] we should tend the manorial
slime[8]—that legacy
offending the outcasts who fringe our circles.

IV

Who believes a bleached yarn? Would we openly
admit the Livingstone[9] spirit turned Kurtz,[1] our flag
is a union of black and blue
flapping in the anthems of haunted rain . . . ?

Coming clean would surely give us greater distance
than this king at the Globe, whose head seems
cluttered
with golden-age bumph,[2]
whose suffering ends him agog at the stars.

V

I applaud and stroll toward Westminster,[3]

yet softly tonight the waters of Britannia bobble
with flotillas of tea and white gold
cotton and sugar and the sweetness-and-light[4]

blood lettings and ultimately red-faced Suez.[5]
And how swiftly the tide removes from the scene
the bagpipe clamouring
garrisons with the field-wide scarlet soldiery

and the martyr's cry: *Every man die at his post!*[6]
Till what's ahead are the upbeat lovers who gaze
from the London Eye[7]
at multinationals lying along the sanitised Thames.

2011

Endnotes

- Note 1: See *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples* (1956–58), a history in four volumes of Great Britain and its former possessions by Winston Churchill (1874–1965). As an ethnic descriptor, "Black" in the British context has sometimes been used to include people not only of African but also of South Asian descent.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: London theater associated with Shakespeare, built in 1599, destroyed by fire in 1613, rebuilt the following year, closed in 1642, and reconstructed near the original site in 1997.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Ancient name for the island of Great Britain. See *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) by the English poet William Blake (1757–1827).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Derogatory term for the native Khoikhoi people of southern Africa.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Study of the shape and size of the skulls of different human races.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: West London suburb. Kew Gardens massively expanded its global collection of plants in the Victorian era.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Ship that in 1948 brought the first large group of West Indian immigrants to Britain. "*Mayflower*:" ship that in 1620 brought the first English Puritan emigrants to Massachusetts.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Phrase that, like the poem's stanza form, is taken from "Spain" (1937) by W. H. Auden (1907–1973) (see p. 675, above).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Indian widows who immolated themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres before Britain banned the practice in the 19th century.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: See the refrain of "Yesterday" in Auden's "Spain" (lines 1ff.) (p. 672, above).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British Muslim protesters were televised burning Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: During May Day demonstrations in London in 2000, a statue of Winston Churchill was given a Mohawk ("Mohican") hairdo made of turf.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: U.S. military doctrine widely cited during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sam Wanamaker (1919–1993), American expatriate film director and actor who re-created the Globe Theatre.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Paul Robeson (1898–1976), American singer, actor, and civil rights advocate acclaimed for his performances as Othello.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See King Lear addressing his daughter Cordelia: "and we'll wear out, / In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones, / That ebb and flow by the moon" (*King Lear* 5.3.17–19).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The British Empire employed a "divide and rule" strategy to weaken local powers in India.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), British historian and politician who mandated English language

instruction in Indian schools.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: In a 1833 speech calling for the education of Indians in English ways, Macaulay said: "The scepter may pass away from us. . . . But . . . [t]here is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism: that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British slang for Bolshevik, Russian revolutionary communist; hence, disobedient, uncooperative.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: See *Brave New World* (1931), a dystopian novel set in London by English writer Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), its title taken from Miranda's speech in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (5.1.205).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See *Richard II* (2.1.42, 50): "This other Eden, demi-paradise / . . . This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: British military officer (1888–1935) who, dressing like and identifying with his Arab partners, led a revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I; he became known as Lawrence of Arabia.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Condensed version of Churchill's insulting reference to Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), leader of the Indian Independence movement.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: See *King Lear* 4.7.46–47: "I am bound / Upon a wheel of fire."Return to reference 7
- Note 8: "Some slave is rotting in this manorial lake," exclaims St. Lucian poet Derek Walcott (1930–2017) in his poem "Ruins of a Great House" (1962), which meditates on the decay of empire by invoking the stench of "rotting lime."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: David Livingstone (1813–1873), Scottish medical missionary and explorer in Africa.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Fictional European ivory trader who rules a society of central African natives as a demigod in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (see p. 67).Return to reference 1

- Note 2: That is, superfluous documents; toilet paper.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: London area with Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, and the Houses of Parliament.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Phrase for the beauty and intelligence of culture that English poet Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) borrowed from Irish poet Jonathan Swift (1667–1745).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Egyptian seaport city where an invasion by Britain, France, and Israel failed in 1956, a failure seen as a turning point in the decline of the British Empire.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From "The Defence of Lucknow" (1879) by English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892), which celebrates the defenders of the British Residency in the Indian city of Lucknow that fell under siege during the Indian Rebellion of 1857.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tallest Ferris wheel in Europe, on the south bank of the River Thames.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *one pound sterling*Return to reference °

DORIS LESSING
1919–2013

Born in Persia (now Iran) to British parents, Doris Lessing (née Tayler) lived in southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) from 1924 to 1949, before settling in England. Her five-novel sequence with the general title Children of Violence (beginning with *Martha Quest,* 1952) combines psychological autobiography with powerful explorations of the relationship between Black and White peoples in southern Africa. Her combination of psychological introspection, political analysis, social documentary, and feminism gives a characteristic tone to her novels and short stories. These elements are effectively combined in her novel *The Golden Notebook* (1962), which explores with unexhibitionist frankness the sexual problems of an independent woman while at the same time probing the political conscience of an ex-communist and the needs and dilemmas of a creative writer. In the early 1970s, influenced by the writings of the renegade psychologist R. D. Laing and by the principles of Sufism (the mystical, ecstatic dimension of Islam), Lessing's realistic investigations of social issues took a different turn. In *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* (1971) and *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1974), she explores myth and fantasy, restrained within a broadly realist context. In a series of novels with the general title *Canopus in Argos: Archives* (written between 1979 and 1983), she draws on her reading of the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha, and the Koran and borrows conventions from science fiction to describe the

efforts of a superhuman, extraterrestrial race to guide human history. The novels convey the scope of human suffering in the twentieth century with a rare imaginative power. On completion of this novel sequence, Lessing took the unusual step of publishing two pseudonymous novels (now known jointly as *The Diaries of Jane Somers*, 1983–84), in which she reverted to the realist mode with which she was most widely associated. *The Good Terrorist* (1985) is also written in the style of documentary realism, but *The Fifth Child* (1988) combines elements of realism and fantasy, exploring the effect on a happy family of the birth of a genetically abnormal, nonhuman child.

Her work from the early 1990s on included two candid volumes of autobiography, *Under My Skin* (1994) and *Walking in the Shade* (1997); the four short novels that comprise *The Grandmothers* (2003); *The Cleft* (2007); a clutch of other novels; and a series of short stories. Some of these stories—which deal with racial and social dilemmas as well as with loneliness, the claims of politics, the problems of aging (especially for women), the conflict between the generations, and a whole spectrum of problems of alienation and isolation—have a particular pungency and force. Winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2007, Lessing was very much a writer of her time, deeply involved with the changing patterns of thought, feeling, and culture during the last sixty years. She consistently explored and tested the boundaries of realist technique, without resort to formal experimentalism. Published just on the cusp of second-wave feminism, the story reprinted here, "To Room Nineteen," is a psychologically penetrating study of a woman who finds ultimate fulfillment in neither her marriage nor her children and, feeling trapped by traditional gender roles, seeks solitude in—to echo the title of Virginia Woolf's feminist classic about gender, space, and identity—a room of her own.

To Room Nineteen

This is a story, I suppose, about a failure in intelligence: the Rawlings' marriage was grounded in intelligence.

They were older when they married than most of their married friends: in their well-seasoned late twenties. Both had had a number of affairs, sweet rather than bitter; and when they fell in love—for they did fall in love—had known each other for some time. They joked that they had saved each other "for the real thing." That they had waited so long (but not too long) for this real thing was to them a proof of their sensible discrimination. A good many of their friends had married young, and now (they felt) probably regretted lost opportunities; while others, still unmarried, seemed to them arid, self-doubting, and likely to make desperate or romantic marriages.

Not only they, but others, felt they were well matched: their friends' delight was an additional proof of their happiness. They had played the same roles, male and female, in this group or set, if such a wide, loosely connected, constantly changing constellation of people could be called a set. They had both become, by virtue of their moderation, their humour, and their abstinence from painful experience people to whom others came for advice. They could be, and were, relied on. It was one of those cases of a man and a woman linking themselves whom no one else had ever thought of linking, probably because of their similarities. But then everyone exclaimed: Of course! How right! How was it we never thought of it before!

And so they married amid general rejoicing, and because of their foresight and their sense for what was probable, nothing was a surprise to them.

Both had well-paid jobs. Matthew was a subeditor on a large London newspaper, and Susan worked in an advertising firm. He was not the stuff of which editors or publicised journalists are made, but

he was much more than "a subeditor," being one of the essential background people who in fact steady, inspire and make possible the people in the limelight. He was content with this position. Susan had a talent for commercial drawing. She was humorous about the advertisements she was responsible for, but she did not feel strongly about them one way or the other.

Both, before they married, had had pleasant flats, but they felt it unwise to base a marriage on either flat, because it might seem like a submission of personality on the part of the one whose flat it was not. They moved into a new flat in South Kensington on the clear understanding that when their marriage had settled down (a process they knew would not take long, and was in fact more a humorous concession to popular wisdom than what was due to themselves) they would buy a house and start a family.

And this is what happened. They lived in their charming flat for two years, giving parties and going to them, being a popular young married couple, and then Susan became pregnant, she gave up her job, and they bought a house in Richmond. It was typical of this couple that they had a son first, then a daughter, then twins, son and daughter. Everything right, appropriate, and what everyone would wish for, if they could choose. But people did feel these two had chosen; this balanced and sensible family was no more than what was due to them because of their infallible sense for *choosing* right.

And so they lived with their four children in their gardened house in Richmond and were happy. They had everything they had wanted and had planned for.

And yet . . .

Well, even this was expected, that there must be a certain flatness. . . .

Yes, yes, of course, it was natural they sometimes felt like this. Like what?

Their life seemed to be like a snake biting its tail. Matthew's job for the sake of Susan, children, house, and garden—which caravanserai[1] needed a well-paid job to maintain it. And Susan's

practical intelligence for the sake of Matthew, the children, the house and the garden—which unit would have collapsed in a week without her.

But there was no point about which either could say: "For the sake of *this* is all the rest." Children? But children can't be a centre of life and a reason for being. They can be a thousand things that are delightful, interesting, satisfying, but they can't be a wellspring to live from. Or they shouldn't be. Susan and Matthew knew that well enough.

Matthew's job? Ridiculous. It was an interesting job, but scarcely a reason for living. Matthew took pride in doing it well; but he could hardly be expected to be proud of the newspaper: the newspaper he read, *his* newspaper, was not the one he worked for.

Their love for each other? Well, that was nearest it. If this wasn't a centre, what was? Yes, it was around this point, their love, that the whole extraordinary structure revolved. For extraordinary it certainly was. Both Susan and Matthew had moments of thinking so, of looking in secret disbelief at this thing they had created: marriage, four children, big house, garden, charwomen,[2] friends, cars . . . and this *thing,* this entity, all of it had come into existence, been blown into being out of nowhere, because Susan loved Matthew and Matthew loved Susan. Extraordinary. So that was the central point, the wellspring.

And if one felt that it simply was not strong enough, important enough, to support it all, well whose fault was that? Certainly neither Susan's nor Matthew's. It was in the nature of things. And they sensibly blamed neither themselves nor each other.

On the contrary, they used their intelligence to preserve what they had created from a painful and explosive world: they looked around them, and took lessons. All around them, marriages collapsing, or breaking, or rubbing along (even worse, they felt). They must not make the same mistakes, they must not.

They had avoided the pitfall so many of their friends had fallen into—of buying a house in the country *for the sake of the children;* so that the husband became a weekend husband, a weekend father,

and the wife always careful not to ask what went on in the town flat which they called (in joke) a bachelor flat. No, Matthew was a full-time husband, a full-time father, and at nights, in the big married bed in the big married bedroom (which had an attractive view of the river) they lay beside each other talking and he told her about his day, and what he had done, and whom he had met; and she told him about her day (not as interesting, but that was not her fault) for both knew of the hidden resentments and deprivations of the woman who has lived her own life—and above all, has earned her own living—and is now dependent on a husband for outside interests and money.

Nor did Susan make the mistake of taking a job for the sake of her independence, which she might very well have done, since her old firm, missing her qualities of humour, balance, and sense, invited her often to go back. Children needed their mother to a certain age, that both parents knew and agreed on; and when these four healthy wisely brought-up children were of the right age, Susan would work again, because she knew, and so did he, what happened to women of fifty at the height of their energy and ability, with grown-up children who no longer needed their full devotion.

So here was this couple, testing their marriage, looking after it, treating it like a small boat full of helpless people in a very stormy sea. Well, of course, so it was. . . . The storms of the world were bad, but not too close—which is not to say they were selfishly felt: Susan and Matthew were both well-informed and responsible people. And the inner storms and quicksands were understood and charted. So everything was all right. Everything was in order. Yes, things were under control.

So what did it matter if they felt dry, flat? People like themselves, fed on a hundred books (psychological, anthropological, sociological) could scarcely be unprepared for the dry, controlled wistfulness which is the distinguishing mark of the intelligent marriage. Two people, endowed with education, with discrimination, with judgement, linked together voluntarily from their will to be happy together and to be of use to others—one sees them everywhere,

one knows them, one even is that thing oneself: sadness because so much is after all so little. These two, unsurprised, turned towards each other with even more courtesy and gentle love: this was life, that two people, no matter how carefully chosen, could not be everything to each other. In fact, even to say so, to think in such a way, was banal, they were ashamed to do it.

It was banal, too, when one night Matthew came home late and confessed he had been to a party, taken a girl home and slept with her. Susan forgave him, of course. Except that forgiveness is hardly the word. Understanding, yes. But if you understand something, you don't forgive it, you are the thing itself: forgiveness is for what you *don't* understand. Nor had he *confessed*—what sort of word is that?

The whole thing was not important. After all, years ago they had joked: Of course I'm not going to be faithful to you, no one can be faithful to one other person for a whole lifetime. (And there was the word *faithful*—stupid, all these words, stupid, belonging to a savage old world.) But the incident left both of them irritable. Strange, but they were both bad-tempered, annoyed. There was something unassimilable about it.

Making love splendidly after he had come home that night, both had felt that the idea that Myra Jenkins, a pretty girl met at a party, could be even relevant was ridiculous. They had loved each other for over a decade, would love each other for years more. Who, then, was Myra Jenkins?

Except, thought Susan, unaccountably bad-tempered, she was (is?) the first. In ten years. So either the ten years' fidelity was not important, or she isn't. (No, no, there is something wrong with this way of thinking, there must be.) But if she isn't important, presumably it wasn't important either when Matthew and I first went to bed with each other that afternoon whose delight even now (like a very long shadow at sundown) lays a long, wand-like finger over us. (Why did I say sundown?) Well, if what we felt that afternoon was not important, nothing is important, because if it hadn't been for what we felt, we wouldn't be Mr and Mrs Rawlings with four children, etc., etc. The whole thing is *absurd*—for him to have come

home and told me was absurd. For him not to have told me was absurd. For me to care, or for that matter not to care, is absurd . . . and who is Myra Jenkins? Why, no one at all.

There was only one thing to do, and of course these sensible people did it: they put the thing behind them, and consciously, knowing what they were doing, moved forward into a different phase of their marriage, giving thanks for past good fortune as they did so.

For it was inevitable that the handsome, blond, attractive, manly man, Matthew Rawlings, should be at times tempted (oh, what a word!) by the attractive girls at parties she could not attend because of the four children; and that sometimes he would succumb (a word even more repulsive, if possible) and that she, a good-looking woman in the big well-tended garden at Richmond, would sometimes be pierced as by an arrow from the sky with bitterness. Except that bitterness was not in order, it was out of court. Did the casual girls touch the marriage? They did not. Rather it was they who knew defeat because of the handsome Matthew Rawlings' marriage body and soul to Susan Rawlings.

In that case why did Susan feel (though luckily not for longer than a few seconds at a time) as if life had become a desert, and that nothing mattered, and that her children were not her own?

Meanwhile her intelligence continued to assert that all was well. What if her Matthew did have an occasional sweet afternoon, the odd affair? For she knew quite well, except in her moments of aridity, that they were very happy, that the affairs were not important.

Perhaps that was the trouble? It was in the nature of things that the adventures and delights could no longer be hers, because of the four children and the big house that needed so much attention. But perhaps she was secretly wishing, and even knowing that she did, that the wildness and the beauty could be his. But he was married to her. She was married to him. They were married inextricably. And therefore the gods could not strike him with the real magic, not really. Well, was it Susan's fault that after he came home from an

adventure he looked harassed rather than fulfilled? (In fact, that was how she knew he had been *unfaithful*, because of his sullen air, and his glances at her, similar to hers at him: What is it that I share with this person that shields all delight from me?) But none of it by anybody's fault. (But what did they feel ought to be somebody's fault?) Nobody's fault, nothing to be at fault, no one to blame, no one to offer or to take it . . . and nothing wrong, either, except that Matthew never was really struck, as he wanted to be, by joy; and that Susan was more and more often threatened by emptiness. (It was usually in the garden that she was invaded by this feeling: she was coming to avoid the garden, unless the children or Matthew were with her.) There was no need to use the dramatic words, unfaithful, forgive, and the rest: intelligence forbade them. Intelligence barred, too, quarrelling, sulking, anger, silences of withdrawal, accusations and tears. Above all, intelligence forbids tears.

A high price has to be paid for the happy marriage with the four healthy children in the large white gardened house.

And they were paying it, willingly, knowing what they were doing. When they lay side by side or breast to breast in the big civilised bedroom overlooking the wild sullied river, they laughed, often, for no particular reason; but they knew it was really because of these two small people, Susan and Matthew, supporting such an edifice on their intelligent love. The laugh comforted them; it saved them both, though from what, they did not know.

They were now both fortyish. The older children, boy and girl were ten and eight, at school. The twins, six, were still at home. Susan did not have nurses or girls to help her: childhood is short; and she did not regret the hard work. Often enough she was bored, since small children can be boring; she was often very tired; but she regretted nothing. In another decade, she would turn herself back into being a woman with a life of her own.

Soon the twins would go to school, and they would be away from home from nine until four. These hours, so Susan saw it, would be the preparation for her own slow emancipation away from the role of

hub-of-the-family into woman-with-her-own-life. She was already planning for the hours of freedom when all the children would be "off her hands." That was the phrase used by Matthew and by Susan and by their friends, for the moment when the youngest child went off to school. "They'll be off your hands, darling Susan, and you'll have time to yourself." So said Matthew, the intelligent husband, who had often enough commended and consoled Susan, standing by her in spirit during the years when her soul was not her own, as she said, but her children's.

What it amounted to was that Susan saw herself as she had been at twenty-eight, unmarried; and then again somewhere about fifty, blossoming from the root of what she had been twenty years before. As if the essential Susan were in abeyance, as if she were in cold storage. Matthew said something like this to Susan one night: and she agreed that it was true—she did feel something like that. What, then, was this essential Susan? She did not know. Put like that it sounded ridiculous, and she did not really feel it. Anyway, they had a long discussion about the whole thing before going off to sleep in each other's arms.

So the twins went off to their school, two bright affectionate children who had no problems about it, since their older brother and sister had trodden this path so successfully before them. And now Susan was going to be alone in the big house, every day of the school term, except for the daily woman who came in to clean.

It was now, for the first time in this marriage, that something happened which neither of them had foreseen.

This is what happened. She returned, at nine-thirty, from taking the twins to the school by car, looking forward to seven blissful hours of freedom. On the first morning she was simply restless, worrying about the twins "naturally enough" since this was their first day away at school. She was hardly able to contain herself until they came back. Which they did happily, excited by the world of school, looking forward to the next day. And the next day Susan took them, dropped them, came back, and found herself reluctant to enter her big and beautiful home because it was as if something was waiting

for her there that she did not wish to confront. Sensibly, however, she parked the car in the garage, entered the house, spoke to Mrs Parkes the daily woman about her duties, and went up to her bedroom. She was possessed by a fever which drove her out again, downstairs, into the kitchen, where Mrs Parkes was making cake and did not need her, and into the garden. There she sat on a bench and tried to calm herself, looking at trees, at a brown glimpse of the river. But she was filled with tension, like a panic: as if an enemy was in the garden with her. She spoke to herself severely, thus: All this is quite natural. First, I spent twelve years of my adult life working, *living my own life.* Then I married, and from the moment I became pregnant for the first time I signed myself over, so to speak, to other people. To the children. Not for one moment in twelve years have I been alone, had time to myself. So now I have to learn to be myself again. That's all.

And she went indoors to help Mrs Parkes cook and clean, and found some sewing to do for the children. She kept herself occupied every day. At the end of the first term she understood she felt two contrary emotions. First: secret astonishment and dismay that during those weeks when the house was empty of children she had in fact been more occupied (had been careful to keep herself occupied) than ever she had been when the children were around her needing her continual attention. Second: that now she knew the house would be full of them, and for five weeks, she resented the fact she would never be alone. She was already looking back at those hours of sewing, cooking (but by herself), as at a lost freedom which would not be hers for five long weeks. And the two months of term which would succeed the five weeks stretched alluringly open to her—freedom. But what freedom—when in fact she had been so careful *not* to be free of small duties during the last weeks? She looked at herself, Susan Rawlings, sitting in a big chair by the window in the bedroom, sewing shirts or dresses, which she might just as well have bought. She saw herself making cakes for hours at a time in the big family kitchen: yet usually she bought cakes. What she saw was a woman alone, that was true, but she had not felt alone. For

instance, Mrs Parkes was always somewhere in the house. And she did not like being in the garden at all, because of the closeness there of the enemy—irritation, restlessness, emptiness, whatever it was, which keeping her hands occupied made less dangerous for some reason.

Susan did not tell Matthew of these thoughts. They were not sensible. She did not recognize herself in them. What should she say to her dear friend and husband Matthew? "When I go into the garden, that is, if the children are not there, I feel as if there is an enemy there waiting to invade me." "What enemy, Susan darling?" "Well I don't know, really. . . ." "Perhaps you should see a doctor?"

No, clearly this conversation should not take place. The holidays began and Susan welcomed them. Four children, lively, energetic, intelligent, demanding: she was never, not for a moment of her day, alone. If she was in a room, they would be in the next room, or waiting for her to do something for them; or it would soon be time for lunch or tea, or to take one of them to the dentist. Something to do: five weeks of it, thank goodness.

On the fourth day of these so welcome holidays, she found she was storming with anger at the twins, two shrinking beautiful children who (and this is what checked her) stood hand in hand looking at her with sheer dismayed disbelief. This was their calm mother, shouting at them. And for what? They had come to her with some game, some bit of nonsense. They looked at each other, moved closer for support, and went off hand in hand, leaving Susan holding on to the windowsill of the living room, breathing deep, feeling sick. She went to lie down, telling the older children she had a headache. She heard the boy Harry telling the little ones: "It's all right, Mother's got a headache." She heard that *It's all right* with pain.

That night she said to her husband: "Today I shouted at the twins, quite unfairly." She sounded miserable, and he said gently: "Well, what of it?"

"It's more of an adjustment than I thought, their going to school."

"But Susie, Susie darling. . . ." For she was crouched weeping on the bed. He comforted her: "Susan, what is all this about? You shouted at them? What of it? If you shouted at them fifty times a day it wouldn't be more than the little devils deserve." But she wouldn't laugh. She wept. Soon he comforted her with his body. She became calm. Calm, she wondered what was wrong with her, and why she should mind so much that she might, just once, have behaved unjustly with the children. What did it matter? They had forgotten it all long ago: Mother had a headache and everything was all right.

It was a long time later that Susan understood that that night, when she had wept and Matthew had driven the misery out of her with his big solid body, was the last time, ever in their married life, that they had been—to use their mutual language—with each other. And even that was a lie, because she had not told him of her real fears at all.

The five weeks passed, and Susan was in control of herself, and good and kind, and she looked forward to the end of the holidays with a mixture of fear and longing. She did not know what to expect. She took the twins off to school (the elder children took themselves to school) and she returned to the house determined to face the enemy wherever he was, in the house, or the garden or—where?

She was again restless, she was possessed by restlessness. She cooked and sewed and worked as before, day after day, while Mrs Parkes remonstrated: "Mrs Rawlings, what's the need for it? I can do that, it's what you pay me for."

And it was so irrational that she checked herself. She would put the car into the garage, go up to her bedroom, and sit, hands in her lap, forcing herself to be quiet. She listened to Mrs Parkes moving around the house. She looked out into the garden and saw the branches shake the trees. She sat defeating the enemy, restlessness. Emptiness. She ought to be thinking about her life, about herself. But she did not. Or perhaps she could not. As soon as she forced her mind to think about Susan (for what else did she want to be alone for?) it skipped off to thoughts of butter or school clothes. Or it

thought of Mrs Parkes. She realised that she sat listening for the movements of the cleaning woman, following her every turn, bend, thought. She followed her in her mind from kitchen to bathroom, from table to oven, and it was as if the duster, the cleaning cloth, the saucepan, were in her own hand. She would hear herself saying: No, not like that, don't put that there. . . . Yet she did not give a damn what Mrs Parkes did, or if she did it at all. Yet she could not prevent herself from being conscious of her, every minute. Yes, this was what was wrong with her: she needed, when she was alone, to be really alone, with no one near. She could not endure the knowledge that in ten minutes or in half an hour Mrs Parkes would call up the stairs: "Mrs Rawlings, there's no silver polish. Madam, we're out of flour."

So she left the house and went to sit in the garden where she was screened from the house by trees. She waited for the demon to appear and claim her, but he did not.

She was keeping him off, because she had not, after all, come to an end of arranging herself.

She was planning how to be somewhere where Mrs Parkes would not come after her with a cup of tea, or a demand to be allowed to telephone (always irritating since Susan did not care who she telephoned or how often), or just a nice talk about something. Yes, she needed a place, or a state of affairs, where it would not be necessary to keep reminding herself: In ten minutes I must telephone Matthew about . . . and at half past three I must leave early for the children because the car needs cleaning. And at ten o'clock tomorrow I must remember. . . . She was possessed with resentment that the seven hours of freedom in every day (during weekdays in the school term) were not free, that never, not for one second, ever, was she free from the pressure of time, from having to remember this or that. She could never forget herself; never really let herself go into forgetfulness.

Resentment. It was poisoning her. (She looked at this emotion and thought it was absurd. Yet she felt it.) She was a prisoner. (She looked at this thought too, and it was no good telling herself it was a

ridiculous one.) She must tell Matthew—but what? She was filled with emotions that were utterly ridiculous, that she despised, yet that nevertheless she was feeling so strongly she could not shake them off.

The school holidays came round, and this time they were for nearly two months, and she behaved with a conscious controlled decency that nearly drove her crazy. She would lock herself in the bathroom, and sit on the edge of the bath, breathing deep, trying to let go into some kind of calm. Or she went up into the spare room, usually empty, where no one would expect her to be. She heard the children calling "Mother, Mother," and kept silent, feeling guilty. Or she went to the very end of the garden, by herself, and looked at the slow-moving brown river; she looked at the river and closed her eyes and breathed slow and deep, taking it into her being, into her veins.

Then she returned to the family, wife and mother, smiling and responsible, feeling as if the pressure of these people—four lively children and her husband—were a painful pressure on the surface of her skin, a hand pressing on her brain. She did not once break down into irritation during these holidays, but it was like living out a prison sentence, and when the children went back to school, she sat on a white stone seat near the flowing river, and she thought: It is not even a year since the twins went to school, since *they were off my hands* (What on earth did I think I meant when I used that stupid phrase?) and yet I'm a different person. I'm simply not myself. I don't understand it.

Yet she had to understand it. For she knew that this structure—big white house, on which the mortgage still cost four hundred a year, a husband, so good and kind and insightful, four children, all doing so nicely, and the garden where she sat, and Mrs Parkes the cleaning woman—all this depended on her, and yet she could not understand why, or even what it was she contributed to it.

She said to Matthew in their bedroom: "I think there must be something wrong with me."

And he said: "Surely not, Susan? You look marvelous—you're as lovely as ever."

She looked at the handsome blond man, with his clear, intelligent, blue-eyed face, and thought: Why is it I can't tell him? Why not? And she said: "I need to be alone more than I am."

At which he swung his slow blue gaze at her, and she saw what she had been dreading: Incredulity. Disbelief. And fear. An incredulous blue stare from a stranger who was her husband, as close to her as her own breath.

He said: "But the children are at school and off your hands."

She said to herself: I've got to force myself to say: Yes, but do you realise that I never feel free? There's never a moment I can say to myself: There's nothing I have to remind myself about, nothing I have to do in half an hour, or an hour, or two hours. . . .

But she said: "I don't feel well."

He said: "Perhaps you need a holiday."

She said, appalled: "But not without you, surely?" For she could not imagine herself going off without him. Yet that was what he meant. Seeing her face, he laughed, and opened his arms, and she went into them, thinking: Yes, yes, but why can't I say it? And what is it I have to say?

She tried to tell him, about never being free. And he listened and said: "But Susan, what sort of freedom can you possibly want—short of being dead! Am I ever free? I go to the office, and I have to be there at ten—all right, half past ten, sometimes. And I have to do this or that, don't I? Then I've got to come home at a certain time—I don't mean it, you know I don't—but if I'm not going to be back home at six I telephone you. When can I ever say to myself: I have nothing to be responsible for in the next six hours?"

Susan, hearing this, was remorseful. Because it was true. The good marriage, the house, the children, depended just as much on his voluntary bondage as it did on hers. But why did he not feel bound? Why didn't he chafe and become restless? No, there was something really wrong with her and this proved it.

And that word *bondage*—why had she used it? She had never felt marriage, or the children, as bondage. Neither had he, or surely they wouldn't be together lying in each other's arms content after twelve years of marriage.

No, her state (whatever it was) was irrelevant, nothing to do with her real good life with her family. She had to accept the fact that after all, she was an irrational person and to live with it. Some people had to live with crippled arms, or stammers, or being deaf. She would have to live knowing she was subject to a state of mind she could not own.

Nevertheless, as a result of this conversation with her husband, there was a new regime next holidays.

The spare room at the top of the house now had a cardboard sign saying: PRIVATE! DO NOT DISTURB! on it. (This sign had been drawn in coloured chalks by the children, after a discussion between the parents in which it was decided this was psychologically the right thing.) The family and Mrs Parkes knew this was "Mother's Room" and that she was entitled to her privacy. Many serious conversations took place between Matthew and the children about not taking Mother for granted. Susan overheard the first, between father and Harry, the older boy, and was surprised at her irritation over it. Surely she could have a room somewhere in that big house and retire into it without such a fuss being made? Without it being so solemnly discussed? Why couldn't she simply have announced: "I'm going to fit out the little top room for myself, and when I'm in it I'm not to be disturbed for anything short of fire"? Just that, and finished; instead of long earnest discussions. When she heard Harry and Matthew explaining it to the twins with Mrs Parkes coming in —"Yes, well, a family sometimes gets on top of a woman"—she had to go right away to the bottom of the garden until the devils of exasperation had finished their dance in her blood.

But now there was a room, and she could go there when she liked, she used it seldom: she felt even more caged there than in her bedroom. One day she had gone up there after a lunch for ten children she had cooked and served because Mrs Parkes was not

there, and had sat alone for a while looking into the garden. She saw the children stream out from the kitchen and stand looking up at the window where she sat behind the curtains. They were all—her children and their friends—discussing Mother's Room. A few minutes later, the chase of children in some game came pounding up the stairs, but ended as abruptly as if they had fallen over a ravine, so sudden was the silence. They had remembered she was there, and had gone silent in a great gale of "Hush! Shhhhhh! Quiet, you'll disturb her. . . ." And they went tiptoeing downstairs like criminal conspirators. When she came down to make tea for them, they all apologised. The twins put their arms around her, from front and back, making a human cage of loving limbs, and promised it would never occur again. "We forgot, Mummy, we forgot all about it!"

What it amounted to was that Mother's Room, and her need for privacy, had become a valuable lesson in respect for other people's rights. Quite soon Susan was going up to the room only because it was a lesson it was a pity to drop. Then she took sewing up there, and the children and Mrs Parkes came in and out: it had become another family room.

She sighed, and smiled, and resigned herself—she made jokes at her own expense with Matthew over the room. That is, she did from the self she liked, she respected. But at the same time, something inside her howled with impatience, with rage. . . . And she was frightened. One day she found herself kneeling by her bed and praying: "Dear God, keep it away from me, keep him away from me." She meant the devil, for she now thought of it, not caring if she were irrational, as some sort of demon. She imagined him, or it, as a youngish man, or perhaps a middle-aged man pretending to be young. Or a man young-looking from immaturity? At any rate, she saw the young-looking face which, when she drew closer, had dry lines about mouth and eyes. He was thinnish, meagre in build. And he had a reddish complexion, and ginger hair. That was he—a gingery, energetic man, and he wore a reddish hairy jacket, unpleasant to the touch.

Well, one day she saw him. She was standing at the bottom of the garden, watching the river ebb past, when she raised her eyes and saw this person, or being, sitting on the white stone bench. He was looking at her, and grinning. In his hand was a long crooked stick, which he had picked off the ground, or broken off the tree above him. He was absent-mindedly, out of an absent-minded or freakish impulse of spite, using the stick to stir around in the coils of a blindworm or a grass snake (or some kind of snakelike creature: it was whitish and unhealthy to look at, unpleasant). The snake was twisting about, flinging its coils from side to side in a kind of dance of protest against the teasing prodding stick.

Susan looked at him thinking: Who is the stranger? What is he doing in our garden? Then she recognised the man around whom her terrors had crystallised. As she did so, he vanished. She made herself walk over to the bench. A shadow from a branch lay across thin emerald grass, moving jerkily over its roughness, and she could see why she had taken it for a snake, lashing and twisting. She went back to the house thinking: Right, then, so I've seen him with my own eyes, so I'm not crazy after all—there *is* a danger because I've seen him. He is lurking in the garden and sometimes even in the house, and he wants *to get into me and to take me over.*

She dreamed of having a room or a place, anywhere, where she could go and sit, by herself, no one knowing where she was.

Once, near Victoria, she found herself outside a news agent that had Rooms to Let advertised. She decided to rent a room, telling no one. Sometimes she could take the train in to Richmond and sit alone in it for an hour or two. Yet how could she? A room would cost three or four pounds a week, and she earned no money, and how could she explain to Matthew that she needed such a sum? What for? It did not occur to her that she was taking it for granted she wasn't going to tell him about the room.

Well, it was out of the question, having a room; yet she knew she must.

One day, when a school term was well established, and none of the children had measles or other ailments, and everything seemed

in order, she did the shopping early, explained to Mrs Parkes she was meeting an old school friend, took the train to Victoria, searched until she found a small quiet hotel, and asked for a room for the day. They did not let rooms by the day, the manageress said, looking doubtful, since Susan so obviously was not the kind of woman who needed a room for unrespectable reasons. Susan made a long explanation about not being well, being unable to shop without frequent rests for lying down. At last she was allowed to rent the room provided she paid a full night's price for it. She was taken up by the manageress and a maid, both concerned over the state of her health . . . which must be pretty bad if, living at Richmond (she had signed her name and address in the register), she needed a shelter at Victoria.

The room was ordinary and anonymous, and was just what Susan needed. She put a shilling in the gas fire, and sat, eyes shut, in a dingy armchair with her back to a dingy window. She was alone. She was alone. She was alone. She could feel pressures lifting off her. First the sounds of traffic came very loud; then they seemed to vanish; she might even have slept a little. A knock on the door: it was Miss Townsend the manageress, bringing her a cup of tea with her own hands, so concerned was she over Susan's long silence and possible illness.

Miss Townsend was a lonely woman of fifty, running this hotel with all the rectitude expected of her, and she sensed in Susan the possibility of understanding companionship. She stayed to talk. Susan found herself in the middle of a fantastic story about her illness, which got more and more improbable as she tried to make it tally with the large house at Richmond, well-off husband, and four children. Suppose she said instead: Miss Townsend, I'm here in your hotel because I need to be alone for a few hours, above all *alone and with no one knowing where I am.* She said it mentally, and saw, mentally, the look that would inevitably come on Miss Townsend's elderly maiden's face. "Miss Townsend, my four children and my husband are driving me insane, do you understand that? Yes, I can see from the gleam of hysteria in your eyes that comes from

loneliness controlled but only just contained that I've got everything in the world you've ever longed for. Well, Miss Townsend, I don't want any of it. You can have it, Miss Townsend. I wish I was absolutely alone in the world, like you. Miss Townsend, I'm besieged by seven devils, Miss Townsend, Miss Townsend, let me stay here in your hotel where the devils can't get me. . . ." Instead of saying all this, she described her anaemia, agreed to try Miss Townsend's remedy for it, which was raw liver, minced, between whole-meal bread, and said yes, perhaps it would be better if she stayed at home and let a friend do shopping for her. She paid her bill and left the hotel, defeated.

At home Mrs Parkes said she didn't really like it, no, not really, when Mrs Rawlings was away from nine in the morning until five. The teacher had telephoned from school to say Joan's teeth were paining her, and she hadn't known what to say; and what was she to make for the children's tea, Mrs Rawlings hadn't said.

All this was nonsense, of course. Mrs Parkes's complaint was that Susan had withdrawn herself spiritually, leaving the burden of the big house on her.

Susan looked back at her day of "freedom" which had resulted in her becoming a friend to the lonely Miss Townsend, and in Mrs Parkes's remonstrances. Yet she remembered the short blissful hour of being alone, really alone. She was determined to arrange her life, no matter what it cost, so that she could have that solitude more often. An absolute solitude, where no one knew her or cared about her.

But how? She thought of saying to her old employer: I want you to back me up in a story with Matthew that I am doing part-time work for you. The truth is that . . . but she would have to tell him a lie too, and which lie? She could not say: I want to sit by myself three or four times a week in a rented room. And besides, he knew Matthew, and she could not really ask him to tell lies on her behalf, apart from his being bound to think it meant a lover.

Suppose she really took a part-time job, which she could get through fast and efficiently, leaving time for herself. What job?

Addressing envelopes? Canvassing?

And there was Mrs Parkes, working widow, who knew exactly what she was prepared to give to the house, who knew by instinct when her mistress withdrew in spirit from her responsibilities. Mrs Parkes was one of the servers of this world, but she needed someone to serve. She had to have Mrs Rawlings, her madam, at the top of the house or in the garden, so that she could come and get support from her: "Yes, the bread's not what it was when I was a girl. . . . Yes, Harry's got a wonderful appetite, I wonder where he puts it all. . . . Yes, it's lucky the twins are so much of a size, they can wear each other's shoes, that's a saving in these hard times. . . . Yes, the cherry jam from Switzerland is not a patch on the jam from Poland, and three times the price. . . ." And so on. That sort of talk Mrs Parkes must have, every day, or she would leave, not knowing herself why she left.

Susan Rawlings, thinking these thoughts, found that she was prowling through the great thicketed garden like a wild cat: she was walking up the stairs, down the stairs, through the rooms, into the garden, along the brown running river, back, up through the house, down again. . . . It was a wonder Mrs Parkes did not think it strange. But on the contrary, Mrs Rawlings could do what she liked, she could stand on her head if she wanted, provided she was *there.* Susan Rawlings prowled and muttered through her house, hating Mrs Parkes, hating poor Miss Townsend, dreaming of her hour of solitude in the dingy respectability of Miss Townsend's hotel bedroom, and she knew quite well she was mad. Yes, she was mad.

She said to Matthew that she must have a holiday. Matthew agreed with her. This was not as things had been once—how they had talked in each other's arms in the marriage bed. He had, she knew, diagnosed her finally as *unreasonable.* She had become someone outside himself that he had to manage. They were living side by side in this house like two tolerably friendly strangers.

Having told Mrs Parkes, or rather, asked for her permission, she went off on a walking holiday in Wales. She chose the remotest place she knew of. Every morning the children telephoned her before

they went off to school, to encourage and support her, just as they had over Mother's Room. Every evening she telephoned them, spoke to each child in turn, and then to Matthew. Mrs Parkes, given permission to telephone for instructions or advice, did so every day at lunchtime. When, as happened three times, Mrs Rawlings was out on the mountainside, Mrs Parkes asked that she should ring back at such and such a time, for she would not be happy in what she was doing without Mrs Rawlings' blessing.

Susan prowled over wild country with the telephone wire holding her to her duty like a leash. The next time she must telephone, or wait to be telephoned, nailed her to her cross. The mountains themselves seemed trammelled by her unfreedom. Everywhere on the mountains, where she met no one at all, from breakfast time to dusk, excepting sheep, or a shepherd, she came face to face with her own craziness which might attack her in the broadest valleys, so that they seemed too small; or on a mountaintop from which she could see a hundred other mountains and valleys, so that they seemed too low, too small, with the sky pressing down too close. She would stand gazing at a hillside brilliant with ferns and bracken, jeweled with running water, and see nothing but her devil, who lifted inhuman eyes at her from where he leaned negligently on a rock, switching at his ugly yellow boots with a leafy twig.

She returned to her home and family, with the Welsh emptiness at the back of her mind like a promise of freedom.

She told her husband she wanted to have an *au pair* girl.[3]

They were in their bedroom, it was late at night, the children slept. He sat, shirted and slippered, in a chair by the window, looking out. She sat brushing her hair and watching him in the mirror. A time-hallowed scene in the connubial bedroom. He said nothing, while she heard the arguments coming into his mind, only to be rejected because every one was *reasonable.*

"It seems strange to get one now, after all, the children are in school most of the day. Surely the time for you to have help was when you were stuck with them day and night. Why don't you ask Mrs Parkes to cook for you? She's even offered to—I can understand

if you are tired of cooking for six people. But you know that an *au pair* girl means all kinds of problems, it's not like having an ordinary char[4] in during the day. . . ."

Finally he said carefully: "Are you thinking of going back to work?"

"No," she said, "no, not really," She made herself sound vague, rather stupid. She went on brushing her black hair and peering at herself so as to be oblivious of the short uneasy glances her Matthew kept giving her. "Do you think we can't afford it?" she went on vaguely, not at all the old efficient Susan who knew exactly what they could afford.

"It's not that," he said, looking out of the window at dark trees, so as not to look at her. Meanwhile she examined a round, candid, pleasant face with clear dark brows and clear grey eyes. A sensible face. She brushed thick healthy black hair and thought: Yet that's the reflection of a madwoman. How very strange! Much more to the point if what looked back at me was the gingery green-eyed demon with his dry meagre smile. . . . Why wasn't Matthew agreeing? After all, what else could he do? She was breaking her part of the bargain and there was no way of forcing her to keep it: that her spirit, her soul, should live in this house, so that the people in it could grow like plants in water, and Mrs Parkes remain content in their service. In return for this, he would be a good loving husband, and responsible towards the children. Well, nothing like this had been true of either of them for a long time. He did his duty, perfunctorily; she did not even pretend to do hers. And he had become like other husbands, with his real life in his work and the people he met there, and very likely a serious affair. All this was her fault.

At last he drew heavy curtains, blotting out the trees, and turned to force her attention: "Susan, are you really sure we need a girl?" But she would not meet his appeal at all: She was running the brush over her hair again and again, lifting fine black clouds in a small hiss of electricity. She was peering in and smiling as if she were amused at the clinging hissing hair that followed the brush.

"Yes, I think it would be a good idea on the whole," she said, with the cunning of a madwoman evading the real point.

In the mirror she could see her Matthew lying on his back, his hands behind his head, staring upwards, his face sad and hard. She felt her heart (the old heart of Susan Rawlings) soften and call out to him. But she set it to be indifferent.

He said: "Susan, the children?" It was an appeal that *almost* reached her. He opened his arms, lifting them from where they had lain by his sides, palms up, empty. She had only to run across and fling herself into them, onto his hard, warm chest, and melt into herself, into Susan. But she could not. She would not see his lifted arms. She said vaguely: "Well, surely it'll be even better for them? We'll get a French or a German girl and they'll learn the language."

In the dark she lay beside him, feeling frozen, a stranger. She felt as if Susan had been spirited away. She disliked very much this woman who lay here, cold and indifferent beside a suffering man, but she could not change her.

Next morning she set about getting a girl, and very soon came Sophie Traub from Hamburg, a girl of twenty, laughing, healthy, blue-eyed, intending to learn English. Indeed, she already spoke a good deal. In return for a room—"Mother's Room"—and her food, she undertook to do some light cooking, and to be with the children when Mrs Rawlings asked. She was an intelligent girl and understood perfectly what was needed. Susan said: "I go off sometimes, for the morning or for the day—well, sometimes the children run home from school, or they ring up, or a teacher rings up. I should be here, really. And there's the daily woman. . . ." And Sophie laughed her deep fruity *Fräulein's* laugh, showed her fine white teeth and her dimples, and said: "You want some person to play mistress of the house sometimes, not so?"

"Yes, that is just so," said Susan, a bit dry, despite herself, thinking in secret fear how easy it was, how much nearer to the end she was than she thought. Healthy Fräulein Traub's instant understanding of their position proved this to be true.

The *au pair* girl, because of her own common sense, or (as Susan said to herself with her new inward shudder) because she had been *chosen* so well by Susan, was a success with everyone, the children liking her, Mrs Parkes forgetting almost at once that she was German, and Matthew finding her "nice to have around the house." For he was now taking things as they came, from the surface of life, withdrawn both as a husband and a father from the household.

One day Susan saw how Sophie and Mrs Parkes were talking and laughing in the kitchen, and she announced that she would be away until teatime. She knew exactly where to go and what she must look for. She took the District Line to South Kensington, changed to the Circle, got off at Paddington, and walked around looking at the smaller hotels until she was satisfied with one which had FRED'S HOTEL painted on windowpanes that needed cleaning. The façade was a faded shiny yellow, like unhealthy skin. A door at the end of a passage said she must knock; she did, and Fred appeared. He was not at all attractive, not in any way, being fattish, and run-down, and wearing a tasteless striped suit. He had small sharp eyes in a white creased face, and was quite prepared to let Mrs Jones (she chose the farcical name deliberately, staring him out) have a room three days a week from ten until six. Provided of course that she paid in advance each time she came? Susan produced fifteen shillings (no price had been set by him) and held it out, still fixing him with a bold unblinking challenge she had not known until then she could use at will. Looking at her still, he took up a ten-shilling note from her palm between thumb and forefinger, fingered it; then shuffled up two half crowns, held out his own palm with these bits of money displayed thereon, and let his gaze lower broodingly at them. They were standing in the passage, a red-shaded light above, bare boards beneath, and a strong smell of floor polish rising about them. He shot his gaze up at her over the still-extended palm, and smiled as if to say: What do you take me for? "I shan't," said Susan, "be using this room for the purposes of making money." He still waited. She added another five shillings, at which he nodded and said: "You pay, and I ask no questions." "Good," said Susan. He now went past her

to the stairs, and there waited a moment: the light from the street door being in her eyes, she lost sight of him momentarily. Then she saw a sober-suited, white-faced, white-balding little man trotting up the stairs like a waiter, and she went after him. They proceeded in utter silence up the stairs of this house where no questions were asked—Fred's Hotel, which could afford the freedom for its visitors that poor Miss Townsend's hotel could not. The room was hideous. It had a single window, with thin green brocade curtains, a three-quarter bed that had a cheap green satin bedspread on it, a fireplace with a gas fire and a shilling meter by it, a chest of drawers, and a green wicker armchair.

"Thank you," said Susan, knowing that Fred (if this was Fred, and not George, or Herbert or Charlie) was looking at her not so much with curiosity, an emotion he would not own to, for professional reasons, but with a philosophical sense of what was appropriate. Having taken her money and shown her up and agreed to everything, he was clearly disapproving of her for coming here. She did not belong here at all, so his look said. (But she knew, already, how very much she did belong: the room had been waiting for her to join it.) "Would you have me called at five o'clock, please?" and he nodded and went downstairs.

It was twelve in the morning. She was free. She sat in the armchair, she simply sat, she closed her eyes and sat and let herself be alone. She was alone and no one knew where she was. When a knock came on the door she was annoyed, and prepared to show it: but it was Fred himself, it was five o'clock and he was calling her as ordered. He flicked his sharp little eyes over the room—bed, first. It was undisturbed. She might never have been in the room at all. She thanked him, said she would be returning the day after tomorrow, and left. She was back home in time to cook supper, to put the children to bed, to cook a second supper for her husband and herself later. And to welcome Sophie back from the pictures where she had gone with a friend. All these things she did cheerfully, willingly. But she was thinking all the time of the hotel room, she was longing for it with her whole being.

Three times a week. She arrived promptly at ten, looked Fred in the eyes, gave him twenty shillings, followed him up the stairs, went into the room, and shut the door on him with gentle firmness. For Fred, disapproving of her being here at all, was quite ready to let friendship, or at least acquaintanceship, follow his disapproval, if only she would let him. But he was content to go off on her dismissing nod, with the twenty shillings in his hand.

She sat in the armchair and shut her eyes.

What did she *do* in the room? Why, nothing at all. From the chair, when it had rested her, she went to the window, stretching her arms, smiling, treasuring her anonymity, to look out. She was no longer Susan Rawlings, mother of four, wife of Matthew, employer of Mrs Parkes and of Sophie Traub, with these and those relations with friends, schoolteachers, tradesmen. She no longer was mistress of the big white house and garden, owning clothes suitable for this and that activity or occasion. She was Mrs Jones, and she was alone, and she had no past and no future. Here I am, she thought, after all these years of being married and having children and playing those roles of responsibility—and I'm just the same. Yet there have been times I thought that nothing existed of me except the roles that went with being Mrs Matthew Rawlings. Yes, here I am, and if I never saw any of my family again, here I would still be . . . how very strange that is! And she leaned on the sill, and looked into the street, loving the men and women who passed, because she did not know them. She looked at the downtrodden buildings over the street, and at the sky, wet and dingy, or sometimes blue, and she felt she had never seen buildings or sky before. And then she went back to the chair, empty, her mind a blank. Sometimes she talked aloud, saying nothing—an exclamation, meaningless, followed by a comment about the floral pattern on the thin rug, or a stain on the green satin coverlet. For the most part, she wool-gathered—what word is there for it?—brooded, wandered, simply went dark, feeling emptiness run deliciously through her veins like the movement of her blood.

This room had become more her own than the house she lived in. One morning she found Fred taking her a flight higher than usual. She stopped, refusing to go up, and demanded her usual room, Number 19. "Well, you'll have to wait half an hour then," he said. Willingly she descended to the dark disinfectant-smelling hall, and sat waiting until the two, man and woman, came down the stairs, giving her swift indifferent glances before they hurried out into the street, separating at the door. She went up to the room, *her* room, which they had just vacated. It was no less hers, though the windows were set wide open, and a maid was straightening the bed as she came in.

After these days of solitude, it was both easy to play her part as mother and wife, and difficult—because it was so easy: she felt an impostor. She felt as if her shell moved here, with her family, answering to Mummy, Mother, Susan, Mrs Rawlings. She was surprised no one saw through her, that she wasn't turned out of doors, as a fake. On the contrary, it seemed the children loved her more; Matthew and she "got on" pleasantly, and Mrs Parkes was happy in her work under (for the most part, it must be confessed) Sophie Traub. At night she lay beside her husband, and they made love again, apparently just as they used to, when they were really married. But she, Susan, or the being who answered so readily and improbably to the name of Susan, was not there: she was in Fred's Hotel, in Paddington, waiting for the easing hours of solitude to begin.

Soon she made a new arrangement with Fred and with Sophie. It was for five days a week. As for the money, five pounds, she simply asked Matthew for it. She saw that she was not even frightened he might ask what for: he would give it to her, she knew that, and yet it was terrifying it could be so, for this close couple, these partners, had once known the destination of every shilling they must spend. He agreed to give her five pounds a week. She asked for just so much, not a penny more. He sounded indifferent about it. It was as if he were paying her, she thought: *paying her off*—yes, that was it. Terror came back for a moment, when she understood this, but she

stilled it: things had gone too far for that. Now, every week, on Sunday nights, he gave her five pounds, turning away from her before their eyes could meet on the transaction. As for Sophie Traub, she was to be somewhere in or near the house until six at night, after which she was free. She was not to cook, or to clean, she was simply to be there. So she gardened or sewed, and asked friends in, being a person who was bound to have a lot of friends. If the children were sick, she nursed them. If teachers telephoned, she answered them sensibly. For the five daytimes in the school week, she was altogether the mistress of the house.

One night in the bedroom, Matthew asked: "Susan, I don't want to interfere—don't think that, please—but are you sure you are well?"

She was brushing her hair at the mirror. She made two more strokes on either side of her head, before she replied: "Yes, dear, I am sure I am well."

He was again lying on his back, his big blond head on his hands, his elbows angled up and part-concealing his face. He said: "Then Susan, I have to ask you this question, though you must understand, I'm not putting any sort of pressure on you." (Susan heard the word pressure with dismay, because this was inevitable, of course she could not go on like this.) "Are things going to go on like this?"

"Well," she said, going vague and bright and idiotic again, so as to escape: "Well, I don't see why not."

He was jerking his elbows up and down, in annoyance or in pain, and, looking at him, she saw he had got thin, even gaunt; and restless angry movements were not what she remembered of him. He said: "Do you want a divorce, is that it?"

At this, Susan only with the greatest difficulty stopped herself from laughing: she could hear the bright bubbling laughter she *would* have emitted, had she let herself. He could only mean one thing: she had a lover, and that was why she spent her days in London, as lost to him as if she had vanished to another continent.

Then the small panic set in again: she understood that he hoped she did have a lover, he was begging her to say so, because otherwise it would be too terrifying.

She thought this out, as she brushed her hair, watching the fine black stuff fly up to make its little clouds of electricity, hiss, hiss, hiss. Behind her head, across the room, was a blue wall. She realised she was absorbed in watching the black hair making shapes against the blue. She should be answering him. "Do *you* want a divorce, Matthew?"

He said: "That surely isn't the point, is it?"

"You brought it up, I didn't," she said, brightly, suppressing meaningless tinkling laughter.

Next day she asked Fred: "Have enquiries been made for me?"

He hesitated, and she said: "I've been coming here a year now. I've made no trouble, and you've been paid every day. I have a right to be told."

"As a matter of fact, Mrs Jones, a man did come asking."

"A man from a detective agency?"

"Well, he could have been, couldn't he?"

"I was asking you . . . well, what did you tell him?"

"I told him a Mrs Jones came every weekday from ten until five or six and stayed in Number Nineteen by herself."

"Describing me?"

"Well Mrs Jones, I had no alternative. Put yourself in my place."

"By rights I should deduct what that man gave you for the information."

He raised shocked eyes: she was not the sort of person to make jokes like this! Then he chose to laugh: a pinkish wet slit appeared across his white crinkled face: his eyes positively begged her to laugh, otherwise he might lose some money. She remained grave, looking at him.

He stopped laughing and said: "You want to go up now?"—returning to the familiarity, the comradeship, of the country where

no questions are asked, on which (and he knew it) she depended completely.

She went up to sit in her wicker chair. But it was not the same. Her husband had searched her out. (The world had searched her out.) The pressures were on her. She was here with his connivance. He might walk in at any moment, here, into Room 19. She imagined the report from the detective agency: "A woman calling herself Mrs Jones, fitting the description of your wife (etc., etc., etc.), stays alone all day in room No. 19. She insists on this room, waits for it if it is engaged. As far as the proprietor knows she receives no visitors there, male or female." A report something on these lines, Matthew must have received.

Well of course he was right: things couldn't go on like this. He had put an end to it all simply by sending the detective after her.

She tried to shrink herself back into the shelter of the room, a snail pecked out of its shell and trying to squirm back. But the peace of the room had gone. She was trying consciously to revive it, trying to let go into the dark creative trance (or whatever it was) that she had found there. It was no use, yet she craved for it, she was as ill as a suddenly deprived addict.

Several times she returned to the room, to look for herself there, but instead she found the unnamed spirit of restlessness, a prickling fevered hunger for movement, an irritable self-consciousness that made her brain feel as if it had coloured lights going on and off inside it. Instead of the soft dark that had been the room's air, were now waiting for her demons that made her dash blindly about, muttering words of hate; she was impelling herself from point to point like a moth dashing itself against a windowpane, sliding to the bottom, fluttering off on broken wings, then crashing into the invisible barrier again. And again and again. Soon she was exhausted, and she told Fred that for a while she would not be needing the room, she was going on holiday. Home she went, to the big white house by the river. The middle of a weekday, and she felt guilty at returning to her own home when not expected. She stood unseen, looking in at the kitchen window. Mrs Parkes, wearing a

discarded floral overall of Susan's, was stooping to slide something into the oven. Sophie, arms folded, was leaning her back against a cupboard and laughing at some joke made by a girl not seen before by Susan—a dark foreign girl, Sophie's visitor. In an armchair Molly, one of the twins, lay curled, sucking her thumb and watching the grownups. She must have some sickness, to be kept from school. The child's listless face, the dark circles under her eyes, hurt Susan: Molly was looking at the three grownups working and talking in exactly the same way Susan looked at the four through the kitchen window: she was remote, shut off from them.

But then, just as Susan imagined herself going in, picking up the little girl, and sitting in an armchair with her, stroking her probably heated forehead, Sophie did just that: she had been standing on one leg, the other knee flexed, its foot set against the wall. Now she let her foot in its ribbon-tied red shoe slide down the wall, and stood solid on two feet, clapping her hands before and behind her, and sang a couple of lines in German, so that the child lifted her heavy eyes at her and began to smile. Then she walked, or rather skipped, over to the child, swung her up, and let her fall into her lap at the same moment she sat herself. She said "Hopla! Hopla! Molly . . ." and began stroking the dark untidy young head that Molly laid on her shoulder for comfort.

Well. . . . Susan blinked the tears of farewell out of her eyes, and went quietly up the house to her bedroom. There she sat looking at the river through the trees. She felt at peace, but in a way that was new to her. She had no desire to move, to talk, to do anything at all. The devils that had haunted the house, the garden, were not there; but she knew it was because her soul was in Room 19 in Fred's Hotel; she was not really here at all. It was a sensation that should have been frightening: to sit at her own bedroom window, listening to Sophie's rich young voice sing German nursery songs to her child, listening to Mrs Parkes clatter and move below, and to know that all this had nothing to do with her: she was already out of it.

Later, she made herself go down and say she was home: it was unfair to be here unannounced. She took lunch with Mrs Parkes,

Sophie, Sophie's Italian friend Maria, and her daughter Molly, and felt like a visitor.

A few days later, at bedtime, Matthew said: "Here's your five pounds," and pushed them over at her. Yet he must have known she had not been leaving the house at all.

She shook her head, gave it back to him, and said, in explanation, not in accusation: "As soon as you knew where I was, there was no point."

He nodded, not looking at her. He was turned away from her: thinking, she knew, how best to handle this wife who terrified him.

He said: "I wasn't trying to . . . it's just that I was worried."

"Yes, I know."

"I must confess that I was beginning to wonder . . ."

"You thought that I had a lover?"

"Yes, I am afraid I did."

She knew that he wished she had. She sat wondering how to say: "For a year now I've been spending all my days in a very sordid hotel room. It's the place where I'm happy. In fact, without it I don't exist." She heard herself saying this, and understood how terrified he was that she might. So instead she said: "Well, perhaps you're not far wrong."

Probably Matthew would think the hotel proprietor lied: he would want to think so.

"Well," he said, and she could hear his voice spring up, so to speak, with relief: "in that case I must confess I've got a bit of an affair on myself."

She said, detached and interested: "Really? Who is she?" and saw Matthew's startled look because of this reaction.

"It's Phil. Phil Hunt."

She had known Phil Hunt well in the old unmarried days. She was thinking: No, she won't do, she's too neurotic and difficult. She's never been happy yet. Sophie's much better: Well Matthew will see that himself, as sensible as he is.

This line of thought went on in silence, while she said aloud: "It's no point in telling you about mine, because you don't know him."

Quick, quick, invent, she thought. Remember how you invented all that nonsense for Miss Townsend.

She began slowly, careful not to contradict herself: "His name is Michael"—(*Michael What?*)—"Michael Plant." (What a silly name!) "He's rather like you—in looks, I mean." And indeed, she could imagine herself being touched by no one but Matthew himself. "He's a publisher." (Really? Why?) "He's got a wife already and two children."

She brought out this fantasy, proud of herself.

Matthew said: "Are you two thinking of marrying?"

She said, before she could stop herself: "Good God, *no!*"

She realised, if Matthew wanted to marry Phil Hunt, that this was too emphatic, but apparently it was all right, for his voice sounded relieved as he said: "It is a bit impossible to imagine oneself married to anyone else, isn't it?" With which he pulled her to him, so that her head lay on his shoulder. She turned her face into the dark of his flesh, and listened to the blood pounding through her ears saying: I am alone, I am alone, I am alone.

In the morning Susan lay in bed while he dressed.

He had been thinking things out in the night, because now he said: "Susan, why don't we make a foursome?"

Of course, she said to herself, of course he would be bound to say that. If one is sensible, if one is reasonable, if one never allows oneself a base thought or an envious emotion, naturally one says: Let's make a foursome!

"Why not?" she said.

"We could all meet for lunch. I mean, it's ridiculous, you sneaking off to filthy hotels, and me staying late at the office, and all the lies everyone has to tell."

What on earth did I say his name was?—she panicked, then said: "I think it's a good idea, but Michael is away at the moment. When he comes back though—and I'm sure you two would like each other."

"He's away, is he? So that's why you've been . . ." Her husband put his hand to the knot of his tie in a gesture of male coquetry she would not before have associated with him; and he bent to kiss her cheek with the expression that goes with the words: Oh you naughty little puss! And she felt its answering look, naughty and coy, come onto her face.

Inside she was dissolving in horror at them both, at how far they had both sunk from honesty of emotion.

So now she was saddled with a lover, and he had a mistress! How ordinary, how reassuring, how jolly! And now they would make a foursome of it, and go about to theatres and restaurants. After all, the Rawlings could well afford that sort of thing, and presumably the publisher Michael Plant could afford to do himself and his mistress quite well. No, there was nothing to stop the four of them developing the most intricate relationship of civilised tolerance, all enveloped in a charming afterglow of autumnal passion. Perhaps they would all go off on holidays together? She had known people who did. Or perhaps Matthew would draw the line there? Why should he, though, if he was capable of talking about "foursomes" at all?

She lay in the empty bedroom, listening to the car drive off with Matthew in it, off to work. Then she heard the children clattering off to school to the accompaniment of Sophie's cheerfully ringing voice. She slid down into the hollow of the bed, for shelter against her own irrelevance. And she stretched out her hand to the hollow where her husband's body had lain, but found no comfort there: he was not her husband. She curled herself up in a small tight ball under the clothes: she could stay here all day, all week, indeed, all her life.

But in a few days she must produce Michael Plant, and—but how? She must presumably find some agreeable man prepared to impersonate a publisher called Michael Plant. And in return for which she would—what? Well, for one thing they would make love. The idea made her want to cry with sheer exhaustion. Oh no, she had finished with all that—the proof of it was that the words "make love," or even imagining it, trying hard to revive no more than the

pleasures of sensuality, let alone affection, or love, made her want to run away and hide from the sheer effort of the thing. . . . Good Lord, why make love at all? Why make love with anyone? Or if you are going to make love, what does it matter who with? Why shouldn't she simply walk into the street, pick up a man and have a roaring sexual affair with him? Why not? Or even with Fred? What difference did it make?

But she had let herself in for it—an interminable stretch of time with a lover, called Michael, as part of a gallant civilised foursome. Well, she could not, and she would not.

She got up, dressed, went down to find Mrs Parkes, and asked her for the loan of a pound, since Matthew, she said, had forgotten to leave her money. She exchanged with Mrs Parkes variations on the theme that husbands are all the same, they don't think, and without saying a word to Sophie, whose voice could be heard upstairs from the telephone, walked to the underground, travelled to South Kensington, changed to the Inner Circle, got out at Paddington, and walked to Fred's Hotel. There she told Fred that she wasn't going on holiday after all, she needed the room. She would have to wait an hour, Fred said. She went to a busy tearoom-cum-restaurant around the corner, and sat watching the people flow in and out the door that kept swinging open and shut, watched them mingle and merge and separate, felt her being flow into them, into their movement. When the hour was up she left a half crown for her pot of tea, and left the place without looking back at it, just as she had left her house, the big, beautiful white house, without another look, but silently dedicating it to Sophie. She returned to Fred, received the key of No. 19, now free, and ascended the grimy stairs slowly, letting floor after floor fall away below her, keeping her eyes lifted, so that floor after floor descended jerkily to her level of vision, and fell away out of sight.

No. 19 was the same. She saw everything with an acute, narrow, checking glance: the cheap shine of the satin spread, which had been replaced carelessly after the two bodies had finished their convulsions under it; a trace of powder on the glass that topped the

chest of drawers; an intense green shade in a fold of the curtain. She stood at the window, looking down, watching people pass and pass and pass until her mind went dark from the constant movement. Then she sat in the wicker chair, letting herself go slack. But she had to be careful, because she did not want, today, to be surprised by Fred's knock at five o'clock.

The demons were not here. They had gone forever, because she was buying her freedom from them. She was slipping already into the dark fructifying dream that seemed to caress her inwardly, like the movement of her blood . . . but she had to think about Matthew first. Should she write a letter for the coroner? But what should she say? She would like to leave him with the look on his face she had seen this morning—banal, admittedly, but at least confidently healthy. Well, that was impossible, one did not look like that with a wife dead from suicide. But how to leave him believing she was dying because of a man—because of the fascinating publisher Michael Plant? Oh, how ridiculous! How absurd! How humiliating! But she decided not to trouble about it, simply not to think about the living. If he wanted to believe she had a lover, he would believe it. And he *did* want to believe it. Even when he had found out that there was no publisher in London called Michael Plant, he would think: Oh poor Susan, she was afraid to give me his real name.

And what did it matter whether he married Phil Hunt or Sophie? Though it ought to be Sophie, who was already the mother of those children . . . and what hypocrisy to sit here worrying about the children, when she was going to leave them because she had not got the energy to stay.

She had about four hours. She spent them delightfully, darkly, sweetly, letting herself slide gently, gently, to the edge of the river. Then, with hardly a break in her consciousness, she got up, pushed the thin rug against the door, made sure the windows were tight shut, put two shillings in the meter, and turned on the gas. For the first time since she had been in the room she lay on the hard bed that smelled stale, that smelled of sweat and sex.

She lay on her back on the green satin cover, but her legs were chilly. She got up, found a blanket folded in the bottom of the chest of drawers, and carefully covered her legs with it. She was quite content lying there, listening to the faint soft hiss of the gas that poured into the room, into her lungs, into her brain, as she drifted off into the dark river.

1963

Endnotes

- Note 1: Inn with large courtyard, in West Asia.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Household workers.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Live-in foreigner who serves a family in exchange for learning its language.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Charwoman—a woman hired to clean.Return to reference 4

PHILIP LARKIN
1922–1985

Philip Larkin was born in Coventry; was educated at its King Henry VIII School and at St. John's College, Oxford; and was for many years librarian of the Hull University Library. He wrote the poems of his first book, *The North Ship* (1945), under W. B. Yeats's strong enchantment. Although this influence persisted in the English poet's formal skill and subdued visionary longings, Larkin began to read Thomas Hardy seriously after World War II, and Hardy's rugged language, local settings, and ironic tone helped counter Yeats's influence. "After that," Larkin said, "Yeats came to seem so artificial —all that crap about masks and Crazy Jane and all the rest. It all rang so completely unreal." Also rejecting the international modernism of Eliot and Pound because of its mythical allusions, polyglot discourse, and fragmentary syntax, Larkin reclaimed a more direct, personal, formally regular model of poetry, supposedly rooted in a native English tradition of Wordsworth, Hardy, A. E. Housman, Wilfred Owen, and W. H. Auden. Even so, his poetry is not so thoroughly antimodernist as are his declarations: witness his imagist precision and alienated personae, his blending of revulsion and attraction toward modernity.

Larkin was the dominant figure in what came to be known as "the Movement," a group of university poets that included Kingsley Amis, Donald Davie, and Thom Gunn, gathered together in Robert Conquest's landmark anthology of 1956, *New Lines.* Their work was

seen as counteracting not only the extravagances of modernism but also the influence of Dylan Thomas's high-flown, apocalyptic rhetoric: like Larkin, these poets preferred a civil grammar and rational syntax over prophecy, suburban realities over mythmaking.

No other poet presents the welfare-state world of postimperial Britain so vividly, so unsparingly, and so tenderly. "Poetry is an affair of sanity, of seeing things as they are," Larkin said; "I don't want to transcend the commonplace, I love the commonplace life. Everyday things are lovely to me." Eschewing the grandiose, he writes poetry that, in its everyday diction and melancholy wryness, worldly subjects and regular meters, affirms rather than contravenes the restrictions of ordinary life. Love's failure, the erosion of religious and national abutments, the loneliness of age and death—Larkin does not avert his poetic gaze from these bleak realities. As indicated by the title of his 1955 collection *The Less Deceived*, disillusionment, drabness, and resignation color these poems. Yet Larkin's drearily mundane world often gives way to muted promise, his speakers' alienation to possible communion, his skepticism to encounters even with the sublime. At the end of "High Windows," the characteristically ironic and self-deprecating speaker glimpses both radiant presence and total absence in the sunlit glass: "And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows / Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless."

Like Hardy, Larkin also wrote novels—*Jill* (1946) and *A Girl in Winter* (1947)—and his poems have a novelist's sense of place and skill in the handling of direct speech. He also edited a controversial anthology, *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse* (1973), which attempted to construct a modern native tradition in England. But his most significant legacy was his poetry, although his output was limited to four volumes. Out of "the commonplace life" he fashioned uncommon poems—some of the most emotionally complex, rhythmically polished, and intricately rhymed poems of the second half of the twentieth century.

Church Going

Once I am sure there's nothing going on
I step inside, letting the door thud shut.
Another church: matting, seats, and stone,
And little books; sprawlings of flowers, cut
For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff
Up at the holy end; the small neat organ;
And a tense, musty, unignorable silence,
Brewed God knows how long. Hatless, I take off
My cycle-clips in awkward reverence,

Move forward, run my hand around the font.
From where I stand, the roof looks almost new—
Cleaned, or restored? Someone would know: I don't.
Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few
Hectoring large-scale verses,[1] and pronounce
"Here endeth" much more loudly than I'd meant.
The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,[2]
Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.

Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,
And always end much at a loss like this,
Wondering what to look for; wondering, too,
When churches fall completely out of use
What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep
A few cathedrals chronically on show,
Their parchment, plate and pyx[3] in locked cases,
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep.
Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?

Or, after dark, will dubious women come

To make their children touch a particular stone;
Pick simples° for a cancer; or on some
Advised night see walking a dead one?
Power of some sort or other will go on
In games, in riddles, seemingly at random;
But superstition, like belief, must die,
And what remains when disbelief has gone?
Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky,

A shape less recognisable each week,
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who
Will be the last, the very last, to seek
This place for what it was; one of the crew
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts[4] were?
Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,
Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff
Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?[5]
Or will he be my representative,

Bored, uninformed, knowing the ghostly silt
Dispersed, yet tending to this cross of ground[6]
Through suburb scrub because it held unspilt
So long and equably what since is found
Only in separation—marriage, and birth,
And death, and thoughts of these—for which was built
This special shell? For, though I've no idea
What this accoutred frowsty barn is worth,
It pleases me to stand in silence here;

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,

And gravitating with it to this ground,
60 Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.

19541955

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, Bible verses printed in large type for reading aloud.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An Irish sixpence has no value in England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Box in which Communion wafers are kept.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Galleries on top of carved screens separating the nave of a church from the choir.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Gum resin used in the making of incense; one of three presents given by the three wise men to the infant Jesus. “Gown-and-bands”: gown and decorative collar worn by clergypeople.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Most Christian churches were built in the shape of a cross.Return to reference 6

Notes

- °: *medicinal herbs*Return to reference °

MCMXIV[1]

Those long uneven lines
Standing as patiently
As if they were stretched outside
The Oval or Villa Park,[2]
The crowns of hats, the sun
On moustached archaic faces
Grinning as if it were all
An August Bank Holiday[3] lark;

And the shut shops, the bleached,
Established names on the sunblinds,
The farthings and sovereigns,[4]
And dark-clothed children at play
Called after kings and queens,
The tin advertisements
For cocoa and twist,° and the pubs
Wide open all day;

And the countryside not caring:
The place-names all hazed over
With flowering grasses, and fields
Shadowing Domesday lines[5]
Under wheat's restless silence;
The differently-dressed servants
With tiny rooms in huge houses,
The dust behind limousines;

Never such innocence,
Never before or since,
As changed itself to past
Without a word—the men

Leaving the gardens tidy,
The thousands of marriages
30 Lasting a little while longer:
Never such innocence again.

19601964

Endnotes

- Note 1: 1914, in Roman numerals, as incised on stone memorials to the dead of World War I.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Respectively, London cricket ground and Birmingham football ground.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Nationwide public holiday observed, when this poem was written (and in 1914), on the first Monday in August.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: At that time the least valuable and the most valuable British coins.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The still-visible boundaries of medieval farmers' long and narrow plots, ownership of which is recorded in William the Conqueror's *Domesday Book* (1085–86).Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *tobacco*Return to reference °

Talking in Bed

Talking in bed ought to be easiest,
Lying together there goes back so far,
An emblem of two people being honest.

Yet more and more time passes silently.
Outside, the wind's incomplete unrest
Builds and disperses clouds about the sky,

And dark towns heap up on the horizon.
None of this cares for us. Nothing shows why
At this unique distance from isolation

It becomes still more difficult to find
Words at once true and kind,
Or not untrue and not unkind.

19601964

High Windows

When I see a couple of kids
And guess he's fucking her and she's
Taking pills or wearing a diaphragm,
I know this is paradise

Everyone old has dreamed of all their lives—
Bonds and gestures pushed to one side
Like an outdated combine harvester,[1]
And everyone young going down the long slide

To happiness, endlessly. I wonder if
Anyone looked at me, forty years back,
And thought, *That'll be the life;*
No God any more, or sweating in the dark

About hell and that, or having to hide
What you think of the priest. He
And his lot will all go down the long slide
Like free bloody birds. And immediately

Rather than words comes the thought of high windows:
The sun-comprehending glass,
And beyond it, the deep blue air, that shows
Nothing, and is nowhere, and is endless.

19671974

Endnotes

- Note 1: Farm machine for harvesting grain.Return to reference 1

Going, Going[1]

I thought it would last my time—
The sense that, beyond the town,
There would always be fields and farms,
Where the village louts[2] could climb
Such trees as were not cut down;
I knew there'd be false alarms

In the papers about old streets
And split-level shopping,[3] but some
Have always been left so far;
And when the old part retreats
As the bleak high-risers come
We can always escape in the car.

Things are tougher than we are, just
As earth will always respond
However we mess it about;
Chuck filth in the sea, if you must:
The tides will be clean beyond.
—But what do I feel now? Doubt?

Or age, simply? The crowd
Is young in the M1[4] café;
Their kids are screaming for more—
More houses, more parking allowed,
More caravan[5] sites, more pay.
On the Business Page, a score

Of spectacled grins approve
Some takeover bid that entails
Five per cent profit (and ten

Per cent more in the estuaries): move
Your works to the unspoilt dales[6]
(Grey area grants)![7] And when

You try to get near the sea
In summer . . .
                It seems, just now,
To be happening so very fast;
Despite all the land left free
For the first time I feel somehow
That it isn't going to last,

That before I snuff it, the whole
Boiling[8] will be bricked in
Except for the tourist parts—
First slum of Europe: a role
It won't be so hard to win,
With a cast of crooks and tarts.[9]

And that will be England gone,
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The guildhalls,[1] the carved choirs.
There'll be books; it will linger on
In galleries; but all that remains
For us will be concrete and tyres.

Most things are never meant.
This won't be, most likely: but greeds
And garbage are too thick-strewn
To be swept up now, or invent
Excuses that make them all needs.
I just think it will happen, soon.

19721974

Endnotes

- Note 1: After the auctioneer's cry, "Going, going, gone!" This poem was commissioned by the UK government to preface a report submitted to the 1972 UN Stockholm Conference on the Environment.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Uncouth or awkward person.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In old-fashioned shops, the store was on the ground floor, the owner's living quarters above.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The first inter-urban motorway in the UK.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A camper or travel trailer.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Valleys. "Works": factories.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Building areas are zoned, on English maps, by colors.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, the whole boiling mess.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Offensive slang for a promiscuous woman.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Town halls.Return to reference 1

Sad Steps[1]

Groping back to bed after a piss
I part thick curtains, and am startled by
The rapid clouds, the moon's cleanliness.

Four o'clock: wedge-shadowed gardens lie
Under a cavernous, a wind-picked sky.
There's something laughable about this,

The way the moon dashes through clouds that blow
Loosely as cannon-smoke to stand apart
(Stone-coloured light sharpening the roofs below)

High and preposterous and separate—
Lozenge° of love! Medallion of art!
O wolves of memory! Immensements! No,

One shivers slightly, looking up there.
The hardness and the brightness and the plain
Far-reaching singleness of that wide stare

Is a reminder of the strength and pain
Of being young; that it can't come again,
But is for others undiminished somewhere.

19681974

Endnotes

- Note 1: See Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* 31: "With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies."Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *diamondlike shape*Return to reference °

Homage to a Government

Next year we are to bring the soldiers home
For lack of money,[1] and it is all right.
Places they guarded, or kept orderly,
Must guard themselves, and keep themselves orderly.
We want the money for ourselves at home
Instead of working. And this is all right.

It's hard to say who wanted it to happen,
But now it's been decided nobody minds.
The places are a long way off, not here,
Which is all right, and from what we hear
The soldiers there only made trouble happen.
Next year we shall be easier in our minds.

Next year we shall be living in a country
That brought its soldiers home for lack of money.
The statues will be standing in the same
Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly the same.
Our children will not know it's a different country.
All we can hope to leave them now is money.

Jan. 10, 19691974

Endnotes

- Note 1: In 1968 Harold Wilson's Labour government decided to withdraw troops east of the Suez Canal, mainly in the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia.Return to reference 1

The Explosion

On the day of the explosion
Shadows pointed towards the pithead:°
In the sun the slagheap° slept.

Down the lane came men in pitboots
Coughing oath-edged talk and pipe-smoke,
Shouldering off the freshened silence.

One chased after rabbits; lost them;
Came back with a nest of lark's eggs;
Showed them; lodged them in the grasses.

So they passed in beards and moleskins,[1]
Fathers, brothers, nicknames, laughter,
Through the tall gates standing open.

At noon, there came a tremor; cows
Stopped chewing for a second; sun,
Scarfed as in a heat-haze, dimmed.

The dead go on before us, they
Are sitting in God's house in comfort,
We shall see them face to face—

Plain as lettering in the chapels
It was said, and for a second
Wives saw men of the explosion

Larger than in life they managed—
Gold as on a coin, or walking
Somehow from the sun towards them,

One showing the eggs unbroken.

19701974[45]

Endnotes

- Note 1: Clothes of heavy fabric.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *mine entrance*Return to reference °
- °: *pile of scrap, refuse*Return to reference °

This Be The Verse[1]

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn
By fools in old-style hats and coats,
Who half the time were soppy-stern
And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.[2]
Get out as early as you can,
And don't have any kids yourself.

Apr.? 19711974

Endnotes

- Note 1: See the elegy "Requiem," by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), of which the final verse reads, "This be the verse you grave for me: / *Here he lies where he longed to be, / Home is the sailor, home from sea, / And the hunter home from the hill.*" Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, continental shelf.Return to reference 2

Aubade[1]

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.
Till then I see what's really always there:
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,
Making all thought impossible but how
And where and when I shall myself die.
Arid interrogation: yet the dread
Of dying, and being dead,
Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.

The mind blanks at the glare. Not in remorse
—The good not done, the love not given, time
Torn off unused—nor wretchedly because
An only life can take so long to climb
Clear of its wrong beginnings, and may never;
But at the total emptiness for ever,
The sure extinction that we travel to
And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
Not to be anywhere,
And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true.

This is a special way of being afraid
No trick dispels. Religion used to try,
That vast moth-eaten musical brocade
Created to pretend we never die,
And specious stuff that says *No rational being*
Can fear a thing it will not feel, not seeing
That this is what we fear—no sight, no sound,
No touch or taste or smell, nothing to think with,
Nothing to love or link with,

The anaesthetic from which none come round.

And so it stays just on the edge of vision,
A small unfocused blur, a standing chill
That slows each impulse down to indecision.
Most things may never happen: this one will,
And realisation of it rages out
In furnace-fear when we are caught without
People or drink. Courage is no good:
It means not scaring others. Being brave
Lets no one off the grave.
Death is no different whined at than withstood.

Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,
Have always known, know that we can't escape,
Yet can't accept. One side will have to go.
Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house.

19771977

Endnotes

- Note 1: Music or poem announcing dawn.Return to reference 1

A. K. RAMANUJAN
1929–1993

Born in Mysore, India, Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan grew up amid the different languages that later informed his life's work as poet, translator, and linguist: he spoke Kannada in the streets, Tamil with his mother, and English with his father, a mathematics professor at Mysore University. Educated there and at Deccan College, he traveled for graduate studies to Indiana University, staying on in the United States to teach at the University of Chicago from 1961. He was the recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, and in 1976 the Indian government honored him with the Padma Shri for distinguished service to the nation.

Ramanujan affirmed that "cultural traditions in India are indissolubly plural and often conflicting," and his poetry—in its texture and subject matter—embodies this complex intercultural mingling within India and across much of the contemporary world. His poems reflect the influence of modern English-language poets, such as W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens, while also drawing on the vivid and structural use of metaphor, the flowing imagery and syntax, the spare diction and paradoxes of ancient and medieval poetry of south India. A poem such as the wittily entitled "Elements of Composition" recalls a traditional Indian vision of identity as embedded in endlessly fluid, concentrically arranged contexts at the same time that it suggests a postmodern vision of the self as decentered, composite, and

provisional. “India does not have one past,” Ramanujan emphasized, “but many pasts,” and the same is true of the self whose multiple pasts he composes and decomposes in his poetry.

Self-Portrait

I resemble everyone
but myself, and sometimes see
in shop-windows,
    despite the well-known laws
    of optics,
the portrait of a stranger,
date unknown,
often signed in a corner
by my father.

1966

Elements of Composition

Composed as I am, like others,
of elements on certain well-known lists,
father's seed and mother's egg

gathering earth, air, fire, mostly
water, into a mulberry mass,
moulding calcium,

carbon, even gold, magnesium and such,
into a chattering self tangled
in love and work,

scary dreams, capable of eyes that can see,
only by moving constantly,
the constancy of things

like Stonehenge or cherry trees;

add uncle's eleven fingers
making shadow-plays of rajas°
and cats, hissing,

becoming fingers again, the look
of panic on sister's face
an hour before

her wedding, a dated newspaper map
of a place one has never seen, maybe
no longer there

after the riots, downtown Nairobi,[1]
that a friend carried in his passport

as others would

a woman's picture in their wallets;

add the lepers of Madurai,°
male, female, married,
with children,

lion faces, crabs for claws,
clotted on their shadows
under the stone-eyed

goddesses of dance, mere pillars,
moving as nothing on earth
can move—

I pass through them
as they pass through me
taking and leaving

affections, seeds, skeletons,

millennia of fossil records
of insects that do not last
a day,

body-prints of mayflies,
a legend half-heard
in a train

of the half-man searching
for an ever-fleeing
other half[2]

through Muharram tigers,[3]
hyacinths in crocodile waters,
and the sweet

twisted lives of epileptic saints,

and even as I add,
  I lose, decompose
into my elements,

into other names and forms,
  past, and passing, tenses
without time,

caterpillar on a leaf, eating,
  being eaten.[4]

1986

Endnotes

- Note 1: Capital of Kenya; in the rioting that ensued after a coup in 1978, many Asian-owned shops were looted and burned. (South Asians formed much of Nairobi's merchant class during and after the era of British colonial rule.)Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In an essay Ramanujan compares the Hindu myth of the god that "splits himself into male and female" to "the androgynous figure in Plato's *Symposium*, halved into male and female segments which forever seek each other and crave union."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: During the first month of the Islamic calendar, Muharram processions, often including dancers in tiger masks, commemorate the martyrdom of Muhammad's grandson, Husein.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: According to a poem in the ancient Sanskrit *Taittiriya Upanishad*, "What eats is eaten, / and what's eaten, eats / in turn" (Ramanujan's translation, in his essay "Some Thoughts on 'Non-Western' Classics").Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *Indian kings or princes* Return to reference °
- °: *city in south India* Return to reference °

THOM GUNN
1929–2004

The son of a London journalist, Thomson Gunn was educated at University College School, London, then Trinity College, Cambridge, and Stanford University, where he studied under the antimodernist, classically inclined poet Yvor Winters. In a poem addressed to Winters, he wrote: "You keep both Rule and Energy in view, / Much power in each, most in the balanced two." The poems of Gunn's *Fighting Terms* (1954) and *The Sense of Movement* (1957) aimed for the same balance. They were influenced by the seventeenth-century English poet John Donne and the twentieth-century French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre and introduced a modern Metaphysical poet able to give powerfully concrete expression to abstract ideas. Along with Philip Larkin, he was seen as a member of "the Movement"—English poets who preferred inherited verse forms to either modernist avant-gardism or high-flown Romanticism. In the second half of *My Sad Captains* (1961), he began to move away from the will-driven heroes and the tight-fitting stanzas of his early work into more tentative explorations of experience and more supple syllabic or open verse forms. "Most of my poems are ambivalent," he said. Moving from England to San Francisco, he experimented with LSD and moved also from poems presumably addressed to women to poems frankly homosexual. *The Man with Night Sweats* (1992) ends with a sequence of poems remarkable for their unflinching directness, compassion, and grace about the deaths of friends from

AIDS. Gunn was a poet of rare intelligence and power in all his protean changes.

Black Jackets

In the silence that prolongs the span
Rawly of music when the record ends,
The red-haired boy who drove a van
In weekday overalls but, like his friends,

Wore cycle boots and jacket here
To suit the Sunday hangout he was in,
Heard, as he stretched back from his beer,
Leather creak softly round his neck and chin.

Before him, on a coal-black sleeve
Remote exertion had lined, scratched, and burned
Insignia that could not revive
The heroic fall or climb where they were earned.

On the other drinkers bent together,
Concocting selves for their impervious kit,
He saw it as no more than leather
Which, taut across the shoulders grown to it,

Sent through the dimness of a bar
As sudden and anonymous hints of light
As those that shipping give, that are
Now flickers in the Bay, now lost in night.

He stretched out like a cat, and rolled
The bitterish taste of beer upon his tongue,
And listened to a joke being told:
The present was the things he stayed among.

If it was only loss he wore,
He wore it to assert, with fierce devotion,

Complicity and nothing more.
He recollected his initiation,

And one especially of the rites.
For on his shoulders they had put tattoos:
The group's name on the left, The Knights,
And on the right the slogan Born To Lose.

1961

My Sad Captains

One by one they appear in
the darkness: a few friends, and
a few with historical
names. How late they start to shine!
but before they fade they stand
perfectly embodied, all

the past lapping them like a
cloak of chaos. They were men
who, I thought, lived only to
renew the wasteful force they
spent with each hot convulsion.
They remind me, distant now.

True, they are not at rest yet,
but now that they are indeed
apart, winnowed from failures,
they withdraw to an orbit
and turn with disinterested
hard energy, like the stars.

1961

From the Wave

It mounts at sea, a concave wall
  Down-ribbed with shine,
And pushes forward, building tall
  Its steep incline.

Then from their hiding rise to sight
  Black shapes on boards
Bearing before the fringe of white
  It mottles towards.

Their pale feet curl, they poise their weight
  With a learn'd skill.
It is the wave they imitate
  Keeps them so still.

The marbling bodies have become
  Half wave, half men,
Grafted it seems by feet of foam
  Some seconds, then,

Late as they can, they slice the face
  In timed procession:
Balance is triumph in this place,
  Triumph possession.

The mindless heave of which they rode
  A fluid shelf
Breaks as they leave it, falls and, slowed,
  Loses itself.

Clear, the sheathed bodies slick as seals
  Loosen and tingle;

And by the board the bare foot feels
The suck of shingle.

They paddle in the shallows still;
Two splash each other;
Then all swim out to wait until
The right waves gather.

1971

Still Life

I shall not soon forget
The greyish-yellow skin
To which the face had set:
Lids tight: nothing of his,
No tremor from within,
Played on the surfaces.

He still found breath, and yet
It was an obscure knack.
I shall not soon forget
The angle of his head,
Arrested and reared back
On the crisp field of bed,

Back from what he could neither
Accept, as one opposed,
Nor, as a life-long breather,
Consentingly let go,
The tube his mouth enclosed
In an astonished O.

1992

The Missing

Now as I watch the progress of the plague,°
The friends surrounding me fall sick, grow thin,
And drop away. Bared, is my shape less vague
—Sharply exposed and with a sculpted skin?

I do not like the statue's chill contour,
Not nowadays. The warmth investing me
Led outward through mind, limb, feeling, and more
In an involved increasing family.

Contact of friend led to another friend,
Supple entwinement through the living mass
Which for all that I knew might have no end,
Image of an unlimited embrace.

I did not just feel ease, though comfortable:
Aggressive as in some ideal of sport,
With ceaseless movement thrilling through the whole,
Their push kept me as firm as their support.

But death—Their deaths have left me less defined:
It was their pulsing presence made me clear.
I borrowed from it, I was unconfined,
Who tonight balance unsupported here,

Eyes glaring from raw marble, in a pose
Languorously part-buried in the block,
Shins perfect and no calves, as if I froze
Between potential and a finished work.

—Abandoned incomplete, shape of a shape,

In which exact detail shows the more strange,
Trapped in unwholeness, I find no escape
Back to the play of constant give and change.

Aug. 19871992

Notes

- °: *AIDS*[Return to reference °]

DEREK WALCOTT
1930—2017

Derek Walcott was born on the island of Saint Lucia in the British West Indies, where he had a Methodist upbringing in a largely Roman Catholic society. He was educated at St. Mary's College in Saint Lucia and the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. He then moved to Trinidad, where he worked as a book reviewer, art critic, playwright, and artistic director of a theater workshop. From the early 1980s on he also taught at a number of American colleges and universities, especially Boston University; in 1992 he received the Nobel Prize in Literature.

As a Black poet writing from within both the English literary tradition and the history of a colonized people, Walcott self-mockingly referred to his split allegiances to his African Caribbean and his European inheritances as those of a "schizophrenic," a "mongrel," a "mulatto of style." His background was indeed racially and culturally mixed: his grandmothers were of African descent; his grandfathers were White, a Dutchman and an Englishman. Schooled in the Standard English that is the official language of Saint Lucia, Walcott also grew up speaking the predominantly French Creole (or patois) that is the primary language of everyday life (the island had traded hands fourteen times in colonial wars between the British and the French). In his poetry this cross-cultural inheritance is sometimes the source of pain and ambivalence, as when in "A Far Cry from Africa" he refers to himself as being "poisoned with the

blood of both." At other times it fuels a celebratory integration of multiple forms, visions, and energies, as in parts of his long poem *Omeros*, which transposes elements of Homeric epic from the Aegean to the Caribbean.

Even as a schoolboy Walcott knew he was not alone in his effort to sort through his vexed postcolonial affiliations. From a young age he felt a special affinity with Irish writers such as W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, and J. M. Synge, whom he saw as fellow colonials—"They were the niggers of Britain"—with the same paradoxical hatred for the British Empire and worship of the English language. He repeatedly asked how the postcolonial poet can both grieve the agonizing harm of British colonialism and appreciate the empire's literary gift. Walcott also acknowledged other English and American writers—T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, W. H. Auden, and Robert Lowell—as enabling influences.

Over the course of his prolific career, Walcott adapted various European literary archetypes (for example, the Greek character Philoctetes) and forms (epic, quatrains, terza rima, English meters). He ascribed his rigorous concern with craft to his youthful Protestantism. At once disciplined and flamboyant as a poet, he insisted on the specifically Caribbean opulence of his art: "I come from a place that likes grandeur; it likes large gestures; it is not inhibited by flourish; it is a rhetorical society; it is a society of physical performance; it is a society of style." Although much of his poetry is in a rhetorically elevated Standard English, Walcott adapted the calypso rhythms of a lightly creolized English in "The Schooner *Flight*," and he braided together West Indian English, Standard English, and French patois in *Omeros.* He had a great passion for metaphor, by which he deftly wove imaginative connections across cultural and racial boundaries. His plays, written in an accurate and energetic language, are similarly infused with the spirit of syncretism, vividly conjoining Caribbean and European motifs, images, and idioms.

A Far Cry from Africa

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt
Of Africa. Kikuyu,[1] quick as flies,
Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.[2]
Corpses are scattered through a paradise.
Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:
"Waste no compassion on these separate dead!"
Statistics justify and scholars seize
The salients of colonial policy.
What is that to the white child hacked in bed?
To savages, expendable as Jews?

Threshed out by beaters,[3] the long rushes break
In a white dust of ibises whose cries
Have wheeled since civilization's dawn
From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.
The violence of beast on beast is read
As natural law, but upright man
Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.
Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars
Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum,
While he calls courage still that native dread
Of the white peace contracted by the dead.

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands
Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again
A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,[4]
The gorilla wrestles with the superman.
I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose

Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?

1956, 1962

Endnotes

- Note 1: An East African ethnic group whose members, as Mau Mau fighters, conducted an eight-year campaign of violent resistance against British colonial settlers in Kenya in the 1950s.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Open country, neither cultivated nor forest (Afrikaans).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In big-game hunting, Natives are hired to beat the brush, driving birds—such as ibises—and other animals into the open.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Spanish Civil War (1936–39).Return to reference 4

From The Schooner *Flight*

1 Adios, Carenage[1]

In idle August, while the sea soft,
and leaves of brown islands stick to the rim
of this Caribbean, I blow out the light
by the dreamless face of Maria Concepcion
to ship as a seaman on the schooner *Flight.*
Out in the yard turning grey in the dawn,
I stood like a stone and nothing else move
but the cold sea rippling like galvanize
and the nail holes of stars in the sky roof,
till a wind start to interfere with the trees.
I pass me dry neighbour sweeping she yard
as I went downhill, and I nearly said:
"Sweep soft, you witch, 'cause she don't sleep hard,"
but the bitch look through me like I was dead.
A route taxi pull up, park-lights still on.
The driver size up my bags with a grin:
"This time, Shabine, like you really gone!"
I ain't answer the ass, I simply pile in
the back seat and watch the sky burn
above Laventille[2] pink as the gown
in which the woman I left was sleeping,
and I look in the rearview and see a man
exactly like me, and the man was weeping
for the houses, the streets, the whole fucking island.

Christ have mercy on all sleeping things!
From that dog rotting down Wrightson Road
to when I was a dog on these streets;

if loving these islands must be my load,
out of corruption my soul takes wings,
But they had started to poison my soul
with their big house, big car, big-time bohbohl,[3]
coolie, nigger, Syrian, and French Creole,
so I leave it for them and their carnival—
I taking a sea-bath, I gone down the road.
I know these islands from Monos to Nassau,[4]
a rusty head sailor with sea-green eyes
that they nickname Shabine, the patois° for
any red nigger, and I, Shabine, saw
when these slums of empire was paradise.
I'm just a red nigger who love the sea,
I had a sound colonial education,
I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
and either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation.

But Maria Concepcion was all my thought
watching the sea heaving up and down
as the port side of dories, schooners, and yachts
was painted afresh by the strokes of the sun
signing her name with every reflection;
I knew when dark-haired evening put on
her bright silk at sunset, and, folding the sea,
sidled under the sheet with her starry laugh,
that there'd be no rest, there'd be no forgetting.
Is like telling mourners round the graveside
about resurrection, they want the dead back,
so I smile to myself as the bow rope untied
and the *Flight* swing seaward: "Is no use repeating
that the sea have more fish. I ain't want her
dressed in the sexless light of a seraph,°
I want those round brown eyes like a marmoset,[5]
and
till the day when I can lean back and laugh,

those claws that tickled my back on sweating
Sunday afternoons, like a crab on wet sand."
As I worked, watching the rotting waves come
past the bow that scissor the sea like silk,
I swear to you all, by my mother's milk,
by the stars that shall fly from tonight's furnace,
that I loved them, my children, my wife, my home;
I loved them as poets love the poetry
that kills them, as drowned sailors the sea.

You ever look up from some lonely beach
and see a far schooner? Well, when I write
this poem, each phrase go be soaked in salt;
I go draw and knot every line as tight
as ropes in this rigging; in simple speech
my common language go be the wind,
my pages the sails of the schooner *Flight.*

1979

Endnotes

- Note 1: Waterfront where schooners are cleaned and repaired. "Adios": good-bye (Spanish).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Hillside slum outside Port of Spain, Trinidad.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Or *bobol*: corrupt practices or fraud, organized by people in positions of power (eastern Caribbean English).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Capital of the Bahamas. "Monos": island off the northwest coast of Trinidad.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: South American monkey.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *spoken dialect*Return to reference °
- °: *angel*Return to reference °

The Season of Phantasmal Peace

Then all the nations of birds lifted together
the huge net of the shadows of this earth
in multitudinous dialects, twittering tongues,
stitching and crossing it. They lifted up
the shadows of long pines down trackless slopes,
the shadows of glass-faced towers down evening streets,
the shadow of a frail plant on a city sill—
the net rising soundless as night, the birds' cries soundless, until
there was no longer dusk, or season, decline, or weather,
only this passage of phantasmal light
that not the narrowest shadow dared to sever.

And men could not see, looking up, what the wild geese drew,
what the ospreys trailed behind them in silvery ropes
that flashed in the icy sunlight; they could not hear
battalions of starlings waging peaceful cries,
bearing the net higher, covering this world
like the vines of an orchard, or a mother drawing
the trembling gauze over the trembling eyes
of a child fluttering to sleep;
it was the light
that you will see at evening on the side of a hill
in yellow October, and no one hearing knew
what change had brought into the raven's cawing,
the killdeer's screech, the ember-circling chough°
such an immense, soundless, and high concern
for the fields and cities where the birds belong,

except it was their seasonal passing, Love,
made seasonless, or, from the high privilege of their birth,
something brighter than pity for the wingless ones
below them who shared dark holes in windows and in houses,
and higher they lifted the net with soundless voices
above all change, betrayals of falling suns,
and this season lasted one moment, like the pause
between dusk and darkness, between fury and peace,
but, for such as our earth is now, it lasted long.

1981

Notes

- °: *bird in crow family*Return to reference °

From Omeros[1]

Endnotes

- Note 1: Modern Greek version of the name Homer. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are, along with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, from which Walcott adapts the terza rima stanza, and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), major influences on this Caribbean epic, which moves across centuries and geographies, from Saint Lucia to Africa to Ireland.Return to reference 1

Book One

Chapter III

III

"Mais qui ça qui rivait-'ous, Philoctete?"[2]
"Moin blessé."[3]
"But what is wrong wif you, Philoctete?"
"I am blest wif this wound, Ma Kilman[4] *qui pas ka guérir pièce.*

Which will never heal."
"Well, you must take it easy. Go home and lie down, give the foot a lickle° rest."
Philoctete, his trouser-legs rolled, stares out to sea

from the worn rumshop window. The itch in the sore
tingles like the tendrils of the anemone,
and the puffed blister of Portuguese man-o'-war.°

He believed the swelling came from the chained ankles
of his grandfathers. Or else why was there no cure?
That the cross he carried was not only the anchor's

but that of his race, for a village black and poor
as the pigs that rooted in its burning garbage,
then were hooked on the anchors of the abattoir.°

Ma Kilman was sewing. She looked up and saw his face
squinting from the white of the street. He was waiting
to pass out on the table. This went on for days.

The ice turned to warm water near the self-hating
gesture of clenching his head tight in both hands.
She
heard the boys in blue uniforms, going to school,

screaming at his elbow: "Pheeloh! Pheelosophee!"
A mummy embalmed in Vaseline and alcohol.
In the Egyptian silence she muttered softly:

"It have a flower somewhere, a medicine, and ways
my grandmother would boil it. I used to watch ants
climbing her white flower-pot. But, God, in which
place?"

Where was this root? What senna,° what tepid
tisanes,°
could clean the branched river of his corrupted
blood,
whose sap was a wounded cedar's? What did it
mean,

this name that felt like a fever? Well, one good heft
of his garden-cutlass would slice the damned name
clean
from its rotting yam. He said, *"Merci."*° Then he left.

Endnotes

- Note 2:
  Pronounced *fee-lock-TET*; a name shared with Philoctetes, who, in the *Iliad* and Sophocles' eponymous play, is abandoned on an island on the way to the Trojan War after receiving a snakebite. The wound never heals and continually torments Philoctetes, who moans uncontrollably. Later the gods decide that the war cannot be won without him, and the Greek soldiers have to go back to the island and beg him to return with them to battle.

Return to reference 2

- Note 3: French patois, punningly mistranslated below, since *blessé* actually means "wounded."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The owner of the No Pain Café, Ma Kilman serves in the poem as a sibyl (female prophet) and an obeah woman (one practicing a kind of West Indian sorcery).Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *little (West Indian English)*Return to reference °
- °: *jellyfish*Return to reference °
- °: *slaughterhouse*Return to reference °
- °: *medicinal herb*Return to reference °
- °: *medicinal beverages*Return to reference °
- °: *Thank you (French)*Return to reference °

Book Six

Chapter XLIX

I

She bathed him in the brew of the root.[1] The basin
was one of those cauldrons from the old sugar-mill,
with its charred pillars, rock pasture, and one grazing

horse, looking like helmets that have tumbled
downhill
from an infantry charge. Children rang them with
stones.
Wildflowers sprung in them when the dirt found a
seam.

She had one in her back yard, close to the crotons,°
agape in its crusted, agonized O: the scream
of centuries. She scraped its rusted scabs, she
scoured

the mouth of the cauldron, then fed a crackling pyre
with palms and banana-trash. In the scream she
poured
tin after kerosene tin, its base black from fire,

of seawater and sulphur. Into this she then fed
the bubbling root and leaves. She led Philoctete
to the gurgling lava. Trembling, he entered

his bath like a boy. The lime leaves leeched to his
wet
knuckled spine like islands that cling to the basin
of the rusted Caribbean. An icy sweat

glazed his scalp, but he could feel the putrescent shin
drain in the seethe like sucked marrow, he felt it drag
the slime from his shame. She rammed him back to his place

as he tried climbing out with: *"Not yet!"* With a rag
sogged in a basin of ice she rubbed his squeezed face
the way boys enjoy their mother's ritual rage,

and as he surrendered to her, the foul flower
on his shin whitened and puckered, the corolla
closed its thorns like the sea-egg. What else did it cure?

II

The bow leapt back to the palm of the warrior.
The yoke of the wrong name lifted from his shoulders.
His muscles loosened like those of a brown river

that was dammed with silt, and then silkens its boulders
with refreshing strength. His ribs thudded like a horse
cantering on a beach that bursts into full gallop

while a boy yanks at its rein with terrified "Whoas!"
The white foam unlocked his coffles, his ribbed shallop
broke from its anchor, and the water, which he swirled

like a child, steered his brow into the right current,
as calm as *In God We Troust*[2] to that other world,
and his flexed palm enclosed an oar with the identi-

ical closure of a mouth around its own name,
the way a sea-anemone closes slyly
into a secrecy many mistake for shame.

Centuries weigh down the head of the swamp-lily,
its tribal burden arches the sea-almond's° spine,
in barracoon[3] back yards the soul-smoke still passes,

but the wound has found her own cure. The soft
days spin
the spittle of the spider in webbed glasses,
as she drenches the burning trash to its last flame,

and the embers steam and hiss to the schoolboys'
cries
when he'd weep in the window for their tribal
shame.
A shame for the loss of words, and a language tired

of accepting that loss, and then all accepted.
That was why the sea stank from the frothing urine
of surf, and fish-guts reeked from the government
shed,

and why God pissed on the village for months of
rain.
But now, quite clearly the tears trickled down his
face
like rainwater down a cracked carafe from Choiseul,[4]

as he stood like a boy in his bath with the first clay's
innocent prick! So she threw Adam a towel.

And the yard was Eden. And its light the first day's.

60

1990

Endnotes

- Note 1: Ma Kilman is bathing Philoctete to heal his wound.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Near the poem's beginning, the character Achille chisels this misspelled phrase into his canoe and then decides, "Leave it! Is God' spelling and mine" (1.1.2).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Barracks for housing convicts or enslaved people.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A village in Saint Lucia.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *tree or shrub*Return to reference °
- °: *a tree*Return to reference °

TED HUGHES
1930–1998

Ted Hughes was born in Yorkshire, the son of one of seventeen men from a regiment of several hundred to return from the battle of Gallipoli in World War I, a tragedy that imprinted the imagination of the poet. He was educated at Mexborough Grammar School and Pembroke College, Cambridge, where in his last year he changed his course of study from English to archaeology and anthropology, pursuing his interest in the mythic structures that were later to inform his poetry. In 1956 he married the American-born poet Sylvia Plath, who committed suicide in 1963. As poets they explored the world of raw feeling and sensation, a world that Hughes's poems tended to view through the eye of the predator, Plath's through the eye of the victim.

In contrast to the rational lucidity and buttoned-up forms of Philip Larkin and other English poets of "the Movement," Hughes fashions a mythical consciousness in his poems, embodied in violent metaphors, blunt syntax, harsh alliterative clusters, bunched stresses, incantatory repetitions, insistent assonances, and a dark brooding tone. His early books, *The Hawk in the Rain* (1957) and *Lupercal* (1960), show the influence of D. H. Lawrence's *Birds, Beasts and Flowers* (1923), and Hughes's electrifying descriptions of jaguars, thrushes, and pike similarly generate metaphors that relate such creatures to forces underlying all animal and human experience. With *Crow* (1970) and *Gaudete* (1977) he abandoned at

once the semblance of realism and the traditional metrical patterning of his early work, in the belief that "the very sound of metre calls up the ghosts of the past and it is difficult to sing one's own tune against that choir. It is easier to speak a language that raises no ghosts." Returning from the wilder shores of myth, Hughes showed in *Moortown* (1979), *Remains of Elmet* (1979), *River* (1983), and *Flowers and Insects* (1989) that he could render the natural world with a delicacy and tenderness as arresting as his earlier ferocity. In *Tales from Ovid* (1997) he brilliantly re-created—rather than translated—twenty-four passages from the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* In the poems of his last volume, *Birthday Letters* (1998), all but two of which are addressed to Plath, Hughes broke a silence of thirty-five years to lift the curtain on the tragic drama of their marriage. That same year he was appointed a member of the Order of Merit, having served as poet laureate of the United Kingdom since 1984. His *Collected Poems* was published in 2003.

Wind

This house has been far out at sea all night,
The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,
Winds stampeding the fields under the window
Floundering black astride and blinding wet

Till day rose; then under an orange sky
The hills had new places, and wind wielded
Blade-light, luminous and emerald,
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.

At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as
The coal-house door. I dared once to look up—
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my eyes
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope,[1]

The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,
At any second to bang and vanish with a flap:
The wind flung a magpie away and a black-
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The house

Rang like some fine green goblet in the note
That any second would shatter it. Now deep
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,

Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in,

Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

1957

Endnotes

- Note 1: Rope or cable that extends from a tent or pole and anchors it to the ground.Return to reference 1

Pike

Pike, three inches long, perfect
Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold.
Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin.
They dance on the surface among the flies.

Or move, stunned by their own grandeur,
Over a bed of emerald, silhouette
Of submarine delicacy and horror.
A hundred feet long in their world.

In ponds, under the heat-struck lily pads—
Gloom of their stillness:
Logged on last year's black leaves, watching upwards.
Or hung in an amber cavern of weeds

The jaws' hooked clamp and fangs
Not to be changed at this date;
A life subdued to its instrument;
The gills kneading quietly, and the pectorals.

Three we kept behind glass,
Jungled in weed: three inches, four,
And four and a half: fed fry° to them—
Suddenly there were two. Finally one

With a sag belly and the grin it was born with.
And indeed they spare nobody.
Two, six pounds each, over two feet long,
High and dry and dead in the willow-herb—

One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet:

The outside eye stared: as a vice locks—
The same iron in this eye
Though its film shrank in death.

A pond I fished, fifty yards across,
Whose lilies and muscular tench[1]
Had outlasted every visible stone
Of the monastery that planted them—

Stilled legendary depth:
It was as deep as England. It held
Pike too immense to stir, so immense and old
That past nightfall I dared not cast

But silently cast and fished
With the hair frozen on my head
For what might move, for what eye might move.
The still splashes on the dark pond,

Owls hushing the floating woods
Frail on my ear against the dream
Darkness beneath night's darkness had freed,
That rose slowly towards me, watching.

1959, 1960

Endnotes

- Note 1: Variety of freshwater fish.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *young fish*Return to reference °

Out

1 The Dream Time

My father sat in his chair recovering
From the four-year mastication° by gunfire and mud,
Body buffeted wordless, estranged by long soaking
In the colors of mutilation.
                His outer perforations
Were valiantly healed, but he and the hearth-fire, its
5 blood-flicker
On biscuit-bowl and piano and table leg,
Moved into strong and stronger possession
Of minute after minute, as the clock's tiny cog
Labored and on the thread of his listening
Dragged him bodily from under
10 The mortised° four-year strata of dead Englishmen
He belonged with. He felt his limbs clearing
With every slight, gingerish movement. While I,
small and four,
Lay on the carpet as his luckless double,
His memory's buried, immovable anchor,
15 Among jawbones and blown-off boots, tree-stumps,
shell-cases and craters,
Under rain that goes on drumming its rods and
thickening
Its kingdom, which the sun has abandoned, and
where nobody
Can ever again move from shelter.

2

The dead man in his cave beginning to sweat;
The melting bronze visor of flesh
Of the mother in the baby-furnace—

Nobody believes, it
Could be nothing, all
Undergo smiling at
The lulling of blood in
Their ears, their ears, their ears, their eyes
Are only drops of water and even the dead man suddenly
Sits up and sneezes—Atishoo!
Then the nurse wraps him up, smiling,
And, though faintly, the mother is smiling,
And it's just another baby.

As after being blasted to bits
The reassembled infantryman
Tentatively totters out, gazing around with the eyes
Of an exhausted clerk.

3 Remembrance Day[1]

The poppy is a wound, the poppy is the mouth
Of the grave, maybe of the womb searching—

A canvas-beauty puppet on a wire
Today whoring everywhere. It is years since I wore one.

It is more years
The shrapnel that shattered my father's paybook

Gripped me, and all his dead
Gripped him to a time

He no more than they could outgrow, but, cast into one, like iron,
Hung deeper than refreshing of ploughs

In the woe-dark under my mother's eye—
One anchor

Holding my juvenile neck bowed to the dunkings of the Atlantic.
So goodbye to that bloody-minded flower.

You dead bury your dead.
Goodbye to the cenotaphs° on my mother's breasts.

Goodbye to all the remaindered charms of my father's survival.
Let England close. Let the green sea-anemone close.

1967

Endnotes

- Note 1: Holiday (November 11) commemorating soldiers who lost their lives in battle. The practice of wearing red poppies in honor of lost soldiers recalls John McCrae's poem "In Flanders Fields" (1915), which depicts the flowers growing between the graves on a battlefield.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *grinding; chewing*Return to reference °
- °: *firmly fixed*Return to reference °
- °: *empty tombs*Return to reference °

Theology

No, the serpent did not
Seduce Eve to the apple.
All that's simply
Corruption of the facts.

Adam ate the apple.
Eve ate Adam.
The serpent ate Eve.
This is the dark intestine.

The serpent, meanwhile,
Sleeps his meal off in Paradise—
Smiling to hear
God's querulous calling.

1967

Crow’s Last Stand

Burning
burning
burning[1]
there was finally
something
The sun could not burn, that it had rendered
Everything down to—a final obstacle
Against which it raged and charred

And rages and chars

Limpid° among the glaring furnace clinkers°
The pulsing blue tongues and the red and the yellow
The green lickings of the conflagration

Limpid and black—

Crow’s eye-pupil, in the tower of its scorched fort.

1970

Endnotes

- Note 1: See “Burning burning burning burning,” line 308 of T. S. Eliot’s *Waste Land*, where it is quoted from the Buddha’s Fire Sermon.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *clear* Return to reference °
- °: *coal remains*Return to reference °

Crow Tyrannosaurus

Creation quaked voices—
It was a cortege[1]
Of mourning and lament
Crow could hear and he looked around fearfully.

The swift's body fled past
Pulsating
With insects
And their anguish, all it had eaten.

The cat's body writhed
Gagging
A tunnel
Of incoming death-struggles, sorrow on sorrow.

And the dog was a bulging filterbag
Of all the deaths it had gulped for the flesh and the bones.
It could not digest their screeching finales.
Its shapeless cry was a blort[2] of all those voices.

Even man he was a walking
Abattoir[3]
Of innocents—
His brain incinerating their outcry.

Crow thought 'Alas
Alas ought I .
To stop eating
And try to become the light?'

But his eye saw a grub. And his head, trapsprung,
stabbed.
And he listened
And he heard
Weeping

Grubs grubs He stabbed he stabbed
Weeping
Weeping .

Weeping he walked and stabbed

Thus came the eye's
roundness
the ear's
deafness.

1970

Endnotes

- Note 1: A procession, especially for a funeral.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A neologism (made-up word) that accentuates shapelessness.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Slaughterhouse.Return to reference 3

ALICE MUNRO
(1931–2024)

Alice Munro was one of the leading short-story writers of her generation. Her fiction combines spareness and realism—an uncompromising look at a panorama of faltering lives—with magisterial vision and expansiveness. Munro's signature approach to the short story, in which she uses a deceptively simple style to produce complex, layered, and emotionally potent effects, has influenced many of her English-language contemporaries, both within and outside Canada. In addition to one novel, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1972), she published numerous collections of short stories, including *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), *Friend of My Youth* (1990), *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998), *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001), *Runaway* (2004), *Carried Away* (2006), *The View from Castle Rock* (2006), *Too Much Happiness* (2009), and *Dear Life* (2012). She won the Man Booker International Prize in 2009 and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013.

Many of Munro's stories are written in the first person, often from the perspective of women whose voices and experiences suggest the author's history. She was born Alice Anne Laidlaw to a low-income family in Wingham, Ontario, and her parents' struggles with a variety of rural occupations continued throughout her childhood. She began writing in her teens and in 1949 enrolled in the University of Western

Ontario; she left the university two years later to marry and raise three daughters. She typically set her stories in small towns where poverty stamps itself on all facets of life, and where women confront—often in a spirit that combines resignation with stubborn resistance—the triple binds of economic, gender, and cultural confinement. Through a precise and particular emphasis on setting and character, Munro evokes rural Canadian life in the decades following midcentury, when modernity and the promise of the future are often crowded out by a hardening sense of the past.

In an early writing, Munro describes an approach to the outside world that effectively captures her sense of the mystery within the ordinary—the hallmark of her realist style: "It seems as if there are feelings that have to be translated into a next-door language, which might blow them up and burst them altogether; or else they have to be let alone. The truth about them is always suspected, never verified, the light catches but doesn't define them. . . . Yet there is the feeling—I have the feeling—that at some level these things open; fragments, moments, suggestions, open, full of power." This aura of openness and suggestion, conveyed through "next-door language," gives Munro's stories their haunting aspect, their quality of movement, rippling and widening from the small-scale to the magnificent. The story included here, "Walker Brothers Cowboy," exemplifies her ability to imbue "fragments, moments, suggestions" with fullness and power, as we view through a young girl's eyes both the pathos and the degradation of men and women whose lives have fallen into a potentially deadening cycle of promise and decay.

Walker Brothers Cowboy[1]

After supper my father says, "Want to go down and see if the Lake's still there?" We leave my mother sewing under the dining-room light, making clothes for me against[2] the opening of school. She has ripped up for this purpose an old suit and an old plaid wool dress of hers, and she has to cut and match very cleverly and also make me stand and turn for endless fittings, sweaty, itching from the hot wool, ungrateful. We leave my brother in bed in the little screened porch at the end of the front veranda, and sometimes he kneels on his bed and presses his face against the screen and calls mournfully, "Bring me an ice-cream cone!" but I call back, "You will be asleep," and do not even turn my head.

Then my father and I walk gradually down a long, shabby sort of street, with Silverwoods Ice Cream signs standing on the sidewalk, outside tiny, lighted stores. This is in Tuppertown, an old town on Lake Huron,[3] an old grain port. The street is shaded, in some places, by maple trees whose roots have cracked and heaved the sidewalk and spread out like crocodiles into the bare yards. People are sitting out, men in shirtsleeves and undershirts and women in aprons—not people we know but if anybody looks ready to nod and say, "Warm night," my father will nod too and say something the same. Children are still playing. I don't know them either because my mother keeps my brother and me in our own yard, saying he is too young to leave it and I have to mind him. I am not so sad to watch their evening games because the games themselves are ragged, dissolving. Children, of their own will, draw apart, separate into islands of two or one under the heavy trees, occupying themselves in such solitary ways as I do all day, planting pebbles in the dirt or writing in it with a stick.

Presently we leave these yards and houses behind; we pass a factory with boarded-up windows, a lumberyard whose high wooden

gates are locked for the night. Then the town falls away in a defeated jumble of sheds and small junkyards, the sidewalk gives up and we are walking on a sandy path with burdocks, plantains, humble nameless weeds all around. We enter a vacant lot, a kind of park really, for it is kept clear of junk and there is one bench with a slat missing on the back, a place to sit and look at the water. Which is generally gray in the evening, under a lightly overcast sky, no sunsets, the horizon dim. A very quiet, washing noise on the stones of the beach. Further along, towards the main part of town, there is a stretch of sand, a water slide, floats bobbing around the safe swimming area, a lifeguard's rickety throne. Also a long dark-green building, like a roofed veranda, called the Pavilion, full of farmers and their wives, in stiff good clothes, on Sundays. That is the part of the town we used to know when we lived at Dungannon and came here three or four times a summer, to the Lake. That, and the docks where we would go and look at the grain boats, ancient, rusty, wallowing, making us wonder how they got past the breakwater let alone to Fort William.

Tramps hang around the docks and occasionally on these evenings wander up the dwindling beach and climb the shifting, precarious path boys have made, hanging on to dry bushes, and say something to my father which, being frightened of tramps, I am too alarmed to catch. My father says he is a bit hard up himself. "I'll roll you a cigarette if it's any use to you," he says, and he shakes tobacco out carefully on one of the thin butterfly papers, flicks it with his tongue, seals it and hands it to the tramp, who takes it and walks away. My father also rolls and lights and smokes one cigarette of his own.

He tells me how the Great Lakes came to be. All where Lake Huron is now, he says, used to be flat land, a wide flat plain. Then came the ice, creeping down from the North, pushing deep into the low places. Like *that*—and he shows me his hand with his spread fingers pressing the rock-hard ground where we are sitting. His fingers make hardly any impression at all and he says, "Well, the old ice cap had a lot more power behind it than this hand has." And then

the ice went back, shrank back towards the North Pole where it came from, and left its fingers of ice in the deep places it had gouged, and ice turned to lakes and there they were today. They were *new*, as time went. I try to see that plain before me, dinosaurs walking on it, but I am not able even to imagine the shore of the Lake when the Indians were there, before Tuppertown. The tiny share we have of time appalls me, though my father seems to regard it with tranquillity. Even my father, who sometimes seems to me to have been at home in the world as long as it has lasted, has really lived on this earth only a little longer than I have, in terms of all the time there has been to live in. He has not known a time, any more than I, when automobiles and electric lights did not at least exist. He was not alive when this century started. I will be barely alive—old, old—when it ends. I do not like to think of it. I wish the Lake to be always just a lake, with the safe-swimming floats marking it, and the breakwater and the lights of Tuppertown.

My father has a job, selling for Walker Brothers. This is a firm that sells almost entirely in the country, the back country. Sunshine, Boylesbridge, Turnaround—that is all his territory. Not Dungannon where we used to live, Dungannon is too near town and my mother is grateful for that. He sells cough medicine, iron tonic, corn plasters, laxatives, pills for female disorders, mouthwash, shampoo, liniment, salves, lemon and orange and raspberry concentrate for making refreshing drinks, vanilla, food coloring, black and green tea, ginger, cloves, and other spices, rat poison. He has a song about it, with these two lines:

> And have all liniments and oils,
> For everything from corns to boils. . . .

Not a very funny song, in my mother's opinion. A peddler's song, and that is what he is, a peddler knocking at backwoods kitchens. Up until last winter we had our own business, a fox farm. My father raised silver foxes and sold their pelts to the people who make them into capes and coats and muffs. Prices fell, my father hung on

hoping they would get better next year, and they fell again, and he hung on one more year and one more and finally it was not possible to hang on anymore, we owed everything to the feed company. I have heard my mother explain this, several times, to Mrs. Oliphant, who is the only neighbor she talks to. (Mrs. Oliphant also has come down in the world, being a schoolteacher who married the janitor.) We poured all we had into it, my mother says, and we came out with nothing. Many people could say the same thing, these days, but my mother has no time for the national calamity, only ours. Fate has flung us onto a street of poor people (it does not matter that we were poor before; that was a different sort of poverty), and the only way to take this, as she sees it, is with dignity, with bitterness, with no reconciliation. No bathroom with a claw-footed tub and a flush toilet is going to comfort her, nor water on tap and sidewalks past the house and milk in bottles, not even the two movie theatres and the Venus Restaurant and Woolworths so marvellous it has live birds singing in its fan-cooled corners and fish as tiny as fingernails, as bright as moons, swimming in its green tanks. My mother does not care.

In the afternoons she often walks to Simon's Grocery and takes me with her to help carry things. She wears a good dress, navy blue with little flowers, sheer, worn over a navy-blue slip. Also a summer hat of white straw, pushed down on the side of the head, and white shoes I have just whitened on a newspaper on the back steps. I have my hair freshly done in long damp curls which the dry air will fortunately soon loosen, a stiff large hair ribbon on top of my head. This is entirely different from going out after supper with my father. We have not walked past two houses before I feel we have become objects of universal ridicule. Even the dirty words chalked on the sidewalk are laughing at us. My mother does not seem to notice. She walks serenely like a lady shopping, like a *lady* shopping, past the housewives in loose beltless dresses torn under the arms. With me her creation, wretched curls and flaunting hair bow, scrubbed knees and white socks—all I do not want to be. I loathe even my name when she says it in public, in a voice so high, proud, and

ringing, deliberately different from the voice of any other mother on the street.

My mother will sometimes carry home, for a treat, a brick of ice cream—pale Neapolitan; and because we have no refrigerator in our house we wake my brother and eat it at once in the dining room, always darkened by the wall of the house next door. I spoon it up tenderly, leaving the chocolate till last, hoping to have some still to eat when my brother's dish is empty. My mother tries then to imitate the conversations we used to have at Dungannon, going back to our earliest, most leisurely days before my brother was born, when she would give me a little tea and a lot of milk in a cup like hers and we would sit out on the step facing the pump, the lilac tree, the fox pens beyond. She is not able to keep from mentioning those days. "Do you remember when we put you in your sled and Major pulled you?" (Major our dog, that we had to leave with neighbors when we moved.) "Do you remember your sandbox outside the kitchen window?" I pretend to remember far less than I do, wary of being trapped into sympathy or any unwanted emotion.

My mother has headaches. She often has to lie down. She lies on my brother's narrow bed in the little screened porch, shaded by heavy branches. "I look up at that tree and I think I am at home," she says.

"What you need," my father tells her, "is some fresh air and a drive in the country." He means for her to go with him, on his Walker Brothers route.

That is not my mother's idea of a drive in the country.

"Can I come?"

"Your mother might want you for trying on clothes."

"I'm beyond sewing this afternoon," my mother says.

"I'll take her then. Take both of them, give you a rest."

What is there about us that people need to be given a rest from? Never mind. I am glad enough to find my brother and make him go to the toilet and get us both into the car, our knees unscrubbed, my hair unringleted. My father brings from the house his two heavy brown suitcases, full of bottles, and sets them on the back seat. He

wears a white shirt, brilliant in the sunlight, a tie, light trousers belonging to his summer suit (his other suit is black, for funerals, and belonged to my uncle before he died), and a creamy straw hat. His salesman's outfit, with pencils clipped in the shirt pocket. He goes back once again, probably to say goodbye to my mother, to ask her if she is sure she doesn't want to come, and hear her say, "No. No thanks, I'm better just to lie here with my eyes closed." Then we are backing out of the driveway with the rising hope of adventure, just the little hope that takes you over the bump into the street, the hot air starting to move, turning into a breeze, the houses growing less and less familiar as we follow the shortcut my father knows, the quick way out of town. Yet what is there waiting for us all afternoon but hot hours in stricken farmyards, perhaps a stop at a country store and three ice-cream cones or bottles of pop, and my father singing? The one he made up about himself has a title—"The Walker Brothers Cowboy"—and it starts out like this:

> Old Ned Fields, he now is dead,
> So I am ridin' the route instead. . . .

Who is Ned Fields? The man he has replaced, surely, and if so he really is dead; yet my father's voice is mournful-jolly, making his death some kind of nonsense, a comic calamity. "Wisht I was back on the Rio Grande,[4] plungin' through the dusky sand." My father sings most of the time while driving the car. Even now, heading out of town, crossing the bridge and taking the sharp turn onto the highway, he is humming something, mumbling a bit of a song to himself, just tuning up, really, getting ready to improvise, for out along the highway we pass the Baptist Camp, the Vacation Bible Camp, and he lets loose:

> Where are the Baptists, where are the Baptists,
> where are all the Baptists today?
> They're down in the water, in Lake Huron water,
> with their sins all a-gittin' washed away.

My brother takes this for straight truth and gets up on his knees trying to see down to the Lake. "I don't see any Baptists," he says accusingly. "Neither do I, son," says my father. "I told you, they're down in the Lake."

No roads paved when we left the highway. We have to roll up the windows because of dust. The land is flat, scorched, empty. Bush lots at the back of the farms hold shade, black pine-shade like pools nobody can ever get to. We bump up a long lane and at the end of it what could look more unwelcoming, more deserted than the tall unpainted farmhouse with grass growing uncut right up to the front door, green blinds down, and a door upstairs opening on nothing but air? Many houses have this door, and I have never yet been able to find out why. I ask my father and he says they are for walking in your sleep. *What*? Well, if you happen to be walking in your sleep and you want to step outside. I am offended, seeing too late that he is joking, as usual, but my brother says sturdily, "If they did that they would break their necks."

The 1930s. How much this kind of farmhouse, this kind of afternoon seem to me to belong to that one decade in time, just as my father's hat does, his bright flared tie, our car with its wide running board (an Essex, and long past its prime). Cars somewhat like it, many older, none dustier, sit in the farmyards. Some are past running and have their doors pulled off, their seats removed for use on porches. No living things to be seen, chickens or cattle. Except dogs. There are dogs lying in any kind of shade they can find, dreaming, their lean sides rising and sinking rapidly. They get up when my father opens the car door, he has to speak to them. "Nice boy, there's a boy, nice old boy." They quiet down, go back to their shade. He should know how to quiet animals, he has held desperate foxes with tongs around their necks. One gentling voice for the dogs and another, rousing, cheerful, for calling at doors. "Hello there, missus, it's the Walker Brothers man and what are you out of today?" A door opens, he disappears. Forbidden to follow, forbidden even to leave the car, we can just wait and wonder what he says. Sometimes trying to make my mother laugh, he pretends to be

himself in a farm kitchen, spreading out his sample case. "Now then, missus, are you troubled with parasitic life? Your children's scalps, I mean. All those crawly little things we're too polite to mention that show up on the heads of the best of families? Soap alone is useless, kerosene is not too nice a perfume, but I have here—" Or else, "Believe me, sitting and driving all day the way I do I *know* the value of these fine pills. Natural relief. A problem common to old folks too, once their days of activity are over—How about you, Grandma?" He would wave the imaginary box of pills under my mother's nose and she would laugh finally, unwillingly. "He doesn't say that really, does he?" I said, and she said no of course not, he was too much of a gentleman.

One yard after another, then, the old cars, the pumps, dogs, views of gray barns and falling-down sheds and unturning windmills. The men, if they are working in the fields, are not in any fields that we can see. The children are far away, following dry creek beds or looking for blackberries, or else they are hidden in the house, spying at us through cracks in the blinds. The car seat has grown slick with our sweat. I dare my brother to sound the horn, wanting to do it myself but not wanting to get the blame. He knows better. We play I Spy, but it is hard to find many colors. Gray for the barns and sheds and toilets and houses, brown for the yard and fields, black or brown for the dogs. The rusting cars show rainbow patches, in which I strain to pick out purple or green; likewise I peer at doors for shreds of old peeling paint, maroon or yellow. We can't play with letters, which would be better, because my brother is too young to spell. The game disintegrates anyway. He claims my colors are not fair, and wants extra turns.

In one house no door opens, though the car is in the yard. My father knocks and whistles, calls, "Hullo there! Walker Brothers man!" but there is not a stir of reply anywhere. This house has no porch, just a bare, slanting slab of cement on which my father stands. He turns around, searching the barnyard, the barn whose mow must be empty because you can see the sky through it, and finally he bends to pick up his suitcases. Just then a window is

opened upstairs, a white pot appears on the sill, is tilted over and its contents splash down the outside wall. The window is not directly above my father's head, so only a stray splash would catch him. He picks up his suitcases with no particular hurry and walks, no longer whistling, to the car. "Do you know what that was?" I say to my brother. *"Pee."* He laughs and laughs.

My father rolls and lights a cigarette before he starts the car. The window has been slammed down, the blind drawn, we never did see a hand or face. "Pee, pee," sings my brother ecstatically. "Somebody dumped down pee!" "Just don't tell your mother that," my father says. "She isn't liable to see the joke." "Is it in your song?" my brother wants to know. My father says no but he will see what he can do to work it in.

I notice in a little while that we are not turning in any more lanes, though it does not seem to me that we are headed home. "Is this the way to Sunshine?" I ask my father, and he answers, "No, ma'am, it's not." "Are we still in your territory?" He shakes his head. "We're going *fast*," my brother says approvingly, and in fact we are bouncing along through dry puddle-holes so that all the bottles in the suitcases clink together and gurgle promisingly.

Another lane, a house, also unpainted, dried to silver in the sun.

"I thought we were out of your territory."

"We are."

"Then what are we going in here for?"

"You'll see."

In front of the house a short, sturdy woman is picking up washing, which had been spread on the grass to bleach and dry. When the car stops she stares at it hard for a moment, bends to pick up a couple more towels to add to the bundle under her arm, comes across to us and says in a flat voice, neither welcoming nor unfriendly, "Have you lost your way?"

My father takes his time getting out of the car. "I don't think so," he says. "I'm the Walker Brothers man."

"George Golley is our Walker Brothers man," the woman says, "and he was out here no more than a week ago. Oh, my Lord God,"

she says harshly, "it's you."

"It was, the last time I looked in the mirror," my father says.

The woman gathers all the towels in front of her and holds on to them tightly, pushing them against her stomach as if it hurt. "Of all the people I never thought to see. And telling me you were the Walker Brothers man."

"I'm sorry if you were looking forward to George Golley," my father says humbly.

"And look at me, I was prepared to clean the henhouse. You'll think that's just an excuse but it's true. I don't go round looking like this every day." She is wearing a farmer's straw hat, through which pricks of sunlight penetrate and float on her face, a loose, dirty print smock, and canvas shoes. "Who are those in the car, Ben? They're not yours?"

"Well, I hope and believe they are," my father says, and tells our names and ages. "Come on, you can get out. This is Nora, Miss Cronin. Nora, you better tell me, is it still Miss, or have you got a husband hiding in the woodshed?"

"If I had a husband that's not where I'd keep him, Ben," she says, and they both laugh, her laugh abrupt and somewhat angry. "You'll think I got no manners, as well as being dressed like a tramp," she says. "Come on in out of the sun. It's cool in the house."

We go across the yard ("Excuse me taking you in this way but I don't think the front door has been opened since Papa's funeral, I'm afraid the hinges might drop off"), up the porch steps, into the kitchen, which really is cool, high-ceilinged, the blinds of course down, a simple, clean, threadbare room with waxed worn linoleum, potted geraniums, drinking-pail and dipper, a round table with scrubbed oilcloth. In spite of the cleanness, the wiped and swept surfaces, there is a faint sour smell—maybe of the dishrag or the tin dipper or the oilcloth, or the old lady, because there is one, sitting in an easy chair under the clock shelf. She turns her head slightly in our direction and says, "Nora? Is that company?"

"Blind," says Nora in a quick explaining voice to my father. Then, "You won't guess who it is, Momma. Hear his voice."

My father goes to the front of her chair and bends and says hopefully, "Afternoon, Mrs. Cronin."

"Ben Jordan," says the old lady with no surprise. "You haven't been to see us in the longest time. Have you been out of the country?"

My father and Nora look at each other.

"He's married, Momma," says Nora cheerfully and aggressively. "Married and got two children and here they are." She pulls us forward, makes each of us touch the old lady's dry, cool hand while she says our names in turn. Blind! This is the first blind person I have ever seen close up. Her eyes are closed, the eyelids sunk away down, showing no shape of the eyeball, just hollows. From one hollow comes a drop of silver liquid, a medicine, or a miraculous tear.

"Let me get into a decent dress," Nora says. "Talk to Momma. It's a treat for her. We hardly ever see company, do we, Momma?"

"Not many makes it out this road," says the old lady placidly. "And the ones that used to be around here, our old neighbors, some of them have pulled out."

"True everywhere," my father says.

"Where's your wife then?"

"Home. She's not too fond of the hot weather, makes her feel poorly."

"Well." This is a habit of country people, old people, to say "well," meaning, "Is that so?" with a little extra politeness and concern.

Nora's dress, when she appears again—stepping heavily on Cuban heels down the stairs in the hall—is flowered more lavishly than anything my mother owns, green and yellow on brown, some sort of floating sheer crêpe, leaving her arms bare. Her arms are heavy, and every bit of her skin you can see is covered with little dark freckles like measles. Her hair is short, black, coarse and curly, her teeth very white and strong. "It's the first time I knew there was such a thing as green poppies," my father says, looking at her dress.

"You would be surprised all the things you never knew," says Nora, sending a smell of cologne far and wide when she moves and

displaying a change of voice to go with the dress, something more sociable and youthful. “They’re not poppies anyway, they’re just flowers. You go and pump me some good cold water and I’ll make these children a drink.” She gets down from the cupboard a bottle of Walker Brothers Orange syrup.

“You telling me you were the Walker Brothers man!”

“It’s the truth, Nora. You go and look at my sample cases in the car if you don’t believe me. I got the territory directly south of here.”

“Walker Brothers? Is that a fact? You selling for Walker Brothers?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“We always heard you were raising foxes over Dungannon way.”

“That’s what I was doing, but I kind of run out of luck in that business.”

“So where’re you living? How long’ve you been out selling?”

“We moved into Tuppertown. I been at it, oh, two, three months. It keeps the wolf from the door. Keeps him as far away as the back fence.”

Nora laughs. “Well, I guess you count yourself lucky to have the work. Isabel’s husband in Brantford, he was out of work the longest time. I thought if he didn’t find something soon I was going to have them all land in here to feed, and I tell you I was hardly looking forward to it. It’s all I can manage with me and Momma.”

“Isabel married,” my father says. “Muriel married too?”

“No, she’s teaching school out West. She hasn’t been home for five years. I guess she finds something better to do with her holidays. I would if I was her.” She gets some snapshots out of the table drawer and starts showing him. “That’s Isabel’s oldest boy, starting school. That’s the baby sitting in her carriage. Isabel and her husband. Muriel. That’s her roommate with her. That’s a fellow she used to go around with, and his car. He was working in a bank out there. That’s her school, it has eight rooms. She teaches Grade Five.” My father shakes his head. “I can’t think of her any way but when she was going to school, so shy I used to pick her up on the road—

I'd be on my way to see you—and she would not say one word, not even to agree it was a nice day."

"She's got over that."

"Who are you talking about?" says the old lady.

"Muriel. I said she's got over being shy."

"She was here last summer."

"No, Momma, that was Isabel. Isabel and her family were here last summer. Muriel's out West."

"I meant Isabel."

Shortly after this the old lady falls asleep, her head on the side, her mouth open. "Excuse her manners," Nora says. "It's old age." She fixes an afghan over her mother and says we can all go into the front room where our talking won't disturb her.

"You two," my father says. "Do you want to go outside and amuse yourselves?"

Amuse ourselves how? Anyway, I want to stay. The front room is more interesting than the kitchen, though barer. There is a gramophone and a pump organ and a picture on the wall of Mary, Jesus' mother—I know that much—in shades of bright blue and pink with a spiked band of light around her head. I know that such pictures are found only in the homes of Roman Catholics and so Nora must be one. We have never known any Roman Catholics at all well, never well enough to visit in their houses. I think of what my grandmother and my Aunt Tena, over in Dungannon, used to always say to indicate that somebody was a Catholic. *So-and-so digs with the wrong foot,* they would say. *She digs with the wrong foot.* That was what they would say about Nora.[5]

Nora takes a bottle, half full, out of the top of the organ and pours some of what is in it into the two glasses that she and my father have emptied of the orange drink.

"Keep it in case of sickness?" my father says.

"Not on your life," says Nora. "I'm never sick. I just keep it because I keep it. One bottle does me a fair time, though, because I don't care for drinking alone. Here's luck!" She and my father drink

and I know what it is. Whisky. One of the things my mother has told me in our talks together is that my father never drinks whisky. But I see he does. He drinks whisky and he talks of people whose names I have never heard before. But after a while he turns to a familiar incident. He tells about the chamberpot that was emptied out the window. "Picture me there," he says, "hollering my heartiest. *Oh, lady, it's your Walker Brothers man, anybody home?*" He does himself hollering, grinning absurdly, waiting, looking up in pleased expectation, and then—oh, ducking, covering his head with his arms, looking as if he begged for mercy (when he never did anything like that, I was watching), and Nora laughs, almost as hard as my brother did at the time.

"That isn't true! That's not a word true!"

"Oh, indeed it is, ma'am. We have our heroes in the ranks of Walker Brothers. I'm glad you think it's funny," he says sombrely.

I ask him shyly, "Sing the song."

"What song? Have you turned into a singer on top of everything else?"

Embarrassed, my father says, "Oh, just this song I made up while I was driving around, it gives me something to do, making up rhymes."

But after some urging he does sing it, looking at Nora with a droll, apologetic expression, and she laughs so much that in places he has to stop and wait for her to get over laughing so he can go on, because she makes him laugh too. Then he does various parts of his salesman's spiel. Nora when she laughs squeezes her large bosom under her folded arms. "You're crazy," she says. "That's all you are." She sees my brother peering into the gramophone and she jumps up and goes over to him. "Here's us sitting enjoying ourselves and not giving you a thought, isn't it terrible?" she says. "You want me to put a record on, don't you? You want to hear a nice record? Can you dance? I bet your sister can, can't she?"

I say no. "A big girl like you and so good-looking and can't dance!" says Nora. "It's high time you learned. I bet you'd make a lovely dancer. Here, I'm going to put on a piece I used to dance to

and even your daddy did, in his dancing days. You didn't know your daddy was a dancer, did you? Well, he is a talented man, your daddy!".[6]

Round and round the linoleum, me proud, intent, Nora laughing and moving with great buoyancy, wrapping me in her strange gaiety, her smell of whisky, cologne, and sweat. Under the arms her dress is damp, and little drops form along her upper lip, hang in the soft black hairs at the corners of her mouth. She whirls me around in front of my father—causing me to stumble, for I am by no means so swift a pupil as she pretends—and lets me go, breathless.

"Dance with me, Ben."

"I'm the world's worst dancer, Nora, and you know it."

"I certainly never thought so."

"You would now."

She stands in front of him, arms hanging loose and hopeful, her breasts, which a moment ago embarrassed me with their warmth and bulk, rising and falling under her loose flowered dress, her face shining with the exercise, and delight.

"Ben."

My father drops his head and says quietly, "Not me, Nora."

So she can only go and take the record off. "I can drink alone but I can't dance alone," she says. "Unless I am a whole lot crazier than I think I am."

"Nora," says my father, smiling. "You're not crazy."

"Stay for supper."

"Oh, no. We couldn't put you to the trouble."

"It's no trouble. I'd be glad of it."

"And their mother would worry. She'd think I'd turned us over in a ditch."

"Oh, well. Yes."

"We've taken a lot of your time now."

"Time," says Nora bitterly. "Will you come by ever again?"

"I will if I can," says my father.

"Bring the children. Bring your wife."

"Yes, I will," says my father. "I will if I can."

When she follows us to the car he says, "You come to see us too, Nora. We're right on Grove Street, left-hand side going in, that's north, and two doors this side—east—of Baker Street."

Nora does not repeat these directions. She stands close to the car in her soft, brilliant dress. She touches the fender, making an unintelligible mark in the dust there.

On the way home my father does not buy any ice cream or pop, but he does go into a country store and get a package of licorice, which he shares with us. She digs with the wrong foot, I think, and the words seem sad to me as never before, dark, perverse. My father does not say anything to me about not mentioning things at home, but I know, just from the thoughtfulness, the pause when he passes the licorice, that there are things not to be mentioned. The whisky, maybe the dancing. No worry about my brother, he does not notice enough. At most he might remember the blind lady, the picture of Mary.

"Sing," my brother commands my father, but my father says gravely, "I don't know, I seem to be fresh out of songs. You watch the road and let me know if you see any rabbits."

So my father drives and my brother watches the road for rabbits and I feel my father's life flowing back from our car in the last of the afternoon, darkening and turning strange, like a landscape that has an enchantment on it, making it kindly, ordinary and familiar while you are looking at it, but changing it, once your back is turned, into something you will never know, with all kinds of weathers, and distances you cannot imagine.

When we get closer to Tuppertown the sky becomes gently overcast, as always, nearly always, on summer evenings by the Lake.

1968

Endnotes

- Note 1: Refers to a traveling salesman for a Canadian company, which is probably modeled on the American direct marketer Watkins Products.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In time for.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: One of the Great Lakes, bordering on Ontario and eastern Michigan. Place-names are both real and invented.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: River that begins in Colorado and flows south, becoming the border between Mexico and the United States.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Relations between Protestants and Catholics within the Irish population in southern Ontario were often strained.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: From the popular song “Whispering,” whose original 1920 release was one of the first records to sell a million copies.Return to reference 6

GEOFFREY HILL
1932–2016

Geoffrey Hill, born in the Worcestershire village of Bromsgrove, educated at its high school and at Keble College, Oxford, was a professor of English at Leeds University, a lecturer at Cambridge, and a professor at Boston University. In 2010 he was elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. As a boy he was drawn to the Metaphysical poets' "fusion of intellectual strength with simple, sensuous, and passionate immediacy," and his own poems offer something of the same fusion. What he said of "Annunciations: 2" might have been said of many of his poems: "But I want the poem to have this dubious end; because I feel dubious; and the whole business is dubious." He was a religious poet but a poet of religious doubt—a skeptic confronting the extremes of human experience, "man's inhumanity to man," on the cross and in the concentration camps—or delight in the abundance of the natural world: pain and pleasure alike rendered with a Keatsian richness and specificity, a modernist allusiveness and syntactic contortion. Distinctively resonant as is the voice of Hill's poems, they are consistently impersonal. Even when the poet's earlier self is conflated with that of historical figures, subjectivity is dissolved in the objective projection of a historical imagination of great range and power. The Holocaust poem "September Song" elegizes a victim of the Nazi concentration camps born the day after the poet was born, implicitly contrasting their divergent fates. Hill was at once one of the most

ambitious, most difficult, and most rewarding contemporary poets writing in English.

In Memory of Jane Fraser

When snow like sheep lay in the fold°
And winds went begging at each door,
And the far hills were blue with cold,
And a cold shroud lay on the moor,

She kept the siege. And every day
We watched her brooding over death
Like a strong bird above its prey.
The room filled with the kettle's breath.

Damp curtains glued against the pane
Sealed time away. Her body froze
As if to freeze us all, and chain
Creation to a stunned repose.

She died before the world could stir.
In March the ice unloosed the brook
And water ruffled the sun's hair.
Dead cones upon the alder shook.

1959

Notes

- °: *shelter for sheep*Return to reference °

Requiem for the Plantagenet Kings[1]

For whom the possessed sea littered, on both
shores,
Ruinous arms; being fired, and for good,
To sound the constitution of just wars,
Men, in their eloquent fashion, understood.

Relieved of soul, the dropping-back of dust,
Their usage, pride, admitted within doors;
At home, under caved chantries,[2] set in trust,
With well-dressed alabaster and proved spurs
They lie; they lie; secure in the decay
Of blood, blood-marks, crowns hacked and coveted,
Before the scouring fires of trial-day
Alight on men; before sleeked groin, gored head,
Budge through the clay and gravel, and the sea
Across daubed rock evacuates its dead.

1959

Endnotes

- Note 1: Dynastic succession of 12th- to 15th-century English kings, beginning with Henry II, who was followed in turn by Richard I, John, Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, Edward III, and Richard II. They ruled not only over England but also over much of France ("on both shores"). The last Plantagenet king was Richard III, who was killed at the Battle of Bosworth on Aug. 22, 1485.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Chapels endowed for priests to sing Masses for the souls of those who founded them. Many chantries have cavelike

ceilings of vaulted stone and contain effigies—sometimes in alabaster—of their founders.Return to reference 2

September Song[1]

born 19.6.32—deported 24.9.42

Undesirable you may have been, untouchable
you were not. Not forgotten
or passed over at the proper time.

As estimated, you died. Things marched,
sufficient, to that end.
Just so much Zyklon and leather, patented
terror, so many routine cries.

(I have made
an elegy for myself it
is true)[2]

September fattens on vines. Roses
flake from the wall. The smoke
of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

This is plenty. This is more than enough.

1968

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  The poem is about the gassing of Jews in German extermination camps; Zyklon-B was the gas used. Hill's fellow poet Jon Silkin has drawn attention to the kind of wit involved in the subtitle, "where the natural event of birth is placed, simply, beside the human and murderous 'deported' as if the latter were of the

same order and inevitability for the victim"; he discusses, too, "the irony of conjuncted meanings between 'undesirable' (touching on both sexual desire and racism) and 'untouchable,' which exploits a similar ambiguity but reverses the emphases" and is "unusually dense *and* simple."
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: As the critic Christopher Ricks pointed out, Hill was born on 18.6.32 (June 18, 1932).Return to reference 2

Broken Hierarchies

When to depict rain—heavy rain—it stands
in dense verticals diagonally lashed,
chalk-white yet with the chalk translucent;

the roadway sprouts ten thousand flowerets,
storm-paddies instantly reaped, replenished,
and again cut down:

the holding burden of a wisteria
drape amid drape, the sodden
copia° of all things flashing and drying:

first here after the storm these butterflies
fixed on each jinking° run,
probing, priming, then leaping back,

a babble of silent tongues;
and the flint church also choiring
into dazzle

. . .

like Appalachian music, those
aureate° stark sounds
plucked or bowed, a wild patience

replete with loss,
the twankled dulcimer,
scrawny rich fiddle gnawing;

a man's low voice that looms out of the drone:
the humming bird that is not

of these climes; and the great

wanderers like the albatross;
the ocean, ranging-in, laying itself
down on our alien shore.

2006

Notes

- °: *abundance*Return to reference °
- °: *zigzagging*Return to reference °
- °: *golden*Return to reference °

V. S. NAIPAUL
1932–2018

Widely regarded in his lifetime as the most accomplished novelist from the English-speaking Caribbean, Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born to a family of Indian descent in Trinidad and educated at Queen's Royal College, Port of Spain, and at University College, Oxford. After settling in England, he became editor of the *Caribbean Voices* program for the British Broadcasting Corporation (1954–56) and fiction reviewer for the *New Statesman* (1957–61). The recipient of many prestigious prizes and awards, he won the Booker Prize in 1971 for *In a Free State*, was knighted in 1990, and received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2001.

Naipaul's first three books, *The Mystic Masseur* (1957), *The Suffrage of Elvira* (1958), and *Miguel Street* (short stories, 1959), are comedies of manners, set in a Trinidad viewed with an exile's acute and ironic eye. These early works present a starkly satiric vision, but a more modulated tone appears in Naipaul's first major novel, partly based on his father's experience, *A House for Mr. Biswas* (1961). Following the declining fortunes of its gentle hero from cradle to grave, this tragicomic novel traces the disintegration of a traditional way of life on something approaching an epic scale. Subsequent novels, including *The Mimic Men* (1967), *Guerrillas* (1973), *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), and *Half a Life* (2001), continued to explore the desperate and destructive conditions facing individuals as they struggle with cultures in complicated states of transition and

development. Because of his often bitter, even withering critiques of so-called Third World states and societies, Naipaul was controversial among readers of postcolonial fiction.

Naipaul also produced essays on a variety of themes, including a travel narrative about the southern United States, *A Turn in the South* (1988), another about African belief, *The Masque of Africa* (2010), and two studies—what he called "cultural explorations"—of Islam: *Among the Believers: An Islamic Journey* (1981) and *Beyond Belief: Islamic Excursions among the Converted Peoples* (1998). Like his novels, these writings range widely, carrying readers to Africa, England, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, South and North America. With the years, Naipaul's vision of the human condition grew darker and more pessimistic, as he brilliantly laid bare the insensitivities and disconnections that bedevil relations among individuals, races, and nations.

Such tremendous disjunctions and dire consequences are revealed in "One Out of Many," the second of three stories that, with two linking diary entries, make up *In a Free State*, a bleakly ironic yet emotionally engaging study of what it means to be enslaved and what it means to be free. The story—its title playing on the American motto "*E pluribus unum*" ("from many, one")—follows the fortunes of Santosh, an Indian immigrant to the United States, whose sense of self changes dramatically in relation to various liberating and imprisoning spaces and various ethnic, cultural, and sexual others. In contrast to narratives of immigration as empowerment, the story represents the promise of more freedom, more status, more economic opportunity in America as coming at the price of an intensified isolation and alienation. As in the literary journeys of other innocents abroad, Santosh's immersion in America satirically reveals as much about the culture he assumes as about the culture he leaves behind.

One Out of Many

I am now an American citizen and I live in Washington, capital of the world. Many people, both here and in India, will feel that I have done well. But.

I was so happy in Bombay. I was respected, I had a certain position. I worked for an important man. The highest in the land came to our bachelor chambers and enjoyed my food and showered compliments on me. I also had my friends. We met in the evenings on the pavement below the gallery of our chambers. Some of us, like the tailor's bearer[1] and myself, were domestics who lived in the street. The others were people who came to that bit of pavement to sleep. Respectable people; we didn't encourage riff-raff.

In the evenings it was cool. There were few passers-by and, apart from an occasional double-decker bus or taxi, little traffic. The pavement was swept and sprinkled, bedding brought out from daytime hiding-places, little oil-lamps lit. While the folk upstairs chattered and laughed, on the pavement we read newspapers, played cards, told stories and smoked. The clay pipe passed from friend to friend; we became drowsy. Except of course during the monsoon,[2] I preferred to sleep on the pavement with my friends, although in our chambers a whole cupboard below the staircase was reserved for my personal use.

It was good after a healthy night in the open to rise before the sun and before the sweepers came. Sometimes I saw the street lights go off. Bedding was rolled up; no one spoke much; and soon my friends were hurrying in silent competition to secluded lanes and alleys and open lots to relieve themselves. I was spared this competition; in our chambers I had facilities.[3]

Afterwards for half an hour or so I was free simply to stroll. I liked walking beside the Arabian Sea, waiting for the sun to come up. Then the city and the ocean gleamed like gold. Alas for those

morning walks, that sudden ocean dazzle, the moist salt breeze on my face, the flap of my shirt, that first cup of hot sweet tea from a stall, the taste of the first leaf-cigarette.

Observe the workings of fate. The respect and security I enjoyed were due to the importance of my employer. It was this very importance which now all at once destroyed the pattern of my life.

My employer was seconded[4] by his firm to Government service and was posted to Washington. I was happy for his sake but frightened for mine. He was to be away for some years and there was nobody in Bombay he could second me to. Soon, therefore, I was to be out of a job and out of the chambers. For many years I had considered my life as settled. I had served my apprenticeship, known my hard times. I didn't feel I could start again. I despaired. Was there a job for me in Bombay? I saw myself having to return to my village in the hills, to my wife and children there, not just for a holiday but for good. I saw myself again becoming a porter during the tourist season, racing after the buses as they arrived at the station and shouting with forty or fifty others for luggage. Indian luggage, not this lightweight American stuff! Heavy metal trunks!

I could have cried. It was no longer the sort of life for which I was fitted. I had grown soft in Bombay and I was no longer young. I had acquired possessions, I was used to the privacy of my cupboard. I had become a city man, used to certain comforts.

My employer said, "Washington is not Bombay, Santosh. Washington is expensive. Even if I was able to raise your fare, you wouldn't be able to live over there in anything like your present style."

But to be barefoot in the hills, after Bombay! The shock, the disgrace! I couldn't face my friends. I stopped sleeping on the pavement and spent as much of my free time as possible in my cupboard among my possessions, as among things which were soon to be taken from me.

My employer said, "Santosh, my heart bleeds for you."

I said, "Sahib,[5] if I look a little concerned it is only because I worry about you. You have always been fussy, and I don't see how

you will manage in Washington."

"It won't be easy. But it's the principle. Does the representative of a poor country like ours travel about with his cook? Will that create a good impression?"

"You will always do what is right, sahib."

He went silent.

After some days he said, "There's not only the expense, Santosh. There's the question of foreign exchange. Our rupee[6] isn't what it was."

"I understand, sahib. Duty is duty."

A fortnight later, when I had almost given up hope, he said, "Santosh, I have consulted Government. You will accompany me. Government has sanctioned, will arrange accommodation. But no expenses. You will get your passport and your P form. But I want you to think, Santosh. Washington is not Bombay."

I went down to the pavement that night with my bedding.

I said, blowing down my shirt, "Bombay gets hotter and hotter."

"Do you know what you are doing?" the tailor's bearer said. "Will the Americans smoke with you? Will they sit and talk with you in the evenings? Will they hold you by the hand and walk with you beside the ocean?"

It pleased me that he was jealous. My last days in Bombay were very happy.

I packed my employer's two suitcases and bundled up my own belongings in lengths of old cotton. At the airport they made a fuss about my bundles. They said they couldn't accept them as luggage for the hold because they didn't like the responsibility. So when the time came I had to climb up to the aircraft with all my bundles. The girl at the top, who was smiling at everybody else, stopped smiling when she saw me. She made me go right to the back of the plane, far from my employer. Most of the seats there were empty, though, and I was able to spread my bundles around and, well, it was comfortable.

It was bright and hot outside, cool inside. The plane started, rose up in the air, and Bombay and the ocean tilted this way and that. It was very nice. When we settled down I looked around for people like myself, but I could see no one among the Indians or the foreigners who looked like a domestic. Worse, they were all dressed as though they were going to a wedding and, brother, I soon saw it wasn't they who were conspicuous. I was in my ordinary Bombay clothes, the loose long-tailed shirt, the wide-waisted pants held up with a piece of string. Perfectly respectable domestic's wear, neither dirty nor clean, and in Bombay no one would have looked. But now on the plane I felt heads turning whenever I stood up.

I was anxious. I slipped off my shoes, tight even without the laces, and drew my feet up. That made me feel better. I made myself a little betel-nut[7] mixture and that made me feel better still. Half the pleasure of betel, though, is the spitting; and it was only when I had worked up a good mouthful that I saw I had a problem. The airline girl saw too. That girl didn't like me at all. She spoke roughly to me. My mouth was full, my cheeks were bursting, and I couldn't say anything. I could only look at her. She went and called a man in uniform and he came and stood over me. I put my shoes back on and swallowed the betel juice. It made me feel quite ill.

The girl and the man, the two of them, pushed a little trolley of drinks down the aisle. The girl didn't look at me but the man said, "You want a drink, chum?" He wasn't a bad fellow. I pointed at random to a bottle. It was a kind of soda drink, nice and sharp at first but then not so nice. I was worrying about it when the girl said, "Five shillings sterling or sixty cents U.S." That took me by surprise. I had no money, only a few rupees. The girl stamped, and I thought she was going to hit me with her pad when I stood up to show her who my employer was.

Presently my employer came down the aisle. He didn't look very well. He said, without stopping, "Champagne, Santosh? Already we are overdoing?" He went on to the lavatory. When he passed back he said, "Foreign exchange, Santosh! Foreign exchange!" That was all. Poor fellow, he was suffering too.

The journey became miserable for me. Soon, with the wine I had drunk, the betel juice, the movement and the noise of the aeroplane, I was vomiting all over my bundles, and I didn't care what the girl said or did. Later there were more urgent and terrible needs. I felt I would choke in the tiny, hissing room at the back. I had a shock when I saw my face in the mirror. In the fluorescent light it was the colour of a corpse. My eyes were strained, the sharp air hurt my nose and seemed to get into my brain. I climbed up on the lavatory seat and squatted. I lost control of myself. As quickly as I could I ran back out into the comparative openness of the cabin and hoped no one had noticed. The lights were dim now; some people had taken off their jackets and were sleeping. I hoped the plane would crash.

The girl woke me up. She was almost screaming. "It's you, isn't it? Isn't it?"

I thought she was going to tear the shirt off me. I pulled back and leaned hard on the window. She burst into tears and nearly tripped on her sari as she ran up the aisle to get the man in uniform.

Nightmare. And all I knew was that somewhere at the end, after the airports and the crowded lounges where everybody was dressed up, after all those takeoffs and touchdowns, was the city of Washington. I wanted the journey to end but I couldn't say I wanted to arrive at Washington. I was already a little scared of that city, to tell the truth. I wanted only to be off the plane and to be in the open again, to stand on the ground and breathe and to try to understand what time of day it was.

At last we arrived. I was in a daze. The burden of those bundles! There were more closed rooms and electric lights. There were questions from officials.

"Is he diplomatic?"[8]

"He's only a domestic," my employer said.

"Is that his luggage? What's in that pocket?"

I was ashamed.

"Santosh," my employer said.

I pulled out the little packets of pepper and salt, the sweets, the envelopes with scented napkins, the toy tubes of mustard. Airline trinkets. I had been collecting them throughout the journey, seizing a handful, whatever my condition, every time I passed the galley.

"He's a cook," my employer said.

"Does he always travel with his condiments?"

"Santosh, Santosh," my employer said in the car afterwards, "in Bombay it didn't matter what you did. Over here you represent your country. I must say I cannot understand why your behaviour has already gone so much out of character."

"I am sorry, sahib."

"Look at it like this, Santosh. Over here you don't only represent your country, you represent me."

For the people of Washington it was late afternoon or early evening, I couldn't say which. The time and the light didn't match, as they did in Bombay. Of that drive I remember green fields, wide roads, many motor cars travelling fast, making a steady hiss, hiss, which wasn't at all like our Bombay traffic noise. I remember big buildings and wide parks; many bazaar areas; then smaller houses without fences and with gardens like bush, with the *hubshi*[9] standing about or sitting down, more usually sitting down, everywhere. Especially I remember the *hubshi.* I had heard about them in stories and had seen one or two in Bombay. But I had never dreamt that this wild race existed in such numbers in Washington and were permitted to roam the streets so freely. O father, what was this place I had come to?

I wanted, I say, to be in the open, to breathe, to come to myself, to reflect. But there was to be no openness for me that evening. From the aeroplane to the airport building to the motor car to the apartment block to the elevator to the corridor to the apartment itself, I was forever enclosed, forever in the hissing, hissing sound of air-conditioners.

I was too dazed to take stock of the apartment. I saw it as only another halting place. My employer went to bed at once, completely exhausted, poor fellow. I looked around for my room. I couldn't find

it and gave up. Aching for the Bombay ways, I spread my bedding in the carpeted corridor just outside our apartment door. The corridor was long: doors, doors. The illuminated ceiling was decorated with stars of different sizes; the colours were grey and blue and gold. Below that imitation sky I felt like a prisoner.

Waking, looking up at the ceiling, I thought just for a second that I had fallen asleep on the pavement below the gallery of our Bombay chambers. Then I realized my loss. I couldn't tell how much time had passed or whether it was night or day. The only clue was that newspapers now lay outside some doors. It disturbed me to think that while I had been sleeping, alone and defenceless, I had been observed by a stranger and perhaps by more than one stranger.

I tried the apartment door and found I had locked myself out. I didn't want to disturb my employer. I thought I would get out into the open, go for a walk. I remembered where the elevator was. I got in and pressed the button. The elevator dropped fast and silently and it was like being in the aeroplane again. When the elevator stopped and the blue metal door slid open I saw plain concrete corridors and blank walls. The noise of machinery was very loud. I knew I was in the basement and the main floor was not far above me. But I no longer wanted to try; I gave up ideas of the open air. I thought I would just go back up to the apartment. But I hadn't noted the number and didn't even know what floor we were on. My courage flowed out of me. I sat on the floor of the elevator and felt the tears come to my eyes. Almost without noise the elevator door closed, and I found I was being taken up silently at great speed.

The elevator stopped and the door opened. It was my employer, his hair uncombed, yesterday's dirty shirt partly unbuttoned. He looked frightened.

"Santosh, where have you been at this hour of morning? Without your shoes."

I could have embraced him. He hurried me back past the newspapers to our apartment and I took the bedding inside. The

wide window showed the early morning sky, the big city; we were high up, way above the trees.

I said, "I couldn't find my room."

"Government sanctioned," my employer said. "Are you sure you've looked?"

We looked together. One little corridor led past the bathroom to his bedroom; another, shorter corridor led to the big room and the kitchen. There was nothing else.

"Government sanctioned," my employer said, moving about the kitchen and opening cupboard doors. "Separate entrance, shelving. I have the correspondence." He opened another door and looked inside. "Santosh, do you think it is possible that this is what Government meant?"

The cupboard he had opened was as high as the rest of the apartment and as wide as the kitchen, about six feet. It was about three feet deep. It had two doors. One door opened into the kitchen; another door, directly opposite, opened into the corridor.

"Separate entrance," my employer said. "Shelving, electric light, power point, fitted carpet."

"This must be my room, sahib."

"Santosh, some enemy in Government has done this to me."

"Oh no, sahib. You mustn't say that. Besides, it is very big. I will be able to make myself very comfortable. It is much bigger than my little cubby-hole in the chambers. And it has a nice flat ceiling. I wouldn't hit my head."

"You don't understand, Santosh. Bombay is Bombay. Here if we start living in cupboards we give the wrong impression. They will think we all live in cupboards in Bombay."

"O sahib, but they can just look at me and see I am dirt."

"You are very good, Santosh. But these people are malicious. Still, if you are happy, then I am happy."

"I am very happy, sahib."

And after all the upset, I was. It was nice to crawl in that evening, spread my bedding and feel protected and hidden. I slept

very well.

In the morning my employer said, "We must talk about money, Santosh. Your salary is one hundred rupees a month. But Washington isn't Bombay. Everything is a little bit more expensive here, and I am going to give you a Dearness Allowance. As from today you are getting one hundred and fifty rupees."

"Sahib."

"And I'm giving you a fortnight's pay in advance. In foreign exchange. Seventy-five rupees. Ten cents to the rupee, seven hundred and fifty cents. Seven fifty U.S. Here, Santosh. This afternoon you go out and have a little walk and enjoy. But be careful. We are not among friends, remember."

So at last, rested, with money in my pocket, I went out in the open. And of course the city wasn't a quarter as frightening as I had thought. The buildings weren't particularly big, not all the streets were busy, and there were many lovely trees. A lot of the *hubshi* were about, very wild-looking some of them, with dark glasses and their hair frizzed out, but it seemed that if you didn't trouble them they didn't attack you.

I was looking for a café or a tea-stall where perhaps domestics congregated. But I saw no domestics, and I was chased away from the place I did eventually go into. The girl said, after I had been waiting some time, "Can't you read? We don't serve hippies or bare feet here."

O father! I had come out without my shoes. But what a country, I thought, walking briskly away, where people are never allowed to dress normally but must forever wear their very best! Why must they wear out shoes and fine clothes for no purpose? What occasion are they honouring? What waste, what presumption! Who do they think is noticing them all the time?

And even while these thoughts were in my head I found I had come to a roundabout with trees and a fountain where—and it was like a fulfilment in a dream, not easy to believe—there were many people who looked like my own people. I tightened the string around

my loose pants, held down my flapping shirt and ran through the traffic to the green circle.

Some of the *hubshi* were there, playing musical instruments and looking quite happy in their way. There were some Americans sitting about on the grass and the fountain and the kerb. Many of them were in rough, friendly-looking clothes; some were without shoes; and I felt I had been over hasty in condemning the entire race. But it wasn't these people who had attracted me to the circle. It was the dancers. The men were bearded, barefooted and in saffron robes, and the girls were in saris and canvas shoes that looked like our own Bata shoes.[1] They were shaking little cymbals and chanting and lifting their heads up and down and going round in a circle, making a lot of dust. It was a little bit like a Red Indian dance in a cowboy movie, but they were chanting Sanskrit words in praise of Lord Krishna.[2]

I was very pleased. But then a disturbing thought came to me. It might have been because of the half-caste[3] appearance of the dancers; it might have been their bad Sanskrit pronunciation and their accent. I thought that these people were now strangers, but that perhaps once upon a time they had been like me. Perhaps, as in some story, they had been brought here among the *hubshi* as captives a long time ago and had become a lost people, like our own wandering gipsy folk, and had forgotten who they were. When I thought that, I lost my pleasure in the dancing; and I felt for the dancers the sort of distaste we feel when we are faced with something that should be kin but turns out not to be, turns out to be degraded, like a deformed man, or like a leper, who from a distance looks whole.

I didn't stay. Not far from the circle I saw a café which appeared to be serving bare feet. I went in, had a coffee and a nice piece of cake and bought a pack of cigarettes; matches they gave me free with the cigarettes. It was all right, but then the bare feet began looking at me, and one bearded fellow came and sniffed loudly at me and smiled and spoke some sort of gibberish, and then some others of the bare feet came and sniffed at me. They weren't

unfriendly, but I didn't appreciate the behaviour; and it was a little frightening to find, when I left the place, that two or three of them appeared to be following me. They weren't unfriendly, but I didn't want to take any chances. I passed a cinema; I went in. It was something I wanted to do anyway. In Bombay I used to go once a week.

And that was all right. The movie had already started. It was in English, not too easy for me to follow, and it gave me time to think. It was only there, in the darkness, that I thought about the money I had been spending. The prices had seemed to me very reasonable, like Bombay prices. Three for the movie ticket, one fifty in the café, with tip. But I had been thinking in rupees and paying in dollars. In less than an hour I had spent nine days' pay.

I couldn't watch the movie after that. I went out and began to make my way back to the apartment block. Many more of the *hubshi* were about now and I saw that where they congregated the pavement was wet, and dangerous with broken glass and bottles. I couldn't think of cooking when I got back to the apartment. I couldn't bear to look at the view. I spread my bedding in the cupboard, lay down in the darkness and waited for my employer to return.

When he did I said, "Sahib, I want to go home."

"Santosh, I've paid five thousand rupees to bring you here. If I send you back now, you will have to work for six or seven years without salary to pay me back."

I burst into tears.

"My poor Santosh, something has happened. Tell me what has happened."

"Sahib, I've spent more than half the advance you gave me this morning. I went out and had a coffee and cake and then I went to a movie."

His eyes went small and twinkly behind his glasses. He bit the inside of his top lip, scraped at his moustache with his lower teeth, and he said, "You see, you see. I told you it was expensive."

I understood I was a prisoner. I accepted this and adjusted. I learned to live within the apartment, and I was even calm.

My employer was a man of taste and he soon had the apartment looking like something in a magazine, with books and Indian paintings and Indian fabrics and pieces of sculpture and bronze statues of our gods. I was careful to take no delight in it. It was of course very pretty, especially with the view. But the view remained foreign and I never felt that the apartment was real, like the shabby old Bombay chambers with the cane chairs, or that it had anything to do with me.

When people came to dinner I did my duty. At the appropriate time I would bid the company goodnight, close off the kitchen behind its folding screen and pretend I was leaving the apartment. Then I would lie down quietly in my cupboard and smoke. I was free to go out; I had my separate entrance. But I didn't like being out of the apartment. I didn't even like going down to the laundry room in the basement.

Once or twice a week I went to the supermarket on our street. I always had to walk past groups of *hubshi* men and children. I tried not to look, but it was hard. They sat on the pavement, on steps and in the bush around their redbrick houses, some of which had boarded-up windows. They appeared to be very much a people of the open air, with little to do; even in the mornings some of the men were drunk.

Scattered among the *hubshi* houses were others just as old but with gas-lamps that burned night and day in the entrance. These were the houses of the Americans. I seldom saw these people; they didn't spend much time on the street. The lighted gas-lamp was the American way of saying that though a house looked old outside it was nice and new inside. I also felt that it was like a warning to the *hubshi* to keep off.

Outside the supermarket there was always a policeman with a gun. Inside, there were always a couple of *hubshi* guards with truncheons, and, behind the cashiers, some old *hubshi* beggar men in rags. There were also many young *hubshi* boys, small but

muscular, waiting to carry parcels, as once in the hills I had waited to carry Indian tourists' luggage.

These trips to the supermarket were my only outings, and I was always glad to get back to the apartment. The work there was light. I watched a lot of television and my English improved. I grew to like certain commercials very much. It was in these commercials I saw the Americans whom in real life I so seldom saw and knew only by their gas-lamps. Up there in the apartment, with a view of the white domes and towers and greenery of the famous city, I entered the homes of the Americans and saw them cleaning those homes. I saw them cleaning floors and dishes. I saw them buying clothes and cleaning clothes, buying motor cars and cleaning motor cars. I saw them cleaning, cleaning.

The effect of all this television on me was curious. If by some chance I saw an American on the street I tried to fit him or her into the commercials; and I felt I had caught the person in an interval between his television duties. So to some extent Americans have remained to me, as people not quite real, as people temporarily absent from television.

Sometimes a *hubshi* came on the screen, not to talk of *hubshi* things, but to do a little cleaning of his own. That wasn't the same. He was too different from the *hubshi* I saw on the street and I knew he was an actor. I knew that his television duties were only make-believe and that he would soon have to return to the street.

One day at the supermarket, when the *hubshi* girl took my money, she sniffed and said, "You always smell sweet, baby."

She was friendly, and I was at last able to clear up that mystery, of my smell. It was the poor country weed I smoked. It was a peasant taste of which I was slightly ashamed, to tell the truth; but the cashier was encouraging. As it happened, I had brought a quantity of the weed with me from Bombay in one of my bundles, together with a hundred razor blades, believing both weed and blades to be purely Indian things. I made an offering to the girl. In return she taught me a few words of English. "Me black and

beautiful"[4] was the first thing she taught me. Then she pointed to the policeman with the gun outside and taught me: "He pig."

My English lessons were taken a stage further by the *hubshi* maid who worked for someone on our floor in the apartment block. She too was attracted by my smell, but I soon began to feel that she was also attracted by my smallness and strangeness. She herself was a big woman, broad in the face, with high cheeks and bold eyes and lips that were full but not pendulous. Her largeness disturbed me; I found it better to concentrate on her face. She misunderstood; there were times when she frolicked with me in a violent way. I didn't like it, because I couldn't fight her off as well as I would have liked and because in spite of myself I was fascinated by her appearance. Her smell mixed with the perfumes she used could have made me forget myself.

She was always coming into the apartment. She disturbed me while I was watching the Americans on television. I feared the smell she left behind. Sweat, perfume, my own weed: the smells lay thick in the room, and I prayed to the bronze gods my employer had installed as living-room ornaments that I would not be dishonoured. Dishonoured, I say; and I know that this might seem strange to people over here, who have permitted the *hubshi* to settle among them in such large numbers and must therefore esteem them in certain ways. But in our country we frankly do not care for the *hubshi.* It is written in our books, both holy and not so holy, that it is indecent and wrong for a man of our blood to embrace the *hubshi* woman. To be dishonoured in this life, to be born a cat or a monkey or a *hubshi* in the next!

But I was falling. Was it idleness and solitude? I was found attractive: I wanted to know why. I began to go to the bathroom of the apartment simply to study my face in the mirror. I cannot easily believe it myself now, but in Bombay a week or a month could pass without my looking in the mirror; then it wasn't to consider my looks but to check whether the barber had cut off too much hair or whether a pimple was about to burst. Slowly I made a discovery. My face was handsome. I had never thought of myself in this way. I had

thought of myself as unnoticeable, with features that served as identification alone.

The discovery of my good looks brought its strains. I became obsessed with my appearance, with a wish to see myself. It was like an illness. I would be watching television, for instance, and I would be surprised by the thought: are you as handsome as that man? I would have to get up and go to the bathroom and look in the mirror.

I thought back to the time when these matters hadn't interested me, and I saw how ragged I must have looked, on the aeroplane, in the airport, in that café for bare feet, with the rough and dirty clothes I wore, without doubt or question, as clothes befitting a servant. I was choked with shame. I saw, too, how good people in Washington had been, to have seen me in rags and yet to have taken me for a man.

I was glad I had a place to hide. I had thought of myself as a prisoner. Now I was glad I had so little of Washington to cope with: the apartment, my cupboard, the television set, my employer, the walk to the supermarket, the *hubshi* woman. And one day I found I no longer knew whether I wanted to go back to Bombay. Up there, in the apartment, I no longer knew what I wanted to do.

I became more careful of my appearance. There wasn't much I could do. I bought laces for my old black shoes, socks, a belt. Then some money came my way. I had understood that the weed I smoked was of value to the *hubshi* and the bare feet; I disposed of what I had, disadvantageously as I now know, through the *hubshi* girl at the supermarket. I got just under two hundred dollars. Then, as anxiously as I had got rid of my weed, I went out and bought some clothes.

I still have the things I bought that morning. A green hat, a green suit. The suit was always too big for me. Ignorance, inexperience; but I also remember the feeling of presumption. The salesman wanted to talk, to do his job. I didn't want to listen. I took the first suit he showed me and went into the cubicle and changed. I couldn't think about size and fit. When I considered all that cloth and

all that tailoring I was proposing to adorn my simple body with, that body that needed so little, I felt I was asking to be destroyed. I changed back quickly, went out of the cubicle and said I would take the green suit. The salesman began to talk; I cut him short; I asked for a hat. When I got back to the apartment I felt quite weak and had to lie down for a while in my cupboard.

I never hung the suit up. Even in the shop, even while counting out the precious dollars, I had known it was a mistake. I kept the suit folded in the box with all its pieces of tissue paper. Three or four times I put it on and walked about the apartment and sat down on chairs and lit cigarettes and crossed my legs, practising. But I couldn't bring myself to wear the suit out of doors. Later I wore the pants, but never the jacket. I never bought another suit; I soon began wearing the sort of clothes I wear today, pants with some sort of zippered jacket.

Once I had had no secrets from my employer; it was so much simpler not to have secrets. But some instinct told me now it would be better not to let him know about the green suit or the few dollars I had, just as instinct had already told me I should keep my growing knowledge of English to myself.

Once my employer had been to me only a presence. I used to tell him then that beside him I was as dirt. It was only a way of talking, one of the courtesies of our language, but it had something of truth. I meant that he was the man who adventured in the world for me, that I experienced the world through him, that I was content to be a small part of his presence. I was content, sleeping on the Bombay pavement with my friends, to hear the talk of my employer and his guests upstairs. I was more than content, late at night, to be identified among the sleepers and greeted by some of those guests before they drove away.

Now I found that, without wishing it, I was ceasing to see myself as part of my employer's presence, and beginning at the same time to see him as an outsider might see him, as perhaps the people who came to dinner in the apartment saw him. I saw that he was a man of my own age, around thirty-five; it astonished me that I hadn't

noticed this before. I saw that he was plump, in need of exercise, that he moved with short, fussy steps; a man with glasses, thinning hair, and that habit, during conversation, of scraping at his moustache with his teeth and nibbling at the inside of his top lip; a man who was frequently anxious, took pains over his work, was subjected at his own table to unkind remarks by his office colleagues; a man who looked as uneasy in Washington as I felt, who acted as cautiously as I had learned to act.

I remember an American who came to dinner. He looked at the pieces of sculpture in the apartment and said he had himself brought back a whole head from one of our ancient temples; he had got the guide to hack it off.

I could see that my employer was offended. He said, "But that's illegal."

"That's why I had to give the guide two dollars. If I had a bottle of whisky he would have pulled down the whole temple for me."

My employer's face went blank. He continued to do his duties as host but he was unhappy throughout the dinner. I grieved for him.

Afterwards he knocked on my cupboard. I knew he wanted to talk. I was in my underclothes but I didn't feel underdressed, with the American gone. I stood in the door of my cupboard; my employer paced up and down the small kitchen; the apartment felt sad.

"Did you hear that person, Santosh?"

I pretended I hadn't understood, and when he explained I tried to console him. I said, "Sahib, but we know these people are Franks[5] and barbarians."

"They are malicious people, Santosh. They think that because we are a poor country we are all the same. They think an official in Government is just the same as some poor guide scraping together a few rupees to keep body and soul together, poor fellow."

I saw that he had taken the insult only in a personal way, and I was disappointed. I thought he had been thinking of the temple.

A few days later I had my adventure. The *hubshi* woman came in, moving among my employer's ornaments like a bull. I was greatly provoked. The smell was too much; so was the sight of her armpits. I fell. She dragged me down on the couch, on the saffron spread which was one of my employer's nicest pieces of Punjabi folk-weaving. I saw the moment, helplessly, as one of dishonour. I saw her as Kali,[6] goddess of death and destruction, coal-black, with a red tongue and white eyeballs and many powerful arms. I expected her to be wild and fierce; but she added insult to injury by being very playful, as though, because I was small and strange, the act was not real. She laughed all the time. I would have liked to withdraw, but the act took over and completed itself. And then I felt dreadful.

I wanted to be forgiven, I wanted to be cleansed, I wanted her to go. Nothing frightened me more than the way she had ceased to be a visitor in the apartment and behaved as though she possessed it. I looked at the sculpture and the fabrics and thought of my poor employer, suffering in his office somewhere.

I bathed and bathed afterwards. The smell would not leave me. I fancied that the woman's oil was still on that poor part of my poor body. It occurred to me to rub it down with half a lemon. Penance and cleansing; but it didn't hurt as much as I expected, and I extended the penance by rolling about naked on the floor of the bathroom and the sitting-room and howling. At last the tears came, real tears, and I was comforted.

It was cool in the apartment; the air-conditioning always hummed; but I could see that it was hot outside, like one of our own summer days in the hills. The urge came upon me to dress as I might have done in my village on a religious occasion. In one of my bundles I had a dhoti[7]-length of new cotton, a gift from the tailor's bearer that I had never used. I draped this around my waist and between my legs, lit incense sticks, sat down cross-legged on the floor and tried to meditate and become still. Soon I began to feel hungry. That made me happy; I decided to fast.

Unexpectedly my employer came in. I didn't mind being caught in the attitude and garb of prayer; it could have been so much worse. But I wasn't expecting him till late afternoon.

"Santosh, what has happened?"

Pride got the better of me. I said, "Sahib, it is what I do from time to time."

But I didn't find merit in his eyes. He was far too agitated to notice me properly. He took off his lightweight fawn jacket, dropped it on the saffron spread, went to the refrigerator and drank two tumblers of orange juice, one after the other. Then he looked out at the view, scraping at his moustache.

"Oh, my poor Santosh, what are we doing in this place? Why do we have to come here?"

I looked with him. I saw nothing unusual. The wide window showed the colours of the hot day: the pale-blue sky, the white, almost colourless, domes of famous buildings rising out of dead-green foliage; the untidy roofs of apartment blocks where on Saturday and Sunday mornings people sunbathed; and, below, the fronts and backs of houses on the tree-lined street down which I walked to the supermarket.

My employer turned off the air-conditioning and all noise was absent from the room. An instant later I began to hear the noises outside: sirens far and near. When my employer slid the window open the roar of the disturbed city rushed into the room. He closed the window and there was near-silence again. Not far from the supermarket I saw black smoke, uncurling, rising, swiftly turning colourless. This was not the smoke which some of the apartment blocks gave off all day. This was the smoke of a real fire.

"The *hubshi* have gone wild, Santosh. They are burning down Washington."

I didn't mind at all. Indeed, in my mood of prayer and repentance, the news was even welcome. And it was with a feeling of release that I watched and heard the city burn that afternoon and watched it burn that night. I watched it burn again and again on television; and I watched it burn in the morning. It burned like a

famous city and I didn't want it to stop burning. I wanted the fire to spread and spread and I wanted everything in the city, even the apartment block, even the apartment, even myself, to be destroyed and consumed. I wanted escape to be impossible; I wanted the very idea of escape to become absurd. At every sign that the burning was going to stop I felt disappointed and let down.

For four days my employer and I stayed in the apartment and watched the city burn. The television continued to show us what we could see and what, whenever we slid the window back, we could hear. Then it was over. The view from our window hadn't changed. The famous buildings stood; the trees remained. But for the first time since I had understood that I was a prisoner I found that I wanted to be out of the apartment and in the streets.

The destruction lay beyond the supermarket. I had never gone into this part of the city before, and it was strange to walk in those long wide streets for the first time, to see trees and houses and shops and advertisements, everything like a real city, and then to see that every signboard on every shop was burnt or stained with smoke, that the shops themselves were black and broken, that flames had burst through some of the upper windows and scorched the red bricks. For mile after mile it was like that. There were *hubshi* groups about, and at first when I passed them I pretended to be busy, minding my own business, not at all interested in the ruins. But they smiled at me and I found I was smiling back. Happiness was on the faces of the *hubshi.* They were like people amazed they could do so much, that so much lay in their power. They were like people on holiday. I shared their exhilaration.

The idea of escape was a simple one, but it hadn't occurred to me before. When I adjusted to my imprisonment I had wanted only to get away from Washington and to return to Bombay. But then I had become confused. I had looked in the mirror and seen myself, and I knew it wasn't possible for me to return to Bombay to the sort of job I had had and the life I had lived. I couldn't easily become part of someone else's presence again. Those evening chats on the

pavement, those morning walks: happy times, but they were like the happy times of childhood: I didn't want them to return.

I had taken, after the fire, to going for long walks in the city. And one day, when I wasn't even thinking of escape, when I was just enjoying the sights and my new freedom of movement, I found myself in one of those leafy streets where private houses had been turned into business premises. I saw a fellow countryman superintending the raising of a signboard on his gallery. The signboard told me that the building was a restaurant, and I assumed that the man in charge was the owner. He looked worried and slightly ashamed, and he smiled at me. This was unusual, because the Indians I had seen on the streets of Washington pretended they hadn't seen me; they made me feel that they didn't like the competition of my presence or didn't want me to start asking them difficult questions.

I complimented the worried man on his signboard and wished him good luck in his business. He was a small man of about fifty and he was wearing a double-breasted suit with old-fashioned wide lapels. He had dark hollows below his eyes and he looked as though he had recently lost a little weight. I could see that in our country he had been a man of some standing, not quite the sort of person who would go into the restaurant business. I felt at one with him. He invited me in to look around, asked my name and gave his. It was Priya.

Just past the gallery was the loveliest and richest room I had ever seen. The wallpaper was like velvet; I wanted to pass my hand over it. The brass lamps that hung from the ceiling were in a lovely cut-out pattern and the bulbs were of many colours. Priya looked with me, and the hollows under his eyes grew darker, as though my admiration was increasing his worry at his extravagance. The restaurant hadn't yet opened for customers and on a shelf in one corner I saw Priya's collection of good-luck objects: a brass plate with a heap of uncooked rice, for prosperity; a little copybook and a little diary pencil, for good luck with the accounts; a little clay lamp, for general good luck.

"What do you think, Santosh? You think it will be all right?"

"It is bound to be all right, Priya."

"But I have enemies, you know, Santosh. The Indian restaurant people are not going to appreciate me. All mine, you know, Santosh. Cash paid. No mortgage or anything like that. I don't believe in mortgages. Cash or nothing."

I understood him to mean that he had tried to get a mortgage and failed, and was anxious about money.

"But what are you doing here, Santosh? You used to be in Government or something?"

"You could say that, Priya."

"Like me. They have a saying here. If you can't beat them, join them. I joined them. They are still beating me." He sighed and spread his arms on the top of the red wall-seat. "Ah, Santosh, why do we do it? Why don't we renounce and go and meditate on the riverbank?" He waved about the room. "The yemblems[8] of the world, Santosh. Just yemblems."

I didn't know the English word he used, but I understood its meaning; and for a moment it was like being back in Bombay, exchanging stories and philosophies with the tailor's bearer and others in the evening.

"But I am forgetting, Santosh. You will have some tea or coffee or something?"

I shook my head from side to side to indicate that I was agreeable, and he called out in a strange harsh language to someone behind the kitchen door.

"Yes, Santosh. Yem-*blems*!" And he sighed and slapped the red seat hard.

A man came out from the kitchen with a tray. At first he looked like a fellow countryman, but in a second I could tell he was a stranger.

"You are right," Priya said, when the stranger went back to the kitchen. "He is not of Bharat. He is a Mexican. But what can I do? You get fellow countrymen, you fix up their papers and everything.

And then? Then they run away. Run-run-runaway. Crooks this side, crooks that side, I can't tell you. Listen, Santosh. I was in cloth business before. Buy for fifty rupees that side, sell for fifty dollars this side. Easy. But then. Caftan, everybody wants caftan. Caftan-aftan, I say, I will settle your caftan. I buy one thousand, Santosh. Delays India-side,[9] of course. They come one year later. Nobody wants caftan then. We're not organized, Santosh. We don't do enough consumer research. That's what the fellows at the embassy tell me. But if I do consumer research, when will I do my business? The trouble, you know, Santosh, is that this shopkeeping is not in my blood. The damn thing goes *against* my blood. When I was in cloth business I used to hide sometimes for shame when a customer came in. Sometimes I used to pretend I was a shopper myself. Consumer research! These people make us dance, Santosh. You and I, we will renounce. We will go together and walk beside Potomac and meditate."

I loved his talk. I hadn't heard anything so sweet and philosophical since the Bombay days. I said, "Priya, I will cook for you, if you want a cook."

"I feel I've known you a long time, Santosh. I feel you are like a member of my own family. I will give you a place to sleep, a little food to eat and a little pocket money, as much as I can afford."

I said, "Show me the place to sleep."

He led me out of the pretty room and up a carpeted staircase. I was expecting the carpet and the new paint to stop somewhere, but it was nice and new all the way. We entered a room that was like a smaller version of my employer's apartment.

"Built-in cupboards and everything, you see, Santosh."

I went to the cupboard. It had a folding door that opened outward. I said, "Priya, it is too small. There is room on the shelf for my belongings. But I don't see how I can spread my bedding inside here. It is far too narrow."

He giggled nervously. "Santosh, you are a joker. I feel that we are of the same family already."

Then it came to me that I was being offered the whole room. I was stunned.

Priya looked stunned too. He sat down on the edge of the soft bed. The dark hollows under his eyes were almost black and he looked very small in his double-breasted jacket. "This is how they make us dance over here, Santosh. You say staff quarters and they say staff quarters. This is what they mean."

For some seconds we sat silently, I fearful, he gloomy, meditating on the ways of this new world.

Someone called from downstairs, "Priya!"

His gloom gone, smiling in advance, winking at me, Priya called back in an accent of the country, "Hi, Bab!"

I followed him down.

"Priya," the American said, "I've brought over the menus."

He was a tall man in a leather jacket, with jeans that rode up above thick white socks and big rubber-soled shoes. He looked like someone about to run in a race. The menus were enormous; on the cover there was a drawing of a fat man with a moustache and a plumed turban, something like the man in the airline advertisements.

"They look great, Bab."

"I like them myself. But what's that, Priya? What's that shelf doing there?"

Moving like the front part of a horse, Bab walked to the shelf with the rice and the brass plate and the little clay lamp. It was only then that I saw that the shelf was very roughly made.

Priya looked penitent and it was clear he had put the shelf up himself. It was also clear he didn't intend to take it down.

"Well, it's yours," Bab said. "I suppose we had to have a touch of the East somewhere. Now, Priya—"

"Money-money-money, is it?" Priya said, racing the words together as though he was making a joke to amuse a child. "But, Bab, how can *you ask me* for money? Anybody hearing you would believe that this restaurant is mine. But this restaurant isn't mine, Bab. This restaurant is yours."

It was only one of our courtesies, but it puzzled Bab and he allowed himself to be led to other matters.

I saw that, for all his talk of renunciation and business failure, and for all his jumpiness, Priya was able to cope with Washington. I admired this strength in him as much as I admired the richness of his talk. I didn't know how much to believe of his stories, but I liked having to guess about him. I liked having to play with his words in my mind. I liked the mystery of the man. The mystery came from his solidity. I knew where I was with him. After the apartment and the green suit and the *hubshi* woman and the city burning for four days, to be with Priya was to feel safe. For the first time since I had come to Washington I felt safe.

I can't say that I moved in. I simply stayed. I didn't want to go back to the apartment even to collect my belongings. I was afraid that something might happen to keep me a prisoner there. My employer might turn up and demand his five thousand rupees. The *hubshi* woman might claim me for her own; I might be condemned to a life among the *hubshi.* And it wasn't as if I was leaving behind anything of value in the apartment. The green suit I was even happy to forget. But.

Priya paid me forty dollars a week. After what I was getting, three dollars and seventy-five cents, it seemed a lot; and it was more than enough for my needs. I didn't have much temptation to spend, to tell the truth. I knew that my old employer and the *hubshi* woman would be wondering about me in their respective ways and I thought I should keep off the streets for a while. That was no hardship; it was what I was used to in Washington. Besides, my days at the restaurant were pretty full; for the first time in my life I had little leisure.

The restaurant was a success from the start, and Priya was fussy. He was always bursting into the kitchen with one of those big menus in his hand, saying in English, "Prestige job, Santosh, prestige." I didn't mind. I liked to feel I had to do things perfectly; I felt I was earning my freedom. Though I was in hiding, and though I worked

every day until midnight, I felt I was much more in charge of myself than I had ever been.

Many of our waiters were Mexicans, but when we put turbans on them they could pass. They came and went, like the Indian staff. I didn't get on with these people. They were frightened and jealous of one another and very treacherous. Their talk amid the biryanis and the pillaus[1] was all of papers and green cards. They were always about to get green cards or they had been cheated out of green cards or they had just got green cards. At first I didn't know what they were talking about. When I understood I was more than depressed.

I understood that because I had escaped from my employer I had made myself illegal in America. At any moment I could be denounced, seized, jailed, deported, disgraced. It was a complication. I had no green card; I didn't know how to set about getting one; and there was no one I could talk to.

I felt burdened by my secrets. Once I had none; now I had so many. I couldn't tell Priya I had no green card. I couldn't tell him I had broken faith with my old employer and dishonoured myself with a *hubshi* woman and lived in fear of retribution. I couldn't tell him that I was afraid to leave the restaurant and that nowadays when I saw an Indian I hid from him as anxiously as the Indian hid from me. I would have felt foolish to confess. With Priya, right from the start, I had pretended to be strong; and I wanted it to remain like that. Instead, when we talked now, and he grew philosophical, I tried to find bigger causes for being sad. My mind fastened on to these causes, and the effect of this was that my sadness became like a sickness of the soul.

It was worse than being in the apartment, because now the responsibility was mine and mine alone. I had decided to be free, to act for myself. It pained me to think of the exhilaration I had felt during the days of the fire; and I felt mocked when I remembered that in the early days of my escape I had thought I was in charge of myself.

The year turned. The snow came and melted. I was more afraid than ever of going out. The sickness was bigger than all the causes. I saw the future as a hole into which I was dropping. Sometimes at night when I awakened my body would burn and I would feel the hot perspiration break all over.

I leaned on Priya. He was my only hope, my only link with what was real. He went out; he brought back stories. He went out especially to eat in the restaurants of our competitors.

He said, "Santosh, I never believed that running a restaurant was a way to God. But it is true. I eat like a scientist. Every day I eat like a scientist. I feel I have already renounced."

This was Priya. This was how his talk ensnared me and gave me the bigger causes that steadily weakened me. I became more and more detached from the men in the kitchen. When they spoke of their green cards and the jobs they were about to get I felt like asking them: Why? Why?

And every day the mirror told its own tale. Without exercise, with the sickening of my heart and my mind, I was losing my looks. My face had become pudgy and sallow and full of spots; it was becoming ugly. I could have cried for that, discovering my good looks only to lose them. It was like a punishment for my presumption, the punishment I had feared when I bought the green suit.

Priya said, "Santosh, you must get some exercise. You are not looking well. Your eyes are getting like mine. What are you pining for? Are you pining for Bombay or your family in the hills?"

But now, even in my mind, I was a stranger in those places.

Priya said one Sunday morning, "Santosh, I am going to take you to see a Hindi movie today. All the Indians of Washington will be there, domestics and everybody else."

I was very frightened. I didn't want to go and I couldn't tell him why. He insisted. My heart began to beat fast as soon as I got into the car. Soon there were no more houses with gas-lamps in the entrance, just those long wide burnt-out *hubshi* streets, now with fresh leaves on the trees, heaps of rubble on bulldozed, fenced-in

lots, boarded-up shop windows, and old smoke-stained signboards announcing what was no longer true. Cars raced along the wide roads; there was life only on the roads. I thought I would vomit with fear.

I said, "Take me back, *sahib*."

I had used the wrong word. Once I had used the word a hundred times a day. But then I had considered myself a small part of my employer's presence, and the word was not servile; it was more like a name, like a reassuring sound, part of my employer's dignity and therefore part of mine. But Priya's dignity could never be mine; that was not our relationship. Priya I had always called Priya; it was his wish, the American way, man to man. With Priya the word was servile. And he responded to the word. He did as I asked; he drove me back to the restaurant. I never called him by his name again.

I was good-looking; I had lost my looks. I was a free man; I had lost my freedom.

One of the Mexican waiters came into the kitchen late one evening and said, "There is a man outside who wants to see the chef."

No one had made this request before, and Priya was at once agitated. "Is he an American? Some enemy has sent him here. Sanitary-anitary, health-ealth, they can inspect my kitchens at any time."

"He is an Indian," the Mexican said.

I was alarmed. I thought it was my old employer; that quiet approach was like him. Priya thought it was a rival. Though Priya regularly ate in the restaurants of his rivals he thought it unfair when they came to eat in his. We both went to the door and peeked through the glass window into the dimly lit dining-room.

"Do you know that person, Santosh?"

"Yes, sahib."

It wasn't my old employer. It was one of his Bombay friends, a big man in Government, whom I had often served in the chambers. He was by himself and seemed to have just arrived in Washington. He had a new Bombay haircut, very close, and a stiff dark suit,

Bombay tailoring. His shirt looked blue, but in the dim multi-coloured light of the dining-room everything white looked blue. He didn't look unhappy with what he had eaten. Both his elbows were on the curry-spotted tablecloth and he was picking his teeth, half closing his eyes and hiding his mouth with his cupped left hand.

"I don't like him," Priya said. "Still, big man in Government and so on. You must go to him, Santosh."

But I couldn't go.

"Put on your apron, Santosh. And that chef's cap. Prestige. You must go, Santosh."

Priya went out to the dining-room and I heard him say in English that I was coming.

I ran up to my room, put some oil on my hair, combed my hair, put on my best pants and shirt and my shining shoes. It was so, as a man about town rather than as a cook, I went to the dining-room.

The man from Bombay was as astonished as Priya. We exchanged the old courtesies, and I waited. But, to my relief, there seemed little more to say. No difficult questions were put to me; I was grateful to the man from Bombay for his tact. I avoided talk as much as possible. I smiled. The man from Bombay smiled back. Priya smiled uneasily at both of us. So for a while we were, smiling in the dim blue-red light and waiting.

The man from Bombay said to Priya, "Brother, I just have a few words to say to my old friend Santosh."

Priya didn't like it, but he left us.

I waited for those words. But they were not the words I feared. The man from Bombay didn't speak of my old employer. We continued to exchange courtesies. Yes, I was well and he was well and everybody else we knew was well; and I was doing well and he was doing well. That was all. Then, secretively, the man from Bombay gave me a dollar. A dollar, ten rupees, an enormous tip for Bombay. But, from him, much more than a tip: an act of graciousness, part of the sweetness of the old days. Once it would have meant so much to me. Now it meant so little. I was saddened and embarrassed. And I had been anticipating hostility!

Priya was waiting behind the kitchen door. His little face was tight and serious, and I knew he had seen the money pass. Now, quickly, he read my own face, and without saying anything to me he hurried out into the dining-room.

I heard him say in English to the man from Bombay, "Santosh is a good fellow. He's got his own room with bath and everything. I am giving him a hundred dollars a week from next week. A thousand rupees a week. This is a first-class establishment."

A thousand chips a week! I was staggered. It was much more than any man in Government got, and I was sure the man from Bombay was also staggered, and perhaps regretting his good gesture and that precious dollar of foreign exchange.

"Santosh," Priya said, when the restaurant closed that evening, "that man was an enemy. I knew it from the moment I saw him. And because he was an enemy I did something very bad, Santosh."

"Sahib."

"I lied, Santosh. To protect you. I told him, Santosh, that I was going to give you seventy-five dollars a week after Christmas."

"Sahib."

"And now I have to make that lie true. But, Santosh, you know that is money we can't afford. I don't have to tell you about overheads and things like that. Santosh, I will give you sixty."

I said, "Sahib, I couldn't stay on for less than a hundred and twenty-five."

Priya's eyes went shiny and the hollows below his eyes darkened. He giggled and pressed out his lips. At the end of that week I got a hundred dollars. And Priya, good man that he was, bore me no grudge.

Now here was a victory. It was only after it happened that I realized how badly I had needed such a victory, how far, gaining my freedom, I had begun to accept death not as the end but as the goal. I revived. Or rather, my senses revived. But in this city what was there to feed my senses? There were no walks to be taken, no idle conversations with understanding friends. I could buy new

clothes. But then? Would I just look at myself in the mirror? Would I go walking, inviting passers-by to look at me and my clothes? No, the whole business of clothes and dressing up only threw me back into myself.

There was a Swiss or German woman in the cake-shop some doors away, and there was a Filipino woman in the kitchen. They were neither of them attractive, to tell the truth. The Swiss or German could have broken my back with a slap, and the Filipino, though young, was remarkably like one of our older hill women. Still, I felt I owed something to the senses, and I thought I might frolic with these women. But then I was frightened of the responsibility. Goodness, I had learned that a woman is not just a roll and a frolic but a big creature weighing a hundred-and-so-many pounds who is going to be around afterwards.

So the moment of victory passed, without celebration. And it was strange, I thought, that sorrow lasts and can make a man look forward to death, but the mood of victory fills a moment and then is over. When my moment of victory was over I discovered below it, as if waiting for me, all my old sickness and fears: fear of my illegality, my former employer, my presumption, the *hubshi* woman. I saw then that the victory I had had was not something I had worked for, but luck; and that luck was only fate's cheating, giving an illusion of power.

But that illusion lingered, and I became restless. I decided to act, to challenge fate. I decided I would no longer stay in my room and hide. I began to go out walking in the afternoons. I gained courage; every afternoon I walked a little farther. It became my ambition to walk to that green circle with the fountain where, on my first day out in Washington, I had come upon those people in Hindu costumes, like domestics abandoned a long time ago, singing their Sanskrit gibberish and doing their strange Red Indian dance. And one day I got there.

One day I crossed the road to the circle and sat down on a bench. The *hubshi* were there, and the bare feet, and the dancers in saris and the saffron robes. It was mid-afternoon, very hot, and no

one was active. I remembered how magical and inexplicable that circle had seemed to me the first time I saw it. Now it seemed so ordinary and tired: the roads, the motor cars, the shops, the trees, the careful policemen: so much part of the waste and futility that was our world. There was no longer a mystery. I felt I knew where everybody had come from and where those cars were going. But I also felt that everybody there felt like me, and that was soothing. I took to going to the circle every day after the lunch rush and sitting until it was time to go back to Priya's for the dinners.

Late one afternoon, among the dancers and the musicians, the *hubshi* and the bare feet, the singers and the police, I saw her. The *hubshi* woman. And again I wondered at her size; my memory had not exaggerated. I decided to stay where I was. She saw me and smiled. Then, as if remembering anger, she gave me a look of great hatred; and again I saw her as Kali, many-armed, goddess of death and destruction. She looked hard at my face; she considered my clothes. I thought: is it for this I bought these clothes? She got up. She was very big and her tight pants made her much more appalling. She moved towards me. I got up and ran. I ran across the road and then, not looking back, hurried by devious ways to the restaurant.

Priya was doing his accounts. He always looked older when he was doing his accounts, not worried, just older, like a man to whom life could bring no further surprises. I envied him.

"Santosh, some friend brought a parcel for you."

It was a big parcel wrapped in brown paper. He handed it to me, and I thought how calm he was, with his bills and pieces of paper, and the pen with which he made his neat figures, and the book in which he would write every day until that book was exhausted and he would begin a new one.

I took the parcel up to my room and opened it. Inside there was a cardboard box; and inside that, still in its tissue paper, was the green suit.

I felt a hole in my stomach. I couldn't think. I was glad I had to go down almost immediately to the kitchen, glad to be busy until midnight. But then I had to go up to my room again, and I was alone. I hadn't escaped; I had never been free. I had been abandoned. I was like nothing; I had made myself nothing. And I couldn't turn back.

In the morning Priya said, "You don't look very well, Santosh."

His concern weakened me further. He was the only man I could talk to and I didn't know what I could say to him. I felt tears coming to my eyes. At that moment I would have liked the whole world to be reduced to tears. I said, "Sahib, I cannot stay with you any longer."

They were just words, part of my mood, part of my wish for tears and relief. But Priya didn't soften. He didn't even look surprised. "Where will you go, Santosh?"

How could I answer his serious question?

"Will it be different where you go?"

He had freed himself of me. I could no longer think of tears. I said, "Sahib, I have enemies."

He giggled. "You are a joker, Santosh. How can a man like yourself have enemies? There would be no profit in it. *I* have enemies. It is part of your happiness and part of the equity of the world that you cannot have enemies. That's why you can run-run-runaway." He smiled and made the running gesture with his extended palm.

So, at last, I told him my story. I told him about my old employer and my escape and the green suit. He made me feel I was telling him nothing he hadn't already known. I told him about the *hubshi* woman. I was hoping for some rebuke. A rebuke would have meant that he was concerned for my honour, that I could lean on him, that rescue was possible.

But he said, "Santosh, you have no problems. Marry the *hubshi.* That will automatically make you a citizen. Then you will be a free man."

It wasn't what I was expecting. He was asking me to be alone forever. I said, "Sahib, I have a wife and children in the hills at home."

"But this is your home, Santosh. Wife and children in the hills, that is very nice and that is always there. But that is over. You have to do what is best for you here. You are alone here. *Hubshi-ubshi*, nobody worries about that here, if that is your choice. This isn't Bombay. Nobody looks at you when you walk down the street. Nobody cares what you do."

He was right. I was a free man; I could do anything I wanted. I could, if it were possible for me to turn back, go to the apartment and beg my old employer for forgiveness. I could, if it were possible for me to become again what I once was, go to the police and say, "I am an illegal immigrant here. Please deport me to Bombay." I could run away, hang myself, surrender, confess, hide. It didn't matter what I did, because I was alone. And I didn't know what I wanted to do. It was like the time when I felt my senses revive and I wanted to go out and enjoy and I found there was nothing to enjoy.

To be empty is not to be sad. To be empty is to be calm. It is to renounce. Priya said no more to me; he was always busy in the mornings. I left him and went up to my room. It was still a bare room, still like a room that in half an hour could be someone else's. I had never thought of it as mine. I was frightened of its spotless painted walls and had been careful to keep them spotless. For just such a moment.

I tried to think of the particular moment in my life, the particular action, that had brought me to that room. Was it the moment with the *hubshi* woman, or was it when the American came to dinner and insulted my employer? Was it the moment of my escape, my sight of Priya in the gallery, or was it when I looked in the mirror and bought the green suit? Or was it much earlier, in that other life, in Bombay, in the hills? I could find no one moment; every moment seemed important. An endless chain of action had brought me to that room. It was frightening; it was burdensome. It was not a time for new decisions. It was time to call a halt.

I lay on the bed watching the ceiling, watching the sky. The door was pushed open. It was Priya.

"My goodness, Santosh! How long have you been here? You have been so quiet I forgot about you."

He looked about the room. He went into the bathroom and came out again.

"Are you all right, Santosh?"

He sat on the edge of the bed and the longer he stayed the more I realized how glad I was to see him. There was this: when I tried to think of him rushing into the room I couldn't place it in time; it seemed to have occurred only in my mind. He sat with me. Time became real again. I felt a great love for him. Soon I could have laughed at his agitation. And later, indeed, we laughed together.

I said, "Sahib, you must excuse me this morning. I want to go for a walk. I will come back about tea time."

He looked hard at me, and we both knew I had spoken truly.

"Yes, yes, Santosh. You go for a good long walk. Make yourself hungry with walking. You will feel much better."

Walking, through streets that were now so simple to me, I thought how nice it would be if the people in Hindu costumes in the circle were real. Then I might have joined them. We would have taken to the road; at midday we would have halted in the shade of big trees; in the late afternoon the sinking sun would have turned the dust clouds to gold; and every evening at some village there would have been welcome, water, food, a fire in the night. But that was a dream of another life. I had watched the people in the circle long enough to know that they were of their city; that their television life awaited them; that their renunciation was not like mine. No television life awaited me. It didn't matter. In this city I was alone and it didn't matter what I did.

As magical as the circle with the fountain the apartment block had once been to me. Now I saw that it was plain, not very tall, and faced with small white tiles. A glass door; four tiled steps down; the desk to the right, letters and keys in the pigeonholes; a carpet to the left, upholstered chairs, a low table with paper flowers in the vase;

the blue door of the swift, silent elevator. I saw the simplicity of all these things. I knew the floor I wanted. In the corridor, with its illuminated star-decorated ceiling, an imitation sky, the colours were blue, grey and gold. I knew the door I wanted. I knocked.

The *hubshi* woman opened. I saw the apartment where she worked. I had never seen it before and was expecting something like my old employer's apartment, which was on the same floor. Instead, for the first time, I saw something arranged for a television life.

I thought she might have been angry. She looked only puzzled. I was grateful for that.

I said to her in English, "Will you marry me?"

And there, it was done.

"It is for the best, Santosh," Priya said, giving me tea when I got back to the restaurant. "You will be a free man. A citizen. You will have the whole world before you."

I was pleased that he was pleased.

So I am now a citizen, my presence is legal, and I live in Washington. I am still with Priya. We do not talk together as much as we did. The restaurant is one world, the parks and green streets of Washington are another, and every evening some of these streets take me to a third. Burnt-out brick houses, broken fences, overgrown gardens; in a levelled lot between the high brick walls of two houses, a sort of artistic children's playground which the *hubshi* children never use; and then the dark house in which I now live.

Its smells are strange, everything in it is strange. But my strength in this house is that I am a stranger. I have closed my mind and heart to the English language, to newspapers and radio and television, to the pictures of *hubshi* runners and boxers and musicians on the wall. I do not want to understand or learn any more.

I am a simple man who decided to act and see for himself, and it is as though I have had several lives. I do not wish to add to these. Some afternoons I walk to the circle with the fountain. I see the dancers but they are separated from me as by glass. Once, when

there were rumours of new burnings, someone scrawled in white paint on the pavement outside my house: *Soul Brother.* I understand the words; but I feel, brother to what or to whom? I was once part of the flow, never thinking of myself as a presence. Then I looked in the mirror and decided to be free. All that my freedom has brought me is the knowledge that I have a face and have a body, that I must feed this body and clothe this body for a certain number of years. Then it will be over.

1971

Endnotes

- Note 1: Servant.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Rainy season.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, a toilet.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Temporarily transferred.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Master (Urdu).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Indian currency, at this time worth ten cents.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Evergreen plant, the leaves of which are chewed in the East with areca-nut parings, as a mild stimulant.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: That is, in the Diplomatic Corps.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Derogatory Indian term for Black Africans (Hindustani).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: That is, from the Bata Shoe Company.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Great Hindu deity.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Mixed-race, usually in India, descended from or born to an Indian mother and a European father.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See the 1960s slogan "Black is Beautiful."Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Here, foreigners of Western origin.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Great Hindu deity.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Loincloth (Hindi).Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Emblems.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In India. “Caftan”: long loose tunic or shirt (Turkish).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: “Biryanis” and “pillaus”: Indian rice dishes.Return to reference 1

WOLE SOYINKA
b. 1934

When Wole Soyinka received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986, the first Black African to be so honored, he stood at the forefront of a cadre of writers who shaped African literature in English. While Soyinka is primarily known as a playwright, with some thirty dramatic works to his credit, he has also made significant contributions to the genres of prose fiction, poetry, critical essays, and memoir. Throughout this diverse oeuvre, a number of recurring themes and concerns emerge, among them the responsibility borne by the living for past and future generations; the pathologies of political power and authoritarianism; the formation of an African sense of identity based not on an idealized, mythical past but on fundamental truths embedded in indigenous cultures and cosmologies; and the fusion of Western theatrical traditions with subject matter and dramatic techniques rooted in the folklore and religion of the Yoruba people of West Africa.

As related in his autobiographical *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (1981), Soyinka was steeped in both Yoruba and European cultures and modes of thought from his boyhood in Abeokuta, an outpost of the British Empire in southwest Nigeria, roughly equidistant from Lagos and Ibadan. Although his devoutly Anglican parents ranked among the city's social elite, other family members adhered to ancient Yoruba beliefs and practices. Soyinka's secondary education took place at highly selective institutions in Ibadan patterned after

British public schools and similarly oriented toward producing civil servants in the European mold. It was at University College that the aspiring writer acquired a solid grounding in English literature and wrote his first play, featuring a Yoruba boy who longs to visit the College Zoo. His interest in the theater blossomed when he transferred to the University of Leeds, in northern England, at age twenty. After earning his bachelor's degree in English in 1957, Soyinka moved to London, where for the next two years he worked as a play reader for the adventurous Royal Court Theatre. Rubbing shoulders with the "angry young men" of British theater left a lasting influence on his own decidedly avant-garde conception of dramatic language and technique.

The Nigeria to which Soyinka returned in 1959, a few months before Britain formally relinquished its claim to his homeland, was awash in social and political ferment and impatient to turn a new page in its history. Skeptical by nature, Soyinka cast himself in the role of critic and spoiler: his play *A Dance of the Forest* (1960), ostensibly written in celebration of Nigerian independence, satirized the sanitized, feel-good version of Africa's past put forth by its postcolonial leaders. Six decades later he would return to this theme in his novel *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* (2021), which pillories the self-serving machinations of the ruling class in contemporary Nigeria. Soyinka's outspokenness inevitably brought him into conflict with the authorities. As a consequence of protesting the government's war against the Biafran rebels in 1967, he was detained as a political prisoner for almost two years, an experience that bore fruit in *Poems from Prison* and *The Man Died: Prison Notes* (both 1972). In 1994 he was briefly forced into exile after speaking out against the country's military dictatorship; this is the subject of his memoir *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* (1996).

Despite his long record of political activism, Soyinka eschews overt politicization in his plays and novels. Instead, he positions himself as an exposer of foibles and debunker of myths. In the essay collection *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976), Soyinka

explored the nature of literary truth, a metaphysical reality that he saw as transcending the mundane factuality of day-to-day living. *Death and the King's Horseman,* written one year earlier, offers a metaphysical perspective on a real-life episode from Nigeria's colonial era in which British authorities prevented the ritual suicide of a horseman to a Yoruba king. Despite this precipitating event, Soyinka's preface to the play discouraged readers from misconstruing it as about "the clash of cultures." He resisted the imposition of such a cliché on his work because it implied that cultures met on equal footing. In fact, British officers had occupied Yoruban soil and imposed their political and cultural norms upon a once autonomous society. The culture clash interpretation also overlooked the core encounter of the play between Elesin, the titular protagonist, and the "universe of the Yoruba mind—the world of the living, the dead and the unborn, and the numinous passage which links all: transition."

Death and the King's Horseman (1975) follows a five-act structure that blends aspects of Greek tragedy with the musicality of African drumming and figurative density of Yoruba proverbs. As a play, it continually foregrounds theatricality, role-playing, and performance—of one's duty, of ritual, of another culture, and of gender roles. Elesin is a flawed hero, driven by carnal desire to wed on the very same day that he is expected to commit ritual suicide. The women of the play, particularly Iyaloja, call attention to the impropriety of the decision but are loathe to contradict a man of Elesin's stature. This conflict between sensual pleasure and spiritual duty, internal to the Yoruba community, is interrupted by the officious and culturally obtuse British administrator Simon Pilkings who imprisons Elesin to prevent his suicide. While Pilkings believes he is helping to reform a primitive culture, Soyinka shows how his interference disrupts the cosmic order and thus the play takes its metaphysical turn. For Elesin, ritual suicide is both noble and obligatory: only by sacrificing himself can he ensure that his spirit will be able to accompany his departed master on the path to immortality and prevent him from doing harm to his earthly subjects.

Elesin’s son Olunde—who, like Soyinka, has returned to Nigeria after a period of study in Europe—attempts to restore cosmic order, but sets in motion a series of events that play havoc with the sacred transition between life and death.

Death and the King's Horseman

Characters

PRAISE-SINGER[1]

ELESIN — *Horseman of the King*

IYALOJA — *'Mother'[2] of the market*

SIMON PILKINGS — *District Officer*

JANE PILKINGS — *his wife*

SERGEANT AMUSA

JOSEPH — *houseboy to the Pilkingses*

BRIDE

H.R.H.[3] THE PRINCE

THE RESIDENT

AIDE-DE-CAMP[4]

OLUNDE — *eldest son of Elesin*

DRUMMERS, WOMEN, YOUNG GIRLS, DANCERS AT THE BALL

The play should run without an interval. For rapid scene changes, one adjustable outline set is very appropriate.

Endnotes

- Note 1: Court poet; serves as a trusted advisor to nobility and is the keeper of historical and ancestral memory. Praise songs are an important oral form of African literature.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Leader of the market women.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: His Royal Highness.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Military officer who assists a senior officer.Return to reference 4

1

A passage through a market in its closing stages. The stalls are being emptied, mats folded. A few WOMEN *pass through on their way home, loaded with baskets. On a cloth-stand, bolts of cloth are taken down, display pieces folded and piled on a tray.* ELESIN OBA *enters along a passage before the market, pursued by his* DRUMMERS *and* PRAISE-SINGERS. *He is a man of enormous vitality, speaks, dances and sings with that infectious enjoyment of life which accompanies all his actions.*

PRAISE-SINGER Elesin o! Elesin Oba! Howu![5] What tryst is this the cockerel[6] goes to keep with such haste that he must leave his tail behind?

ELESIN [*slows down a bit, laughing*] A tryst where the cockerel needs no adornment.

PRAISE-SINGER O-oh, you hear that my companions? That's the way the world goes. Because the man approaches a brand-new bride he forgets the long faithful mother of his children.

ELESIN When the horse sniffs the stable does he not strain at the bridle? The market is the long-suffering home of my spirit and the women are packing up to go. That Esu[7]-harassed day slipped into the stewpot while we feasted. We ate it up with the rest of the meat. I have neglected my women.

PRAISE-SINGER We know all that. Still it's no reason for shedding your tail on this day of all days. I know the women will cover you in damask and *alari*[8] but when the wind blows cold from behind, that's when the fowl knows his true friends.

ELESIN Olohun-iyo![9]

PRAISE-SINGER Are you sure there will be one like me on the other side?

ELESIN Olohun-iyo!

PRAISE-SINGER Far be it for me to belittle the dwellers of that place but, a man is either born to his art or he isn't. And I don't know for certain that you'll meet my father, so who is going to sing

these deeds in accents that will pierce the deafness of the ancient ones. I have prepared my going—just tell me: Olohun-iyo, I need you on this journey and I shall be behind you.

ELESIN You're like a jealous wife. Stay close to me, but only on this side. My fame, my honour are legacies to the living; stay behind and let the world sip its honey from your lips.

PRAISE-SINGER Your name will be like the sweet berry a child places under his tongue to sweeten the passage of food. The world will never spit it out.

ELESIN Come then. This market is my roost. When I come among the women I am a chicken with a hundred mothers. I become a monarch whose palace is built with tenderness and beauty.

PRAISE-SINGER They love to spoil you but beware. The hands of women also weaken the unwary.

ELESIN This night I'll lay my head upon their lap and go to sleep. This night I'll touch feet with their feet in a dance that is no longer of this earth. But the smell of their flesh, their sweat, the smell of indigo[1] on their cloth, this is the last air I wish to breathe as I go to meet my great forebears.

PRAISE-SINGER In their time the world was never tilted from its groove, it shall not be in yours.

ELESIN The gods have said No.

PRAISE-SINGER In their time the great wars came and went, the little wars came and went; the white slavers came and went, they took away the heart of our race, they bore away the mind and muscle of our race.[2] The city fell and was rebuilt; the city fell and our people trudged through mountain and forest to found a new home[3] but—Elesin Oba do you hear me?

ELESIN I hear your voice Olohun-iyo.

PRAISE-SINGER Our world was never wrenched from its true course.

ELESIN The gods have said No.

PRAISE-SINGER There is only one home to the life of a river-mussel; there is only one home to the life of a tortoise; there is only one shell to the soul of man; there is only one world to the spirit of our

race. If that world leaves its course and smashes on boulders of the great void,[4] whose world will give us shelter?

ELESIN It did not in the time of my forebears, it shall not in mine.

PRAISE-SINGER The cockerel must not be seen without his feathers.

ELESIN Nor will the Not-I bird[5] be much longer without his nest.

PRAISE-SINGER [*stopped in his lyric stride*] The Not-I bird, Elesin?

ELESIN I said, the Not-I bird.

PRAISE-SINGER All respect to our elders but, is there really such a bird?

ELESIN What! Could it be that he failed to knock on your door?

PRAISE-SINGER [*smiling*] Elesin's riddles are not merely the nut in the kernel[6] that breaks human teeth; he also buries the kernel in hot embers and dares a man's fingers to draw it out.

ELESIN I am sure he called on you, Olohun-iyo. Did you hide in the loft and push out the servant to tell him you were out?

> [ELESIN *executes a brief, half-taunting dance. The* DRUMMER *moves in and draws a rhythm out of his steps.* ELESIN *dances towards the market-place as he chants the story of the Not-I bird, his voice changing dexterously to mimic his characters. He performs like a born raconteur, infecting his retinue with his humour and energy. More* WOMEN *arrive during his recital, including* IYALOJA.]

Death came calling.
Who does not know his rasp of reeds?
A twilight whisper in the leaves before
The great araba[7] falls? Did you hear it?
Not I! swears the farmer. He snaps
His fingers round his head, abandons
A hard-worn harvest and begins
A rapid dialogue with his legs.

'Not I,' shouts the fearless hunter, 'but—
It's getting dark, and this night-lamp
Has leaked out all its oil. I think

It's best to go home and resume my hunt
Another day.' But now he pauses, suddenly
Lets out a wail: 'Oh foolish mouth, calling
Down a curse on your own head! Your lamp
Has leaked out all its oil, has it?'
Forwards or backwards now he dare not move.
To search for leaves and make *etutu*[8]
On that spot? Or race home to the safety
Of his hearth? Ten market-days[9] have passed
My friends, and still he's rooted there
Rigid as the plinth of Orayan.[1]

The mouth of the courtesan[2] barely
Opened wide enough to take a ha'penny *robo*[3]
When she wailed: 'Not I.' All dressed she was
To call upon my friend the Chief Tax Officer.
But now she sends her go-between instead:
'Tell him I'm ill: my period has come suddenly
But not—I hope—my time.'

Why is the pupil crying?
His hapless head was made to taste
The knuckles of my friend the Mallam:[4]
'If you were then reciting the Koran
Would you have ears for idle noises
Darkening the trees, you child of ill omen?'
He shuts down school before its time
Runs home and rings himself with amulets.

And take my good kinsman Ifawomi.
His hands were like a carver's, strong
And true. I saw them
Tremble like wet wings of a fowl
One day he cast his time-smoothed *opele*[5]
Across the divination board.[6] And all because

The suppliant looked him in the eye and asked,
'Did you hear that whisper in the leaves?'
'Not I,' was his reply; 'perhaps I'm growing deaf—
Good-day.' And Ifa spoke no more that day
The priest locked fast his doors,
Sealed up his leaking roof—but wait!
This sudden care was not for Fawomi[7]
But for Osanyin,[8] courier-bird of Ifa's
Heart of wisdom. I did not know a kite[9]
Was hovering in the sky
And Ifa now a twittering chicken in
The brood of Fawomi the Mother Hen.

Ah, but I must not forget my evening
Courier from the abundant palm, whose groan
Became Not I, as he constipated down
A wayside bush. He wonders if Elegbara[1]
Has tricked his buttocks to discharge
Against a sacred grove. Hear him
Mutter spells to ward off penalties
For an abomination he did not intend.
If any here
Stumbles on a gourd of wine, fermenting
Near the road, and nearby hears a stream
Of spells issuing from a crouching form,
Brother to a *sigidi*,[2] bring home my wine,
Tell my tapper[3] I have ejected
Fear from home and farm. Assure him,
All is well.

PRAISE-SINGER In your time we do not doubt the peace of farmstead and home, the peace of road and hearth, we do not doubt the peace of the forest.

ELESIN There was fear in the forest too.
Not-I was lately heard even in the lair

Of beasts. The hyena cackled loud Not I,
The civet[4] twitched his fiery tail and glared:
Not I. Not-I became the answering-name
Of the restless bird, that little one
Whom Death found nesting in the leaves
When whisper of his coming ran
Before him on the wind. Not-I
Has long abandoned home. This same dawn
I heard him twitter in the gods' abode.
Ah, companions of this living world
What a thing this is, that even those
We call immortal
Should fear to die.

IYALOJA But you, husband of multitudes?

ELESIN I, when that Not-I bird perched
Upon my roof, bade him seek his nest again,
Safe, without care or fear. I unrolled
My welcome mat for him to see. Not-I
Flew happily away, you'll hear his voice
No more in this lifetime—You all know
What I am.

PRAISE-SINGER That rock which turns its open lodes
Into the path of lightning. A gay
Thoroughbred whose stride disdains
To falter though an adder[5] reared
Suddenly in his path.

ELESIN My rein is loosened.
I am master of my Fate. When the hour comes
Watch me dance along the narrowing path
Glazed by the soles of my great precursors.
My soul is eager. I shall not turn aside.

WOMEN You will not delay?

ELESIN Where the storm pleases, and when, it directs
The giants of the forest. When friendship summons
Is when the true comrade goes.

WOMEN Nothing will hold you back?
ELESIN Nothing. What! Has no one told you yet?
I go to keep my friend and master company.
Who says the mouth does not believe in
'No, I have chewed all that before?' I say I have.
The world is not a constant honey-pot.
Where I found little I made do with little.
Where there was plenty I gorged myself.
My master's hands and mine have always
Dipped together and, home or sacred feast,
The bowl was beaten bronze, the meats
So succulent our teeth accused us of neglect.
We shared the choicest of the season's
Harvest of yams. How my friend would read
Desire in my eyes before I knew the cause—
However rare, however precious, it was mine.
WOMEN The town, the very land was yours.
ELESIN The world was mine. Our joint hands
Raised houseposts of trust that withstood
The siege of envy and the termites of time.
But the twilight hour brings bats and rodents—
Shall I yield them cause to foul the rafters?
PRAISE-SINGER Elesin Oba! Are you not that man who
Looked out of doors that stormy day
The god of luck[6] limped by, drenched
To the very lice that held
His rags together? You took pity upon
His sores and wished him fortune.
Fortune was footloose this dawn, he replied,
Till you trapped him in a heartfelt wish
That now returns to you. Elesin Oba!
I say you are that man who
Chanced upon the calabash[7] of honour
You thought it was palm wine and
Drained its contents to the final drop.

ELESIN Life has an end. A life that will outlive
Fame and friendship begs another name.
What elder takes his tongue to his plate,
Licks it clean of every crumb? He will encounter
Silence when he calls on children to fulfill
The smallest errand! Life is honour.
It ends when honour ends.

WOMEN We know you for a man of honour.

ELESIN Stop! Enough of that!

WOMEN [*puzzled, they whisper among themselves, turning mostly to* IYALOJA] What is it? Did we say something to give offence? Have we slighted him in some way?

ELESIN Enough of that sound I say. Let me hear no more in that vein. I've heard enough.

IYALOJA We must have said something wrong. [*Comes forward a little.*] Elesin Oba, we ask forgiveness before you speak.

ELESIN I am bitterly offended.

IYALOJA Our unworthiness has betrayed us. All we can do is ask your forgiveness. Correct us like a kind father.

ELESIN This day of all days . . .

IYALOJA It does not bear thinking. If we offend you now we have mortified the gods. We offend heaven itself. Father of us all, tell us where we went astray. [*She kneels, the other women follow.*]

ELESIN Are you not ashamed? Even a tear-veiled
Eye preserves its function of sight.
Because my mind was raised to horizons
Even the boldest man lowers his gaze
In thinking of, must my body here
Be taken for a vagrant's?

IYALOJA Horseman of the King, I am more baffled than ever.

PRAISE-SINGER The strictest father unbends his brow when the child is penitent, Elesin. When time is short, we do not spend it prolonging the riddle. Their shoulders are bowed with the weight of fear lest they have marred your day beyond repair. Speak now in plain words and let us pursue the ailment to the home of remedies.

ELESIN Words are cheap. 'We know you for
A man of honour.' Well tell me, is this how
A man of honour should be seen?
Are these not the same clothes in which
I came among you a full half-hour ago?

[*He roars with laughter and the* WOMEN, *relieved, rise and rush into stalls to fetch rich cloths.*]

WOMEN The gods are kind. A fault soon remedied is soon forgiven. Elesin Oba, even as we match our words with deed, let your heart forgive us completely.

ELESIN You who are breath and giver of my being
How shall I dare refuse you forgiveness
Even if the offence were real.

IYALOJA [*dancing round him. Sings*]
He forgives us. He forgives us.
What a fearful thing it is when
The voyager sets forth
But a curse remains behind.

WOMEN For a while we truly feared
Our hands had wrenched the world adrift
In emptiness.

IYALOJA Richly, richly, robe him richly
The cloth of honour is *alari*
Sanyan[8] is the band of friendship
Boa-skin[9] makes slippers of esteem

WOMEN For a while we truly feared
Our hands had wrenched the world adrift
In emptiness.

PRAISE-SINGER He who must, must voyage forth
The world will not roll backwards
It is he who must, with one
Great gesture overtake the world.

WOMEN For a while we truly feared
Our hands had wrenched the world

In emptiness.

PRAISE-SINGER The gourd you bear is not for shriking.
The gourd is not for setting down
At the first crossroad or wayside grove.
Only one river may know its contents

WOMEN We shall all meet at the great market[1]
We shall all meet at the great market
He who goes early takes the best bargains
But we shall meet, and resume our banter.

[ELESIN *stands resplendent in rich clothes, cap, shawl, etc. His sash is of a bright red* alari *cloth. The* WOMEN *dance round him. Suddenly, his attention is caught by an object off-stage.*]

ELESIN The world I know is good.

WOMEN We know you'll leave it so.

ELESIN The world I know is the bounty
Of hives after bees have swarmed.
No goodness teems with such open hands
Even in the dreams of deities.

WOMEN And we know you'll leave it so.

ELESIN I was born to keep it so. A hive
Is never known to wander. An anthill[2]
Does not desert its roots. We cannot see
The still great womb of the world—
No man beholds his mother's womb—
Yet who denies it's there? Coiled
To the navel of the world is that
Endless cord that links us all
To the great origin. If I lose my way
The trailing cord will bring me to the roots.

WOMEN The world is in your hands.

[*The earlier distraction, a beautiful* YOUNG GIRL, *comes along the passage through which* ELESIN *first made his entry.*]

ELESIN I embrace it. And let me tell you, women—
I like this farewell that the world designed,

Unless my eyes deceive me, unless
We are already parted, the world and I,
And all that breeds desire is lodged
Among our tireless ancestors. Tell me friends,
Am I still earthed in that beloved market
Of my youth? Or could it be my will
Has outleapt the conscious act and I have come
Among the great departed?

PRAISE-SINGER Elesin-Oba why do your eyes roll like a bush-rat who sees his fate like his father's spirit, mirrored in the eye of a snake? And all these questions! You're standing on the same earth you've always stood upon. This voice you hear is mine, Oluhuniyo, not that of an acolyte[3] in heaven.

ELESIN How can that be? In all my life
As Horseman of the King, the juiciest
Fruit on every tree was mine. I saw,
I touched, I wooed, rarely was the answer No.
The honour of my place, the veneration I
Received in the eye of man or woman
Prospered my suit and
Played havoc with my sleeping hours.
And they tell me my eyes were a hawk
In perpetual hunger. Split an iroko[4] tree
In two, hide a woman's beauty in its heartwood[5]
And seal it up again—Elesin, journeying by,
Would make his camp beside that tree
Of all the shades in the forest.

PRAISE-SINGER Who would deny your reputation, snake-on-the-loose in dark passages of the market! Bed-bug who wages war on the mat and receives the thanks of the vanquished! When caught with his bride's own sister he protested—but I was only prostrating myself to her as becomes a grateful in-law. Hunter who carries his powder-horn[6] on the hips and fires crouching or standing! Warrior who never makes that excuse of the whining coward—but how can I go to battle without my trousers?—trouserless or shirtless

it's all one to him. Oka[7]-rearing-from-a-camouflage-of-leaves, before he strikes the victim is already prone! Once they told him, Howu, a stallion does not feed on the grass beneath him: he replied, true, but surely he can roll on it!

WOMEN Ba-a-a-ba O!

PRAISE-SINGER Ah, but listen yet. You know there is the leaf-nibbling grub and there is the cola-chewing beetle; the leaf-nibbling grub lives on the leaf, the cola-chewing beetle lives in the colanut.[8] Don't we know what our man feeds on when we find him cocooned in a woman's wrapper?

ELESIN Enough, enough, you all have cause
To know me well. But, if you say this earth
Is still the same as gave birth to those songs,
Tell me who was that goddess through whose lips
I saw the ivory pebbles of Oya's[9] river-bed.
Iyaloja, who is she? I saw her enter
Your stall; all your daughters I know well.
No, not even Ogun[1]-of-the-farm toiling
Dawn till dusk on his tuber patch
Not even Ogun with the finest hoe he ever
Forged at the anvil could have shaped
That rise of buttocks, not though he had
The richest earth between his fingers.
Her wrapper was no disguise
For thighs whose ripples shamed the river's
Coils around the hills of Ilesi.[2] Her eyes
Were new-laid eggs glowing in the dark.
Her skin . . .

IYALOJA Elesin Oba . . .

ELESIN What! Where do you all say I am?

IYALOJA Still among the living.

ELESIN And that radiance which so suddenly
Lit up this market I could boast
I knew so well?

IYALOJA Has one step already in her husband's home. She is betrothed.

ELESIN [*irritated*] Why do you tell me that?

[IYALOJA *falls silent. The* WOMEN *shuffle uneasily.*]

IYALOJA Not because we dare give you offence Elesin. Today is your day and the whole world is yours. Still, even those who leave town to make a new dwelling elsewhere like to be remembered by what they leave behind.

ELESIN Who does not seek to be remembered?
Memory is Master of Death, the chink
In his armour of conceit. I shall leave
That which makes my going the sheerest
Dream of an afternoon. Should voyagers
Not travel light? Let the considerate traveller
Shed, of his excessive load, all
That may benefit the living.

WOMEN [*relieved*] Ah Elesin Oba, we knew you for a man of honour.

ELESIN Then honour me. I deserve a bed of honour to lie upon.

IYALOJA The best is yours. We know you for a man of honour. You are not one who eats and leaves nothing on his plate for children. Did you not say it yourself? Not one who blights the happiness of others for a moment's pleasure.

ELESIN Who speaks of pleasure? O women, listen!
Pleasure palls. Our acts should have meaning.
The sap of the plantain[3] never dries.
You have seen the young shoot swelling
Even as the parent stalk begins to wither.
Women, let my going be likened to
The twilight hour of the plantain.

WOMEN What does he mean Iyaloja? This language is the language of our elders, we do not fully grasp it.

IYALOJA I dare not understand you yet Elesin.

ELESIN All you who stand before the spirit that dares
The opening of the last door of passage,
Dare to rid my going of regrets! My wish

Transcends the blotting out of thought
In one mere moment's tremor of the senses.
Do me credit. And do me honour.
I am girded for the route beyond
Burdens of waste and longing.
Then let me travel light. Let
Seed that will not serve the stomach
On the way remain behind. Let it take root
In the earth of my choice, in this earth
I leave behind.

IYALOJA [*turns to* WOMEN] The voice I hear is already touched by the waiting fingers of our departed. I dare not refuse.

WOMAN But Iyaloja . . .

IYALOJA The matter is no longer in our hands.

WOMAN But she is betrothed to your own son. Tell him.

IYALOJA My son's wish is mine. I did the asking for him, the loss can be remedied. But who will remedy the blight of closed hands on the day when all should be openness and light? Tell him, you say! You wish that I burden him with knowledge that will sour his wish and lay regrets on the last moments of his mind. You pray to him who is your intercessor to the world—don't set this world adrift in your own time; would you rather it was my hand whose sacrilege[4] wrenched it loose?

WOMAN Not many men will brave the curse of a dispossessed husband.

IYALOJA Only the curses of the departed are to be feared. The claims of one whose foot is on the threshold of their abode surpasses even the claims of blood. It is impiety even to place hindrances in their ways.

ELESIN What do my mothers say? Shall I step
Burdened into the unknown?

IYALOJA Not we, but the very earth says No. The sap in the plantain does not dry. Let grain that will not feed the voyager at his passage drop here and take root as he steps beyond this earth and us. Oh you who fill the home from hearth to threshold with

the voices of children, you who now bestride the hidden gulf and pause to draw the right foot across and into the resting-home of the great forebears, it is good that your loins be drained into the earth we know, that your last strength be ploughed back into the womb that gave you being.

PRAISE-SINGER Iyaloja, mother of multitudes in the teeming market of the world, how your wisdom transfigures you!

IYALOJA [*smiling broadly, completely reconciled*] Elesin, even at the narrow end of the passage I know you will look back and sigh a last regret for the flesh that flashed past your spirit in flight. You always had a restless eye. Your choice has my blessing. [*To the* WOMEN.] Take the good news to our daughter and make her ready. [*Some* WOMEN *go off*.]

ELESIN Your eyes were clouded at first.

IYALOJA Not for long. It is those who stand at the gateway of the great change to whose cry we must pay heed. And then, think of this—it makes the mind tremble. The fruit of such a union is rare. It will be neither of this world nor of the next. Nor of the one behind us. As if the timelessness of the ancestor world and the unborn have joined spirits to wring an issue of the elusive being of passage . . . Elesin!

ELESIN I am here. What is it?

IYALOJA Did you hear all I said just now?

ELESIN Yes.

IYALOJA The living must eat and drink. When the moment comes, don't turn the food to rodents' droppings in their mouth. Don't let them taste the ashes of the world when they step out at dawn to breathe the morning dew.

ELESIN This doubt is unworthy of you Iyaloja.

IYALOJA Eating the awusa[5] nut is not so difficult as drinking water afterwards.

ELESIN The waters of the bitter stream are honey to a man Whose tongue has savoured all.

IYALOJA No one knows when the ants desert their home; they leave the mound intact. The swallow is never seen to peck holes in its

nest when it is time to move with the season. There are always throngs of humanity behind the leave-taker. The rain should not come through the roof for them, the wind must not blow through the walls at night.

ELESIN I refuse to take offence.

IYALOJA You wish to travel light. Well, the earth is yours. But be sure the seed you leave in it attracts no curse.

ELESIN You really mistake my person Iyaloja.

IYALOJA I said nothing. Now we must go prepare your bridal chamber. Then these same hands will lay your shrouds.

ELESIN [*exasperated*] Must you be so blunt? [*Recovers.*] Well, weave your shrouds, but let the fingers of my bride seal my eyelids with earth and wash my body.

IYALOJA Prepare yourself Elesin.

> [*She gets up to leave. At that moment the* WOMEN *return, leading the* BRIDE. ELESIN*'s face glows with pleasure. He flicks the sleeves of his agbada*[6] *with renewed confidence and steps forward to meet the group. As the girl kneels before* IYALOJA, *lights fade out on the scene.*]

Endnotes

- Note 5: Why have you come? (Yoruba).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A young male chicken. "Tryst": a romantic rendezvous.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The Yoruba trickster god; often associated with doubleness, ambivalence, and duplicity. He is also a messenger between the realms of gods and humans.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A rich, woven cloth, brightly coloured [*Soyinka's glossary*]. "Damask": woven patterned fabric with a satiny finish.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Praise-singer.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A deep violet-blue dye obtained from plants; associated with royalty and power.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: A reference to the transatlantic slave trade, which began in Nigeria in the late 15th century (with the complicity of local African rulers), and to the wars between Yoruba kingdoms in the 18th and 19th centuries.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: As it attempted to consolidate its authority in the 16th century, the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo had to rebuild its capital several times.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The space of transition between life and death.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A bird whose chirping sounds as if it is saying "Not I" in Yoruba.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The soft, edible part of a palm nut.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The kapok or silk-cotton tree, cultivated for its cottonlike seed fiber.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Placatory rites or medicine [*Soyinka's glossary*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Considered the equivalent of one week.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: King Orayan was one of the children of Odudawa, the founder of the Yoruba people. According to Yoruba history, a commemorative obelisk, or plinth, was erected in his honor in Ile-Ilfe, the Yoruba ancestral home.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The mistress of a wealthy or high-born man.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A delicacy made from crushed melon seeds, fried in tiny balls [*Soyinka's glossary*]. "Ha'penny": halfpenny, a low-denomination British coin.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Muslim teacher.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: String of beads used in Ifa divination [*Soyinka's glossary*]. "Divination": the art of trying to foretell the future or to discover hidden knowledge through supernatural means.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The carved board on which divination beads are thrown and then interpreted.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Contraction of "Ifawomi," meaning "Ifa watches over me." "Ifa": the Yoruba god of divination.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Patron deity of diviners and medicine men in Yoruba culture.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A bird of prey.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Another name for Esu (see n. 7, p. 865).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A squat, carved figure, endowed with the powers of an incubus [*Soyinka's glossary*]. "Incubus": an imaginary evil spirit that descends on people when they are asleep.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A person whose profession is to tap palm trees for their sap, which is fermented into a wine.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Catlike carnivorous mammal whose glandular secretion is used in making perfume.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Snake.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Possibly another reference to Esu Elegba, the trickster god, who, especially in Caribbean and South American versions, limps because one foot is in the human world and the other in the spiritual world.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Half of a hollow gourd often used to serve food or water.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A richly valued woven cloth [*Soyinka's glossary*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Skin from a large nonvenomous snake that usually kills its victims by constriction and suffocation.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In the afterlife.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A mound of earth formed by a colony of ants in the construction of their underground nests.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An attendant in a religious service.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An African teak, a large tree believed, in Yoruba folklore, to be inhabited by a roguish fairy or spirit.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The heartwood, or inside, of the iroko tree is made up of a variety of colors.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Yoruba hunters carry their gunpowder in the hollowed-out horn of an animal.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Python.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: The caffeinated seed of the cola (kola) nut tree was used as a ritual symbol of welcome.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Goddess of the Niger River, Africa's third-longest waterway, and patron of fishermen and sailors.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: God of iron and war, of hunters, soldiers, and blacksmiths; also considered to be the patron of artists.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A district and town in Oyo, western Nigeria.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A variety of banana, a staple of the tropical regions of Africa.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Disrespect of something held to be sacred.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A climbing plant, also known as Nigerian walnut.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Large flowing robe usually worn by men and often embroidered at the neck and chest.Return to reference 6

2

The verandah of the District Officer's bungalow.[7] *A tango is playing from an old hand-cranked gramophone and, glimpsed through the wide windows and doors which open onto the forestage verandah are the shapes of* SIMON PILKINGS *and his wife,* JANE, *tangoing in and out of shadows in the living-room. They are wearing what is immediately apparent as some form of fancy-dress. The dance goes on for some moments and then the figure of a* 'NATIVE ADMINISTRATION' POLICEMAN[8] *emerges and climbs up the steps onto the verandah. He peeps through and observes the dancing couple, reacting with what is obviously a long-standing bewilderment. He stiffens suddenly, his expression changes to one of disbelief and horror. In his excitement he upsets a flowerpot and attracts the attention of the couple. They stop dancing.*

PILKINGS Is there anyone out there?

JANE I'll turn off the gramophone.

PILKINGS [*approaching the verandah*] I'm sure I heard something fall over. [*The* CONSTABLE *retreats slowly, open-mouthed as* PILKINGS *approaches the verandah.*] Oh it's you Amusa. Why didn't you just knock instead of knocking things over?

AMUSA [*stammers badly and points a shaky finger at his dress*] Mista Prinkin . . . Mista Prinkin . . .

PILKINGS What is the matter with you?

JANE [*emerging*] Who is it dear? Oh, Amusa . . .

PILKINGS Yes it's Amusa, and acting most strangely.

AMUSA [*his attention now transferred to* MRS PILKINGS] Mammadam . . . you too!

PILKINGS What the hell is the matter with you man!

JANE Your costume darling. Our fancy dress.

PILKINGS Oh hell, I'd forgotten all about that. [*Lifts the face mask over his head showing his face. His wife follows suit.*]

JANE I think you've shocked his big pagan heart bless him.

PILKINGS Nonsense, he's a Moslem. Come on Amusa, you don't believe in all this nonsense do you? I thought you were a good Moslem.

AMUSA Mista Pirinkin, I beg you sir, what you think you do with that dress? It belong to dead cult, not for human being.

PILKINGS Oh Amusa, what a let down you are. I swear by you at the club you know—thank God for Amusa, he doesn't believe in any mumbo-jumbo[9] And now look at you!

AMUSA Mista Pirinkin, I beg you, take it off. Is not good for man like you to touch that cloth.

PILKINGS Well, I've got it on. And what's more Jane and I have bet on it we're taking first prize at the ball. Now, if you can just pull yourself together and tell me what you wanted to see me about . . .

AMUSA Sir, I cannot talk this matter to you in that dress. I no fit.

PILKINGS What's that rubbish again?

JANE He is dead earnest too Simon. I think you'll have to handle this delicately.

PILKINGS Delicately my . . . ! Look here Amusa, I think this little joke has gone far enough hm? Let's have some sense. You seem to forget that you are a police officer in the service of His Majesty's Government. I order you to report your business at once or face disciplinary action.

AMUSA Sir, it is a matter of death. How can man talk against death to person in uniform of death? Is like talking against government to person in uniform of police. Please sir, I go and come back.

PILKINGS [*roars*] Now! [AMUSA *switches his gaze to the ceiling suddenly, remains mute.*]

JANE Oh Amusa, what is there to be scared of in the costume? You saw it confiscated last month from those *egungun*[1] men who were creating trouble in town. You helped arrest the cult leaders yourself—if the juju[2] didn't harm you at the time how could it possibly harm you now? And merely by looking at it?

AMUSA [*without looking down*] Madam, I arrest the ringleaders who make trouble but me I no touch *egungun.* That *egungun* itself, I

no touch. And I no abuse 'am. I arrest ringleader but I treat *egungun* with respect.

PILKINGS It's hopeless. We'll merely end up missing the best part of the ball. When they get this way there is nothing you can do. It's simply hammering against a brick wall. Write your report or whatever it is on that pad Amusa and take yourself out of here. Come on Jane. We only upset his delicate sensibilities by remaining here.

[AMUSA *waits for them to leave, then writes in the notebook, somewhat laboriously. Drumming from the direction of the town wells up.* AMUSA *listens, makes a movement as if he wants to recall* PILKINGS *but changes his mind. Completes his note and goes. A few moments later* PILKINGS *emerges, picks up the pad and reads.*]

PILKINGS Jane!

JANE [*from the bedroom*] Coming darling. Nearly ready.

PILKINGS Never mind being ready, just listen to this.

JANE What is it?

PILKINGS Amusa's report. Listen. 'I have to report that it come to my information that one prominent chief, namely, the Elesin Oba, is to commit death tonight as a result of native custom. Because this is criminal offence I await further instruction at charge office. Sergeant Amusa.'

[JANE *comes out onto the verandah while he is reading.*]

JANE Did I hear you say commit death?

PILKINGS Obviously he means murder.

JANE You mean a ritual murder?

PILKINGS Must be. You think you've stamped it all out but it's always lurking under the surface somewhere.

JANE Oh. Does it mean we are not getting to the ball at all?

PILKINGS No-o. I'll have the man arrested. Everyone remotely involved. In any case there may be nothing to it. Just rumours.

JANE Really? I thought you found Amusa's rumours generally reliable.

PILKINGS That's true enough. But who knows what may have been giving him the scare lately. Look at his conduct tonight.

JANE [*laughing*] You have to admit he had his own peculiar logic. [*Deepens her voice.*] How can man talk against death to person in uniform of death? [*Laughs.*] Anyway, you can't go into the police station dressed like that.

PILKINGS I'll send Joseph with instructions. Damn it, what a confounded nuisance!

JANE But don't you think you should talk first to the man, Simon?

PILKINGS Do you want to go to the ball or not?

JANE Darling, why are you getting rattled? I was only trying to be intelligent. It seems hardly fair just to lock up a man—and a chief at that—simply on the er . . . what is the legal word again?—uncorroborated word of a sergeant.

PILKINGS Well, that's easily decided. Joseph!

JOSEPH [*from within*] Yes master.

PILKINGS You're quite right of course, I am getting rattled. Probably the effect of those bloody drums. Do you hear how they go on and on?

JANE I wondered when you'd notice. Do you suppose it has something to do with this affair?

PILKINGS Who knows? They always find an excuse for making a noise . . . [*Thoughtfully.*] Even so . . .

JANE Yes Simon?

PILKINGS It's different Jane. I don't think I've heard this particular—sound—before. Something unsettling about it.

JANE I thought all bush drumming sounded the same.

PILKINGS Don't tease me now Jane. This may be serious.

JANE I'm sorry. [*Gets up and throws her arms around his neck. Kisses him. The* HOUSEBOY *enters, retreats and knocks.*]

PILKINGS [*wearily*] Oh, come in Joseph! I don't know where you pick up all these elephantine[3] notions of tact. Come over here.

JOSEPH Sir?

PILKINGS Joseph, are you a christian or not?

JOSEPH Yessir.

PILKINGS Does seeing me in this outfit bother you?

JOSEPH No sir, it has no power.

PILKINGS Thank God for some sanity at last. Now Joseph, answer me on the honour of a christian—what is supposed to be going on in town tonight?

JOSEPH Tonight sir? You mean the chief who is going to kill himself?

PILKINGS What?

JANE What do you mean, kill himself?

PILKINGS You do mean he is going to kill somebody don't you?

JOSEPH No master. He will not kill anybody and no one will kill him. He will simply die.

JANE But why Joseph?

JOSEPH It is native law and custom. The King die last month. Tonight is his burial. But before they can bury him, the Elesin must die so as to accompany him to heaven.

PILKINGS I seem to be fated to clash more often with that man than with any of the other chiefs.

JOSEPH He is the King's Chief Horseman.

PILKINGS [*in a resigned way*] I know.

JANE Simon, what's the matter?

PILKINGS It would have to be him!

JANE Who is he?

PILKINGS Don't you remember? He's that chief with whom I had a scrap some three or four years ago. I helped his son get to a medical school in England, remember? He fought tooth and nail to prevent it.

JANE Oh now I remember. He was that very sensitive young man. What was his name again?

PILKINGS Olunde. Haven't replied to his last letter come to think of it. The old pagan wanted him to stay and carry on some family tradition or the other. Honestly I couldn't understand the fuss he made. I literally had to help the boy escape from close confinement and load him onto the next boat. A most intelligent boy, really bright.

JANE I rather thought he was much too sensitive you know. The kind of person you feel should be a poet munching rose petals in

Bloomsbury.[4]

PILKINGS Well, he's going to make a first-class doctor. His mind is set on that. And as long as he wants my help he is welcome to it.

JANE [*after a pause*] Simon.

PILKINGS Yes?

JANE This boy, he was the eldest son wasn't he?

PILKINGS I'm not sure. Who could tell with that old ram?

JANE Do you know, Joseph?

JOSEPH Oh yes madam. He was the eldest son. That's why Elesin cursed master good and proper. The eldest son is not supposed to travel away from the land.

JANE [*giggling*] Is that true Simon? Did he really curse you good and proper?

PILKINGS By all accounts I should be dead by now.

JOSEPH Oh no, master is white man. And good christian. Black man juju can't touch master.

JANE If he was his eldest, it means that he would be the Elesin to the next king. It's a family thing isn't it Joseph?

JOSEPH Yes madam. And if this Elesin had died before the King, his eldest son must take his place.

JANE That would explain why the old chief was so mad you took the boy away.

PILKINGS Well it makes me all the more happy I did.

JANE I wonder if he knew.

PILKINGS Who? Oh, you mean Olunde?

JANE Yes. Was that why he was so determined to get away? I wouldn't stay if I knew I was trapped in such a horrible custom.

PILKINGS [*thoughtfully*] No, I don't think he knew. At least he gave no indication. But you couldn't really tell with him. He was rather close you know, quite unlike most of them. Didn't give much away, not even to me.

JANE Aren't they all rather close, Simon?

PILKINGS These natives here? Good gracious. They'll open their mouths and yap with you about their family secrets before you can stop them. Only the other day . . .

JANE But Simon, do they really give anything away? I mean, anything that really counts. This affair for instance, we didn't know they still practised that custom did we?

PILKINGS Ye-e-es, I suppose you're right there. Sly, devious bastards.

JOSEPH [*stiffly*] Can I go now master? I have to clean the kitchen.

PILKINGS What? Oh, you can go. Forgot you were still there.

[JOSEPH *goes.*]

JANE Simon, you really must watch your language. Bastard isn't just a simple swear-word in these parts, you know.

PILKINGS Look, just when did you become a social anthropologist, that's what I'd like to know.

JANE I'm not claiming to know anything. I just happen to have overheard quarrels among the servants. That's how I know they consider it a smear.

PILKINGS I thought the extended family system[5] took care of all that. Elastic family, no bastards.

JANE [*shrugs*] Have it your own way.

[*Awkward silence. The drumming increases in volume.* JANE *gets up suddenly, restless.*]

That drumming Simon, do you think it might really be connected with this ritual? It's been going on all evening.

PILKINGS Let's ask our native guide. Joseph! Just a minute Joseph.

[JOSEPH *re-enters*.] What's the drumming about?

JOSEPH I don't know master.

PILKINGS What do you mean you don't know? It's only two years since your conversion. Don't tell me all that holy water nonsense also wiped out your tribal memory.

JOSEPH [*visibly shocked*] Master!

JANE Now you've done it.

PILKINGS What have I done now?

JANE Never mind. Listen Joseph, just tell me this. Is that drumming connected with dying or anything of that nature?

JOSEPH Madam, this is what I am trying to say: I am not sure. It sounds like the death of a great chief and then, it sounds like the wedding of a great chief. It really mix me up.

PILKINGS Oh get back to the kitchen. A fat lot of help you are.

JOSEPH Yes master. [*Goes.*]

JANE Simon . . .

PILKINGS Alright, alright. I'm in no mood for preaching.

JANE It isn't my preaching you have to worry about, it's the preaching of the missionaries who preceded you here. When they make converts they really convert them. Calling holy water nonsense to our Joseph is really like insulting the Virgin Mary before a Roman Catholic. He's going to hand in his notice tomorrow you mark my word.

PILKINGS Now you're being ridiculous.

JANE Am I? What are you willing to bet that tomorrow we are going to be without a steward-boy?[6] Did you see his face?

PILKINGS I am more concerned about whether or not we will be one native chief short by tomorrow. Christ! Just listen to those drums. [*He strides up and down, undecided.*]

JANE [*getting up*] I'll change and make us some supper.

PILKINGS What's that?

JANE Simon, it's obvious we have to miss this ball.

PILKINGS Nonsense. It's the first bit of real fun the European club[7] has managed to organise for over a year, I'm damned if I'm going to miss it. And it is a rather special occasion. Doesn't happen every day.

JANE You know this business has to be stopped Simon. And you are the only man who can do it.

PILKINGS I don't have to stop anything. If they want to throw themselves off the top of a cliff or poison themselves for the sake of some barbaric custom what is that to me? If it were ritual murder or something like that I'd be duty-bound to do something. I can't keep an eye on all the potential suicides in this province. And as for that man—believe me it's good riddance.

JANE [*laughs*] I know you better than that Simon. You are going to have to do something to stop it—after you've finished blustering.

PILKINGS [*shouts after her*] And suppose after all it's only a wedding. I'd look a proper fool if I interrupted a chief on his honeymoon, wouldn't I? [*Resumes his angry stride, slows down.*] Ah well, who can tell what those chiefs actually do on their honeymoon anyway? [*He takes up the pad and scribbles rapidly on it.*] Joseph! Joseph! Joseph! [*Some moments later* JOSEPH *puts in a sulky appearance.*] Did you hear me call you? Why the hell didn't you answer?

JOSEPH I didn't hear master.

PILKINGS You didn't hear me! How come you are here then?

JOSEPH [*stubbornly*] I didn't hear master.

PILKINGS [*controls himself with an effort*] We'll talk about it in the morning. I want you to take this note directly to Sergeant Amusa. You'll find him at the charge office.[8] Get on your bicycle and race there with it. I expect you back in twenty minutes exactly. Twenty minutes, is that clear?

JOSEPH Yes master. [*Going.*]

PILKINGS Oh er . . . Joseph.

JOSEPH Yes master?

PILKINGS [*between gritted teeth*] Er . . . forget what I said just now. The holy water is not nonsense. I was talking nonsense.

JOSEPH Yes master. [*Goes.*]

JANE [*pokes her head round the door*] Have you found him?

PILKINGS Found who?

JANE Joseph. Weren't you shouting for him?

PILKINGS Oh yes, he turned up finally.

JANE You sounded desperate. What was it all about?

PILKINGS Oh nothing. I just wanted to apologise to him. Assure him that the holy water isn't really nonsense.

JANE Oh? And how did he take it?

PILKINGS Who the hell gives a damn! I had a sudden vision of our Very Reverend Macfarlane drafting another letter of complaint to

the Resident about my unchristian language towards his parishioners.

JANE Oh I think he's given up on you by now.

PILKINGS Don't be too sure. And anyway, I wanted to make sure Joseph didn't 'lose' my note on the way. He looked sufficiently full of the holy crusade to do some such thing.

JANE If you've finished exaggerating, come and have something to eat.

PILKINGS No, put it all away. We can still get to the ball.

JANE Simon . . .

PILKINGS Get your costume back on. Nothing to worry about. I've instructed Amusa to arrest the man and lock him up.

JANE But that station is hardly secure Simon. He'll soon get his friends to help him escape.

PILKINGS A-ah, that's where I have out-thought you. I'm not having him put in the station cell. Amusa will bring him right here and lock him up in my study. And he'll stay with him till we get back. No one will dare come here to incite him to anything.

JANE How clever of you darling. I'll get ready.

PILKINGS Hey.

JANE Yes darling.

PILKINGS I have a surprise for you. I was going to keep it until we actually got to the ball.

JANE What is it?

PILKINGS You know the Prince is on a tour of the colonies don't you? Well, he docked in the capital only this morning but he is already at the Residency.[9] He is going to grace the ball with his presence later tonight.

JANE Simon! Not really.

PILKINGS Yes he is. He's been invited to give away the prizes and he has agreed. You must admit old Engleton is the best Club Secretary we ever had. Quick off the mark that lad.

JANE But how thrilling.

PILKINGS The other provincials are going to be damned envious.

JANE I wonder what he'll come as.

PILKINGS Oh I don't know. As a coat-of-arms[1] perhaps. Anyway it won't be anything to touch this.

JANE Well that's lucky. If we are to be presented I won't have to start looking for a pair of gloves. It's all sewn on.

PILKINGS [*laughing*] Quite right. Trust a woman to think of that. Come on, let's get going.

JANE [*rushing off*] Won't be a second. [*Stops.*] Now I see why you've been so edgy all evening. I thought you weren't handling this affair with your usual brilliance—to begin with that is.

PILKINGS [*his mood is much improved*] Shut up woman and get your things on.

JANE Alright boss, coming.

[PILKINGS *suddenly begins to hum the tango to which they were dancing before. Starts to execute a few practice steps. Lights fade.*]

Endnotes

- Note 7: A one-story house generally surrounded by a "verandah," a large covered porch, favored by colonial officials as a protection against the tropical heat. Both words are of Indian (Hindi) origin.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A policeman belonging to a unit charged with the policing of Africans and considered inferior to the regular police.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: An object of superstitious veneration. The term may derive from a West African word for a masked male dancer in religious ceremonies.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Ancestral masquerade [*Soyinka's glossary*]. The masked figures in the masquerade embody the reincarnated spirits of ancestors; they appear at traditional celebrations, festivals, and funerals, and bridge the world of the living and the dead.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Magic, usually associated with an object like an amulet or charm.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Ponderous or clumsy.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A fashionable district in central London associated with literature, art, and high culture.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The domestic system in which the distinction between the nuclear family and other relatives is not strictly maintained.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A domestic servant.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A club reserved for Europeans.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The office in a police station where the names of criminal suspects are recorded.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The governor’s official residence.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Crest.Return to reference 1

3

A swelling, agitated hum of women's voices rises immediately in the background. The lights come on and we see the frontage of a converted cloth stall in the market. The floor leading up to the entrance is covered in rich velvets and woven cloth. The WOMEN *come on stage, borne backwards by the determined progress of Sergeant* AMUSA *and his two* CONSTABLES *who already have their batons out and use them as a pressure against the* WOMEN. *At the edge of the cloth-covered floor however the* WOMEN *take a determined stand and block all further progress of the men. They begin to tease them mercilessly.*

AMUSA I am tell you women for last time to commot my road.[2] I am here on official business.

WOMAN Official business you white man's eunuch? Official business is taking place where you want to go and it's a business you wouldn't understand.

WOMAN [*makes a quick tug at the* CONSTABLE*'s baton*] That doesn't fool anyone you know. It's the one you carry under your government knickers[3] that counts. [*She bends low as if to peep under the baggy shorts. The embarrassed* CONSTABLE *quickly puts his knees together. The* WOMEN *roar.*]

WOMAN You mean there is nothing there at all?

WOMAN Oh there was something. You know that handbell which the whiteman uses to summon his servants . . . ?

AMUSA [*he manages to preserve some dignity throughout*] I hope you women know that interfering with officer in execution of his duty is criminal offence.

WOMAN Interfere? He says we're interfering with him. You foolish man we're telling you there's nothing to interfere with.

AMUSA I am order you now to clear the road.

WOMAN What road? The one your father built?

WOMAN You are a Policeman not so? Then you know what they call trespassing in court. Or—[*Pointing to the cloth-lined steps*]—do

you think that kind of road is built for every kind of feet.

WOMAN Go back and tell the white man who sent you to come himself.

AMUSA If I go I will come back with reinforcement. And we will all return carrying weapons.

WOMAN Oh, now I understand. Before they can put on those knickers the white man first cuts off their weapons.

WOMAN What a cheek! You mean you come here to show power to women and you don't even have a weapon.

AMUSA [*shouting above the laughter*] For the last time I warn you women to clear the road.

WOMAN To where?

AMUSA To that hut. I know he dey dere.

WOMAN Who?

AMUSA The chief who call himself Elesin Oba.

WOMAN You ignorant man. It is not he who calls himself Elesin Oba, it is his blood that says it. As it called out to his father before him and will to his son after him. And that is in spite of everything your white man can do.

WOMAN Is it not the same ocean that washes this land and the white man's land? Tell your white man he can hide our son away as long as he likes. When the time comes for him, the same ocean will bring him back.

AMUSA The government say dat kin' ting[4] must stop.

WOMAN Who will stop it? You? Tonight our husband and father will prove himself greater than the laws of strangers.

AMUSA I tell you nobody go prove anyting tonight or anytime. Is ignorant and criminal to prove dat kin' prove.

IYALOJA [*entering, from the hut. She is accompanied by a group of* YOUNG GIRLS *who have been attending the* BRIDE] What is it Amusa? Why do you come here to disturb the happiness of others.

AMUSA Madame Iyaloja, I glad you come. You know me, I no like trouble but duty is duty. I am here to arrest Elesin for criminal intent. Tell these women to stop obstructing me in the performance of my duty.

IYALOJA And you? What gives you the right to obstruct our leader of men in the performance of his duty?

AMUSA What kin' duty be dat one Iyaloja.

IYALOJA What kin' duty? What kin' duty does a man have to his new bride?

AMUSA [*bewildered, looks at the* WOMEN *and at the entrance to the hut*] Iyaloja, is it wedding you call dis kin' ting?

IYALOJA You have wives haven't you? Whatever the white man has done to you he hasn't stopped you having wives. And if he has, at least he is married. If you don't know what a marriage is, go and ask him to tell you.

AMUSA This no to wedding.

IYALOJA And ask him at the same time what he would have done if anyone had come to disturb him on his wedding night.

AMUSA Iyaloja, I say dis no to wedding.

IYALOJA You want to look inside the bridal chamber? You want to see for yourself how a man cuts the virgin knot?[5]

AMUSA Madam . . .

WOMAN Perhaps his wives are still waiting for him to learn.

AMUSA Iyaloja, make you tell dese women make den no insult me again. If I hear dat kin' insult once more . . .

GIRL [*pushing her way through*] You will do what?

GIRL He's out of his mind. It's our mothers you're talking to, do you know that? Not to any illiterate villager you can bully and terrorise. How dare you intrude here anyway?

GIRL What a cheek, what impertinence!

GIRL You've treated them too gently. Now let them see what it is to tamper with the mothers of this market.

GIRL Your betters dare not enter the market when the women say no!

GIRL Haven't you learnt that yet, you jester in khaki and starch?

IYALOJA Daughters . . .

GIRL No no Iyaloja, leave us to deal with him. He no longer knows his mother, we'll teach him.

[*With a sudden movement they snatch the batons of the two* CONSTABLES. *They begin to hem them in.*]

GIRL What next? We have your batons? What next? What are you going to do?

[*With equally swift movements they knock off their hats.*]

GIRL Move if you dare. We have your hats, what will you do about it? Didn't the white man teach you to take off your hats before women?

IYALOJA It's a wedding night. It's a night of joy for us. Peace . . .

GIRL Not for him. Who asked him here?

GIRL Does he dare go to the Residency without an invitation?

GIRL Not even where the servants eat the left-overs.

GIRL [*in turn. In an 'English' accent*] Well well it's Mister Amusa. Were you invited? [*Play-acting to one another. The older* WOMEN *encourage them with their titters.*]

—Your invitation card please?

—Who are you? Have we been introduced?

—And who did you say you were?

—Sorry, I didn't quite catch your name.

—May I take your hat?

—If you insist. May I take yours? [*Exchanging the* POLICEMEN*'s hats.*]

—How very kind of you.

—Not at all. Won't you sit down?

—After you.

—Oh no.

—I insist.

—You're most gracious.

—And how do you find the place?

—The natives are alright.

—Friendly?

—Tractable.

—Not a teeny-weeny bit restless?

—Well, a teeny-weeny bit restless.

—One might even say, difficult?

—Indeed one might be tempted to say, difficult.
—But you do manage to cope?
—Yes indeed I do. I have a rather faithful ox called Amusa.
—He's loyal?
—Absolutely.
—Lay down his life for you what?
—Without a moment's thought.
—Had one like that once. Trust him with my life.
—Mostly of course they are liars.
—Never known a native to tell the truth.
—Does it get rather close around here?
—It's mild for this time of the year.
—But the rains may still come.
—They are late this year aren't they?
—They are keeping African time.
—Ha ha ha ha
—Ha ha ha ha
—The humidity is what gets me.
—It used to be whisky.
—Ha ha ha ha
—Ha ha ha ha
—What's your handicap[6] old chap?
—Is there racing by golly?
—Splendid golf course, you'll like it.
—I'm beginning to like it already.
—And a European club, exclusive.
—You've kept the flag flying.
—We do our best for the old country.
—It's a pleasure to serve.
—Another whisky old chap?
—You are indeed too too kind.
—Not at all sir. Where is that boy? [*With a sudden bellow.*] Sergeant!
AMUSA [*snaps to attention*] Yessir!

[*The* WOMEN *collapse with laughter.*]

GIRL Take your men out of here.

AMUSA [*realising the trick, he rages from loss of face*] I'm give you warning . . .

GIRL Alright then. Off with his knickers! [*They surge slowly forward.*]

IYALOJA Daughters, please.

AMUSA [*squaring himself for defence*] The first woman wey touch me . . .

IYALOJA My children, I beg of you . . .

GIRL Then tell him to leave this market. This is the home of our mothers. We don't want the eater of white left-overs at the feast their hands have prepared.

IYALOJA You heard them Amusa. You had better go.

GIRL Now!

AMUSA [*commencing his retreat*] We dey go now, but make you no say we no warn you.

GIRL Now!

GIRL Before we read the riot act—you should know all about that.

AMUSA Make we go. [*They depart, more precipitately.*]

[*The* WOMEN *strike their palms across in the gesture of wonder.*]

WOMEN Do they teach you all that at school?

WOMAN And to think I nearly kept Apinke away from the place.

WOMAN Did you hear them? Did you see how they mimicked the white man?

WOMAN The voices exactly. Hey, there are wonders in this world!

IYALOJA Well, our elders have said it: Dada may be weak, but he has a younger sibling who is truly fearless.[7]

WOMAN The next time the white man shows his face in this market I will set Wuraola[8] on his tail.

[*A* WOMAN *bursts into song and dance of euphoria—Tani l'awa o l'ogbeja? Kayi! A l'ogbeja. Omo Kekere l'ogbeja.*[9] *The rest of the* WOMEN *join in, some placing the* GIRLS *on their back like infants, others dancing round them. The dance becomes*

general, mounting in excitement. ELESIN *appears, in wrapper only. In his hands a white velvet cloth folded loosely as if it held some delicate object. He cries out.*]

ELESIN Oh you mothers of beautiful brides! [*The dancing stops. They turn and see him, and the object in his hands.* IYALOJA *approaches and gently takes the cloth from him.*] Take it. It is no mere virgin stain, but the union of life and the seeds of passage. My vital flow, the last from this flesh is intermingled with the promise of future life. All is prepared. Listen! [*A steady drum-beat from the distance.*] Yes. It is nearly time. The King's dog has been killed. The King's favourite horse is about to follow his master. My brother chiefs know their task and perform it well. [*He listens again.*]

[*The* BRIDE *emerges, stands shyly by the door. He turns to her.*]

Our marriage is not yet wholly fulfilled. When earth and passage wed, the consummation is complete only when there are grains of earth on the eyelids of passage. Stay by me till then. My faithful drummers, do me your last service. This is where I have chosen to do my leave-taking, in this heart of life, this hive which contains the swarm of the world in its small compass. This is where I have known love and laughter away from the palace. Even the richest food cloys[1] when eaten days on end; in the market, nothing ever cloys. Listen. [*They listen to the drums.*] They have begun to seek out the heart of the King's favourite horse. Soon it will ride in its bolt of raffia[2] with the dog at its feet. Together they will ride on the shoulders of the King's grooms through the pulse centres of the town. They know it is here I shall await them. I have told them. [*His eyes appear to cloud. He passes his hand over them as if to clear his sight. He gives a faint smile.*] It promises well; just then I felt my spirit's eagerness. The kite makes for wide spaces and the wind creeps up behind its tail; can the kite say less than—thank you, the quicker the better? But wait a while my spirit. Wait.

Wait for the coming of the courier of the King. Do you know, friends, the horse is born to this one destiny, to bear the burden that is man upon its back. Except for this night, this night alone when the spotless stallion will ride in triumph on the back of man. In the time of my father I witnessed the strange sight. Perhaps tonight also I shall see it for the last time. If they arrive before the drums beat for me, I shall tell them to let the Alafin[3] know I follow swiftly. If they come after the drums have sounded, why then, all is well for I have gone ahead. Our spirits shall fall in step along the great passage. [*He listens to the drums. He seems again to be falling into a state of semi-hypnosis; his eyes scan the sky but it is in a kind of daze. His voice is a little breathless.*] The moon has fed, a glow from its full stomach fills the sky and air, but I cannot tell where is that gateway through which I must pass. My faithful friends, let our feet touch together this last time, lead me into the other market with sounds that cover my skin with down yet make my limbs strike earth like a thoroughbred. Dear mothers, let me dance into the passage even as I have lived beneath your roofs. [*He comes down progressively among them. They make way for him, the* DRUMMERS *playing. His dance is one of solemn, regal motions, each gesture of the body is made with a solemn finality. The* WOMEN *join him, their steps a somewhat more fluid version of his. Beneath the* PRAISE-SINGER*'s exhortations the women dirge 'Alẹlẹlẹ, awo mi lọ.*[4]]

PRAISE-SINGER Elesin Alfain, can you hear my voice?

ELESIN Faintly, my friend, faintly.

PRAISE-SINGER Elesin Alafin, can you hear my call?

ELESIN Faintly my king, faintly.

PRAISE-SINGER Is your memory sound Elesin?
Shall my voice be a blade of grass and
Tickle the armpit of the past?

ELESIN My memory needs no prodding but
What do you wish to say to me?

PRAISE-SINGER Only what has been spoken. Only what concerns

The dying wish of the father of all.

ELESIN It is buried like seed-yam in my mind.
This is the season of quick rains, the harvest
Is this moment due for gathering.

PRAISE-SINGER If you cannot come, I said, swear
You'll tell my favourite horse. I shall
Ride on through the gates alone.

ELESIN Elesin's message will be read
Only when his loyal heart no longer beats.

PRAISE-SINGER If you cannot come Elesin, tell my dog.
I cannot stay the keeper too long
At the gate.

ELESIN A dog does not outrun the hand
That feeds it meat. A horse that throws its rider
Slows down to a stop. Elesin Alafin
Trusts no beasts with messages between
A king and his companion.

PRAISE-SINGER If you get lost my dog will track
The hidden path to me.

ELESIN The seven-way crossroads[5] confuses
Only the stranger. The Horseman of the King
Was born in the recesses of the house.

PRAISE-SINGER I know the wickedness of men. If there is
Weight on the loose end of your sash, such weight
As no mere man can shift; if your sash is earthed
By evil minds who mean to part us at the last . . .

ELESIN My sash is of the deep purple *alari*;
It is no tethering-rope. The elephant
Trails no tethering-rope; that king
Is not yet crowned who will peg an elephant—
Not even you my friend and King.

PRAISE-SINGER And yet this fear will not depart from me
The darkness of this new abode is deep—
Will your human eyes suffice?

ELESIN In a night which falls before our eyes

However deep, we do not miss our way.

PRAISE-SINGER Shall I now not acknowledge I have stood
Where wonders met their end? The elephant deserves
Better than that we say 'I have caught
A glimpse of something'. If we see the tamer
Of the forest let us say plainly, we have seen
An elephant.

ELESIN [*his voice is drowsy*]
I have freed myself of earth and now
It's getting dark. Strange voices guide my feet.

PRAISE-SINGER The river is never so high that the eyes
Of a fish are covered. The night is not so dark
That the albino[6] fails to find his way. A child
Returning homewards craves no leading by the hand.
Gracefully does the mask regain his grove at the end of the day . . .
Gracefully. Gracefully does the mask dance
Homeward at the end of the day, gracefully . . .

[ELESIN*'s trance*[7] *appears to be deepening, his steps heavier.*]

IYALOJA It is the death of war that kills the valiant,
Death of water is how the swimmer goes
It is the death of markets that kills the trader
And death of indecision takes the idle away
The trade of the cutlass blunts its edge
And the beautiful die the death of beauty.
It takes an Elesin to die the death of death . . .
Only Elesin . . . dies the unknowable death of death . . .
Gracefully, gracefully does the horseman regain
The stables at the end of day, gracefully . . .

PRAISE-SINGER How shall I tell what my eyes have seen? The Horseman gallops on before the courier, how shall I tell what my eyes have seen? He says a dog may be confused by new scents of beings he never dreamt of, so he must precede the dog to heaven. He says a horse may stumble on strange boulders and be

lamed, so he races on before the horse to heaven. It is best, he says, to trust no messenger who may falter at the outer gate; oh how shall I tell what my ears have heard? But do you hear me still Elesin, do you hear your faithful one?

> [ELESIN *in his motions appears to feel for a direction of sound, subtly, but he only sinks deeper into his trance-dance.*]

Elesin Alafin, I no longer sense your flesh. The drums are changing now but you have gone far ahead of the world. It is not yet noon in heaven; let those who claim it is begin their own journey home. So why must you rush like an impatient bride: why do you race to desert your Olohun-iyo?

> [ELESIN *is now sunk fully deep in his trance, there is no longer sign of any awareness of his surroundings.*]

Does the deep voice of *gbedu*[8] cover you then, like the passage of royal elephants? Those drums that brook no rivals, have they blocked the passage to your ears that my voice passes into wind, a mere leaf floating in the night? Is your flesh lightened Elesin, is that lump of earth I slid between your slippers to keep you longer slowly sifting from your feet? Are the drums on the other side now tuning skin to skin with ours in *osugho*?[9] Are there sounds there I cannot hear, do footsteps surround you which pound the earth like *gbedu*, roll like thunder round the dome of the world? Is the darkness gathering in your head Elesin? Is there now a streak of light at the end of the passage, a light I dare not look upon? Does it reveal whose voices we often heard, whose touches we often felt, whose wisdoms come suddenly into the mind when the wisest have shaken their heads and murmured; It cannot be done? Elesin Alafin, don't think I do not know why your lips are heavy, why your limbs are drowsy as palm oil in the cold of harmattan.[1] I would call you back but when the elephant heads for the jungle, the tail is too small a handhold for the hunter that would pull him back. The sun that heads for the sea no longer heeds the prayers of the farmer. When the river begins to taste the salt of the ocean, we

no longer know what deity to call on, the river-god or Olokun.[2] No arrow flies back to the string, the child does not return through the same passage that gave it birth. Elesin Oba, can you hear me at all? Your eyelids are glazed like a courtesan's, is it that you see the dark groom and master of life? And will you see my father? Will you tell him that I stayed with you to the last? Will my voice ring in your ears awhile, will you remember Olohun-iyo even if the music on the other side surpasses his mortal craft? But will they know you over there? Have they eyes to gauge your worth, have they the heart to love you, will they know what thoroughbred prances towards them in caparisons of honour? If they do not Elesin, if any there cuts your yam with a small knife, or pours you wine in a small calabash, turn back and return to welcoming hands. If the world were not greater than the wishes of Olohun-iyo, I would not let you go . . .

[*He appears to break down.* ELESIN *dances on, completely in a trance. The dirge wells up louder and stronger.* ELESIN*'s dance does not lose its elasticity but his gestures become, if possible, even more weighty. Lights fade slowly on the scene.*]

Endnotes

- Note 2: Get out of my way; literally translated from pidgin English as "come out of my road."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Women's underwear. The reference here is to the khaki shorts won by colonial policemen.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: That kind of thing (pidgin English).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The hymen.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In sports, an advantage given to a less competitive player to level the playing field.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Dada, the mythical king of Oyo and patron god of newborns, is reputed to have abdicated in favor of his fierce younger brother Shango, the god of thunder and lightning in the Yoruba pantheon.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Rich Gold (Yoruba), a common name for a girl.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Who says we haven't a defender? Silence! We have our defenders. Little children are our champions [*Soyinka's translation*].Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Becomes uninteresting or distasteful.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The fiber from raffia palms, used in making skirts for ceremonial masks.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: King or emperor of Oyo.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Night has fallen, the seasoned initiate is leaving.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In Yoruba cosmology, Esu Elegba, the god of confusion and doubleness, is often found at the crossroads.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A person with pale skin resulting from a lack of melanin pigmentation.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A hypnotic condition; in another sense, the word refers to a passageway.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A deep-timbred royal drum [*Soyinka's glossary*].Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Secret 'executive' cult of the Yoruba; its meeting place [*Soyinka's glossary*].Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In West Africa, a dry breeze blows from November to March and carries dust from the Sahara Desert.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: God of the ocean, worshiped by fishermen and sailors.Return to reference 2

A Masque.[3] *The front side of the stage is part of a wide corridor around the great hall of the Residency extending beyond vision into the rear and wings. It is redolent of the tawdry decadence of a far-flung but key imperial frontier. The couples in a variety of fancy-dress are ranged around the walls, gazing in the same direction. The guest-of-honour is about to make an appearance. A portion of the local police brass band with its white conductor is just visible. At last, the entrance of Royalty. The band plays 'Rule Britannia',*[4] *badly, beginning long before he is visible. The couples bow and curtsey as he passes by them. Both he and his companions are dressed in seventeenth-century European costume. Following behind are the* RESIDENT *and his partner similarly attired. As they gain the end of the hall where the orchestra dais begins the music comes to an end. The* PRINCE *bows to the guests. The band strikes up a Viennese waltz and the* PRINCE *formally opens the floor. Several bars later the* RESIDENT *and his companion follow suit. Others follow in appropriate pecking order. The orchestra's waltz rendition is not of the highest musical standard.*

Some time later the PRINCE *dances again into view and is settled into a corner by the* RESIDENT *who then proceeds to select couples as they dance past for introduction, sometimes threading his way through the dancers to tap the lucky couple on the shoulder. Desperate efforts from many to ensure that they are recognised in spite of, perhaps, their costume. The ritual of introductions soon takes in* PILKINGS *and his wife. The* PRINCE *is quite fascinated by their costume and they demonstrate the adaptations they have made to it, pulling down the mask to demonstrate how the* egungun *normally appears, then showing the various press-button controls they have innovated for the face flaps, the sleeves, etc. They demonstrate the dance steps and the guttural*[5] *sounds made by the* egungun, *harass other dancers in the hall,* MRS PILKINGS *playing the 'restrainer*[6] *to* PILKINGS *' manic darts. Everyone is highly entertained, the Royal Party especially who lead the applause.*

At this point a liveried[7] *footman comes in with a note on a salver*[8] *and is intercepted almost absent-mindedly by the* RESIDENT *who takes the note and reads it. After polite coughs he succeeds in excusing the* PILKINGS *from the* PRINCE *and takes them aside. The* PRINCE *considerately offers the* RESIDENT*'s wife his hand and dancing is resumed.*

On their way out the RESIDENT *gives an order to his* AIDE-DE-CAMP.[9] *They come into the side corridor where the* RESIDENT *hands the note to* PILKINGS.

RESIDENT As you see it says 'emergency' on the outside. I took the liberty of opening it because His Highness was obviously enjoying the entertainment. I didn't want to interrupt unless really necessary.

PILKINGS Yes, yes of course, sir.

RESIDENT Is it really as bad as it says? What's it all about?

PILKINGS Some strange custom they have sir. It seems because the King is dead some important chief has to commit suicide.

RESIDENT The King? Isn't it the same one who died nearly a month ago?

PILKINGS Yes sir.

RESIDENT Haven't they buried him yet?

PILKINGS They take their time about these things, sir. The preburial ceremonies last nearly thirty days. It seems tonight is the final night.

RESIDENT But what has it got to do with the market women? Why are they rioting? We've waived that troublesome tax[1] haven't we?

PILKINGS We don't quite know that they are exactly rioting yet sir. Sergeant Amusa is sometimes prone to exaggerations.

RESIDENT He sounds desperate enough. That comes out even in his rather quaint grammar. Where is the man anyway? I asked my aide-de-camp to bring him here.

PILKINGS They are probably looking in the wrong verandah. I'll fetch him myself.

RESIDENT No no you stay here. Let your wife go and look for them. Do you mind my dear . . . ?

JANE Certainly not, your Excellency. [*Goes.*]

RESIDENT You should have kept me informed, Pilkings. You realise how disastrous it would have been if things had erupted while His Highness was here.

PILKINGS I wasn't aware of the whole business until tonight sir.

RESIDENT Nose to the ground Pilkings, nose to the ground. If we all let these little things slip past us where would the empire be eh? Tell me that. Where would we all be?

PILKINGS [*low voice*] Sleeping peacefully at home I bet.

RESIDENT What did you say Pilkings?

PILKINGS It won't happen again sir.

RESIDENT It mustn't Pilkings. It mustn't. Where is that damned sergeant? I ought to get back to His Highness as quickly as possible and offer him some plausible explanation for my rather abrupt conduct. Can you think of one, Pilkings?

PILKINGS You could tell him the truth, sir.

RESIDENT I could? No no no Pilkings, that would never do. What! Go and tell him there is a riot just two miles away from him? This is supposed to be a secure colony of His Majesty, Pilkings.

PILKINGS Yes, sir.

RESIDENT Ah, there they are. No, these are not our native police. Are these the ring-leaders of the riot?

PILKINGS Sir, these are my police officers.

RESIDENT Oh, I beg your pardon officers. You do look a little . . . I say, isn't there something missing in their uniform? I think they used to have some rather colourful sashes. If I remember rightly I recommended them myself in my young days in the service. A bit of colour always appeals to the natives, yes, I remember putting that in my report. Well well well, where are we? Make your report man.

PILKINGS [*moves close to* AMUSA, *between his teeth*] And let's have no more superstitious nonsense from you Amusa or I'll throw you in the guardroom for a month and feed you pork!

RESIDENT What's that? What has pork to do with it?

PILKINGS Sir, I was just warning him to be brief. I'm sure you are most anxious to hear his report.

RESIDENT Yes yes yes of course. Come on man, speak up. Hey, didn't we give them some colourful fez hats with all those wavy things, yes, pink tassels . . .

PILKINGS Sir, I think if he was permitted to make his report we might find that he lost his hat in the riot.

RESIDENT Ah yes indeed. I'd better tell His Highness that. Lost his hat in the riot, ha ha. He'll probably say well, as long as he didn't lose his head. [*Chuckles to himself.*] Don't forget to send me a report first thing in the morning young Pilkings.

PILKINGS No sir.

RESIDENT And whatever you do, don't let things get out of hand. Keep a cool head and—nose to the ground Pilkings. [*Wanders off in the general direction of the hall.*]

PILKINGS Yes, sir.

AIDE-DE-CAMP Would you be needing me sir?

PILKINGS No thanks Bob. I think His Excellency's need of you is greater than ours.

AIDE-DE-CAMP We have a detachment of soldiers from the capital sir. They accompanied His Highness up here.

PILKINGS I doubt if it will come to that but, thanks, I'll bear it in mind. Oh, could you send an orderly with my cloak.

AIDE-DE-CAMP Very good sir. [*Goes.*]

PILKINGS Now sergeant.

AMUSA Sir . . . [*Makes an effort, stops dead. Eyes to the ceiling.*]

PILKINGS Oh, not again.

AMUSA I cannot against death to dead cult. This dress get power of dead.

PILKINGS Alright, let's go. You are relieved of all further duty Amusa. Report to me first thing in the morning.

JANE Shall I come Simon?

PILKINGS No, there's no need for that. If I can get back later I will. Otherwise get Bob to bring you home.

JANE Be careful Simon . . . I mean, be clever.

PILKINGS Sure I will. You two, come with me. [*As he turns to go, the clock in the Residency begins to chime.* PILKINGS *looks at his watch then turns, horror-stricken, to stare at his wife. The same thought clearly occurs to her. He swallows hard. An orderly brings his cloak.*] It's midnight. I had no idea it was that late.

JANE But surely . . . they don't count the hours the way we do. The moon, or something . . .

PILKINGS I am . . . not so sure.

[*He turns and breaks into a sudden run. The two* CONSTABLES *follow, also at a run.* AMUSA, *who has kept his eyes on the ceiling throughout waits until the last of the footsteps has faded out of hearing. He salutes suddenly, but without once looking in the direction of the woman.*]

AMUSA Goodnight madam.

JANE Oh. [*She hesitates.*] Amusa . . . [*He goes off without seeming to have heard.*] Poor Simon . . . [*A figure emerges from the shadows, a young black man dressed in a sober western suit. He peeps into the hall, trying to make out the figures of the dancers.*] Who is that?

OLUNDE [*emerging into the light*] I didn't mean to startle you madam. I am looking for the District Officer.

JANE Wait a minute . . . don't I know you? Yes, you are Olunde, the young man who . . .

OLUNDE Mrs Pilkings! How fortunate. I came here to look for your husband.

JANE Olunde! Let's look at you. What a fine young man you've become. Grand but solemn. Good God, when did you return? Simon never said a word. But you do look well Olunde. Really!

OLUNDE You are . . . well, you look quite well yourself Mrs Pilkings. From what little I can see of you.

JANE Oh, this. It's caused quite a stir I assure you, and not all of it very pleasant. You are not shocked I hope?

OLUNDE Why should I be? But don't you find it rather hot in there? Your skin must find it difficult to breathe.

JANE Well, it is a little hot I must confess, but it's all in a good cause.

OLUNDE What cause Mrs Pilkings?

JANE All this. The ball. And His Highness being here in person and all that.

OLUNDE [*mildly*] And that is the good cause for which you desecrate an ancestral mask?

JANE Oh, so you are shocked after all. How disappointing.

OLUNDE No I am not shocked Mrs Pilkings. You forget that I have now spent four years among your people. I discovered that you have no respect for what you do not understand.

JANE Oh. So you've returned with a chip on your shoulder. That's a pity Olunde. I am sorry.

[*An uncomfortable silence follows.*]

I take it then that you did not find your stay in England altogether edifying.

OLUNDE I don't say that. I found your people quite admirable in many ways, their conduct and courage in this war[2] for instance.

JANE Ah yes, the war. Here of course it is all rather remote. From time to time we have a black-out drill just to remind us that there is a war on. And the rare convoy passes through on its way somewhere or on manoeuvres. Mind you there is the occasional bit of excitement like that ship that was blown up in the harbour.

OLUNDE Here? Do you mean through enemy action?

JANE Oh no, the war hasn't come that close. The captain did it himself. I don't quite understand it really. Simon tried to explain. The ship had to be blown up because it had become dangerous to the other ships, even to the city itself. Hundreds of the coastal population would have died.

OLUNDE Maybe it was loaded with ammunition and had caught fire. Or some of those lethal gases they've been experimenting on.

JANE Something like that. The captain blew himself up with it. Deliberately. Simon said someone had to remain on board to light the fuse.

OLUNDE It must have been a very short fuse.

JANE [*shrugs*] I don't know much about it. Only that there was no other way to save lives. No time to devise anything else. The captain took the decision and carried it out.

OLUNDE Yes . . . I quite believe it. I met men like that in England.

JANE Oh just look at me! Fancy welcoming you back with such morbid news. Stale[3] too. It was at least six months ago.

OLUNDE I don't find it morbid at all. I find it rather inspiring. It is an affirmative commentary on life.

JANE What is?

OLUNDE That captain's self-sacrifice.

JANE Nonsense. Life should never be thrown deliberately away.

OLUNDE And the innocent people round the harbour?

JANE Oh, how does one know? The whole thing was probably exaggerated anyway.

OLUNDE That was a risk the captain couldn't take. But please Mrs Pilkings, do you think you could find your husband for me? I have to talk to him.

JANE Simon? Oh. [*As she recollects for the first time the full significance of* OLUNDE*'s presence.*] Simon is . . . there is a little problem in town. He was sent for. But . . . when did you arrive? Does Simon know you're here?

OLUNDE [*suddenly earnest*] I need your help Mrs Pilkings. I've always found you somewhat more understanding than your husband. Please find him for me and when you do, you must help me talk to him.

JANE I'm afraid I don't quite . . . follow you. Have you seen my husband already?

OLUNDE I went to your house. Your houseboy told me you were here. [*He smiles.*] He even told me how I would recognise you and Mr Pilkings.

JANE Then you must know what my husband is trying to do for you.

OLUNDE For me?

JANE For you. For your people. And to think he didn't even know you were coming back! But how do you happen to be here? Only

this evening we were talking about you. We thought you were still four thousand miles away.

OLUNDE I was sent a cable.

JANE A cable? Who did? Simon? The business of your father didn't begin till tonight.

OLUNDE A relation sent it weeks ago, and it said nothing about my father. All it said was, Our King is dead. But I knew I had to return home at once so as to bury my father. I understood that.

JANE Well, thank God you don't have to go through that agony. Simon is going to stop it.

OLUNDE That's why I want to see him. He's wasting his time. And since he has been so helpful to me I don't want him to incur the enmity of our people. Especially over nothing.

JANE [*sits down open-mouthed*] You . . . you Olunde!

OLUNDE Mrs Pilkings, I came home to bury my father. As soon as I heard the news I booked my passage home. In fact we were fortunate. We travelled in the same convoy as your Prince, so we had excellent protection.

JANE But you don't think your father is also entitled to whatever protection is available to him?

OLUNDE How can I make you understand? He *has* protection. No one can undertake what he does tonight without the deepest protection the mind can conceive. What can you offer him in place of his peace of mind, in place of the honour and veneration of his own people? What would you think of your Prince if he refused to accept the risk of losing his life on this voyage? This . . . showing-the-flag tour of colonial possessions.

JANE I see. So it isn't just medicine you studied in England.

OLUNDE Yet another error into which your people fall. You believe that everything which appears to make sense was learnt from you.

JANE Not so fast Olunde. You have learnt to argue I can tell that, but I never said you made sense. However clearly you try to put it, it is still a barbaric custom. It is even worse—it's feudal![4] The king dies and a chieftain must be buried with him. How feudalistic can you get!

OLUNDE [*waves his hand towards the background. The* PRINCE *is dancing past again—to a different step—and all the guests are bowing and curtseying as he passes*] And this? Even in the midst of a devastating war, look at that. What name would you give to that?

JANE Therapy, British style. The preservation of sanity in the midst of chaos.

OLUNDE Others would call it decadence. However, it doesn't really interest me. You white races know how to survive; I've seen proof of that. By all logical and natural laws this war should end with all the white races wiping out one another, wiping out their so-called civilisation for all time and reverting to a state of primitivism the like of which has so far only existed in your imagination when you thought of us. I thought all that at the beginning. Then I slowly realised that your greatest art is the art of survival. But at least have the humility to let others survive in their own way.

JANE Through ritual suicide?

OLUNDE Is that worse than mass suicide? Mrs Pilkings, what do you call what those young men are sent to do by their generals in this war? Of course you have also mastered the art of calling things by names which don't remotely describe them.

JANE You talk! You people with your long-winded, roundabout way of making conversation.

OLUNDE Mrs Pilkings, whatever we do, we never suggest that a thing is the opposite of what it really is. In your newsreels[5] I heard defeats, thorough, murderous defeats described as strategic victories. No wait, it wasn't just on your newsreels. Don't forget I was attached to hospitals all the time. Hordes of your wounded passed through those wards. I spoke to them. I spent long evenings by their bedsides while they spoke terrible truths of the realities of that war. I know now how history is made.

JANE But surely, in a war of this nature, for the morale of the nation you must expect . . .

OLUNDE That a disaster beyond human reckoning be spoken of as a triumph? No. I mean, is there no mourning in the home of the

bereaved that such blasphemy is permitted?

JANE [*after a moment's pause*] Perhaps I can understand you now. The time we picked for you was not really one for seeing us at our best.

OLUNDE Don't think it was just the war. Before that even started I had plenty of time to study your people. I saw nothing, finally, that gave you the right to pass judgement on other peoples and their ways. Nothing at all.

JANE [*hesitantly*] Was it the . . . colour thing? I know there is some discrimination.

OLUNDE Don't make it so simple, Mrs Pilkings. You make it sound as if when I left, I took nothing at all with me.

JANE Yes . . . and to tell the truth, only this evening, Simon and I agreed that we never really knew what you left with.

OLUNDE Neither did I. But I found out over there. I am grateful to your country for that. And I will never give it up.

JANE Olunde please . . . promise me something. Whatever you do, don't throw away what you have started to do. You want to be a doctor. My husband and I believe you will make an excellent one, sympathetic and competent. Don't let anything make you throw away your training.

OLUNDE [*genuinely surprised*] Of course not. What a strange idea. I intend to return and complete my training. Once the burial of my father is over.

JANE Oh, please . . . !

OLUNDE Listen! Come outside. You can't hear anything against that music.

JANE What is it?

OLUNDE The drums. Can you hear the changes? Listen.

[*The drums come over, still distant but more distinct. There is a change of rhythm, it rises to a crescendo and then, suddenly, it is cut off. After a silence, a new beat begins, slow and resonant.*]

There, it's all over.

JANE You mean he's . . .

OLUNDE Yes, Mrs Pilkings, my father is dead. His will-power has always been enormous; I know he is dead.

JANE [*screams*] How can you be so callous! So unfeeling! You announce your father's own death like a surgeon looking down on some strange . . . stranger's body! You're just a savage like all the rest.

AIDE-DE-CAMP [*rushing out*] Mrs Pilkings. Mrs Pilkings. [*She breaks down, sobbing.*] Are you all right, Mrs Pilkings?

OLUNDE She'll be all right. [*Turns to go.*]

AIDE-DE-CAMP Who are you? And who the hell asked your opinion?

OLUNDE You're quite right, nobody. [*Going.*]

AIDE-DE-CAMP What the hell! Did you hear me ask you who you were?

OLUNDE I have business to attend to.

AIDE-DE-CAMP I'll give you business in a moment you impudent nigger. Answer my question!

OLUNDE I have a funeral to arrange. Excuse me. [*Going.*]

AIDE-DE-CAMP I said stop! Orderly!

JANE No, no, don't do that. I'm alright. And for heaven's sake don't act so foolishly. He's a family friend.

AIDE-DE-CAMP Well he'd better learn to answer civil questions when he's asked them. These natives put a suit on and they get high opinions of themselves.

OLUNDE Can I go now?

JANE No no don't go. I must talk to you. I'm sorry about what I said.

OLUNDE It's nothing, Mrs Pilkings. And I'm really anxious to go. I couldn't see my father before, it's forbidden for me, his heir and successor, to set eyes on him from the moment of the king's death. But now . . . I would like to touch his body while it is still warm.

JANE You will. I promise I shan't keep you long. Only, I couldn't possibly let you go like that. Bob, please excuse us.

AIDE-DE-CAMP If you're sure . . .

JANE Of course I'm sure. Something happened to upset me just then, but I'm alright now. Really.

[*The* AIDE-DE-CAMP *goes, somewhat reluctantly.*]

OLUNDE I mustn't stay long.

JANE Please, I promise not to keep you. It's just that . . . oh you saw yourself what happens to one in this place. The Resident's man thought he was being helpful, that's the way we all react. But I can't go in among that crowd just now and if I stay by myself somebody will come looking for me. Please, just say something for a few moments and then you can go. Just so I can recover myself.

OLUNDE What do you want me to say?

JANE Your calm acceptance for instance, can you explain that? It was so unnatural. I don't understand that at all. I feel a need to understand all I can.

OLUNDE But you explained it yourself. My medical training perhaps. I have seen death too often. And the soldiers who returned from the front, they died on our hands all the time.

JANE No. It has to be more than that. I feel it has to do with the many things we don't really grasp about your people. At least you can explain.

OLUNDE All these things are part of it. And anyway, my father has been dead in my mind for nearly a month. Ever since I learnt of the King's death. I've lived with my bereavement so long now that I cannot think of him alive. On that journey on the boat, I kept my mind on my duties as the one who must perform the rites over his body. I went through it all again and again in my mind as he himself had taught me. I didn't want to do anything wrong, something which might jeopardise the welfare of my people.

JANE But he had disowned you. When you left he swore publicly you were no longer his son.

OLUNDE I told you, he was a man of tremendous will. Sometimes that's another way of saying stubborn. But among our people, you don't disown a child just like that. Even if I had died before him I would still be buried like his eldest son. But it's time for me to go.

JANE Thank you. I feel calmer. Don't let me keep you from your duties.

OLUNDE Goodnight, Mrs Pilkings.

JANE Welcome home. [*She holds out her hand. As he takes it footsteps are heard approaching the drive. A short while later a woman's sobbing is also heard.*]

PILKINGS [*off*] Keep them here till I get back. [*He strides into view, reacts at the sight of* OLUNDE *but turns to his wife.*] Thank goodness you're still here.

JANE Simon, what happened?

PILKINGS Later Jane, please. Is Bob still here?

JANE Yes, I think so. I'm sure he must be.

PILKINGS Try and get him out here as quickly as you can. Tell him it's urgent.

JANE Of course. Oh Simon, you remember . . .

PILKINGS Yes yes. I can see who it is. Get Bob out here. [*She runs off.*] At first I thought I was seeing a ghost.

OLUNDE Mr Pilkings, I appreciate what you tried to do. I want you to believe that. I can tell you it would have been a terrible calamity if you'd succeeded.

PILKINGS [*opens his mouth several times, shuts it*] You . . . said what?

OLUNDE A calamity for us, the entire people.

PILKINGS [*sighs*] I see. Hm.

OLUNDE And now I must go. I must see him before he turns cold.

PILKINGS Oh ah . . . em . . . but this is a shock to see you. I mean er thinking all this while you were in England and thanking God for that.

OLUNDE I came on the mail boat. We travelled in the Prince's convoy.

PILKINGS Ah yes, a-ah, hm . . . er well . . .

OLUNDE Goodnight. I can see you are shocked by the whole business. But you must know by now there are things you cannot understand—or help.

PILKINGS Yes. Just a minute. There are armed policemen that way and they have instructions to let no one pass. I suggest you wait a little. I'll er . . . give you an escort.

OLUNDE That's very kind of you. But do you think it could be quickly arranged?

PILKINGS Of course. In fact, yes, what I'll do is send Bob over with some men to the er . . . place. You can go with them. Here he comes now. Excuse me a minute.

AIDE-DE-CAMP Anything wrong sir?

PILKINGS [*takes him to one side*] Listen Bob, that cellar in the disused annexe of the Residency, you know, where the slaves were stored before being taken down to the coast . . . [6]

AIDE-DE-CAMP Oh yes, we use it as a storeroom for broken furniture.

PILKINGS But it's still got the bars on it?

AIDE-DE-CAMP Oh yes, they are quite intact.

PILKINGS Get the keys please. I'll explain later. And I want a strong guard over the Residency tonight.

AIDE-DE-CAMP We have that already. The detachment from the coast . . .

PILKINGS No, I don't want them at the gates of the Residency. I want you to deploy them at the bottom of the hill, a long way from the main hall so they can deal with any situation long before the sound carries to the house.

AIDE-DE-CAMP Yes of course.

PILKINGS I don't want His Highness alarmed.

AIDE-DE-CAMP You think the riot will spread here?

PILKINGS It's unlikely but I don't want to take a chance. I made them believe I was going to lock the man up in my house, which was what I had planned to do in the first place. They are probably assailing it by now. I took a roundabout route here so I don't think there is any danger at all. At least not before dawn. Nobody is to leave the premises of course—the native employees I mean. They'll soon smell something is up and they can't keep their mouths shut.

AIDE-DE-CAMP I'll give instructions at once.

PILKINGS I'll take the prisoner down myself. Two policemen will stay with him throughout the night. Inside the cell.

AIDE-DE-CAMP Right sir. [*Salutes and goes off at the double.*]

PILKINGS Jane. Bob is coming back in a moment with a detachment. Until he gets back please stay with Olunde. [*He makes an extra*

warning gesture with his eyes.]

OLUNDE Please, Mr Pilkings . . .

PILKINGS I hate to be stuffy old son, but we have a crisis on our hands. It has to do with your father's affair if you must know. And it happens also at a time when we have His Highness here. I am responsible for security so you'll simply have to do as I say. I hope that's understood. [*Marches off quickly, in the direction from which he made his first appearance.*]

OLUNDE What's going on? All this can't be just because he failed to stop my father killing himself.

JANE I honestly don't know. Could it have sparked off a riot?

OLUNDE No. If he'd succeeded that would be more likely to start the riot. Perhaps there were other factors involved. Was there a chieftancy dispute?

JANE None that I know of.

ELESIN [*an animal bellow*[7] *from off*] Leave me alone! Is it not enough that you have covered me in shame! White man, take your hand from my body!

[OLUNDE *stands frozen to the spot.* JANE, *understanding at last, tries to move him.*]

JANE Let's go in. It's getting chilly out here.

PILKINGS [*off*] Carry him.

ELESIN Give me back the name you have taken away from me you ghost from the land of the nameless!

PILKINGS Carry him! I can't have a disturbance here. Quickly! stuff up his mouth.

JANE Oh God! Let's go in. Please Olunde. [OLUNDE*does not move.*]

ELESIN Take your albino's[8] hand from me you . . .

[*Sounds of a struggle. His voice chokes as he is gagged.*]

OLUNDE [*quietly*] That was my father's voice.

JANE Oh you poor orphan, what have you come home to?

[*There is a sudden explosion of rage from off-stage and powerful steps come running up the drive.*]

PILKINGS You bloody fools, after him!

[*Immediately* ELESIN, *in handcuffs, comes pounding in the direction of* JANE *and* OLUNDE, *followed some moments afterwards by* PILKINGS *and the* CONSTABLES. ELESIN, *confronted by the seeming statue of his son, stops dead.* ELESIN, *confronted by the seeming statue of his son, stops dead.* OLUNDE *stares above his head into the distance. The* CONSTABLES *try to grab him.* JANE *screams at them.*]

JANE Leave him alone! Simon, tell them to leave him alone.

PILKINGS All right, stand aside you. [*Shrugs.*] Maybe just as well. It might help to calm him down.

[*For several moments they hold the same position.* ELESIN *moves a step forward, almost as if he's still in doubt.*]

ELESIN Olunde? [*He moves his head, inspecting him from side to side.*] Olunde! [*He collapses slowly at* OLUNDE*'s feet.*] Oh son, don't let the sight of your father turn you blind!

OLUNDE [*he moves for the first time since he heard his voice, brings his head slowly down to look on him*] I have no father, eater of left-overs.

[*He walks slowly down the way his father had run. Light fades out on* ELESIN, *sobbing into the ground.*]

Endnotes

- Note 3: An elaborate masked ball long associated with the English court.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A patriotic British anthem composed in 1740.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Harsh and throaty sound.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The person who controls the movements of the dancing mask when its movements seem excessive.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Uniformed.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: A tray of silver or glass.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A military assistant to a civilian administrator.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Taxes levied on market women often sparked riots in colonial West Africa, such as the "Women's War" that erupted in Nigeria in 1929.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: World War II. Some 45,000 Nigerian soldiers served in the British Army, helping to fuel the country's postwar independence movement.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Old or out of date.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: System of government in which vassals lived on the land of nobility and paid homage in return for protection; also a term connoting an outmoded way of life.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Tapes of news and features shown in movie houses before the main features. This was common before the age of television and prominent during World War II.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The area historically known as Africa's Slave Coast extended from Nigeria to present-day Ghana.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A loud, hollow sound usually associated with animals, especially cows; in some cases, it was considered to be a feature of the language of *egungun* and other masked figures.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: *Albino* is a term of abuse when used in reference to a White person.Return to reference 8

5

A wide iron-barred gate stretches almost the whole width of the cell in which ELESIN *is imprisoned. His wrists are encased in thick iron bracelets, chained together; he stands against the bars, looking out. Seated on the ground to one side on the outside is his recent bride, her eyes bent perpetually to the ground. Figures of the two* GUARDS *can be seen deeper inside the cell, alert to every movement* ELESIN *makes*, PILKINGS *now in a police officer's uniform, enters noiselessly, observes him a while. Then he coughs ostentatiously and approaches. Leans against the bars near a corner, his back to* ELESIN. *He is obviously trying to fall in mood with him. Some moments' silence.*

PILKINGS You seem fascinated by the moon.

ELESIN [*after a pause*] Yes, ghostly one. Your twin-brother up there engages my thoughts.

PILKINGS It is a beautiful night.

ELESIN Is that so?

PILKINGS The light on the leaves, the peace of the night . . .

ELESIN The night is not at peace, District Officer.

PILKINGS No? I would have said it was. You know, quiet . . .

ELESIN And does quiet mean peace for you?

PILKINGS Well, nearly the same thing. Naturally there is a subtle difference . . .

ELESIN The night is not at peace, ghostly one. The world is not at peace. You have shattered the peace of the world for ever. There is no sleep in the world tonight.

PILKINGS It is still a good bargain if the world should lose one night's sleep as the price of saving a man's life.

ELESIN You did not save my life, District Officer. You destroyed it.

PILKINGS Now come on . . .

ELESIN And not merely my life but the lives of many. The end of the night's work is not over. Neither this year nor the next will see it. If

I wished you well, I would pray that you do not stay long enough on our land to see the disaster you have brought upon us.

PILKINGS Well, I did my duty as I saw it. I have no regrets.

ELESIN No. The regrets of life always come later.

[*Some moments' pause.*]

You are waiting for dawn white man. I hear you saying to yourself: only so many hours until dawn and then the danger is over. All I must do is to keep him alive tonight. You don't quite understand it all but you know that tonight is when what ought to be must be brought about. I shall ease your mind even more, ghostly one. It is not an entire night but a moment of the night, and that moment is past. The moon was my messenger and guide. When it reached a certain gateway in the sky, it touched that moment for which my whole life has been spent in blessings. Even I do not know the gateway. I have stood here and scanned the sky for a glimpse of that door but, I cannot see it. Human eyes are useless for a search of this nature. But in the house of *osugbo*, those who keep watch through the spirit recognised the moment, they sent word to me through the voice of our sacred drums to prepare myself. I heard them and I shed all thoughts of earth. I began to follow the moon to the abode of the gods . . . servant of the white king, that was when you entered my chosen place of departure on feet of desecration.

PILKINGS I'm sorry, but we all see our duty differently.

ELESIN I no longer blame you. You stole from me my first-born, sent him to your country so you could turn him into something in your own image. Did you plan it all beforehand? There are moments when it seems part of a larger plan. He who must follow my footsteps is taken from me, sent across the ocean. Then, in my turn, I am stopped from fulfilling my destiny. Did you think it all out before, this plan to push our world from its course and sever the cord that links us to the great origin?

PILKINGS You don't really believe that. Anyway, if that was my intention with your son, I appear to have failed.

ELESIN You did not fail in the main thing ghostly one. We know the roof covers the rafters,[9] the cloth covers blemishes; who would have known that the white skin covered our future, preventing us from seeing the death our enemies had prepared for us. The world is set adrift and its inhabitants are lost. Around them, there is nothing but emptiness.

PILKINGS Your son does not take so gloomy a view.

ELESIN Are you dreaming now, white man? Were you not present at the reunion of shame? Did you not see when the world reversed itself and the father fell before his son, asking forgiveness?

PILKINGS That was in the heat of the moment. I spoke to him and . . . if you want to know, he wishes he could cut out his tongue for uttering the words he did.

ELESIN No. What he said must never be unsaid. The contempt of my own son rescued something of my shame at your hands. You have stopped me in my duty but I know now that I did give birth to a son. Once I mistrusted him for seeking the companionship of those my spirit knew as enemies of our race. Now I understand. One should seek to obtain the secrets of his enemies. He will avenge my shame, white one. His spirit will destroy you and yours.

PILKINGS That kind of talk is hardly called for. If you don't want my consolation . . .

ELESIN No white man, I do not want your consolation.

PILKINGS As you wish. Your son, anyway, sends his consolation. He asks your forgiveness. When I asked him not to despise you his reply was: I cannot judge him, and if I cannot judge him, I cannot despise him. He wants to come to you and say goodbye and to receive your blessing.

ELESIN Goodbye? Is he returning to your land?

PILKINGS Don't you think that's the most sensible thing for him to do? I advised him to leave at once, before dawn, and he agrees that is the right course of action.

ELESIN Yes, it is best. And even if I did not think so, I have lost the father's place of honour. My voice is broken.

PILKINGS Your son honours you. If he didn't he would not ask your blessing.

ELESIN No. Even a thoroughbred is not without pity for the turf he strikes with his hoof. When is he coming?

PILKINGS As soon as the town is a little quieter. I advised it.

ELESIN Yes white man, I am sure you advised it. You advise all our lives although on the authority of what gods, I do not know.

PILKINGS [*opens his mouth to reply, then appears to change his mind. Turns to go. Hesitates and stops again*] Before I leave you, may I ask just one thing of you?

ELESIN I am listening.

PILKINGS I wish to ask you to search the quiet of your heart and tell me—do you not find great contradictions in the wisdom of your own race?

ELESIN Make yourself clear, white one.

PILKINGS I have lived among you long enough to learn a saying or two. One came to my mind tonight when I stepped into the market and saw what was going on. You were surrounded by those who egged you on with song and praises. I thought, are these not the same people who say: the elder grimly approaches heaven and you ask him to bear your greetings yonder; do you really think he makes the journey willingly? After that, I did not hesitate.

[*A pause.* ELESIN *sighs. Before he can speak a sound of running feet is heard.*]

JANE [*off*] Simon! Simon!

PILKINGS What on earth . . . ! [*Runs off.*]

[ELESIN *turns to his new wife, gazes on her for some moments.*]

ELESIN My young bride, did you hear the ghostly one? You sit and sob in your silent heart but say nothing to all this. First I blamed the white man, then I blamed my gods for deserting me. Now I feel I want to blame you for the mystery of the sapping of my will. But blame is a strange peace offering for a man to bring a world

he has deeply wronged, and to its innocent dwellers. Oh little mother, I have taken countless women in my life but you were more than a desire of the flesh. I needed you as the abyss across which my body must be drawn, I filled it with earth and dropped my seed in it at the moment of preparedness for my crossing. You were the final gift of the living to their emissary to the land of the ancestors, and perhaps your warmth and youth brought new insights of this world to me and turned my feet leaden on this side of the abyss. For I confess to you, daughter, my weakness came not merely from the abomination of the white man who came violently into my fading presence, there was also a weight of longing on my earth-held limbs. I would have shaken it off, already my foot had begun to lift but then, the white ghost entered and all was defiled.

[*Approaching voices of* PILKINGS *and his wife.*]

JANE Oh Simon, you will let her in won't you?

PILKINGS I really wish you'd stop interfering.

[*They come into view.* JANE *is in a dressing-gown.* PILKINGS *is holding a note to which he refers from time to time.*]

JANE Good gracious, I didn't initiate this. I was sleeping quietly, or trying to anyway, when the servant brought it. It's not my fault if one can't sleep undisturbed even in the Residency.

PILKINGS He'd have done the same thing if we were sleeping at home so don't sidetrack the issue. He knows he can get round you or he wouldn't send you the petition in the first place.

JANE Be fair Simon. After all he was thinking of your own interests. He is grateful you know, you seem to forget that. He feels he owes you something.

PILKINGS I just wish they'd leave this man alone tonight, that's all.

JANE Trust him Simon. He's pledged his word it will all go peacefully.

PILKINGS Yes, and that's the other thing. I don't like being threatened.

JANE Threatened? [*Takes the note.*] I didn't spot any threat.

PILKINGS It's there. Veiled, but it's there. The only way to prevent serious rioting tomorrow—what a cheek!

JANE I don't think he's threatening you Simon.

PILKINGS He's picked up the idiom alright. Wouldn't surprise me if he's been mixing with commies[1] or anarchists over there. The phrasing sounds too good to be true. Damn! If only the Prince hadn't picked this time for his visit.

JANE Well, even so Simon, what have you got to lose? You don't want a riot on your hands, not with the Prince here.

PILKINGS [*going up to* ELESIN] Let's see what he has to say. Chief Elesin, there is yet another person who wants to see you. As she is not a next-of-kin I don't really feel obliged to let her in. But your son sent a note with her, so it's up to you.

ELESIN I know who that must be. So she found out your hiding-place. Well, it was not difficult. My stench of shame is so strong, it requires no hunter's dog to follow it.

PILKINGS If you don't want to see her, just say so and I'll send her packing.

ELESIN Why should I not want to see her? Let her come. I have no more holes in my rag of shame. All is laid bare.

PILKINGS I'll bring her in. [*Goes off.*]

JANE [*hesitates, then goes to* ELESIN] Please, try and understand. Everything my husband did was for the best.

ELESIN [*he gives her a long strange stare, as if he is trying to understand who she is*] You are the wife of the District Officer?

JANE Yes. My name, is Jane.

ELESIN That is my wife sitting down there. You notice how still and silent she sits? My business is with your husband.

[PILKINGS *returns with* IYALOJA.]

PILKINGS Here she is. Now first I want your word of honour that you will try nothing foolish.

ELESIN Honour? White one, did you say you wanted my word of honour?

PILKINGS I know you to be an honourable man. Give me your word of honour you will receive nothing from her.

ELESIN But I am sure you have searched her clothing as you would never dare touch your own mother. And there are these two lizards of yours who roll their eyes even when I scratch.

PILKINGS And I shall be sitting on that tree trunk watching even how you blink. Just the same I want your word that you will not let her pass anything to you.

ELESIN You have my honour already. It is locked up in that desk in which you will put away your report of this night's events. Even the honour of my people you have taken already; it is tied together with those papers of treachery which make you masters in this land.

PILKINGS Alright. I am trying to make things easy but if you must bring in politics we'll have to do it the hard way. Madam, I want you to remain along this line and move no nearer to the cell door. Guards! [*They spring to attention.*] If she moves beyond this point, blow your whistle. Come on Jane. [*They go off.*]

IYALOJA How boldly the lizard struts before the pigeon when it was the eagle itself he promised us he would confront.

ELESIN I don't ask you to take pity on me Iyaloja. You have a message for me or you would not have come. Even if it is the curses of the world, I shall listen.

IYALOJA You made so bold with the servant of the white king who took your side against death. I must tell your brother chiefs when I return how bravely you waged war against him. Especially with words.

ELESIN I more than deserve your scorn.

IYALOJA [*with sudden anger*] I warned you, if you must leave a seed behind, be sure it is not tainted with the curses of the world. Who are you to open a new life when you dared not open the door to a new existence? I say who are you to make so bold? [*The* BRIDE *sobs and* IYALOJA *notices her. Her contempt noticeably increases as she turns back to* ELESIN.] Oh you self-vaunted[2] stem of the plantain, how hollow it all proves. The pith is gone in the parent stem, so how will it prove with the new shoot?[3] How will it go with

that earth that bears it? Who are you to bring this abomination on us!

ELESIN My powers deserted me. My charms, my spells, even my voice lacked strength when I made to summon the powers that would lead me over the last measure of earth into the land of the fleshless. You saw it, Iyaloja. You saw me struggle to retrieve my will from the power of the stranger whose shadow fell across the doorway and left me floundering and blundering in a maze I had never before encountered. My senses were numbed when the touch of cold iron[4] came upon my wrists. I could do nothing to save myself.

IYALOJA You have betrayed us. We fed you sweetmeats[5] such as we hoped awaited you on the other side. But you said No, I must eat the world's left-overs. We said you were the hunter who brought the quarry down; to you belonged the vital portions of the game. No, you said, I am the hunter's dog and I shall eat the entrails of the game and the faeces of the hunter. We said you were the hunter returning home in triumph, a slain buffalo pressing down on his neck; you said wait, I first must turn up this cricket hole with my toes. We said yours was the doorway at which we first spy the tapper when he comes down from the tree, yours was the blessing of the twilight wine,[6] the purl that brings night spirits out of doors to steal their portion before the light of day. We said yours was the body of wine whose burden shakes the tapper like a sudden gust on his perch. You said, No, I am content to lick the dregs[7] from each calabash when the drinkers are done. We said, the dew on earth's surface was for you to wash your feet along the slopes of honour. You said No, I shall step in the vomit of cats and the droppings of mice; I shall fight them for the left-overs of the world.

ELESIN Enough Iyaloja, enough.

IYALOJA We called you leader and oh, how you led us on. What we have no intention of eating should not be held to the nose.

ELESIN Enough, enough. My shame is heavy enough.

IYALOJA Wait. I came with a burden.

ELESIN You have more than discharged it.

IYALOJA I wish I could pity you.

ELESIN I need neither your pity nor the pity of the world. I need understanding. Even I need to understand. You were present at my defeat. You were part of the beginnings. You brought about the renewal of my tie to earth, you helped in the binding of the cord.

IYALOJA I gave you warning. The river which fills up before our eyes does not sweep us away in its flood.

ELESIN What were warnings beside the moist contact of living earth between my fingers? What were warnings beside the renewal of famished embers lodged eternally in the heart of man. But even that, even if it overwhelmed one with a thousandfold temptations to linger a little while, a man could overcome it. It is when the alien hand pollutes the source of will,[8] when a stranger force of violence shatters the mind's calm resolution, this is when a man is made to commit the awful treachery of relief, commit in his thought the unspeakable blasphemy of seeing the hand of the gods in this alien rupture of his world. I know it was this thought that killed me, sapped my powers and turned me into an infant in the hands of unnamable strangers. I made to utter my spells anew but my tongue merely rattled in my mouth. I fingered hidden charms and the contact was d there was no spark left to sever the life-strings that should stretch from every finger-tip. My will was squelched in the spittle[9] of an alien race, and all because I had committed this blasphemy of thought—that there might be the hand of the gods in a stranger's intervention.

IYALOJA Explain it how you will, I hope it brings you peace of mind. The bush-rat fled his rightful cause, reached the market and set up a lamentation. 'Please save me!'—are these fitting words to hear from an ancestral mask? 'There's a wild beast at my heels' is not becoming language from a hunter.

ELESIN May the world forgive me.

IYALOJA I came with a burden I said. It approaches the gates which are so well guarded by those jackals whose spittle will from this

day be on your food and drink. But first, tell me, you who were once Elesin Oba, tell me, you who know so well the cycle of the plantain: is it the parent shoot which withers to give sap[1] to the younger or, does your wisdom see it running the other way?

ELESIN I don't see your meaning Iyaloja?

IYALOJA Did I ask you for a meaning? I asked a question. Whose trunk withers to give sap to the other? The parent shoot or the younger?

ELESIN The parent.

IYALOJA Ah. So you do know that. There are sights in this world which say different Elesin. There are some who choose to reverse the cycle of our being. Oh, you emptied bark[2] that the world once saluted for a pith-laden being, shall I tell you what the gods have claimed of you?

[*In her agitation she steps beyond the line indicated by* PILKINGS *and the air is rent by piercing whistles. The two* GUARDS *also leap forward and place safe-guarding hands on* ELESIN. IYALOJA *stops, astonished.* PILKINGS *comes racing in, followed by* JANE.]

PILKINGS What is it? Did they try something?

GUARD She stepped beyond the line.

ELESIN [*in a broken voice*] Let her alone. She meant no harm.

IYALOJA Oh Elesin, see what you've become. Once you had no need to open your mouth in explanation because evil-smelling goats, itchy of hand and foot, had lost their senses. And it was a brave man indeed who dared lay hands on you because Iyaloja stepped from one side of the earth onto another. Now look at the spectacle of your life. I grieve for you.

PILKINGS I think you'd better leave. I doubt you have done him much good by coming here. I shall make sure you are not allowed to see him again. In any case we are moving him to a different place before dawn, so don't bother to come back.

IYALOJA We foresaw that. Hence the burden I trudged here to lay beside your gates.

PILKINGS What was that you said?

IYALOJA Didn't our son explain? Ask that one. He knows what it is. At least we hope the man we once knew as Elesin remembers the lesser Oaths he need not break.

PILKINGS Do you know what she is talking about?

ELESIN Go to the gates, ghostly one. Whatever you find there, bring it to me.

IYALOJA Not yet. It drags behind me on the slow, weary feet of women. Slow as it is Elesin, it has long overtaken you. It rides ahead of your laggard[3] will.

PILKINGS What is she saying now? Christ! Must your people forever speak in riddles?

ELESIN It will come white man, it will come. Tell your men at the gates to let it through.

PILKINGS [*dubiously*] I'll have to see what it is.

IYALOJA You will. [*Passionately.*] But this is one oath he cannot shirk. White one, you have a king here, a visitor from your land. We know of his presence here. Tell me, were he to die would you leave his spirit roaming restlessly on the surface of earth? Would you bury him here among those you consider less than human? In your land have you no ceremonies of the dead?

PILKINGS Yes. But we don't make our chiefs commit suicide to keep him company.

IYALOJA Child, I have not come to help your understanding. [*Points to* ELESIN.] This is the man whose weakened understanding holds us in bondage to you. But ask him if you wish. He knows the meaning of a king's passage; he was not born yesterday. He knows the peril to the race when our dead father, who goes as intermediary, waits and waits and knows he is betrayed. He knows when the narrow gate was opened and he knows it will not stay for laggards who drag their feet in dung and vomit, whose lips are reeking of the left-overs of lesser men. He knows he has condemned our King to wander in the void of evil with beings who are enemies of life.

PILKINGS Yes er . . . but look here . . .

IYALOJA What we ask is little enough. Let him release our King so he can ride on homewards alone. The messenger is on his way on the backs of women. Let him send word through the heart that is folded up within the bolt. It is the least of all his oaths, it is the easiest fulfilled.

[*The* AIDE-DE-CAMP *runs in.*]

PILKINGS Bob?

AIDE-DE-CAMP Sir, there's a group of women chanting up the hill.

PILKINGS [*rounding on* IYALOJA] If you people want trouble . . .

JANE Simon, I think that's what Olunde referred to in his letter.

PILKINGS He knows damned well I can't have a crowd here! Damn it, I explained the delicacy of my position to him. I think it's about time I got him out of town. Bob, send a car and two or three soldiers to bring him in. I think the sooner he takes his leave of his father and gets out the better.

IYALOJA Save your labour white one. If it is the father of your prisoner you want, Olunde, he who until this night we knew as Elesin's son, he comes soon himself to take his leave. He has sent the women ahead, so let them in.

[PILKINGS *remains undecided.*]

AIDE-DE-CAMP What do we do about the invasion? We can still stop them far from here.

PILKINGS What do they look like?

AIDE-DE-CAMP They're not many. And they seem quite peaceful.

PILKINGS No men?

AIDE-DE-CAMP Mm, two or three at the most.

JANE Honestly, Simon, I'd trust Olunde. I don't think he'll deceive you about their intentions.

PILKINGS He'd better not. Alright then, let them in Bob. Warn them to control themselves. Then hurry Olunde here. Make sure he brings his baggage because I'm not returning him into town.

AIDE-DE-CAMP Very good, sir. [*Goes.*]

PILKINGS [*to* IYALOJA] I hope you understand that if anything goes wrong it will be on your head. My men have orders to shoot at the

first sign of trouble.

IYALOJA To prevent one death you will actually make other deaths? Ah, great is the wisdom of the white race. But have no fear. Your Prince will sleep peacefully. So at long last will ours. We will disturb you no further, servant of the white King. Just let Elesin fulfil his oath and we will retire home and pay homage to our King.

JANE I believe her Simon, don't you?

PILKINGS Maybe.

ELESIN Have no fear ghostly one. I have a message to send my King and then you have nothing more to fear.

IYALOJA Olunde would have done it. The chiefs asked him to speak the words but he said no, not while you lived.

ELESIN Even from the depths to which my spirit has sunk, I find some joy that this little has been left to me.

> [*The* WOMEN *enter, intoning the dirge 'Alẹ lẹ lẹ́ and swaying from side to side. On their shoulders is borne a longish object roughly like a cylindrical bolt, covered in cloth. They set it down on the spot where* IYALOJA *had stood earlier, and form a semi-circle round it. The* PRAISE-SINGER *and* DRUMMER *stand on the inside of the semi-circle but the drum is not used at all. The* DRUMMER *intones under the* PRAISE-SINGER*'s invocations.*]

PILKINGS [*as they enter*] What is *that*?

IYALOJA The burden you have made white one, but we bring it in peace.

PILKINGS I said *what* is it?

ELESIN White man, you must let me out. I have a duty to perform.

PILKINGS I most certainly will not.

ELESIN There lies the courier of my King. Let me out so I can perform what is demanded of me.

PILKINGS You'll do what you need to do from inside there or not at all. I've gone as far as I intend to with this business.

ELESIN The worshipper who lights a candle in your church to bear a message to his god bows his head and speaks in a whisper to the flame. Have I not seen it ghostly one? His voice does not ring out

to the world. Mine are no words for anyone's ears. They are not words even for the bearers of this load. They are words I must speak secretly, even as my father whispered them in my ears and I in the ears of my first-born. I cannot shout them to the wind and the open night-sky.

JANE Simon . . .

PILKINGS Don't interfere. Please!

IYALOJA They have slain the favourite horse of the King and slain his dog. They have borne them from pulse to pulse centre of the land receiving prayers for their King. But the rider has chosen to stay behind. Is it too much to ask that he speak his heart to heart of the waiting courier? [PILKINGS *turns his back on her.*] So be it, Elesin Oba, you see how even the mere leavings[4] are denied you.

[*She gestures to the* PRAISE-SINGER.]

PRAISE-SINGER Elesin Oba! I call you by that name only this last time. Remember when I said, if you cannot come, tell my horse. [*Pause.*] What? I cannot hear you? I said, if you cannot come, whisper in the ears of my horse. Is your tongue severed from the roots Elesin? I can hear no response. I said, if there are boulders you cannot climb, mount my horse's back, this spotless black stallion, he'll bring you over them. [*Pauses.*] Elesin Oba, once you had a tongue that darted like a drummer's stick. I said, if you get lost my dog will track a path to me. My memory fails me but I think you replied: My feet have found the path, Alafin.

[*The dirge rises and falls.*]

I said at the last, if evil hands hold you back, just tell my horse there is weight on the hem of your smock. I dare not wait too long.

[*The dirge rises and falls.*]

There lies the swiftest ever messenger of a king, so set me free with the errand of your heart. There lie the head and heart of the favourite of the gods, whisper in his ears. Oh my companion, if you had followed when you should, we would not

say that the horse preceded its rider. If you had followed when it was time, we would not say the dog has raced beyond and left his master behind. If you had raised your will to cut the thread of life at the summons of the drums, we would not say your mere shadow fell across the gateway and took its owner's place at the banquet. But the hunter, laden with slain buffalo, stayed to root in the cricket's hole with his toes. What now is left? If there is a dearth of bats, the pigeon must serve us for the offering. Speak the words over your shadow which must now serve in your place.

ELESIN I cannot approach. Take off the cloth. I shall speak my message from heart to heart of silence.

IYALOJA [*moves forward and removes the covering*] Your courier Elesin, cast your eyes on the favoured companion of the King.

[*Rolled up in the mat, his head and feet showing at either end, is the body of* OLUNDE.]

There lies the honour of your household and of our race. Because he could not bear to let honour fly out of doors, he stopped it with his life. The son has proved the father, Elesin, and there is nothing left in your mouth to gnash but infant gums.

PRAISE-SINGER Elesin, we placed the reins of the world in your hands yet you watched it plunge over the edge of the bitter precipice. You sat with folded arms while evil strangers tilted the world from its course and crashed it beyond the edge of emptiness—you muttered, there is little that one man can do, you left us floundering in a blind future. Your heir has taken the burden on himself. What the end will be, we are not gods to tell. But this young shoot has poured its sap into the parent stalk, and we know this is not the way of life. Our world is tumbling in the void of strangers, Elesin.

[ELESIN *has stood rock-still, his knuckles taut on the bars, his eyes glued to the body of his son. The stillness seizes and paralyses everyone, including* PILKINGS *who has turned to look.*

Suddenly ELESIN *flings one arm round his neck, once, and with the loop of the chain, strangles himself in a swift, decisive pull. The* GUARDS *rush forward to stop him but they are only in time to let his body down.* PILKINGS *has leapt to the door at the same time and struggles with the lock. He rushes within, fumbles with the handcuffs and unlocks them, raises the body to a sitting position while he tries to give resuscitation. The* WOMEN *continue their dirge, unmoved by the sudden event.*]

IYALOJA Why do you strain yourself? Why do you labour at tasks for which no one, not even the man lying there, would give you thanks? He is gone at last into the passage but oh, how late it all is. His son will feast on the meat and throw him bones. The passage is clogged with droppings from the King's stallion; he will arrive all stained in dung.

PILKINGS [*in a tired voice*] Was this what you wanted?

IYALOJA No child, it is what you brought to be, you who play with strangers' lives, who even usurp the vestments of our dead, yet believe that the stain of death will not cling to you. The gods demanded only the old expired plantain but you cut down the sap-laden shoot to feed your pride. There is your board[5] filled to overflowing. Feast on it. [*She screams at him suddenly, seeing that* PILKINGS *is about to close* ELESIN*'s staring eyes.*] Let him alone! However sunk he was in debt he is no pauper's carrion[6] abandoned on the road. Since when have strangers donned clothes of indigo before the bereaved cries out his loss?

[*She turns to the* BRIDE *who has remained motionless throughout.*]

Child.

[*The girl takes up a little earth, walks calmly into the cell and closes* ELESIN*'s eyes. She then pours some earth over each eyelid and comes out again.*]

IYALOJA Now forget the dead, forget even the living. Turn your mind only to the unborn.

[*She goes off, accompanied by the* BRIDE. *The dirge rises in volume and the* WOMEN *continue their sway. Lights fade to a black-out.*]

THE END

1975

Endnotes

- Note 9: Timbers supporting the roof of a house.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A disapproving term for communists. The Communist Party of Great Britain peaked in popularity in the late 1940s, particularly among Black immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Excessively self-praising, vain.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The young plant that grows directly from the parent, not from a seed. "Pith": the inner part of a plant; its fiber or core.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A reference to a very sharp knife or razor.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pastries or candies made with sugar or honey.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Palm wine tapped before dawn is considered fresh and potent.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The sediment of leftover liquids; hence, considered impure.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In Yoruba cosmology, will is the life source that makes everything happen.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Saliva.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The vital liquid or juice circulating in a tree or plant, the equivalent of blood.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The external covering or skin of a tree.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Slow, sluggish, spent.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Remains or leftovers, usually of food.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Food.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The rotting flesh of a dead animal.Return to reference 6

CARYL CHURCHILL
b. 1938

Born in London, Churchill grew up an only child in a creative home in the Lake District, one that influenced her approach to theater. Her father was a political cartoonist, and she has said, "Cartoons are really so much like plays—an image with somebody saying something." Her mother worked variously as a secretary, model, and film actress, and Churchill's earliest exposure to theater was the Christmas pantomimes, which she would then act out at home. Her family moved to Montreal, Canada, when she was ten, but she returned to England for university. She studied English at Lady Margaret Hall, a women's college at Oxford, where she began to write plays, which were produced by student companies. Churchill has discussed the period after graduation in 1960 as grounded in family life and yet also solitary and politicizing. While raising her children, she struggled to carve out time for writing. She managed to develop short radio plays for the BBC, including *The Ants* (1962), *Lovesick* (1967), and *Abortive* (1971), but in the 1970s and 1980s her literary output grew prolific and increasingly experimental.

Churchill's first professional stage production, *Owners* (1972), premiered at the Royal Court Theatre where she would go on to serve as resident dramatist in 1974–75. Churchill's work, renowned for its exploration of gender and power, is unpredictable in its use of dialogue, casting, and props. *Cloud Nine*, perhaps her best-known play before *Top Girls*, debuted in England in 1979 and premiered off-

Broadway in New York in 1981. A comedic parody of the Victorian Empire, the first act is set in colonial Africa, the second in 1979 London. In her time-bending plot and cross-casting specifications, Churchill challenges her audience's concepts of race, class, and gender. The role of Joshua, a Black African servant, was played by a White man, and the roles of Victorian-era Betty, her son Edward, and Cathy, a little girl, were all cast opposite gender, with an adult man playing Cathy. A rag doll sufficed to represent Edward's sister Victoria. These incongruities call attention, often hilariously, to unconscious expectations around masculinity and femininity and disrupt any easy alignments among race, gender, and bodily presentation.

Churchill regularly writes plays inspired by current events, including *Serious Money* (1987), about the excesses of the financial industry, and the science-fictional *A Number* (2002), in which a father must come to terms with his three sons, two of whom are clones of the first. The play engaged the conversation around biotechnology and ethics sparked by the 1996 cloning of Dolly the sheep. *Love and Information* (2012), a work about modern forms of communication, introduced randomization into its staging. The play involves one hundred characters played by fifteen actors and is made up of scenes that range from twenty-five seconds to a few minutes long. These scenes unfold across seven sections of the play, but can be staged in different orders within each section at the discretion of the director. Churchill's experiments with length continue in *Ding Dong the Wicked* (2013), a full-length play, which lasts just twenty minutes, and *What If If Only*, another twenty-minute play, which explores grief and loss while evoking a Scrooge-like character confronted by ghosts from the future. Many of Churchill's works have been revived: *Cloud Nine* in 2015 in New York City; the one-acts *Blue Kettle* (1997) and *Here We Go* (2015) in 2018 by the Boston Commonwealth Shakespeare Company; *Top Girls* in 2019 at the National Theatre; *A Number* in 2022 at the Old Vic for its twentieth anniversary. The Royal Court Theatre mounted a seventieth-birthday retrospective in 2008 with readings from her

plays. Churchill has won five Obies, including one for lifetime achievement, two Lucille Lortel Awards, and a Drama Critics' Circle Award.

Top Girls, included here, premiered at the Royal Court in 1982, and follows a surreal structure. The first act invites its audience to a dinner party featuring notable women from different continents and centuries. The scene recalls a famous work of installation art, *The Dinner Party* (1974–79) by American artist Judy Chicago, which gathered women from mythology and history around a table whose place settings contain biographical details of each woman ornamented by strikingly vulvar forms. Chicago's piece sought to celebrate iconic women excluded from or diminished by history books. The *Top Girls* dinner party draws on but complicates such a celebration. Here, historical, mythic, and fictional women parade into a restaurant, one by one, to mark the achievement of their host, Marlene, who has been promoted to managing director of the Top Girls employment agency in early 1980s England. The lives of these guests cannot be contained by a place setting, and as they tell their stories, details spill out on top of each other in overlapping dialogue —a technique that Churchill pioneered. Two characters are historical: Isabella Bird, a Scots-English explorer from the Victorian era, and Lady Nijo, a Japanese courtesan who has become a Buddhist monk. One is fictional: the long-suffering Patient Griselda from Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale." Another is an artist's subject: Dull Gret, a folkloric figure ready to invade Hell in Bruegel's Flemish Renaissance oil painting. Another is the stuff of legend: Pope Joan, who passed as a boy—and then Pope—until she gave birth and was martyred.

As theater critic Ben Brantley wryly noted in the *New York Times*, Churchill "saved her best for first," as this anachronistic procession of accomplished, trailblazing women, in historical dress, speak with and over each other in a raucous, energized symphony of stories. Churchill explains in "The Layout" her approach to characters' speech: it is marked typographically to indicate when a character interrupts, talks through another character's speech, or continues from a speech begun several characters earlier. Churchill

choreographs a dizzying verbal dance, dramatizing on the stage the intersections between language and the women's shared experiences. The play is typically double cast with the actresses playing the notable characters in scene 1 later becoming Marlene's 1980s-era contemporaries: co-workers, job-seekers, family members. This strategy visualizes the connection between mythic and modern women's lives and draws attention to how historical representations of female ambition and sacrifice infiltrate the more ordinary but pressing concerns of women crossing between the home and the office. Churchill moves between these settings as much as she ranges across time. The final scene of *Top Girls*, set in the kitchen of Marlene's sister Joyce, takes place a year earlier than the penultimate scene, giving the last word to the daughter that Marlene left behind in the pursuit of career advancement.

As the play moves into modern-day England, Churchill yokes complex portrayals of female empowerment to the ideological shift toward self-reliance and economic individualism enshrined in the positions of Margaret Thatcher, the first female prime minister of the United Kingdom and leader of the Conservative Party. From 1979 until 1990, Thatcher oversaw the dismantling of the English welfare state, and five years after *Top Girls* premiered, famously declared "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families." Churchill's play recognizes and wrestles with the values embedded in Thatcher's legacy as well the divisiveness inspired by the Iron Lady herself.

Top Girls

PRODUCTION NOTE

The seating order for ACT I SCENE 1 in the original production at the Royal Court was (from R.) GRET, NIJO, MARLENE, JOAN, GRISELDA, ISABELLA.

The Characters

ISABELLA BIRD (1831–1904)—lived in Edinburgh,[1] travelled extensively between the ages of 40 and 70.
LADY NIJO (b. 1258)—Japanese, was an Emperor's courtesan and later a Buddhist nun who travelled on foot through Japan.
DULL GRET—is the subject of the Brueghel painting *Dulle Griet*,[2] in which a woman in an apron and armour leads a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils.
POPE JOAN[3]—disguised as a man, is thought to have been Pope between 854–856.
PATIENT GRISELDA—is the obedient wife whose story is told by Chaucer in "The Clerk's Tale" of *The Canterbury Tales.*

The Layout

A speech usually follows the one immediately before it BUT:

1) When one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked / . e.g.
   ISABELLA. This is the Emperor of Japan? / I once met the Emperor of Morocco.
   NIJO. In fact he was the ex-Emperor.
2) A character sometimes continues speaking right through another's speech: e.g.
   ISABELLA. When I was forty I thought my life was over. / Oh I was pitiful. I was

NIJO. I didn't say I felt it for twenty years. Not every minute
ISABELLA. sent on a cruise for my health and felt even worse. Pains in my bones, pins and needles . . . etc.

3) Sometimes a speech follows on from a speech earlier than the one immediately before it, and continuity is marked *. e.g.

GRISELDA. I'd seen him riding by, we all had. And he'd seen me in the fields with the sheep. *
ISABELLA. I would have been well suited to minding sheep.
NIJO. And Mr Nugent went riding by.
ISABELLA. Of course not, Nijo, I mean a healthy life in the open air.
JOAN. *He just rode up while you were minding the sheep and asked you to marry him?

where "in the fields with the sheep" is the cue to both "I would have been" and "He just rode up."

Endnotes

- Note 1: City in Scotland.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: 1563 painting by Flemish artist Pieter Brueghel the Elder (ca. 1525–1569).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: While her reign was widely believed in and storied, scholars believe her to have been fictional.Return to reference 3

Act One

SCENE 1

Restaurant. Saturday night. There is a table with a white cloth set for dinner with six places. The lights come up on MARLENE *and the Waitress.*

MARLENE Excellent, yes, table for six. One of them's going to be late but we won't wait. I'd like a bottle of Frascati[4] straight away if you've got one really cold. [*The Waitress goes.* ISABELLA BIRD *arrives.*] Here we are. Isabella.

ISABELLA Congratulations, my dear.

MARLENE Well, it's a step. It makes for a party. I haven't time for a holiday. I'd like to go somewhere exotic like you but I can't get away. I don't know how you could bear to leave Hawaii. / I'd like to lie

ISABELLA I did think of settling.

MARLENE in the sun forever, except of course I can't bear sitting still.

ISABELLA I sent for my sister Hennie to come and join me. I said, Hennie we'll live here forever and help the natives. You can buy two sirloins of beef for what a pound of chops cost in Edinburgh. And Hennie wrote back, the dear; that yes, she would come to Hawaii if I wished, but I said she had far better stay where she was. Hennie was suited to life in Tobermory.[5]

MARLENE Poor Hennie.

ISABELLA Do you have a sister?

MARLENE Yes in fact.

ISABELLA Hennie was happy. She was good. I did miss its face, my own pet. But I couldn't stay in Scotland. I loathed the constant murk.

[LADY NIJO *arrives.*]

MARLENE [*seeing her*] Ah! Nijo! [*The Waitress enters with the wine.*]

NIJO Marlene! [*to* ISABELLA] So excited when Marlene told me / you were coming.

ISABELLA I'm delighted / to meet you.

MARLENE I think a drink while we wait for the others. I think a drink anyway. What a week. [MARLENE *seats* NIJO. *The Waitress pours the wine.*]

NIJO It was always the men who used to get so drunk. I'd be one of the maidens, passing the sake.

ISABELLA I've had sake. Small hot drink. Quite fortifying after a day in the wet.

NIJO One night my father proposed three rounds of three cups, which was normal, and then the Emperor should have said three rounds of three cups, but he said three rounds of nine cups, so you can imagine.[6] Then the Emperor passed his sake cup to my father and said, "Let the wild goose come to me this spring."

MARLENE Let the what?

NIJO It's a literary allusion to a tenth-century epic.[7] His Majesty was very cultured.

ISABELLA This is the Emperor of Japan? / I once met the Emperor of Morocco.[8]

NIJO In fact he was the ex-Emperor.[9]

MARLENE But he wasn't old? / Did you, Isabella?

NIJO Twenty-nine.

ISABELLA Oh it's a long story.

MARLENE Twenty-nine's an excellent age.

NIJO Well I was only fourteen and I knew he meant something but I didn't know what. He sent me an eight-layered gown and I sent it back. So when the time came I did nothing but cry. My thin gowns were badly ripped. But even that morning when he left / —he'd a green

MARLENE Are you saying he raped you?

NIJO robe with a scarlet lining and very heavily embroidered trousers, I already felt different about him. It made me uneasy. No, of course not, Marlene, I belonged to him, it was what I was brought up for from a baby. I soon found I was sad if he stayed away. It was depressing day after day not knowing when he would come. I never enjoyed taking other women to him.

ISABELLA I certainly never saw my father drunk. He was a clergyman. / And I didn't get married till I was fifty. [*The Waitress brings the menus.*]

NIJO Oh, my father was a very religious man. Just before he died he said to me, "Serve His Majesty, be respectful, if you lose his favour enter holy orders."

MARLENE But he meant stay in a convent, not go wandering round the country.

NIJO Priests were often vagrants, so why not a nun? You think I shouldn't / I still did what my father wanted.

MARLENE No no, I think you should. / I think it was wonderful.

[DULL GRET *arrives.*]

ISABELLA I tried to do what my father wanted.

MARLENE Gret, good. Nijo. Gret / I know Griselda's going to be late, but should we wait for Joan? / Let's get you a drink.

ISABELLA Hello, Gret! [*She continues to* NIJO.] I tried to be a clergyman's daughter. Needlework, music, charitable schemes. I had a tumour removed from my spine and spent a great deal of time on the sofa. I studied the metaphysical poets and hymnology[1] / I thought I enjoyed intellectual pursuits.

NIJO Ah, you like poetry. I come of a line of eight generations of poets. Father had a poem / in the anthology.

ISABELLA My father taught me Latin although I was a girl. / But really I was.

MARLENE They didn't have Latin at my school.

ISABELLA more suited to manual work. Cooking, washing, mending, riding horses. / Better than reading

NIJO Oh but I'm sure you're very clever.

ISABELLA books, eh Gret? A rough life in the open air.

NIJO I can't say I enjoyed my rough life. What I enjoyed most was being the Emperor's favourite / and wearing thin silk.

ISABELLA Did you have any horses, Gret?

GRET Pig.

[POPE JOAN *arrives.*]

MARLENE Oh Joan, thank God, we can order. Do you know everyone? We were just talking about learning Latin and being clever girls. Joan way by way of an infant prodigy. Of course you were. What excited you when you were ten?

JOAN Because angels are without matter they are not individuals. Every angel is a species.[2]

MARLENE There you are. [*They laugh. They look at the menus.*]

ISABELLA Yes, I forgot all my Latin. But my father was the mainspring of my life and when he died I was so grieved. I'll have the chicken, please, / and the soup.

NIJO Of course you were grieved. My father was saying his prayers and he dozed off in the sun. So I touched his knee to rouse him. "I wonder what will happen," he said, and then he was dead before he finished the sentence. / If he'd

MARLENE What a shock.

NIJO died saying his prayers he would have gone straight to heaven. / Waldorf salad[3]

JOAN Death is the return of all creatures to God.

NIJO I shouldn't have woken him.

JOAN Damnation only means ignorance of the truth. I was always attracted by the teachings of John the Scot,[4] though he was inclined to confuse / God and the world.

ISABELLA Grief always overwhelmed me at the time.

MARLENE What I fancy is a rare steak. Gret?

ISABELLA I am of course a member of the / Church of England.[5]

MARLENE Gret?

GRET Potatoes.

MARLENE I haven't been to church for years. / I like Christmas carols.

ISABELLA Good works matter more than church attendance.

MARLENE Make that two steaks and a lot of potatoes. Rare. But I don't do good works either.

JOAN Canelloni,[6] please, / and a salad.

ISABELLA Well, I tried, but oh dear. Hennie did good works.

NIJO The first half of my life was all sin and the second / all repentance.*

MARLENE Oh what about starters?
GRET Soup.
JOAN *And which did you like best?
MARLENE Were your travels just a penance? Avocado vinaigrette. Didn't you / enjoy yourself?
JOAN Nothing to start with for me, thank you.
NIJO Yes, but I was very unhappy. / It hurt to remember the past.
MARLENE And the wine list.
NIJO I think that was repentance.
MARLENE Well I wonder.
NIJO I might have just been homesick.
MARLENE Or angry.
NIJO Not angry, no, / why angry?
GRET Can we have some more bread?
MARLENE Don't you get angry? I get angry.
NIJO But what about?
MARLENE Yes let's have two more Frascati. And some more bread, please. [*The Waitress exits.*]
ISABELLA I tried to understand Buddhism when I was in Japan but all this birth and death succeeding each other through eternities just filled me with the most profound melancholy. I do like something more active.
NIJO You couldn't say I was inactive. I walked every day for twenty years.
ISABELLA I don't mean walking. / I mean in the head.
NIJO I vowed to copy five Mahayana sutras.[7] / Do you know how long they are?
MARLENE I don't think religious beliefs are something we have in common. Activity yes. [GRET *empties the bread basket into her apron.*]
NIJO My head was active. / My head ached.
JOAN It's no good being active in heresy.
ISABELLA What heresy? She's calling the Church of England / a heresy.
JOAN There are some very attractive / heresies.

NIJO I had never heard of Christianity. Never / heard of it. Barbarians.

MARLENE Well I'm not a Christian. / And I'm not a Buddhist.

ISABELLA You have heard of it?

MARLENE We don't all have to believe the same.

ISABELLA I knew coming to dinner with a Pope we should keep off religion.

JOAN I always enjoy a theological argument. But I won't try to convert you, I'm not a missionary. Anway I'm a heresy myself.

ISABELLA There are some barbaric practices in the east.

NIJO Barbaric?

ISABELLA Among the lower classes.

NIJO I wouldn't know.

ISABELLA Well theology always made my head ache.

MARLENE Oh good, some food. [*The Waitress brings the first course, serves it during the following, then exits.*]

NIJO How else could I have left the court if I wasn't a nun? When father died I had only His Majesty. So when I fell out of favour I had nothing. Religion is a kind of nothing / and I dedicated what was left of me to nothing.

ISABELLA That's what I mean about Buddhism. It doesn't brace.

MARLENE Come on, Nijo, have some wine.

NIJO Haven't you ever felt like that? You've all felt / like that. Nothing will ever happen again. I am dead already.

ISABELLA You thought your life was over but it wasn't.

JOAN You wish it was over.

GRET Sad.

MARLENE Yes, when I first came to London I sometimes . . . and when I got back from America I did. But only for a few hours. Not twenty years.

ISABELLA When I was forty I thought my life was over. / Oh I was pitiful. I was sent

NIJO I didn't say I felt it for twenty years. Not every minute.

ISABELLA on a cruise for my health and I felt even worse. Pains in my bones, pins and needles in my hands, swelling behind the ears, and—oh, stupidity. I shook all over, indefinable terror. And

Australia seemed to me a hideous country, the acacias[8] stank like drains. / I

NIJO You were homesick. [GRET *steals a bottle of wine.*]

ISABELLA had a photograph taken for Hennie but I told her I wouldn't send it, my hair had fallen out and my clothes were crooked, I looked completely insane and suicidal.

NIJO So did I, exactly, dressed as a nun. / I was wearing walking shoes for the first time.

ISABELLA I longed to go home, / but home to what? Houses are so perfectly dismal.*

NIJO I longed to go back ten years.

MARLENE *I thought travelling cheered you both up.

ISABELLA Oh it did / of course. It was on

NIJO I'm not a cheerful person, Marlene. I just laugh a lot.

ISABELLA the trip from Australia to the Sandwich Isles,[9] I fell in love with the sea. There were rats in the cabin and ants in the food but suddenly it was like a new world. I woke up every morning happy, knowing there would be nothing to annoy me. No nervousness. No dressing.

NIJO Don't you like getting dressed? I adored my clothes. / When I was chosen

MARLENE You had prettier colours than Isabella.

NIJO to give sake to His Majesty's brother, the Emperor Kameyana,[1] on his formal visit, I wore raw silk pleated trousers and a seven-layered gown in shades of red, and two outer garments, / yellow lined with green

MARLENE Yes, all that silk must have been very—[*The Waitress enters, clears the first course and exits.*]

JOAN I dressed as a boy when I left home.*

NIJO and a light green jacket. Lady Betto[2] had a five-layered gown in shades of green and purple.

ISABELLA *You dressed as a boy?

MARLENE Of course, / for safety.

JOAN It was easy, I was only twelve. / Also women weren't allowed in the library. We wanted to study in Athens.[3]

MARLENE You ran away alone?
JOAN No, not alone, I went with my friend. / He was
NIJO Ah, an elopement.
JOAN sixteen but I thought I knew more science than he did and almost as much philosophy.
ISABELLA Well I always travelled as a lady and I repudiated strongly any suggestion in the press that I was other than feminine.
MARLENE I don't wear trousers in the office. / I could but I don't.
ISABELLA There was no great danger to a woman of my age and appearance.
MARLENE And you got away with it, Joan?
JOAN I did then. [*The Waitress brings in the main course.*]
MARLENE And nobody noticed anything?
JOAN They noticed I was a very clever boy. / And
MARLENE I couldn't have kept pretending for so long.
JOAN when I shared a bed with my friend, that was ordinary—two poor students in a lodging house. I think I forgot I was pretending.
ISABELLA Rocky Mountain Jim, Mr Nugent,[4] showed me no disrespect. He found it interesting, I think, that I could make scones and also lasso cattle. Indeed he declared his love for me, which was most distressing.
NIJO What did he say? / We always sent poems first.
MARLENE What did you say?
ISABELLA I urged him to give up whisky, / but he said it was too late.
MARLENE Oh Isabella.
ISABELLA He had lived alone in the mountains for many years.
MARLENE But did you—? [*The Waitress goes.*]
ISABELLA Mr Nugent was a man that any woman might love but none could marry. I came back to England.
NIJO Did you write him a poem when you left? / Snow on the mountains. My sleeves
MARLENE Did you never see him again?
ISABELLA No, never.
NIJO are wet with tears. In England no tears, no snow.

ISABELLA Well, I say never. One morning very early in Switzerland, it was a year later, I had a vision of him as I last saw him / in his trapper's clothes with his

NIJO A ghost!

ISABELLA hair round his face, and that was the day, / I learnt later, he died with a

NIJO Ah!

ISABELLA bullet in his brain. / He just bowed to me and vanished.

MARLENE Oh Isabella.

NIJO When your lover dies—One of my lovers died. / The priest Ariake.[5]

JOAN My friend died. Have we all got dead lovers?

MARLENE Not me, sorry.

NIJO [*to* ISABELLA] I wasn't a nun, I was still at court, but he was a priest, and when he came to me he dedicated his whole life to hell. / He knew that when he died he would fall into one of the three lower realms. And he died, he did die.

JOAN [*to* MARLENE] I'd quarrelled with him over the teachings of John the Scot, who held that our ignorance of God is the same as his ignorance of himself. He only knows what he creates because he creates everything he knows but he himself is above being—do you follow?

MARLENE No, but go on.

NIJO I couldn't bear to think / in what shape would he be reborn.*

JOAN St Augustine maintained that the Neo-Platonic Ideas are indivisible[6]

ISABELLA *Buddhism is really most uncomfortable.

JOAN from God, but I agreed with John that the created world is essences derived from Ideas which derived from God. As Denys the Areopagite said—the pseudo-Denys—first we give God a name, then deny it, / then reconcile the contradiction

NIJO In what shape would he return?

JOAN by looking beyond / those terms—

MARLENE Sorry, what? Denys said what?

JOAN Well we disagreed about it, we quarrelled. And next day he was ill, / I was so annoyed with him

NIJO Misery in this life and worse in the next, all because of me.

JOAN all the time I was nursing him I kept going over the arguments in my mind. Matter is not a means of knowing the essence. The source of the species is the Idea. But then I realized he'd never understand my arguments again, and that night he died. John the Scot held that the individual disintegrates / and there is no personal immortality.

ISABELLA I wouldn't have you think I was in love with Jim Nugent. It was yearning to save him that I felt.

MARLENE [*to* JOAN] So what did you do?

JOAN First I decided to stay a man. I was used to it. And I wanted to devote my life to learning. Do you know why I went to Rome? Italian men didn't have beards.

ISABELLA The loves of my life were Hennie, my own pet, and my dear husband the doctor, who nursed Hennie in her last illness. I knew it would be terrible when Hennie died but I didn't know how terrible. I felt half of myself had gone. How could I go on my travels without that sweet soul waiting at home for my letters? It was Doctor Bishop's devotion to her in her last illness that made me decide to marry him. He and Hennie had the same sweet character. I had not.

NIJO I thought His Majesty had sweet character because when he found out about Ariake he was so kind. But really it was because he no longer cared for me. One night he even sent me out to a man who had been pursuing me. / He lay awake on the other side of the screens and listened.

ISABELLA I did wish marriage had seemed more of a step. I tried very hard to cope with the ordinary drudgery of life. I was ill again with carbuncles[7] on the spine and nervous prostration. I ordered a tricycle, that was my idea of adventure then. And John himself fell ill, with erysipelas and anaemia.[8] I began to love him with my whole heart but it was too late. He was a skeleton with transparent white hands. I wheeled him on various seafronts in a

bathchair. And he faded and left me. There was nothing in my life. The doctors said I had gout / and my heart was much affected.

NIJO There was nothing in my life, nothing, without the Emperor's favour. The Empress had always been my enemy, Marlene, she said I had no right to wear three-layered gowns. / But I was the adopted daughter of my grandfather the Prime Minister. I had been publicly granted permission to wear thin silk.

JOAN There was nothing in my life except my studies. I was obsessed with pursuit of the truth. I taught at the Greek School in Rome, which St Augustine had made famous. I was poor, I worked hard, I spoke apparently brilliantly, I was still very young, I was a stranger, suddenly I was quite famous, I was everyone's favourite. Huge crowds came to hear me. The day after they made me cardinal I fell ill and lay two weeks without speaking, full of terror and regret. / But then I got up determined to

MARLENE Yes, success is very . . .

JOAN go on. I was seized again / with a desperate longing for the absolute.

ISABELLA Yes, yes, to go on. I sat in Tobermory among Hennie's flowers and sewed a complete outfit in Jaeger flannel.[9] I was fifty-six years old.

NIJO Out of favour but I didn't die. I left on foot, nobody saw me go. For the next twenty years I walked through Japan.

GRET Walking is good. [*Meanwhile, the Waitress enters, pours lots of wine, then shows* MARLENE *the empty bottle*.]

JOAN Pope Leo[1] died and I was chosen. All right then. I would be Pope. I would know God. I would know everything.

ISABELLA I determined to leave my grief behind and set off for Tibet.

MARLENE Magnificent all of you. We need some more wine, please, two bottles I think, Griselda isn't even here yet, and I want to drink a toast to you all. [*The Waitress exits.*]

ISABELLA To yourself surely, / we're here to celebrate your success.

NIJO Yes, Marlene.

JOAN Yes, what is it exactly, Marlene?

MARLENE Well it's not Pope but it is managing director.*

JOAN And you find work for people.
MARLENE Yes, an employment agency.
NIJO *Over all the women you work with. And the men.
ISABELLA And very well deserved too. I'm sure it's just the beginning of something extraordinary.
MARLENE Well it's worth a party.
ISABELLA To Marlene.*
MARLENE And all of us.
JOAN *Marlene.
NIJO Marlene.
GRET Marlene.
MARLENE We've all come a long way. To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements. [*They laugh and drink a toast.*]
ISABELLA Such adventures. We were crossing a mountain pass at seven thousand feet, the cook was all to pieces, the muleteers suffered fever and snow blindness.[2] But even though my spine was agony I managed very well.*
MARLENE Wonderful.
NIJO *Once I was ill for four months lying alone at an inn. Nobody to offer a horse to Buddha. I had to live for myself, and I did live.
ISABELLA Of course you did. It was far worse returning to Tobermory. I always felt dull when I was stationary. / That's why I could never stay anywhere.
NIJO Yes, that's it exactly. New sights. The shrine by the beach, the moon shining on the sea. The goddess had vowed to save all living things. / She would even save the fishes. I was full of hope.
JOAN I had thought the Pope would know everything. I thought God would speak to me directly. But of course he knew I was a woman.
MARLENE But nobody else even suspected? [*The Waitress brings more wine and then exits.*]
JOAN In the end I did take a lover again.*
ISABELLA In the vatican?[3]
GRET *Keep you warm.

NIJO *Ah, lover.

MARLENE *Good for you.

JOAN He was one of my chamberlains.[4] There are such a lot of servants when you're Pope. The food's very good. And I realized I did know the truth. Because whatever the Pope says, that's true.

NIJO What was he like, the chamberlain?*

GRET Big cock.

ISABELLA Oh, Gret.

MARLENE *Did he fancy you when he thought you were a fella?

NIJO What was he like?

JOAN He could keep a secret.

MARLENE So you did know everything.

JOAN Yes, I enjoyed being Pope. I consecrated bishops and let people kiss my feet. I received the King of England when he came to submit to the church. Unfortunately there were earthquakes, and some village reported it had rained blood, and in France there was a plague of giant grasshoppers, but I don't think that can have been my fault, do you?*[5] [*laughter*] The grasshoppers fell on the English Channel / and were washed up on shore

NIJO I once went to sea. It was very lonely. I realized it made very little difference where I went.

JOAN and their bodies rotted and poisoned the air and everyone in those parts died. [*laughter*]

ISABELLA *Such superstition! I was nearly murdered in China by a howling mob. They thought the barbarians ate babies and put them under railway sleepers to make the tracks steady, and ground up their eyes to make the lenses of cameras. / So they were shouting,

MARLENE And you had a camera!

ISABELLA "Child-eater, child-eater." Some people tried to sell girl babies to Europeans for cameras or stew! [*laughter*]

MARLENE So apart from the grasshoppers it was a great success.

JOAN Yes, if it hadn't been for the baby I expect I'd have lived to an old age like Theodora of Alexandria,[6] who lived as a monk. She

was accused by a girl / who fell in love with her of being the father of her child and—

NIJO But tell us what happened to your baby. I had some babies.

MARLENE Didn't you think of getting rid of it?

JOAN Wouldn't that be a worse sin than having it? / But a Pope with a child was about as bad as possible.

MARLENE I don't know, you're the Pope.

JOAN But I wouldn't have known how to get rid of it.

MARLENE Other Popes had children, surely.

JOAN They didn't give birth to them.

NIJO Well you were a woman.

JOAN Exactly and I shouldn't have been a woman. Women, children and lunatics can't be Pope.

MARLENE So the only thing to do / was to get rid of it somehow.

NIJO You had to have it adopted secretly.

JOAN But I didn't know what was happening. I thought I was getting fatter, but then I was eating more and sitting about, the life of a Pope is quite luxurious. I don't think I'd spoken to a woman since I was twelve. The chamberlain was the one who realized.

MARLENE And by then it was too late.

JOAN Oh I didn't want to pay attention. It was easier to do nothing.

NIJO But you had to plan for having it. You had to say you were ill and go away.

JOAN That's what I should have done I suppose.

MARLENE Did you want them to find out?

NIJO I too was often in embarrassing situations, there's no need for a scandal. My first child was His Majesty's, which unfortunately died, but my second was Akebono's. I was seventeen. He was in love with me when I was thirteen, he was very upset when I had to go to the Emperor, it was very romantic, a lot of poems. Now His Majesty hadn't been near me for two months so he thought I was four months pregnant when I was really six, so when I reached the ninth month / I announced I was seriously ill,

JOAN I never knew what month it was.

NIJO and Akebono announced he had gone on a religious retreat. He held me round the waist and lifted me up as the baby was born. He cut the cord with a short sword, wrapped the baby in white and took it away. It was only a girl but I was sorry to lose it. Then I told the Emperor that the baby had miscarried because of my illness, and there you are. The danger was past.

JOAN But, Nijo, I wasn't used to having a woman's body.

ISABELLA So what happened?

JOAN I didn't know of course that it was near the time. It was Rogation Day,[7] there was always a procession. I was on the horse dressed in my robes and a cross was carried in front of me, and all the cardinals were following, and all the clergy of Rome, and a huge crowd of people. / We set off from St Peter's to go

MARLENE Total Pope. [GRET *pours the wine and steals the bottle.*]

JOAN to St John's. I had felt a slight pain earlier, I thought it was something I'd eaten, and then it came back, and came back more often. I thought when this is over I'll go to bed. There were still long gaps when I felt perfectly all right and I didn't want to attract attention to myself and spoil the ceremony. Then I suddenly realized what it must be. I had to last out till I could get home and hide. Then something changed, my breath started to catch, I couldn't plan things properly any more. We were in a little street that goes between St Clement's and the Colosseum, and I just had to get off the horse and sit down for a minute. Great waves of pressure were going through my body, I heard sounds like a cow lowing, they came out of my mouth. Far away I heard people screaming, "The Pope is ill, the Pope is dying." And the baby just slid out on to the road.*

MARLENE The cardinals / won't have known where to put themselves.

NIJO Oh dear, Joan, what a thing to do! In the street!

ISABELLA *How embarrassing.

GRET In a field, yah. [*They are laughing.*]

JOAN One of the cardinals said, "The Antichrist!" and fell over in a faint. [*They all laugh.*]

MARLENE So what did they do? They weren't best pleased.

JOAN They took me by the feet and dragged me out of town and stoned me to death. [*They stop laughing.*]

MARLENE Joan, how horrible.

JOAN I don't really remember.

NIJO And the child died too?

JOAN Oh yes, I think so, yes. [*The Waitress enters to clear the plates. Pause. They start talking very quietly.*]

ISABELLA [*to* JOAN] I never had any children. I was very fond of horses.

NIJO [*to* MARLENE] I saw my daughter once. She was three years old. She wore a plum-red / small sleeved gown. Akebono's[8] wife

ISABELLA Birdie was my favourite. A little Indian bay mare[9] I rode in the Rocky Mountains.

NIJO had taken the child because her own died. Everyone thought I was just a visitor. She was being brought up carefully so she could be sent to the palace like I was. [GRET *steals her empty plate.*]

ISABELLA Legs of iron and always cheerful, and such a pretty face. If a stranger led her she reared up like a bronco.

NIJO I never saw my third child after he was born, the son of Ariake the priest. Ariake held him on his lap the day he was born and talked to him as if he could understand, and cried. My fourth child was Ariake's too. Ariake died before he was born. I didn't want to see anyone, I stayed alone in the hills. It was a boy again, my third son. But oddly enough I felt nothing for him.

MARLENE How many children did you have, Gret?

GRET Ten.

ISABELLA Whenever I came back to England I felt I had so much to atone for. Hennie and John were so good. I did no good in my life. I spent years in self-gratification. So I hurled myself into committees, I nursed the people of Tobermory in the epidemic of influenza, I lectured the Young Women's Christian Association on Thrift.[1] I talked and talked explaining how the East was corrupt and vicious. My travels must do good to someone beside myself. I wore myself out with good causes.

MARLENE [*pause*] Oh God, why are we all so miserable?
JOAN [*pause*] The procession never went down that street again.
MARLENE They rerouted it specially?
JOAN Yes they had to go all round to avoid it. And they introduced a pierced chair.[2]
MARLENE A pierced chair?
JOAN Yes, a chair made out of solid marble with a hole in the seat / and it was
MARLENE You're not serious.
JOAN in the Chapel of the Saviour, and after he was elected the Pope had to sit in it.
MARLENE And someone looked up his skirts? / Not really!
ISABELLA What an extraordinary thing.
JOAN Two of the clergy / made sure he was a man.
NIJO On their hands and knees!
MARLENE A pierced chair!
GRET Balls!

[GRISELDA *arrives unnoticed.*]

NIJO Why couldn't he just pull up his robe?
JOAN He had to sit there and look dignified.
MARLENE You could have made all your chamberlains sit in it.*
GRET Big one. Small one.
NIJO Very useful chair at court.
ISABELLA *Or the Laird of Tobermory in his kilt.[3]

[*They are quite drunk. They get the giggles.* MARLENE *notices* GRISELDA *and gets up to welcome her. The others go on talking and laughing.* GRET *crosses to* JOAN *and* ISABELLA *and pours them wine from her stolen bottles. The Waitress gives out the menus.*]

MARLENE Griselda! / There you are. Do you want to eat?
GRISELDA I'm sorry I'm so late. No, no, don't bother.
MARLENE Of course it's no bother. / Have you eaten?
GRISELDA No really, I'm not hungry.
MARLENE Well have some pudding.

GRISELDA I never eat pudding.

MARLENE Griselda, I hope you're not anorexic.[4] We're having pudding, I am, and getting nice and fat.

GRISELDA Oh if everyone is. I don't mind.

MARLENE Now who do you know? This is Joan who was Pope in the ninth century, and Isabella Bird, the Victorian traveller, and Lady Nijo from Japan, Emperor's concubine and Buddhist nun, thirteenth century, nearer your own time, and Gret who was painted by Brueghel. Griselda's in Boccaccio and Petrarch and Chaucer because of her extraordinary marriage.[5] I'd like profiteroles[6] because they're disgusting.

JOAN Zabaglione,[7] please.

ISABELLA Apple pie / and cream.

NIJO What's this?

MARLENE Zabaglione, it's Italian, it's what Joan's having, / it's delicious.

NIJO A Roman Catholic / dessert? Yes please.

MARLENE Gret?

GRET Cake.

GRISELDA Just cheese and biscuits, thank you. [*The Waitress exits.*]

MARLENE Yes, Griselda's life is like a fairy story, except it starts with marrying the prince.

GRISELDA He's only a marquis, Marlene.

MARLENE Well everyone for miles around is his liege and he'd absolute lord of life and death and you were the poor but beautiful peasant girl and he whisked you off. / Near enough a prince.

NIJO How old were you?

GRISELDA Fifteen.

NIJO I was brought up in court circles and it was still a shock. Had you ever seen him before?

GRISELDA I'd seen him riding by, we all had. And he'd seen me in the fields with the sheep.*

ISABELLA I would have been well suited to minding sheep.

NIJO And Mr Nugent riding by.

ISABELLA Of course not, Nijo, I mean a healthy life in the open air.

JOAN *He just rode up while you were minding the sheep and asked you to marry him?

GRISELDA No, no, it was on the wedding day. I was waiting outside the door to see the procession. Everyone wanted him to get married so there'd be an heir to look after us when he died, / and at last he

MARLENE I don't think Walter wanted to get married. It is Walter? Yes.

GRISELDA announced a day for the wedding but nobody knew who the bride was, we thought it must be a foreign princess, we were longing to see her. Then the carriage stopped outside our cottage and we couldn't see the bride anywhere. And he came and spoke to my father.

NIJO And your father told you to serve the Prince.

GRISELDA My father could hardly speak. The Marquis said it wasn't an order, I could say no, but if I said yes I must always obey him in everything.

MARLENE That's when you should have suspected.

GRISELDA But of course a wife must obey her husband. / And of course I must obey the Marquis.*

ISABELLA I swore to obey dear John, of course, but it didn't seem to arise. Naturally I wouldn't have wanted to go abroad while I was married.

MARLENE *Then why bother to mention it at all? He'd got a thing about it, that's why.

GRISELDA I'd rather obey the Marquis than a boy from the village.

MARLENE Yes, that's a point.

JOAN I never obeyed anyone. They all obeyed me.

NIJO And what did you wear? He didn't make you get married in your own clothes? That would be perverse.*

MARLENE Oh, you wait.

GRISELDA *He had ladies with him who undressed me and they had a white silk dress and jewels for my hair.

MARLENE And at first he seemed perfectly normal?

GRISELDA Marlene, you're always so critical of him. / Of course he was normal, he was very kind.

MARLENE But, Griselda, come on, he took your baby.

GRISELDA Walter found it hard to believe I loved him. He couldn't believe I would always obey him. He had to prove it.

MARLENE I don't think Walter likes women.

GRISELDA I'm sure he loved me, Marlene, all the time.

MARLENE He just had a funny way / of showing it.

GRISELDA It was hard for him too.

JOAN How do you mean he took away your baby?

NIJO Was it a boy?

GRISELDA No, the first one was a girl.

NIJO Even so it's hard when they take it away. Did you see it at all?

GRISELDA Oh yes, she was six weeks old.

NIJO Much better to do it straight away.

ISABELLA But why did your husband take the child?

GRISELDA He said all the people hated me because I was just one of them. And now I had a child they were restless. So he had to get rid of the child to keep them quiet. But he said he wouldn't snatch her, I had to agree and obey and give her up. So when I was feeding her a man came in and took her away. I thought he was going to kill her even before he was out of the room.

MARLENE But you let him take her? You didn't struggle?

GRISELDA I asked him to give her back so I could kiss he. And I asked him to bury her where no animals could dig her up. / It was Walter's child to do what he

ISABELLA Oh, my dear.

GRISELDA liked with.*

MARLENE Walter was bonkers.

GRET Bastard.

ISABELLA *But surely, murder.

GRISELDA I had promised.

MARLENE I can't stand this. I'm going for a pee.

[MARLENE *goes out. The Waitress brings the dessert, serves it during the following, then exits.*]

NIJO No, I understand. Of course you had to, he was your life. And were you in favour after that?

GRISELDA Oh yes, we were very happy together. We never spoke about what had happened.

ISABELLA I can see you were doing what you thought was your duty. But didn't it make you ill?

GRISELDA No, I was very well, thank you.

NIJO And you had another child?

GRISELDA Not for four years, but then I did, yes, a boy.

NIJO Ah a boy. / So it all ended happily.

GRISELDA Yes he was pleased. I kept my son till he was two years old. A peasant's grandson. It made the people angry. Walter explained.

ISABELLA But surely he wouldn't kill his children / just because—

GRISELDA Oh it wasn't true. Walter would never give in to the people. He wanted to see if I loved him enough.

JOAN He killed his children / to see if you loved him enough?

NIJO Was it easier the second time or harder?

GRISELDA It was always easy because I always knew I would do what he said. [*Pause. They start to eat.*]

ISABELLA I hope you didn't have any more children.

GRISELDA Oh no, no more. It was twelve years till he tested me again.

ISABELLA So whatever did he do this time? / My poor John, I never loved him enough, and he would never have dreamt . . .

GRISELDA He sent me away. He said the people wanted him to marry someone else who'd give him an heir and he'd got special permission from the Pope. So I said I'd go home to my father. I came with nothing / so I went with nothing. I took

NIJO Better to leave if your master doesn't want you.

GRISELDA off my clothes. He let me keep a slip so he wouldn't be shamed. And I walked home barefoot. My father came out in tears. Everyone was crying except me.

NIJO At least your father wasn't dead. / I had nobody.

ISABELLA Well it can be a relief to come home. I loved to see Hennie's sweet face again.

GRISELDA Oh yes, I was perfectly content. And quite soon he sent for me again.

JOAN I don't think I would have gone.

GRISELDA But he told me to come. I had to obey him. He wanted me to help prepare his wedding. He was getting married to a young girl from France / and nobody except me knew how to arrange things the way he liked them.

NIJO It's always hard taking him another woman. [MARLENE *comes back.*]

JOAN I didn't live a woman's life. I don't understand it.

GRISELDA The girl was sixteen and far more beautiful than me. I could see why he loved her. / She had her younger brother with her as a page. [*The Waitress enters.*]

MARLENE Oh God, I can't bear it. I want some coffee. Six coffees. Six brandies. / Double brandies. Straightaway. [*The Waitress exits.*]

GRISELDA They all went into the feast I'd prepared. And he stayed behind and put his arms round me and kissed me. / I felt half asleep with the shock.

NIJO Oh, like a dream.

MARLENE And he said, "This is your daughter and your son."

GRISELDA Yes.

JOAN What?

NIJO Oh. Oh I see. You got them back.

ISABELLA I did think it was remarkably barbaric to kill them but you learn not to say anything. / So he had them brought up secretly I suppose.

MARLENE Walter's a monster. Weren't you angry? What did you do?

GRISELDA Well I fainted. Then I cried and kissed the children. / Everyone was making a fuss of me.

NIJO But did you feel anything for them?

GRISELDA What?

NIJO Did you feel anything for the children?

GRISELDA Of course, I loved them.

JOAN So you forgave him and lived with him?

GRISELDA He suffered so much all those years.

ISABELLA Hennie had the same sweet nature.

NIJO So they dressed you again?

GRISELDA Cloth of gold.

JOAN I can't forgive anything.

MARLENE You really are exceptional, Griselda.

NIJO Nobody gave me back my children. [*She cries.*]

[*The Waitress brings the brandies and then exits. During the following,* JOAN *goes to* NIJO.]

ISABELLA I can never be like Hennie. I was always so busy in England, a kind of business I detested. The very presence of people exhausted my emotional reserves. I could not be like Hennie however I tried. I tried Full p. F-921Shorter p. 1517and was as ill as could be. The doctor suggested a steel net to support my head, the weight of my own head was too much for my diseased spine. It is dangerous to put oneself in depressing circumstances. Why should I do it?

JOAN [*to* NIJO] Don't cry.

NIJO My father and the Emperor both died in the autumn. So much pain.

JOAN Yes, but don't cry.

NIJO They wouldn't let me into the palace when he was dying. I hid in the room with his coffin, then I couldn't find where I'd left my shoes, I ran after the funeral procession in bare feet, I couldn't keep up. When I got there it was over, a few wisps of smoke in the sky, that's all that was left of him. What I want to know is, if I'd still been at court, would I have been allowed to wear full mourning?

MARLENE I'm sure you would.

NIJO Why do you say that? You don't know anything about it. Would I have been allowed to wear full mourning?

ISABELLA How can people live in this dim pale island and wear our hideous clothes? I cannot and will not live the life of a lady.

NIJO I'll tell you something that made me angry. I was eighteen, at the Full Moon Ceremony. They make a special rice gruel and stir it with their sticks, and then they beat their women across the loins so they'll have sons and not daughters. So the Emperor beat us all / very hard as

MARLENE What a sod. [*The Waitress enters with the coffees.*]

NIJO usual—that's not it, Marlene, that's normal, what made us angry he told his attendants they could beat us too. Well they had a wonderful time. / So Lady Genki and I made a plan, and the ladies

MARLENE I'd like another brandy, please. Better make it six. [*The Waitress exits.*]

NIJO all hid in his rooms, and Lady Mashimizu[8] stood guard with a stick at the door, and when His Majesty came in Genki seized him and I beat him till he cried out and promised he would never order anyone to hit us again. Afterwards there was a terrible fuss. The nobles were horrified. "We wouldn't even dream of stepping on Your Majesty's shadow." And I had hit him with a stick. Yes, I hit him with a stick.

> [*The Waitress brings the brandy bottle and tops up the glasses.* JOAN *crosses in front of the table and back to her place while drunkenly reciting:*]

JOAN Suave, mari magno turantibus aequora ventis,
e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
non quia vexari quemquamst iucunda voluptas,
sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri
per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli.
Sed nil dulcius est, bene quam munita tenere
edita doctrina sapientum templa serena,
despicere unde queas alios passimque videre
errare atque viam palantis quaerere vitae,

GRISELDA I do think—I do wonder—it would have been nicer if Walter hadn't had to.

ISABELLA Why should I? Why should I?

MARLENE Of course not.

NIJO I hit him with a stick.

JOAN certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate,
noctes atque dies niti praestante labore
ad summas emergere opes rerumque potiri.
O miseras hominum mentis, / o pectora caeca!*

ISABELLA O miseras!

NIJO *Pectora caeca!

JOAN qualibus in tenebris vitae quantisque periclis degitur hoc aevi quoducmquest! / none videre nil aliud sibi naturam latrare, nisi utqui corpore seiunctus dolor absit, mente fruatur . . . [*She subsides.*][9]

GRET We come to hell through a big mouth. Hell's black and red. / It's

MARLENE [*to* JOAN] Shut up, pet.

GRISELDA Hush, please.

ISABELLA Listen, she's been to hell.

GRET like the village where I come from. There's a river and a bridge and houses. There's places on fire like when the soldiers come. There's a big devil sat on a roof with a big hole in his arse and he's scooping stuff out of it with a big ladle and it's falling down on us, and it's money, so a lot of the women stop and get some. But most of us is fighting the devils. There's lots of little devils, our size, and we get them down all right and give them a beating. There's lots of funny creatures round your feet, you don't like to look, like rats and lizards, and nasty things, a bum with a face, and fish with legs, and faces on things that don't have faces on. But they don't hurt, you just keep going. Well we'd had worse, you see, we'd had the Spanish.[1] We'd all had family killed. My big son die on a wheel. Birds eat him. My baby, a soldier run her through with a sword. I'd had enough, I was mad, I hate the bastards. I come out of my front door that morning and shout till my neighbours come out and I said, "Come on, we're going where the evil come from and pay the bastards out." And they all come out just as they was / from baking or

NIJO All the ladies come.

GRET washing in their aprons, and we push down the street and the ground opens up and we go through a big mouth into a street just like ours but in hell. I've got a sword in my hand from somewhere and I fill a basket with gold cups they drink out of down there.

You just keep running on and fighting, / you didn't stop for nothing. Oh we give them devils such a beating.*

NIJO Take that, take that.

JOAN *Something something something mortisque timores
tum vaccum pectus—damn.
Quod si ridicula—
something something on and on and on
and something splendorem purpureai.[2]

ISABELLA I thought I would have a last jaunt up the west river in China.[3] Why not? But the doctors were so very grave I just went to Morocco. The sea was so wild I had to be landed by ship's crane in a coal bucket. / My horse was a terror to me, a powerful black charger.

GRET Coal bucket good.

JOAN nos in luce timemus
something
terrorem[4]

> [NIJO *is laughing and crying.* JOAN *gets up and is sick.* GRISELDA *looks after her.*]

GRISELDA Can I have some water, please? [*The Waitress exits.*]

ISABELLA So off I went to visit the Berber sheikhs[5] in full blue trousers and great brass spurs. I was the only European woman ever to have seen the Emperor of Morocco. I was [*The Waitress brings the water.*] seventy years old. What lengths to go to for a last chance of joy. I knew my return of vigour was only temporary, but how marvellous while it lasted.

Endnotes

- Note 4: Wine from Frascati, Italy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: City in Scotland.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A reference to *Towazugatari*, translated as *The Confessions of Lady Nijo*, a memoir written by Nijo in which she describes Emperor Go-Fukakusa's proposal of three rounds of

nine cups of sake as part of the celebration of her becoming his concubine in place of Nijo's mother.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: *The Tales of the Ise*. In the poem, the wild goose is a metaphor for a girl offered for marriage by her mother.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Country in western Africa.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Go-Fukakusa abdicated the throne in 1260.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Study of religious songs and hymns. "Metaphysical poets": a group of 17th-century poets who explored religion and philosophy, including figures like John Donne.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Joan is referring to Christian angelology debates. She is likely referring to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. 5th–6th century), who is mentioned later in the play, and his conception of angelic hierarchy from his book *De Coelesti Hierarchia,* or *On the Celestial Hierarchy.*Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A fruit and nut salad, attributed to the Waldorf Hotel in New York City.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: John Scotus Eriugena (ca. 800–ca. 877), known as John the Scot. Irish philosopher and theologian in the Early Middle Ages.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: The church was a product of the English Reformation in the 16th century, when Henry VIII renounced papal authority after being denied a marriage annulment. He aligned himself with Protestants, who had broken away from the Catholic Church, and his son Edward VI further developed the theology of the new Church of England.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Cannelloni, an Italian cylindrical pasta.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Buddhist scriptures.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Type of flowering shrub, known in Australia as a wattle.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The name given to the Hawaiian Islands by James Cook in 1778.Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Emperor Go-Fukakusa abdicated the throne to his brother, Kameyana.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Another concubine of Go-Fukakusa, mentioned by Nijo in her memoir.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: City in Greece. Some reports of Joan's life say she went to Athens dressed as a man with her lover and was educated there.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: James Nugent, known as "Rocky Mountain Jim," a trapper and guide to the Estes Park area in Colorado. Isabella Bird met him when travelling in 1873, and most of what is known about him comes from her writings. It is unclear who shot and killed him, as Isabella references later, though it was likely Griffith Evans, a rival guide in the area.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Ariake no Tsuki, another lover of Nijo's mentioned in her memoir.Return to reference 5
- Note 6:
  Neoplatonism, following from Platonism, emerged in the 3rd century and greatly influenced religious scholars in the Middle Ages. While Neoplatonism is a wide set of ideas, most Neoplatonists believe in monism, or that all of reality is derived from "the One." "St Augustine": Christian theologian and philosopher (354–430) who studied Neoplatonism, which influenced his conversion to Christianity.
  Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Clusters of boils under infected skin.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: An iron deficiency or lack of red blood cells.
  "Erysipelas": a bacterial infection of the skin.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Gustav Jaeger (1832–1917) advocated for the use of clothing made from animal fibers like wool, instead of plant fibers like cotton, for hygienic reasons.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: St. Leo IV, who served as pope before Joan in some accounts. The historical record shows that Benedict III quickly

succeeded Leo IV's death, and that she therefore could not have reigned.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Eye damage or vision loss as a result of overexposure to UV rays, which are reflected by the snow. "Muleteers": drivers of mules.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The seat of the pope.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A papal attendant.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Reference to a passage in *The Chronicles of the Lives of the Popes and the Roman Emperors*, published in 1478 and widely reprinted. The text's popularity resulted from attribution to Petrarch, but scholars now agree he was not the author.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A 5th-century saint from Alexandria, Egypt. To do penance for adultery, she disguised herself as a man and joined a monastery. She was discovered to be a woman only after her death. Unlike her, Pope Joan is said to have been discovered as a woman once she gave birth to a child during a procession.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A day of prayer and fasting.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Yuki no Akebono, another of Nijo's lovers in her memoir.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A female horse with brown hair and black mane and tail. "Indian": refers to Native American.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Originally a philanthropic group, founded in London in 1855. "Thrift": refers to management and saving of money.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A legend not believed to be true by historians. Following the reign of a female pope, it was believed that subsequent popes were made to sit on a chair with a hole in the seat, and a cardinal would check to ensure that the pope had male genitalia.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A Scottish garment for men, resembling a skirt. "Laird": a Scottish owner of an estate.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Referring to anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder characterized by refusing to eat.Return to reference 4
- Note 5:

Griselda is the heroine of the final tale in the *Decameron* (1351–53), by the Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375); the story was retold in Latin, as "One Wife's Mythic Obedience and Faith," by the Italian poet Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374); Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343–1400) drew on Petrarch's version in "The Clerk's Tale." As the story of her marriage goes, Walter, a man from Italy, marries the peasant Griselda only after she promises to obey him always. He proceeds to test that promise by claiming to kill her two children and contriving to divorce her. She remains patient and obedient, and he finally confesses his deceit, returns her children, and they remain in a loving marriage.
Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Cream puffs.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Italian custard dessert.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: With Lady Genki, other Imperial courtesans mentioned in Nijo's memoir.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  Joan is reciting from Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, or *On the Nature of Things.* Translated from the Latin by W. H. D. Rouse: "Pleasant it is, when on the great sea the winds trouble the waters, to gaze from shore upon another's great tribulation: not because any man's troubles are a delectable joy, but because to perceive what ills you are free from yourself is pleasant. Pleasant is it also to behold great encounters of warfare arrayed over the plains, with no part of yours in the peril. But nothing is more delightful than to possess lofty sanctuaries serene, well fortified by the teachings of the wise, whence you may look down upon others and behold them all astray, wandering abroad and seeking the path of life:—the strife of wits, the fight for precedence, all labouring night and day with surpassing toil to mount upon the pinnacle of riches and to lay hold on power. O pitiable minds of men, O blind intelligences! In what gloom of life, in how great perils is passed all your poor span of time! not to see that all nature barks for is this, that pain be removed away out of the body, and that the mind, kept away from care

and fear, enjoy a feeling of delight!" Joan trails off before the final line of the quotation, leaving out roughly "enjoy a feeling of delight!"
Return to reference 9

- Note 1: Under Charles V, the King of Spain, the Netherland region was united and became part of the Holy Roman Empire. Philip II inherited the lands, and the Netherlands revolted against him in the Eighty Years' War. In 1648, the Spanish King Philip IV recognized the Independence of the Dutch Republic.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Joan continues to quote Lucretius in broken Latin. What she remembers can be roughly translated as "death's terrors then leave your heart unpossessed—That if ridiculous—the brightness of the purple."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Xi River.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Let us not fear in the light—terror (Latin).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An Arab honorific for a leader. "Berber": the Berbers are an ethnic group of North Africa, including Morocco.Return to reference 5

SCENE 2

"Top Girls" Employment Agency. Monday morning. The Lights come up on MARLENE *and* JEANINE.

MARLENE Right, Jeanine, you are Jeanine aren't you? Let's have a look. O's and A's.[6] / No A's, all those

JEANINE Six O's.

MARLENE O's you probably could have got an A. / Speeds,[7] not brilliant, not too bad.

JEANINE I wanted to go to work.

MARLENE Well, Jeanine, what's your present job like?

JEANINE I'm a secretary.

MARLENE Secretary or typist?

JEANINE I did start as a typist but the last six months I've been a secretary.

MARLENE To?

JEANINE To three of them, really, they share me. There's Mr Ashford, he's the office manager, and Mr Philby / is sales, and—

MARLENE Quite a small place?

JEANINE A bit small.

MARLENE Friendly?

JEANINE Oh it's friendly enough.

MARLENE Prospects?

JEANINE I don't think so, that's the trouble. Miss Lewis is secretary to the managing director and she's been there forever, and Mrs Bradford / is—

MARLENE So you want a job with better prospects?

JEANINE I want a change.

MARLENE So you'll take anything comparable?

JEANINE No, I do want prospects. I want more money.

MARLENE You're getting—?

JEANINE Hundred.

MARLENE It's not bad you know. You're what? Twenty?

JEANINE I'm saving to get married.

MARLENE Does that mean you don't want a long-term job, Jeanine?

JEANINE I might do.

MARLENE Because where do the prospects come in? No kids for a bit?

JEANINE Oh no, not kids, not yet.

MARLENE So you won't tell them you're getting married?

JEANINE Had I better not?

MARLENE It would probably help.

JEANINE I'm not wearing a ring. We thought we wouldn't spend on a ring.

MARLENE Saves taking it off.

JEANINE I wouldn't take it off.

MARLENE There's no need to mention it when you go for an interview. / Now, Jeanine, do you have a feel

JEANINE But what if they ask?

MARLENE for any particular kind of company?

JEANINE I thought advertising.

MARLENE People often do think advertising. I have got a few vacancies but I think they're looking for something glossier.

JEANINE You mean how I dress? / I can

MARLENE I mean experience.

JEANINE dress different. I dress like this on purpose for where I am now.

MARLENE I have a marketing department here of a knitwear manufacturer. / Marketing is near enough

JEANINE Knitwear?

MARLENE advertising. Secretary to the marketing manager, he's thirty-five, married, I've sent him a girl before and she was happy, left to have a baby, you won't want to mention marriage there. He's very fair I think, good at his job, you won't have to nurse him along. Hundred and ten, so that's better than you're doing now.

JEANINE I don't know.

MARLENE I've a fairly small concern[8] here, father and two sons, you'd have more say potentially, secretarial and reception duties, only a hundred but the job's going to grow with the concern and

then you'll be in at the top with new girls coming in underneath you.

JEANINE What is it they do?

MARLENE Lampshades. / This would be my first choice for you.

JEANINE Just lampshades?

MARLENE There's plenty of different kinds of lampshade. So we'll send you there, shall we, and the knitwear second choice. Are you free to go for an interview any day they call you?

JEANINE I'd like to travel.

MARLENE We don't have any foreign clients. You'd have to go elsewhere.

JEANINE Yes I know. I don't really . . . I just mean . . .

MARLENE Does your fiancé want to travel?

JEANINE I'd like a job where I was here in London and with him and everything but now and then—I expect it's silly. Are there jobs like that?

MARLENE There's personal assistant to a top executive in a multinational. If that's the idea you need to be planning ahead. Is that where you want to be in ten years?

JEANINE I might not be alive in ten years.

MARLENE Yes but you will be. You'll have children.

JEANINE I can't think about ten years.

MARLENE You haven't got the speeds anyway. So I'll send you to these two shall I? You haven't been to any other agency? Just so we don't get crossed wires. Now, Jeanine, I want you to get one of these jobs, all right? If I send you that means I'm putting myself on the line for you. Your presentation's OK, you look fine, just be confident and go in there convinced that this is the best job for you and you're the best person for the job. If you don't believe it they won't believe it.

JEANINE Do you believe it?

MARLENE I think you could make me believe it if you put your mind to it.

JEANINE Yes, all right.

Endnotes

- Note 6: In the British education system, Ordinary (O) level examinations covered subject areas. After completing the O-Level exams, a student could choose to continue on to Advanced (A) level exams.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Words per minute speed, a measurement of how fast a secretary or typist can type.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: British term for a company.Return to reference 8

SCENE 3

JOYCE*'s back yard. Sunday afternoon. The house with a back door is* US. DS.[9] *is a shelter made of junk, made by children. The Lights come up on two girls,* ANGIE *and* KIT, *who are squashed together in the shelter.* ANGIE *is sixteen,* KIT *is twelve. They cannot be seen from the house.*

JOYCE [*off, calling from the house*] Angie. Angie, are you out there?

[*Silence. They keep still and wait. When nothing else happens they relax.*]

ANGIE Wish she was dead.

KIT Wanna watch *The Exterminator*?[1]

ANGIE You're sitting on my leg.

KIT There's nothing on telly.[2] We can have an ice cream. Angie?

ANGIE Shall I tell you something?

KIT Do you wanna watch *The Exterminator*?

ANGIE It's X,[3] innit?

KIT I can get into Xs.

ANGIE Shall I tell you something?

KIT We'll go to something else. We'll go to Ipswich. What's on the Odeon?[4]

ANGIE She won't let me, will she.

KIT Don't tell her.

ANGIE I've no money.

KIT I'll pay.

ANGIE She'll moan though, won't she.

KIT I'll ask her for you if you like.

ANGIE I've no money, I don't want you to pay.

KIT I'll ask her.

ANGIE She don't like you.

KIT I still got three pounds birthday money. Did she say she don't like me? I'll go by myself then.

ANGIE Your mum don't let you. I got to take you.

KIT She won't know.
ANGIE You'd be scared who'd sit next to you.
KIT No I wouldn't. She does like me anyway. Tell me then.
ANGIE Tell you what?
KIT Its you she doesn't like.
ANGIE Well I don't like her so tough shit.
JOYCE [*off*] Angie. Angie. Angie. I know you're out there. I'm not coming out after you. You come in here. [*Silence. Nothing happens.*]
ANGIE Last night when I was in bed. I been thinking yesterday could I make things move. You know, make things move by thinking about them without touching them. Last night I was in bed and suddenly a picture fell down off the wall.
KIT What picture?
ANGIE My gran, that picture. Not the poster. The photograph in the frame.
KIT Had you done something to make it fall down?
ANGIE I must have done.
KIT But were you thinking about it?
ANGIE Not about it, but about something.
KIT I don't think that's very good.
ANGIE You know the kitten?
KIT Which one?
ANGIE There only is one. The dead one.
KIT What about it?
ANGIE I heard it last night.
KIT Where?
ANGIE Out here. In the dark. What I left you here in the dark all night?
KIT You couldn't. I'd go home.
ANGIE You couldn't.
KIT I'd / go home.
ANGIE No you couldn't, not if I said.
KIT I could.
ANGIE Then you wouldn't see anything. You'd just be ignorant.
KIT I can see in the daytime.

ANGIE No you can't. You can't hear it in the daytime.
KIT I don't want to hear it.
ANGIE You're scared that's all.
KIT I'm not scared of anything.
ANGIE You're scared of blood.
KIT It's not the same kitten anyway. You just heard an old cat, / you just heard some old cat.
ANGIE You don't know what I heard. Or what I saw. You don't know nothing because you're a baby.
KIT You're sitting on me.
ANGIE Mind my hair / you silly cunt.
KIT Stupid fucking cow, I hate you.
ANGIE I don't care if you do.
KIT You're horrible.
ANGIE I'm going to kill my mother and you're going to watch.
KIT I'm not playing.
ANGIE You're scared of blood. [KIT *puts her hand under dress, brings it out with blood on her finger.*]
KIT There, see, I got my own blood, so. [ANGIE *takes* KIT*'s hand and licks her finger.*]
ANGIE Now I'm a cannibal. I might turn into a vampire now.
KIT That picture wasn't nailed up right.
ANGIE You'll have to do that when I get mine.
KIT I don't have to.
ANGIE You're scared.
KIT I'll do it, I might do it. I don't have to just because you say. I'll be sick on you.
ANGIE I don't care if you are sick on me, I don't mind sick. I don't mind blood. If I don't get away from here I'm going to die.
KIT I'm going home.
ANGIE You can't go through the house. She'll see you.
KIT I won't tell her.
ANGIE Oh great, fine.
KIT I'll say I was by myself. I'll tell her you're at my house and I'm going there to get you.
ANGIE She knows I'm here, stupid.

KIT Then why can't I go through the house?
ANGIE Because I said not.
KIT My mum don't like you anyway.
ANGIE I don't want her to like me. She's a slag.[5]
KIT She is not.
ANGIE She does it with everyone.
KIT She does not.
ANGIE You don't even know what it is.
KIT Yes I do.
ANGIE Tell me then.
KIT We get it all at school, cleverclogs.[6] It's on television. You haven't done it.
ANGIE How do you know?
KIT Because I know you haven't.
ANGIE You know wrong then because I have.
KIT Who with?
ANGIE I'm not telling you / who with.
KIT You haven't anyway.
ANGIE How do you know?
KIT Who with?
ANGIE I'm not telling you.
KIT You said you told me everything.
ANGIE I was lying wasn't I.
KIT Who with? You can't tell me who with because / you never—
ANGIE Sh.

[JOYCE *has come out of the house. She stops half way across the yard and listens. They listen.*]

JOYCE You there Angie? Kit? You there Kitty? Want a cup of tea? I've got some chocolate biscuits.[7] Come on now I'll put the kettle on. Want a choccy biccy, Angie? [*They all listen and wait.*] Fucking rotten little cunt. You can stay there and die. I'll lock the door.

[*They all wait.* JOYCE *goes back to the house.* ANGIE *and* KIT *sit in silence for a while.*]

KIT When there's a war, where's the safest place?

ANGIE Nowhere.

KIT New Zealand[8] is, my mum said. Your skin's burned right off. Shall we go to New Zealand?

ANGIE I'm not staying here.

KIT Shall we go to New Zealand?

ANGIE You're not old enough.

KIT You're not old enough.

ANGIE I'm old enough to get married.

KIT You don't want to get married.

ANGIE No but I'm old enough.

KIT I'd find out where they were going to drop it and stand right in the place.

ANGIE You couldn't find out.

KIT Better than walking round with your skin dragging on the ground. Eugh. / Would you like walking round with your skin dragging on the ground?

ANGIE You couldn't find out, stupid, it's a secret.

KIT Where are you going?

ANGIE I'm not telling you.

KIT Why?

ANGIE It's a secret.

KIT But you tell me all your secrets.

ANGIE Not the true secrets.

KIT Yes you do.

ANGIE No I don't.

KIT I want to go somewhere away from the war.

ANGIE Just forget the war.

KIT I can't.

ANGIE You have to. It's so boring.

KIT I'll remember it at night.

ANGIE I'm going to do something else anyway.

KIT What? Angie, come on. Angie.

ANGIE It's a true secret.

KIT It can't be worse than the kitten. And killing your mother. And the war.

ANGIE Well I'm not telling you so you can die for all I care.
KIT My mother says there's something wrong with you playing with someone my age. She says why haven't you got friends your own age. People your own age know there's something funny about you. She says you're a bad influence. She says she's going to speak to your mother. [ANGIE *twists* KIT*'s arm till she cries out.*]
ANGIE Say you're a liar.
KIT She said it not me.
ANGIE Say you eat shit.
KIT You can't make me. [ANGIE *lets go.*]
ANGIE I don't care anyway. I'm leaving.
KIT Go on then.
ANGIE You'll all wake up one morning and find I've gone.
KIT Good.
ANGIE I'm not telling you when.
KIT Go on then.
ANGIE I'm sorry I hurt you.
KIT I'm tired.
ANGIE Do you like me?
KIT I don't know.
ANGIE You do like me.
KIT I'm going home. [*She gets up.*]
ANGIE No you're not.
KIT I'm tired.
ANGIE She'll see you.
KIT She'll give me a chocolate biscuit.
ANGIE Kitty.
KIT Tell me where you're going.
ANGIE Sit down.
KIT [*sitting down again*] Go on then.
ANGIE Swear?
KIT Swear.
ANGIE I'm going to London. To see my aunt.
KIT And what?
ANGIE That's it.
KIT I see my aunt all the time.

ANGIE I don't see my aunt.
KIT What's so special?
ANGIE It is special. She's special.
KIT Why?
ANGIE She is.
KIT Why?
ANGIE She is.
KIT Why?
ANGIE My mother hates her.
KIT Why?
ANGIE Because she does.
KIT Perhaps she's not very nice.
ANGIE She is nice.
KIT How do you know?
ANGIE Because I know her.
KIT You said you never see her.
ANGIE I saw her last year. You saw her.
KIT Did I?
ANGIE Never mind.
KIT I remember her. That aunt. What's so special?
ANGIE She gets people jobs.
KIT What's so special?
ANGIE I think I'm my aunt's child. I think my mother's really my aunt.
KIT Why?
ANGIE Because she goes to America, now shut up.
KIT I've been to London.
ANGIE Now give us a cuddle and shut up because I'm sick.
KIT You're sitting on my arm.

[*They curl up in each other's arms. Silence.* JOYCE *comes out of the house and comes up to them quietly.*]

JOYCE Come on.
KIT Oh hello.
JOYCE Time you went home.
KIT We want to go to the Odeon.

JOYCE What time?
KIT Don't know.
JOYCE What's on?
KIT Don't know.
JOYCE Don't know much do you?
KIT That all right then?
JOYCE Angie's got to clean her room first.
ANGIE No I don't.
JOYCE Yes you do, it's a pigsty.
ANGIE Well I'm not.
JOYCE Then you're not going. I don't care.
ANGIE Well I am going.
JOYCE You've no money, have you?
ANGIE Kit's paying anyway.
JOYCE No she's not.
KIT I'll help you with your room.
JOYCE That's nice.
ANGIE No you won't. You wait here.
KIT Hurry then.
ANGIE I'm not hurrying. You just wait. [ANGIE *goes slowly into the house. Silence.*]
JOYCE I don't know. [*silence*] How's school then?
KIT All right.
JOYCE What are you now? Third year?
KIT Second year.
JOYCE Your mum says you're good at English. [*silence*] Maybe Angie should've stayed on.
KIT She didn't like it.
JOYCE I didn't like it. And look at me. If your face fits at school it's going to fit other places too. It wouldn't make no difference to Angie. She's not going to get a job when jobs are hard to get. I'd be sorry for anyone in charge of her. She'd better get married. I don't know who'd have her, mind. She's one of those girls might never leave home. What do you want to be when you grow up, Kit?
KIT Physicist.

JOYCE What?
KIT Nuclear physicist.
JOYCE Whatever for?
KIT I could, I'm clever.
JOYCE I know you're clever, pet. [*silence*] I'll make a cup of tea. [*silence*] Looks like it's going to rain. [*silence*] Don't you have friends your own age?
KIT Yes.
JOYCE Well then.
KIT I'm old for my age.
JOYCE And Angie's simple is she? She's not simple.
KIT I love Angie.
JOYCE She's clever in her own way.
KIT You can't stop me.
JOYCE I don't want to.
KIT You can't, so.
JOYCE Don't be cheeky, Kitty. She's always kind to little childen.
KIT She's coming so you better leave me alone.

[ANGIE *comes out. She has changed into an old best dress, slightly small for her.*]

JOYCE What you put that on for? Have you done your room? You can't clean you room in that.
ANGIE I looked in the cupboard and it was there.
JOYCE Of course it was there, it's meant to be there. Is that why it was a surprise, finding something in the right place? I should think she's surprised, wouldn't you, Kit, to find something in her room in the right place.
ANGIE I decided to wear it.
JOYCE Not today, why? To clean your room? You're not going to the pictures till you've done your room. You can put your dress on after if you like. [ANGIE *picks up a brick.*] Have you done your room? You're not getting out of it, you know.
KIT Angie, let's go.
JOYCE She's not going till she's done her room.
KIT It's starting to rain.

JOYCE Come on, come on then. Hurry and do your room, Angie, and then you can go to the cinema with Kit. Oh it's wet, come on. We'll look up the time in the paper. Does your mother know, Kit, it's going to be a late night for you, isn't it? Hurry up, Angie. You'll spoil your dress. You make me sick. [JOYCE *and* KIT *run into the house.* ANGIE *stays where she is. There is the sound of rain.* KIT *comes out of the house.*]

KIT [*shouting*] Angie. Angie, come on, you'll get wet. [*She comes back to* ANGIE.]

ANGIE I put on this dress to kill my mother.

KIT I suppose you thought you'd do it with a brick.

ANGIE You can kill people with a brick. [*She puts the brick down.*]

KIT Well you didn't, so.

Endnotes

- Note 9: Stage direction for *downstage*. "US": *upstage*.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: 1980 American action film, about a Vietnam veteran seeking to cleanse New York of crime.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Television (British slang).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: X-rated, preventing children under the age of 18 from viewing a film.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Odeon Cinemas, a movie theater chain in England. "Ipswich": a town in England.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A woman with many sexual partners (offensive British slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Someone annoyingly smart; a smart aleck (British slang).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A type of British sweet like a cookie.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Island country in the Pacific Ocean.Return to reference 8

Act Two

SCENE 1

"Top Girls" Employment Agency. Monday morning. There are three desks in the main office and a separate small interviewing area. The Lights come up in the main office on WIN *and* NELL *who have just arrived for work.*

NELL Coffee coffee coffee coffee / coffee.

WIN The roses were smashing. / Mermaid.

NELL Ohhh.

WIN Iceberg. He taught me all their names. [NELL *has some coffee now.*]

NELL Ah. Now then.

WIN He has one of the finest rose gardens in West Sussex.[9] He exhibits.

NELL He what?

WIN His wife was visiting her mother. It was like living together.

NELL Crafty, you never said.

WIN He rang on Saturday morning.

NELL Lucky you were free.

WIN That's what I told him.

NELL Did you hell.

WIN Have you ever seen a really beautiful rose garden?

NELL I don't like flowers. / I like swimming pools.

WIN Marilyn. Esther's Baby.[1] They're all called after birds.

NELL Our friend's late. Celebrating all weekend I bet you.

WIN I'd call a rose Elvis. Or John Conteh.[2]

NELL Is Howard in yet?

WIN If he is he'll be bleeping us with a problem.

NELL Howard can just hang on to himself.

WIN Howard's really cut up.

NELL Howard thinks because he's a fella the job was his as of right. Our Marlene's got far more balls than Howard and that's that.

WIN Poor little bugger.

NELL He'll live.

WIN He'll move on.

NELL I wouldn't mind a change of air myself.
WIN Serious?
NELL I've never been a staying-put lady. Pastures new.
WIN So who's the pirate?
NELL There's nothing definite.
WIN Inquiries?
NELL There's always inquiries. I'd think I'd got bad breath if there stopped being inquiries. Most of them can't afford me. Or you.
WIN I'm all right for the time being. Unless I go to Australia.
NELL There's not a lot of room upward.
WIN Marlene's filled it up.
NELL Good luck to her. Unless there's some prospects moneywise.
WIN You can but ask.
NELL Can always but ask.
WIN So what have we got? I've got a Mr Holden I saw last week.
NELL Any use?
WIN Pushy. Bit of a cowboy.
NELL Goodlooker?
WIN Good dresser.
NELL High flyer?
WIN That's his general idea certainly but I'm not sure he's got it up there.
NELL Prestel wants six flyers and I've only seen two and a half.
WIN He's making a bomb on the road but he thinks it's time for an office. I sent him to IBM[3] but he didn't get it.
NELL Prestel's on the road.
WIN He's not overbright.
NELL Can he handle an office?
WIN Provided his secretary can punctuate he should go far.
NELL Bear Prestel in mind then, I might put my head round the door. I've got that poor little nerd I should never had said I could help. Tender heart me.
WIN Tender like old boots. How old?
NELL Yes well forty-five.
WIN Say no more.

NELL He knows his place, he's not after calling himself a manager, he's just a poor little bod[4] wants a better commission and a bit of sunshine.

WIN Don't we all.

NELL He's just got to relocate. He's got a bungalow in Dymchurch.[5]

WIN And his wife says.

NELL The lady wife wouldn't care to relocate. She's going through the change.[6]

WIN It's his funeral, don't waste your time.

NELL I don't waste a lot.

WIN Good weekend you?

NELL You could say.

WIN Which one?

NELL One Friday, one Saturday.

WIN Aye—aye.

NELL Sunday night I watched telly.

WIN Which of them do you like best really?

NELL Sunday was best, I like the Ovaltine.[7]

WIN Holden, Barker, Gardner, Duke.

NELL I've a lady here thinks she can sell.

WIN Taking her on?

NELL She's had some jobs.

WIN Services?

NELL No, quite heavy stuff, electric.

WIN Tough bird like us.

NELL We could do with a few more here.

WIN There's nothing going here.

NELL No but I always want the tough ones when I see them. Hang on to them.

WIN I think we're plenty.

NELL Derek asked me to marry him again.

WIN He doesn't know when he's beaten.

NELL I told him I'm not going to play house, not even in Ascot.[8]

WIN Mind you, you could play house.

NELL If I chose to play house I would play house ace.[9]

WIN You could marry him and go on working.
NELL I could go on working and not marry him.

[MARLENE *arrives.*]

MARLENE Morning ladies. [WIN *and* NELL *cheer and whistle.*] Mind my head.
NELL Coffee coffee coffee.
WIN We're tactfully not mentioning you're late.
MARLENE Fucking tube.[1]
WIN We've heard that one.
NELL We've used that one.
WIN It's the top executive doesn't come in as early as the poor working girl.
MARLENE Pass the sugar and shut your face, pet.
WIN Well I'm delighted.
NELL Howard's looking sick.
WIN Howard is sick. He's got ulcers and heart. He told me.
NELL He'll have to stop then, won't he?
WIN Stop what?
NELL Smoking, drinking, shouting. Working.
WIN Well, working.
NELL We're just looking through the day.
MARLENE I'm doing some of Pam's ladies. They've been piling up while she's away.
NELL Half a dozen little girls and an arts graduate who can't type.
WIN I spent the whole weekend at his place in Sussex.
NELL She fancies his rose garden.
WIN I had to lie down in the back of the car so the neighbours wouldn't see me go in.
NELL You're kidding.
WIN It was funny.
NELL Fuck that for a joke.
WIN It was funny.
MARLENE Anyway they'd see you in the garden.
WIN The garden has extremely high walls.
NELL I think I'll tell the wife.

WIN Like hell.

NELL She might leave him and you could have the rose garden.

WIN The minute it's not a secret I'm out on my ear.

NELL Don't know why you bother.

WIN Bit of fun.

NELL I think it's time you went to Australia.

WIN I think it's pushy Mr Holden time.

NELL If you've any really pretty bastards, Marlene, I want some for Prestel.

MARLENE I might have one this afternoon. This morning it's all Pam's secretarial.

NELL Not long now and you'll be upstairs watching over us all.

MARLENE Do you fell bad about it?

NELL I don't like coming second.

MARLENE Who does?

WIN We'd rather it was you than Howard. We're glad for you, aren't we, Nell?

NELL Oh yes. Aces.

[LOUISE *enters the interviewing area. The Lights crossfade to* WIN *and* LOUISE *in the interviewing area.* NELL *exits.*]

WIN Now, Louise, hello, I have your details here. You've been very loyal to the one job I see.

LOUISE Yes I have.

WIN Twenty-one years is a long time in one place.

LOUISE I feel it is. I feel it's time to move on.

WIN And you are what age now?

LOUISE I'm in my early forties.

WIN Exactly?

LOUISE Forty-six.

WIN It's not necessarily a handicap, well it is of course we have to face that, but it's not necessarily a disabling handicap, experience does count for something.

LOUISE I hope so.

WIN Now between ourselves is there any trouble, any reason why you're leaving that wouldn't appear on the form?

LOUISE Nothing like that.

WIN Like what?

LOUISE Nothing at all.

WIN No long term understandings come to a sudden end, making for an insupportable atmosphere?

LOUISE I've always completely avoided anything like that at all.

WIN No personality clashes with your immediate superiors or inferiors?

LOUISE I've always taken care to get on very well with everyone.

WIN I only ask because it can affect the reference and it also affects your motivation, I want to be quite clear why you're moving on. So I take it the job itself no longer satisfies you. Is it the money?

LOUISE It's partly the money. It's not so much the money.

WIN Nine thousand is very respectable. Have you dependants?

LOUISE No, no dependants. My mother died.

WIN So why are you making a change?

LOUISE Other people make changes.

WIN But why are you, now, after spending most of your life in the one place?

LOUISE There you are, I've lived for that company, I've given my life really you could say because I haven't had a great deal of social life, I've worked in the evenings. I haven't had office entanglements for the very reason you just mentioned and if you are committed to your work you don't move in many other circles. I had management status from the age of twenty-seven and you'll appreciate what that means. I've built up a department. And there it is, it works extremely well, and I feel I'm stuck there. I've spent twenty years in middle management. I've seen young men who I trained go on, in my own company or elsewhere, to higher things. Nobody notices me, I don't expect it, I don't attract attention by making mistakes, everybody takes it for granted that my work is perfect. They will notice me when I go, they will be sorry I think to lose me, they will offer me more money of course, I will refuse. They will see when I've gone what I was doing for them.

WIN If they offer you more money you won't stay?

LOUISE No I won't.

WIN Are you the only woman?

LOUISE Apart from the girls of course, yes. There was one, she was my assistant, it was the only time I took on a young woman assistant, I always had my doubts. I don't care greatly for working with women, I think I pass as a man at work. But I did take on this young woman, her qualifications were excellent, and she did well, she got a department of her own, and left the company for a competitor where she's now on the board and good luck to her. She has a different style, she's a new kind of attractive well-dressed—I don't mean I don't dress properly. But there is a kind of woman who is thirty now who grew up in a different climate. They are not so careful. They take themselves for granted. I have had to justify my existence every minute, and I have done so, I have proved—well.

WIN Let's face it, vacancies are ones where you'll be in competition with younger men. And there are companies that will value your experience enough that you'll be in with a chance. There are also fields that are easier for a woman, there is a cosmetic company here where your experience might be relevant. It's eight and a half, I don't know if that appeals.

LOUISE I've proved I can earn money. It's more important to get away. I feel it's now or never. I sometimes / think—

WIN You shouldn't talk too much at an interview.

LOUISE I don't. I don't normally talk about myself. I know very well how to handle myself in an office situation. I only talk to you because it seems to me this is different, it's your job to understand me, surely. You asked the questions.

WIN I think I understand you sufficiently.

LOUISE Well good, that's good.

WIN Do you drink?

LOUISE Certainly not. I'm not a teetotaller,[2] I think that's very suspect, it's seen as being an alcoholic if you're teetotal. What do you mean? I don't drink. Why?

WIN I drink.

LOUISE I don't.

WIN Good for you.

[*The Lights crossfade to the main office with* MARLENE *sitting at her desk.* WIN *and* LOUISE *exit.* ANGIE *arrives in the main office.*]

ANGIE HELLO.
MARLENE Have you an appointment?
ANGIE It's me. I've come.
MARLENE What? It's not Angie?
ANGIE It was hard to find this place. I got lost.
MARLENE How did you get past the receptionist? The girl on the desk, didn't she try to stop you?
ANGIE What desk?
MARLENE Never mind.
ANGIE I just walked in. I was looking for you.
MARLENE Well you found me.
ANGIE Yes.
MARLENE So where's your mum? Are you up in town for the day?
ANGIE Not really.
MARLENE Sit down. Do you feel all right?
ANGIE Yes thank you.
MARLENE So where's Joyce?
ANGIE She's at home.
MARLENE Did you come up on a school trip then?
ANGIE I've left school.
MARLENE Did you come up with a friend?
ANGIE No. There's just me.
MARLENE You came up by yourself, that's fun. What have you been doing? Shopping? Tower of London?
ANGIE No, I just come here. I come to you.
MARLENE That's very nice of you to think of paying your aunty a visit. There's not many nieces make that the first port of call. Would you like a cup of coffee?
ANGIE No thank you.
MARLENE Tea, orange?
ANGIE No thank you.
MARLENE Do you feel all right?

ANGIE Yes thank you.
MARLENE Are you tired from the journey?
ANGIE Yes, I'm tired from the journey.
MARLENE You sit there for a bit then. How's Joyce?
ANGIE She's all right.
MARLENE Same as ever.
ANGIE Oh yes.
MARLENE Unfortunately you've picked a day when I'm rather busy, if there's ever a day when I'm not, or I'd take you out to lunch and we'd go to Madame Tussaud's[3] We could go shopping. What time do you have to be back? Have you got a day return?
ANGIE No.
MARLENE So what train are you going back on?
ANGIE I came on the bus.
MARLENE So what bus are you going back on? Are you staying the night?
ANGIE Yes.
MARLENE Who are you staying with? Do you want me to put you up for the night, is that it?
ANGIE Yes please.
MARLENE I haven't got a spare bed.
ANGIE I can sleep on the floor.
MARLENE You can sleep on the sofa.
ANGIE Yes please.
MARLENE I do think Joyce might have phoned me. It's like her.
ANGIE This is where you work is it?
MARLENE It's where I have been working the last two years but I'm going to move into another office.
ANGIE It's lovely.
MARLENE My new office is nicer than this. There's just the one big desk in it for me.
ANGIE Can I see it?
MARLENE Not now, no, there's someone else in it now. But he's leaving at the end of next week and I'm going to do his job.
ANGIE Is that good?

MARLENE Yes, it's very good.
ANGIE Are you going to be in charge?
MARLENE Yes I am.
ANGIE I knew you would be.
MARLENE How did you know?
ANGIE I knew you'd be in charge of everything.
MARLENE Not quite everything.
ANGIE You will be.
MARLENE Well we'll see.
ANGIE Can I see it next week then?
MARLENE Will you still be here next week?
ANGIE Yes.
MARLENE Don't you have to go home?
ANGIE Yes.
MARLENE Don't you have to go home?
ANGIE No.
MARLENE Why not?
ANGIE It's all right.
MARLENE Is it all right?
ANGIE Yes, don't worry about it.
MARLENE Does Joyce know where you are?
ANGIE Yes of course she does.
MARLENE Well does she?
ANGIE Don't worry about it.
MARLENE How long are you planning to stay with me then?
ANGIE You know when you came to see us last year?
MARLENE Yes, that was nice wasn't it.
ANGIE That was the best day of my whole life.
MARLENE So how long are you planning to stay?
ANGIE Don't you want me?
MARLENE Yes yes, I just wondered.
ANGIE I won't stay if you don't want me.
MARLENE No, of course you can stay.
ANGIE I'll sleep on the floor. I won't be any bother.
MARLENE Don't get upset.
ANGIE I'm not, I'm not. Don't worry about it.

[MRS KIDD *comes in.*]

MRS KIDD Excuse me.

MARLENE Yes.

MRS KIDD Excuse me.

MARLENE Can I help you?

MRS KIDD Excuse me bursting in on you like this but I have to talk to you.

MARLENE I am engaged at the moment. / If you could go to reception—

MRS KIDD I'm Rosemary Kidd, Howard's wife, you don't recognize me but we did meet, I remember you of course / but you wouldn't—

MARLENE Yes of course, Mrs Kidd, I'm sorry, we did meet. Howard's about somewhere I expect, have you looked in his office?

MRS KIDD Howard's not about, no. I'm afriad it's you I've come to see if I could have a minute or two.

MARLENE I do have an appointment in five minutes.

MRS KIDD This won't take five minutes. I'm very sorry. It is a matter of some urgency.

MARLENE Well of course. What can I do for you?

MRS KIDD I just wanted a chat, an informal chat. It's not something I can simply—I'm sorry if I'm interrupting your work. I know office work isn't like housework / which is all interruptions.

MARLENE No no, this is my niece. Angie. Mrs Kidd.

MRS KIDD Very pleased to meet you.

ANGIE Very well thank you.

MRS KIDD Howard's not in today.

MARLENE Isn't he?

MRS KIDD He's feeling poorly.

MARLENE I didn't know. I'm sorry to hear that.

MRS KIDD The fact is he's in a state of shock. About what's happened.

MARLENE What has happened?

MRS KIDD You should know if anyone. I'm referring to you been appointed managing director instead of Howard. He hasn't been at

all well all weekend. He hasn't slept for three nights. I haven't slept.

MARLENE I'm sorry to hear that, Mrs Kidd. Has he thought of taking sleeping pills?

MRS KIDD It's very hard when someone has worked all these years.

MARLENE Business life is full of little setbacks. I'm sure Howard knows that. He'll bounce back in a day or two. We all bounce back.

MRS KIDD If you could see him you'd know what I'm talking about. What's it going to do to him working for a woman? I think if it was a man he'd get over it as something normal.

MARLENE I think he's going to have to get over it.

MRS KIDD It's me that bears the brunt. I'm not the one that's been promoted. I put him first every inch of the way. And now what do I get? You women this, you women that. It's not my fault. You're going to have to be very careful how you handle him. He's very hurt.

MARLENE Naturally I'll be tactfull and pleasant to him, you don't start pushing someone around. I'll consult him over any decisions affecting his department. But that's no different, Mrs Kidd, from any of my other colleagues.

MRS KIDD I think it is different, because he's a man.

MARLENE I'm not quite sure why you came to see me.

MRS KIDD I had to do something.

MARLENE Well you've done it, you've seen me. I think that's probably all we've time for. I'm sorry he's been taking it out on you. He really is a shit, Howard.

MRS KIDD But he's got a family to support. He's got three children. It's only fair.

MARLENE Are you suggesting I give up the job to him then?

MRS KIDD It had crossed my mind if you were unavailable after all for some reason, he would be the natural second choice I think, don't you? I'm not asking.

MARLENE Good.

MRS KIDD You mustn't tell him I came. He's very proud.

MARLENE If he doesn't like what's happening here he can go and work somewhere else.

MRS KIDD Is that a threat?

MARLENE I'm sorry but I do have some work to do.

MRS KIDD It's not that easy, a man of Howard's age. You don't care. I thought he was going too far but he's right. You're one of these ballbreakers,[4] / that's what you

MARLENE I'm sorry but I do have some work to do.

MRS KIDD are. You'll end up miserable and lonely. You're not natural.

MARLENE Could you please piss off?

MRS KIDD I thought if I saw you at least I'd be doing something. [MRS KIDD *goes.*]

MARLENE I've got to go and do some work now. Will you come back later?

ANGIE I think you were wonderful.

MARLENE I've got to go and do some work now.

ANGIE You told her to piss off.

MARLENE Will you come back later?

ANGIE Can't I stay here?

MARLENE Don't you want to go sightseeing?

ANGIE I'd rather stay here.

MARLENE You can stay here I suppose, if it's not boring.

ANGIE It's where I most want to be in the world.

MARLENE I'll see you later then.

[MARLENE *goes.* SHONA *and* NELL *enter the interviewing area.* ANGIE *sits at* WIN*'s desk. The Lights crossfade to* NELL *and* SHONA *in the interviewing area.*]

NELL Is this right? You are Shona?

SHONA Yeh.

NELL It says here you're twenty-nine.

SHONA Yeh.

NELL Too many late nights, me. So you've been where you are for four years, Shona, you're earning six basic and three commission.[5] So what's the problem?

SHONA No problem.
NELL Why do you want a change?
SHONA Just a change.
NELL Change of product, change of area?
SHONA Both.
NELL But you're happy on the road?
SHONA I like driving.
NELL You're not after management status?
SHONA I would like management status.
NELL You'd be interested in titular management status but not come off the road?
SHONA I want to be on the road, yeh.
NELL So how many calls have you been making a day?
SHONA Six.
NELL And what proportion of those are successful?
SHONA Six.
NELL That's hard to believe.
SHONA Four.
NELL You find it easy to get the initial interest do you?
SHONA Oh yeh, I get plenty of initial interest.
NELL And what about closing?
SHONA I close, don't I?
NELL Because that's what an employer is going to have doubts about with a lady as I needn't tell you, whether she's got the guts to push through to a closing situation. They think we're too nice. They think we listen to the buyer's doubts. They think we consider his needs and his feelings.
SHONA I never consider people's feelings.
NELL I was selling for six years, I can sell anything, I've sold in three continents, and I'm jolly as they come but I'm not very nice.
SHONA I'm not very nice.
NELL What sort of time do you have on the road with the other reps? Get on all right? Handle the chat?
SHONA I get on. Keep myself to myself.
NELL Fairly much of a loner are you?
SHONA Sometimes.

NELL So what field are you interested in?
SHONA Computers.
NELL That's a top field as you know and you'll be up against some very slick fellas there, there's some very pretty boys in computers, it's an American-style field.
SHONA That's why I want to do it.
NELL Video systems appeal? That's a high-flying situation.
SHONA Video systems appeal OK.
NELL Because Prestel have half a dozen vacancies I'm looking to fill at the moment. We're talking in the area of ten to fifteen thousand here and upwards.
SHONA Sounds OK.
NELL I've half a mind to go for it myself. But it's good money here if you've got the top clients. Could you fancy it do you think?
SHONA Work here?
NELL I'm not in a position to offer, there's nothing officially going just now, but we're always on the lookout. There's not that many of us. We could keep in touch.
SHONA I like driving.
NELL So the Prestel appeals?
SHONA Yeh.
NELL What about ties?
SHONA No ties.
NELL So relocation wouldn't be a problem.
SHONA No problem.
NELL So just fill me in a bit more could you about what you've been doing.
SHONA What I've been doing. It's all down there.
NELL The bare facts are down here but I've got to present you to an employer.
SHONA I'm twenty-nine years old.
NELL So it says here.
SHONA We look young. Youngness runs in the family in our family.
NELL So just describe your present job for me.
SHONA My present job at present. I have a car. I have a Porsche. I go up the M1 a lot. Burn up the M1 a lot. Straight up the M1 in the

fast lane to where the clients are, Staffordshire, Yorkshire,[6] I do a lot in Yorkshire. I'm selling electric things. Like dishwashers, washing machines, stainless steel tubs are a feature and the reliability of the programme. After sales service, we offer a very good after sales service, spare parts, plenty of spare parts. And fridges, I sell a lot of fridges specially in the summer. People want to buy fridges in the summer because of the heat melting the butter and you get fed up standing the milk in a basin of cold water with a cloth over, stands to reason people don't want to do that in this day and age. So I sell a lot of them. Big ones with big freezers. Big freezers. And I stay in hotels at night when I'm away from home. On my expense account. I stay in various hotels. They know me, the ones I go to. I check in, have a bath, have a shower. Then I go down to the bar, have a gin and tonic, have a chat. Then I go into the dining room and have dinner. I usually have fillet steak and mushrooms, I like mushrooms. I like smoked salmon very much. I like having a salad on the side. Green salad. I don't like tomatoes.

NELL Christ what a waste of time.

SHONA Beg your pardon?

NELL Not a word of this is true, is it?

SHONA How do you mean?

NELL You just filled in the form with a pack of lies.

SHONA Not exactly.

NELL How old are you?

SHONA Twenty-nine.

NELL Nineteen?

SHONA Twenty-one.

NELL And what jobs have you done? Have you done any?

SHONA I could though, I bet you.

[*The Lights crossfade to the main office with* ANGIE *sitting as before.* WIN *comes in to the main office.* SHONA *and* NELL *exit.*]

WIN Who's sitting in my chair?

ANGIE What? Sorry.

WIN Who's been eating my porridge?

ANGIE What?

WIN It's all right, I saw Marlene. Angie, isn't it? I'm Win. And I'm not going out for lunch because I'm knackered.[7] I'm going to set me down here and have a yoghurt. Do you like yoghurt?

ANGIE No.

WIN That's good because I've only got one. Are you hungry?

ANGIE No.

WIN There's a cafe on the corner.

ANGIE No thank you. Do you work here?

WIN How did you guess?

ANGIE Because you look as if you might work here and you're sitting at the desk. Have you always worked here?

WIN No I was headhunted. That means I was working for another outfit like this and this lot came and offered me more money. I broke my contract, there was a hell of a stink. There's not many top ladies about. Your aunty's a smashing bird.[8]

ANGIE Yes I know.

MARLENE Fan are you? Fan of your aunty's?

ANGIE Do you think I could work here?

WIN Not at the moment.

ANGIE How do I start?

WIN What can you do?

ANGIE I don't know. Nothing.

WIN Type?

ANGIE Not very well. The letters jump up when I do capitals. I was going to do a CSE[9] in commerce but I didn't.

WIN What have you got?

ANGIE What?

WIN CSE's, O's.

ANGIE Nothing, none of that. Did you do all that?

WIN Oh yes, all that, and a science degree funnily enough. I started out doing medical research but there's no money in it. I thought I'd go abroad. Did you know they sell Coca Cola in Russia and Pepsi-Cola in China? You don't have to be qualified as much as you might think. Men are awful bullshitters, they like to make out

jobs are harder than they are. Any job I ever did I started doing it better than the rest of the crowd and they didn't like it. So I'd get unpopular and I'd have a drink to cheer myself up. I lived with a fella and supported him for four years, he couldn't get work. After that I went to California. I like the sunshine. Americans know how to live. This country's too slow. Then I went to Mexico, still in sales, but it's no country for a single lady. I came home, went bonkers for a bit, thought I was five different people, got over that all right, the psychiatrist said I was perfectly sane and highly intelligent. Got married in a moment of weakness and he's inside[1] now, he's been inside four years, and I've not been to see him too much this last year. I like this better than sales, I'm not really that aggressive. I started thinking sales was a good job if you want to meet people, but you're meeting people that don't want to meet you. It's no good if you like being liked. Here your clients want to meet you because you're the one doing them some good. They hope. [ANGIE *has fallen asleep.* NELL *comes in.*]

NELL You're talking to yourself, sunshine.

WIN So what's new?

NELL Who is this?

WIN Marlene's little niece.

NELL What's she got, brother, sister? She never talks about her family.

WIN I was telling her my life story.

NELL Violins?

WIN No, success story.

NELL You've heard Howard's had a heart attack?

WIN No, when?

NELL I heard just now. He hadn't come in, he was at home, he's gone to hospital. He's not dead. His wife was here, she rushed off in a cab.

WIN Too much butter, too much smoke. We must send him some flowers. [MARLENE *comes in.*] You've heard about Howard?

MARLENE Poor sod.

NELL Lucky he didn't get the job if that's what his health's like.

MARLENE Is she asleep?
WIN She wants to work here.
MARLENE Packer in Tesco[2] more like.
WIN She's a nice kid. Isn't she?
MARLENE She's a bit thick. She's a bit funny.
WIN She thinks you're wonderful.
MARLENE She's not going to make it.

Endnotes

- Note 9: County in southeast England.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: "Mermaid," "Iceberg," "Marilyn," and "Esther's Baby" are all names of rose varieties.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British boxing champion (b. 1951). "Elvis": Elvis Presley (1935–1977), American singer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: International Business Machines Corporation, multinational technology company established 1911. "Bomb on the road": earning a great deal of money.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A person (British slang).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Village in England.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Likely referring to menopause.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Flavored powder for milk, made from malt extract.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Town in England, known for the Royal Ascot horse race, a major social event attended by the British monarchy.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: The best (British slang).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The subway system in London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Someone who practices total abstinence from alcohol.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Wax museum featuring life-size replicas of celebrities and historical figures.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Someone, especially a woman, who is demanding of men (slang).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Likely £600 a month salary, plus £300 a month on commission.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: County in northern England. “Porsche”: brand of luxury sports car. “M1”: a major highway in England. “Staffordshire”: county in western England.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Tired (British slang).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A great girl (British slang).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Certificate of Secondary Education. It was added to broaden the subjects available for qualifications, and was more vocational.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In prison.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British supermarket.Return to reference 2

SCENE 2

JOYCE *'s kitchen. Sunday evening, a year earlier. The Lights come up on* JOYCE, ANGIE *and* MARLENE, MARLENE *is taking presents out of bright carrier bag.* ANGIE *has already opened a box of chocolates.*

MARLENE Just a few little things. / I've

JOYCE There's no need.

MARLENE no memory for birthdays have I, and Christmas seems to slip by. So I think I owe Angie a few presents.

JOYCE What do you say?

ANGIE Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Aunty Marlene [*She opens a present. It is the dress from Act One, new.*] Oh look, Mum, isn't it lovely?

MARLENE I don't know if it's the right size. She's grown up since I saw her. / I knew she was always

ANGIE Isn't it lovely?

MARLENE tall for her age.

JOYCE She's a big lump.

MARLENE Hold it up, Angie, let's see.

ANGIE I'll put it on, shall I?

MARLENE Yes, try it on.

JOYCE Go on to your room then, we don't want / a strip show thank you.

ANGIE Of course I'm going to my room, what do you think. Look, Mum, here's something for you. Open it, go on. What is it? Can I open it for you?

JOYCE Yes, you open it, pet.

ANGIE Don't you want to open it yourself? / Go on.

JOYCE I don't mind, you can do it.

ANGIE It's something hard. It's—what is it? A bottle. Drink is it? No, it's what? Perfume, look. What a lot. Open it, look, let's smell it. Oh it's strong. It's lovely. Put it on me. How do you do it? Put it on me.

JOYCE You're too young.

ANGIE I can play wearing it like dressing up.

JOYCE And you're too old for that. Here, give it here, I'll do it, you'll tip the whole bottle over yourself / and we'll have you smelling all summer.

ANGIE Put it on you. Do I smell? Put it on Aunty too. Put it on Aunty too. Let's all smell.

MARLENE I didn't know what you'd like.

JOYCE There's no danger I'd have it already, / that's one thing.

ANGIE Now we all smell the same.

MARLENE It's a bit nonsense.

JOYCE It's very kind of you Marlene, you shouldn't.

ANGIE Now I'll put on the dress and then we'll see. [ANGIE *goes.*]

JOYCE You've caught me on the hop[3] with the place in the mess. / If you'd let me

MARLENE That doesn't matter.

JOYCE know you was coming I'd have got something in to eat. We had our dinner dinnertime. We're just going to have a cup of tea. You could have an egg.

MARLENE No, I'm not hungry. Tea's fine.

JOYCE I don't expect you take sugar.

MARLENE Why not?

JOYCE You take care of yourself.

MARLENE How do you mean you didn't know I was coming?

JOYCE You could have written. I know we're not on the phone but we're not completely in the dark ages, / we do have a postman.

MARLENE But you asked me to come.

JOYCE How did I ask you to come?

MARLENE Angie said when she phoned up.

JOYCE Angie phoned up, did she.

MARLENE Was it just Angie's idea?

JOYCE What did she say?

MARLENE She said you wanted me to come and see you. / It was a couple of

JOYCE Ha.

MARLENE weeks ago. How was I to know that's a ridiculous idea? My diary's always full a couple of weeks ahead so we fixed it for this

weekend. I was meant to get here earlier but I was held up. She gave me messages from you.

JOYCE Didn't you wonder why I didn't phone you myself?

MARLENE She said you didn't like using the phone. You're shy on the phone and can't use it. I don't know what you're like, do I?

JOYCE Are there people who can't use the phone?

MARLENE I expect so.

JOYCE I haven't met any.

MARLENE Why should I think she was lying?

JOYCE Because she's like what she's like.

MARLENE How do I know / what she's like?

JOYCE It's not my fault you don't know what she's like. You never come and see her.

MARLENE Well I have now / and you don't seem over the moon.*

JOYCE Good. *Well I'd have got a cake if she'd told me. (*pause*)

MARLENE I did wonder why you wanted to see me.

JOYCE I didn't want to see you.

MARLENE Yes, I know. Shall I go?

JOYCE I don't mind seeing you.

MARLENE Great, I feel really welcome.

JOYCE You can come and see Angie any time you like, I'm not stopping you. / You

MARLENE Ta ever so.[4]

JOYCE know where we are. You're the one went away, not me. I'm right here where I was. And will be a few years yet I shouldn't wonder.

MARLENE All right. All right. [JOYCE *gives* MARLENE *a cup of tea.*]

JOYCE Tea.

MARLENE Sugar? [JOYCE *passes* MARLENE *the sugar.*] It's very quiet down here.

JOYCE I expect you'd notice it.

MARLENE The air smells different too.

JOYCE That's the scent.

MARLENE No, I mean walking down the lane.

JOYCE What sort of air you get in London then?

[ANGIE *comes in, wearing the dress. It fits.*]

MARLENE Oh, very pretty. / You do look pretty, Angie.
JOYCE That fits all right.
MARLENE Do you like the colour?
ANGIE Beautiful. Beautiful.
JOYCE You better take it off, / you'll get it dirty.
ANGIE I want to wear it. I want to wear it.
MARLENE It is for wearing after all. You can't just hang it up and look at it.
ANGIE I love it.
JOYCE Well if you must you must.
ANGIE If someone asks me what's my favourite colour I'll tell them it's this. Thank you very much, Aunty Marlene.
MARLENE You didn't tell your mum you asked me down.
ANGIE I wanted it to be a surprise.
JOYCE I'll give you a surprise / one of these days.
ANGIE I thought you'd like to see her. She hasn't been here since I was nine. People do see their aunts.
MARLENE Is it that long? Doesn't time fly.
ANGIE I wanted to.
JOYCE I'm not cross.
ANGIE Are you glad?
JOYCE I smell nicer anyhow, don't I?

[KIT *comes in without saying anything, as if she lived there.*]

MARLENE I think it was a good idea, Angie, about time. We are sisters after all. It's a pity to let that go.
JOYCE This is Kitty, / who lives up the road. This is Angie's Aunty Marlene.
KIT What's that?
ANGIE It's a present. Do you like it?
KIT It's all right. / Are you coming out?*
MARLENE Hello, Kitty.
ANGIE *No.
KIT What's that smell?

ANGIE It's a present.
KIT It's horrible. Come on.*
MARLENE Have a chocolate.
ANGIE *No, I'm busy.
KIT Coming out later?
ANGIE No.
KIT [*to* MARLENE] Hello. [KIT *goes without a chocolate.*]
JOYCE She's a little girl Angie sometimes plays with because she's the only child lives really close. She's like a little sister to her really. Angie's good with little children.
MARLENE Do you want to work with children, Angie? / Be a teacher or a nursery nurse?
JOYCE I don't think she's ever thought of it.
MARLENE What do you want to do?
JOYCE She hasn't an idea in her head what she wants to do. / Lucky to get anything.
MARLENE Angie?
JOYCE She's not clever like you. [*pause*]
MARLENE I'm not clever, just pushy.
JOYCE True enough. [MARLENE *takes a bottle of whisky out of the bag.*] I don't drink spirits.
ANGIE You do at Christmas.
JOYCE It's not Christmas, is it?
ANGIE It's better than Christmas.
MARLENE Glasses?
JOYCE Just a small one then.
MARLENE Do you want some, Angie?
ANGIE I can't, can I?
JOYCE Taste it if you want. You won't like it. [ANGIE *tastes it.*]
ANGIE Mmm.
MARLENE We got drunk together the night your grandfather died.
JOYCE We did not get drunk.
MARLENE I got drunk. You were just overcome with grief.
JOYCE I still keep up the grave with flowers.
MARLENE Do you really?
JOYCE Why wouldn't I?

MARLENE Have you seen Mother?
JOYCE Of course I've seen Mother.
MARLENE I mean lately.
JOYCE Of course I've seen her lately, I go every Thursday.
MARLENE [*to* ANGIE] Do you remember your grandfather?
ANGIE He got me out of the bath one night in a towel.
MARLENE Did he? I don't think he ever gave me a bath. Did he give you a bath, Joyce? He probably got soft in his old age. Did you like him?
ANGIE Yes of course.
MARLENE Why?
ANGIE What?
MARLENE So what's the hews? How's Mrs Paisley? Still going crazily / And Dorothy. What happened to Dorothy?*
ANGIE Who's Mrs Paisley?
JOYCE *She went to Canada.
MARLENE Did she? What to do?
JOYCE I don't know. She just went to Canada.
MARLENE Well / good for her.
ANGIE Mr Connolly killed his wife.
MARLENE What, Connolly at Whitegates?
ANGIE They found her body in the garden. / Under the cabbages.
MARLENE He was always so proper.
JOYCE Stuck up git,[5] Connolly. Best lawyer money could buy but he couldn't get out of it. She was carrying on with Matthew.
MARLENE How old's Matthew then?
JOYCE Twenty-one. / He's got a motorbike.
MARLENE I think he's about six.
ANGIE How can he be six? He's six years older than me. / If he was six I'd be nothing, I'd be just born this minute.
JOYCE You aunty knows that, she's just being silly. She means it's so long since she's been here she's forgetten about Matthew.
ANGIE You were here for my brithday when I was nine. I had a pink cake. Kit was only five then, she was four, she hadn't started

school yet. She could read already when she went to school. You remember my birthday / You remember me?

MARLENE Yes, I remember the cake.

ANGIE You remember me?

MARLENE Yes, I remember you.

ANGIE And Mum and Dad was there, and Kit was.

MARLENE Yes, how is your dad? Where is he tonight? Up the pub?

JOYCE No, he's not here.

MARLENE I can see he's not here.

JOYCE He moved out.

MARLENE What? When did he? / Just recently?*

ANGIE Didn't you know that? You don't know much.

JOYCE *No, it must be three years ago. Don't be rude, Angie.

ANGIE I'm not, am I, Aunty? What else don't you know?

JOYCE You was in America or somewhere. You sent a postcard.

ANGIE I've got that in my room. It's the Grand Canyon.[6] Do you want to see it? Shall I get it? I can get it for you.

MARLENE Yes, all right. [ANGIE *goes.*]

JOYCE You could be married with twins for all I know. You must have affairs and break up and I don't need to know about any of that so I don't see what the fuss is about.

MARLENE What fuss? [ANGIE *comes back with the postcard.*]

ANGIE "Driving across the states for a new job in L.A.[7] It's a long way but the car goes very fast. It's very hot. Wish you were here. Love from Aunty Marlene."

JOYCE Did you make a lot of money?

MARLENE I spent a lot.

ANGIE I want to go to America. Will you take me?

JOYCE She's not going to America, she's been to America, stupid.

ANGIE She might go again, stupid. It's not something you do once. People who go keep going all the time, back and forth on jets. They go on Concorde and Laker[8] and get jet lag. Will you take me?

MARLENE I'm not planning a trip.

ANGIE Will you let me know?

JOYCE Angie, / you're getting silly.
ANGIE I want to be American.
JOYCE It's time you were in bed.
ANGIE No it's not. / I don't have to go to bed at all tonight.
JOYCE School in the morning.
ANGIE I'll wake up.
JOYCE Come on now, you know how you get.
ANGIE How do I get? / I don't get anyhow.*
JOYCE Angie. *Are you staying the night?
MARLENE Yes, if that's all right. / I'll see you in the morning.
ANGIE You can have my bed. I'll sleep on the sofa.
JOYCE You will not, you'll sleep in your bed. / Think
ANGIE Mum.
JOYCE I can't see through that? I can just see you going to sleep / with us talking.
ANGIE I would, I would go to sleep, I'd love that.
JOYCE I'm going to get cross, Angie.
ANGIE I want to show her something.
JOYCE Then bed.
ANGIE It's a secret.
JOYCE Then I expect it's in your room so off you go. Give us a shout when you're ready for bed and your aunty'll be up and see you.
ANGIE Will you?
MARLENE Yes of course. [ANGIE *goes. Silence.*] It's cold tonight.
JOYCE Will you be all right on the sofa? You can / have my bed.
MARLENE The sofa's fine.
JOYCE Yes the forecast said rain tonight but it's held off.
MARLENE I was going to walk down to the estuary but I've left it a bit late. Is it just the same?
JOYCE They cut down the hedges a few years back. Is that since you were here?
MARLENE But it's not changed down the end, all the mud? And the reeds? We used to pick them up when they were bigger than us. Are there still lapwings?[9]

JOYCE You get strangers walking there on a Sunday. I expect they're looking at the mud and the lapwings, yes.
MARLENE You could have left.
JOYCE Who says I wanted to leave?
MARLENE Stop getting at me then, you're really boring.
JOYCE How could I have left?
MARLENE Did you want to?
JOYCE I said how, / how could I?
MARLENE If you'd wanted to you'd have done it.
JOYCE Christ.
MARLENE Are we getting drunk?
JOYCE Do you want something to eat?
MARLENE No, I'm getting drunk.
JOYCE Funny time to visit, Sunday evening.
MARLENE I came this morning. I spent the day—
ANGIE [*off*] Aunty! Aunty Marlene!
MARLENE I'd better go.
JOYCE Go on then.
MARLENE All right.
ANGIE [*off*] Aunty! Can you hear me? I'm ready.

[MARLENE *goes.* JOYCE *goes on sitting, clears up, sits again.* MARLENE *comes back.*]

JOYCE So what's the secret?
MARLENE It's a secret.
JOYCE I know what it is anyway.
MARLENE I bet you don't. You always said that.
JOYCE It's her exercise book.
MARLENE Yes, but you don't know what's in it.
JOYCE It's some game, some secret society she has with Kit.
MARLENE You don't know the password. You don't know the code.
JOYCE You're really in it, aren't you. Can you do the handshake?
MARLENE She didn't mention a handshake.
JOYCE I thought they'd have a special handshake. She spends hours writing that but she's useless at school. She copies things out of

books about black magic, and politicians out of the paper. It's a bit childish.

MARLENE I think it's a plot to take over the world.

JOYCE She's been in the remedial class the last two years.

MARLENE I came up this morning and spent the day in Ipswich. I went to see mother.

JOYCE Did she recognize you?

MARLENE Are you trying to be funny?

JOYCE No, she does wander.

MARLENE She wasn't wandering at all, she was very lucid thank you.

JOYCE You were very lucky then.

MARLENE Fucking awful life she's had.

JOYCE Don't tell me.

MARLENE Fucking waste.

JOYCE Don't talk to me.

MARLENE Why shouldn't I talk? Why shouldn't I talk to you? / Isn't she my mother too?

JOYCE Look, you've left, you've gone away, / we can do without you.

MARLENE I left home, so what, I left home. People do leave home / it is normal.

JOYCE We understand that, we can do without you.

MARLENE We weren't happy. Were you happy?

JOYCE Don't come back.

MARLENE So it's just your mother is it, your child, you never wanted me round, / you were jealous

JOYCE Here we go.

MARLENE of me because I was the little one and I was clever.

JOYCE I'm not clever enough for all this psychology / if that's what it is.

MARLENE Why can't I visit my own family / without

JOYCE Aah.

MARLENE all this?

JOYCE Just don't go on about Mum's life when you haven't been to see her for how many years. / I go

MARLENE It's up to me.

JOYCE and see her every week.

MARLENE Then don’t go and see her every week.
JOYCE Somebody has to.
MARLENE No they don’t. / Why do they?
JOYCE How would I feel if I didn’t go?
MARLENE A lot better.
JOYCE I hope you feel better.
MARLENE It’s up to me.
JOYCE You couldn’t get out of here fast enough. [*pause*]
MARLENE Of course I couldn’t get out of here fast enough. What was I going to do? Marry a dairyman who’d come home pissed? / Don’t you fucking this
JOYCE Christ.
MARLENE fucking that fucking bitch fucking tell me what to fucking do fucking.
JOYCE I don’t know how you could leave your own child.
MARLENE You were quick enough to take her.
JOYCE What does that mean?
MARLENE You were quick enough to take her.
JOYCE Or what? Have her put in a home? Have some stranger / I take her would you rather?
MARLENE You couldn’t have one so you took mine.
JOYCE I didn’t know that then.
MARLENE Like hell, / married three years.
JOYCE I didn’t know that. Plenty of people / take that long.
MARLENE Well it turned out lucky for you, didn’t it?
JOYCE Turned out all right for you by the look of you. You’d be getting a few less thousand a year.
MARLENE Not necessarily.
JOYCE You’d be stuck here / like you said.
MARLENE I could have taken her with me.
JOYCE You didn’t want to take her with you. It’s no good coming back now, Marlene, / and saying—
MARLENE I know a managing director who’s got two children, she breast feeds in the board room, she pays a hundred pounds a week on domestic help alone and she can afford that because

she's an extremely high-powered lady earning a great deal of money.

JOYCE So what's that got to do with you at the age of seventeen?

MARLENE Just because you were married and had somewhere to live —

JOYCE You could have lived at home. / Or live

MARLENE Don't be stupid.

JOYCE with me and Frank. / You

MARLENE You never suggested.

JOYCE said you weren't keeping it. You shouldn't have had it / if you wasn't

MARLENE Here we go.

JOYCE going to keep it. You was the most stupid, / for someone so clever you was the most stupid, get yourself pregnant, not go to the doctor, not tell.

MARLENE You wanted it, you said you were glad, I remember the day, you said I'm glad you never got rid of it, I'll look after it, you said that down by the river. So what are you saying, sunshine, you don't want her?

JOYCE Course I'm not saying that.

MARLENE Because I'll take her, / wake her up and pack now.

JOYCE You wouldn't know how to begin to look after her.

MARLENE Don't you want her?

JOYCE Course I do, she's my child.

MARLENE Then what are you going on about / why did I have her?

JOYCE You said I got her off you / when you didn't—

MARLENE I said you were lucky / the way it—

JOYCE Have a child now if you want one. You're not old.

MARLENE I might do.

JOYCE Good. [*pause*]

MARLENE I've been on the pill[1] so long / I'm probably sterile.

JOYCE Listen when Angie was six months I did get pregnant and I lost it because I was so tired looking after your fucking baby / because she cried so

MARLENE You never told me.

JOYCE much—yes I did tell you—/ and the doctor
MARLENE Well I forgot.
JOYCE said if I'd sat down all day with my feet up I'd've kept it / and that's the only chance I ever had because after that—
MARLENE I've had two abortions, are you interested? Shall I tell you about them? Well I won't, it's boring, it wasn't a problem. I don't like messy talk about blood / and what a bad time we all had. I
JOYCE If I hadn't had your baby. The doctor said.
MARLENE don't want a baby. I don't want to talk about gynaecology.
JOYCE Then stop trying to get Angie off of me.
MARLENE I come down here after six years. All night you've been saying I don't come often enough. If I don't come for another six years she'll be twenty-one, will that be OK?
JOYCE That'll be fine, yes, six years would suit me fine. [*pause*]
MARLENE I was afraid of this. I only came because I thought you wanted . . . I just want . . . [*She cries.*]
JOYCE Don't grizzle,[2] Marlene, for God's sake.
Marly? Come on, pet. Love you really.
Fucking stop it, will you? [*She goes to* MARLENE.]
MARLENE No, let me cry. I like it. [*They laugh,* MARLENE *begins to stop crying.*] I knew I'd cry if I wasn't careful.
JOYCE Everyone's always crying in this house. Nobody takes any notice.
MARLENE You've been wonderful looking after Angie.
JOYCE Don't get carried away.
MARLENE I can't write letters but I do think of you.
JOYCE You're getting drunk. I'm going to make some tea.
MARLENE Love you. [JOYCE *goes to make tea.*]
JOYCE I can see why you'd want to leave. It's a dump here.
MARLENE So what's this about you and Frank?
JOYCE He was always carrying on, wasn't he. And if I wanted to go out in the evening he'd go mad, even if it was nothing, a class, I was going to go to an evening class. So he had this girlfriend, only twenty-two poor cow, and I said go on, off you go, hoppit.[3] I don't think he even likes her.

MARLENE So what about money?
JOYCE I've always said I don't want your money.
MARLENE No, does he send you money?
JOYCE I've got four different cleaning jobs. Adds up. There's not a lot round here.
MARLENE Does Angie miss him?
JOYCE She doesn't say.
MARLENE Does she see him?
JOYCE He was never that fond of her to be honest.
MARLENE He tried to kiss me once. When you were engaged.
JOYCE Did you fancy him?
MARLENE No, he looked like a fish.
JOYCE He was lovely then.
MARLENE Ugh.
JOYCE Well I fancied him. For about three years.
MARLENE Have you got someone else?
JOYCE There's not a lot round here. Mind you, the minute you're on your own, you'd be amazed how your friends' husbands drop by. I'd sooner do without.
MARLENE I don't see why you couldn't take my money.
JOYCE I do, so don't bother about it.
MARLENE Only got to ask.
JOYCE So what about you? Good job?
MARLENE Good for a laugh. / Got back
JOYCE Good for more than a laugh I should think.
MARLENE from the US of A a bit wiped out and slotted into this speedy employment agency and still there.
JOYCE You can always find yourself work then?
MARLENE That's right.
JOYCE And men?
MARLENE Oh there's always men.
JOYCE No-one special?
MARLENE There's fellas who like to be seen with a high-flying lady. Shows they've got something really good in their pants. But they can't take the day to day. They're waiting for me to turn into the little woman. Or maybe I'm just horrible of course.

JOYCE Who needs them.

MARLENE Who needs them. Well I do. But I need adventures more. So on on into the sunset. I think the eighties are going to be stupendous.

JOYCE Who for?

MARLENE For me. / I think I'm going up up up.

JOYCE Oh for you. Yes, I'm sure they will.

MARLENE And for the country, come to that. Get the economy back on its feet and whoosh. She's a tough lady, Maggie.[4] I'd give her a job. / She just needs to hang

JOYCE You voted for them, did you?

MARLENE in there. This country needs to stop whining. / Monetarism[5] is not

JOYCE Drink your tea and shut up, pet.

MARLENE stupid. It takes time, determination. No more slop. / And

JOYCE Well I think they're filthy bastards.

MARLENE who's got to drive it on? First woman prime minister. Terrifico. Aces. Right on. / You must admit. Certainly gets my vote.

JOYCE What good's first woman if it's her? I suppose you'd have liked Hitler[6] if he was a woman. Ms Hitler. Got a lot done, Hitlerina. / Great adventures.

MARLENE Bosses still walking on the worker's faces? Still dadda's little parrot? Haven't you learned to think for yourself? I believe in the individual. Look at me.

JOYCE I am looking at you.

MARLENE Come on, Joyce, we're not going to quarrel over politics.

JOYCE We are though.

MARLENE Forget I mentioned it. Not a word about the slimy unions will cross my lips. [*pause*]

JOYCE You say Mother had a wasted life.

MARLENE Yes I do. Married to that bastard.

JOYCE What sort of life did he have? /

MARLENE Violent life?

JOYCE Working in the fields like an animal. / Why

MARLENE Come off it.

JOYCE wouldn't he want a drink? You want a drink. He couldn't afford whisky.

MARLENE I don't want to talk about him.

JOYCE You started, I was talking about her. She had a rotten life because she had nothing. She went hungry.

MARLENE She was hungry because he drank the money. / He used to hit her.

JOYCE It's not all down to him / Their

MARLENE She didn't hit him.

JOYCE lives were rubbish. They were treated like rubbish. He's dead and she'll die soon and what sort of life / did they have?

MARLENE I saw him one night. I came down.

JOYCE Do you think I didn't? / They

MARLENE I still have dreams.

JOYCE didn't get to America and drive across it in a fast car. / Bad nights, they had bad days.

MARLENE America, America, you're jealous. / I had to get out, I knew when I

JOYCE Jealous?

MARLENE was thirteen, out of their house, out of them, never let that happen to me, / never let him, make my own way, out.

JOYCE Jealous of what you've done, you'd be ashamed of me if I came to your office, your smart friends, wouldn't you, I'm ashamed of you, think of nothing but yourself, you've got on, nothing's changed for most people, / has it?

MARLENE I hate the working class / which is what

JOYCE Yes you do.

MARLENE you're going to go on about now, it doesn't exist any more, it means lazy and stupid. / I don't

JOYCE Come on, now we're getting it.

MARLENE like the way they talk. I don't like beer guts and football[7] vomit and saucy tits / and brothers and sisters—

JOYCE I spit when I see a Rolls Royce, scratch it with my ring / Mercedes[8] it was.

MARLENE Oh very mature—

JOYCE I hate the cows I work for / and their dirty dishes with blanquette of fucking veau.[9]

MARLENE and I will not be pulled down to their level by a flying picket and I won't be sent to Siberia[1] / or a loony bin just because I'm original. And I support

JOYCE No, you'll be on a yacht, you'll be head of Coca Cola and you wait, the eighties is going to be stupendous all right because we'll get you lot off our backs—

MARLENE Reagan[2] even if he is a lousy movie star because the reds are swarming up his map and I want to be free in a free world—

JOYCE What? / What?

MARLENE I know what I mean / by that—not shut up here.

JOYCE So don't be round here when it happens because if someone's kicking you I'll just laugh. [*silence*]

MARLENE I don't mean anything personal. I don't believe in class. Anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes.

JOYCE And if they haven't?

MARLENE If they're stupid or lazy or frightened, I'm not going to help them get a job, why should I?

JOYCE What about Angie?

MARLENE What about Angie?

JOYCE She's stupid, lazy and frightened, so what about her?

MARLENE You run her down too much. She'll be all right.

JOYCE I don't expect so, no. I expect her children will say what a wasted life she had. If she has children. Because nothing's changed and it won't with them in.

MARLENE Them, them. / Us and them?

JOYCE And you're one of them.

MARLENE And you're us, wonderful us, and Angie's us / and Mum and Dad's us.

JOYCE Yes, that's right, and you're them.

MARLENE Come on, Joyce, what a night. You've got what it takes.

JOYCE I know I have.

MARLENE I didn't really mean all that.

JOYCE I did.

MARLENE But we're friends anyway.
JOYCE I don't think so, no.
MARLENE Well it's lovely to be out in the country. I really must make the effort to come more often. I want to go to sleep. I want to go to sleep. [JOYCE *gets blankets for the sofa.*]
JOYCE Goodnight then. I hope you'll be warm enough.
MARLENE Goodnight. Joyce—
JOYCE No, pet. Sorry. [JOYCE *goes.* MARLENE *sits wrapped in a blanket and has another drink.* ANGIE *comes in.*]
ANGIE Mum?
MARLENE Angie? What's the matter?
ANGIE Mum?
MARLENE No, she's gone to bed. It's Aunty Marlene.
ANGIE Frightening.
MARLENE Did you have a bad dream? What happened in it? Well you're awake now, aren't you, pet?
ANGIE Frightening.

End of Play

1979

Endnotes

- Note 3: Unprepared (British slang).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Thanks (British slang).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A stuck-up person (British slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Natural wonder in Arizona created by the Colorado River.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Los Angeles, city in California.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Laker Airways, one of the first low-cost airlines; it went bankrupt and ceased operating in 1981. "Concorde": a high-speed passenger plane.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A type of ground-nesting bird.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Birth control.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Someone crying or whining, typically a young child (British slang).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Hop to it.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013), the first female British prime minister (1979–90).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: An economic school of thought, asserting that monetary supply is the dominant influence on the economy. If the rate of increase of money is controlled, particularly by governments, then growth stabilizes. This was central to Thatcher's economic policies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: German dictator and leader of the Nazi Party (1933–45).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: European football, what Americans call soccer.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Luxury car.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: French veal stew.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Region in Russia where the former Soviet Union established prison labor camps.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: President of the United States 1981–89, at the same time as Thatcher, with similar economic policies. He was formerly an actor who starred in many films.Return to reference 2

LES MURRAY
1938–2019

Leslie Allan Murray was born at Nabiac, on the north coast of New South Wales, Australia, and grew up on a dairy farm at nearby Bunyah. He was educated at Taree High School and the University of Sydney, where he studied modern languages. After military service with the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, he worked as a translator in the Australian National University, Canberra, and as an officer in the prime minister's department. He became a full-time writer in 1971.

Remaining true to his roots in the Australian "outback" (despite the global shuttling expected of a major poet in the twenty-first century), Murray emerged as a powerful celebrant of the natural world and agricultural work. His substantial *Collected Poems* (1998), dedicated "to the glory of God," bears witness to a staunch and highly individual Roman Catholicism. His celebration of nature includes human nature and reveals a sensibility generously attuned to the hopes and fears, hurts and happinesses of ordinary lives.

Murray seemed intent on proving that the provincial farmer living at the margins of the former British Empire can write poetry as learned, authoritative, and technically virtuosic as any from the metropolitan center. The language of his poetry startles and amuses, reveling in the fecundity and elasticity of English. In poems of metaphorical lushness and sonic opulence, he plays on the eddying reflections of homonyms and rhymes, alliterations and consonances, to suggest a profound interconnectedness among things. As Derek

Walcott said of Murray's work: "There is no poetry in the English language so rooted in its sacredness, so broad-leafed in its pleasures, and yet so intimate and conversational."

Morse[1]

Tuckett. Bill Tuckett. Telegraph operator, Hall's Creek,
which is way out back of the Outback, but he stuck it,
quite likely liked it, despite heat, glare, dust and the lack
of diversion or doctors. Come disaster you trusted to luck,
ingenuity and pluck. This was back when nice people said pluck,
the sleevelink and green eyeshade epoch.[2]
Faced, though, like Bill Tuckett
with a man needing surgery right on the spot, a lot
would have done their dashes. It looked hopeless (dot dot dot)
Lift him up on the table, said Tuckett, running the key hot
till Head Office turned up a doctor who coolly instructed
up a thousand miles of wire, as Tuckett advanced slit by slit
with a safety razor blade, pioneering on into the wet,
copper-wiring the rivers off, in the first operation conducted
along dotted lines, with rum drinkers gripping the patient:
d-d-dash it, take care, Tuck!
And the vital spark stayed unshorted.

Yallah![3] breathed the camelmen. Tuckett, you did it,
you did it!
cried the spattered la-de-dah jodhpur[4]-wearing
Inspector of Stock.
We imagine, some weeks later, a properly laconic
convalescent averring Without you, I'd have kicked
the bucket . . .

From Chungking to Burrenjuck,[5] morse keys have
mostly gone silent
and only old men meet now to chit-chat in their
electric
bygone dialect. The last letter many will forget
is dit-dit-dit-dah,[6] V for Victory. The coders' hero had
speed,
resource and a touch. So ditditdit daah for Bill
Tuckett.

1983

Endnotes

- Note 1: Morse code was used to transmit messages by sequences of dots and dashes (or *dits* and *dahs*) to represent letters and numbers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, the nineteenth century. "Sleevelink": cuff link.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: God be praised! (Arabic).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Long breeches for riding, close-fitting from knee to ankle.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, from southwest China to southeast Australia.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The first four notes of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, also representing *V* for victory, the signal by which Morse code

operators prefaced messages in World War II.Return to reference 6

Corniche[1]

I work all day and hardly drink at all.[2]
I can reach down and feel if I'm depressed.
I adore the Creator because I made myself
and a few times a week a wire jags in my chest.

The first time, I'd been coming apart all year,
weeping, incoherent; cigars had given me up:
any road round a cliff edge I'd whimper along in low gear
then: cardiac horror. Masking my pulse's calm lub-dub.

It was the victim-sickness. Adrenaline howling in my head,
the black dog[3] was my brain. Come to drown me in my breath
was energy's black hole, depression, compere[4] of the predawn show
when, returned from a pee, you stew and welter in your death.

The rogue space rock is on course to snuff your world,
sure. But go acute, and its oncoming fills your day.
The brave die but once? I could go a hundred times a week,
clinging to my pulse with the world's edge inches away.

Laugh, who never shrank around wizened genitals there

or killed themselves to stop dying. The blow that never falls
batters you stupid. Only gradually do
you notice a slight scorn in you for what appals.

A self inside self, cool as conscience, one to be erased
in your final night, or faxed, still knows beneath
all the mute grand opera and uncaused effect—
that death which can be imagined is not true death.

1996

Endnotes

- Note 1: Coastal road.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: See the opening of "Aubade," by the English poet Philip Larkin (1922–1985): "I work all day, and get half drunk at night."Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, depression.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Master of ceremonies.Return to reference 4

The Kitchen Grammars

The verb in a Sanscrit or Farsi[1]
or Latin or Japanese sentence
most frequently comes last,
as if the ingredients and spices
only after collection, measure and
even preservation might get cooked.
To all these cuisines renown attaches.

It's the opening of a Celtic[2] sentence
is a verb. And it was more fire and pot
for us very often than ingredients.
Had we not fed our severed heads[3] on poetry
final might have been our fame's starvation.
Upholding cuisine for us are the French
to be counting in scores and called Gallic.[4]

In English and many more, in Chinese
the verb surrounds itself nucleus-fashion
with its subjects and qualifiers.
Down every slope of the wok they go
to the spitting middle, to be sauced,
ladled, lidded, steamed, flipped back up,
becoming verbs themselves often

and the calm egg centres the meatloaf.

2006

Endnotes

- Note 1: Persian.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Ancient family of languages including Breton, Welsh, Irish, and Gaelic.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Sometimes said to have been venerated by the ancient Celts.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Of Gaul, the Roman name for the region of France. In French, 20 (“score”) is still a base number from 70 to 99.Return to reference 4

SEAMUS HEANEY
1939–2013

Seamus Heaney was born into a Roman Catholic family in predominantly Protestant North Ireland (or Ulster), and he grew up on a farm in County Derry bordered on one side by a stream that marked the frontier with the largely Catholic Irish Republic (or Eire) to the south. He won scholarships first to St. Columb's College, a Catholic boarding school, and then to Queen's University in Belfast. There he became one of an extraordinary group of Northern Irish poets from both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, including Michael Longley and Derek Mahon, who read, discussed, and spurred on one another's work. He taught at Queen's University, before moving in 1972 to the Irish Republic, where he became a citizen and full-time writer. He was Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard and Professor of Poetry at Oxford, and in 1995 won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

With "Digging," placed appropriately as the first poem of his first book, Heaney defined his territory. He dug into his memory, uncovering first his father and then, going deeper, his grandfather. This idea of poetry as an archaeological process of recovery took on a darker cast after the eruption of internecine violence—"the Troubles"—in Northern Ireland in 1969, culminating in the 1972 Bloody Sunday killing of thirteen Catholic civilians by British paratroopers during a civil rights march in Derry. Across several volumes, especially *North* (1975), Heaney wrote a series of grim

"bog poems," about well-preserved Iron Age corpses discovered in the peat of Northern Europe and Ireland. In these poems he sees the bog as a "memory bank," or unconscious, that preserves everything thrown into it, including the victims of ritual killings. He views contemporary violence through the lens of ancient myths, sacrifices, and feuds, an oblique approach that gives his poetry about the Troubles an unusual depth and resonance. He had discovered emblems for the violence in Northern Ireland in *The Bog People*, a book by the Danish archaeologist P. V. Glob, published in translation in 1969, "the year the killing started." Heaney wrote of it:

> It was chiefly concerned with preserved bodies of men and women found in the bogs of Jutland, naked, strangled or with their throats cut, disposed under the peat since early Iron Age times. The author . . . argues convincingly that a number of these, and in particular, the Tollund Man, whose head is now preserved near Aarhus in the museum of Silkeburg, were ritual sacrifices to the Mother Goddess, the goddess of the ground who needed new bridegrooms each winter to bed with her in her sacred place, in the spring. Taken in relation to the tradition of Irish political martyrdom for the cause whose icon is Kathleen Ni Houlihan [mythic figure emblematic of Mother Ireland], this is more than an archaic barbarous rite: it is an archetypal pattern. And the unforgettable photographs of these victims blended in my mind with photographs of atrocities, past and present, in the long rites of Irish political and religious struggles. ("Feeling into Words")

In the bog poems Heaney reflects on the poet's responsibilities to write about the dead, yet to do so without prettifying or exploiting them. He probes the vexed relations between lyric song and historical suffering, "beauty and atrocity": the need to be true to his calling as artist, but also to represent the irredeemable carnage of modern political violence—"the actual weight / of each hooded victim / slashed and dumped" ("The Grauballe Man"). The result is a

tough-minded witnessing, an ethically scrupulous and self-aware mourning of collective loss and sectarian murder.

From the late 1970s Heaney elegized specific victims of the Troubles, such as his acquaintance Louis O'Neill, in "Casualty," as well as more personal losses, such as the natural death of his mother, in "Clearances." He also wrote poems about domestic love, such as "The Sharping Stone." Heaney was thus both a private poet—skillfully kneading grief, love, and wonder into poems about his family and his humble origins—and a public poet, affirming his affinities with the Catholic civil rights movement, which has struggled for centuries against British and Protestant domination. Even in his public poetry he refused slogans, journalistic reportage, and political pieties, scrutinizing instead the wellsprings of collective identity, the ambivalences of individual response to history. Responding obliquely to the destruction of the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, he reworked a two-thousand-year-old Latin ode by Horace in "Anything Can Happen," and the bombings of the London underground (subway) on July 7, 2005, reverberate in *District and Circle* (2006).

An Irishman writing in the language of the British Empire, he translated Gaelic poetry and renewed specifically Irish traditions, such as the *aisling*, or vision poem, but he was also steeped in the English literary canon, drawing on British poetry from *Beowulf* (his prize-winning translation appears earlier in this anthology) to the works of William Wordsworth, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Ted Hughes. Straddling a multiplicity of divisions, transubstantiating crisscross feelings into unexpected images and intricate sonorities, Heaney's work has been embraced by popular audiences for its accessible style and yet also admired by poets and academic critics for its lyric subtlety and rigorous technique.

Formally, Heaney's poetry ranges from strenuous free verse—the clipped lines and unrhymed quatrains of the bog poems—to more traditional forms, such as the modified terza rima of "Station Island" and the sonnet sequence "Clearances." His poems are earthy and matter-of-fact, saturated with the physical textures, sights, smells,

and sounds of farm life, and they are also visionary, lit up by hope and spirit, enacting penitential pilgrimages and unbridled imaginings. That Heaney's poetry is both earthbound and airborne, free and formed, public and private helps explain why he is seen by many as the most gifted English-language poet of his generation.

Digging

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills[1]
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf[2] in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge

Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

1966

Endnotes

- Note 1: Small furrows in which seeds are sown.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Slabs of peat that, when dried, are a common domestic fuel in Ireland.Return to reference 2

The Grauballe Man[1]

As if he had been poured
in tar, he lies
on a pillow of turf
and seems to weep

the black river of himself.
The grain of his wrists
is like bog oak,
the ball of his heel

like a basalt egg.
His instep has shrunk
cold as a swan's foot
or a wet swamp root.

His hips are the ridge
and purse of a mussel,
his spine an eel arrested
under a glisten of mud.

The head lifts,
the chin is a visor
raised above the vent
of his slashed throat

that has tanned and toughened.
The cured wound
opens inwards to a dark
elderberry place.

Who will say 'corpse'
to his vivid cast?

Who will say ‘body’
to his opaque repose?

And his rusted hair,
a mat unlikely
as a foetus’s.
I first saw his twisted face

in a photograph,
a head and shoulder
out of the peat,
bruised like a forceps baby,

but now he lies
perfected in my memory,
down to the red horn
of his nails,

hung in the scales
with beauty and atrocity:
with the Dying Gaul[2]
too strictly compassed

on his shield,
with the actual weight
of each hooded victim,
slashed and dumped.

1975

Endnotes

- Note 1: A body exhumed from a Danish bog and photographed in P. V. Glob’s book *The Bog People.*Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Roman marble reproduction of a Greek bronze sculpture depicting a wounded soldier of Gaul, whose matted hair

identifies him as a Celt, in Rome’s Capitoline Museum.Return to reference 2

Punishment[1]

I can feel the tug
of the halter at the nape
of her neck, the wind
on her naked front.

It blows her nipples
to amber beads,
it shakes the frail rigging
of her ribs.

I can see her drowned
body in the bog,
the weighing stone,
the floating rods and boughs.

Under which at first
she was a barked sapling
that is dug up
oak-bone, brain-firkin:°

her shaved head
like a stubble of black corn,
her blindfold a soiled bandage,
her noose a ring

to store
the memories of love.
Little adultress,
before they punished you

you were flaxen-haired,
undernourished, and your

tar-black face was beautiful.
My poor scapegoat,

I almost love you
but would have cast, I know,
the stones of silence.
I am the artful voyeur

of your brain's exposed
and darkened combs,°
your muscles' webbing
and all your numbered bones:

I who have stood dumb
when your betraying sisters,
cauled° in tar,
wept by the railings,

who would connive
in civilized outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge.

1975

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In 1951 the peat-stained body apparently of a young girl, who lived in the late 1st century C.E., was recovered from a bog in Windeby, Germany. As P. V. Glob describes her in *The Bog People*, she "lay naked in the hole in the peat, a bandage over the eyes and a collar round the neck. The band across the eyes was drawn tight and had cut into the neck and the base of the nose. We may feel sure that it had been used to close her eyes to this world. There was no mark of strangulation on the neck,

so that it had not been used for that purpose." Her hair "had been shaved off with a razor on the left side of the head. . . . When the brain was removed the convolutions and folds of the surface could be clearly seen [Glob reproduces a photograph of her brain]. . . . This girl of only fourteen had had an inadequate winter diet. . . . To keep the young body under, some birch branches and a big stone were laid upon her." According to the Roman historian Tacitus, the Germanic peoples punished adulterous women by shaving off their hair and then scourging them out of the village or killing them. More recently, her "betraying sisters" were sometimes shaved, stripped, tarred, and handcuffed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to the railings of Belfast in punishment for keeping company with British soldiers.
Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *small cask*Return to reference °
- °: *valleys*Return to reference °
- °: *wrapped, enclosed*Return to reference °

Casualty

1

He would drink by himself
And raise a weathered thumb
Towards the high shelf,
Calling another rum
And blackcurrant, without
Having to raise his voice,
Or order a quick stout°
By a lifting of the eyes
And a discreet dumb-show
Of pulling off the top;
At closing time would go
In waders and peaked cap
Into the showery dark,
A dole-kept[1] breadwinner
But a natural for work.
I loved his whole manner,
Sure-footed but too sly,
His deadpan sidling tact,
His fisherman's quick eye
And turned observant back.
Incomprehensible
To him, my other life.
Sometimes, on his high stool,
Too busy with his knife
At a tobacco plug
And not meeting my eye
In the pause after a slug°
He mentioned poetry.

We would be on our own
And, always politic
And shy of condescension,
I would manage by some trick
To switch the talk to eels
Or lore of the horse and cart
Or the Provisionals.[2]

But my tentative art
His turned back watches too:
He was blown to bits
Out drinking in a curfew
Others obeyed, three nights
After they shot dead
The thirteen men in Derry.
PARAS THIRTEEN, the walls said,
BOGSIDE NIL.[3] That Wednesday
Everybody held
His breath and trembled.

2

It was a day of cold
Raw silence, wind-blown
Surplice and soutane:[4]
Rained-on, flower-laden
Coffin after coffin
Seemed to float from the door
Of the packed cathedral
Like blossoms on slow water.
The common funeral
Unrolled its swaddling band,[5]
Lapping, tightening
Till we were braced and bound
Like brothers in a ring.

But he would not be held
At home by his own crowd
Whatever threats were phoned,
Whatever black flags waved.
I see him as he turned
In that bombed offending place,
Remorse fused with terror
In his still knowable face,
His cornered outfaced stare
Blinding in the flash.

He had gone miles away
For he drank like a fish
Nightly, naturally
Swimming towards the lure
Of warm lit-up places,
The blurred mesh and murmur
Drifting among glasses
In the gregarious smoke.
How culpable was he
That last night when he broke
Our tribe's complicity?[6]
'Now you're supposed to be
An educated man,'
I hear him say. 'Puzzle me
The right answer to that one.'

3

I missed his funeral,
Those quiet walkers
And sideways talkers
Shoaling out of his lane
To the respectable
Purring of the hearse . . .

They move in equal pace
With the habitual
Slow consolation
Of a dawdling engine,
The line lifted, hand
Over fist, cold sunshine
On the water, the land
Banked under fog: that morning
I was taken in his boat,
The screw° purling, turning
Indolent fathoms white,
I tasted freedom with him.
To get out early, haul
Steadily off the bottom,
Dispraise the catch, and smile
As you find a rhythm
Working you, slow mile by mile,
Into your proper haunt
Somewhere, well out, beyond . . .

Dawn-sniffing revenant,[7]
Plodder through midnight rain,
Question me again.

1979

Endnotes

- Note 1: That is, receiving unemployment benefits.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The Provisional, paramilitary branch of the IRA.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: This graffito records—in the form of a soccer match score—that the British Army's Parachute Regiment had killed thirteen people; the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Derry's Bogside district, none. The IRA bombing occurred after the

killing of Catholic demonstrators on Bloody Sunday, January 30, 1972.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Vestments worn by Roman Catholic priests.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Long cloth in which babies were once wrapped to restrain and warm them.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Roman Catholic community's agreement to obey the curfew (of lines 39–40).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: One returned from the dead.Return to reference 7

Notes

- °: *strong dark beer*Return to reference °
- °: *gulp of liquor*Return to reference °
- °: *propellor*Return to reference °

From Station Island[1]

12

Like a convalescent, I took the hand
stretched down from the jetty, sensed again
an alien comfort as I stepped on ground

to find the helping hand still gripping mine,
fish-cold and bony, but whether to guide
or to be guided I could not be certain

for the tall man in step at my side
seemed blind, though he walked straight as a rush
upon his ash plant,[2] his eyes fixed straight ahead.

Then I knew him in the flesh
out there on the tarmac° among the cars,
wintered hard and sharp as a blackthorn bush.

His voice eddying with the vowels of all rivers[3]
came back to me, though he did not speak yet,
a voice like a prosecutor's or a singer's,

cunning,[4] narcotic, mimic, definite
as a steel nib's downstroke, quick and clean,
and suddenly he hit a litter basket

with his stick, saying, "Your obligation
is not discharged by any common rite.
What you must do must be done on your own

so get back in harness. The main thing is to write

for the joy of it. Cultivate a work-lust
that imagines its haven like your hands at night

dreaming the sun in the sunspot of a breast.
You are fasted now, light-headed, dangerous.
Take off from here. And don't be so earnest,

let others wear the sackcloth and the ashes.[5]
Let go, let fly, forget.
You've listened long enough. Now strike your note."

It was as if I had stepped free into space
alone with nothing that I had not known
already. Raindrops blew in my face

as I came to. "Old father, mother's son,
there is a moment in Stephen's diary
for April the thirteenth, a revelation

set among my stars—that one entry
has been a sort of password in my ears,
the collect of a new epiphany,[6]

the Feast of the Holy Tundish."[7] "Who cares,"
he jeered, "any more? The English language
belongs to us. You are raking at dead fires,

a waste of time for somebody your age.
That subject° people stuff is a cod's° game,
infantile, like your peasant pilgrimage.

You lose more of yourself than you redeem
doing the decent thing. Keep at a tangent.
When they make the circle wide, it's time to swim

out on your own and fill the element
with signatures on your own frequency,

echo soundings, searches, probes, allurements,

elver-gleams[8] in the dark of the whole sea."
The shower broke in a cloudburst, the tarmac
fumed and sizzled. As he moved off quickly

the downpour loosed its screens round his straight walk.

1984

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Station Island is a sequence of dream encounters with familiar ghosts, set on Station Island on Lough Derg in Co. Donegal. The island is also known as St. Patrick's Purgatory because of a tradition that Patrick was the first to establish the penitential vigil of fasting and praying which still constitutes the basis of the three-day pilgrimage. Each unit of the contemporary pilgrim's exercises is called a 'station,' and a large part of each station involves walking barefoot and praying round the 'beds,' stone circles which are said to be the remains of early medieval monastic cells [*Heaney's note*]. In this last section of the poem, the familiar ghost is that of Heaney's countryman James Joyce. Compare with the stanza form and encounter with a ghost in T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Walking stick made of ash, like the one carried by Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses.* Joyce was almost blind.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Anna Livia Plurabelle episode of *Finnegans Wake* resounds with the names of many rivers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: "The only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning" (Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*).Return to reference 4

- Note 5: As worn by penitents in biblical times and later.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Manifestation of a superhuman being, as of the infant Jesus to the Magi (Matthew 2). In the Christian calendar, the Feast of the Epiphany is January 6. “Epiphany” was also Joyce’s term for the “sudden revelation of the whatness of a thing.” “Collect”: short prayer assigned to a particular day.Return to reference 6
- Note 7:
  See the end of James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* [*Heaney’s note*]: “*13 April:* That tundish [funnel] has been on my mind for a long time. I looked it up and find it English and good old blunt English too. Damn the dean of studies and his funnel! What did he come here for to teach us his own language or to learn it from us? Damn him one way or the other!”
  Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Gleams as of young eels.Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *blacktop surface*Return to reference °
- °: *colonized* Return to reference °
- °: *fool’s*Return to reference °

Clearances

in memoriam M.K.H.,[1] 1911–1984

She taught me what her uncle once taught her:
How easily the biggest coal block split
If you got the grain and hammer angled right.

The sound of that relaxed alluring blow,
Its co-opted and obliterated echo,
Taught me to hit, taught me to loosen,

Taught me between the hammer and the block
To face the music. Teach me now to listen,
To strike it rich behind the linear black.

1

A cobble thrown a hundred years ago
Keeps coming at me, the first stone
Aimed at a great-grandmother's turncoat brow.[2]
The pony jerks and the riot's on.
She's crouched low in the trap
Running the gauntlet that first Sunday
Down the brae° to Mass at a panicked gallop.
He whips on through the town to cries of 'Lundy!'[3]

Call her 'The Convert'. 'The Exogamous[4] Bride'.
Anyhow, it is a genre piece
Inherited on my mother's side
And mine to dispose with now she's gone.
Instead of silver and Victorian lace,
The exonerating, exonerated stone.

2

Polished linoleum shone there. Brass taps shone.
The china cups were very white and big—
An unchipped set with sugar bowl and jug.
The kettle whistled. Sandwich and teascone
Were present and correct. In case it run,
The butter must be kept out of the sun.
And don't be dropping crumbs. Don't tilt your chair.
Don't reach. Don't point. Don't make noise when you stir.

It is Number 5, New Row, Land of the Dead,
Where grandfather is rising from his place
With spectacles pushed back on a clean bald head
To welcome a bewildered homing daughter
Before she even knocks. 'What's this? What's this?'
And they sit down in the shining room together.

3

When all the others were away at Mass
I was all hers as we peeled potatoes.
They broke the silence, let fall one by one
Like solder weeping off the soldering iron:
Cold comforts set between us, things to share
Gleaming in a bucket of clean water.
And again let fall. Little pleasant splashes
From each other's work would bring us to our senses.

So while the parish priest at her bedside
Went hammer and tongs at the prayers for the dying
And some were responding and some crying
I remembered her head bent towards my head,
Her breath in mine, our fluent dipping knives—

Never closer the whole rest of our lives.

4

Fear of affectation made her affect
Inadequacy whenever it came to
Pronouncing words 'beyond her'. *Bertold Brek.*[5]
She'd manage something hampered and askew
Every time, as if she might betray
The hampered and inadequate by too
Well-adjusted a vocabulary.
With more challenge than pride, she'd tell me, 'You
Know all them things.' So I governed my tongue
In front of her, a genuinely well-
adjusted adequate betrayal
Of what I knew better. I'd *naw* and *aye*
And decently relapse into the wrong
Grammar which kept us allied and at bay.

5

The cool that came off sheets just off the line
Made me think the damp must still be in them
But when I took my corners of the linen
And pulled against her, first straight down the hem
And then diagonally, then flapped and shook
The fabric like a sail in a cross-wind,
They made a dried-out undulating thwack.
So we'd stretch and fold and end up hand to hand
For a split second as if nothing had happened
For nothing had that had not always happened
Beforehand, day by day, just touch and go,
Coming close again by holding back
In moves where I was x and she was o

Inscribed in sheets she'd sewn from ripped-out flour
sacks.

6

In the first flush of the Easter holidays
The ceremonies during Holy Week
Were highpoints of our *Sons and Lovers*[6] phase.
The midnight fire. The paschal candlestick.[7]
Elbow to elbow, glad to be kneeling next
To each other up there near the front
Of the packed church, we would follow the text
And rubrics° for the blessing of the font.[8]
As the hind longs for the streams, so my soul . . .[9]
Dippings. Towellings. The water breathed on.
The water mixed with chrism[1] and with oil.
Cruet[2] tinkle. Formal incensation
And the psalmist's outcry taken up with pride:
Day and night my tears have been my bread.[3]

7

In the last minutes he said more to her
Almost than in all their life together.
'You'll be in New Row on Monday night
And I'll come up for you and you'll be glad
When I walk in the door . . . Isn't that right?'
His head was bent down to her propped-up head.
She could not hear but we were overjoyed.
He called her good and girl. Then she was dead,
The searching for a pulsebeat was abandoned
And we all knew one thing by being there.
The space we stood around had been emptied
Into us to keep, it penetrated
Clearances that suddenly stood open.

High cries were felled and a pure change happened.

8

I thought of walking round and round a space
Utterly empty, utterly a source
Where the decked chestnut tree had lost its place
In our front hedge above the wallflowers.
The white chips jumped and jumped and skited[4] high.
I heard the hatchet's differentiated
Accurate cut, the crack, the sigh
And collapse of what luxuriated
Through the shocked tips and wreckage of it all.
Deep planted and long gone, my coeval[5]
Chestnut from a jam jar in a hole,
Its heft and hush become a bright nowhere,
A soul ramifying and forever
Silent, beyond silence listened for.

1987

Endnotes

- Note 1: Margaret Kathleen Heaney, the poet's mother.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Heaney's Protestant great-grandmother married a Catholic.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: That is, traitor. In 1688 the Irish colonel Robert Lundy knew that Derry (or Londonderry) would be invaded by the English, but failed to prepare adequate defenses.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Married outside the group.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), German playwright.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Novel (1913) by the English writer D. H. Lawrence (1885–1930) that largely centers on the oedipal relationship between a mother and son.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Large candle lit during a ceremony on Holy Saturday, which precedes Easter Sunday.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Receptacle for holy water.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Psalms 42:1.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Mixture of olive oil and balsam.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Small vessel for wine or water.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Psalms 42:3.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Shot off obliquely.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Of the same age.Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *steep slope*Return to reference °
- °: *rules*Return to reference °

Anything Can Happen

after Horace, *Odes*, 1, 34[1]

Anything can happen. You know how Jupiter[2]
Will mostly wait for clouds to gather head
Before he hurls the lightning? Well, just now
He galloped his thunder cart and his horses

Across a clear blue sky. It shook the earth
And the clogged underearth, the River Styx,[3]
The winding streams, the Atlantic shore itself.
Anything can happen, the tallest towers

Be overturned, those in high places daunted,
Those overlooked regarded. Stropped-beak[4] Fortune
Swoops, making the air gasp, tearing the crest off one,
Setting it down bleeding on the next.

Ground gives. The heaven's weight
Lifts up off Atlas like a kettle-lid.
Capstones shift, nothing resettles right.
Telluric[5] ash and fire-spores boil away.

2001, 2006

Endnotes

- Note 1: See *Odes* (23 B.C.E.), books of lyric poetry by the Roman poet and satirist Horace (65–8 B.C.E.). Although he follows aspects of Horace's poem, Heaney drops Horace's first stanza and adds a new final stanza.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Supreme Roman god, whose weapon was the thunderbolt.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Greek mythology, a river in the underworld, over which the shades of the dead were ferried.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: With a beak with a sharpened edge.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Of the earth or soil. “Atlas”: one of the Titans in Greek mythology, he was condemned to hold up the heavens. “Capstones”: stones that crown structures, typically walls.Return to reference 5

Environmental Literature and Climate Change

Nature has always been a source of literary inspiration, but the modern Western understanding of the environment as under threat and in need of protection begins with the conservation movements of the late nineteenth century. English social reformer Octavia Hill (1838–1912) advocated for the importance of open spaces and co-founded the National Trust in 1895 to create parks and greenbelts accessible to the public in the United Kingdom. The Open Space movement, named after Hill's essay on the topic, emphasized preservation of nature for human enjoyment, but the priorities of environmental activists shifted in the wake of World War II and with the rise of environmental justice movements across the globe. The atomic fallout of nuclear weapons, the cancerous effects of pesticide use, and the displacement of Indigenous and poor peoples from land earmarked for oil drilling, dam building, and deforestation widened the scope of environmentalism to include matters of social justice and climate change. While environmental literature commemorating the beauty of natural landscapes remains powerful, authors writing in the contemporary era also convey more dystopian, tragic, and surreal views of Earth's habitats.

Since the eighteenth century, humans have been warming the planet by burning fossil fuels, which create atmospheric gases that trap the sun's energy. The latter half of the twentieth century, known among climate scientists as "The Great Acceleration," saw the Earth warming at rates not seen for millennia. In response to the intensification of climate change, biologist Eugene Stoermer and Nobel Prize–winning chemist Paul Crutzen have proposed that human beings are living in a new geological epoch called the "Anthropocene." The Anthropocene remains an unofficial unit of geological time; however, there is now a scientific consensus around

the existence of anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change. Such awareness has served as a major rallying point for diverse writers of environmental literature who explore the impact of human beings on Earth systems. The writers featured in this cluster hail from around the English-speaking world, and their fiction, nonfiction, and poetry reveal the interdependence of nature and culture in a world profoundly endangered by human activity.

Stories of natural disaster illustrate ambivalence toward the advances of human civilization and connect traditionally literary fiction to neighboring genres such as science fiction and testimony. J. G. Ballard, a leading author of the "New Wave" movement, brought popular and pulp forms of science fiction into conversation with the literary traditions of modernism and postmodernism. *The Drowned World* (1962) is the second of his four "elemental novels," dedicated to representing the awesome powers of wind, water, fire, and earth. Although Ballard's novel is not overtly about climate change, his imagery of drowned cities and makeshift boats on city streets supplies an influential iconography for climate-change fiction or cli-fi to come. Bessie Head employs traditionally realist narrative strategies in "Looking for a Rain God" (1977) to depict extreme weather. Chronicling the increasingly desperate plight of villagers in rural Botswana, Head drew on real-world events to offer an anguished portrait of how drought underpins social interactions and rituals of sacrifice.

Industrial development is a central theme in literary fiction preoccupied by environmental and climate justice. Ben Okri's "What the Tapster Saw" (1988) offers a nightmarish vision of the Niger Delta, the site of some of the most damaging oil spills in the world. Okri uses surreal images, at one point transforming an oil spill into a giant snake, to capture the monstrosity of the global petroleum industry's effects on multispecies habitats and local Nigerian industries and trades. Arundhati Roy, like Okri, experiments with narrative perspective and description, to capture the ecological ravaging of a resource-rich, biodiverse place. In *The God of Small Things* (1997), the protagonist returns to the Kerala backwaters of her youth to discover that its beauty has made it an international

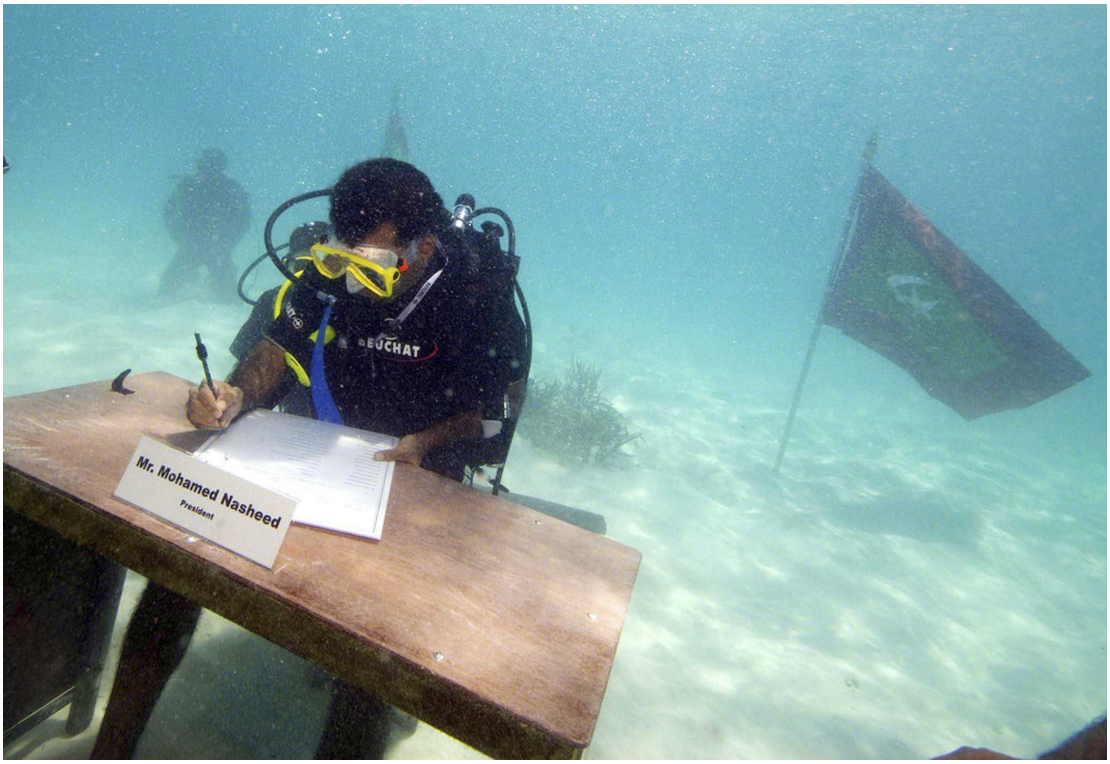
tourist attraction and resort destination. Roy uses an abundance of descriptive detail to introduce the fragile networks of life sacrificed for the sake of progress and modernization.

Climate Protests in London, 2019. Students march past the Houses of Parliament during the international school strike for climate.

Nonfiction plays a special role in the history of environmental literature, in particular the genre of nature-writing, which blends elements of memoir, reportage, and travelogue to capture the specificities of place over time. Amitav Ghosh, a novelist, nonfiction writer, and self-described descendant of ecological refugees, argues in *The Great Derangement* that nonfiction has historically outpaced fiction in its capacity to represent climate change. For Ghosh, traditional forms of literary fiction struggle to register the mundane

aspects of environmental damage and the invisible changes to Earth's atmosphere. Nature writing, as evidenced in Robert Macfarlane's *Underworld*, centralizes land, place, and life cycles in ways that human-centered fictions have not always prioritized.

Ghosh and Macfarlane's recalculations of human time within the deep time of the planet set the stage for a selection of twenty-first-century poems that address climate change. These poems treat the representation of climate change as an aesthetic challenge. To do so is not to minimize the material effects of environmental destruction, but to make their consequences more visible and more palpable.



Underwater Cabinet Meeting in the Maldives. The Maldives is located in the Indian Ocean and, as a low-lying country, faces inundation from rising sea levels. In 2009 the nation's president, Mohamed Nasheed, drew attention to the crisis by convening an underwater cabinet meeting, during which he signed a declaration calling for global action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

J. G. BALLARD

James Graham Ballard (1930–2009) was born in Shanghai, China, where his father was the managing director of a printing company. The family lived in an extraterritorial area known as the Shanghai International Settlement, where British residents were not subject to local Chinese law. When Japan invaded this area during World War II, the Ballard family was sent to an internment camp where they lived for two years. Ballard has described the camp as a place where he witnessed extreme violence and yet retained a childish sense of play and imagination. His experience in the camp directly informs his novel *Empire of the Sun* (1984), but the larger ironies spurred by the co-existence of violence and normalcy also underpin major works like *The Atrocity Exhibition* (1969), *Crash* (1973), *Concrete Island* (1974), and *High Rise* (1975). These works establish Ballard's fascination with the fallout of new technologies and the effects of hypermodern environments on the psychology of their inhabitants.

Ballard returned to England in 1945 after the end of World War II. He attended the University of Cambridge and planned to become a psychiatrist, but shifted to writing science fiction under the influence of surrealism. *The Drowned World* (1962), set in a post-apocalyptic future London, illustrates his concept of "inner space," in which external reality merges with the inner workings of the mind, particularly the sex and death drives associated with the work of Sigmund Freud. In the excerpt included here, the scientist-protagonist Kerans attempts to find Lieutenant Hardman, who, after falling ill and possibly going insane, abandons his team of researchers without clear motivation. Ballard defamiliarizes the city, turning it into a "necropolis" in which strange flora and fauna have overtaken landmarks like the British Museum, described in turn through archaic and spectral language. The vision of the end of civilization, in which rising seas reclaim areas of human settlement, has made *The Drowned World* a classic work of environmental

dystopia. Whether the flood is a form of biblical renewal or a psychoanalytic invitation to return to the womb is left ambiguous, but Ballard's inner spaces offer an unusual glimpse into the built environments of modernity and the dark fantasies they hold in check.

From The Drowned World

The Causeways of the Sun

As Kerans had prophesied, they found Hardman among the silt flats.

Descending to three hundred feet above the water, they began to rake up and down the distal[1] five-mile length of the main channel. The huge banks of silt lifted above the surface like the backs of yellow sperm whales. Wherever the hydrodynamic contours of the channel gave the silt banks any degree of permanence, the surrounding jungle spilled from the rooftops and rooted itself in the damp loam, matting the whole morass into an immovable structure. From the hatchway Kerans scrutinised the narrow beaches under the outer edge of the fern trees, watching for the tell-tale signs of a camouflaged raft or makeshift hut.

After twenty minutes, however, and a dozen careful sweeps of the channel, Riggs turned from the hatchway with a rueful shake of his head.

"You're probably right, Robert, but it's a hopeless job. Hardman's no fool, if he wants to hide from us we'll never find him. Even if he were leaning out of a window and waving, ten to one we wouldn't see him."

Kerans murmured in reply, watching the surface below. Each of the tracking runs was about a hundred yards to the starboard of the previous one, and for the last three runs he had been watching the semicircular crescent of what appeared to be a large apartment block standing in the angle between the channel and the southern bank of a small creek which ran off into the surrounding jungle. The upper eight or nine storeys of the block stood above the water, enclosing a low mound of muddy-brown silt. The surface streamed with water draining away from a collection of shallow pools covering it. Two hours earlier the bank had been a sheet of wet mud, but by

ten o'clock, as the helicopter flew over, the mud was beginning to dry and grow firm. To Kerans, shielding his eyes from the reflected sunlight, its smooth surface appeared to be scored by two faint parallel lines, about six feet apart, that led across to the jutting roof of an almost submerged balcony. As they swept overhead he tried to see under the concrete slab, but its mouth was choked with refuse and rotting logs.

He touched Riggs' arm and pointed to the tracks, so immersed in tracing their winding progress to the balcony that he almost failed to notice the equally distinct pattern of imprints emerging in the drying surface between the lines, spaced some four feet apart, unmistakably the footsteps of a tall powerful man hauling a heavy load.

As the noise of the helicopter's engine faded out on the roof above them, Riggs and Macready bent down and inspected the crude catamaran hidden behind a screen of bocage[2] under the balcony. Fashioned from two drop-tanks lashed to either end of a metal bed-frame, its twin grey hulls were still streaked with silt. Clumps of mud from Hardman's feet crossed the room opening on to the balcony and disappeared through the suite into the adjacent corridor.

"This is it without a doubt—agree, Sergeant?" Riggs asked, stepping out into the sunlight to look up at the crescent of apartment blocks. A chain of autonomous units, they were linked by short causeways between the elevator wells at the end of each building. Most of the windows were broken, the cream facing tiles covered by huge patches of fungus, and the whole complex looked like an over-ripe camembert cheese.[3]

Macready knelt down by one of the hulls, cleaning away the silt, then traced out the code number painted across the bow. "UNAF 22-H-549—that's us, sir. The drop tanks were being cleared out yesterday, we'd stored them on C-Deck. He must have taken a spare bed from the sick-bay after ward-roll."

"Good." Rubbing his hands together with pleasure, Riggs stepped over to Kerans, smiling jauntily, his self-confidence and good humour

fully restored. "Excellent, Robert. Superb diagnostic skill. You were quite right, of course." He peered shrewdly at Kerans, as if speculating on the real sources of this remarkable insight, invisibly marking him off. "Cheer up, Hardman will be grateful to you when we take him back."

Kerans stood on the edge of the balcony, the slope of caking silt below him. He looked up at the silent curve of windows, wondering which of the thousand or so rooms would be Hardman's hiding-place. "I hope you're right. You've still got to catch him."

"Don't worry. We will." Riggs began to shout up at the two men on the roof, helping Daley lash down the helicopter. "Wilson, keep a look-out from the south-west end; Caldwell, you work your way across to the north. Keep an eye on both sides, he might try to swim for it."

The two men saluted and moved off, their carbines[4] held at their hips. Macready cradled a Thompson gun in the crook of his arm, and as Riggs unbuttoned the flap of his holster Kerans said quietly: "Colonel, we're not tracking down a wild dog."

Riggs waved this aside. "Relax, Robert, it's just that I don't want my leg bitten off by some sleeping croc. Though as a matter of interest"—here he flashed Kerans a gleaming smile—"Hardman has got a ·45 Colt with him."

Leaving Kerans to digest this, he picked up the electric megaphone.

"*Hardman! ! This is Colonel Riggs! !*" He bellowed Hardman's name at the silent heat, then winked at Kerans and added: "*Dr. Kerans wants to talk to you, Lieutenant! !*

Focused by the crescent of buildings, the sounds echoed away across the swamps and creeks, booming distantly over the great empty mudflats. Around them everything glistened in the immense heat, and the men on the roof fretted nervously under their forage caps. A thick cloacal[5] stench exuded from the silt flat, a corona of a million insects pulsing and humming hungrily above it, and a sudden spasm of nausea knotted Kerans' gullet, for a moment dizzying him. Pressing a wrist tightly to his forehead, he leaned back against a

pillar, listening to the echoes reverberate around him. Four hundred yards away two white-faced clock towers protruded through the vegetation, like the temple spires of some lost jungle religion, and the sounds of his name—*"Kerans ... Kerans ... Kerans"*—reflected off them seemed to Kerans to toll with an intense premonition of terror and disaster, the meaningless orientation of the clock hands identifying him, more completely than anything he had previously experienced, with all the confused and minatory spectres that cast their shadows more and more darkly through his mind, the myriad-handed mandala[6] of cosmic time.

His name still echoed faintly in his ears as they began their search of the building. He took up his position at the stairwell at the centre of each corridor while Riggs and Macready inspected the apartments, keeping a look-out as they climbed the floors. The building had been gutted. All the floorboards had rotted or been ripped out, and they moved slowly along the tiled inlays, stepping warily from one concrete tie-beam to another. Most of the plaster had slipped from the walls and lay in grey heaps along the skirting boards. Wherever sunlight filtered through, the bare lathes[7] were intertwined with creeper and wire-moss, and the original fabric of the building seemed solely supported by the profusion of vegetation ramifying through every room and corridor.

Through the cracks in the floors rose the stench of the greasy water swirling through the windows below. Disturbed for the first time in many years, the bats which hung from the tilting picture rails flew frantically for the windows, dispersing with cries of pain in the brilliant sunlight. Lizards scuttered and darted through the floor cracks, or skated desperately around the dry baths in the bathrooms.

Exacerbated by the heat, Riggs' impatience mounted as they climbed the floors and had covered all but the top two without success.

"Well, where is he?" Riggs rested against the stair-rail, gesturing for quiet, and listened to the silent building, breathing tightly

through his teeth. "We'll stand easy for five minutes, Sergeant. Now's the time for caution. He's somewhere around here."

Macready slung his Thompson over his shoulder and climbed to the fan-light on the next landing which let in a thin breeze. Kerans leaned against the wall, the sweat pouring across his back and chest, temples thudding from the exertion of mounting the stairs. It was 11.30, and the temperature outside was well over 120 degrees. He looked down at Riggs' flushed pink face, admiring the Colonel's self-discipline and single-mindedness.

"Don't look so condescending, Robert. I know I'm sweating like a pig, but I haven't had as much rest as you lately."

The two men exchanged glances, each aware of the conflict of attitude towards Hardman, and Kerans, in an effort to resolve the rivalry between them, said quietly: "You'll probably catch him now, Colonel."

Searching for somewhere to sit, he walked off down the corridor and pushed back the door into the first apartment.

As he unlatched the door the frame collapsed weakly into a litter of worm-eaten dust and timbers, and he stepped across it to the wide french windows overlooking the balcony. A little air funnelled through, and Kerans let it play over his face and chest, surveying the jungle below. The promontory on which the crescent of apartment houses stood had at one time been a small hill, and a number of the buildings visible beneath the vegetation on the other side of the silt flat were still above the flood-waters. Kerans stared at the two clock towers jutting up like white obelisks above the fern fronds. The yellow air of the noon high seemed to press down like a giant translucent counterpane on the leafy spread, a thousand motes of light spitting like diamonds whenever a bough moved and deflected the sun's rays. The obscured outline of a classical portico and colonnaded façade below the towers suggested that the buildings were once part of some small municipal centre. One of the clockfaces was without its hands; the other, by coincidence, had stopped at almost exactly the right time—11.35. Kerans wondered whether the clock was not in fact working, tended by some mad

recluse clinging to a last meaningless register of sanity, though if the mechanism were still operable Riggs might well perform that role. Several times, before they abandoned one of the drowned cities, he had wound the two-ton mechanism of some rusty cathedral clock and they had sailed off to a last carillon[8] of chimes across the water. For nights afterwards, in his dreams Kerans had seen Riggs dressed as William Tell, striding about in a huge Dalinian landscape,[9] planting immense dripping sundials like daggers in the fused sand.

Kerans leaned against the window, waiting as the minutes passed and left behind the clock fixed at 11.35, overtaking it like a vehicle in a faster lane. Or was it not stationary (guaranteed though it would be to tell the time with complete, unquestionable accuracy twice a day—more than most time-pieces) but merely so slow that its motion *appeared* to be imperceptible? The slower a clock, the nearer it approximated to the infinitely gradual and majestic progression of cosmic time—in fact, by reversing a clock's direction and running it backwards one could devise a timepiece that in a sense was moving even more slowly than the universe, and consequently part of an even greater spatiotemporal system.

Kerans' amusement at this notion was distracted by his discovery among the clutter of debris on the opposite bank of a small cemetery sloping down into the water, its leaning headstones advancing to their crowns like a party of bathers. He remembered again one ghastly cemetery over which they had moored, its ornate Florentine tombs cracked and sprung, corpses floating out in their unravelling winding-sheets in a grim rehearsal of the Day of Judgement.

Averting his eyes, he turned away from the window, with a jolt realised that a tall black-bearded man was standing motionlessly in a doorway behind him. Startled, Kerans stared uncertainly at the figure, with an effort reassembling his thoughts. The big man stood in a slightly stooped but relaxed pose, his heavy arms loosely at his sides. Black mud caked across his wrists and forehead, and clogged his boots and the fabric of his drill trousers, for a moment reminding Kerans of one of the resurrected corpses. His bearded chin was sunk

between his broad shoulders, the impression of constraint and fatigue heightened by the medical orderly's blue denim jacket several sizes too small which he wore, the corporal's stripe pulled up over the swell of his deltoid muscles. The expression on his face was one of hungry intensity, but he gazed at Kerans with sombre detachment, his eyes like heavily banked fires, a thin glow of interest in the biologist the only outward show of the energy within.

Kerans waited until his eyes adjusted themselves to the darkness at the rear of the room, looking involuntarily at the bedroom doorway through which the bearded man had stepped. He reached out one hand to him, half-afraid of breaking the spell between them, warning him not to move, and elicited in return an expression of curiously understanding sympathy, almost as if their roles were reversed.

"Hardman!" Kerans whispered.

With a galvanic leap, Hardman flung himself at Kerans, his big frame blocking off half the room, feinted just before they collided and swerved past, before Kerans could regain his balance had jumped out on to the balcony and climbed over the rail.

"*Hardman!*" As one of the men on the roof shouted the alarm Kerans reached the balcony. Hardman swung himself like an acrobat down the drain-pipe to the parapet below. Riggs and Macready dived into the room. Holding on to his hat, Riggs pivoted out over the rail, swore as Hardman disappeared into the apartment.

"Good man, Kerans. You nearly held him!" Together they ran back into the corridor and raced down the stairway, saw Hardman swinging around the banisters four floors below, hurling himself from one landing to the next in a single stride.

When they reached the lowest floor they were thirty seconds behind Hardman, and a medley of excited shouts were coming from the roof. But Riggs paused stock-still on the balcony.

"Good God, he's trying to drag his raft back into the water!"

Thirty yards away, Hardman was dragging the catamaran across the caking mass of silt, the tow-rope over his shoulders, jerking its bows into the air with demoniac energy.

Riggs buttoned the flap of his holster, sadly shaking his head. There was a full fifty yards to the water's edge, and Hardman was sinking up to his knees in the damper silt, oblivious of the men on the roof looking down at him. Finally he tossed away the tow-rope and seized the bed-frame in both hands, began to wrench it along in slow painful jerks, the denim jacket splitting down his back.

Riggs stepped up on to the balcony, gesturing to Wilson and Caldwell to come down. "Poor devil. He looks all in. Doctor, you stay close; you may be able to pacify him."

Carefully they closed in on Hardman. The five men, Riggs, Macready, the two soldiers and Kerans, advanced down the sloping crust, shielding their eyes from the intense sunlight. Like a wounded water-buffalo, Hardman continued to wrestle in the mud ten yards in front of them. Kerans motioned to the others to stay still and then walked forwards with Wilson, a blond-haired youth who had once been Hardman's orderly. Wondering what to say to Hardman, he cleared the knots of phlegm from his throat.

On the roof behind them there was a sudden staccato roar of exhaust, splitting the silence of the tableau. A few steps behind Wilson, Kerans hesitated, saw Riggs look up in annoyance at the helicopter. Assuming that their mission was now over, Daley had started his engine, and the blades were swinging slowly through the air.

Roused from his attempt to reach the water, Hardman looked around at the group encircling him, released the catamaran and crouched down behind it. Wilson began to wade forward precariously through the soft silt along the water's edge, the carbine held across his chest. As he sank up to his waist he shouted at Kerans, his voice lost in the mounting roar of the engine, exhaust spitting in sharp cracks over their heads. Suddenly Wilson swayed, and before Kerans could steady him Hardman leaned across the catamaran, the big Colt ·45 in his hand, and fired at them. The flame from the barrel stabbed through the dazzling air, and with a short cry Wilson fell across the carbine, then rolled back clutching a

bloodied elbow, his forage cap cuffed off his head by the discharge wave of the explosion.

As the other men began to retreat up the slope Hardman holstered the revolver in his belt, turned and ran off along the water's edge to the buildings that merged into the jungle a hundred yards away.

Pursued by the ascending roar of the helicopter, they raced after Hardman, Riggs and Kerans helping the injured Wilson, stumbling in and out of the pot-holes left by the men ahead. At the edge of the silt flat the jungle rose in a high green cliff, tier upon tier of fern-trees and giant club moss flowering from the terraces. Without hesitating, Hardman plunged into a narrow interval between two ancient cobbled walls, and disappeared down the alley-way, Macready and Caldwell twenty yards behind him.

"Keep after him, Sergeant!" Riggs bellowed when Macready paused to wait for the Colonel. "We've nearly got him; he's beginning to tire." To Kerans he confided: "God, what a shambles!" He pointed hopelessly at the huge figure of Hardman pounding away in long strides. "What's driving the man on? I've a damn' good mind to let him go and get on with it."

Wilson had recovered sufficiently to walk unaided, and Kerans left him and broke into a run. "He'll be all right, Colonel. I'll try to talk to Hardman; there's a chance I may be able to hold him."

From the alley-way they emerged into a small square, where a group of sedate 19th-century municipal buildings looked down on an ornate fountain. Wild orchids and magnolia entwined themselves around the grey ionic columns of the old courthouse, a miniature sham-Parthenon with a heavy sculptured portico,[1] but otherwise the square had survived intact the assaults of the previous fifty years, its original floor still well above the surrounding water level. Next to the courthouse with the faceless clock tower, was a second colonnaded building, a library or museum,[2] its white pillars gleaming in the sunlight like a row of huge bleached bones.

Nearing noon, the sun filled this antique forum with a harsh burning light, and Hardman stopped and looked back uncertainly at

the men following him, then stumbled up the steps into the courthouse. Signalling to Kerans and Caldwell, Macready backed away among the statues in the square and took up his position behind the bowl of the fountain.

"Doctor, it's too dangerous now! He may not recognise you. We'll wait until the heat lifts; he can't move from there. Doctor ——"

Kerans ignored him. He advanced slowly across the cracked flagstones, both forearms up over his eyes, and placed one foot insecurely on the first step. Somewhere among the shadows he could hear Hardman's exhausted breathing, pumping the scalding air into his lungs.

Shaking the square with its noise, the helicopter soared slowly overhead, and Riggs and Wilson hurried up the steps into the museum entrance, watching as the tail rotor turned the machine in a diminishing spiral. Together the noise and the heat drummed at Kerans' brain, bludgeoning him like a thousand clubs, clouds of dust billowing around him. Abruptly the helicopter began to lose lift, with an agonised acceleration of its engine slid out of the air into the square, then picked up just before it touched the ground. Ducking away, Kerans sheltered with Macready behind the fountain, while the aircraft jerked about over their heads. As it revolved, the tail rotor lashed into the portico of the courthouse, in an explosion of splintered marble the helicopter porpoised and plunged heavily on to the cobbles, the shattered tail propeller rotating eccentrically. Cutting his engine, Daley sat back at his controls, half stunned by the impact with the ground and trying helplessly to remove his harness.

Frustrated at this second attempt to catch Hardman, they crouched in the shadows below the portico of the museum, waiting for the noon high to subside. As if illuminated by immense searchlights, a vast white glare lit the grey stone of the buildings around the square, like an over-exposed photograph, reminding Kerans of the chalk-white colonnade of an Egyptian necropolis.[3] As the sun mounted to its zenith[4] the reflected light began to glimmer upwards from the paving stones. Periodically, while he tended Wilson and

settled him with a few grains of morphine, Kerans could see the other men as they kept up their watch for Hardman, fanning themselves slowly with their forage caps.

Ten minutes later, shortly after noon, he looked up at the square. Completely obscured by the light and glare, the buildings on the other side of the fountain were no longer continuously visible, looming in and out of the air like the architecture of a spectral city. In the centre of the square, by the edge of the fountain, a tall solitary figure was standing, the pulsing thermal gradients every few seconds inverting the normal perspectives and magnifying him fleetingly. Hardman's sun-burnt face and black beard were now chalk-white, his mud-stained clothes glinting in the blinding sunlight like sheets of gold.

Kerans pulled himself to his knees, waiting for Macready to leap forward at him, but the Sergeant, with Riggs beside him, was huddled against a pillar, his eyes staring blankly at the floor in front of them, as if asleep or entranced.

Stepping away from the fountain, Hardman moved slowly across the square, in and out of the shifting curtains of light. He passed within twenty feet of Kerans, who knelt hidden behind the column, one hand on Wilson's shoulder, quietening the man's low grumbling. Skirting the helicopter, Hardman reached the far end of the courthouse and there left the square, walking steadily up a narrow incline towards the silt banks which stretched along the shore a hundred yards away.

Acknowledging his escape, the intensity of the sunlight diminished fractionally.

"Colonel Riggs!"

Macready plunged down the steps, shielding his eyes from the glare, and pointed off across the silt flat with his Thompson. Riggs followed him, hatless, his thin shoulders pinched together, tired and dispirited.

He put a restraining hand on Macready's elbow. "Let him go, Sergeant. We'll never catch him now. There doesn't seem to be much point, anyway."

Safely two hundred yards away, Hardman was still moving strongly, undeterred by the furnace-like heat. He reached the first crest, partly hidden in the huge palls of steam which hung over the centre of the silt flat, fading into them like a man disappearing into a deep mist. The endless banks of the inland sea stretched out in front of him, merging at their edges into the incandescent sky so that to Kerans he seemed to be walking across dunes of white-hot ash into the very mouth of the sun.

For the next two hours he sat quietly in the museum, waiting for the cutter[5] to arrive, listening to Riggs' irritated grumbling and Daley's lame excuses. Drained by the heat, Kerans tried to sleep, but the occasional crack of a carbine jolted through his bruised brain like the kick of a leather boot. Attracted by the sounds of the helicopter, a school of iguana had approached, and the reptiles were now sidling around the edges of the square, braying at the men on the steps of the museum. Their harsh shrieking voices filled Kerans with a dull fear that persisted even after the cutter's arrival and their return journey to the base. Sitting in the comparative coolness under the wire hood, the green banks of the channel sliding past, he could hear their raucous barks.

At the base he settled Wilson in the sick-bay, then sought out Dr. Bodkin and described the events of the morning, referring in passing to the voices of the iguanas. Enigmatically, Bodkin only nodded to himself, then remarked: "Bewarned, Robert; you may hear them again."

About Hardman's escape he made no comment.

Kerans' catamaran was still moored across the lagoon, so he decided to spend the night in his cabin at the testing station. There he passed a quiet afternoon, nursing a light fever in his bunk, thinking of Hardman and his strange southward odyssey, and of the silt banks glowing like luminous gold in the meridian[6] sun, both forbidding and inviting, like the lost but forever beckoning and unattainable shores of the amnionic[7] paradise.

1962

Endnotes

- Note 1: The outer area.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A mixed woodland and pasture landscape. “Catamaran”: a type of multi-hulled boat.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A very soft cheese.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A type of rifle.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Sewer.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A geometric design with spiritual uses in Hinduism and Buddhism.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A supporting structure.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Song played by a set of bells in a tower.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Reference to Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dalí (1904–1989). Dalí painted *The Enigma of William Tell* in 1933. William Tell was a Swiss folk hero, but the painting is actually of Vladimir Lenin, who is identified with Tell.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A covered entryway. “Sham-Parthenon”: an imitation of the Parthenon, a Grecian temple dedicated to the goddess Athena, now in ruins.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The British Museum, located in the Bloomsbury area of London.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: An elaborately designed cemetery, of which ancient Egypt had many.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The point when the sun is directly above an observer.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A type of small boat.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: An imaginary circle passing through the poles and zenith of the Earth.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Like the amnion, the membrane that encloses an embryo and is filled with watery, amniotic fluid.Return to reference 7

BESSIE HEAD

Bessie Head (1937–1986) was born to a White mother and Black father in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, in the era of apartheid, when interracial relationships were strictly outlawed. Her mother was married to a White Australian immigrant, but the marriage was rocky, and Head was the result of an affair. She never knew her biological father and had little contact with the family that placed her mother in the Fort Napier Mental Institution upon discovering her pregnancy. Head faced hardship from a very young age. Sent to a White foster family as a baby, she was rejected for her mixed-race appearance and placed with a Coloured family (an apartheid-era designation for those of mixed race) with whom she lived for thirteen years, under the misapprehension that they were her biological family. Upon moving to an orphanage school as a teenager, she was informed by a school officer that the woman who raised her was not her mother, that her mother was White, and that her mother had gone insane. This childhood trauma would mark the rest of Head's life. It shaped her writing and self-imposed exile from South Africa to the neighboring nation of Botswana.

Head published four novels in her lifetime, the first of which, *Where Rainclouds Gather* (1968), drew on her experience working on a farm in Botswana. Head combines psychological realism with fascinatingly detailed accounts of rural and village life. Her later novels *Maru* (1971) and particularly *A Question of Power* (1973) connect psychological trauma to changes in weather cycles as if to suggest that cycles of creation, destruction, and rejuvenation in the natural world also shape narratives of human resilience and survival. In "Looking for a Rain God," originally published in the short story collection *The Collector of Treasures* (1977), Head returns her focus to village life in Botswana, one of the most drought-prone countries in the world. The story depicts the brutality of waiting for a rain that

never comes and the desperate acts that bring tribal cultural practices into conflict with official state laws.

Looking for a Rain God

It is lonely at the lands where the people go to plough. These lands are vast clearings in the bush,[1] and the wild bush is lonely too. Nearly all the lands are within walking distance from the village. In some parts of the bush where the underground water is very near the surface, people made little rest camps for themselves and dug shallow wells to quench their thirst while on their journey to their own lands. They experienced all kinds of things once they left the village. They could rest at shady watering places full of lush, tangled trees with delicate pale-gold and purple wild flowers springing up between soft green moss and the children could hunt around for wild figs and any berries that might be in season. But from 1958, a seven-year drought fell upon the land and even the watering places began to look as dismal as the dry open thorn-bush country; the leaves of the trees curled up and withered; the moss became dry and hard and, under the shade of the tangled trees, the ground turned a powdery black and white, because there was no rain. People said rather humorously that if you tried to catch the rain in a cup it would only fill a teaspoon. Towards the beginning of the seventh year of drought, the summer had become an anguish to live through. The air was so dry and moisture-free that it burned the skin. No one knew what to do to escape the heat and tragedy was in the air. At the beginning of that summer, a number of men just went out of their homes and hung themselves to death from trees. The majority of the people had lived off crops, but for two years past they had all returned from the lands with only their rolled-up skin blankets and cooking utensils. Only the charlatans, incanters, and witch-doctors[2] made a pile of money during this time because people were always turning to them in desperation for little talismans and herbs to rub on the plough for the crops to grow and the rain to fall.

The rains were late that year. They came in early November, with a promise of good rain. It wasn't the full, steady downpour of the years of good rain, but thin, scanty, misty rain. It softened the earth and a rich growth of green things sprang up everywhere for the animals to eat. People were called to the village kgotla[3] to hear the proclamation of the beginning of the ploughing season; they stirred themselves and whole families began to move off to the lands to plough.

The family of the old man, Mokgobja, were among those who left early for the lands. They had a donkey cart and piled everything onto it, Mokgobja—who was over seventy years old; two little girls, Neo and Boseyong; their mother Tiro and an unmarried sister, Nesta; and the father and supporter of the family, Ramadi, who drove the donkey cart. In the rush of the first hope of rain, the man, Ramadi, and the two women, cleared the land of thorn-bush and then hedged their vast ploughing area with this same thorn-bush to protect the future crop from the goats they had brought along for milk. They cleared out and deepened the old well with its pool of muddy water and still in this light, misty rain, Ramadi inspanned two oxen and turned the earth over with a hand plough.

The land was ready and ploughed, waiting for the crops. At night, the earth was alive with insects singing and rustling about in search of food. But suddenly, by mid-November, the rain fled away; the rain-clouds fled away and left the sky bare. The sun danced dizzily in the sky, with a strange cruelty. Each day the land was covered in a haze of mist as the sun sucked up the last drop of moisture out of the earth. The family sat down in despair, waiting and waiting. Their hopes had run so high; the goats had started producing milk, which they had eagerly poured on their porridge, now they ate plain porridge with no milk. It was impossible to plant the corn, maize, pumpkin and water-melon seeds in the dry earth. They sat the whole day in the shadow of the huts and even stopped thinking, for the rain had fled away. Only the children, Neo and Boseyong, were quite happy in their little girl world. They carried on with their game of making house like their mother and chattered to

each other in light, soft tones. They made children from sticks around which they tied rags, and scolded them severely in an exact imitation of their own mother. Their voices could be heard scolding the day long: 'You stupid thing, when I send you to draw water, why do you spill half of it out of the bucket!' 'You stupid thing! Can't you mind the porridge-pot without letting the porridge burn!' And then they would beat the rag-dolls on their bottoms with severe expressions.

The adults paid no attention to this; they did not even hear the funny chatter; they sat waiting for rain; their nerves were stretched to breaking-point willing the rain to fall out of the sky. Nothing was important, beyond that. All their animals had been sold during the bad years to purchase food, and of all their herd only two goats were left. It was the women of the family who finally broke down under the strain of waiting for rain. It was really the two women who caused the death of the little girls. Each night they started a weird, high-pitched wailing that began on a low, mournful note and whipped up to a frenzy. Then they would stamp their feet and shout as though they had lost their heads. The men sat quiet and self-controlled; it was important for men to maintain their self-control at all times but their nerve was breaking too. They knew the women were haunted by the starvation of the coming year.

Finally, an ancient memory stirred in the old man, Mokgobja. When he was very young and the customs of the ancestors still ruled the land, he had been witness to a rain-making ceremony. And he came alive a little, struggling to recall the details which had been buried by years and years of prayer in a Christian church. As soon as the mists cleared a little, he began consulting in whispers with his youngest son, Ramadi. There was, he said, a certain rain god who accepted only the sacrifice of the bodies of children. Then the rain would fall; then the crops would grow, he said. He explained the ritual and as he talked, his memory became a conviction and he began to talk with unshakable authority. Ramadi's nerves were smashed by the nightly wailing of the women and soon the two men began whispering with the two women. The children continued their

game: ‘You stupid thing! How could you have lost the money on the way to the shop! You must have been playing again!’

After it was all over and the bodies of the two little girls had been spread across the land, the rain did not fall. Instead, there was a deathly silence at night and the devouring heat of the sun by day. A terror, extreme and deep, overwhelmed the whole family. They packed, rolling up their skin blankets and pots, and fled back to the village.

People in the village soon noted the absence of the two little girls. They had died at the lands and were buried there, the family said. But people noted their ashen, terror-stricken faces and a murmur arose. What had killed the children, they wanted to know? And the family replied that they had just died. And people said amongst themselves that it was strange that the two deaths had occurred at the same time. And there was a feeling of great unease at the unnatural looks of the family. Soon the police came around. The family told them the same story of death and burial at the lands. They did not know what the children had died of. So the police asked to see the graves. At this, the mother of the children broke down and told everything.

Throughout that terrible summer the story of the children hung like a dark cloud of sorrow over the village, and the sorrow was not assuaged when the old man and Ramadi were sentenced to death for ritual murder. All they had on the statute books was that ritual murder was against the law and must be stamped out with the death penalty. The subtle story of strain and starvation and breakdown was inadmissable evidence at court; but all the people who lived off crops knew in their hearts that only a hair’s breadth had saved them from sharing a fate similar to that of the Mokgobja family. They could have killed something to make the rain fall.

1977

Endnotes

- Note 1: Term for *wilderness* or *backwoods*.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A type of healer treating illnesses caused by witchcraft, and not witches themselves. “Charlatans”: someone claiming to have a skill they do not possess, a fraud. “Incanters”: spell-casters.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A public meeting or council.Return to reference 3

BEN OKRI

Ben Okri (b. 1959) spent his early years in England, where he attended primary school while his father pursued a law degree. His family returned to Nigeria in 1968 in the midst of the Nigerian Civil War (1967–70), a conflict that pitted ethnic groups against one another and generated disputes over the control of oil production in the Niger Delta. Okri's memories of this period inspired the Booker Prize–winning *The Famished Road* (1991), *Songs of Enchantment* (1993), and *Infinite Riches* (1998), a trilogy of novels centered on a spirit-child who moves between the mystical and earthly realms of modern Nigeria. Okri, the author of over two dozen novels, short story collections, and books of poetry, rejects the characterization of his work as magical realism as an unhelpful shorthand. Like his compatriot Wole Soyinka, he draws on a mix of African and European philosophies as well as myth and animism to portray reality as more multidimensional than a secular imagination of the world would allow.

Although Okri's novels tend to feature more fantastic elements than his short stories, his spiritual realism is on display in "What the Tapster Saw," from his collection *Stars of the New Curfew* (1988). The story features a tapster, a man who taps palm trees for sap used in the making of palm wine. The profession, several centuries old, connects the protagonist to a local trade, but his world is turned upside down when he falls from a tree on the newly demarcated property of the Delta Oil Company (a substitute for the British multinational corporation Shell, which dominated the Niger Delta region). The tapster proceeds to have nightmarish visions of a world poisoned by oil; images of deformed animals take the place of known birds; smoke from dynamite used for drilling obscures the tapster's sight and creates a burning sensation in his eyes and nose. Okri weaves obvious, subtle, and hallucinatory markers of oil's destructive effects throughout the story—none more surreal than the

rainbow-colored snake slithering from a borehole into the water in an animated recreation of an oil spill. “What the Tapster Saw” blurs the line between dreams and death to bring an otherworldly dimension to environmental crisis.

What the Tapster Saw

There was once an excellent tapster[1] who enjoyed climbing palm-trees as much as the tapping of their wines. One night he dreamt that while tapping for palm-wine he fell from the tree and died. He was so troubled by the dream that late as it was he went to visit his friend, Tabasco, who was a renowned herbalist. But that night Tabasco was too busy to pay much attention to what the tapster was saying. Harassed by the demands of his many wives, the herbalist kept chewing bundles of alligator pepper seeds[2] and dousing his mouth with palm-wine. When the tapster was about to leave the herbalist drew him aside and, with curious irrelevance, said:

'I used to know a hunter who, one day while hunting, saw a strange antelope. He followed the antelope till it came to an anthill. To his surprise the antelope turned into a woman and then disappeared. The hunter waited near the anthill for the woman to reappear. He fell asleep and when he woke up the ground was full of red water. He looked up and found himself surrounded by nine spirits. He went mad, of course. It took me three weeks to recover after I went inside his head to cure him. A little of his madness entered me. Tomorrow if you bring me three turtles and a big lobe of kola nut[3] I will do something about your dream. But tonight I am very busy.'

The tapster agreed and, disappointed, went back home and drank his way through a gourd of palm-wine. He managed to forget his dream by the time he fell asleep.

In the morning he gathered his ropes and magic potions, tied three empty gourds to his bicycle, and rode out into the forest to begin his day's work. He had been riding for some time when he came to a signboard which read: DELTA OIL COMPANY: THIS AREA IS BEING DRILLED. TRESPASSERS IN DANGER. The tapster stared at the signboard without comprehension. Further along he noticed a

strange cluster of palm-trees. He rode through thick cobwebs in order to reach them. The smell of their red-green bark intoxicated him. He immediately tied his magic potions to one of the tree-trunks, brought out his rope, and proceeded to climb. Pressing his feet on both sides of the tree, switching the rope high up the rough rungs of the bark, he pulled himself up rapidly, till his chest began to ache. The morning sun, striking him with an oblique glare, blinded him. As the golden lights exploded in his eyes the branches of the palm-tree receded from him. It was the first time he had fallen in thirty years.

When he woke up he was surprised that he felt no pain. He even had the curious feeling that the fall had done him some good. He felt unbelievably light and airy. He walked through spangles of glittering cobwebs without the faintest idea of where he was going. Fireflies darted into his nose and ears and re-emerged from his eyes with their lights undimmed. He walked for a long time. Then he saw another signboard which read: DELTA OIL COMPANY: TRESPASSERS WILL BE PERSECUTED. Around him were earth-mounds, gravestones, a single palm-tree, and flickering mangrove roots. He made a mark on the tree-trunk. Suddenly it became a fully festered wound. As he passed the twisting roots, troubled by the whitish ichors[4] of the wound, they clasped him round the ankles. They held him down and tickled him. When he began to laugh they let him go.

He came to a river, whose water was viscous and didn't seem to move. Near the river there was a borehole.[5] Three turtles lazed on the edge of the borehole, watching him. One of the turtles had Tabasco's face. The tapster was about to say something when a multi-coloured snake emerged from the borehole and slithered past him. When the snake slid into the river the colour of the water changed, and it became transparent and luminous. The snake's skin burned with a roseate flame. While the tapster looked on a voice behind him said:

'Don't turn round.'

The tapster stayed still. The three turtles gazed at him with eyes of glass. Then the turtle that had Tabasco's face urinated in the tapster's direction. The turtle seemed to enjoy the act. The ecstasy

on its face made it look positively fiendish. The tapster laughed and a heavy object hit him on the head from behind. He turned round swiftly and saw nothing. He laughed again and was whacked even harder. He felt the substance of his being dissolve. The river seemed to heave during the long silence which followed.

'Where am I?' the tapster asked.

There was another silence. The snake, glittering, slid back out of the river. When the snake passed him it lifted its head and spat at him. The snake went on into the borehole, dazzling with the colours of the sun. The tapster began to tremble. After the trembling ceased a curious serenity spread through him. When he looked around he saw that he had multiplied. He was not sure whether it was his mind or his body which flowed in and out of him.

'Where am I?'

The voice did not answer. Then he heard footsteps moving away. He could not even sleep, for he heard other voices talking over him, talking about him, as if he were not there.

In that world the sun did not set, nor did it rise. It was a single unmoving eye. In the evenings the sun was like a large crystal. In the mornings it was incandescent. The tapster was never allowed to shut his eyes. After a day's wandering, when he lay by the borehole, hallucinating about palm-wine, a foul-smelling creature would come and stuff his eyes with cobwebs. This made his eyes itch and seemed a curious preparation for vision. When the tapster tried to sleep, with his eyes open, he saw the world he knew revolving in red lights. He saw women going to the distant marketplaces, followed by sounds which they didn't hear. He saw that the signboards of the world were getting bigger. He saw the employees of the oil company as they tried to level the forests. When he was hungry another creature, which he couldn't see, would come and feed him a mess of pulped chameleons, millepedes and bark. When he was thirsty the creature gave him a leaking calabash[6] of green liquid. And then later at night another creature, which smelt of rotting agapanthus,[7] crept above him, copulated with him, and left him the grotesque eggs of their nights together.

Then one day he dared to count the eggs. They were seven. He screamed. The river heaved. The snake stuck its head out from the borehole and the laughter of death roared from the sun. The laughter found him, crashed on him, shook him, and left large empty spaces in his head.

That night he fled. Everything fled with him. Then, after a while, he stopped. He abused the place, its terrible inhabitants, its unchanging landscape. Unable to escape, he cursed it ferociously. He was rewarded with several knocks. Then, as the eggs tormented him with the grating noises within them, as if a horrible birth were cranking away inside their monstrous shapes, he learned patience. He learned to watch the sky, and he saw that it wasn't so different from the skies of his drunkenness. He learned not to listen to the birth groaning within the eggs. He also learned that when he kept still everything else around him reflected his stillness.

And then, on another day, the voice came to him and said:

'Everything in your world has endless counterparts in other worlds. There is no shape, no madness, no ecstasy or revolution which does not have its shadow somewhere else. I could tell you stories which would drive you mad. You humans are so slow—you walk two thousand years behind yourselves.'

The voice was soon gone.

Another voice said to him:

'You have been dead for two days. Wake up.'

A creature came and stuffed his eyes with cobwebs. His eyes itched again and he saw that the wars were not yet over. Bombs which had not detonated for freak reasons, and which had lain hidden in farms, suddenly exploded. And some of those who lived as if the original war was over were blown up while they struggled with poverty. He saw the collapse of bridges that were being repaired. He saw roads that spanned wild tracts of forests and malarial swamps, creeks without names, hills without measurements. He saw the mouth of the roads lined with human skeletons, victims of mindless accidents. He saw dogs that followed people up and down the

bushpaths and brooding night-tracks. As soon as the dogs vanished they turned into ghommids[8] that swallowed up lonely and unfortified travellers.

Then he saw the unsuccessful attempts to level the forest area and drill for oil. He saw the witch-doctors that had been brought in to drive away the spirits from the forest. They also tried to prevent the torrential rains from falling and attempted to delay the setting of the sun. When all this failed the company hired an expatriate who flew in with explosives left over from the last war. The tapster saw the expatriate plant dynamite round the forest area. After the explosion the tapster saw a thick pall of green smoke. When the smoke cleared the tapster watched a weird spewing up of oil and animal limbs from the ground. The site was eventually abandoned. Agapanthus grew there like blood on a battlefield.

The tapster saw people being shot in coups, in secret executions, in armed robberies. He noticed that those who died were felled by bullets which had their names on them. When his eyes stopped itching the tapster wandered beneath the copper bursts of the sky. He noticed that there were no birds around. Streamers of cobweb membranes weaved over the wounded palm tree.

And then one day, fired by memories of ancient heroes, he pursued a course into the borehole. In the strange environment he saw the multi-coloured snake twisted round a soapstone image. He saw alligators in a lake of bubbling green water. He saw an old man who had died in a sitting position while reading a bible upside-down. Everything seemed on fire, but there was no smoke. Thick slimes of oil seeped down the walls. Roseate flames burned everywhere without consuming anything. He heard a noise behind him. He turned and a creature forced a plate containing a messy substance of food into his hands. The creature then indicated that he should eat. The multi-coloured snake uncoiled itself from the soapstone image. While the tapster ate the snake slid over and began to tell him bad jokes. The snake told him stories of how they hang black men in quiet western towns across the great seas, and of how it was

possible to strip the skin off a baby without it uttering a sound. The snake laughed. Partly because the snake looked so ridiculous, the tapster laughed as well. Several sharp whacks, as from a steel edge, drummed on his head, and put him out for what could have been aeons of time.

When he recovered he traced his way out of the place. As he passed the man who had died reading the bible upside-down he saw that the man looked exactly like him. He fled from the borehole.

His impatience reached new proportions. He counted the rocks on the ground. He counted the cobwebs, the colours of the sun, the heavings of the river. He counted the number of times the wind blew. He told himself stories. But he found that whatever he told himself that was subversive was simultaneously censored by the knocks. He counted the knocks. He grew used to them.

Then the voice came to him again. It sounded more brutal than usual. The voice said:

'Do you like it here?'

'No.'

The tapster waited for a knock. It didn't arrive.

'Do you want to leave?'

'Yes.'

'What's stopping you?'

'I don't know how.'

The voice was silent.

Another voice said:

'You have been dead for three days.'

The tapster, who had seen the sky and earth from many angles, who knew the secrets of wine, had learned the most important lesson. He listened without thinking.

'If you want to leave,' the voice said, 'we will have to beat you out.'

'Why?'

'Because you humans only understand pain.'

'We don't.'

There was another pause. He waited for a knock. It came. His thoughts floated around like cobwebs on the wind. The tapster stayed like that, still, through the purple phases of the sun. After a long while the voice said:

'Here are some thoughts to replace the ones that have been knocked away. Do you want to hear them?'

'Yes.'

The voice coughed and began:

'Even the good things in life eventually poison you. There are three kinds of sounds, two kinds of shadows, one gourd for every cracked head, and seven boreholes for those that climb too high. There is an acid in the feel of things. There is a fire which does not burn, but which dissolves the flesh like common salt. The bigger mouth eats the smaller head. The wind blows back to us what we have blown away. There are several ways to burn in your own fire. There is a particular sound which indicates trouble is coming. And your thoughts are merely the footsteps of you tramping round the disaster area of your own mind.'

'Thank you,' the tapster said.

The voice left. The tapster fell asleep.

When he woke up he saw the three turtles lazing again at the edge of the borehole. The turtle with Tabasco's face had on a pair of horn-rimmed glasses and a stethoscope round his neck. The turtles broke a kola nut, divided it amongst themselves, and discussed gravely like scholars without a text. The multi-coloured snake came out of the borehole and made for the river. It paused when it neared the turtles. The tapster was fascinated by its opal eyes.

'There are six moons tonight,' said the turtle with Tabasco's face.

'Yes, there are six moons tonight,' agreed the other turtles.

The snake, lifting up its head, its eyes glittering at the firmament, said:

'There are seven moons tonight.'

The turtles were silent. The snake moved on towards the river. The turtle with Tabasco's face picked up a little rock and threw it at the snake. The other turtles laughed.

'There are no snakes tonight,' said the turtle with Tabasco's face.

As if it were a cue, the other turtles set upon the snake. Tabasco the turtle grabbed it by the neck and began to strangle it with the stethoscope. The other turtles beat its head with rocks. The snake lashed out with its tail. Tabasco and the snake rolled over and fell into the borehole. Noises were heard below. After a while Tabasco the turtle emerged without his glasses and stethoscope. He took up his place amongst the others. They broke another kola nut. Then Tabasco the turtle began to prepare a pipe. Instead of tobacco, he used alligator pepper seeds. He lit the pipe and motioned to the tapster to come closer. The tapster went and sat amongst the turtles on the edge of the borehole. Tabasco the turtle blew black ticklish smoke into the tapster's face and said:

'You have been dead for six days.'

The tapster didn't understand. The turtles gravely resumed their discussions on the numbers of heavenly bodies in the sky.

After some time the smoke had the effect of making the tapster float into a familiar world. A tickling sensation began in his nose. He floated to a moment in his childhood, when his mother carried him on her back on the day of the Masquerades.[9] It was a hot day. The Masquerades thundered past, bellowing plumes of red smoke everywhere so that ordinary mortals would be confused about their awesome ritual aspects. All through that day his nose was on fire. And that night he dreamt that all sorts of mythical figures competed as to who could keep his nose on his face. He re-lived the dream. The mythical figures included the famous blacksmith, who could turn water into metal; the notorious tortoise, with his simple madness for complex situations; and the witch-doctors,[1] who did not have the key to mysteries. As they competed his mother came along, drove them away by scattering a plate full of ground hot pepper, worsening the problem of his nose.

And while the tapster floated in that familiar world the voice came and bore down on him. Another voice said:

'It's getting too late. Wake up.'

Invisible knocks fell on him. It was the most unusual moment of the sun, when it changed from purple to the darkness of the inward eye. After the knocks had stopped the tapster relieved himself of the mighty sneeze which had been gathering. When he sneezed the monstrous eggs exploded, the snake lost its opal eyes, and the voice fissioned into the sounds of several mosquitoes dying for a conversation. Green liquids spewed out from the borehole and blew away the snake, the signboard, and the turtles. When the tapster recovered from the upheaval he looked around. A blue cloud passed before his eyes. Tabasco the herbalist stood over him waving a crude censer,[2] from which issued the most irritating smoke. As soon as their eyes met, Tabasco gave a cry of joy and went to pour a libation on the soapstone image of his shrine. The image had two green glass eyes. At the foot of the shrine there were two turtles in a green basin.

'Where am I?' asked the tapster.

'I'm sorry I didn't pay attention to your dream in the first place,' said the herbalist.

'But where am I?'

'You fell from a palm-tree and you have been dead for seven days. We were going to bury you in the morning. I have been trying to reach you all this time. I won't charge you for my services; in fact I'd rather pay you, because all these years as a herbalist I have never had a more interesting case, nor a better conversation.'

1988

Endnotes

- Note 1: Someone who taps palm trees for the sap inside to be fermented into an alcoholic beverage.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: West African spice.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Fruit of the kola tree, native to west Africa.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Discharge from a wound.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A narrow hole in the ground, like those made to find oil.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A type of gourd.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A flower native to southern Africa with medicinal properties.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Supernatural creatures drawn from Yoruba mythology; the word was coined by Wole Soyinka in his 1968 translation of the Yoruba-language novel *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons—A Hunter's Saga* by D. O. Fagunwa.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Beings that bridge the human and spirit world. Masked dancers embody these spirits. Masquerades are thought to appear at traditional celebrations, festivals, and funerals, and are evidence of Indigenous religious practices, which colonial officials tried to suppress.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A type of healer treating illnesses caused by witchcraft, and not witches themselves. "Famous blacksmith": possibly Ogun, the Yoruba god of blacksmithing and metalwork. "Notorious tortoise": possibly Mbeku or Ijapa, both trickster figures in Yoruba folktales.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A container for burning incense.Return to reference 2

ARUNDHATI ROY

Arundhati Roy was born in northern India in 1961. Her father was a tea plantation manager, and her mother, a native of the southern state of Kerala, worked on behalf of women's rights. While Roy was still a child, her parents divorced and she moved with her mother to Kerala, where she lived until the age of sixteen and would set her Booker Prize–winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). Kerala is renowned for its biodiverse backwaters, a network of rivers, lakes, and wetlands that brings fresh water into contact with salt water from the Arabian Sea. In the 1980s, the state identified tourism as a growth industry and launched a successful campaign to brand the backwaters region "God's Own Country."

In the excerpt from *The God of Small Things* included here, the novel's protagonist, Rahel, returns to her hometown of Ayemenem in the wake of the tourism boom to witness its transformation from a small fishing village to an environmental attraction dominated by the luxurious "Heritage" hotel. While the new Ayemenem may draw numerous visitors, the narrative calls attention to the costly effects of industrialized tourism and agriculture upon the environment and upon the livelihoods of local artists. The juxtaposition of Rahel's childhood memories with the present day also invites readers to consider the relationship between Kerala's colonial past under British rule and its present state of economic dependence on international visitors and global hotel conglomerates. Roy's storytelling relies on the beauty and power of physical description, which she uses to connect the most vulnerable members of the human and nonhuman world to the larger social and economic forces threatening their existence. This hallmark of her style is on vivid display in *The God of Small Things*, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), and her prolific nonfiction on behalf of environmental justice causes.

From The God of Small Things

God's Own Country[1]

Years later, when Rahel returned to the river, it greeted her with a ghastly skull's smile, with holes where teeth had been, and a limp hand raised from a hospital bed.

Both things had happened.

It had shrunk. And she had grown.

Downriver, a saltwater barrage had been built, in exchange for votes from the influential paddy-farmer[2] lobby. The barrage regulated the inflow of salt water from the backwaters that opened into the Arabian Sea. So now they had two harvests a year instead of one. More rice, for the price of a river.

Despite the fact that it was June, and raining, the river was no more than a swollen drain now. A thin ribbon of thick water that lapped wearily at the mud banks on either side, sequined with the occasional silver slant of a dead fish. It was choked with a succulent weed,[3] whose furred brown roots waved like thin tentacles underwater. Bronze-winged lily-trotters walked across it. Splay-footed, cautious.

Once it had had the power to evoke fear. To change lives. But now its teeth were drawn, its spirit spent. It was just a slow, sludging green ribbon lawn that ferried fetid garbage to the sea. Bright plastic bags blew across its viscous, weedy surface like subtropical flying-flowers.

The stone steps that had once led bathers right down to the water, and Fisher People to the fish, were entirely exposed and led from nowhere to nowhere, like an absurd corbelled[4] monument that commemorated nothing. Ferns pushed through the cracks.

On the other side of the river, the steep mud banks changed abruptly into low mud walls of shanty hutments.[5] Children hung their

bottoms over the edge and defecated directly onto the squelchy, sucking mud of the exposed riverbed. The smaller ones left their dribbling mustard streaks to find their own way down. Eventually, by evening, the river would rouse itself to accept the day's offerings and sludge off to the sea, leaving wavy lines of thick white scum in its wake. Upstream, clean mothers washed clothes and pots in unadulterated factory effluents. People bathed. Severed torsos soaping themselves, arranged like dark busts on a thin, rocking, ribbon lawn.

On warm days the smell of shit lifted off the river and hovered over Ayemenem like a hat.

Further inland, and still across, a five-star hotel chain had bought the Heart of Darkness.[6]

The History House (where map-breath'd ancestors with tough toe-nails once whispered) could no longer be approached from the river. It had turned its back on Ayemenem.[7] The hotel guests were ferried across the backwaters, straight from Cochin.[8] They arrived by speedboat, opening up a *V* of foam on the water, leaving behind a rainbow film of gasoline.

The view from the hotel was beautiful, but here too the water was thick and toxic. *No Swimming* signs had been put up in stylish calligraphy. They had built a tall wall to screen off the slum and prevent it from encroaching on Kari Saipu's estate. There wasn't much they could do about the smell.

But they had a swimming pool for swimming. And fresh tandoori pomfret and crépe suzette[9] on their menu.

The trees were still green, the sky still blue, which counted for something. So they went ahead and plugged their smelly paradise—*God's Own Country* they called it in their brochures—because they knew, those clever Hotel People, that smelliness, like other peoples' poverty, was merely a matter of getting used to. A question of discipline. Of Rigor and Air-conditioning. Nothing more.

Kari Saipu's house had been renovated and painted. It had become the centerpiece of an elaborate complex, crisscrossed with artificial

canals and connecting bridges. Small boats bobbed in the water. The old colonial bungalow with its deep verandah and Doric columns,[1] was surrounded by smaller, older, wooden houses—ancestral homes—that the hotel chain had bought from old families and transplanted in the Heart of Darkness. Toy Histories for rich tourists to play in. Like the sheaves of rice in Joseph's dream, like a press of eager natives petitioning an English magistrate, the old houses had been arranged around the History House in attitudes of deference. "Heritage," the hotel was called.

The Hotel People liked to tell their guests that the oldest of the wooden houses, with its airtight, paneled storeroom which could hold enough rice to feed an army for a year, had been the ancestral home of Comrade E. M. S. Namboodiripad, "Kerala's Mao Tse-tung,"[2] they explained to the uninitiated. The furniture and knick-knacks that came with the house were on display. A reed umbrella, a wicker couch. A wooden dowry box. They were labeled with edifying placards that said *Traditional Kerala Umbrella* and *Traditional Bridal Dowry-box.*

So there it was then, History and Literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx[3] joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat.

Comrade Namboodiripad's house functioned as the hotel's dining room, where semi-suntanned tourists in bathing suits sipped tender coconut water (served in the shell), and old Communists, who now worked as fawning bearers in colorful ethnic clothes, stooped slightly behind their trays of drinks.

In the evenings (for that Regional Flavor) the tourists were treated to truncated kathakali[4] performances ("Small attention spans," the Hotel People explained to the dancers). So ancient stories were collapsed and amputated. Six-hour classics were slashed to twenty-minute cameos.

The performances were staged by the swimming pool. While the drummers drummed and the dancers danced, hotel guests frolicked with their children in the water. While Kunti revealed her secret to Karna on the riverbank,[5] courting couples rubbed suntan oil on each

other. While fathers played sublimated sexual games with their nubile teenaged daughters, Poothana suckled young Krishna at her poisoned breast.[6] Bhima disemboweled Dushasana and bathed Draupadi's hair in his blood.[7]

The back verandah of the History House (where a posse of Touchable policemen converged, where an inflatable goose was burst) had been enclosed and converted into the airy hotel kitchen. Nothing worse than kebabs and caramel custard happened there now. The Terror was past. Overcome by the smell of food. Silenced by the humming of cooks. The cheerful chop-chop-chopping of ginger and garlic. The disemboweling of lesser mammals—pigs, goats. The dicing of meat. The scaling of fish.

Something lay buried in the ground. Under grass. Under twenty-three years of June rain.

A small forgotten thing.

Nothing that the world would miss.

A child's plastic wristwatch with the time painted on it.

Ten to two, it said.

A band of children followed Rahel on her walk.

"Hello hippie," they said, twenty-five years too late. "Whatisyourname?"

Then someone threw a small stone at her, and her childhood fled, flailing its thin arms.

* * *

1997

Endnotes

- Note 1: Tourism slogan for Kerala, a state in southern India famous for its backwaters and beaches.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Rice farmers. “Barrage”: a type of dam that can be opened and closed to control water flow.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Type of fleshy plant.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An architectural technique to carry weight made by jutting material, like a bracket.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A collection of huts.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A reference to the 1899 novella by Joseph Conrad (see p. 67 in this volume).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Village in Kerala, India.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: City in Kerala, India.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A French dessert crêpe served with an orange zest and liqueur sauce. “Tandoori pomfret”: a fish dish.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Grecian style of plain, unadorned columns.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Chinese revolutionary leader (1893–1976) and founder of the People’s Republic of China (a Communist state). “Comrade E. M. S. Namboodiripad”: Indian politician who belonged to the Communist Party.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: German philosopher and author of *The Communist Manifesto.* “Kurtz”: reference to a major character in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness.* He descends into corruption and madness while living in Congo and is a symbol of the moral failure of the imperial project.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Type of classical Indian dance.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*, Kunti gives birth to Karna out of wedlock and abandons him in a basket on the Ganges. Karna later finds that he is fighting against his half-siblings when he meets his mother later in life.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: In Hindu legend, Poothana, sent to kill the god Krishna, attempts to do so by breastfeeding him poisoned milk.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Also a tale of the *Mahabharata.* Dushasana is a villain who attempts to humiliate the noblewoman Draupadi by

removing her sari, and Bhima avenges her by slaying Dushasana.Return to reference 7

AMITAV GHOSH

Amitav Ghosh was born in 1956 in Calcutta in the state of West Bengal in India. He studied at the Doon School and Delhi University and went on to receive a doctorate in social anthropology from Oxford. Ghosh is equally renowned for his novels and nonfiction, both of which blend meticulous historical research and ethnographic accounts with complex plotlines and fully realized characters. Ghosh's early novels, including *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), and *The Hungry Tide* (2004), establish his preoccupation with memory, cross-cultural encounters, and the effects of humanmade borders on the conception of more than human homelands. Scientists feature prominently in the latter two novels as Ghosh derives literary conflict from the intermingling of their professional expertise with diverse forms of cultural knowledge and belief. Ghosh's interests in cosmopolitanism and environmentalism are on full display in the *Ibis* trilogy, which contains *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015). Set in the 1830s in the Indian Ocean region and centered on a trading ship called the *Ibis*, these novels feature a diverse multilingual ensemble of migrant characters whose fates intersect in the lead-up to the Opium Wars between Britain and China.

The *Ibis* trilogy reveals in fictional form the impact of industrial development, free trade, and resource wars on the nineteenth-century world order. *The Great Derangement* (2016), an excerpt from which is included here, offers in nonfictional form an account of the representational challenges that climate change poses to twenty-first-century writers of literature. Ghosh provocatively argues that the dominant conventions shaping literary fiction over the past two centuries have rendered climate change invisible or outlandish. Spectacular and apocalyptic natural disasters have been the province of science fiction, a genre historically regarded as less respectable or

"serious" than literary realism and modernism. In turn, the cumulatively destructive effects of carbon emissions have been missing from canonical literary representations of everyday life. Ghosh calls upon writers to treat climate change as not only a problem of physical changes to Earth systems, but also a problem of perception that demands new strategies of literary representation.

From The Great Derangement

1

Who can forget those moments when something that seems inanimate turns out to be vitally, even dangerously alive? As, for example, when an arabesque[1] in the pattern of a carpet is revealed to be a dog's tail, which, if stepped upon, could lead to a nipped ankle? Or when we reach for an innocent looking vine and find it to be a worm or a snake? When a harmlessly drifting log turns out to be a crocodile?

It was a shock of this kind, I imagine, that the makers of *The Empire Strikes Back*[2] had in mind when they conceived of the scene in which Han Solo lands the Millennium Falcon on what he takes to be an asteroid—but only to discover that he has entered the gullet of a sleeping space monster.

To recall that memorable scene now, more than thirty-five years after the making of the film, is to recognize its impossibility. For if ever there were a Han Solo, in the near or distant future, his assumptions about interplanetary objects are certain to be very different from those that prevailed in California at the time when the film was made. The humans of the future will surely understand, knowing what they presumably will know about the history of their forebears on Earth, that only in one, very brief era, lasting less than three centuries, did a significant number of their kind believe that planets and asteroids are inert.

2

My ancestors were ecological refugees[3] long before the term was invented.

They were from what is now Bangladesh,[4] and their village was on the shore of the Padma River, one of the mightiest waterways in

the land. The story, as my father told it, was this: one day in the mid-1850s the great river suddenly changed course, drowning the village; only a few of the inhabitants had managed to escape to higher ground. It was this catastrophe that had unmoored our forebears; in its wake they began to move westward and did not stop until the year 1856, when they settled once again on the banks of a river, the Ganges, in Bihar.[5]

I first heard this story on a nostalgic family trip, as we were journeying down the Padma River in a steamboat. I was a child then, and as I looked into those swirling waters I imagined a great storm, with coconut palms bending over backward until their fronds lashed the ground; I envisioned women and children racing through howling winds as the waters rose behind them. I thought of my ancestors sitting huddled on an outcrop, looking on as their dwellings were washed away.

To this day, when I think of the circumstances that have shaped my life, I remember the elemental force that untethered my ancestors from their homeland and launched them on the series of journeys that preceded, and made possible, my own travels. When I look into my past the river seems to meet my eyes, staring back, as if to ask, Do you recognize me, wherever you are?

Recognition is famously a passage from ignorance to knowledge. To recognize, then, is not the same as an initial introduction. Nor does recognition require an exchange of words: more often than not we recognize mutely. And to recognize is by no means to understand that which meets the eye; comprehension need play no part in a moment of recognition.

The most important element of the word *recognition* thus lies in its first syllable, which harks back to something prior, an already existing awareness that makes possible the passage from ignorance to knowledge: a moment of recognition occurs when a prior awareness flashes before us, effecting an instant change in our understanding of that which is beheld. Yet this flash cannot appear spontaneously; it cannot disclose itself except in the presence of its lost other. The knowledge that results from recognition, then, is not

of the same kind as the discovery of something new: it arises rather from a renewed reckoning with a potentiality that lies within oneself.

This, I imagine, was what my forebears experienced on that day when the river rose up to claim their village: they awoke to the recognition of a presence that had molded their lives to the point where they had come to take it as much for granted as the air they breathed. But, of course, the air too can come to life with sudden and deadly violence—as it did in the Congo in 1988, when a great cloud of carbon dioxide burst forth from Lake Nyos[6] and rolled into the surrounding villages, killing 1,700 people and an untold number of animals. But more often it does so with a quiet insistence—as the inhabitants of New Delhi and Beijing[7] know all too well—when inflamed lungs and sinuses prove once again that there is no difference between the without and the within; between using and being used. These too are moments of recognition, in which it dawns on us that the energy that surrounds us, flowing under our feet and through wires in our walls, animating our vehicles and illuminating our rooms, is an all-encompassing presence that may have its own purposes about which we know nothing.

It was in this way that I too became aware of the urgent proximity of nonhuman presences, through instances of recognition that were forced upon me by my surroundings. I happened then to be writing about the Sundarbans, the great mangrove forest of the Bengal Delta,[8] where the flow of water and silt is such that geological processes that usually unfold in deep time appear to occur at a speed where they can be followed from week to week and month to month. Overnight a stretch of riverbank will disappear, sometimes taking houses and people with it; but elsewhere a shallow mud bank will arise and within weeks the shore will have broadened by several feet. For the most part, these processes are of course cyclical. But even back then, in the first years of the twenty-first century, portents of accumulative and irreversible change could also be seen, in receding shorelines and a steady intrusion of salt water on lands that had previously been cultivated.

This is a landscape so dynamic that its very changeability leads to innumerable moments of recognition. I captured some of these in my notes from that time, as, for example, in these lines, written in May 2002: "I do believe it to be true that the land here is demonstrably alive; that it does not exist solely, or even incidentally, as a stage for the enactment of human history; that it is [itself] a protagonist." Elsewhere, in another note, I wrote, "Here even a child will begin a story about his grandmother with the words: 'in those days the river wasn't here and the village was not where it is . . .' "

Yet, I would not be able to speak of these encounters as instances of recognition if some prior awareness of what I was witnessing had not already been implanted in me, perhaps by childhood experiences, like that of going to look for my family's ancestral village; or by memories like that of a cyclone, in Dhaka,[9] when a small fishpond, behind our walls, suddenly turned into a lake and came rushing into our house; or by my grandmother's stories of growing up beside a mighty river; or simply by the insistence with which the landscape of Bengal forces itself on the artists, writers, and filmmakers of the region.

But when it came to translating these perceptions into the medium of my imaginative life—into fiction, that is—I found myself confronting challenges of a wholly different order from those that I had dealt with in my earlier work. Back then, those challenges seemed to be particular to the book I was then writing, *The Hungry Tide;*[1] but now, many years later, at a moment when the accelerating impacts of global warming have begun to threaten the very existence of low-lying areas like the Sundarbans, it seems to me that those problems have far wider implications. I have come to recognize that the challenges that climate change poses for the contemporary writer, although specific in some respects, are also products of something broader and older; that they derive ultimately from the grid of literary forms and conventions that came to shape the narrative imagination in precisely that period when the accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere was rewriting the destiny of the Earth.

That climate change casts a much smaller shadow within the landscape of literary fiction than it does even in the public arena is not hard to establish. To see that this is so, we need only glance through the pages of a few highly regarded literary journals and book reviews, for example, the *London Review of Books,* the *New York Review of Books,* the *Los Angeles Review of Books,* the *Literary Journal,* and the *New York Times Review of Books*. When the subject of climate change occurs in these publications, it is almost always in relation to nonfiction; novels and short stories are very rarely to be glimpsed within this horizon. Indeed, it could even be said that fiction that deals with climate change is almost by definition not of the kind that is taken seriously by serious literary journals: the mere mention of the subject is often enough to relegate a novel or a short story to the genre of science fiction. It is as though in the literary imagination climate change were somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel.

There is something confounding about this peculiar feedback loop. It is very difficult, surely, to imagine a conception of seriousness that is blind to potentially life-changing threats. And if the urgency of a subject were indeed a criterion of its seriousness, then, considering what climate change actually portends for the future of the Earth, it should surely follow that this would be the principal preoccupation of writers the world over—and this, I think, is very far from being the case.

But why? Are the currents of global warming too wild to be navigated in the accustomed barques of narration? But the truth, as is now widely acknowledged, is that we have entered a time when the wild has become the norm: if certain literary forms are unable to negotiate these torrents, then they will have failed—and their failures will have to be counted as an aspect of the broader imaginative and cultural failure that lies at the heart of the climate crisis.

Clearly the problem does not arise out of a lack of information: there are surely very few writers today who are oblivious to the

current disturbances in climate systems the world over. Yet, it is a striking fact that when novelists do choose to write about climate change it is almost always outside of fiction. A case in point is the work of Arundhati Roy:[2] not only is she one of the finest prose stylists of our time, she is passionate and deeply informed about climate change. Yet all her writings on these subjects are in various forms of nonfiction.

Or consider the even more striking case of Paul Kingsnorth,[3] author of *The Wake,* a much-admired historical novel set in eleventh-century England. Kingsnorth dedicated several years of his life to climate change activism before founding the influential Dark Mountain Project, "a network of writers, artists and thinkers who have stopped believing the stories our civilization tells itself." Although Kingsnorth has written a powerful nonfiction account of global resistance movements, as of the time of writing he has yet to publish a novel in which climate change plays a major part.

I too have been preoccupied with climate change for a long time, but it is true of my own work as well, that this subject figures only obliquely in my fiction. In thinking about the mismatch between my personal concerns and the content of my published work, I have come to be convinced that the discrepancy is not the result of personal predilections: it arises out of the peculiar forms of resistance that climate change presents to what is now regarded as serious fiction.

4

In his seminal essay "The Climate of History," Dipesh Chakrabarty[4] observes that historians will have to revise many of their fundamental assumptions and procedures in this era of the Anthropocene, in which "humans have become geological agents, changing the most basic physical processes of the earth." I would go further and add that the Anthropocene presents a challenge not only to the arts and humanities, but also to our commonsense understandings and beyond that to contemporary culture in general.

There can be no doubt, of course, that this challenge arises in part from the complexities of the technical language that serves as our primary window on climate change. But neither can there be any doubt that the challenge derives also from the practices and assumptions that guide the arts and humanities. To identify how this happens is, I think, a task of the utmost urgency: it may well be the key to understanding why contemporary culture finds it so hard to deal with climate change. Indeed, this is perhaps the most important question ever to confront *culture* in the broadest sense—for let us make no mistake: the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination.

Culture generates desires—for vehicles and appliances, for certain kinds of gardens and dwellings—that are among the principal drivers of the carbon economy. A speedy convertible excites us neither because of any love for metal and chrome, nor because of an abstract understanding of its engineering. It excites us because it evokes an image of a road arrowing through a pristine landscape; we think of freedom and the wind in our hair; we envision James Dean and Peter Fonda[5] racing toward the horizon; we think also of Jack Kerouac and Vladimir Nabokov.[6] When we see an advertisement that links a picture of a tropical island to the word *paradise*, the longings that are kindled in us have a chain of transmission that stretches back to Daniel Defoe and Jean-Jacques Rousseau:[7] the flight that will transport us to the island is merely an ember in that fire. When we see a green lawn that has been watered with desalinated water, in Abu Dhabi[8] or Southern California or some other environment where people had once been content to spend their water thriftily in nurturing a single vine or shrub, we are looking at an expression of a yearning that may have been midwifed by the novels of Jane Austen.[9] The artifacts and commodities that are conjured up by these desires are, in a sense, at once expressions and concealments of the cultural matrix that brought them into being.

This culture is, of course, intimately linked with the wider histories of imperialism and capitalism that have shaped the world.

But to know this is still to know very little about the specific ways in which the matrix interacts with different modes of cultural activity: poetry, art, architecture, theater, prose fiction, and so on. Throughout history these branches of culture have responded to war, ecological calamity, and crises of many sorts: why, then, should climate change prove so peculiarly resistant to their practices?

From this perspective, the questions that confront writers and artists today are not just those of the politics of the carbon economy; many of them have to do also with our own practices and the ways in which they make us complicit in the concealments of the broader culture. For instance: if contemporary trends in architecture, even in this period of accelerating carbon emissions, favor shiny, glass-and-metal-plated towers, do we not have to ask, What are the patterns of desire that are fed by these gestures? If I, as a novelist, choose to use brand names as elements in the depiction of character, do I not need to ask myself about the degree to which this makes me complicit in the manipulations of the marketplace?

In the same spirit, I think it also needs to be asked, What is it about climate change that the mention of it should lead to banishment from the preserves of serious fiction? And what does this tell us about culture writ large and its patterns of evasion?

In a substantially altered world, when sea-level rise has swallowed the Sundarbans and made cities like Kolkata, New York, and Bangkok[1] uninhabitable, when readers and museumgoers turn to the art and literature of our time, will they not look, first and most urgently, for traces and portents of the altered world of their inheritance? And when they fail to find them, what should they—what can they—do other than to conclude that ours was a time when most forms of art and literature were drawn into the modes of concealment that prevented people from recognizing the realities of their plight? Quite possibly, then, this era, which so congratulates itself on its self-awareness, will come to be known as the time of the Great Derangement.

2016

Endnotes

- Note 1: Type of decoration or ornamental pattern characterized by intricate lines and patterns.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The fifth episode of the Star Wars film franchise (1980).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: People who must leave their homes due to the effects of climate change.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Country in South Asia.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: State in eastern India.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Lake in the African country Cameroon. "Congo": country in Central Africa.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Capital of China. "New Delhi": capital of India.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: World's largest river delta, where the Brahmaputra and Ganges Rivers, among others, drain into the Bay of Bengal.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Capital of Bangladesh.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Published 2004.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Indian author also in this section (b. 1961).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: English author (b. 1972).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Indian historian (b. 1948).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: American actors. Fonda (1940–2019) starred in *Easy Rider* (1969), considered a quintessential American road film. Dean (1931–1955) starred in films including *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) and also raced cars.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Russian American novelist (1899–1977), author of *Lolita* (1955), in part a foreigner's story of traveling across the United States. "Jack Kerouac": American novelist (1922–1969), author of *On the Road* (1957).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: French philosopher and writer (1712–1778). "Daniel Defoe": English writer (1660–1731).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Capital of the United Arab Emirates.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: English novelist (1775–1817).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Capital of Thailand. “Kolkata”: city in India.Return to reference 1

ROBERT MACFARLANE

Born in 1976 in the village of Halam, Nottinghamshire, in England, Robert Macfarlane studied at the University of Cambridge, where he now teaches. Macfarlane is a distinguished nature writer whose nonfiction blends literary allusion, essayistic meditations, and novelistic plotlines in which individuals, like characters, experience revelations through their encounters with places. His early books, *Mountains of the Mind* (2003) and *The Wild Places* (2007), engage and challenge traditions of nature writing that align mountains with majesty and wilderness with empty spaces devoid of human intervention. Macfarlane approaches wildness as a "state of mind" rather than a feature of the land. His commitment to restoring human history and psychology to sites of geological and ecological wonder characterizes the skepticism of contemporary nature writing toward pristine notions of "Nature" with a capital N.

In his award-winning *Underland* (2019), Macfarlane uses the mythic motif of the underworld to connect the depths beneath the Earth's surface to the limits of human imagination and fortitude in the face of irreversible changes to the climate. Traversing caves beneath the Mendip Hills in England, underground nuclear waste facilities in New Mexico, and tunnels beneath the melting ice caps of Greenland, Macfarlane contemplates the paradox of human agency in the face of geological time. On the one hand, human beings have irrevocably changed the Earth's atmosphere and will leave the signature of our species in the strata of the Earth. On the other hand, humans are merely a blip in the deep time of our planet whose rock formations inscribe billions of years. In the excerpt included here, Macfarlane goes beneath Epping Forest in the northeast of London to explore the symbiotic networks between trees and fungus. Turning from megaflora to mushrooms draws human attention to the aesthetically unremarkable forms of life that enable our existence. Macfarlane takes the urban forest as a site of

contradictions that leads its visitors to reappraise their own notions of preservation and extinction.

From Underland

The Understorey

(*Epping Forest, London*)[1]

Occasionally—once or twice in a lifetime if you are lucky—you encounter an idea so powerful in its implications that it unsettles the ground you walk on.

The first time I heard anyone speak of the 'wood wide web,' more than a decade ago now, I was trying not to cry. A beloved friend was dying too young and too quickly. I had gone to see him for what I took to be the last time. He was tired by pain and drugs. We sat together, talked. My friend was a woodsman. Trees grew through his life and thought. His grandfather's surname was Wood, he lived in a timber-framed house that he had built himself, and he had planted thousands of trees by hand over the years. 'I have sap in my veins,' he wrote once.

That day I read aloud a poem that was important to us both, 'Birches' by Robert Frost,[2] in which climbing the snow-white trunks of birches becomes both a readying for death and a declaration of life. Then he told me about new research he had recently read concerning the interrelations of trees: how, when one of their number was sickening or under stress, they could share nutrients by means of an underground system that conjoined their roots beneath the soil, thereby sometimes nursing the sick tree back to health. It was a measure of my friend's generosity of spirit that—so close to death himself—he could speak unjealously of this phenomenon of healing.

He did not have the strength then to tell me the details of how this below-ground sharing operated—how tree might invisibly reach out to tree within the soil. But I could not forget the image of that mysterious buried network, joining single trees into forest

communities. It was planted in my mind, and there took root. Over the years I would encounter other mentions of the same extraordinary idea, and gradually these isolated fragments began to connect together into something like understanding.

* * *

Merlin Sheldrake, as the oldest joke in mycology goes, is a fun guy to be around. During the days in which he conjures open the underland of Epping Forest for me, I ask more questions than I have of anyone for what feels like years. What he tells and shows me in that modest peri-urban forest reshapes my sense of the world in ways I am still processing.

* * *

'My childhood superheroes weren't Marvel characters,'[3] Merlin once said to me, 'they were lichens and fungi. Fungi and lichen annihilate our categories of gender. They reshape our ideas of community and cooperation. They screw up our hereditary model of evolutionary descent. They utterly *liquidate* our notions of time. Lichens can crumble rocks into dust with terrifying acids. Fungi can exude massively powerful enzymes *outside* their bodies that dissolve soil. They're the biggest organisms in the world and among the oldest. They're world-makers and world-breakers. What's more superhero than *that*?'

Merlin and I set off on foot into Epping Forest one morning from a high clearing, heading roughly north, keeping the sun to the right of our line.

Epping extends to the north-east of London, and it is very far from a wildwood. It was first designated as a royal hunting forest in the twelfth century by Henry II,[4] with penalties for poaching that included imprisonment and mutilation. Presently it is managed by the City of London Corporation, and has more than fifty bye-laws

governing behaviour within its bounds—though the punishments are now fiscal rather than corporal. It is fully contained within the M25, the orbital motorway that encircles outer London. Minor roads traverse it, and it is never more than two and a half miles wide. Despite its small extent, Epping is easy to get lost in—a forest of forking paths to which, for a thousand years, the people of London and its surrounds have gone for shelter, sex, escape and a relic greenwood magic.

Growl of roads. Whirr of a low-flying bumblebee, stirring the leaf litter with its downdraught. Buzzard overhead, turning, mewing. Old coppice trees left uncut, hydra-headed pollards. A fallen log, thick with moss; small orange fungi sprouting from wet breaks in its grain. Where trees thin out and light falls, hundreds of green beech seedlings are pushing up through the litter, none more than an inch high. Five fallow deer appear between hollies ahead of us, the dapple of leaf-light flicking off the dapple of their flanks as they move through the understorey.

In the language of forestry and forest ecology, the 'understorey' is the name given to the life that exists between the forest floor and the tree canopy: the fungi, mosses, lichens, bushes and saplings that thrive and compete in this mid-zone. Metaphorically, though, the 'understorey' is also the sum of the entangled, ever-growing narratives, histories, ideas and words that interweave to give a wood or forest its diverse life in culture.

'What interests me most,' says Merlin, 'is the understorey's understory.' He points around at the beech, the hornbeam, the chestnut. 'All of these trees and bushes,' he says, 'are connected with one another below ground in ways we not only cannot see, but ways we have scarcely begun to understand.'

* * *

Merlin was taught as an undergraduate by Oliver Rackham,[5] the legendary botanist whose research transformed our understanding of both the cultural and botanical history of the English landscape.

Working with Rackham, Merlin found himself most intellectually attracted to places where orthodox evolutionary theory felt thinnest—and for him the thinnest places were where mutualisms were at work. Mutualism is a subset of symbiosis in which there exists between organisms a prolonged relationship that is interdependent and reciprocally beneficial.

'What fascinates me about mutualisms,' says Merlin, 'is that one would predict from basic evolutionary theory that they would be massively unstable, and collapse quickly into parasitism. But it turns out that there are very ancient mutualisms, which have remained stable for puzzlingly long times: between the yucca plant and yucca moths, for example, or of course between the bacteria that illuminate the bioluminescent headlamp of the bobtail squid, and the squid itself.'

'Of course,' I reply. 'The ancient glowing-bobtail-squid-and-bacteria mutualism.'

'The ultimate mutualism, though,' says Merlin, 'is between plants and mycorrhizal fungi.'

* * *

Merlin and I have been walking the forest for two hours or so when we reach one of Epping's great pollard beech groves. Pollarding—the pruning of the upper branches of a tree to promote dense growth—keeps trees alive for longer, indeed can enter them into an almost indefinite fairy-tale time of longevity. Here in the grove, long waving trunks yearn up to the sun. Through their leaves falls a green sub-sea light. It feels as if we are swimming through a kelp forest.

We stop and lie down for a while on the woodland floor, on our backs, not speaking, watching the trees' gentle movements in the breeze, and the light lacing and lancing from fifty feet or more above us. Where the pollards spread out to form the canopies, I realize I can trace patterns of space running along the edges of each tree's canopy: the beautiful phenomenon known as 'crown shyness', whereby individual forest trees respect each other's space, leaving

slender running gaps between the end of one tree's outermost leaves and the start of another's.

Lying there among the trees, despite a learned wariness towards anthropomorphism, I find it hard not to imagine these arboreal relations in terms of tenderness, generosity and even love: the respectful distance of their shy crowns, the kissing branches that have pleached with one another, the unseen connections forged by root and hyphae between seemingly distant trees. I remember something Louis de Bernières[6] has written about a relationship that endured into old age: 'we had roots that grew towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossom had fallen from our branches we found that we were one tree and not two.' As someone lucky to live in a long love, I recognize that gradual growing-towards and subterranean intertwining; the things that do not need to be said between us, the unspoken communication which can sometimes tilt troublingly towards silence, and the sharing of both happiness and pain. I think of good love as something that roots, not rots, over time, and of the hyphae that are weaving through the ground below me, reaching out through the soil in search of mergings. Theirs, too, seems to me then a version of love's work.

Merlin gets up, walks towards the centre of the grove as if looking for something, then bends down and brushes away leaf litter and beech mast,[7] to clear a patch of soil the size of a saucer. I get up and follow him. He pinches some of the earth and rubs it between his fingers. It smears rather than crumbling: a rich, dark humus,[8] made of composted leaves.

'This is our problem when it comes to studying the fungal network,' he says. 'Soil is fantastically impenetrable to experiments, and the fungal hyphae are on the whole too thin to see with the naked eye. That's the main reason it's taken us so long to work out the wood wide web's existence, and to discern what it's doing.'

Rivers of sap flow in the trees around us. If we were right now to lay a stethoscope to the bark of a birch or beech, we would hear the sap bubbling and crackling as it moves through the trunk.

‘You can put rhizotrons[9] into the ground to look at root growth,’ Merlin says, ‘but those don’t really give you the fungi because they’re too fine. You can do below-ground laser scanning but, again, that’s too crude for the fungal networks.’

I am reminded once more of how resistant the underland remains to our usual forms of seeing; how it still hides so much from us, even in our age of hyper-visibility and ultra-scrutiny. Just a few inches of soil is enough to keep startling secrets, hold astonishing cargo: an eighth of the world’s total biomass comprises bacteria that live below ground, and a further quarter is of fungal origin.

‘We know the network is there,’ Merlin says, ‘but it’s so effortful to track it. So we have to look for clues to the labyrinth—find clever means of following its paths.’

I kneel beside him. I can see dozens of insects just in this small area, the names of most of which I do not know: gleaming spiders and red-bronze beetles battling over the leaves, a woodlouse curled up into a sphere, a green threadworm writhing through the humus.

‘It’s *roiling* with life,’ I say to Merlin.

‘That’s just the visible life. Hyphae will be growing into the decomposing matter of this half-rotting leaf,’ says Merlin, ‘into those rotting logs and those rotting twigs, and then you’ll have the mycorrhizal fungi whose hyphae grow into hot spots—all of them frothing and tangling and fusing, making a network that’s connecting holly to holly but also to this beech, and to a seedling of something else over there, layering and layering and *layering*—until, well, it blows your computational brain!’

As Merlin speaks I feel a quick, eerie sense of the world shifting irreversibly around me. Ground shivering beneath feet, knees, skin. *If only your mind were a slightly greener thing, we’d drown you in meaning* . . . I glance down, try to trance the soil into transparency such that I can see its hidden infrastructure: millions of fungal skeins suspended between tapering tree roots, their prolific liaisons creating a gossamer web at least as intricate as the cables and fibres that hang beneath our cities. What’s the haunting phrase I’ve heard used to describe the realm of fungi? *The kingdom of the grey*. It

speaks of fungi's utter otherness—the challenges they issue to our usual models of time, space and species.

'You look at the network,' says Merlin, 'and then it starts to look back at you.'

* * *

Potawatomi, a Native American language of the Great Plains region, includes the word *puhpowee*, which might be translated as 'the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight'. In 'all its technical vocabulary', Robin Wall Kimmerer notes, 'Western science has no such term, no words to hold this mystery.'

Kimmerer herself is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. A speaker of what she calls 'fluent botany', she is careful to distinguish this from what she refers to as 'the language of plants'—that is to say, the language that plants speak, as opposed to the language that is used to speak of plants. Kimmerer does not disdain the precisions of botanical lexis,[1] which 'polishes the gift of seeing', but she finds it also to be of necessity a lexis of objectification and distancing, with something missing beneath its finely faceted surface. That missing something is predominantly the acknowledgement of life in the more-than-human world, an indifference which is grained into language not just at the level of individual words, but at the deeper-down levels of grammar and syntax.

In Potawatomi, by contrast, almost all words declare the animacy or inanimacy of that to which they refer. The language is predisposed to recognize life in otherness, and also to extend the reach of that category of 'life' far beyond its familiar limits in Western thought. In Potawatomi, not only humans, animals and trees are alive, but so too are mountains, boulders, winds and fire. Stories, songs and rhythms are all also animate, they *are*, they *be*. Potawatomi is a language abundant with verbs: 70 per cent of its words are verbs, compared to 30 per cent in English. *Wiikwegamaa*,

for instance, means 'to be a bay'. 'A bay is a noun only if water is *dead*,' writes Kimmerer:

> trapped between its shores and contained by the word. But the verb . . . releases the water from bondage and lets it live. 'To be a bay' holds the wonder that, for this moment, the living water has decided to shelter itself between these shores, conversing with cedar roots and a flock of baby mergansers.[2]

Like Kimmerer, I wish for a language that recognizes and advances the animacy of the world, 'the life that pulses through pines and nuthatches and mushrooms . . . well[ing] up all around us'. Like Kimmerer, I relish those aspects of discourse that extend being and sentience respectfully and flexibly beyond the usual bearers of such qualities. Like Kimmerer I believe that we need, now, a 'grammar of animacy'. A modern predisposition to regard animacy as anomaly runs through what the poet Jeremy Prynne[3] once called 'mammal language', by which he means the language that is used by humans, encoding intent, agency and muscular power deep in its grammar.

The real underland of language is not the roots of single words, but rather the soil of grammar and syntax, where habits of speech and therefore also habits of thought settle and interact over long periods of time. Grammar and syntax exert powerful influence on the proceedings of language and its users. They shape the ways we relate to each other and to the living world. Words are world-makers—and language is one of the great geological forces of the Anthropocene.

Projects have recently been started around the world to gain even the most basic of vocabularies for the experiences of life and death in the Anthropocene. These stuttering attempts to speak what it is we are doing have generated ugly new terms for an ugly epoch: 'geotraumatics', 'planetary dysphoria', 'apex-guilt'. Such words feel like futile forms of nominalism, a hopelessly hyperactive pointing and

naming. They stick in the throat in two ways: they are difficult to utter and hard to swallow.

Only one of these recent coinages resonates with me: ‘species loneliness’, for the intense solitude that we are fashioning for ourselves as we strip the Earth of the other life with which we share it. If there is human meaning to be made of the wood wide web, it is surely that what might save us as we move forwards into the precarious, unsettled centuries ahead is collaboration: mutualism, symbiosis, the inclusive human work of collective decision-making extended to more-than-human communities.

You look at the network, and then it starts to look back at you ...

Writing of mycorrhizal fungi, Albrecht proposes that we rechristen the Anthropocene, naming it instead the Symbiocene—an epoch characterized in terms of social organization ‘by human intelligence that replicates the symbiotic and mutually reinforcing life-reproducing forms and processes found in living systems . . . such as the wood wide web.’

The word for world is forest.

2019

Endnotes

- Note 1: Ancient woodland between London and Essex.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: American poet (1874–1963).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Brand of comics, with superhero characters including Spider-Man, Iron Man, and Captain America.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: King of England (r. 1154–89).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Cambridge historian and ecologist (1939–2015).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: English novelist (b. 1954).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Beech nuts fallen from a beech tree.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Organic component of soil.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Underground labs made to study soil.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: The vocabulary of a language.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2013).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: English poet (b. 1936).Return to reference 3

Poetry of Climate Change

In the twenty-first century, oceans are heating up, ice sheets are shrinking, glaciers are melting, sea levels are rising, biodiversity is falling, and extreme weather is battering the planet. Although environmental awareness can be traced through the Romantics to earlier poets like Spenser and Chaucer, it was not until the twenty-first century that poets began grappling with the consequences of anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change. Their poems take a variety of approaches, but all have forged innovative ways of seeing, responding to, and thinking about the fate of the planet.

Some, such as Simon Armitage's "Ark," are openly elegiac, mourning the loss of diverse species, the degradation of reefs, ice sheets, and snow caps. Others, such as Peter Reading's "Clockwise (from the bottom)," assume a prophetic stance, satirically foretelling devastation. Still others, such as Vahni Capildeo's "Book of Dreams / Livre de Cauchemars," VI, present a dream vision of the future—or nightmare, as the French subtitle has it. In some climate poems, such as Reading's, the perspective is global. In others, such as Capildeo's poem set in the Caribbean, the focus is on the local effects of worldwide warming. Similarly, Seamus Heaney scrutinizes a glacier melting in Iceland, Patience Agbabi overhears rivers flooding in climate-sensitive Nepal, and in "Rainforest in the Sleep Room," Pascale Petit recounts the deforestation and bio-depletion of the Amazon, a human intrusion she figuratively compares to a lobotomy.

Climate change poses difficulties for representing time and space. How can a brief poem convey the long, layered timescale of climatic shift? In the compressed language of "Höfn," Heaney evokes the ages-long processes of glacier formation, followed by rapid, fearful warming. In "ECO_2nomics" Agbabi reflects another temporal complexity of climate change, how seasons become confused, as winter merges with spring. Or as Craig Santos Perez wryly puts it, "It was summer all winter long." Like time, space becomes confused. Recalling a long-haul flight from London to Delhi, Agbabi conflates

up with down, air with earth, the plane's movement—the "airbus cuts a tunnel through the air"—with the dangerous flooding caused by emissions from it and other sources. In Armitage's "Ark," widely separated locations seem to merge—Latin America and Antarctica, the hippos of Africa and the public housing estates of Britain.

The human and the natural had long been enmeshed in the pastoral tradition of a sympathetic nature; but an endangered, humanity-degraded nature can provide far less solace or refuge. Rewriting the modern American poet Wallace Stevens in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Glacier," Craig Santos Perez affirms, "Humans and animals / are kin. / Humans and animals and glaciers / are kin." But as he and other poets indicate, the refusal to honor this kinship is jeopardizing not only animals and glaciers but also the humans who hold the planet's future in their hands.

SEAMUS HEANEY

A poet of the natural world and of humanity's complex entanglement with it, Seamus Heaney (1939–2013; see the headnote to him earlier in this volume) commented that "environmental issues have to a large extent changed the mind of poetry": "at this stage," he explained, with a reference to the late nineteenth-century poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, "nobody can have an uncomplicated Hopkinsian trust in the self-refreshing powers of nature." If nature once functioned as an uncorrupted alternative space with redemptive powers, it can no longer do so to the extent that it is seen as profoundly shaped by human activities.

In "Höfn" Heaney meditates on an endangered glacier. He wrote the poem after flying in a small propeller plane over Vatnajökull, also known as the Vatna Glacier, the largest ice cap in Iceland and one of the world's largest glaciers, en route from Reykjavik to the fishing town of Höfn. The poem compares the melting glacier to an enormous beast with multiple *tongues*, a term for glacial extensions into the sea. Human populations now ponder their precarious fate in the face of the melting they have caused. The poem's compounds suggest Old English and Old Norse kennings, words bolted together in an ancient, frozen world that now threatens to come undone as the "Undead" glacier melts. The poem implicitly acknowledges that the airflight that made it possible is complicit in the destruction it witnesses.

Höfn[1]

The three-tongued glacier[2] has begun to melt.
What will we do, they ask, when boulder-milt[3]
Comes wallowing across the delta flats

And the miles-deep shag ice makes its move?
I saw it, ridged and rock-set, from above,
Undead grey-gristed earth-pelt, aeon[4]-scruff,

And feared its coldness that still seemed enough
To iceblock the plane window dimmed with breath,
Deepfreeze the seep of adamantine tilth[5]

And every warm, mouthwatering word of mouth.

2006

Endnotes

- Note 1: Town visited by Heaney after flying over Vatnajökull, or the Vatna Glacier, the largest ice cap in Iceland and one of the world's largest glaciers.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: An ice tongue extends from a glacier into the sea.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *milt* is an obsolete word for *rot*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: *Aeon* is a spelling for *eon*, a major division of geological time. Also, in a variety of religions and philosophies, a word for long lengths of time, life cycles, or eternity.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Soil that's been prepared for planting. "Adamantine": unbreakable.Return to reference 5

PATIENCE AGBABI

Nigerian British poet Agbabi (b. 1965; see the headnote to her later in this volume) has helped renew poetic traditions to grapple with contemporary challenges of race, sexuality, and the environment. In 2007, Lloyd's, a London-based insurance company, co-sponsored and published a series of her and two other writers' poems about climate change—an indication of the public's rising interest in the subject. The punning title of one of her six poems, "ECO_2nomics," signals the entanglement of economics, carbon dioxide, and ecology in climate change. Agbabi abruptly juxtaposes a long-haul flight from London to Delhi with the terrestrial destruction it is helping to cause below. Planes and other humanmade technologies are dramatically affecting the seemingly distant earth's crops, rivers, and seasons. She quotes two villagers cited in an article in *The Guardian* about the effect of CO_2 emissions on Nepal, a country described as particularly vulnerable to climate change, like many areas of the global South. It has suffered devastating floods that a villager links by simile to a horrifying sound, "*like 10,000 lorries*." The poem leaps across time and space, emphasizing lines of connections. Even though inhabitants of Nepal have contributed only a small fraction of carbon emissions, in this interlinked, threatened world, they are at far greater risk of suffering its consequences in the near term.

ECO$_2$nomics

The average Briton produces 126 times more carbon dioxide than someone living in Nepal.[1]

I read about freak floods in Nepal
as my London-Delhi long-haul

airbus cuts a tunnel through the air.
O°C. *It was like a wall of water.*[2]

CO_2, -3, up here it's Winter;
down there, December, Printemps[3]

is early on the banks of the Seine.
It means that crop yields are going down.

The plane—*it sounded like 10,000 lorries*—
makes a constant burr, a snowdrop buries

its name, beats its estimated time of arrival.
Then all the land started moving like a river.

10,000 metres above sea level
the plane heaves like a tidal wave.

2007

Endnotes

- Note 1: The info under the title about CO_2 emissions comes after a report in the *Guardian*, "Nepal's farmers on the front line

of global climate change”—John Vidal, Kathmandu, Dec. 2, 2006 [*Agbabi’s note*].Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The italicized quotes in this poem are mostly attributed to Sherbahadur Tamang, a Nepalese villager quoted in the *Guardian* article mentioned above. One quote, “It means that crop yields are going down,” is attributed to another villager, Tekmadur Majsi. These villagers describe two southern Nepalese villages flooded with increasing frequency and intensityReturn to reference 2
- Note 3: Spring (French).Return to reference 3

PETER READING

Born in Liverpool, Peter Reading (1946–2011) studied painting at the Liverpool College of Art. Working for many years as a weighbridge operator at an animal feedmill in Shropshire, he eventually turned full-time to poetry and over the years published twenty-six collections. His work tends to be mordant, imbued with a recognition of the quotidian's capacity to turn grotesque. "Time's malice castigates / not only me," he writes, but "also fair governments, concepts, zeniths," leading to a bleak conclusion: "all which we valued nears expiry."

In Reading's late volumes, "Time's malice" takes on the special urgency of climate change. "Clockwise (from the bottom)," a poem written after the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had issued dire predictions in its fourth report, hurtles toward environmental doom, not bothering to stop between title and the first stanza. The prophetic satire envisions the consequences of unchecked fossil-fuel emissions. Each of its forty-one, three-beat lines marks a year in the march toward a projected temperature rise of 4° Celsius. With grim poetic economy, the tightly constructed poem devotes a clipped sentence to each region, starting from the bottom of the globe with "Antarctic / glacial meltdown," and then moving north in a clockwise motion. The poem's thirteen stanzas—one more than the hands of a clock—proceed relentlessly across the barren Americas to the "snow-free Alps" to "Polynesia: sunk." In its final lines, the poem opens a set of parentheses but does not close them, "(all hands, &c., &c . . . ,)" trailing off into a future better averted, but terrifyingly possible.

Clockwise (from the bottom),[1]

4 degrees Celsius up,
40 years on: Antarctic
glacial meltdown, ergo,
sea levels risen (albeit
most marine life extinct).

South America: deluge,
deglaciation,[2] desert,
uninhabitable
(by humankind, that is).

North America: drought,
flood, hurricane, desert,
uninhabitable
(by humankind, that is).

Canada: now warm, fertile
(all hands battle to live there).

Greenland's icesheet thawed.

Scandinavia/UK/
Russia/Siberia:
ideal growing conditions
(all hands war to get there).

Southern Europe: desert,
snow-free Alps, dry rivers.

Middle East: same old testament.

Asia: Himalayan

deglaciation, floods;
Bangladesh abandoned,
ditto South India,
Pakistan &c.

Southern China: dried rivers
and aquifers[3] mean
the region is abandoned,
monsoons erode the earth,
dustbowls only obtain.

Polynesia: sunk.

Australia: in the north,
and in Tas.,[4] 'compact cities'—
all hands at war to get there—
the mass is wilderness.

New Zealand: densely populous,
intensive farming and all that
(all hands, &c., &c . . .

2010

Endnotes

- Note 1: This poem proceeds clockwise across the globe, from Antarctica to South America to New Zealand, in forty-one lines, one for each year before the predicted rise of 4 degrees Celsius if emissions were unchecked, in thirteen stanzas, one more than the numbers on a clockface.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: In geology, the retreat or melting of glaciers and ice.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Underground rock that contains groundwater, commonly extracted by a well.Return to reference 3

- Note 4: Shortening of *Tasmania*, an island state of Australia.Return to reference 4

VAHNI CAPILDEO

Born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in 1973 and living in the UK since 1991, the Trinidadian Scottish poet Vahni Capildeo attended Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship, where they earned a D.Phil. in English on translation theory and Old Norse. They have researched for the *Oxford English Dictionary* and taught at multiple universities in the UK.

"The Book of Dreams / Livre de Cauchemars," VI, is a poem of shifting, spectatorial perception. Like a dream, the Caribbean world it portrays is nightmarishly changeable, as it undergoes the dire effects of sea level rise. In the poem, the speaker watches as boys from a Trinidadian school play football (soccer) in rising waters near a new hotel, its grounds periodically saturated with sea water. In Capildeo's dry, impersonal description, the match swells into the surreal: "How were they managing it? Their knees were lifting above the / waves." Crisp, vivid similes accumulate, deepening the poem's un/reality and anticipating the coming merger of water, vegetation, animal, and human. Waves follow "one another like one ridged iguana moving from branch to branch," and the players are "thin and whippy like coconut trees." "We were not enjoying watching the boys playing football in the sea," the speaker observes, as the joy of following a game dissolves into the horror of bearing witness to catastrophic inundation: "The Atlantic was going to join the match, and come in to / the hotel afterwards." Can we wake from such a *cauchemar*, the poem seems to ask, or is this now reality?

From The Book of Dreams / Livre de Cauchemars

VI

Someone had developed the bay since our last visit. The drive north
was the same as for the more famous bathing-place; only a little
further. We parked and began the uncertain walk (what should the
feet expect? blown sand over paved path, or deep sand? mud or
quicksand? broken bottle or quartz?), to arrive at the tight little curve.
The lines in the sea threw up walls of light, drawing an imaginary
stadium around the bay—an under-resourced stadium whose build-
ing contractor had run off with the cash: the walls of light, lined like
sea, were like corrugated metal, grey and splashed with rust or the
red of rained-on national slogans.
It wasn't a question of us arriving late: the grey and rust, scrub and
dust, in a place indubitably holiday destination-ish for the people
who lived on the island even more than for the thin-on-the-ground
tourists. Up till the previous bend in the road, the day had retained

its colour.

The match had not started.

We walked down the steep slope to what was not defined enough to be a beach—more the area belonging to the sea. The ground was damp-packed, indicating that sometimes but not always it was below water. We turned left, or south-west, and up a smaller slope.

The pleasant, ramshackle new hotel, two and a half storeys high, overlooking the bay, had an old-fashioned gallery running the length of each floor. Perhaps not belonging to the hotel, there was a not-imaginary slice of stadium, or rather seats in tiered stands and something like a barbecue area, covering the western part of the angle of the small bay. That was new. It looked worn.

The match was starting. We sat on metal folding chairs in the first floor gallery, to watch the boys play football[1] in the sea.

'Eh-eh! But what are you doing here!' It was the drum majorette from the Form II March Past parade—how many years ago? Grown up now, pretty in red, with a frosty can of something in her hand.

Retired headmistresses. Half-remembered prefects.[2] Everybody's

aunt in a flowered hat and coral lipstick, the weight of a picnic
cooler testing the strength of her talcum-thick[3] wrist. Somebody's
father (but hadn't he died?) trying harder to be friendly since he
had betrayed his wife. The boys from the College of the Immaculate
Conception,[4] out of uniform and in red or white cotton T-shirts that
burned and cowled over the forbidden meagreness that, shyly and
muskily, was—not their bodies—was also-them. Other boys from
their college were in the sea, all at sea, playing football in the sea.
We were gathered there together to watch the match.
How were they managing it? Their knees were lifting above the
waves. Despite the absence of goalposts, and the shifting depth of
water, the boys seemed to know where to go. They were playing side-
on to the waves; side-on to us. The waves came in faster, following
one another like one ridged iguana moving from branch to branch.
The boys were thin and whippy like coconut trees, heads ferocious
clusters of concentration.
'The match going well!'
But a dark cloud was blowing up, between the open sea and the

edge of mountain. And the boys would not stop playing. And the
wind was blowing up too, chill and bitter and salt, what the Atlantic
brings to the tropics and is not 'tropical'. The drops of rain then,
heavy like one cent coins, hitting us like spiteful alms. And the boys
seemed unable to stop playing. And they were kicking the ball up
somehow from under greater and greater depth of water, and we
remarked their sportsmanship from their elbows, the tops of their
torsos, the struggling coconut-heads above the waves, in between
the waves. They were in deeper. The sea was nearer. Nearer to us.
We were not enjoying watching the boys playing football in the sea.
They were playing the match of their lives.
Under the rimlet of every wave gasping further up on to the damp-
packed ground, the sea brought more darkness.
Then the approximate stadium of the bay began, most impressively,
to acquire a fourth wall.
The Atlantic was going to join the match, and come in to
the hotel afterwards.

2014, 2016

Endnotes

- Note 1: Soccer.Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Students charged with authority over younger schoolmates; more generally, chief officers or magistrates.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Talcum is one of the softest minerals.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago.Return to reference 4

CRAIG SANTOS PEREZ

Born in 1980 on the Pacific Island of Guåhan (Guam), Craig Santos Perez has published eco-poetry, essays, criticism, reviews, and academic scholarship. He has also released spoken word albums and has performed his work at poetry festivals and conferences. His poetry is centered on Native Chamorro experience and language, criticizing the ecological ramifications of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism, as well as gesturing toward what one poem calls a "horizon of care." He teaches literature and creative writing at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

In "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Glacier," Perez "recycles" American modernist poet Wallace Stevens's influential poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." Perez adapts Stevens's cubistic array of perspectives to defamiliarize an image of climate change so ubiquitous and clichéd as to be hard to see. Reversing Stevens's sequence, Perez starts with XIII and wends backward to a beginning that is an end. Perez reflects on the catastrophic threat to glaciers posed by climate change—their dwindling, breaking, rumbling, retreating, calving, and, as the final stanza brings home, melting. Whereas warmth often figures as a life-giving force, here human-derived heat has melted the last of what was "once 200,000 glaciers." Perez's many ways of "looking" also remind us that poetry offers a way of knowing: "I know, too," the speaker in the sixth stanza avers, "that the glacier is involved / in what I know." The glacier is involved in our knowing, and, as Perez's poem poignantly reminds us, our survival is inseparable from its fate: "We are of one ecology," "Humans and animals and glaciers / are kin."

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Glacier

recycling Wallace Stevens[1]

XIII

Among starving polar bears,
the only moving thing
was the edge of a glacier.

XII

We are of one ecology
like a planet
in which there were once 200,000 glaciers.

XI

The glacier absorbs greenhouse gas.
We are a large part of the biosphere.

X

Humans and animals
are kin.
Humans and animals and glaciers
are kin.

IX

We do not know which to fear more,
the terror of change

or the terror of uncertainty,
the glacier calving
or just after.

VIII

Icebergs fill the vast ocean
with titanic wrecks.
The mass of the glacier
disappears, to and fro.
The threat
hidden in the crevasse[2]
an irreversible clause.

VII

O vulnerable humans,
why do you engineer sea walls?
Do you not see how the glacier
already floods the streets
of the cities around you?

VI

I know king tides,
and lurid, unprecedented storms;
but I know, too,
that the glacier is involved
in what I know.

V

When the glacial terminus broke,
it marked the beginning
of one of many waves.

IV

At the rumble of a glacier
losing its equilibrium,
every tourist in the new Arctic
chased ice quickly.

III

Shell[3] explored the poles
for offshore drilling.
Once, we blocked them,
in that we understood
the risk of an oil spill
to a glacier.

II

The sea is rising.
The glacier must be retreating.

I

It was summer all winter.
It was melting
and it was going to melt.
The last glacier fits
in our warm hands.

2016

Endnotes

- Note 1: American poet (1879–1955).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A deep crack in a glacier or ice sheet.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Founded in 1907 and one of the largest oil companies in the world.Return to reference 3

PASCALE PETIT

Born in France in 1953, Pascale Petit, a British poet of Indian, Welsh, and French heritage, studied sculpting at the Royal College of Art. In her collections of poetry, she explores questions of gender, embodiment, and the environment. Her collection *Mama Amazonica* was the inaugural winner of the Laurel Prize for Poetry in 2020, a prize for environmental poetry founded by British poet laureate Simon Armitage to raise awareness of the climate crisis.

A poem in this collection, "Rainforest in the Sleep Room," personifies the Amazon rainforest as a human patient receiving medical care. Like road construction through the rainforest, some medical interventions, though well intended, can be horribly destructive. The poem opens with a shocking image, comparing human intrusion into the Amazon to a lobotomy: "The highway goes through / the Amazon's brain / like an icepick through an eye-socket." More violence accrues through other similes: bulldozers cut through the Amazon's "cortex / like a scalpel." Petit's personifications vividly convey how destruction of the Amazon, a rainforest often anthropomorphized as the lungs of the world, wipes out a sustainable ecology for human and nonhuman animals. As a result of this persistent violence, in the end, "The only animals left / are grainy films / on camera traps." The poem concludes with a "still small voice," one of extinction: "a recording of the last / musician-wren." This voice, the poem concludes, "is like the beginning of the world." We might ask what such a beginning portends, and if it's enough to resist the cruelties to the planet enumerated in Petit's poem.

Rainforest in the Sleep Room

1

The highway goes through
the Amazon's[1] brain
like an ice pick through an eye-socket.

First we clear her synapses[2]
then she forgets her animals.

2

Our bulldozers drive through
the rainbow boa of her cortex
like a scalpel—

those sleeping coils
still dreaming up new species,

3

hallucinations we've blitzed
with ECT.[3]

The bilateral current purrs
through her frontal lobes

like a forest of songbirds
electrocuted by rain.

4

Afterwards, her thoughts are nestless,
except for a few chicks
up in the last ironwoods,
patrolled by armed guards.

Scientists climb ropes
to monitor her stats,
bring motherless macaws

down to incubators,
measuring their wings,
weighing naked souls,

5

as if she's a patient
in the Sleep Room
who won't wake—

her dreams treelines
traced by the EEG pen.[4]

6

The only animals left
are grainy films
on camera traps

7

and a recording of the last
musician-wren

whose still small voice[5]
is like the beginning of the world.

Endnotes

- Note 1: South American river; largest in the world by water volume.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Medical preparation for a frontal lobotomy.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Electroconvulsive therapy, commonly known as "shock therapy."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Electroencephalogram (EEG) given by a wireless portable "pen" device to measure brain waves.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: After biblical destruction by earthquake, whirlwind, and fire, Ezekiel hears the "still small voice" of God (1 Kings 19:12).Return to reference 5

SIMON ARMITAGE

The publication in the magazine *Scientific American* of "Ark" by British poet laureate Simon Armitage (b. 1963; see headnote to him later in this volume), a poem written to commemorate the naming of a new polar research ship, exemplifies how science and literature can come together to address the unprecedented challenge of climate change. To convey the gravity of the situation, Armitage reimagines the biblical story of Noah's Ark for the Anthropocene. Now the flood results not from a divine judgment on human wickedness but from the sea level rise of anthropogenic climate change. Now the dove can bring back not an olive leaf, evidencing the promise of receding waters and dry land, but "a sprig of tinsel snagged in its beak, / a yard of fishing-line binding its feet." Now instead of evincing the hope of renewed life, it has "wings slicked in a rainbow of oil," a catastrophic degradation of the exalted biblical symbol of the Covenant.

Availing himself of the compression of poetry, Armitage shows that global warming has collapsed the distances between spaces on the globe—between Latin America and Antarctica, the African hippo and the British housing estate. To lament the losses of climate change, he echoes a Scottish folk song in lines such as "*Bring back, bring back the leaf. / Bring back the reed and the reef*." And to mourn species extinction, he deploys alliteration, rhythm, and rhyme: "*Bring back the fern, the fish, the frond and the fowl, / the golden toad and the pygmy owl*." Intermixing elegiac grief with satire, he mocks the careless littering of the oceans with metallic and plastic junk—"wrappers and bottles and nurdles and cans." Is there still time to reverse the slide toward ruination of the planet? Or will future generations look back on poems like Armitage's and on scientific reports and see warnings that went unheeded?

Ark[1]

They sent out a dove:[2] it wobbled home,
wings slicked in a rainbow[3] of oil,
a sprig of tinsel snagged in its beak,
a yard of fishing-line binding its feet.

Bring back, bring back the leaf.[4]

They sent out an arctic fox:
it plodded the bays
of the northern fringe
in muddy socks
and a nylon cape.

Bring back, bring back the leaf.
Bring back the reed and the reef,
set the ice sheet back on its frozen plinth,[5]
tuck the restless watercourse[6] *into its bed,*
sit the glacier down on its highland throne,
put the snow cap back on the mountain peak.

Let the northern lights be the northern lights
not the alien glow over Glasgow or Leeds.[7]

A camel capsized in a tropical flood.
Caimans[8] dozed in Antarctic lakes.
Polymers rolled in the sturgeon's[9] blood.
Hippos wandered the housing estates.

Bring back, bring back the leaf.
Bring back the tusk and the horn
unshorn.

Bring back the fern, the fish, the frond and the fowl,
the golden toad and the pygmy owl,
revisit the scene
where swallowtails fly
through acres of unexhausted sky.

They sent out a boat.
Go little breaker,
splinter the pack-ice and floes, nose
through the rafts and pads
of wrappers and bottles and nurdles[1] and cans,
the bergs and atolls and islands and states
of plastic bags and micro-beads
and the forests of smoke.

Bring back, bring back the leaf,
bring back the river and sea.

2020

Endnotes

- Note 1: In the biblical story of Noah's Ark, God directs Noah to build an ark and bring his family as well as one male and female animal of each species to safety. The humans and animals on the ark would repopulate the world in the wake of the great flood.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Noah releases a dove after the flood to find land. When the dove returns with an olive branch in its mouth, it becomes a symbol of hope.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Symbol of the covenant God makes with all living creatures to never flood the Earth again.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Variation on the refrain of the Scottish folk tune "My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean." The refrain is "Bring back, bring back, O bring back my Bonnie to me."Return to reference 4

- Note 5: A solid base, usually for a statue or column.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A channel where water flows.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: City in England. “Glasgow”: city in Scotland.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A reptile closely related to the alligator.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A type of fish. “Polymers”: natural or synthetic materials characterized by large, repeating molecular structures. Many plastics are polymers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A small pellet of plastic, or a microplastic.Return to reference 1

MARGARET ATWOOD
b. 1939

Margaret Atwood was born in Ottawa, Canada, into a family with roots in Nova Scotia, but when she was seven her family moved to Toronto. She did not receive formal schooling until she was eleven, because her family spent a large part of every year in the northern wildernesses of Quebec and Ontario. There, her father, a forest entomologist, pursued his research on insects, while she immersed herself in both the woods and books. The Canadian wilderness is the setting of a number of her poems, novels, and stories, although her work has ranged among a variety of real and fictional locales, including the Caribbean island of *Bodily Harm* (1981) and the dystopian Boston of *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Atwood received her B.A. in English from Victoria College, University of Toronto, in 1961. The next year she earned an M.A. at Harvard, later returning for doctoral research she did not complete, though several volumes of her poetry were published during that time. Before 1972, when she became a full-time writer, Atwood taught at Canadian universities in Vancouver, Montreal, Alberta, and Toronto.

Atwood is the author of more than a dozen collections of poetry, and more than twenty volumes of imaginative prose—both novels and short fiction—as well as a large number of essays and critical works. Her earliest books include the poems collected in the self-published *Double Persephone* (1961), and then the conventionally published *The Circle Game* (1964), a collection that won the

Governor General's Literary Award for Poetry. Precisely carved language, doubleness of vision, ironic inversions of expectations—these are among the qualities that have garnered attention for her poetry. A poem such as "Miss July Grows Older" suggests the complexity of Atwood's surprising and witty examinations of gender relations. It opens with an arresting question in the voice of a smart, wryly self-critical beauty queen who, hardly a passive object, has skillfully manipulated men: "How much longer can I get away / with being so fucking cute?" Atwood has said that poetry is "the heart of the language, the activity through which language is renewed and kept alive."

She has also said that, for her, "fiction is the guardian of the moral and ethical sense of the community." Although she continued to publish collections of poetry over several decades, it is Atwood's fiction that has made her perhaps Canada's best-known writer. Her first novel, *The Edible Woman* (1969), explores a woman's eating disorders long before the sexual politics of anorexia and bulimia were widely discussed. Several of her subsequent novels were short-listed for the Booker Prize, including her most famous work, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), about a woman's struggle against imprisonment within sharply hierarchical gender roles in a religious fundamentalist dystopia; *Cat's Eye* (1989), about power and cruelty in girlhood friendships; and *Alias Grace* (1996), a fictionalized narrative of a historical nineteenth-century female servant accused of murder. *The Blind Assassin* (2000), which nests various stories within one another, finally won Atwood the Booker Prize. She won her second Booker for *The Testaments* (2019), a prize she shared with Bernardine Evaristo, who won for *Girl, Woman, Other*. Atwood joins Peter Carey, J. M. Coetzee, and Hilary Mantel as the only authors to have won a Booker twice.

Since the publication of her early book of essays, *Survival* (1972), Atwood has helped bring attention and shape to Canadian literature. Early in that book, she hazards sweeping comparisons between Canadian literature and both "the sense of adventure or danger" in the literature of the United States (its key symbol being "The

Frontier") and the "smugness and/or sense of security" in the literature of England ("The Island"). In her view, Canadian literature reflects a distinct experience. "Our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back, from the awful experience—the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship—that killed everyone else. The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival." Some of Atwood's fictional characters are survivors of the Canadian wilderness, including the young female protagonist of *Surfacing*, a novel published in the same year as *Survival*, who journeys deep into the wilderness in search of her lost father. The main character in *Cat's Eye* reviews and relives the psychological damage inflicted on her by female friendships and bullying during her childhood and teenage years in the forest.

In the short story "Death by Landscape," the central character, Lois, is also a survivor of loss and painful memories, of vexed female friendship and power relations lived out in the Canadian wilderness. Reflecting on coming of age at camp, Lois remembers the singing, the stratification, the role-playing as American Indians, but her main focus is her friendship with an American girl, Lucy, who imports into Canada her troubled home life. After a defining incident on a canoe trip, "Death by Landscape," like other of Atwood's novels and short fiction, becomes a narrative in part about the power of stories to give meaning, as well as their potential duplicity—about the power of narrative both to condemn and to explore, of language both to cripple and to liberate.

Death by Landscape

Now that the boys are grown up and Rob is dead, Lois has moved to a condominium apartment in one of the newer waterfront developments. She is relieved not to have to worry about the lawn, or about the ivy pushing its muscular little suckers into the brickwork, or the squirrels gnawing their way into the attic and eating the insulation off the wiring, or about strange noises. This building has a security system, and the only plant life is in pots in the solarium.

Lois is glad she's been able to find an apartment big enough for her pictures. They are more crowded together than they were in the house, but this arrangement gives the walls a European look: blocks of pictures, above and beside one another, rather than one over the chesterfield,[1] one over the fireplace, one in the front hall, in the old acceptable manner of sprinkling art around so it does not get too intrusive. This way has more of an impact. You know it's not supposed to be furniture.

None of the pictures is very large, which doesn't mean they aren't valuable. They are paintings, or sketches and drawings, by artists who were not nearly as well known when Lois began to buy them as they are now. Their work later turned up on stamps, or as silk-screen reproductions hung in the principals' offices of high schools, or as jigsaw puzzles, or on beautifully printed calendars sent out by corporations as Christmas gifts, to their less important clients. These artists painted mostly in the twenties and thirties and forties; they painted landscapes. Lois has two Tom Thomsons, three A. Y. Jacksons, a Lawren Harris. She has an Arthur Lismer, she has a J. E. H. MacDonald. She has a David Milne.[2] They are pictures of convoluted tree trunks on an island or pink wave-smoothed stone, with more islands behind; of a lake with rough, bright, sparsely wooded cliffs; of a vivid river shore with a tangle of bush and two

beached canoes, one red, one grey; of a yellow autumn woods with the ice-blue gleam of a pond half-seen through the interlaced branches.

It was Lois who'd chosen them. Rob had no interest in art, although he could see the necessity of having something on the walls. He left all the decorating decisions to her, while providing the money, of course. Because of this collection of hers, Lois's friends—especially the men—have given her the reputation of having a good nose for art investments.

But this is not why she bought the pictures, way back then. She bought them because she wanted them. She wanted something that was in them, although she could not have said at the time what it was. It was not peace: she does not find them peaceful in the least. Looking at them fills her with a wordless unease. Despite the fact that there are no people in them or even animals, it's as if there is something, or someone, looking back out.

When she was thirteen, Lois went on a canoe trip. She'd only been on overnights before. This was to be a long one, into the trackless wilderness, as Cappie put it. It was Lois's first canoe trip, and her last.

Cappie was the head of the summer camp to which Lois had been sent ever since she was nine. Camp Manitou, it was called; it was one of the better ones, for girls, though not the best. Girls of her age whose parents could afford it were routinely packed off to such camps, which bore a generic resemblance to one another. They favoured Indian names and had hearty, energetic leaders, who were called Cappie or Skip or Scottie. At these camps you learned to swim well and sail, and paddle a canoe, and perhaps ride a horse or play tennis. When you weren't doing these things you could do Arts and Crafts and turn out dingy, lumpish clay ashtrays for your mother—mothers smoked more, then—or bracelets made of coloured braided string.

Cheerfulness was required at all times, even at breakfast. Loud shouting and the banging of spoons on the tables were allowed, and

even encouraged, at ritual intervals. Chocolate bars were rationed, to control tooth decay and pimples. At night, after supper, in the dining hall or outside around a mosquito-infested campfire ring for special treats, there were singsongs. Lois can still remember all the words to "My Darling Clementine," and to "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean," with acting-out gestures: a rippling of the hands for "the ocean," two hands together under the cheek for "lies." She will never be able to forget them, which is a sad thought.

Lois thinks she can recognize women who went to these camps, and were good at it. They have a hardness to their handshakes, even now; a way of standing, legs planted firmly and farther apart than usual; a way of sizing you up, to see if you'd be any good in a canoe—the front, not the back. They themselves would be in the back. They would call it the stern.

She knows that such camps still exist, although Camp Manitou does not. They are one of the few things that haven't changed much. They now offer copper enamelling, and functionless pieces of stained glass baked in electric ovens, though judging from the productions of her friends' grandchildren the artistic standards have not improved.

To Lois, encountering it in the first year after the war, Camp Manitou seemed ancient. Its log-sided buildings with the white cement in between the half-logs, its flagpole ringed with whitewashed stones, its weathered grey dock jutting out into Lake Prospect, with its woven rope bumpers and its rusty rings for tying up, its prim round flowerbed of petunias near the office door, must surely have been there always. In truth it dated only from the first decade of the century; it had been founded by Cappie's parents, who'd thought of camping as bracing to the character, like cold showers, and had been passed along to her as an inheritance, and an obligation.

Lois realized, later, that it must have been a struggle for Cappie to keep Camp Manitou going, during the Depression and then the war, when money did not flow freely. If it had been a camp for the very rich, instead of the merely well off, there would have been

fewer problems. But there must have been enough Old Girls, ones with daughters, to keep the thing in operation, though not entirely shipshape: furniture was battered, painted trim was peeling, roofs leaked. There were dim photographs of these Old Girls dotted around the dining hall, wearing ample woollen bathing suits and showing their fat, dimpled legs, or standing, arms twined, in odd tennis outfits with baggy skirts.

In the dining hall, over the stone fireplace that was never used, there was a huge moulting stuffed moose head, which looked somehow carnivorous. It was a sort of mascot; its name was Monty Manitou. The older campers spread the story that it was haunted, and came to life in the dark, when the feeble and undependable lights had been turned off or, due to yet another generator failure, had gone out. Lois was afraid of it at first, but not after she got used to it.

Cappie was the same: you had to get used to her. Possibly she was forty, or thirty-five, or fifty. She had fawn-coloured hair that looked as if it was cut with a bowl. Her head jutted forward, jigging like a chicken's as she strode around the camp, clutching notebooks and checking things off in them. She was like their minister in church: both of them smiled a lot and were anxious because they wanted things to go well; they both had the same overwashed skins and stringy necks. But all this disappeared when Cappie was leading a singsong, or otherwise leading. Then she was happy, sure of herself, her plain face almost luminous. She wanted to cause joy. At these times she was loved, at others merely trusted.

There were many things Lois didn't like about Camp Manitou, at first. She hated the noisy chaos and spoon-banging of the dining hall, the rowdy singsongs at which you were expected to yell in order to show that you were enjoying yourself. Hers was not a household that encouraged yelling. She hated the necessity of having to write dutiful letters to her parents claiming she was having fun. She could not complain, because camp cost so much money.

She didn't much like having to undress in a roomful of other girls, even in the dim light, although nobody paid any attention, or

sleeping in a cabin with seven other girls, some of whom snored because they had adenoids[3] or colds, some of whom had nightmares, or wet their beds and cried about it. Bottom bunks made her feel closed in, and she was afraid of falling out of top ones; she was afraid of heights. She got homesick, and suspected her parents of having a better time when she wasn't there than when she was, although her mother wrote to her every week saying how much they missed her. All this was when she was nine. By the time she was thirteen she liked it. She was an old hand by then.

Lucy was her best friend at camp. Lois had other friends in winter, when there was school and itchy woollen clothing and darkness in the afternoons, but Lucy was her summer friend.

She turned up the second year, when Lois was ten, and a Bluejay. (Chickadees, Bluejays, Ravens, and Kingfishers—these were the names Camp Manitou assigned to the different age groups, a sort of totemic clan system. In those days, thinks Lois, it was birds for girls, animals for boys: wolves, and so forth. Though some animals and birds were suitable and some were not. Never vultures, for instance; never skunks, or rats.)

Lois helped Lucy to unpack her tin trunk and place the folded clothes on the wooden shelves, and to make up her bed. She put her in the top bunk right above her, where she could keep an eye on her. Already she knew that Lucy was an exception, to a good many rules; already she felt proprietorial.

Lucy was from the United States, where the comic books came from, and the movies. She wasn't from New York or Hollywood or Buffalo, the only American cities Lois knew the names of, but from Chicago. Her house was on the lake shore and had gates to it, and grounds. They had a maid, all of the time. Lois's family only had a cleaning lady twice a week.

The only reason Lucy was being sent to *this* camp (she cast a look of minor scorn around the cabin, diminishing it and also offending Lois, while at the same time daunting her) was that her mother had been a camper here. Her mother had been a Canadian

once, but had married her father, who had a patch over one eye, like a pirate. She showed Lois the picture of him in her wallet. He got the patch in the war. "Shrapnel," said Lucy. Lois, who was unsure about shrapnel, was so impressed she could only grunt. Her own two-eyed, unwounded father was tame by comparison.

"My father plays golf," she ventured at last.

"*Everyone* plays golf," said Lucy. "My *mother* plays golf."

Lois's mother did not. Lois took Lucy to see the outhouses and the swimming dock and the dining hall with Monty Manitou's baleful head, knowing in advance they would not measure up.

This was a bad beginning; but Lucy was good-natured, and accepted Camp Manitou with the same casual shrug with which she seemed to accept everything. She would make the best of it, without letting Lois forget that this was what she was doing.

However, there were things Lois knew that Lucy did not. Lucy scratched the tops off all her mosquito bites and had to be taken to the infirmary to be daubed with Ozonol.[4] She took her T-shirt off while sailing, and although the counsellor spotted her after a while and made her put it back on, she burnt spectacularly, bright red, with the X of her bathing-suit straps standing out in alarming white; she let Lois peel the sheets of whispery-thin burned skin off her shoulders. When they sang "Alouette" around the campfire, she did not know any of the French words. The difference was that Lucy did not care about the things she didn't know, whereas Lois did.

During the next winter, and subsequent winters, Lucy and Lois wrote to each other. They were both only children, at a time when this was thought to be a disadvantage, so in their letters they pretended to be sisters, or even twins. Lois had to strain a little over this, because Lucy was so blonde, with translucent skin and large blue eyes like a doll's, and Lois was nothing out of the ordinary—just a tallish, thinnish, brownish person with freckles. They signed their letters LL, with the L's entwined together like the monograms on a towel. (Lois and Lucy, thinks Lois. How our names date us. Lois Lane, Superman's girlfriend, enterprising female reporter; "I Love

Lucy." Now we are obsolete, and it's little Jennifers, little Emilys, little Alexandras and Carolines and Tiffanys.)

They were more effusive in their letters than they ever were in person. They bordered their pages with X's and O's, but when they met again in the summers it was always a shock. They had changed so much, or Lucy had. It was like watching someone grow up in jolts. At first it would be hard to think up things to say.

But Lucy always had a surprise or two, something to show, some marvel to reveal. The first year she had a picture of herself in a tutu, her hair in a ballerina's knot on the top of her head; she pirouetted around the swimming dock, to show Lois how it was done, and almost fell off. The next year she had given that up and was taking horseback riding. (Camp Manitou did not have horses.) The next year her mother and father had been divorced, and she had a new stepfather, one with both eyes, and a new house, although the maid was the same. The next year, when they had graduated from Bluejays and entered Ravens, she got her period, right in the first week of camp. The two of them snitched some matches from their counsellor, who smoked illegally, and made a small fire out behind the farthest outhouse, at dusk, using their flashlights. They could set all kinds of fires by now; they had learned how in Campcraft. On this fire they burned one of Lucy's used sanitary napkins. Lois is not sure why they did this, or whose idea it was. But she can remember the feeling of deep satisfaction it gave her as the white fluff singed and the blood sizzled, as if some wordless ritual had been fulfilled.

They did not get caught, but then they rarely got caught at any of their camp transgressions. Lucy had such large eyes, and was such an accomplished liar.

This year Lucy is different again: slower, more languorous. She is no longer interested in sneaking around after dark, purloining cigarettes from the counsellor, dealing in black-market candy bars. She is pensive, and hard to wake in the mornings. She doesn't like her stepfather, but she doesn't want to live with her real father either, who has a new wife. She thinks her mother may be having a love

affair with a doctor; she doesn't know for sure, but she's seen them smooching in his car, out on the driveway, when her stepfather wasn't there. It serves him right. She hates her private school. She has a boyfriend, who is sixteen and works as a gardener's assistant. This is how she met him: in the garden. She describes to Lois what it is like when he kisses her—rubbery at first, but then your knees go limp. She has been forbidden to see him, and threatened with boarding school. She wants to run away from home.

Lois has little to offer in return. Her own life is placid and satisfactory, but there is nothing much that can be said about happiness. "You're so lucky," Lucy tells her, a little smugly. She might as well say *boring* because this is how it makes Lois feel.

Lucy is apathetic about the canoe trip, so Lois has to disguise her own excitement. The evening before they are to leave, she slouches into the campfire ring as if coerced, and sits down with a sigh of endurance, just as Lucy does.

Every canoe trip that went out of camp was given a special send-off by Cappie and the section leader and counsellors, with the whole section in attendance. Cappie painted three streaks of red across each of her cheeks with a lipstick. They looked like three-fingered claw marks. She put a blue circle on her forehead with fountain-pen ink, and tied a twisted bandanna around her head and stuck a row of frazzle-ended feathers around it, and wrapped herself in a red-and-black Hudson's Bay blanket. The counsellors, also in blankets but with only two streaks of red, beat on tom-toms made of round wooden cheese boxes with leather stretched over the top and nailed in place. Cappie was Chief Cappeosota. They all had to say "How!" when she walked into the circle and stood there with one hand raised.

Looking back on this, Lois finds it disquieting. She knows too much about Indians: this is why. She knows, for instance, that they should not even be called Indians, and that they have enough worries without other people taking their names and dressing up as them. It has all been a form of stealing.

But she remembers, too, that she was once ignorant of this. Once she loved the campfire, the flickering of light on the ring of faces, the sound of the fake tom-toms, heavy and fast like a scared heartbeat; she loved Cappie in a red blanket and feathers, solemn, as a chief should be, raising her hand and saying, "Greetings, my Ravens." It was not funny, it was not making fun. She wanted to be an Indian. She wanted to be adventurous and pure, and aboriginal.

"You go on big water," says Cappie. This is her idea—all their ideas—of how Indians talk. "You go where no man has ever trod. You go many moons." This is not true. They are only going for a week, not many moons. The canoe route is clearly marked, they have gone over it on a map, and there are prepared campsites with names which are used year after year. But when Cappie says this—and despite the way Lucy rolls up her eyes—Lois can feel the water stretching out, with the shores twisting away on either side, immense and a little frightening.

"You bring back much wampum,"[5] says Cappie. "Do good in war, my braves, and capture many scalps." This is another of her pretences: that they are boys, and bloodthirsty. But such a game cannot be played by substituting the word "squaw." It would not work at all.

Each of them has to stand up and step forward and have a red line drawn across her cheeks by Cappie. She tells them they must follow in the paths of their ancestors (who most certainly, thinks Lois, looking out the window of her apartment and remembering the family stash of daguerreotypes[6] and sepia-coloured portraits on her mother's dressing table, the stiff-shirted, black-coated, grim-faced men and the beflounced women with their severe hair and their corseted respectability, would never have considered heading off onto an open lake, in a canoe, just for fun).

At the end of the ceremony they all stood and held hands around the circle, and sang taps. This did not sound very Indian, thinks Lois. It sounded like a bugle call at a military post, in a movie. But Cappie

was never one to be much concerned with consistency, or with archaeology.

After breakfast the next morning they set out from the main dock, in four canoes, three in each. The lipstick stripes have not come off completely, and still show faintly pink, like healing burns. They wear their white denim sailing hats, because of the sun, and thin-striped T-shirts, and pale baggy shorts with the cuffs rolled up. The middle one kneels, propping her rear end against the rolled sleeping bags. The counsellors going with them are Pat and Kip. Kip is no-nonsense; Pat is easier to wheedle, or fool.

There are white puffy clouds and a small breeze. Glints come from the little waves. Lois is in the bow of Kip's canoe. She still can't do a J-stroke very well, and she will have to be in the bow or the middle for the whole trip. Lucy is behind her; her own J-stroke is even worse. She splashes Lois with her paddle, quite a big splash.

"I'll get you back," says Lois.

"There was a stable fly on your shoulder," Lucy says.

Lois turns to look at her, to see if she's grinning. They're in the habit of splashing each other. Back there, the camp has vanished behind the first long point of rock and rough trees. Lois feels as if an invisible rope has broken. They're floating free, on their own, cut loose. Beneath the canoe the lake goes down, deeper and colder than it was a minute before.

"No horsing around in the canoe," says Kip. She's rolled her T-shirt sleeves up to the shoulder; her arms are brown and sinewy, her jaw determined, her stroke perfect. She looks as if she knows exactly what she is doing.

The four canoes keep close together. They sing, raucously and with defiance; they sing "The Quartermaster's Store," and "Clementine," and "Alouette." It is more like bellowing than singing.

After that the wind grows stronger, blowing slantwise against the bows, and they have to put all their energy into shoving themselves through the water.

Was there anything important, anything that would provide some sort of reason or clue to what happened next? Lois can remember everything, every detail; but it does her no good.

They stopped at noon for a swim and lunch, and went on in the afternoon. At last they reached Little Birch, which was the first campsite for overnight. Lois and Lucy made the fire, while the others pitched the heavy canvas tents. The fireplace was already there, flat stones piled into a U. A burned tin can and a beer bottle had been left in it. Their fire went out, and they had to restart it. "Hustle your bustle," said Kip. "We're starving."

The sun went down, and in the pink sunset light they brushed their teeth and spat the toothpaste froth into the lake. Kip and Pat put all the food that wasn't in cans into a packsack and slung it into a tree, in case of bears.

Lois and Lucy weren't sleeping in a tent. They'd begged to be allowed to sleep out; that way they could talk without the others hearing. If it rained, they told Kip, they promised not to crawl dripping into the tent over everyone's legs: they would get under the canoes. So they were out on the point.

Lois tried to get comfortable inside her sleeping bag, which smelled of musty storage and of earlier campers, a stale salty sweetness. She curled herself up, with her sweater rolled up under her head for a pillow and her flashlight inside her sleeping bag so it wouldn't roll away. The muscles of her sore arms were making small pings, like rubber bands breaking.

Beside her Lucy was rustling around. Lois could see the glimmering oval of her white face.

"I've got a rock poking into my back," said Lucy.

"So do I," said Lois. "You want to go into the tent?" She herself didn't, but it was right to ask.

"No," said Lucy. She subsided into her sleeping bag. After a moment she said, "It would be nice not to go back."

"To camp?" said Lois.

"To Chicago," said Lucy. "I hate it there."

"What about your boyfriend?" said Lois. Lucy didn't answer. She was either asleep or pretending to be.

There was a moon, and a movement of the trees. In the sky there were stars, layers of stars that went down and down. Kip said that when the stars were bright like that instead of hazy it meant bad weather later on. Out on the lake there were two loons, calling to each other in their insane, mournful voices. At the time it did not sound like grief. It was just background.

The lake in the morning was flat calm. They skimmed along over the glassy surface, leaving V-shaped trails behind them; it felt like flying. As the sun rose higher it got hot, almost too hot. There were stable flies in the canoes, landing on a bare arm or leg for a quick sting. Lois hoped for wind.

They stopped for lunch at the next of the named campsites, Lookout Point. It was called this because, although the site itself was down near the water on a flat shelf of rock, there was a sheer cliff nearby and a trail that led up to the top. The top was the lookout, although what you were supposed to see from there was not clear. Kip said it was just a view.

Lois and Lucy decided to make the climb anyway. They didn't want to hang around waiting for lunch. It wasn't their turn to cook, though they hadn't avoided much by not doing it, because cooking lunch was no big deal, it was just unwrapping the cheese and getting out the bread and peanut butter, but Pat and Kip always had to do their woodsy act and boil up a billy tin[7] for their own tea.

They told Kip where they were going. You had to tell Kip where you were going, even if it was only a little way into the woods to get dry twigs for kindling. You could never go anywhere without a buddy.

"Sure," said Kip, who was crouching over the fire, feeding driftwood into it. "Fifteen minutes to lunch."

"Where are they off to?" said Pat. She was bringing their billy tin of water from the lake.

"Lookout," said Kip.

"Be careful," said Pat. She said it as an afterthought, because it was what she always said.

"They're old hands," Kip said.

Lois looks at her watch: it's ten to twelve. She is the watch-minder; Lucy is careless of time. They walk up the path, which is dry earth and rocks, big rounded pinky-grey boulders or split-open ones with jagged edges. Spindly balsam and spruce trees grow to either side, the lake is blue fragments to the left. The sun is right overhead; there are no shadows anywhere. The heat comes up at them as well as down. The forest is dry and crackly.

It isn't far, but it's a steep climb and they're sweating when they reach the top. They wipe their faces with their bare arms, sit gingerly down on a scorching-hot rock, five feet from the edge but too close for Lois. It's a lookout all right, a sheer drop to the lake and a long view over the water, back the way they've come. It's amazing to Lois that they've travelled so far, over all that water, with nothing to propel them but their own arms. It makes her feel strong. There are all kinds of things she is capable of doing.

"It would be quite a dive off here," says Lucy.

"You'd have to be nuts," says Lois.

"Why?" says Lucy. "It's really deep. It goes straight down." She stands up and takes a step nearer the edge. Lois gets a stab in her midriff, the kind she gets when a car goes too fast over a bump. "Don't," she says.

"Don't what?" says Lucy, glancing around at her mischievously. She knows how Lois feels about heights. But she turns back. "I really have to pee," she says.

"You have toilet paper?" says Lois, who is never without it. She digs in her shorts pocket.

"Thanks," says Lucy.

They are both adept at peeing in the woods: doing it fast so the mosquitoes don't get you, the underwear pulled up between the knees, the squat with the feet apart so you don't wet your legs, facing downhill. The exposed feeling of your bum, as if someone is

looking at you from behind. The etiquette when you're with someone else is not to look. Lois stands up and starts to walk back down the path, to be out of sight.

"Wait for me?" says Lucy.

Lois climbed down, over and around the boulders, until she could not see Lucy; she waited. She could hear the voices of the others, talking and laughing, down near the shore. One voice was yelling, "Ants! Ants!" Someone must have sat on an ant hill. Off to the side, in the woods, a raven was croaking, a hoarse single note.

She looked at her watch: it was noon. This is when she heard the shout.

She has gone over and over it in her mind since, so many times that the first, real shout has been obliterated, like a footprint trampled by other footprints. But she is sure (she is almost positive, she is nearly certain) that it was not a shout of fear. Not a scream. More like a cry of surprise, cut off too soon. Short, like a dog's bark.

"Lucy?" Lois said. Then she called "Lucy!" By now she was clambering back up, over the stones of the path. Lucy was not up there. Or she was not in sight.

"Stop fooling around," Lois said. "It's lunch-time." But Lucy did not rise from behind a rock or step out, smiling, from behind a tree. The sunlight was all around; the rocks looked white. "This isn't funny!" Lois said, and it wasn't, panic was rising in her, the panic of a small child who does not know where the bigger ones are hidden. She could hear her own heart. She looked quickly around; she lay down on the ground and looked over the edge of the cliff. It made her feel cold. There was nothing.

She went back down the path, stumbling; she was breathing too quickly; she was too frightened to cry. She felt terrible—guilty and dismayed, as if she had done something very bad, by mistake. Something that could never be repaired. "Lucy's gone," she told Kip.

Kip looked up from her fire, annoyed. The water in the billy can was boiling. "What do you mean, gone?" she said. "Where did she go?"

"I don't know," said Lois. "She's just gone."

No one had heard the shout, but then no one had heard Lois calling, either. They had been talking among themselves, by the water.

Kip and Pat went up to the lookout and searched and called, and blew their whistles. Nothing answered.

Then they came back down, and Lois had to tell exactly what had happened. The other girls all sat in a circle and listened to her. Nobody said anything. They all looked frightened, especially Pat and Kip. They were the leaders. You did not just lose a camper like this, for no reason at all.

"Why did you leave her alone?" said Kip.

"I was just down the path," said Lois. "I told you. She had to go to the bathroom." She did not say *pee* in front of people older than herself.

Kip looked disgusted.

"Maybe she just walked off into the woods and got turned around," said one of the girls.

"Maybe she's doing it on purpose," said another.

Nobody believed either of these theories.

They took the canoes and searched around the base of the cliff, and peered down into the water. But there had been no sound of falling rock; there had been no splash. There was no clue, nothing at all. Lucy had simply vanished.

That was the end of the canoe trip. It took them the same two days to go back that it had taken coming in, even though they were short a paddler. They did not sing.

After that, the police went in a motorboat, with dogs; they were the Mounties[8] and the dogs were German shepherds, trained to follow trails in the woods. But it had rained since, and they could find nothing.

Lois is sitting in Cappie's office. Her face is bloated with crying, she's seen that in the mirror. By now she feels numbed; she feels as if she has drowned. She can't stay here. It has been too much of a shock.

Tomorrow her parents are coming to take her away. Several of the other girls who were on the canoe trip are also being collected. The others will have to stay, because their parents are in Europe, or cannot be reached.

Cappie is grim. They've tried to hush it up, but of course everyone in camp knows. Soon the papers will know too. You can't keep it quiet, but what can be said? What can be said that makes any sense? "Girl vanishes in broad daylight, without a trace." It can't be believed. Other things, worse things, will be suspected. Negligence, at the very least. But they have always taken such care. Bad luck will gather around Camp Manitou like a fog; parents will avoid it, in favour of other, luckier places. Lois can see Cappie thinking all this, even through her numbness. It's what anyone would think.

Lois sits on the hard wooden chair in Cappie's office, beside the old wooden desk, over which hangs the thumb-tacked bulletin board of normal camp routine, and gazes at Cappie through her puffy eyelids. Cappie is now smiling what is supposed to be a reassuring smile. Her manner is too casual: she's after something. Lois has seen this look on Cappie's face when she's been sniffing out contraband chocolate bars, hunting down those rumoured to have snuck out of their cabins at night.

"Tell me again," says Cappie, "from the beginning."

Lois has told her story so many times by now, to Pat and Kip, to Cappie, to the police, that she knows it word for word. She knows it, but she no longer believes it. It has become a story. "I told you," she said. "She wanted to go to the bathroom. I gave her my toilet paper. I went down the path, I waited for her. I heard this kind of shout . . ."

"Yes," says Cappie, smiling confidingly, "but before that. What did you say to one another?"

Lois thinks. Nobody has asked her this before. "She said you could dive off there. She said it went straight down."

"And what did you say?"

"I said you'd have to be nuts."

"Were you mad at Lucy?" says Cappie, in an encouraging voice.

"No," says Lois. "Why would I be mad at Lucy? I wasn't ever mad at Lucy." She feels like crying again. The times when she has in fact been mad at Lucy have been erased already. Lucy was always perfect.

"Sometimes we're angry when we don't know we're angry," says Cappie, as if to herself. "Sometimes we get really mad and we don't even know it. Sometimes we might do a thing without meaning to, or without knowing what will happen. We lose our tempers."

Lois is only thirteen, but it doesn't take her long to figure out that Cappie is not including herself in any of this. By *we* she means Lois. She is accusing Lois of pushing Lucy off the cliff. The unfairness of this hits her like a slap. "I didn't!" she says.

"Didn't what?" says Cappie softly. "Didn't what, Lois?"

Lois does the worst thing, she begins to cry. Cappie gives her a look like a pounce. She's got what she wanted.

Later, when she was grown up, Lois was able to understand what this interview had been about. She could see Cappie's desperation, her need for a story, a real story with a reason in it; anything but the senseless vacancy Lucy had left for her to deal with. Cappie wanted Lois to supply the reason, to be the reason. It wasn't even for the newspapers or the parents, because she could never make such an accusation without proof. It was for herself: something to explain the loss of Camp Manitou and of all she had worked for, the years of entertaining spoiled children and buttering up parents and making a fool of herself with feathers stuck in her hair. Camp Manitou was in fact lost. It did not survive.

Lois worked all this out, twenty years later. But it was far too late. It was too late even ten minutes afterwards, when she'd left Cappie's office and was walking slowly back to her cabin to pack. Lucy's clothes were still there, folded on the shelves, as if waiting. She felt the other girls in the cabin watching her with speculation in their eyes. *Could she have done it? She must have done it.* For the rest of her life, she has caught people watching her in this way.

Maybe they weren't thinking this. Maybe they were merely sorry for her. But she felt she had been tried and sentenced, and this is what has stayed with her: the knowledge that she had been singled out, condemned for something that was not her fault.

Lois sits in the living room of her apartment, drinking a cup of tea. Through the knee-to-ceiling window she has a wide view of Lake Ontario, with its skin of wrinkled blue-grey light, and of the willows of Centre Island shaken by a wind, which is silent at this distance, and on this side of the glass. When there isn't too much pollution she can see the far shore, the foreign shore; though today it is obscured.

Possibly she could go out, go downstairs, do some shopping; there isn't much in the refrigerator. The boys say she doesn't get out enough. But she isn't hungry, and moving, stirring from this space, is increasingly an effort.

She can hardly remember, now, having her two boys in the hospital, nursing them as babies; she can hardly remember getting married, or what Rob looked like. Even at the time she never felt she was paying full attention. She was tired a lot, as if she was living not one life but two: her own, and another, shadowy life that hovered around her and would not let itself be realized—the life of what would have happened if Lucy had not stepped sideways, and disappeared from time.

She would never go up north, to Rob's family cottage or to any place with wild lakes and wild trees and the calls of loons. She would never go anywhere near. Still, it was as if she was always listening for another voice, the voice of a person who should have been there but was not. An echo.

While Rob was alive, while the boys were growing up, she could pretend she didn't hear it, this empty space in sound. But now there is nothing much left to distract her.

She turns away from the window and looks at her pictures. There is the pinkish island, in the lake, with the intertwisted trees. It's the same landscape they paddled through, that distant summer. She's

seen travelogues of this country, aerial photographs; it looks different from above, bigger, more hopeless: lake after lake, random blue puddles in dark green bush, the trees like bristles.

How could you ever find anything there, once it was lost? Maybe if they cut it all down, drained it all away, they might find Lucy's bones, some time, wherever they are hidden. A few bones, some buttons, the buckle from her shorts.

But a dead person is a body; a body occupies space, it exists somewhere. You can see it; you put it in a box and bury it in the ground, and then it's in a box in the ground. But Lucy is not in a box, or in the ground. Because she is nowhere definite, she could be anywhere.

And these paintings are not landscape paintings. Because there aren't any landscapes up there, not in the old, tidy European sense, with a gentle hill, a curving river, a cottage, a mountain in the background, a golden evening sky. Instead there's a tangle, a receding maze, in which you can become lost almost as soon as you step off the path. There are no backgrounds in any of these paintings, no vistas; only a great deal of foreground that goes back and back, endlessly, involving you in its twists and turns of tree and branch and rock. No matter how far back in you go, there will be more. And the trees themselves are hardly trees; they are currents of energy, charged with violent colour.

Who knows how many trees there were on the cliff just before Lucy disappeared? Who counted? Maybe there was one more, afterwards.

Lois sits in her chair and does not move. Her hand with the cup is raised halfway to her mouth. She hears something, almost hears it: a shout of recognition, or of joy.

She looks at the paintings, she looks into them. Every one of them is a picture of Lucy. You can't see her exactly, but she's there, in behind the pink stone island or the one behind that. In the picture of the cliff she is hidden by the clutch of fallen rocks towards the bottom, in the one of the river shore she is crouching beneath the overturned canoe. In the yellow autumn woods she's behind the tree

that cannot be seen because of the other trees, over beside the blue sliver of pond; but if you walked into the picture and found the tree, it would be the wrong one, because the right one would be further on.

Everyone has to be somewhere, and this is where Lucy is. She is in Lois's apartment, in the holes that open inwards on the wall, not like windows but like doors. She is here. She is entirely alive.

1991

Endnotes

- Note 1: Sofa.Return to reference 1
- Note 2:
  All Canadian landscape painters: Tom Thomson (1877–1917), A. Y. Jackson (1882–1974), Lawren Harris (1885–1970), Arthur Lismer (1885–1969), J. E. H. MacDonald (1873–1932), and David Milne (1882–1953). Jackson, Harris, Lismer, and MacDonald were members of the Group of Seven, the first major national movement in Canadian art, and Thomson was associated with the group. Its work was usually expressionist in style.
  Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Enlarged masses of lymphoid tissue at the top of the throat, blocking the nasal passages.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: First-aid ointment.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Beads made from polished shells and used as money by Indigenous peoples of North America.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Early photographs.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Metal pail with a close-fitting lid and a wire handle, used for cooking over open fires.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Royal Canadian Mounted Police.Return to reference 8

Miss July Grows Older

How much longer can I get away
with being so fucking cute?
Not much longer.
The shoes with bows, the cunning underwear
with slogans on the crotch—*Knock Here*,
and so forth—
will have to go, along with the cat suit.[1]
After a while you forget
what you really look like.
You think your mouth is the size it was.
You pretend not to care.

When I was young I went with my hair
hiding one eye, thinking myself daring;
off to the movies in my jaunty pencil
skirt and elastic cinch-belt,
chewed gum, left lipstick
imprints the shape of grateful, rubbery
sighs on the cigarettes of men
I hardly knew and didn't want to.
Men were a skill, you had to have
good hands, breathe into
their nostrils, as for horses. It was something I did well,
like playing the flute, although I don't.

In the forests of grey stems there are standing pools,
tarn-coloured,[2] choked with brown leaves.
Through them you can see an arm, a shoulder,
when the light is right, with the sky clouded.

The train goes past silos, through meadows,
the winter wheat on the fields like scanty fur.

I still get letters, although not many.
A man writes me, requesting true-life stories
about bad sex. He's doing an anthology.
He got my name off an old calendar,
the photo that's mostly bum and daisies,
back when my skin had the golden slick
of fresh-spread margarine.
Not rape, he says, but disappointment,
more like a defeat of expectations.
Dear Sir, I reply, I never had any.
Bad sex, that is.
It was never the sex, it was the other things,
the absence of flowers, the death threats,
the eating habits at breakfast.
I notice I'm using the past tense.

Though the vaporous cloud of chemicals that
    enveloped you
like a glowing eggshell, an incense,
doesn't disappear: it just gets larger
and takes in more. You grow out
of sex like a shrunk dress
into your common senses, those you share
with whatever's listening. The way the sun
moves through the hours becomes important,
the smeared raindrops
on the window, buds
on the roadside weeds, the sheen
of spilled oil on a raw ditch
filling with muddy water.

Don't get me wrong: with the lights out
I'd still take on anyone,

if I had the energy to spare.
But after a while these flesh arpeggios get boring,
like Bach[3] over and over;
too much of one kind of glory.

When I was all body I was lazy.
I had an easy life, and was not grateful.
Now there are more of me.
Don't confuse me with my hen-leg elbows:
what you get is no longer
what you see.

1995

Endnotes

- Note 1: Close-fitting jumpsuit, typically covering the body from the neck to the feet.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: That is, the color of a small mountain lake.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), German composer. "Arpeggios": the notes of a musical chord played in rapid succession.Return to reference 3

J. M. COETZEE
b. 1940

John Maxwell Coetzee was born in Cape Town, South Africa. His mother was a schoolteacher; his father, a lawyer who became a sheepherder after losing his job. When Coetzee was eight his family left the provinces, and he chronicles this and other parts of his childhood in third-person memoirs, *Boyhood: Scenes from a Provincial Life* (1997) and *Youth: Scenes from a Provincial Life II* (2002), followed up by a novelistic pseudo-biography of his adulthood, *Summertime* (2009). Coetzee was educated in Cape Town and then lived in London for a few years, working as a computer programmer, before earning his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Austin, where he wrote a dissertation on the fiction of Samuel Beckett—a major influence, along with Kafka and Dostoyevsky, on Coetzee's fiction. He was appointed, first, assistant professor and, subsequently, Butler Professor of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In 1984 he returned to South Africa as professor of general literature at the University of Cape Town, and since 2002 he has lived in Australia. Coetzee is the first novelist to win the prestigious Booker Prize twice, and in 2003 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The central concern of Coetzee's fiction—the oppressive nature of colonialism—made its appearance with his first book, *Dusklands* (1974). This consists of two novellas, one set in the U.S. State Department during the Vietnam War, the other in southern Africa

two hundred years earlier. The protagonists of these seemingly different stories—Eugene Dawn, an expert in psychological warfare, and Jacobus Coetzee, an explorer and pioneer—are engaged in similar projects, each leading to oppression and murder. Coetzee's subsequent novels include *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), a feminist anticolonial fable in the voice of a mad South African farmwoman; *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983), about a homeless man trying to survive in war-torn Africa; *Foe* (1986), a retelling of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* from the perspective of a female castaway; *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), a fictionalized account of Dostoyevsky's life; and *Disgrace* (1999), about sexual harassment, rape, and race relations in post-apartheid South Africa. Coetzee published his first major works of the twenty-first century, including *Elizabeth Costello* (2003)*, Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), and *Summertime* (2009), under the category of "fiction." Each was highly experimental in structure and deviated from the usual narratives and typographical modes of the novel. *Elizabeth Costello* unfolded as a series of lectures embedded within a fictional world, while *Diary* featured three narrative threads arranged in distinct sections across each page. *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013), *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), and *The Death of Jesus* (2020) return to the allegorical mode of Coetzee's earlier novels, but with stronger core interests in religion and philosophy. His novel *The Pole* (2023) is his second to be published in Spanish translation (the first being *The Death of Jesus*) before appearing in an English-language edition. His many essays and works of criticism have concerned censorship, the rights of animals, translation, and South African history, among other themes.

Coetzee is at once a passionate political novelist and an intensely literary one, both qualities emerging in his most compelling indictment of colonialism, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). This novel takes its title and theme from a well-known poem by the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933), which ends (in Rae Dalven's translation):

> . . . night is here but the barbarians have not come.

> Some people arrived from the frontiers,
> And they said that there are no longer any barbarians.
> And now what shall become of us without any barbarians?
> Those people were a kind of solution.

In Coetzee's novel the rulers of the unnamed empire claim it is threatened by barbarians, but the barbarian threat is, at least in part, a fantasy concocted by the empire to hold itself together. The narrator is a magistrate in charge of a frontier post, poised uneasily between the harmless inhabitants of the region and the empire's ruthless officials, and unable to protect either the natives or himself from his brutal colleague, Colonel Joll. Imprisoned and stripped of his duties, the magistrate becomes increasingly skeptical of the empire's motives. When the imperial army arrives to subdue supposed insurgents, its vicious treatment of prisoners calls into question the relation of "civilization" to "barbarism" and demonstrates, in harrowing scenes of abuse and torture, the ethical dangers of one people's dominance over another. In this medley of realist particularism and allegorical parable, Coetzee leaves the landscape and time of the novel hauntingly unspecified, suggesting that colonialism's degradation and coercion, violence, and moral corruption can occur anywhere, at any time.

From Waiting for the Barbarians

First there is the sound of muskets far away, as diminutive as popguns.[1] Then from nearer by, from the ramparts themselves, come volleys of answering shots. There is a stampede of footsteps across the barracks yard. "The barbarians!" someone shouts; but I think he is wrong. Above all the clamour the great bell begins to peal.

Kneeling with an ear to the crack of the door I try to make out what is going on.

The noise from the square mounts from a hubbub to a steady roar in which no single voice can be distinguished. The whole town must be pouring out in welcome, thousands of ecstatic souls. Volleys of musket-shots keep cracking. Then the tenor of the roar changes, rises in pitch and excitement. Faintly above it come the brassy tones of bugles.

The temptation is too great. What have I to lose? I unlock the door. In glare so blinding that I must squint and shade my eyes, I cross the yard, pass through the gate, and join the rear of the crowd. The volleys and the roar of applause continue. The old woman in black beside me takes my arm to steady herself and stands on her toes. "Can you see?" she says. "Yes, I can see men on horseback," I reply; but she is not listening.

I can see a long file of horsemen who, amid flying banners, pass through the gateway and make their way to the centre of the square where they dismount. There is a cloud of dust over the whole square, but I see that they are smiling and laughing: one of them rides with his hands raised high in triumph, another waves a garland of flowers. They progress slowly, for the crowd presses around them, trying to touch them, throwing flowers, clapping their hands above their heads in joy, spinning round and round in private ecstasies. Children dive past me, scrambling through the legs of the

grownups to be nearer to their heroes. Fusillade after fusillade comes from the ramparts, which are lined with cheering people.

One part of the cavalcade does not dismount. Headed by a stern-faced young corporal bearing the green and gold banner of the battalion, it passes through the press of bodies to the far end of the square and then begins a circuit of the perimeter, the crowd surging slowly in its wake. The word runs like fire from neighbour to neighbour: *"Barbarians!"*

The standard-bearer's horse is led by a man who brandishes a heavy stick to clear his way. Behind him comes another trooper trailing a rope; and at the end of the rope, tied neck to neck, comes a file of men, barbarians, stark naked, holding their hands up to their faces in an odd way as though one and all are suffering from toothache. For a moment I am puzzled by the posture, by the tiptoeing eagerness with which they follow their leader, till I catch a glint of metal and at once comprehend. A simple loop of wire runs through the flesh of each man's hands and through holes pierced in his cheeks. "It makes them meek as lambs," I remember being told by a soldier who had once seen the trick: "they think of nothing but how to keep very still." My heart grows sick. I know now that I should not have left my cell.

I have to turn my back smartly to avoid being seen by the two who, with their mounted escort, bring up the rear of the procession: the bareheaded young captain whose first triumph this is, and at his shoulder, leaner and darker after his months of campaigning, Colonel of Police Joll.

The circuit is made, everyone has a chance to see the twelve miserable captives, to prove to his children that the barbarians are real. Now the crowd, myself reluctantly in its wake, flows towards the great gate, where a half-moon of soldiers blocks its way until, compressed at front and rear, it cannot budge.

"What is going on?" I ask my neighbour.

"I don't know," he says, "but help me to lift him." I help him to lift the child he carries on his arm on to his shoulders. "Can you see?" he asks the child.

"Yes."

"What are they doing?"

"They are making those barbarians kneel. What are they going to do to them?"

"I don't know. Let's wait and see."

Slowly, titanically, with all my might, I turn and begin to squeeze my body out, "Excuse me . . . excuse me . . ." I say: "the heat—I'm going to be sick." For the first time I see heads turn, fingers point.

I ought to go back to my cell. As a gesture it will have no effect, it will not even be noticed. Nevertheless, for my own sake, as a gesture to myself alone, I ought to return to the cool dark and lock the door and bend the key and stop my ears to the noise of patriotic bloodlust and close my lips and never speak again. Who knows, perhaps I do my fellow-townsmen an injustice, perhaps at this very minute the shoemaker is at home tapping on his last, humming to himself to drown the shouting, perhaps there are housewives shelling peas in their kitchens, telling stories to occupy their restless children, perhaps there are farmers still going calmly about the repair of the ditches. If comrades like these exist, what a pity I do not know them! For me, at this moment, striding away from the crowd, what has become important above all is that I should neither be contaminated by the atrocity that is about to be committed nor poison myself with impotent hatred of its perpetrators. I cannot save the prisoners, therefore let me save myself. Let it at the very least be said, if it ever comes to be said, if there is ever anyone in some remote future interested to know the way we lived, that in this farthest outpost of the Empire of light there existed one man who in his heart was not a barbarian.

I pass through the barracks gate into my prison yard. At the trough in the middle of the yard I pick up an empty bucket and fill it. With the bucket held up before me, slopping water over its sides, I approach the rear of the crowd again. "Excuse me," I say, and push. People curse me, give way, the bucket tilts and splashes, I forge forward till in a minute I am suddenly clear in the frontmost rank of

the crowd behind the backs of the soldiers who, holding staves between them, keep an arena clear for the exemplary spectacle.

Four of the prisoners kneel on the ground. The other eight, still roped together, squat in the shade of the wall watching, their hands to their cheeks.

The kneeling prisoners bend side by side over a long heavy pole. A cord runs from the loop of wire through the first man's mouth, under the pole, up to the second man's loop, back under the pole, up to the third loop, under the pole, through the fourth loop. As I watch a soldier slowly pulls the cord tighter and the prisoners bend further till finally they are kneeling with their faces touching the pole. One of them writhes his shoulders in pain and moans. The others are silent, their thoughts wholly concentrated on moving smoothly with the cord, not giving the wire a chance to tear their flesh.

Directing the soldier with little gestures of the hand is Colonel Joll. Though I am only one in a crowd of thousands, though his eyes are shaded as ever, I stare at him so hard with a face so luminous with query that I know at once he sees me.

Behind me I distinctly hear the word *magistrate.* Do I imagine it or are my neighbours inching away from me?

The Colonel steps forward. Stooping over each prisoner in turn he rubs a handful of dust into his naked back and writes a word with a stick of charcoal. I read the words upside down: *ENEMY . . . ENEMY . . . ENEMY . . . ENEMY.* He steps back and folds his hands. At a distance of no more than twenty paces he and I contemplate each other.

Then the beating begins. The soldiers use the stout green cane staves, bringing them down with the heavy slapping sounds of washing-paddles, raising red welts on the prisoners' backs and buttocks. With slow care the prisoners extend their legs until they lie flat on their bellies, all except the one who had been moaning and who now gasps with each blow.

The black charcoal and ochre dust begin to run with sweat and blood. The game, I see, is to beat them till their backs are washed

clean.

I watch the face of a little girl who stands in the front rank of the crowd gripping her mother's clothes. Her eyes are round, her thumb is in her mouth: silent, terrified, curious, she drinks in the sight of these big naked men being beaten. On every face around me, even those that are smiling, I see the same expression: not hatred, not bloodlust, but a curiosity so intense that their bodies are drained by it and only their eyes live, organs of a new and ravening appetite.

The soldiers doing the beating grow tired. One stands with his hands on his hips panting, smiling, gesturing to the crowd. There is a word from the Colonel: all four of them cease their labour and come forward offering their canes to the spectators.

A girl, giggling and hiding her face, is pushed forward by her friends. "Go on, don't be afraid!" they urge her. A soldier puts a cane in her hand and leads her to the place. She stands confused, embarrassed, one hand still over her face. Shouts, jokes, obscene advice are hurled at her. She lifts the cane, brings it down smartly on the prisoner's buttocks, drops it, and scuttles to safety to a roar of applause.

There is a scramble for the canes, the soldiers can barely keep order, I lose sight of the prisoners on the ground as people press forward to take a turn or simply watch the beating from nearer. I stand forgotten with my bucket between my feet.

Then the flogging is over, the soldiers reassert themselves, the crowd scrambles back, the arena is reconstituted, though narrower than before.

Over his head, exhibiting it to the crowd, Colonel Joll holds a hammer, an ordinary four-pound hammer used for knocking in tent-pegs. Again his gaze meets mine. The babble subsides.

"No!" I hear the first word from my throat, rusty, not loud enough. Then again: *"No!"* This time the word rings like a bell from my chest. The soldier who blocks my way stumbles aside. I am in the arena holding up my hands to still the crowd: *"No! No! No!"*

When I turn to Colonel Joll he is standing not five paces from me, his arms folded. I point a finger at him. *"You!"* I shout. Let it all

be said. Let him be the one on whom the anger breaks. "You are depraving these people!"

He does not flinch, he does not reply.

"You!" My arm points at him like a gun. My voice fills the square. There is utter silence; or perhaps I am too intoxicated to hear.

Something crashes into me from behind. I sprawl in the dust, gasp, feel the sear of old pain in my back. A stick thuds down on me. Reaching out to ward it off, I take a withering blow on my hand.

It becomes important to stand up, however difficult the pain makes it. I come to my feet and see who it is that is hitting me. It is the stocky man with the sergeant's stripes who helped with the beatings. Crouched at the knees, his nostrils flaring, he stands with his stick raised for the next blow. "Wait!" I gasp, holding out my limp hand. "I think you have broken it!" He strikes, and I take the blow on the forearm. I hide my arm, lower my head, and try to grope towards him and grapple. Blows fall on my head and shoulders. Never mind: all I want is a few moments to finish what I am saying now that I have begun. I grip his tunic and hug him to me. Though he wrestles, he cannot use his stick; over his shoulder I shout again.

"Not with that!" I shout. The hammer lies cradled in the Colonel's folded arms. "You would not use a hammer on a beast, not on a beast!" In a terrible surge of rage I turn on the sergeant and hurl him from me. Godlike strength is mine. In a minute it will pass: let me use it well while it lasts! "Look!" I shout. I point to the four prisoners who lie docilely on the earth, their lips to the pole, their hands clasped to their faces like monkeys' paws, oblivious of the hammer, ignorant of what is going on behind them, relieved that the offending mark has been beaten from their backs, hoping that the punishment is at an end. I raise my broken hand to the sky. "Look!" I shout. "We are the great miracle of creation! But from some blows this miraculous body cannot repair itself! How—!" Words fail me. "Look at these men!" I recommence. *"Men!"* Those in the crowd who can crane to look at the prisoners, even at the flies that begin to settle on their bleeding welts.

I hear the blow coming and turn to meet it. It catches me full across the face. “I am blind!” I think, staggering back into the blackness that instantly falls. I swallow blood; something blooms across my face, starting as a rosy warmth, turning to fiery agony. I hide my face in my hands and stamp around in a circle trying not to shout, trying not to fall.

What I wanted to say next I cannot remember. A miracle of creation—I pursue the thought but it eludes me like a wisp of smoke. It occurs to me that we crush insects beneath our feet, miracles of creation too, beetles, worms, cockroaches, ants, in their various ways.

I take my fingers from my eyes and a grey world re-emerges swimming in tears. I am so profoundly grateful that I cease to feel pain. As I am hustled, a man at each elbow, back through the murmuring crowd to my cell, I even find myself smiling.

That smile, that flush of joy, leave behind a disturbing residue. I know that they commit an error in treating me so summarily. For I am no orator. What would I have said if they had let me go on? That it is worse to beat a man’s feet to pulp than to kill him in combat? That it brings shame on everyone when a girl is permitted to flog a man? That spectacles of cruelty corrupt the hearts of the innocent? The words they stopped me from uttering may have been very paltry indeed, hardly words to rouse the rabble. What, after all, do I stand for besides an archaic code of gentlemanly behaviour towards captured foes, and what do I stand against except the new science of degradation that kills people on their knees, confused and disgraced in their own eyes? Would I have dared to face the crowd to demand justice for these ridiculous barbarian prisoners with their backsides in the air? *Justice:* once that word is uttered, where will it all end? Easier to shout *No!* Easier to be beaten and made a martyr. Easier to lay my head on a block than to defend the cause of justice for the barbarians: for where can that argument lead but to laying down our arms and opening the gates of the town to the people whose land we have raped? The old magistrate, defender of the rule of law, enemy in his own way of the State, assaulted and

imprisoned, impregnably virtuous, is not without his own twinges of doubt.

My nose is broken, I know, and perhaps also the cheekbone where the flesh was laid open by the blow of the stick. My left eye is swelling shut.

As the numbness wears off the pain begins to come in spasms a minute or two apart so intense that I can no longer lie still. At the height of the spasm I trot around the room holding my face, whining like a dog; in the blessed valleys between the peaks I breathe deeply, trying to keep control of myself, trying not to make too disgraceful an outcry. I seem to hear surges and lulls in the noise from the mob on the square but cannot be sure that the roar is not simply in my eardrums.

They bring me my evening meal as usual but I cannot eat. I cannot keep still, I have to walk back and forth or rock on my haunches to keep myself from screaming, tearing my clothes, clawing my flesh, doing whatever people do when the limit of their endurance is reached. I weep, and feel the tears stinging the open flesh. I hum the old song about the rider and the juniper bush over and over again, clinging to the remembered words even after they have ceased to make any sense. One, two, three, four . . . I count. It will be a famous victory, I tell myself, if you can last the night.

In the early hours of the morning, when I am so giddy with exhaustion that I reel on my feet, I finally give way and sob from the heart like a child: I sit in a corner against the wall and weep, the tears running from my eyes without stop. I weep and weep while the throbbing comes and goes according to its own cycles. In this position sleep bursts upon me like a thunderbolt. I am amazed to come to myself in the thin grey light of day, slumped in a corner, with not the faintest sense that time has passed. Though the throbbing is still there I find I can endure it if I remain still. Indeed, it has lost its strangeness. Soon, perhaps, it will be as much part of me as breathing.

So I lie quietly against the wall, folding my sore hand under my armpit for comfort, and fall into a second sleep, into a confusion of

images among which I search out one in particular, brushing aside the others that fly at me like leaves. It is of the girl. She is kneeling with her back to me before the snow-castle or sandcastle she has built. She wears a dark blue robe. As I approach I see that she is digging away in the bowels of the castle.

She becomes aware of me and turns. I am mistaken, it is not a castle she has built but a clay oven. Smoke curls up from the vent at the back. She holds out her hands to me offering me something, a shapeless lump which I peer at unwillingly through a mist. Though I shake my head my vision will not clear.

She is wearing a round cap embroidered in gold. Her hair is braided in a heavy plait which lies over her shoulder: there is gold thread worked into the braid. "Why are you dressed in your best?" I want to say: "I have never seen you looking so lovely." She smiles at me: what beautiful teeth she has, what clear jet-black eyes! Also now I can see that what she is holding out to me is a loaf of bread, still hot, with a coarse steaming broken crust. A surge of gratitude sweeps through me. "Where did a child like you learn to bake so well in the desert?" I want to say. I open my arms to embrace her, and come to myself with tears stinging the wound on my cheek. Though I scrabble back at once into the burrow of sleep I cannot re-enter the dream or taste the bread that has made my saliva run.

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Colonel Joll sits behind the desk in my office. There are no books or files; the room is starkly empty save for a vase of fresh flowers.

The handsome warrant officer whose name I do not know lifts the cedar-wood chest on to the desk and steps back.

Looking down to refer to his papers, the Colonel speaks. "Among the items found in your apartment was this wooden chest. I would like you to consider it. Its contents are unusual. It contains approximately three hundred slips of white poplar-wood, each about eight inches by two inches, many of them wound about with lengths

of string.[2] The wood is dry and brittle. Some of the string is new, some so old that it has perished.

"If one loosens the string one finds that the slip splits open revealing two flat inner surfaces. These surfaces are written on in an unfamiliar script.

"I think you will concur with this description."

I stare into the black lenses. He goes on.

"A reasonable inference is that the wooden slips contain messages passed between yourself and other parties, we do not know when. It remains for you to explain what the messages say and who the other parties were."

He takes a slip from the chest and flicks it across the polished surface of the desk towards me.

I look at the lines of characters written by a stranger long since dead. I do not even know whether to read from right to left or from left to right. In the long evenings I spent poring over my collection I isolated over four hundred different characters in the script, perhaps as many as four hundred and fifty. I have no idea what they stand for. Does each stand for a single thing, a circle for the sun, a triangle for a woman, a wave for a lake; or does a circle merely stand for "circle", a triangle for "triangle", a wave for "wave"? Does each sign represent a different state of the tongue, the lips, the throat, the lungs, as they combine in the uttering of some multifarious unimaginable extinct barbarian language? Or are my four hundred characters nothing but scribal embellishments of an underlying repertory of twenty or thirty whose primitive forms I am too stupid to see?

"He sends greetings to his daughter," I say. I hear with surprise the thick nasal voice that is now mine. My finger runs along the line of characters from right to left. "Whom he says he has not seen for a long time. He hopes she is happy and thriving. He hopes the lambing season has been good. He has a gift for her, he says, which he will keep till he sees her again. He sends his love. It is not easy to read his signature. It could be simply 'Your father' or it could be something else, a name."

I reach over into the chest and pick out a second slip. The warrant officer, who sits behind Joll with a little notebook open on his knee, stares hard at me, his pencil poised above the paper.

"This one reads as follows," I say: " 'I am sorry I must send bad news. The soldiers came and took your brother away. I have been to the fort every day to plead for his return. I sit in the dust with my head bare. Yesterday for the first time they sent a man to speak to me. He says your brother is no longer here. He says he has been sent away. "Where?" I asked, but he would not say. Do not tell your mother, but join me in praying for his safety.'

"And now let us see what this next one says." The pencil is still poised, he has not written anything, he has not stirred. " 'We went to fetch your brother yesterday. They showed us into a room where he lay on a table sewn up in a sheet.' " Slowly Joll leans back in his chair. The warrant officer closes his notebook and half-rises; but with a gesture Joll restrains him. " 'They wanted me to take him away like that, but I insisted on looking first. "What if it is the wrong body you are giving me?" I said—"You have so many bodies here, bodies of brave young men." So I opened the sheet and saw that it was indeed he. Through each eyelid, I saw that there was a stitch, "Why have you done that?" I said. "It is our custom," he said. I tore the sheet wide open and saw bruises all over his body, and saw that his feet were swollen and broken. "What happened to him?" I said. "I do not know," said the man, "it is not on the paper; if you have questions you must go to the sergeant, but he is very busy." We have had to bury your brother here, outside their fort, because he was beginning to stink. Please tell your mother and try to console her.'

"Now let us see what the next one says. See, there is only a single character. It is the barbarian character *war*, but it has other senses too. It can stand for *vengeance*, and, if you turn it upside down like this, it can be made to read *justice.* There is no knowing which sense is intended. That is part of barbarian cunning.

"It is the same with the rest of these slips." I plunge my good hand into the chest and stir. "They form an allegory. They can be

read in many orders. Further, each single slip can be read in many ways. Together they can be read as a domestic journal, or they can be read as a plan of war, or they can be turned on their sides and read as a history of the last years of the Empire—the old Empire, I mean. There is no agreement among scholars about how to interpret these relics of the ancient barbarians. Allegorical sets like this one can be found buried all over the desert. I found this one not three miles from here in the ruins of a public building. Graveyards are another good place to look in, though it is not always easy to tell where barbarian burial sites lie. It is recommended that you simply dig at random: perhaps at the very spot where you stand you will come upon scraps, shards, reminders of the dead. Also the air: the air is full of sighs and cries. These are never lost: if you listen carefully, with a sympathetic ear, you can hear them echoing forever within the second sphere. The night is best: sometimes when you have difficulty in falling asleep it is because your ears have been reached by the cries of the dead which, like their writings, are open to many interpretations.

"Thank you. I have finished translating."

I have not failed to keep an eye on Joll through all this. He has not stirred again, save to lay a hand on his subordinate's sleeve at the moment when I referred to the Empire and he rose, ready to strike me.

If he comes near me I will hit him with all the strength in my body. I will not disappear into the earth without leaving my mark on them.

The Colonel speaks. "You have no idea how tiresome your behaviour is. You are the one and only official we have had to work with on the frontier who has not given us his fullest co-operation. Candidly, I must tell you I am not interested in these sticks." He waves a hand at the slips scattered on the desk. "They are very likely gambling-sticks. I know that other tribes on the border gamble with sticks.

"I ask you to consider soberly: what kind of future do you have here? You cannot be allowed to remain in your post. You have

utterly disgraced yourself. Even if you are not eventually prosecuted —”

“I am waiting for you to prosecute me!” I shout. “When are you going to do it? When are you going to bring me to trial? When am I going to have a chance to defend myself?” I am in a fury. None of the speechlessness I felt in front of the crowd afflicts me. If I were to confront these men now, in public, in a fair trial, I would find the words to shame them. It is a matter of health and strength: I feel my hot words swell in my breast. But they will never bring a man to trial while he is healthy and strong enough to confound them. They will shut me away in the dark till I am a muttering idiot, a ghost of myself; then they will haul me before a closed court and in five minutes dispose of the legalities they find so tiresome.

“For the duration of the emergency, as you know,” says the Colonel, “the administration of justice is out of the hands of civilians and in the hands of the Bureau.” He sighs. “Magistrate, you seem to believe that we do not dare to bring you to trial because we fear you are too popular a figure in this town. I do not think you are aware of how much you forfeited by neglecting your duties, shunning your friends, keeping company with low people. There is no one I have spoken to who has not at some time felt insulted by your behaviour.”

“My private life is none of their business!”

“Nevertheless, I may tell you that our decision to relieve you of your duties has been welcomed in most quarters. Personally I have nothing against you. When I arrived back a few days ago, I had decided that all I wanted from you was a clear answer to a simple question, after which you could have returned to your concubines a free man.”

It strikes me suddenly that the insult may not be gratuitous, that perhaps for different reasons these two men might welcome it if I lost my temper. Burning with outrage, tense in every muscle, I guard my silence.

“However, you seem to have a new ambition,” he goes on. “You seem to want to make a name for yourself as the One Just Man, the man who is prepared to sacrifice his freedom to his principles.

"But let me ask you: do you believe that that is how your fellow-citizens see you after the ridiculous spectacle you created on the square the other day? Believe me, to people in this town you are not the One Just Man, you are simply a clown, a madman. You are dirty, you stink, they can smell you a mile away. You look like an old beggar-man, a refuse-scavenger. They do not want you back in any capacity. You have no future here.

"You want to go down in history as a martyr, I suspect. But who is going to put you in the history books? These border troubles are of no significance. In a while they will pass and the frontier will go to sleep for another twenty years. People are not interested in the history of the back of beyond."

"There were no border troubles before you came," I say.

"That is nonsense," he says. "You are simply ignorant of the facts. You are living in a world of the past. You think we are dealing with small groups of peaceful nomads. In fact we are dealing with a well organized enemy. If you had travelled with the expeditionary force you would have seen that for yourself."

"Those pitiable prisoners you brought in—are *they* the enemy I must fear? Is that what you say? *You* are the enemy, Colonel!" I can restrain myself no longer. I pound the desk with my fist. "*You* are the enemy, *you* have made the war, and *you* have given them all the martyrs they need—starting not now but a year ago when you committed your first filthy barbarities here! History will bear me out!"

"Nonsense. There will be no history, the affair is too trivial." He seems impassive, but I am sure I have shaken him.

"You are an obscene torturer! You deserve to hang!"

"Thus speaks the judge, the One Just Man," he murmurs.

We stare into each other's eyes.

"Now," he says, squaring the papers before him: "I would like a statement on everything that passed between you and the barbarians on your recent and unauthorized visit to them."

"I refuse."

"Very well. Our interview is over." He turns to his subordinate. "He is your responsibility." He stands up, walks out. I face the

warrant officer.

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The wound on my cheek, never washed or dressed, is swollen and inflamed. A crust like a fat caterpillar has formed on it. My left eye is a mere slit, my nose a shapeless throbbing lump. I must breathe through my mouth.

I lie in the reek of old vomit obsessed with the thought of water. I have had nothing to drink for two days.

In my suffering there is nothing ennobling. Little of what I call suffering is even pain. What I am made to undergo is subjection to the most rudimentary needs of my body: to drink, to relieve itself, to find the posture in which it is least sore. When Warrant Officer Mandel and his man first brought me back here and lit the lamp and closed the door, I wondered how much pain a plump comfortable old man would be able to endure in the name of his eccentric notions of how the Empire should conduct itself. But my torturers were not interested in degrees of pain. They were interested only in demonstrating to me what it meant to live in a body, as a body, a body which can entertain notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well, which very soon forgets them when its head is gripped and a pipe is pushed down its gullet and pints of salt water are poured into it till it coughs and retches and flails and voids itself. They did not come to force the story out of me of what I had said to the barbarians and what the barbarians had said to me. So I had no chance to throw the high-sounding words I had ready in their faces. They came to my cell to show me the meaning of humanity, and in the space of an hour they showed me a great deal.

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Nor is it a question of who endures longest. I used to think to myself, “They are sitting in another room discussing me. They are

saying to each other, ‘How much longer before he grovels? In an hour we will go back and see.’ ”

But it is not like that. They have no elaborated system of pain and deprivation to which they subject me. For two days I go without food and water. On the third day I am fed. “I am sorry,” says the man who brings my food, “we forgot.” It is not malice that makes them forget. My torturers have their own lives to lead. I am not the centre of their universe. Mandel’s underling probably spends his days counting bags in the commissary or patrolling the earthworks, grumbling to himself about the heat. Mandel himself, I am sure, spends more time polishing his straps and buckles than he spends on me. When the mood takes him he comes and gives me a lesson in humanity. How long can I withstand the randomness of their attacks? And what will happen if I succumb, weep, grovel, while yet the attacks go on?

• •

They call me into the yard. I stand before them hiding my nakedness, nursing my sore hand, a tired old bear made tame by too much baiting. “Run,” Mandel says. I run around the yard under the blazing sun. When I slacken he slaps me on the buttocks with his cane and I trot faster. The soldiers leave their siesta and watch from the shade, the scullery maids hang over the kitchen door, children stare through the bars of the gate. “I cannot!” I gasp. “My heart!” I stop, hang my head, clutch my chest. Everyone waits patiently while I recover myself. Then the cane prods me and I shamble on, moving no faster than a man walks.

Or else I do tricks for them. They stretch a rope at knee-height and I jump back and forth over it. They call the cook’s little grandson over and give him one end to hold. “Keep it steady,” they say, “we don’t want him to trip.” The child grips his end of the rope with both hands, concentrating on this important task, waiting for me to jump. I baulk. The point of the cane finds its way between my buttocks and prods. “Jump,” Mandel murmurs. I run, make a little skip,

blunder into the rope, and stand there. I smell of shit. I am not permitted to wash. The flies follow me everywhere, circling around the appetizing sore on my cheek, alighting if I stand still for a moment. The looping movement of my hand before my face to chase them away has become as automatic as the flick of a cow's tail. "Tell him he must do better next time," Mandel says to the boy. The boy smiles and looks away. I sit down in the dust to wait for the next trick. "Do you know how to skip?" he says to the boy. "Give the rope to the man and ask him to show you how to skip." I skip.

It cost me agonies of shame the first time I had to come out of my den and stand naked before these idlers or jerk my body about for their amusement. Now I am past shame. My mind is turned wholly to the menace of the moment when my knees turn to water or my heart grips me like a crab and I have to stand still; and each time I discover with surprise that after a little rest, after the application of a little pain, I can be made to move, to jump or skip or crawl or run a little further. Is there a point at which I will lie down and say, "Kill me—I would rather die than go on"? Sometimes I think I am approaching that point, but I am always mistaken.

There is no consoling grandeur in any of this. When I wake up groaning in the night it is because I am reliving in dreams the pettiest degradations. There is no way of dying allowed me, it seems, except like a dog in a corner.

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Then one day they throw open the door and I step out to face not two men but a squad standing to attention. "Here," says Mandel, and hands me a woman's calico smock. "Put it on."

"Why?"

"Very well, if you want to go naked, go naked."

I slip the smock over my head. It reaches halfway down my thighs. I catch a glimpse of the two youngest maids ducking back into the kitchen, dissolving in giggles.

My wrists are caught behind my back and tied. “The time has come, Magistrate,” Mandel whispers in my ear. “Do your best to behave like a man.” I am sure I can smell liquor on his breath.

They march me out of the yard. Under the mulberry trees, where the earth is purple with the juice of fallen berries, there is a knot of people waiting. Children are scrambling about on the branches. As I approach everyone falls silent.

A soldier tosses up the end of a new white hemp rope; one of the children in the tree catches it, loops it over a branch, and drops it back.

I know this is only a trick, a new way of passing the afternoon for men bored with the old torments. Nevertheless my bowels turn to water. “Where is the Colonel?” I whisper. No one pays any heed.

“Do you want to say something?” says Mandel. “Say whatever you wish. We give you this opportunity.”

I look into his clear blue eyes, as clear as if there were crystal lenses slipped over his eyeballs. He looks back at me. I have no idea what he sees. Thinking of him, I have said the words *torture ... torturer* to myself, but they are strange words, and the more I repeat them the more strange they grow, till they lie like stones on my tongue. Perhaps this man, and the man he brings along to help him with his work, and their Colonel, are torturers, perhaps that is their designation on three cards in a pay-office somewhere in the capital, though it is more likely that the cards call them security officers. But when I look at him I see simply the clear blue eyes, the rather rigid good looks, the teeth slightly too long where the gums are receding. He deals with my soul: every day he folds the flesh aside and exposes my soul to the light; he has probably seen many souls in the course of his working life; but the care of souls seems to have left no more mark on him than the care of hearts leaves on the surgeon.

“I am trying very hard to understand your feelings towards me,” I say. I cannot help mumbling, my voice is unsteady, I am afraid and the sweat is dripping from me. “Much more than an opportunity to address these people, to whom I have nothing to say, would I

appreciate a few words from you. So that I can come to understand why you devote yourself to this work. And can hear what you feel towards me, whom you have hurt a great deal and now seem to be proposing to kill."

Amazed I stare at this elaborate utterance as it winds its way out of me. Am I mad enough to intend a provocation?

"Do you see this hand?" he says. He holds his hand an inch from my face. "When I was younger"—he flexes the fingers—"I used to be able to poke this finger"—he holds up the index finger—"through a pumpkin-shell." He puts the tip of his finger against my forehead and presses. I take a step backwards.

They even have a cap ready for me, a salt-bag which they slip over my head and tie around my throat with a string. Through the mesh I watch them bring up the ladder and prop it against the branch. I am guided to it, my foot is set on the lowest rung, the noose is settled under my ear. "Now climb," says Mandel.

I turn my head and see two dim figures holding the end of the rope. "I can't climb with my hands tied," I say. My heart is hammering. "Climb," he says, steadying me by the arm. The rope tightens. "Keep it tight," he orders.

I climb, he climbs behind me, guiding me. I count ten rungs. Leaves brush against me. I stop. He grips my arm tighter. "Do you think we are playing?" he says. He talks through clenched teeth in a fury I do not understand. "Do you think I don't mean what I say?"

My eyes sting with sweat inside the bag. "No," I say, "I do not think you are playing." As long as the rope remains taut I know they are playing. If the rope goes slack, and I slip, I will die.

"Then what do you want to say to me?"

"I want to say that nothing passed between myself and the barbarians concerning military matters. It was a private affair. I went to return the girl to her family. For no other purpose."

"Is that all you want to say to me?"

"I want to say that no one deserves to die." In my absurd frock and bag, with the nausea of cowardice in my mouth, I say: "I want

to live. As every man wants to live. To live and live and live. No matter what."

"That isn't enough." He lets my arm go. I teeter on my tenth rung, the rope saving my balance. "Do you see?" he says. He retreats down the ladder, leaving me alone.

Not sweat but tears.

There is a rustling in the leaves near me. A child's voice: "Can you see, uncle?"

"No."

"Hey, monkeys, come down!" calls someone from below. Through the taut rope I can feel the vibration of their movements in the branches.

So I stand for a long while, balancing carefully on the rung, feeling the comfort of the wood in the curve of my sole, trying not to waver, keeping the tension of the rope as constant as possible.

How long will a crowd of idlers be content to watch a man stand on a ladder? I would stand here till the flesh dropped from my bones, through storm and hail and flood, to live.

But now the rope tightens, I can even hear it rasp as it passes over the bark, till I must stretch to keep it from throttling me.

This is not a contest of patience, then: if the crowd is not satisfied the rules are changed. But of what use is it to blame the crowd? A scapegoat is named, a festival is declared, the laws are suspended: who would not flock to see the entertainment? What is it I object to in these spectacles of abasement and suffering and death that our new regime puts on but their lack of decorum? What will my own administration be remembered for besides moving the shambles from the marketplace to the outskirts of the town twenty years ago in the interests of decency? I try to call out something, a word of blind fear, a shriek, but the rope is now so tight that I am strangled, speechless. The blood hammers in my ears. I feel my toes lose their hold. I am swinging gently in the air, bumping against the ladder, flailing with my feet. The drumbeat in my ears becomes slower and louder till it is all I can hear.

I am standing in front of the old man, screwing up my eyes against the wind, waiting for him to speak. The ancient gun still rests between his horse's ears, but it is not aimed at me. I am aware of the vastness of the sky all around us, and of the desert.

I watch his lips. At any moment now he will speak: I must listen carefully to capture every syllable, so that later, repeating them to myself, poring over them, I can discover the answer to a question which for the moment has flown like a bird from my recollection.

I can see every hair of the horse's mane, every wrinkle of the old man's face, every rock and furrow of the hillside.

The girl, with her black hair braided and hanging over her shoulder in barbarian fashion, sits her horse behind him. Her head is bowed, she too is waiting for him to speak.

I sigh. "What a pity," I think. "It is too late now."

I am swinging loose. The breeze lifts my smock and plays with my naked body. I am relaxed, floating. In a woman's clothes.

What must be my feet touch the ground, though they are numb to all feeling. I stretch myself out carefully, at full length, light as a leaf. Whatever it is that has held my head so tightly slackens its grip. From inside me comes a ponderous grating. I breathe. All is well.

Then the hood comes off, the sun dazzles my eyes, I am hauled to my feet, everything swims before me, I go blank.

The word *flying* whispers itself somewhere at the edge of my consciousness. Yes, it is true, I have been flying.

I am looking into the blue eyes of Mandel. His lips move but I hear no words. I shake my head, and having once started find that I cannot stop.

"I was saying," he says, "*now we will show you another form of flying.*"

"He can't hear you," someone says. "He can hear," says Mandel. He slips the noose from my neck and knots it around the cord that binds my wrists. "Pull him up."

If I can hold my arms stiff, if I am acrobat enough to swing a foot up and hook it around the rope, I will be able to hang upside down and not be hurt: that is my last thought before they begin to

hoist me. But I am as weak as a baby, my arms come up behind my back, and as my feet leave the ground I feel a terrible tearing in my shoulders as though whole sheets of muscle are giving way. From my throat comes the first mournful dry bellow, like the pouring of gravel. Two little boys drop out of the tree and, hand in hand, not looking back, trot off. I bellow again and again, there is nothing I can do to stop it, the noise comes out of a body that knows itself damaged perhaps beyond repair and roars its fright. Even if all the children of the town should hear me I cannot stop myself: let us only pray that they do not imitate their elders' games, or tomorrow there will be a plague of little bodies dangling from the trees. Someone gives me a push and I begin to float back and forth in an arc a foot above the ground like a great old moth with its wings pinched together, roaring, shouting. "He is calling his barbarian friends," someone observes. "That is barbarian language you hear." There is laughter.

1980

Endnotes

- Note 1: The magistrate, narrator of the novel, listens from the prison in which the empire has incarcerated him.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Over the years the magistrate has conducted archaeological digs outside the city, unearthing these poplar slips and other artifacts.Return to reference 2

EAVAN BOLAND
1944–2020

Eavan Boland was born in Dublin, the youngest daughter of an Irish diplomat and a painter, but as recalled in "Fond Memory" and other poems, she was displaced as a six-year-old from Ireland to London, where her father was Irish ambassador, and then to New York, where he was his country's representative at the United Nations, before finally returning to Ireland in adolescence. She attended convent schools in these various locations. In Ireland she studied—and then taught—English at Trinity College, Dublin, and following that she taught at University College, the University of Iowa, and Stanford University.

Boland said in a 1994 lecture, "I am an Irish poet. A woman poet. In the first category I enter the tradition of the English language at an angle. In the second, I enter my own tradition at an even more steep angle." The great puzzle of Boland's career was how to embrace Irish identity while rejecting certain male-centered assumptions that have long dominated Irish literary culture. For Boland as a young woman writer, the frozen, mythical images of the Irish nation as an idealized woman—Mother Ireland, Dark Rosaleen, Cathleen Ni Houlihan—were inhibiting and insufficient. To bring into Irish verse a national narrative, a "herstory" that interweaves private life and public life, Boland seized on an alternative tradition to that of Irish male poets—namely, the example of American women poets such as Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich. Her eye for symbolic detail,

her ear for musical structure, her use of form to mirror content served her well in her effort to recover and vivify Irish women's historical experiences, including domestic labor, motherhood, famine, prostitution, and emigration.

Fond Memory

It was a school where all the children wore darned
worsted;°
where they cried—or almost all—when the Reverend
Mother
announced at lunch-time that the King[1] had died

peacefully in his sleep. I dressed in wool as well,
ate rationed food, played English games and learned
how wise the Magna Carta was, how hard the
Hanoverians[2]

had tried, the measure and complexity of verse,
the hum and score of the whole orchestra.
At three-o-clock I caught two buses home

where sometimes in the late afternoon
at a piano pushed into a corner of the playroom
my father would sit down and play the slow

lilts of Tom Moore[3] while I stood there trying
not to weep at the cigarette smoke stinging up
from between his fingers and—as much as I could
think—

I thought this is my country, was, will be again,
this upward-straining song made to be
our safe inventory of pain. And I was wrong.

1987

Endnotes

- Note 1: King George VI of the United Kingdom died in 1952. Boland's father was a diplomat, and she spent much of her childhood in London.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Family of English monarchs who reigned from 1714 to 1901. "Magna Carta": charter of English liberties granted by King John in 1215.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Irish poet and singer (1779–1852).Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *woolen fabric*Return to reference °

The Dolls Museum in Dublin

The wounds are terrible. The paint is old.
The cracks along the lips and on the cheeks
cannot be fixed. The cotton lawn[1] is soiled.
The arms are ivory dissolved to wax.

Recall the Quadrille.[2] Hum the waltz.
Promenade on the yacht-club terraces.
Put back the lamps in their copper holders,
the carriage wheels on the cobbled quays.

And recreate Easter in Dublin.[3]
Booted officers. Their mistresses.
Sunlight criss-crossing College Green.
Steam hissing from the flanks of horses.

Here they are. Cradled and cleaned,
held close in the arms of their owners.
Their cold hands clasped by warm hands,
their faces memorized like perfect manners.

The altars are mannerly with linen.
The lilies are whiter than surplices.[4]
The candles are burning and warning:
Rejoice, they whisper. After sacrifice.

Horse-chestnuts hold up their candles.
The Green is vivid with parasols.
Sunlight is pastel and windless.
The bar of the Shelbourne[5] is full.

Laughter and gossip on the terraces.

Rumour and alarm at the barracks.
The Empire is summoning its officers.
The carriages are turning: they are turning back.

Past children walking with governesses,
Looking down, cossetting their dolls,
then looking up as the carriage passes,
the shadow chilling them. Twilight falls.

It is twilight in the dolls' museum. Shadows
remain on the parchment-coloured waists,
are bruises on the stitched cotton clothes,
are hidden in the dimples on the wrists.

The eyes are wide. They cannot address
the helplessness which has lingered in
the airless peace of each glass case:
to have survived. To have been stronger than

a moment. To be the hostages ignorance
takes from time and ornament from destiny. Both.
To be the present of the past. To infer the difference
with a terrible stare. But not feel it. And not know it.

1994

Endnotes

- Note 1: Usually fine linen, but also, as here, fine cotton.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A square dance and the music for it.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: What became known as the "Easter Rising" began on Easter Monday, 1916, when over sixteen hundred Irish nationalists seized key points in Dublin and an Irish Republic

was proclaimed from the General Post Office. See W. B. Yeats's "Easter, 1916" (p. 227).Return to reference 3

- Note 4: White linen vestments worn over cassocks.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Large Dublin hotel.Return to reference 5

The Lost Land

I have two daughters.

They are all I ever wanted from the earth.

Or almost all.

I also wanted one piece of ground:

One city trapped by hills. One urban river.
An island in its element.

So I could say *mine. My own.*
And mean it.

Now they are grown up and far away

and memory itself
has become an emigrant,
wandering in a place
where love dissembles itself as landscape:

Where the hills
are the colours of a child's eyes,
where my children are distances, horizons:

At night,
on the edge of sleep,
I can see the shore of Dublin Bay.
Its rocky sweep and its granite pier.

Is this, I say
how they must have seen it,

backing out on the mailboat at twilight,

shadows falling
on everything they had to leave?
And would love forever?
And then

I imagine myself
at the landward rail of that boat
searching for the last sight of a hand.

I see myself
on the underworld side of that water,
the darkness coming in fast, saying
all the names I know for a lost land:

Ireland. Absence. Daughter.

1998

SALMAN RUSHDIE
b. 1947

The most influential novelist to have come from South Asia in the last seventy years is Ahmed Salman Rushdie, whose dynamic narratives—stories of magic, suffering, and the vitality of human beings in the grip of history—helped generate a literary renaissance in India. "I come from Bombay," Rushdie has said, "and from a Muslim family, too. 'My' India has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity: ideas to which the ideologies of the communalists are diametrically opposed. To my mind, the defining image of India is the crowd, and a crowd is by its very nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once." Rushdie was educated at Cathedral School, Bombay (now Mumbai), and from the age of thirteen, at Rugby School, Warwickshire, and King's College, Cambridge. After living briefly in Pakistan, where his prosperous family had moved, Rushdie settled in England, working as an actor and as a freelance advertising copywriter (1970–80).

His first novel, *Grimus* (1979), passed unnoticed, but his second, *Midnight's Children* (1981), announced the arrival of a major writer. Taking its title from those who were born—two months later than its author—around midnight on August 15, 1947, when the independent state of India was born, *Midnight's Children* is a work of prodigious prodigality, a cornucopia as richly fertile in character, incident, and language as the subcontinent that is its setting. The book's triumphant progress across the world culminated in its being judged

"the Booker of Bookers," the best novel to have won Britain's premier fiction prize in its first twenty-five years. Rushdie has said that "we're all radio-active with history," and the books that have followed *Midnight's Children* have again shown a form of "magical realism"—learned from Latin American writers such as Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez—deployed in the service of a powerful political-historical imagination. Rushdie's most notable novels of the 1990s and 2000s return to themes of historical violence, pluralism, and transnational violence, such as in *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), while making use of the forms of fable, fantasy, and metafictional narration, such as in *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), *Quichotte* (2019), and *Victory City* (2023).

In 1988 Rushdie found himself at the perilous center of a real, rather than a magical-realist, political-historical storm. His novel *The Satanic Verses* provoked riots in India, Pakistan, and South Africa, and was judged by senior religious figures in Iran to have blasphemed the Prophet Muhammad (called by the offensive name "Mahound" in the novel), founder of the Muslim faith. A fatwa, or legal decree, calling for his death was pronounced. He was obliged to go into hiding, and for almost a decade lived under round-the-clock protection from British Secret Service agents, while governments argued for and against the lifting of the fatwa, and the author himself became symbolic of the vulnerability of the intellectual in the face of fundamentalism. The lifting of the fatwa in 1998 allowed Rushdie to reappear in public, but it is seen as irrevocable by some religious groups, and so his life has remained under constant threat. On August 12, 2022, just as he was about to give a lecture at the Chatauqua Institution in New York State, Rushdie was attacked by a man and stabbed multiple times, afterward spending six weeks in the hospital and losing vision in one eye.

Rushdie has defended *The Satanic Verses* in the essay "In Good Faith" (1990), while defining the irreverently pluralistic vision behind his "mongrel" aesthetic—a vision that has repeatedly resulted in the

burning or banning of his books by political nationalists and religious purists in South Asia and other parts of the world:

> If *The Satanic Verses* is anything, it is a migrant's-eye view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity.
>
> Standing at the centre of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with just the sort of great problems of hybridization and ghettoization, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. *The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world.* It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves.

An earlier story, published the same year as his groundbreaking *Midnight's Children*, had invoked the Prophet uncontroversially. Like *Midnight's Children*, the story "The Prophet's Hair" buoyantly fuses Standard English with an exuberantly Indianized English, peppered with words of Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit, and Arabic origin—among the many languages that have been used in the extraordinarily polyglot Indian subcontinent. Like *The Satanic Verses*, "The Prophet's Hair" risks playfulness, satire, caricature, and whimsy in its treatment of the religion of his youth (though Rushdie has indicated he was brought up not as a believer but within a relaxed Muslim climate, almost secularized by the variety of other religions surrounding it).

The story is at once a moral fable in the tradition of *The Thousand and One Nights* and a magical-realist extravaganza, packed with incident, poetic detail ("water to which the cold of the night had given the cloudy consistency of wild honey"), and humor, all brilliantly interwoven at breakneck speed.

The Prophet's[1] Hair

Early in the year 19—, when Srinagar[2] was under the spell of a winter so fierce it could crack men's bones as if they were glass, a young man upon whose cold-pinked skin there lay, like a frost, the unmistakable sheen of wealth was to be seen entering the most wretched and disreputable part of the city, where the houses of wood and corrugated iron seemed perpetually on the verge of losing their balance, and asking in low, grave tones where he might go to engage the services of a dependably professional burglar. The young man's name was Atta, and the rogues in that part of town directed him gleefully into ever darker and less public alleys, until in a yard wet with the blood of a slaughtered chicken he was set upon by two men whose faces he never saw, robbed of the substantial bank-roll which he had insanely brought on his solitary excursion, and beaten within an inch of his life.

Night fell. His body was carried by anonymous hands to the edge of the lake, whence it was transported by shikara[3] across the water and deposited, torn and bleeding, on the deserted embankment of the canal which led to the gardens of Shalimar. At dawn the next morning a flower-vendor was rowing his boat through water to which the cold of the night had given the cloudy consistency of wild honey when he saw the prone form of young Atta, who was just beginning to stir and moan, and on whose now deathly pale skin the sheen of wealth could still be made out dimly beneath an actual layer of frost.

The flower-vendor moored his craft and by stooping over the mouth of the injured man was able to learn the poor fellow's address, which was mumbled through lips that could scarcely move; whereupon, hoping for a large tip, the hawker rowed Atta home to a large house on the shores of the lake, where a beautiful but inexplicably bruised

young woman and her distraught, but equally handsome mother, neither of whom, it was clear from their eyes, had slept a wink from worrying, screamed at the sight of their Atta—who was the elder brother of the beautiful young woman—lying motionless amidst the funereally stunted winter blooms of the hopeful florist.

The flower-vendor was indeed paid off handsomely, not least to ensure his silence, and plays no further part in our story. Atta himself, suffering terribly from exposure as well as a broken skull, entered a coma which caused the city's finest doctors to shrug helplessly. It was therefore all the more remarkable that on the very next evening the most wretched and disreputable part of the city received a second unexpected visitor. This was Huma, the sister of the unfortunate young man, and her question was the same as her brother's, and asked in the same low, grave tones:

'Where may I hire a thief?'

The story of the rich idiot who had come looking for a burglar was already common knowledge in those insalubrious[4] gullies, but this time the young woman added: 'I should say that I am carrying no money, nor am I wearing any jewellery items. My father has disowned me and will pay no ransom if I am kidnapped; and a letter has been lodged with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, my uncle, to be opened in the event of my not being safe at home by morning. In that letter he will find full details of my journey here, and he will move Heaven and Earth to punish my assailants.'

Her exceptional beauty, which was visible even through the enormous welts and bruises disfiguring her arms and forehead, coupled with the oddity of her inquiries, had attracted a sizable group of curious onlookers, and because her little speech seemed to them to cover just about everything, no one attempted to injure her in any way, although there were some raucous comments to the effect that it was pretty peculiar for someone who was trying to hire a crook to invoke the protection of a high-up policeman uncle.

She was directed into ever darker and less public alleys until finally in a gully as dark as ink an old woman with eyes which stared so piercingly that Huma instantly understood she was blind motioned her through a doorway from which darkness seemed to be pouring like smoke. Clenching her fists, angrily ordering her heart to behave normally, Huma followed the old woman into the gloom-wrapped house.

The faintest conceivable rivulet of candlelight trickled through the darkness; following this unreliable yellow thread (because she could no longer see the old lady), Huma received a sudden sharp blow to the shins and cried out involuntarily, after which she at once bit her lip, angry at having revealed her mounting terror to whoever or whatever waited before her, shrouded in blackness.

She had, in fact, collided with a low table on which a single candle burned and beyond which a mountainous figure could be made out, sitting cross-legged on the floor. 'Sit, sit,' said a man's calm, deep voice, and her legs, needing no more flowery invitation, buckled beneath her at the terse command. Clutching her left hand in her right, she forced her voice to respond evenly:

'And you, sir, will be the thief I have been requesting?'

Shifting its weight very slightly, the shadow-mountain informed Huma that all criminal activity originating in this zone was well organised and also centrally controlled, so that all requests for what might be termed freelance work had to be channelled through this room.

He demanded comprehensive details of the crime to be committed, including a precise inventory of items to be acquired, also a clear statement of all financial inducements being offered with no gratuities excluded, plus, for filing purposes only, a summary of the motives for the application.

At this, Huma, as though remembering something, stiffened both in body and resolve and replied loudly that her motives were entirely a matter for herself; that she would discuss details with no one but

the thief himself; but that the rewards she proposed could only be described as 'lavish'.

'All I am willing to disclose to you, sir, since it appears that I am on the premises of some sort of employment agency, is that in return for such lavish rewards I must have the most desperate criminal at your disposal, a man for whom life holds no terrors, not even the fear of God.

'The worst of fellows, I tell you—nothing less will do!'

At this a paraffin storm-lantern was lighted, and Huma saw facing her a grey-haired giant down whose left cheek ran the most sinister of scars, a cicatrice in the shape of the letter *sín* in the Nastaliq[5] script. She was gripped by the insupportably nostalgic notion that the bogeyman of her childhood nursery had risen up to confront her, because her ayah[6] had always forestalled any incipient acts of disobedience by threatening Huma and Atta: 'You don't watch out and I'll send that one to steal you away—that Sheikh[7] Sín, the Thief of Thieves!'

Here, grey-haired but unquestionably scarred, was the notorious criminal himself—and was she out of her mind, were her ears playing tricks, or had he truly just announced that, given the stated circumstances, he himself was the only man for the job?

Struggling hard against the newborn goblins of nostalgia, Huma warned the fearsome volunteer that only a matter of extreme urgency and peril would have brought her unescorted into these ferocious streets.

'Because we can afford no last-minute backings-out,' she continued, 'I am determined to tell you everything, keeping back no secrets whatsoever. If, after hearing me out, you are still prepared to proceed, then we shall do everything in our power to assist you, and to make you rich.'

The old thief shrugged, nodded, spat. Huma began her story.

Six days ago, everything in the household of her father, the wealthy moneylender Hashim, had been as it always was. At breakfast her mother had spooned khichri[8] lovingly on to the moneylender's plate; the conversation had been filled with those expressions of courtesy and solicitude on which the family prided itself.

Hashim was fond of pointing out that while he was not a godly man he set great store by 'living honourably in the world'. In that spacious lakeside residence, all outsiders were greeted with the same formality and respect, even those unfortunates who came to negotiate for small fragments of Hashim's large fortune, and of whom he naturally asked an interest rate of over 70 per cent, partly, as he told his khichri-spooning wife, 'to teach these people the value of money; let them only learn that, and they will be cured of this fever of borrowing borrowing all the time—so you see that if my plans succeed, I shall put myself out of business!'

In their children, Atta and Huma, the moneylender and his wife had successfully sought to inculcate the virtues of thrift, plain dealing and a healthy independence of spirit. On this, too, Hashim was fond of congratulating himself.

Breakfast ended; the family members wished one another a fulfilling day. Within a few hours, however, the glassy contentment of that household, of that life of porcelain delicacy and alabaster sensibilities, was to be shattered beyond all hope of repair.

The moneylender summoned his personal shikara and was on the point of stepping into it when, attracted, by a glint of silver, he noticed a small vial floating between the boat and his private quay. On an impulse, he scooped it out of the glutinous water.

It was a cylinder of tinted glass cased in exquisitely wrought silver, and Hashim saw within its walls a silver pendant bearing a single strand of human hair.

Closing his fist around this unique discovery, he muttered to the boatman that he'd changed his plans, and hurried to his sanctum,[9]

where, behind closed doors, he feasted his eyes on his find.

There can be no doubt that Hashim the moneylender knew from the first that he was in possession of the famous relic of the Prophet Muhammad, that revered hair whose theft from its shrine at Hazratbal mosque the previous morning had created an unprecedented hue and cry in the valley.

The thieves—no doubt alarmed by the pandemonium, by the procession through the streets of endless ululating[1] crocodiles of lamentation, by the riots, the political ramifications and by the massive police search which was commanded and carried out by men whose entire careers now hung upon the finding of this lost hair—had evidently panicked and hurled the vial into the gelatine bosom of the lake.

Having found it by a stroke of great good fortune, Hashim's duty as a citizen was clear: the hair must be restored to its shrine, and the state to equanimity and peace.

But the moneylender had a different notion.

All around him in his study was the evidence of his collector's mania. There were enormous glass cases full of impaled butterflies from Gulmarg, three dozen scale models in various metals of the legendary cannon Zamzama, innumerable swords, a Naga spear, ninety-four terracotta camels of the sort sold on railway station platforms, many samovars,[2] and a whole zoology of tiny sandalwood animals, which had originally been carved to serve as children's bathtime toys.

'And after all,' Hashim told himself, 'the Prophet would have disapproved mightily of this relic-worship. He abhorred the idea of being deified! So, by keeping this hair from its distracted devotees, I perform—do I not?—a finer service than I would by returning it! Naturally, I don't want it for its religious value . . . I'm a man of the world, of this world. I see it purely as a secular object of great rarity and blinding beauty. In short, it's the silver vial I desire, more than the hair.

‘They say there are American millionaires who purchase stolen art masterpieces and hide them away—they would know how I feel. I must, must have it!’

Every collector must share his treasures with one other human being, and Hashim summoned—and told—his only son Atta, who was deeply perturbed but, having been sworn to secrecy, only spilled the beans when the troubles became too terrible to bear.

The youth excused himself and left his father alone in the crowded solitude of his collections. Hashim was sitting erect in a hard, straight-backed chair, gazing intently at the beautiful vial.

It was well known that the moneylender never ate lunch, so it was not until evening that a servant entered the sanctum to summon his master to the dining-table. He found Hashim as Atta had left him. The same, and not the same—for now the moneylender looked swollen, distended. His eyes bulged even more than they always had, they were red-rimmed, and his knuckles were white.

He seemed to be on the point of bursting! As though, under the influence of the misappropriated relic, he had filled up with some spectral fluid which might at any moment ooze uncontrollably from his every bodily opening.

He had to be helped to the table, and then the explosion did indeed take place.

Seemingly careless of the effect of his words on the carefully constructed and fragile constitution of the family’s life, Hashim began to gush, to spume long streams of awful truths. In horrified silence, his children heard their father turn upon his wife, and reveal to her that for many years their marriage had been the worst of his afflictions. ‘An end to politeness!’ he thundered. ‘An end to hypocrisy!’

Next, and in the same spirit, he revealed to his family the existence of a mistress; he informed them also of his regular visits to paid women. He told his wife that, far from being the principal beneficiary of his will, she would receive no more than the eighth

portion which was her due under Islamic law. Then he turned upon his children, screaming at Atta for his lack of academic ability—'A dope! I have been cursed with a dope!'—and accusing his daughter of lasciviousness, because she went around the city barefaced, which was unseemly for any good Muslim girl to do. She should, he commanded, enter purdah[3] forthwith.

Hashim left the table without having eaten and fell into the deep sleep of a man who has got many things off his chest, leaving his children stunned, in tears, and the dinner going cold on the sideboard under the gaze of an anticipatory bearer.[4]

At five o'clock the next morning the moneylender forced his family to rise, wash and say their prayers. From then on, he began to pray five times daily for the first time in his life, and his wife and children were obliged to do likewise.

Before breakfast, Huma saw the servants, under her father's direction, constructing a great heap of books in the garden and setting fire to it. The only volume left untouched was the Qur'an,[5] which Hashim wrapped in a silken cloth and placed on a table in the hall. He ordered each member of his family to read passages from this book for at least two hours per day. Visits to the cinema were forbidden. And if Atta invited male friends to the house, Huma was to retire to her room.

By now, the family had entered a state of shock and dismay; but there was worse to come.

That afternoon, a trembling debtor arrived at the house to confess his inability to pay the latest instalment of interest owed, and made the mistake of reminding Hashim, in somewhat blustering fashion, of the Qur'an's strictures against usury. The moneylender flew into a rage and attacked the fellow with one of his large collection of bullwhips.

By mischance, later the same day a second defaulter came to plead for time, and was seen fleeing Hashim's study with a great gash in his arm, because Huma's father had called him a thief of

other men's money and had tried to cut off the wretch's right hand with one of the thirty-eight kukri knives[6] hanging on the study walls.

These breaches of the family's unwritten laws of decorum alarmed Atta and Huma, and when, that evening, their mother attempted to calm Hashim down, he struck her on the face with an open hand. Atta leapt to his mother's defence and he, too, was sent flying.

'From now on,' Hashim bellowed, 'there's going to be some discipline around here!'

The moneylender's wife began a fit of hysterics which continued throughout that night and the following day, and which so provoked her husband that he threatened her with divorce, at which she fled to her room, locked the door and subsided into a raga[7] of sniffling. Huma now lost her composure, challenged her father openly, and announced (with that same independence of spirit which he had encouraged in her) that she would wear no cloth over her face; apart from anything else, it was bad for the eyes.

On hearing this, her father disowned her on the spot and gave her one week in which to pack her bags and go.

By the fourth day, the fear in the air of the house had become so thick that it was difficult to walk around. Atta told his shock-numbed sister: 'We are descending to gutter-level—but I know what must be done.'

That afternoon, Hashim left home accompanied by two hired thugs to extract the unpaid dues from his two insolvent clients. Atta went immediately to his father's study. Being the son and heir, he possessed his own key to the moneylender's safe. This he now used, and removing the little vial from its hiding-place, he slipped it into his trouser pocket and re-locked the safe door.

Now he told Huma the secret of what his father had fished out of Lake Dal, and exclaimed: 'Maybe I'm crazy—maybe the awful things that are happening have made me cracked—but I am convinced there will be no peace in our house until this hair is out of it.'

His sister at once agreed that the hair must be returned, and Atta set off in a hired shikara to Hazratbal mosque. Only when the boat had delivered him into the throng of the distraught faithful which was swirling around the desecrated shrine did Atta discover that the relic was no longer in his pocket. There was only a hole, which his mother, usually so attentive to household matters, must have overlooked under the stress of recent events.

Atta's initial surge of chagrin was quickly replaced by a feeling of profound relief.

'Suppose', he imagined, 'that I had already announced to the mullahs[8] that the hair was on my person! They would never have believed me now—and this mob would have lynched me! At any rate, it has gone, and that's a load off my mind.' Feeling more contented than he had for days, the young man returned home.

Here he found his sister bruised and weeping in the hall; upstairs, in her bedroom, his mother wailed like a brand-new widow. He begged Huma to tell him what had happened, and when she replied that their father, returning from his brutal business trip, had once again noticed a glint of silver between boat and quay, had once again scooped up the errant relic, and was consequently in a rage to end all rages, having beaten the truth out of her—then Atta buried his face in his hands and sobbed out his opinion, which was that the hair was persecuting them, and had come back to finish the job.

It was Huma's turn to think of a way out of their troubles.

While her arms turned black and blue and great stains spread across her forehead, she hugged her brother and whispered to him that she was determined to get rid of the hair *at all costs*—she repeated this last phrase several times.

'The hair', she then declared, 'was stolen from the mosque; so it can be stolen from this house. But it must be a genuine robbery, carried out by a bona-fide thief, not by one of us who are under the hair's thrall—by a thief so desperate that he fears neither capture nor curses.'

Unfortunately, she added, the theft would be ten times harder to pull off now that their father, knowing that there had already been one attempt on the relic, was certainly on his guard.

'Can you do it?'

Huma, in a room lit by candle and storm-lantern, ended her account with one further question: 'What assurances can you give that the job holds no terrors for you still?'

The criminal, spitting, stated that he was not in the habit of providing references, as a cook might, or a gardener, but he was not alarmed so easily, certainly not by any children's djinni[9] of a curse. Huma had to be content with this boast, and proceeded to describe the details of the proposed burglary.

'Since my brother's failure to return the hair to the mosque, my father has taken to sleeping with his precious treasure under his pillow. However, he sleeps alone, and very energetically; only enter his room without waking him, and he will certainly have tossed and turned quite enough to make the theft a simple matter. When you have the vial, come to my room,' and here she handed Sheikh Sín a plan of her home, 'and I will hand over all the jewellery owned by my mother and myself. You will find . . . it is worth . . . that is, you will be able to get a fortune for it . . .'

It was evident that her self-control was weakening and that she was on the point of physical collapse.

'Tonight,' she burst out finally. 'You must come tonight!'

No sooner had she left the room than the old criminal's body was convulsed by a fit of coughing: he spat blood into an old vanaspati[1] can. The great Sheikh, the 'Thief of Thieves', had become a sick man, and every day the time drew nearer when some young pretender to his power would stick a dagger in his stomach. A lifelong addiction to gambling had left him almost as poor as he had been when, decades ago, he had started out in this line of work as a mere pickpocket's apprentice; so in the extraordinary commission he had accepted from the moneylender's daughter he saw his

opportunity of amassing enough wealth at a stroke to leave the valley for ever, and acquire the luxury of a respectable death which would leave his stomach intact.

As for the Prophet's hair, well, neither he nor his blind wife had ever had much to say for prophets—that was one thing they had in common with the moneylender's thunderstruck clan.

It would not do, however, to reveal the nature of this, his last crime, to his four sons. To his consternation, they had all grown up to be hopelessly devout men, who even spoke of making the pilgrimage to Mecca some day. 'Absurd!' their father would laugh at them. 'Just tell me how you will go?' For, with a parent's absolutist love, he had made sure they were all provided with a lifelong source of high income by crippling them at birth, so that, as they dragged themselves around the city, they earned excellent money in the begging business.

The children, then, could look after themselves.

He and his wife would be off soon with the jewel-boxes of the moneylender's women. It was a timely chance indeed that had brought the beautiful bruised girl into his corner of the town.

That night, the large house on the shore of the lake lay blindly waiting, with silence lapping at its walls. A burglar's night: clouds in the sky and mists on the winter water. Hashim the moneylender was asleep, the only member of his family to whom sleep had come that night. In another room, his son Atta lay deep in the coils of his coma with a blood-clot forming on his brain, watched over by a mother who had let down her long greying hair to show her grief, a mother who placed warm compresses on his head with gestures redolent of impotence. In a third bedroom Huma waited, fully dressed, amidst the jewel-heavy caskets of her desperation.

At last a bulbul[2] sang softly from the garden below her window and, creeping downstairs, she opened a door to the bird, on whose face there was a scar in the shape of the Nastaliq letter *sín.*

Noiselessly, the bird flew up the stairs behind her. At the head of the staircase they parted, moving in opposite directions along the corridor of their conspiracy without a glance at one another.

Entering the moneylender's room with professional ease, the burglar, Sín, discovered that Huma's predictions had been wholly accurate. Hashim lay sprawled diagonally across his bed, the pillow untenanted by his head, the prize easily accessible. Step by padded step, Sín moved towards the goal.

It was at this point that, in the bedroom next door, young Atta sat bolt upright in his bed, giving his mother a great fright, and without any warning—prompted by goodness knows what pressure of the blood-clot upon his brain—began screaming at the top of his voice:

'Thief! Thief! Thief!'

It seems probable that his poor mind had been dwelling, in these last moments, upon his own father; but it is impossible to be certain, because having uttered these three emphatic words the young man fell back upon his pillow and died.

At once his mother set up a screeching and a wailing and a keening and a howling so earsplittingly intense that they completed the work which Atta's cry had begun—that is, her laments penetrated the walls of her husband's bedroom and brought Hashim wide awake.

Sheikh Sín was just deciding whether to dive beneath the bed or brain the moneylender good and proper when Hashim grabbed the tiger-striped swordstick which always stood propped up in a corner beside his bed, and rushed from the room without so much as noticing the burglar who stood on the opposite side of the bed in the darkness. Sín stooped quickly and removed the vial containing the Prophet's hair from its hiding-place.

Meanwhile Hashim had erupted into the corridor, having unsheathed the sword inside his cane. In his right hand he held the weapon and was waving it about dementedly. His left hand was

shaking the stick. A shadow came rushing towards him through the midnight darkness of the passageway and, in his somnolent anger, the moneylender thrust his sword fatally through its heart. Turning up the light, he found that he had murdered his daughter, and under the dire influence of this accident he was so overwhelmed by remorse that he turned the sword upon himself, fell upon it and so extinguished his life. His wife, the sole surviving member of the family, was driven mad by the general carnage and had to be committed to an asylum for the insane by her brother, the city's Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Sheikh Sín had quickly understood that the plan had gone awry.

Abandoning the dream of the jewel-boxes when he was but a few yards from its fulfilment, he climbed out of Hashim's window and made his escape during the appalling events described above. Reaching home before dawn, he woke his wife and confessed his failure. It would be necessary, he whispered, for him to vanish for a while. Her blind eyes never opened until he had gone.

The noise in the Hashim household had roused their servants and even managed to awaken the night-watchman, who had been fast asleep as usual on his charpoy[3] by the street-gate. They alerted the police, and the Deputy Commissioner himself was informed. When he heard of Huma's death, the mournful officer opened and read the sealed letter which his niece had given him, and instantly led a large detachment of armed men into the light-repellent gullies of the most wretched and disreputable part of the city.

The tongue of a malicious cat-burglar named Huma's fellow-conspirator; the finger of an ambitious bank-robber pointed at the house in which he lay concealed; and although Sín managed to crawl through a hatch in the attic and attempt a roof-top escape, a bullet from the Deputy Commissioner's own rifle penetrated his stomach and brought him crashing messily to the ground at the feet of Huma's enraged uncle.

From the dead thief's pocket rolled a vial of tinted glass, cased in filigree silver.

The recovery of the Prophet's hair was announced at once on All-India Radio. One month later, the valley's holiest men assembled at the Hazratbal mosque and formally authenticated the relic. It sits to this day in a closely guarded vault by the shores of the loveliest of lakes in the heart of the valley which was once closer than any other place on earth to Paradise.

But before our story can properly be concluded, it is necessary to record that when the four sons of the dead Sheikh awoke on the morning of his death, having unwittingly spent a few minutes under the same roof as the famous hair, they found that a miracle had occurred, that they were all sound of limb and strong of wind, as whole as they might have been if their father had not thought to smash their legs in the first hours of their lives. They were, all four of them, very properly furious, because the miracle had reduced their earning powers by 75 per cent, at the most conservative estimate; so they were ruined men.

Only the Sheikh's widow had some reason for feeling grateful, because although her husband was dead she had regained her sight, so that it was possible for her to spend her last days gazing once more upon the beauties of the valley of Kashmir.

1981

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Prophet Muhammad, founder of the Muslim religion, was born in Mecca in about 570 and died in 632.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Capital of the state of Kashmir.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Long, swift Kashmiri boat.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Unhealthy.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A Persian cursive script, characterized by rounded forms and elongated horizontal strokes. "Cicatrice": scar of a healed

wound.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Child's nurse (Anglo-Indian, from Portuguese).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Chief (Arabic).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Rice and lentils cooked together (Hindi).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Private room.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Howling.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Apparatuses for making tea (Russian for "self-boilers").Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Area of certain traditional Indian houses in which Hindu or Muslim women live secluded from the sight of men outside their family circle.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Servant.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Or Koran, Muslims' sacred book: a collection of the Prophet Muhammad's oral revelations.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Curved knives broadening toward the point (Hindi).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Musical improvisation (Sanskrit).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Muslims learned in Islamic theology and sacred law.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In Muslim demonology, a spirit (genie) with supernatural powers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Vegetable fat used as butter in India.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Asian song thrush.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Light Indian bedstead.Return to reference 3

ANNE CARSON
b. 1950

Anne Carson was born in Toronto, Canada, and grew up in Ontario; she received both her B.A. and her Ph.D. in classics from the University of Toronto. The recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship, she has taught classics at the universities of Calgary, Princeton, Emory, McGill, and Michigan. Along with poetry, she has published books of criticism on classical literature, translations and adaptations from Greek, novels-in-verse, *Autobiography of Red* (1998) and *Red Doc>* (2013), and the play *Norma Jeane Baker of Troy* (2019).

In her poetry, Carson braids together the ruminative texture of the essay, the narrative propulsion of the novel, the self-analysis of autobiography, and the lapidary compression of lyric. In "The Glass Essay," a long poem that reflects on the dislocations of identity through time, love, and madness, she vividly narrates the end of a love affair, a visit with a difficult mother, and the degeneration of a father with Alzheimer's in a nursing home. Into this semiautobiographical tale she weaves commentary on the writings of the Brontë sisters, whose works function—like the classical texts she often incorporates into her poetry—as oblique and remote points of comparison for the poet's experience. Both personal and impersonal, Carson's poetry bridges the gap between private narrative and philosophical speculation, between self-excavation and literary-critical analysis. Tightly wound with crisp diction, studded with striking metaphors, etched with epigrams and ironies, her poems are

both lucid in feeling and intense in thought. They are at one and the same time intellectually crystalline and emotionally volcanic.

From The Glass Essay

* * *

Well there are many ways of being held prisoner,
I am thinking as I stride over the moor.
As a rule after lunch mother has a nap

and I go out to walk.
The bare blue trees and bleached wooden sky of
April
carve into me with knives of light.

Something inside it reminds me of childhood—
it is the light of the stalled time after lunch
when clocks tick

and hearts shut
and fathers leave to go back to work
and mothers stand at the kitchen sink pondering

something they never tell.
You remember too much,
my mother said to me recently.

Why hold onto all that? And I said,
Where can I put it down?
She shifted to a question about airports.

Crops of ice are changing to mud all around me
as I push on across the moor
warmed by drifts from the pale blue sun.

On the edge of the moor our pines

dip and coast in breezes
from somewhere else.

Perhaps the hardest thing about losing a lover is
to watch the year repeat its days.
It is as if I could dip my hand down

into time and scoop up
blue and green lozenges° of April heat
a year ago in another country.

I can feel that other day running underneath this one
like an old videotape—here we go fast around the last corner
up the hill to his house, shadows

of limes and roses blowing in the car window
and music spraying from the radio and him
singing and touching my left hand to his lips.

Law[1] lived in a high blue room from which he could see the sea.
Time in its transparent loops as it passes beneath me now
still carries the sound of the telephone in that room

and traffic far off and doves under the window
chuckling coolly and his voice saying,
You beauty. I can feel that beauty's

heart beating inside mine as she presses into his arms in the high blue room—
No, I say aloud. I force my arms down
through air which is suddenly cold and heavy as water

and the videotape jerks to a halt
like a glass slide under a drop of blood.
I stop and turn and stand into the wind,

which now plunges towards me over the moor.
When Law left I felt so bad I thought I would die.
This is not uncommon.

I took up the practice of meditation.
Each morning I sat on the floor in front of my sofa
and chanted bits of old Latin prayers.

De profundis clamavi ad te Domine.[2]
Each morning a vision came to me.
Gradually I understood that these were naked
glimpses of my soul.

I called them Nudes.
Nude #1. Woman alone on a hill.
She stands into the wind.

It is a hard wind slanting from the north.
Long flaps and shreds of flesh rip off the woman's
body and lift
and blow away on the wind, leaving

an exposed column of nerve and blood and muscle
calling mutely through lipless mouth.
It pains me to record this,

I am not a melodramatic person.
But soul is "hewn in a wild workshop"
as Charlotte Brontë says of *Wuthering Heights.*[3]

Charlotte's preface to *Wuthering Heights* is a
publicist's masterpiece.
Like someone carefully not looking at a scorpion

crouched on the arm of the sofa Charlotte

talks firmly and calmly
about the other furniture of Emily's workshop—about
the inexorable spirit ("stronger than a man, simpler than a child"),

the cruel illness ("pain no words can render"),
the autonomous end ("she sank rapidly, she made haste to leave us")
and about Emily's total subjection

to a creative project she could neither understand nor control,
and for which she deserves no more praise nor blame
than if she had opened her mouth

"to breathe lightning." The scorpion is inching down
the arm of the sofa while Charlotte
continues to speak helpfully about lightning

and other weather we may expect to experience
when we enter Emily's electrical atmosphere.
It is "a horror of great darkness" that awaits us there

but Emily is not responsible. Emily was in the grip.
"Having formed these beings she did not know what she had done,"
says Charlotte (of Heathcliff and Earnshaw and Catherine).[4]

Well there are many ways of being held prisoner.
The scorpion takes a light spring and lands on our left knee
as Charlotte concludes, "On herself she had no pity."

Pitiless too are the Heights, which Emily called Wuthering
because of their "bracing ventilation"
and "a north wind over the edge."

Whaching[5] a north wind grind the moor
that surrounded her father's house on every side,
formed of a kind of rock called millstone grit,

taught Emily all she knew about love and its necessities—
an angry education that shapes the way her characters
use one another. "My love for Heathcliff," says Catherine,

"resembles the eternal rocks beneath—
a source of little visible delight, but necessary."
Necessary? I notice the sun has dimmed

and the afternoon air sharpening.
I turn and start to recross the moor towards home.
What are the imperatives

that hold people like Catherine and Heathcliff
together and apart, like pores blown into hot rock
and then stranded out of reach

of one another when it hardens? What kind of necessity is that?
The last time I saw Law was a black night in September.
Autumn had begun,

my knees were cold inside my clothes.
A chill fragment of moon rose.
He stood in my living room and spoke

without looking at me. Not enough spin on it,
he said of our five years of love.
Inside my chest I felt my heart snap into two pieces

which floated apart. By now I was so cold
it was like burning. I put out my hand
to touch his. He moved back.

I don't want to be sexual with you, he said.
Everything gets crazy.
But now he was looking at me.
Yes, I said as I began to remove my clothes.

Everything gets crazy. When nude
I turned my back because he likes the back.
He moved onto me.

Everything I know about love and its necessities
I learned in that one moment
when I found myself

thrusting my little burning red backside like a baboon
at a man who no longer cherished me.
There was no area of my mind

not appalled by this action, no part of my body
that could have done otherwise.
But to talk of mind and body begs the question.

Soul is the place,
stretched like a surface of millstone grit between
body and mind,
where such necessity grinds itself out.

Soul is what I kept watch on all that night.
Law stayed with me.

We lay on top of the covers as if it weren't really a night of sleep and time,

caressing and singing to one another in our made-up language
like the children we used to be.
That was a night that centred Heaven and Hell,

as Emily would say. We tried to fuck
but he remained limp, although happy. I came
again and again, each time accumulating lucidity,

until at last I was floating high up near the ceiling looking down
on the two souls clasped there on the bed
with their mortal boundaries

visible around them like lines on a map.
I saw the lines harden.
He left in the morning.

It is very cold
walking into the long scraped April wind.
At this time of year there is no sunset
just some movements inside the light and then a sinking away.

1995

Endnotes

- Note 1: The speaker's lover.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Psalm 130: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord" (Latin).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Novel by English author Emily Brontë (1818–1848). Her sister Charlotte (1815–1855) wrote an introduction to the 1850 edition, explaining how such a mild and modest woman could

have created a work of such passionate imagination and apparent "coarseness." The speaker of "The Glass Essay" compares herself to Emily Brontë throughout the poem.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Three characters from *Wuthering Heights*.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Emily Brontë's idiosyncratic spelling of *watcher*, as the poem explains earlier. This excerpt is from its fourth section, also titled "Whacher."Return to reference 5

Notes

- °: *diamond-shaped figures*Return to reference °

PAUL MULDOON
b. 1951

Paul Muldoon was born in Portadown, County Armagh, Northern Ireland. His mother was a schoolteacher; his father, a farm laborer and mushroom grower. Paul grew up in, as he put it, "a little enclave of Roman Catholics living within the predominantly Protestant parish of Loughgall, the village where the Orange Order was founded in 1795" (a unionist, anti-Catholic fraternal organization). Despite inheriting strong Republican sympathies, he depicts the Catholic Church unsympathetically, even going so far as to state that there is "a very fine line between organized religion and organized crime." His skepticism toward the nationalist extremism of the Irish Republican Army is evident in the wryly psychoanalytic poem "Anseo," which traces an IRA fighter's violent ways back to the violence inflicted on him by a cruel primary school teacher.

Muldoon was educated at the primary school in Collegelands (where his mother taught); St. Patrick's College, Armagh; and Queen's University, Belfast, where he was tutored by Seamus Heaney and came to know other poets of the "Belfast Group," such as Derek Mahon and Michael Longley. He worked as a radio and television producer for the British Broadcasting Corporation in Belfast until, in the mid-1980s, he became a freelance writer and moved to the United States, where he teaches at Princeton University. He was elected the Oxford Professor of Poetry, a post he held from 1999 to 2004, and he was the poetry editor of *The New Yorker* from 2007 to

2017. His collections of poems *Howdie-Skelp*, titled after the slap a midwife gives a newborn, was published in 2021.

Muldoon's first published poems were written in Irish, and although he soon switched to English, Irish words and phrases, such as "Anseo," continued to appear in his work. Like other Irish poets, he has had to contend with the long shadow cast by W. B. Yeats. In "7, Middagh Street," Muldoon quotes Yeats's agonizing worry, in his late poem "Man and the Echo," that his art may have helped inspire the executed leaders of the Easter Rising of 1916: "Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?" In Muldoon's poem, the characteristically irreverent answer, spoken by W. H. Auden, is " 'Certainly not'. / / If Yeats had saved his pencil-lead / would certain men have stayed in bed?" Muldoon is more circumspect than Yeats about the power of art to alter the course of history. Informed by his postmodern skepticism about language, his approach to the Irish Troubles is also more oblique and ironic than that of his tutor, Seamus Heaney. In "Anseo" and "Turtles," among his many poems that eerily skew the form of the sonnet, he deploys multiple screens of irony to tell sly parables about the relation of language to history, of art to violence, especially of the Irish Troubles.

As with many other Irish poets, the United States soon loomed large in Muldoon's imagination. Excited by American films, he adapted cinematic techniques in long, hectic, hallucinatory poems. Other poems, such as "Meeting the British," parallel the plight of Native Americans with that of Northern Irish Catholics. Still others, such as "The Loaf," vigorously play on refrain, rhyme, and other repetitive formal structures to recall the sad history of Irish laborers in the United States. His earliest literary influence was, he said, Robert Frost's "strong, classic, lyric line. But the most important thing . . . was his mischievous, sly, multi-layered quality under the surface." It would be hard to improve on that last sentence as a description of Muldoon's own style, the expression of an omnivorous imagination that—in "Milkweed and Monarch," for example—mixes sensations at his parents' Collegelands grave with geographically scattered memories into a kaleidoscopic pattern that is at once

moving, musically satisfying, and a brilliant postmodern variation on the poetic form of the villanelle (with the repetition of its first and third lines).

Anseo

When the Master was calling the roll
At the primary school in Collegelands,[1]
You were meant to call back *Anseo*
And raise your hand
As your name occurred.
Anseo, meaning here, here and now,
All present and correct,
Was the first word of Irish I spoke.
The last name on the ledger
Belonged to Joseph Mary Plunkett Ward[2]
And was followed, as often as not,
By silence, knowing looks,
A nod and a wink, the Master's droll
'And where's our little Ward-of-court?'[3]

I remember the first time he came back
The Master had sent him out
Along the hedges
To weigh up for himself and cut
A stick with which he would be beaten.
After a while, nothing was spoken;
He would arrive as a matter of course
With an ash-plant, a salley-rod.[4]
Or, finally, the hazel-wand
He had whittled down to a whip-lash,
Its twist of red and yellow lacquers
Sanded and polished,
And altogether so delicately wrought
That he had engraved his initials on it.

I last met Joseph Mary Plunkett Ward

In a pub just over the Irish border.
He was living in the open,
In a secret camp
On the other side of the mountain.
He was fighting for Ireland,
Making things happen.
And he told me, Joe Ward,
Of how he had risen through the ranks
To Quartermaster, Commandant:
How every morning at parade
His volunteers would call back *Anseo*
And raise their hands
As their names occurred.

1980

Endnotes

- Note 1: Village in Northern Ireland where Muldoon went to school and his mother taught.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Named after Joseph Mary Plunkett (1887–1916), one of the rebel leaders of the Easter Rising of 1916, executed for his role in planning the rebellion against British rule.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A minor under the care of a court-appointed guardian.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Stick made from a willow tree. “Ash-plant”: stick or whip made from a sapling of the ash tree.Return to reference 4

Meeting the British

We met the British in the dead of winter.
The sky was lavender

and the snow lavender-blue.
I could hear, far below,

the sound of two streams coming together
(both were frozen over)

and, no less strange,
myself calling out in French

across that forest-
clearing. Neither General Jeffery Amherst[1]

nor Colonel Henry Bouquet
could stomach our willow-tobacco.

As for the unusual
scent when the Colonel shook out his hand-
kerchief: *C'est la lavande,*
une fleur mauve comme le ciel.[2]

They gave us six fishhooks
and two blankets embroidered with smallpox.

1987

Endnotes

- Note 1:

Jeffery Amherst, commander-in-chief of British forces in the French and Indian War (1754–63), fought against France and its Native American allies. During Pontiac's Rebellion (1763–64), led by Ottawa chief Pontiac in the Great Lakes region, Amherst wrote to the British officer Colonel Bouquet, "Could it not be contrived to Send the *Small Pox* among those Disaffected Tribes of Indians?" Bouquet replied, "I will try to inocculate [that is, infect] the Indians by means of Blankets that may fall in their hands, taking care however not to get the disease myself," to which Amherst responded, "You will Do well to try to Innoculate the Indians by means of Blanketts, as well as to try Every other method that can serve to Extirpate this Execreble Race." Apparently as a result of this and similar plans of other British officers, many Native Americans in the area, never having been exposed to smallpox, were killed by the disease in 1763–64. Pontiac concluded a peace treaty with the British in July 1766. Return to reference 1

- Note 2: It is lavender, a flower purple as the sky (French).Return to reference 2

From 7, Middagh Street

From *Wystan*[1]

* * *

And were Yeats living at this hour
it should be in some ruined tower

not malachited Ballylee[2]
where he paid out to those below

one gilt-edged scroll from his pencil
as though he were part-Rapunzel

and partly Delphic oracle.[3]
As for his crass, rhetorical

posturing, 'Did that play of mine
send out certain men (*certain* men?)

the English shot . . . ?[4]
the answer is 'Certainly not'.

If Yeats had saved his pencil-lead
would certain men have stayed in bed?

For history's a twisted root
with art its small, translucent fruit

and never the other way round.
The roots by which we were once bound

are severed here, in any case,
and we are all now dispossessed;

prince, poet, construction worker,
salesman, soda fountain jerker—

all equally isolated.
Each loads flour, sugar and salted

beef into a covered wagon
and strikes out for his Oregon,

each straining for the ghostly axe
of a huge, blond-haired lumberjack.

* * *

1987

Endnotes

- Note 1: This long poem is spoken in various voices, including this selection from "Wystan," first name of the Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden (1907–1973), whose periodic Brooklyn Heights address is the title of the poem.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The ancient Norman tower that the Irish poet W. B. Yeats (1865–1939) purchased and lived in. "Malachited": of a deep green color.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In ancient Greece, a cave and shrine where a priestess supposedly under a god's influence gave riddling answers to questions brought by worshipers. "Rapunzel": fairy-tale character imprisoned in a tower who let down her long hair for her rescuer to climb.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: From Yeats's poem "Man and the Echo" (see p. 244), in which he worries that his nationalist play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*

(1902) helped inspire the violent Easter 1916 uprising against British rule.Return to reference 4

Milkweed and Monarch

As he knelt by the grave of his mother and father
the taste of dill, or tarragon—
he could barely tell one from the other—

filled his mouth. It seemed as if he might smother.
Why should he be stricken
with grief, not for his mother and father,

but a woman slinking from the fur of a sea-otter
in Portland, Maine, or, yes, Portland, Oregon—
he could barely tell one from the other—

and why should he now savour
the tang of her, her little pickled gherkin,
as he knelt by the grave of his mother and father?

•

He looked about. He remembered her palaver° on how both earth and sky would darken—
"You could barely tell one from the other"—

while the Monarch butterflies passed over
in their milkweed-hunger:[1] "A wing-beat, some reckon,
may trigger off the mother and father

of all storms, striking your Irish Cliffs of Moher
with the force of a hurricane."
Then: "Milkweed and Monarch 'invented' each other."

•

He looked about. Cow's-parsley in a samovar.[2]
He'd mistaken his mother's name, "Regan", for
"Anger":
as he knelt by the grave of his mother and father
he could barely tell one from the other.

25

1994

Endnotes

- Note 1: The monarch butterfly's larvae appear to eat only milkweed.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Russian tea urn.Return to reference 2

Notes

- °: *beguiling talk*Return to reference °

The Loaf

When I put my finger to the hole they've cut for a dimmer switch
in a wall of plaster stiffened with horsehair
it seems I've scratched a two-hundred-year-old itch

with a pink and a pink and a pinkie-pick.

When I put my ear to the hole I'm suddenly aware
of spades and shovels turning up the gain°
all the way from Raritan to the Delaware[1]

with a clink and a clink and a clinky-click.

When I put my nose to the hole I smell the floodplain
of the canal after a hurricane
and the spots of green grass where thousands of Irish have lain

with a stink and a stink and a stinky-stick.

When I put my eye to the hole I see one holding horse dung to the rain
in the hope, indeed, indeed,
of washing out a few whole ears of grain

with a wink and a wink and a winkie-wick.

And when I do at last succeed
in putting my mouth to the horsehair-fringed niche
I can taste the small loaf of bread he baked from that whole seed

with a link and a link and a linky-lick.

Endnotes

- Note 1: The Delaware and Raritan Canal was hand-built by Irish immigrants between 1830 and 1834, providing a route from Philadelphia to New York City. During its construction, many Irish laborers died of Asiatic cholera. Muldoon's house in New Jersey was built around 1750.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *volume*Return to reference °

Turtles

A cubit-wide turtle acting the bin[1] lid
by the side of the canal
conjures those Belfast[2] nights I lay awake, putting in a bid
for the police channel
as lid bangers gave the whereabouts
of armored cars and petrol° bombers lit one flare
after another. So many of those former sentries and scouts
have now taken up the lyre[3]
I can't be sure of what is and what is not.
The water, for example, has the look of tin.
Nor am I certain, given their ability to smell the rot
once the rot sets in,
that turtles have not been enlisted by some police forces
to help them recover corpses.

2006

Endnotes

- Note 1: Garbage can. "Cubit": ancient measure of length approximately equal to the forearm, or between 18 and 22 inches.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Capital of Northern Ireland and a site, from the 1970s, of violent sectarian conflict (known as "the Troubles") between Protestants and Catholics.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Stringed instrument similar to a harp; a symbol of lyric poetry.Return to reference 3

Notes

- °: *gasoline*Return to reference °

HILARY MANTEL
1952–2022

Hilary Mantel was born and grew up in villages in Derbyshire and Cheshire, in the north of England, near greater Manchester. Her parents were struggling Irish Catholic immigrants, a textile worker and a clerk. She was a deeply religious student at convent schools, though by the age of twelve, she had lost her faith. After she studied law at the London School of Economics and the University of Sheffield, she was first employed as a social work assistant at a geriatric hospital and, after a year, as a sales assistant selling dresses in a department store where she began to write. With her husband, a geologist, she lived in Botswana for five years (1977–82) and Saudi Arabia for four (1983–86). Her ongoing and severe endometriosis was first misdiagnosed as psychosomatic. She described her struggle with the painful disease in a memoir, *Giving up the Ghost* (2003), and illness and alienation from the body were frequent concerns in her fiction.

Mantel was the first English novelist and the first woman to become a two-time winner of Britain's most prestigious award for fiction, the Man Booker Prize. The awards were for her historical novels written from the perspective of Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's key counselor: *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring up the Bodies* (2012), the first two books of the trilogy, which ended with *The Mirror and the Light* (2020). By the time she received these prizes and the National Book Critics Circle Award, she had already

published novels in various genres in a wide range of settings and time periods, from revolutionary France and eighteenth-century England to contemporary southern Africa and Saudi Arabia. Despite their variety, all these novels draw, perhaps not surprisingly, on facets of Mantel's life. Written in Saudi Arabia, her first two published novels, *Every Day Is Mother's Day* (1985) and *Vacant Possession* (1986), are black comedies that made use of her experience in social work. In the thriller *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* (1988), cross-cultural tensions erupt after an Englishwoman moves to Saudi Arabia. The theological mystery *Fludd* (1989) casts a critical eye on Roman Catholicism in 1950s England. Although it wasn't published until 1992, *A Place of Greater Safety* was the first novel Mantel wrote—a historical novel centered on three figures in the French Revolution who, she suggested, reflected her youthful idealism. *A Change of Climate* (1994) tells the tragic story of an English missionary couple in southern Africa. *An Experiment in Love* (1995) concerns strained friendships among classmates who end up together at the University of London. *The Giant, O'Brien* (1998) describes an unusually large Irishman (and endometriosis had greatly enlarged Mantel's body) who only briefly fascinates eighteenth-century England. *Beyond Black* (2005) concerns a medium with a powerful memory and perhaps novelistic imagination who travels with her manager through the English suburbs.

Despite the autobiographical traces in her work, Mantel was uncannily able to inhabit minds and social worlds vastly distant from her own, perhaps nowhere more so than in her Thomas Cromwell novels. As a result, she could bring to life a sixteenth-century counselor as a multidimensional character, though Cromwell had been represented by other writers as a cardboard villain. Even with his execution of Henry VIII's perceived enemies, including Thomas More and Anne Boleyn, the shrewd and wily strategist becomes sympathetic in Mantel's retelling. Having grown up in poverty with an abusive father, he makes himself—by virtue of cunning, intelligence, and exacting observation—one of the most powerful and consequential figures of the English Renaissance. The

complexity of Mantel's characters, her brilliant use of dialogue, her deft construction of dramatic scenes, and her fascination with historical detail suggest the abiding impression that Shakespeare made on her in childhood. She said that, having only been exposed to snippets of his work, "I almost exploded with joy when I found there was a whole fat book of plays."

The immense historical and cultural differences between the Tudor court in Mantel's historical novels and the world of her semiautobiographical short story "Sorry to Disturb"—Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, as experienced by a budding English novelist in the 1980s—is a measure of Mantel's range. Yet from Mantel's perspective, these worlds were not entirely unlike. She compared the limits on free expression and the consequent reliance on rumor in both Tudor England and 1980s Saudi Arabia, and in Mantel's telling, women in both worlds find themselves confined and trapped, even under conditions of relative affluence. "Sorry to Disturb" revolves around the misunderstandings between an English narrator and a South Asian businessman who regularly visits her coffinlike apartment. At first it seems as if he might provide a welcome diversion, but their encounters become increasingly vexed as he projects on her certain ideas about the British and other Westerners. She finds herself wanting, as she puts it, to "bear out the national character he had given me," yet also to deflect his gender assumptions. The layering of English with Saudi and South Asian cultural worlds, of fictional narration with dialogue and diary entries, of realist social observation with surreal hints and evocative figurative language (insecticide falling "like bright mists, veils"), all contribute to the making of a rich story. Mantel's tale demonstrates her lifelong ability to write her way into the vulnerability of the outsider, to illuminate the constraints endured by women in various centuries and cultures, and to vivify the lived experience of religious and cultural friction, whether in sixteenth-century England or in the contemporary Persian Gulf.

Sorry to Disturb

In those days, the doorbell didn't ring often, and if it did I would draw back into the body of the house. Only at a persistent ring would I creep over the carpets, and make my way to the front door with its spy hole. We were big on bolts and shutters, deadlocks and mortises, safety chains and windows that were high and barred. Through the spy hole I saw a distraught man in a crumpled, silver-gray suit: thirties, Asian. He had dropped back from the door, and was looking about him, at the closed and locked door opposite, and up the dusty marble stairs. He patted his pockets, took out a balled-up handkerchief, and rubbed it across his face. He looked so fraught that his sweat could have been tears. I opened the door.

At once he raised his hands as if to show he was unarmed, his handkerchief dropping like a white flag. "Madam!" Ghastly pale I must have looked, under the light that dappled the tiled walls with swinging shadows. But then he took a breath, tugged at his creased jacket, ran a hand through his hair and conjured up his business card. "Muhammad Ijaz. Import-Export. I am so sorry to disturb your afternoon. I am totally lost. Would you permit use of your telephone?"

I stood aside to let him in. No doubt I smiled. Given what would ensue, I must suppose I did. "Of course. If it's working today."

I walked ahead and he followed, talking; an important deal, he had almost closed it, visit to client in person necessary, time—he worked up his sleeve and consulted a fake Rolex—time running out; he had the address—again he patted his pockets—but the office is not where it should be. He spoke into the telephone in rapid Arabic, fluent, aggressive, his eyebrows shooting up, finally shaking his head; he put down the receiver, looked at it in regret; then up at me, with a sour smile. Weak mouth, I thought. Almost a handsome man, but not: slim, sallow, easily thrown. "I am in your debt, madam," he said. "Now I must dash."

I wanted to offer him a what—bathroom break? Comfort stop? I had no idea how to phrase it. The absurd phrase *wash and brushup* came into my mind. But he was already heading for the door—though from the way the call had concluded I thought they might not be so keen to see him, at his destination, as he was to see them. "This crazy city," he said. "They are always digging up the streets and moving them. I am so sorry to break in on your privacy." In the hall, he darted another glance around and up the stairs. "Only the British will ever help you." He skidded across the hall and prized open the outer door with its heavy ironwork screen; admitting, for a moment, the dull roar of traffic from Medina Road. The door swung back, he was gone. I closed the hall door discreetly, and melted into the oppressive hush. The air conditioner rattled away, like an old relative with a loose cough. The air was heavy with insecticide; sometimes I sprayed it as I walked, and it fell about me like bright mists, veils. I resumed my phrasebook and tape, Fifth Lesson: *I'm living in Jeddah.*[1] *I'm busy today. God give you strength!*

When my husband came home in the afternoon I told him: "A lost man was here. Pakistani. Businessman. I let him in to phone."

My husband was silent. The air conditioner hacked away. He walked into the shower, having evicted the cockroaches. Walked out again, dripping, naked, lay on the bed, stared at the ceiling. Next day I swept the business card into a bin.

In the afternoon the doorbell rang again. Ijaz had come back, to apologize, to explain, to thank me for rescuing him. I made him some instant coffee and he sat down and told me about himself.

It was then June 1983. I had been in Saudi Arabia for six months. My husband worked for a Toronto-based company of consulting geologists, and had been seconded[2] by them to the Ministry of Mineral Resources. Most of his colleagues were housed in family "compounds" of various sizes, but the single men and a childless couple like ourselves had to take what they could get. This was our second flat. The American bachelor who had occupied it before had been moved out in haste. Upstairs, in this block of four flats, lived a

Saudi civil servant with his wife and baby; the fourth flat was empty; on the ground floor across the hall from us lived a Pakistani accountant who worked for a government minister, handling his personal finances. Meeting the womenfolk in the hall or on the stairs—one blacked-out head to toe, one partly veiled—the bachelor had livened up their lives by calling "Hello!" Or possibly "Hi there!"

There was no suggestion of further impertinence. But a complaint had been made, and he vanished, and we went to live there instead. The flat was small by Saudi standards. It had beige carpet and off-white wallpaper on which there was a faint crinkled pattern, almost indiscernible. The windows were guarded by heavy wooden shutters that you cranked down by turning a handle on the inside. Even with the shutters up it was dim and I needed the strip lights on all day. The rooms were closed off from each other by double doors of dark wood, heavy like coffin lids. It was like living in a funeral home, with samples stacked around you, and insect opportunists frying themselves on the lights.

He was a graduate of a Miami business school, Ijaz said, and his business, his main business just now, was bottled water. Had the deal gone through, yesterday? He was evasive—obviously, there was nothing simple about it. He waved a hand—give it time, give it time.

I had no friends in this city as yet. Social life, such as it was, centered on private houses; there were no cinemas, theaters or lecture halls. There were sports grounds, but women could not attend them. No "mixed gatherings" were allowed. The Saudis did not mix with foreign workers. They looked down on them as necessary evils, though white-skinned, English-speaking expatriates were at the top of the pecking order. Others—Ijaz, for example—were "Third Country Nationals," a label that exposed them to every kind of truculence, insult and daily complication. Indians and Pakistanis staffed the shops and small businesses. Filipinos worked on building sites. Men from Thailand cleaned the streets. Bearded Yemenis sat on the pavement outside lock-up shops, their skirts rucked up, their hairy legs thrust out, their flip-flops inches from the whizzing cars.

I am married, Ijaz said, and to an American; you must meet her. Maybe, he said, maybe you could do something for her, you know? What I foresaw at best was the usual Jeddah arrangement, of couples shackled together. Women had no motive power in this city; they had no driving licenses, and only the rich had drivers. So couples who wanted to visit must do it together. I didn't think Ijaz and my husband would be friends. Ijaz was too restless and nervy. He laughed at nothing. He was always twitching his collar and twisting his feet in their scuffed Oxfords,[3] always tapping the fake Rolex, always apologizing. Our apartment is down by the port, he said, with my sister-in-law and my brother, but he's back in Miami just now, and my mother's here just now for a visit, and my wife from America, and my son and my daughter, aged six, aged eight. He reached for his wallet and showed me a strange-looking, steeple-headed little boy. "Saleem."

When he left, he thanked me again for trusting him to come into my house. Why, he said, he might have been anybody. But it is not the British way to think badly of needy strangers. At the door he shook my hand. That's that, I thought. Part of me thought, it had better be.

For one was always observed: overlooked, without precisely being seen, recognized. My Pakistani neighbor Yasmin, to get between my flat and hers, would fling a scarf over her rippling hair, then peep around the door; with nervous, pecking movements she hopped across the marble, head swiveling from side to side, in case someone should choose that very moment to shoulder through the heavy street door. Sometimes, irritated by the dust that blew under the door and banked up on the marble, I would go out into the hall with a long broom. My male Saudi neighbor would come down from the first floor on his way out to his car and step over my brushstrokes without looking at me, his head averted. He was according me invisibility, as a mark of respect to another man's wife.

I was not sure that Ijaz accorded me this respect. Our situation was anomalous and ripe for misunderstanding: I had an afternoon

caller. He probably thought that only the kind of woman who took a lot of risks with herself would let a stranger into her house. Yet I could not guess what he probably thought. Surely a Miami business school, surely his time in the West, had made my attitude seem more normal than not? His talk was relaxed now he knew me, full of feeble jokes that he laughed at himself; but then there was the jiggling of his foot, the pulling of his collar, the tapping of his fingers. I had noticed, listening to my tape, that his situation was anticipated in the Nineteenth Lesson: *I gave the address to my driver, but when we arrived, there wasn't any house at this address*. I hoped to show by my brisk friendliness what was only the truth, that our situation could be simple, because I felt no attraction to him at all; so little that I felt apologetic about it. That is where it began to go wrong—my feeling that I must bear out the national character he had given me, and that I must not slight him or refuse a friendship, in case he thought it was because he was a Third Country National.

For his second visit, and his third, were an interruption, almost an irritation. Having no choice in that city, I had decided to cherish my isolation, coddle it. I was ill in those days, and subject to a fierce drug regime that gave me blinding headaches, made me slightly deaf and made me, though I was hungry, unable to eat. The drugs were expensive and had to be imported from England; my husband's company brought them in by courier. Word of this leaked out, and the company wives decided I was taking fertility drugs; but I did not know this, and my ignorance made our conversations peculiar and, to me, slightly menacing. Why were they always talking, on the occasions of forced company sociability, about women who'd had miscarriages but now had a bouncing babe in the buggy? An older woman confided that her two were adopted; I looked at them and thought Jesus, where from, the zoo? My Pakistani neighbour also joined in the cooing over the offspring that I would have shortly—she was in on the rumors, but I put her hints down to the fact that she was carrying her first child and wanted company. I saw her most mornings for an interval of coffee and chat, and I would rather steer her to talking about Islam, which was easy enough; she was an

educated woman and keen to instruct. June 6th: "Spent two hours with my neighbor," says my diary, "widening the cultural gap."

Next day, my husband brought home air tickets and my exit visa for our first home leave, which was seven weeks away. Thursday, June 9th: "Found a white hair in my head." At home there was a general election, and we sat up through the night to listen to the results on the BBC World Service. When we turned out the light, the grocer's daughter jigged through my dreams to the strains of "Lillibulero."[4] Friday was a holiday, and we slept undisturbed till the noon prayer call. Ramadan[5] began. Wednesday, June 15th: "Read *The Twyborn Affair*[6] and vomited sporadically."

On the sixteenth our neighbors across the hall left for pilgrimage, robed in white. They rang our doorbell before they left: "Is there anything we can bring you from Mecca?"[7] June 19th saw me desperate for change, moving the furniture around the sitting room and recording "not much improvement." I write that I am prey to "unpleasant and intrusive thoughts," but I do not say what they are. I describe myself as "hot, sick and morose." By July 4th I must have been happier, because I listened to the *Eroica*[8] while doing the ironing. But on the morning of July 10th, I got up first, put the coffee on, and went into the sitting room to find that the furniture had been trying to move itself back. An armchair was leaning to the left, as if executing some tipsy dance; at one side its base rested on the carpet, but the other side was a foot in the air, and balanced finely on the rim of a flimsy wastepaper basket. Open-mouthed, I shot back into the bedroom; it was the Eid holiday,[9] and my husband was still half awake. I gibbered at him. Silent, he rose, put on his glasses, and followed me. He stood in the doorway of the sitting room. He looked around and told me without hesitation it had nothing to do with him. He walked into the bathroom. I heard him close the door, curse the cockroaches, switch on the shower. I said later, I must be walking in my sleep. Do you think that's it? Do you think I did it? July 12th: "Execution dream again."

The trouble was, Ijaz knew I was at home; how would I be going anywhere? One afternoon I left him standing in the hall, while he

pressed and pressed the doorbell, and next time, when I let him in, he asked me where I had been; when I said, "Ah, sorry, I must have been with my neighbor," I could see he did not believe me, and he looked at me so sorrowfully that my heart went out to him. Jeddah fretted him, it galled him, and he missed, he said, America, he missed his visits to London, he must go soon, take a break; when was our leave, perhaps we might meet up? I explained I did not live in London, which surprised him; he seemed to suspect it was an evasion, like my failure to answer the door. "Because I could get an exit visa," he said again. "Meet up there. Without all this . . ." he gestured at the coffin-lid doors, the heavy, willful furniture.

He made me laugh that day, telling me about his first girlfriend, his American girlfriend whose nickname was Patches. It was easy to picture her, sassy and suntanned, astonishing him one day by pulling off her top, bouncing her bare breasts at him and putting an end to his wan virginity. The fear he felt, the terror of touching her . . . his shameful performance . . . recalling it, he knuckled his forehead. I was charmed, I suppose. How often does a man tell you these things? I told my husband, hoping to make him laugh, but he didn't. Often, to be helpful, I hoovered up the cockroaches before his return from the Ministry. He shed his clothes and headed off. I heard the splash of the shower. Nineteenth Lesson: *Are you married? Yes, my wife is with me, she's standing there in the corner of the room*. I imagined the cockroaches, dark and flailing in the dust bag.

I went back to the dining table, on which I was writing a comic novel. It was a secret activity I never mentioned to the company wives, and barely mentioned to myself. I scribbled under the strip light, until it was time to drive out for food shopping. You had to shop between sunset prayers and night prayers; if you mistimed it, then at the first prayer call the shops slammed down their shutters, trapping you inside, or outside in the wet heat of the car park. The malls were patrolled by volunteers from the Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and the Elimination of Vice.

At the end of July Ijaz brought his family for tea. Mary-Beth was a small woman but seemed swollen beneath the skin; spiritless,

freckled, limp, she was a faded redhead who seemed huddled into herself, unused to conversation. A silent daughter with eyes like dark stars had been trussed up for the visit in a frilly white dress. At six, steeple-headed Saleem had lost his baby fat, and his movements were tentative, as if his limbs were snappable. His eyes were watchful; Mary-Beth hardly met my gaze at all. What had Ijaz told her? That he was taking her to see a woman who was something like he'd like her to be? It was an unhappy afternoon. I can only have got through it because I was buoyed by an uprush of anticipation; my bags were packed for our flight home. A day earlier, when I had gone into the spare room where I kept my clothes, I had met another dismaying sight. The doors of the fitted wardrobe, which were large and solid like the other coffin lids, had been removed from their hinges; they had been replaced, but hung by the lower hinges only, so that their upper halves flapped like the wings of some ramshackle flying machine.

On August 1st we left King Abdulaziz International Airport in an electrical storm, and had a bumpy flight. I was curious about Mary-Beth's situation and hoped to see her again, though another part of me hoped that she and Ijaz would simply vanish.

I didn't return to Jeddah till the very end of November, having left my book with an agent. Just before our leave I had met my Saudi neighbor, a young mother taking a part-time literature course at the women's university. Education for women was regarded as a luxury, an ornament, a way for a husband to boast of his broadmindedness; Munira couldn't even begin to do her assignments, and I took to going up to her flat in the late mornings and doing them for her, while she sat on the floor in her négligée, watching Egyptian soaps on TV and eating sunflower seeds. We three women, Yasmin and Munira and I, had become midmorning friends; all the better for them to watch me, I thought, and discuss me when I'm gone. It was easier for Yasmin and me to go upstairs, because to come down Munira had to get kitted out in full veil and abaya;[1] again, that treacherous, hovering moment on the public territory of the

staircase, where a man might burst through from the street and shout "Hi!" Yasmin was a delicate woman, like a princess in a Persian miniature; younger than myself, she was impeccably soignée,[2] finished with a flawless glaze of good manners and restraint. Munira was nineteen, with coarse, eager good looks, a pale skin, and a mane of hair that crackled with static and seemed to lead a vital, separate life; her laugh was a raucous cackle. She and Yasmin sat on cushions but gave me a chair; they insisted. They served Nescafé in my honor, though I would have preferred a sludgy local brew. I had learned the crude effectiveness of caffeine against migraine; some nights, sleepless, pacing, I careened off the walls, and only the dawn prayer call sent me to bed, still thinking furiously of books I might write.

Ijaz rang the doorbell on December 6th. He was so very pleased to see me after my long leave; beaming, he said, "Now you are more like Patches than ever." I felt a flare of alarm; nothing, nothing had been said about this before. I was slimmer, he said, and looked well—my prescription drugs had been cut down, and I had been exposed to some daylight, I supposed that was what was doing it. But, "No, there is something different about you," he said. One of the company wives had said the same. She thought, no doubt, that I had conceived my baby at last.

I led Ijaz into the sitting room, while he trailed me with compliments, and made the coffee. "Maybe it's my book," I said, sitting down. "You see, I've written a book . . ." My voice tailed off. This was not his world. No one read books in Jeddah. You could buy anything in the shops except alcohol or a bookcase. My neighbor Yasmin, though she was an English graduate, said she had never read a book since her marriage; she was too busy making supper parties every night. I have had a little success, I explained, or I hope for a little success, I have written a novel you see, and an agent has taken it on.

"It is a storybook? For children?"

"For adults."

"You did this during your vacation?"

"No, I was always writing it." I felt deceitful. I was writing it when I didn't answer the doorbell.

"Your husband will pay to have it published for you."

"No, with luck someone will pay me. A publisher. The agent hopes he can sell it."

"This agent, where did you meet him?"

I could hardly say, in the *Writers' & Artists' Yearbook*.[3] "In London. At his office."

"But you do not live in London," Ijaz said, as if laying down an ace. He was out to find something wrong with my story. "Probably he is no good. He may steal your money."

I saw of course that in his world, the term *agent* would cover some broad, unsavory categories. But what about "Import-Export," as written on his business cards? That didn't sound to me like the essence of probity. I wanted to argue; I was still upset about Patches; without warning, Ijaz seemed to have changed the terms of engagement between us. "I don't think so. I haven't given him money. His firm, it's well known." Their office is where? Ijaz sniffed, and I pressed on, trying to make my case; though why did I think that an office in William IV Street was a guarantee of moral worth? Ijaz knew London well. "Charing Cross tube?" He still looked affronted. "Near Trafalgar Square?"

Ijaz grunted. "You went to this premises alone?"

I couldn't placate him. I gave him a biscuit. I didn't expect him to understand what I was up to, but he seemed aggrieved that another man had entered my life. "How is Mary-Beth?" I asked.

"She has some kidney disease."

I was shocked. "Is it serious?"

He raised his shoulders; not a shrug, more a rotation of the joints, as if easing some old ache. "She must go back to America for treatment. It's okay. I'm getting rid of her anyway."

I looked away. I hadn't imagined this. "I'm sorry you're unhappy."

"You see really I don't know what's the matter with her," he said testily. "She is always miserable and moping."

"You know, this is not the easiest place for a woman to live."

But did he know? Irritated, he said, "She wanted a big car. So I got a big car. What more does she want me to do?"

December 6th: "Ijaz stayed too long," the diary says. Next day he was back. After the way he had spoken of his wife—and the way he had compared me to dear old Patches from his Miami days—I didn't think I should see him again. But he had hatched a scheme and he wasn't going to let it go. I should come to a dinner party with my husband and meet his family and some of his business contacts. He had been talking about this project before my leave and I knew he set great store by it. I wanted, if I could, to do him some good; he would appear to his customers to be more a man of the world if he could arrange an international gathering, if—let's be blunt—he could produce some white friends. Now the time had come. His sister-in-law was already cooking, he said. I wanted to meet her; I admired these diaspora Asians, their polyglot enterprise, the way they withstood rebuffs, and I wanted to see if she was more Western or Eastern or what. "We have to arrange the transportation," Ijaz said. "I shall come Thursday, when your husband is here. Four o'clock. To give him directions." I nodded. No use drawing a map. They might move the streets again.

The meeting of December 8th was not a success. Ijaz was late, but didn't seem to know it. My husband dispensed the briefest host's courtesies, then sat down firmly in his armchair, which was the one that had tried to levitate. He seemed, by his watchful silence, ready to put an end to any nonsense, from furniture or guests or any other quarter. Sitting on the edge of the sofa, Ijaz flaked his baklava over his lap, he juggled with his fork and jiggled his coffee cup. After our dinner party, he said, almost the next day, he was flying to America on business. "I shall route via London. Just for some recreation. Just to relax, three–four days."

My husband must have stirred himself to ask if he had friends there. "Very old friend," Ijaz said, brushing crumbs to the carpet. "Living at Trafalgar Square. A good district. You know it?"

My heart sank; it was a physical feeling, of the months falling away from me, months in which I'd had little natural light. When Ijaz left—and he kept hovering on the threshold, giving further and better street directions—I didn't know what to say, so I went into the bathroom, kicked out the cockroaches and cowered under the stream of tepid water. Wrapped in a towel, I lay on the bed in the dark. I could hear my husband—I hoped it was he, and not the armchair—moving around in the sitting room. Sometimes in those days when I closed my eyes I felt that I was looking back into my own skull. I could see the hemispheres of my brain. They were convoluted and the color of putty.

The family apartment down by the port was filled with cooking smells and crammed with furniture. There were photographs on every surface, carpets laid on carpets. It was a hot night, and the air conditioners labored and hacked, spitting out water, coughing up lungfuls of mold spores, blights. The table linen was limp and heavily fringed, and I kept fingering these fringes, which felt like nylon fur, like the ears of a teddy bear; they comforted me, though I felt electric with tension. At the table a vast lumpen elder presided, a woman with a long chomping jaw; she was like Quentin Matsys's Ugly Duchess,[4] except in a spangled sari. The sister-in-law was a bright, brittle woman, who gave a sarcastic lilt to all her phrases. I could see why; it was evident, from her knowing looks, that Ijaz had talked about me, and set me up in some way; if he was proposing me as his next wife, I offered little improvement on the original. Her scorn became complete when she saw I barely touched the food at my elbow; I kept smiling and nodding, demurring and deferring, nibbling a parsley leaf and sipping my Fanta. I wanted to eat, but she might as well have offered me stones on a doily. Did Ijaz think, as the Saudis did, that Western marriages meant nothing? That they were entered impulsively and on impulse broken? Did he assume my husband was as keen to offload me as he was to lose Mary-Beth? From his point of view the evening was not going well. He had expected two supermarket managers, he told us, important men with spending power; now night prayers were over, the traffic was

on the move again, all down Palestine Road and along the Corniche[5] the traffic lights were turning green, from Thumb Street to the Pepsi flyover[6] the city was humming, but where were they? Sweat dripped from his face. Fingers jabbed the buttons of the telephone. "Okay, he is delayed? He has left? He is coming now?" He rapped down the receiver, then gazed at the phone as if willing it to chirp back at him, like some pet fowl. "Time means nothing here," he joked, pulling at his collar. The sister-in-law shrugged and turned down her mouth. She never rested, but passed airily through the room in peach chiffon, each time returning from the kitchen with another laden tray; out of sight, presumably, some oily skivvy[7] was weeping into the dishes. The silent elder put away a large part of the food, pulling the plates toward her and working through them systematically till the pattern showed beneath her questing fingers; you looked away, and when you looked back the plate was clean. Sometimes, the phone rang: "Okay, they're nearly here," Ijaz called. Ten minutes, and his brow furrowed again. "Maybe they're lost."

"Sure they're lost," sister-in-law sang. She sniggered; she was enjoying herself. Nineteenth Lesson, translate these sentences: *So long as he holds the map the wrong way up, he will never find the house. They started traveling this morning, but have still not arrived.* It seemed a hopeless business, trying to get anywhere, and the textbook confessed it. I was not really learning Arabic, of course, I was too impatient; I was leafing through the lessons, looking for phrases that might be useful if I could say them. We stayed long, long into the evening, waiting for the men who had never intended to come; in the end, wounded and surly, Ijaz escorted us to the door. I heard my husband take in a breath of wet air. "We'll never have to do it again," I consoled him. In the car, "You have to feel for him," I said. No answer.

December 13th: My diary records that I am oppressed by "the darkness, the ironing and the smell of drains." I could no longer play my *Eroica* tape as it had twisted itself up in the innards of the machine. In my idle moments I had summarized forty chapters of *Oliver Twist*[8] for the use of my upstairs neighbor. Three days later I

was "horribly unstable and restless," and reading the *Lyttelton/Hart-Davis Letters*.[9] Later that week I was cooking with my neighbor Yasmin. I recorded "an afternoon of graying pain." All the same, Ijaz was out of the country and I realized I breathed easier when I was not anticipating the ring of the doorbell. December 16th, I was reading *The Philosopher's Pupil*[1] and visiting my own student upstairs. Munira took my forty chapter summaries, flicked through them, yawned, and switched on the TV. "What is a workhouse?" I tried to explain about the English poor law, but her expression glazed; she had never heard of poverty. She yelled out for her servant, an ear-splitting yell, and the girl—a beaten-down Indonesian—brought in Munira's daughter for my diversion. A heavy, solemn child, she was beginning to walk, or stamp, under her own power, her hands flailing for a hold on the furniture. She would fall on her bottom with a grunt, haul herself up again by clutching the sofa; the cushions slid away from her, she tumbled backward, banged on the floor her large head with its corkscrew curls, and lay there wailing. Munira laughed at her: "White nigger, isn't it?" She didn't get her flat nose from my side, she explained. Or those fat lips either. It's my husband's people, but of course, they're blaming me.

January 2nd 1984: We went to a dark little restaurant off Khalid bin Wahlid Street, where we were seated behind a lattice screen in the "family area." In the main part of the room men were dining with each other. The business of eating out was more a gesture than a pleasure; you would gallop through the meal, because without wine and its rituals there was nothing to slow it, and the waiters, who had no concept that a man and woman might eat together for more than sustenance, prided themselves on picking up your plate as soon as you had finished and slapping down another, and rushing you back onto the dusty street. That dusty orange glare, perpetual, like the lighting of a bad sci-fi film; the constant snarl and rumble of traffic; I had become afraid of traffic accidents, which were frequent, and every time we drove out at night I saw the gaping spaces beneath bridges and flyovers; they seemed to me like amphitheaters in which the traffic's casualties enacted, flickering, their final moments.

Sometimes, when I set foot outside the apartment, I started to shake. I blamed it on the drugs I was taking; the dose had been increased again. When I saw the other wives they didn't seem to be having these difficulties. They talked about paddling pools and former lives they had led in Hong Kong. They got up little souk[2] trips to buy jewelry, so that sliding on their scrawny tanned arms their bracelets clinked and chimed, like ice cubes knocking together. On Valentine's Day we went to a cheese party; you had to imagine the wine. I was bubbling with happiness; a letter had come from William IV Street, to tell me my novel had been sold. Spearing his Edam[3] with a cocktail stick, my husband's boss loomed over me: "Hubby tells me you're having a book published. That must be costing him a pretty penny."

Ijaz, I assumed, was still in America. After all, he had his marital affairs to sort out, as well as business. He doesn't reappear in the diary till March 17th, St. Patrick's Day, when I recorded, "Phone call, highly unwelcome." For politeness, I asked how business was; as ever, he was evasive. He had something else to tell me: "I've got rid of Mary-Beth. She's gone."

"What about the children?"

"Saleem is staying with me. The girl, it doesn't matter. She can have her if she wants."

"Ijaz, look, I must say good-bye. I hear the doorbell." What a lie.

"Who is it?"

What, did he think I could see through the wall? For a second I was so angry I forgot there was only a phantom at the door. "Perhaps my neighbor," I said meekly.

"See you soon," Ijaz said.

I decided that night I could no longer bear it. I did not feel I could bear even one more cup of coffee together. But I had no means of putting an end to it, and for this I excused myself, saying I had been made helpless by the society around me. I was not able to bring myself to speak to Ijaz directly. I still had no power in me to snub him. But the mere thought of him made me squirm inside with shame, at my own general cluelessness, and at the sad little lies he

had told to misrepresent his life, and the situation into which we had blundered; I thought of the sister-in-law, her peach chiffon and her curled lip.

Next day when my husband came home I sat him down and instigated a conversation. I asked him to write to Ijaz and ask him not to call on me anymore, as I was afraid that the neighbors had noticed his visits and might draw the wrong conclusion: which, as he knew, could be dangerous to us all. My husband heard me out. You need not write much, I pleaded, he will get the point. I should be able to sort this out for myself, but I am not allowed to, it is beyond my power, or it seems to be. I heard my own voice, jangled, grating; I was doing what I had wriggled so hard to avoid, I was sheltering behind the mores of this society, off-loading the problem I had created for myself in a way that was feminine, weak and spiteful.

My husband saw all this. Not that he spoke. He got up, took his shower. He lay in the rattling darkness, in the bedroom where the wooden shutters blocked out the merest chink of afternoon glare. I lay beside him. The evening prayer call woke me from my doze. My husband had risen to write the letter. I remember the snap of the lock as he closed it in his briefcase.

I have never asked him what he put in the letter, but whatever it was it worked. There was nothing—not a chastened note pushed under the door, nor a regretful phone call. Just silence. The diary continues but Ijaz exits from it. I read *Zuckerman Unbound, The Present & The Past*, and *The Bottle Factory Outing*.[4] The company's post office box went missing, with all the incoming mail in it. You would think a post box was a fixed thing and wouldn't go wandering of its own volition, but it was many days before it was found, at a distant post office, and I suppose a post box can move if furniture can. We drifted toward our next leave. May 10th, we attended a farewell party for an escapee whose contract was up. "Fell over while dancing and sprained my ankle." May 11th: With my ankle strapped up, "watched *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*."[5]

I had much more time to serve in Jeddah. I didn't leave finally till the spring of 1986. By that time we had been rehoused twice more,

shuttled around the city and finally outside it to a compound off the freeway. I never heard of my visitor again. The woman trapped in the flat on the corner of Al-Suror Street seems a relative stranger, and I ask myself what she should have done, how she could have managed it better. She should have thrown those drugs away, for one thing; they are nowadays a medication of last resort, because everybody knows they make you frightened, deaf and sick. But about Ijaz? She should never have opened the door in the first place. Discretion is the better part of valor; she's always said that. Even after all this time it's hard to grasp exactly what happened. I try to write it as it occurred but I find myself changing the names to protect the guilty. I wonder if Jeddah left me forever off-kilter in some way, tilted from the vertical and condemned to see life skewed. I can never be certain that doors will stay closed and on their hinges, and I do not know, when I turn out the lights at night, whether the house is quiet as I left it or the furniture is frolicking in the dark.

2009, 2014

Endnotes

- Note 1: Saudi Arabian port city on the Red Sea and modern commercial hub.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Temporarily assigned.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Dress shoes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: March associated with the English Civil War (1642–51).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Islamic holy month of fasting, introspection, and prayer. "Noon prayer": Muslims typically pray at five designated times each day.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Novel (1979) by Australian writer Patrick White (1912–1990).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Birthplace of Muhammad and Islam's holiest city. All able Muslims are expected to make pilgrimage to Mecca at some point in their lives.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Third Symphony by German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Feast day marking the end of Ramadan.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Full-body robe (Arabic).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Elegant (French).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: British directory for aspiring writers.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Satirical portrait by the Flemish artist Quentin Matsys (1466–1530), also referred to as *A Grotesque Old Woman*.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Coastal resort area of Jeddah.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Overpass.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Low-ranking female domestic servant.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Novel (1838) by English writer Charles Dickens (1812–1870).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Correspondence between English literature teacher George Lyttelton (1883–1962) and former student Rupert Hart-Davis (1907–1999), published in six volumes between 1978 and 1984.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Novel (1983) by Irish-born English writer Iris Murdoch (1919–1999).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Open-air marketplace.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Dutch cheese.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Novels by American writer Philip Roth (1933–2018) and English writers Ivy Compton-Burnett (1884–1969) and Beryl Bainbridge (1932–2010).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: 1974 American slasher film.Return to reference 5

BORN-DIGITAL LITERATURE

Born-digital literature refers to a subset of literary works that are written on a computer and generally meant to be read on a computer. Many such works are programmed in addition to being written; use sound, motion, and interactivity; and have historically been published on floppy disk, CD-ROM, and online (hence, born-digital). They cannot appear on the printed page without sacrificing some aspect of their essential form and meaning. Other born-digital works begin on a computer, but appear in print and thematize the process of crossing over from screen to page. Their composition and presentation reflect a deep awareness of the media formats in which they appear.

We might think of these works as metamedial rather than metafictional. Whereas a metafictional work self-consciously references its status as a work of fiction, a metamedial work references the media in which it was written or appears—whether it be a paper book, a computer screen, or a particular social media platform. Further, metamedial works do not take the material qualities of language for granted. They experiment with the look and sound of letters and the speed and arrangement of words across print, audio, and video. In various ways, they invite readers of literature to think about how the specificities of print and digital environments affect their experience of the work.

Many of the writers in this cluster invoke or rewrite canonical texts from earlier periods of literary history. This is no accident. Writers wishing to prove that digital media can indeed be literary media draw on their knowledge of the canon and reinvent old forms using new tools and techniques. Take the poetry of Kamau Brathwaite and Caroline Bergvall, for example. When Brathwaite began writing poetry on an Apple Macintosh computer in the late 1980s, he coined the phrase "Sycorax video style" (SVS) to describe his visual exploration of the different typefaces and symbols

available through its word-processing program. Named for Caliban's mother, an unseen character who is also a witch and foil to Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, SVS is characterized by pixelated letters, keyboard art (drawings made from symbols available on a keyboard), and variable typefaces, fonts, and font sizes to bring a screen aesthetic to paper. With SVS, Brathwaite reverses expectations of technological progress. He brings graphic design into his writing to excavate the deep past of colonial violence and to compare computer screens to medieval forms of media, such as the scroll and the illuminated manuscript. Poet and sound artist Caroline Bergvall follows Brathwaite in using computer-mediated poetry to evoke the history of the English language as well as the radically different sensory experiences of reading aloud and silent reading. "The Franker Tale" (2011), a contemporary reimagining of Chaucer's "The Franklin's Tale," blends the sounds and spellings of Middle English and modern English to show proximities in the regulation of women's bodies over time. Bergvall further remixes found documents with original writing in a literary version of the common web-based practice of copy and paste.

The earliest computer-generated poetry descends from avant-garde traditions of European modernism. German mathematician Theo Lutz created *Stochastic Texts* (1959) on a Zuse22 computer. He designed a Fortran program where the input was carefully selected words from Franz Kafka's *The Castle* and the output was a series of random combinations of those words. Lutz, like the mathematically inclined French poet Raymond Queneau, incorporated randomness, chance, and permutation into the making of poetry. Programmed and recombinant poetry influenced the development of kinetic poetry or poetry that moves across a screen and consequently cannot be read on paper.

The prolific Canadian poet bpNichol created *First Screening* (1984) on an Apple IIe computer in the BASIC programming language. These kinetic poems operate in the borderlands of text and image. Visuals puns, moving strings of words, and the use of letters as variables draw attention to how the changing physical

inscription and pacing of a poem adds to its many possible meanings. The kinetic poetry of bpNichol recalls the visual and typographical play of French symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé and the *Blast* manifesto (see the cluster on Modernist Manifestos earlier in this volume) and looks forward to the work of Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries (YHCHI). The group, based in Seoul, South Korea, consists of artist Young-Hae Chang and her partner, Marc Voge. YHCHI programmed the powerful "BUST DOWN THE DOOR!" (2000) and "TRAVELING TO UTOPIA" (2012) with Flash Animation, a software platform of historical importance to developing interactive media on the World Wide Web. YHCHI use the resources of Flash to question the reputation of the internet as a highly accessible or "democratic" medium that levels cultural hierarchies. Their kinetic poems purposely deny users interactivity and create jarring experiences that suggest digital tools may take away more freedom than they give. The high-speed sequencing of frames, shockingly large Monaco typeface, layered multilingual writing, and pulsating music disorient the reader and defamiliarize the visual organization of the computer screen.

The World Wide Web was developed and launched by British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee in 1989, and in the 1990s, first-generation digital fiction was dominated by American writers of hypertext narratives. *afternoon, a story* (1990) by Michael Joyce, and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995), a rewriting of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, brought the hyperlinked, networked structure native to the web into this new literary form of storytelling. Hypertext fiction offered multiple reading paths through a story, and its labyrinthine structure would in turn influence twenty-first-century experiments with typography and page design in book-based novels such as Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) and Adam Thirlwell's *Kapow!* (2012). Ali Smith's novel *How to Be Both* (2014), an excerpt of which is included here, was simultaneously published in two print editions, each presenting the narrative in a different order. Print readers received one of the two versions at random while ebook readers were given both versions.

Since 2010, born-digital fiction has spread to large social media platforms where authors engage with internet genres like the tweet and the meme, launch collaborative writing projects, and blend aspects of literary publishing with public performance. The fiction of David Mitchell and Teju Cole reflects the migration of writers without specialized programming skills into the sphere of digital literature. Mitchell published his short story "The Right Sort" on Twitter (rebranded in 2023 as X) serially over one week (July 14–20, 2014) and followed a strict timetable of two batches of tweets per day at one tweet per minute. He welcomed the novelty of writing prose under the constraint of 140 characters (the maximum length of a tweet at that time) and incorporated the rhythm of tweet release into a story that used timing and enjambment to convey the changing mental state of its protagonist.

Writing from Lagos, Nigeria, Cole took to Twitter to examine how modes of attention shaped the relationship between political centers of power and their peripheries. "Seven Short Stories about Drones" (2013) offers a new twist on postcolonial strategies of writing back to the canon. It unfolds through a series of seven tweets, each of which recontextualizes the first line of a classic novel in light of drone strikes and civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Pakistan. If literature is the medium through which readers refine their faculties of attention and empathy, then Cole suggests it might be weaponized against apathy in the face of atrocity. "Hafiz" (2014), which centers on eyewitness accounts of an emergency situation, cleverly harnesses Twitter's reputation as a platform for breaking news and citizen journalism. The short story was written by Cole alone, but its sentences were distributed across a group of his followers who tweeted them from their accounts. Cole then retweeted (copied) his followers' tweets so that the complete story appeared on his profile page. The orchestration of "Hafiz" made ingenious use of Twitter's retweet function to transform an individually authored story into a collaborative performance that blurred the boundaries between fiction and news.

Readers can experience the full effect of kinetic poetry through an ebook, which, unlike a print format, enables access to the audio and video features of born-digital literature. In the case of social media-based literature, access is more complicated. Twitter fiction, on its native platform, blended into the news feeds of different users so that each reader would encounter a story or a fragment of the story through the prism of their personalized feed. While the Norton Anthology ebook cannot replicate the experience of reading on Twitter, it does remind us how all literature that lasts is inevitably read outside of its original context. This fact does not diminish the value of the encounter, but raises fruitful questions about the relationship between text and context, between reading and viewing a poem, and between experiencing a fictional work in real time on a social media platform and reading it later in its archived form. To make some of the literature in this section more accessible, we invite you to move from page to screen.

With twentieth- and twenty-first-century advances in digital technology, desktop computers, laptops, game consoles, tablets, and smartphones have become indispensable tools for work and play. Even if preservation and display pose a challenge as file formats change and become obsolete, born-digital literature proves that computing devices have left a vital mark on the arts of the English language. Through their inspired use of word-processing software, programming languages, graphic design, and social media interfaces, these authors make reading and writing feel new again.

KAMAU BRATHWAITE

In the excerpt below from *ConVERSations* with poet Nathaniel Mackey, the Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite (1930–2020) (see headnote earlier in this volume) introduces Sycorax Video Style, a mode of writing that combines technological and typographical experimentation with the postcolonial desire to reimagine characters from the canon of English literature. Sycorax is the name of Caliban's mother in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Although she never appears on stage, characters refer to her as a witch. Brathwaite reclaims Sycorax as a mother who inspires his poetic creativity and provides an alternative figure of authority to Prospero. Sycorax Video Style uses pixelated letters, computer typefaces, and line drawings to approximate the appearance of a television or computer screen on the printed page. The result is an experimental form of writing that resists the standardization of literary language on the page.

After he began writing in Sycorax Video Style, Brathwaite encountered difficulties with publishers unable or unwilling to deviate from standard formats. The style of *ConVERSations* reproduced here exemplifies the style as Brathwaite wished it to appear. The visual appearance of the poem "Letter Sycorax" offers a more subdued version of Sycorax Video Style. In the poem Brathwaite imagines Sycorax's computer as an alternative to Prospero's book. The computer, despite being an emblem of Western technology, allows Brathwaite to write "in light" and to improvise upon his past poetics of decolonization.

[On Sycorax Video Style]

The publishers are struggling with it because what happen dur ing this time was not only - for mwe - a 'revolution' into su rrealism, if you like, or magical realism - I call it dream status or dreamstorie - [to Nate] *you would know more about th- is than I do* - but I suppose dreams are a healing process. .

But the very concept of writing has alter, and it's as if I'm gone back to the Middle Ages, in a way, and I'm tryin to cre ate those things that they did - what-do-you-call-them? Scro- lls? that kind of tone. And the computer gives me that oppor- tunity. To release the pen from the fist of my broeken hand and begin what I call my '*video-style*', in which I tr (y) make the words themselves live off - away from - the 'pa- ge', so you can see - *is this true? does this make sense - or does it simply try to mean what i mean?* - like *see their sound* - techno logy taking us 'back', I suppose, to the Urals - which is why I continue to think of the MiddleAges - what was 'happening' in Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Islamic wo rld of the **ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS** when the written word could still *hear itself speak,* as it were And beyond that, ev en to the possibility of

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On Sycorax Video Style: This is a selection from ConVERsations with Nathaniel Mackey, a book based on a transcript of a public discussion between the two poets. Mackey (b. 1947) is referred to as "Nate." Throughout, Brathwaite plays with the sound and sight of words as he brings in the informal style and syntax of spoken Caribbean English.

Sycorax: In Shakespeare's Tempest, Sycorax is a character mentioned but not seen. She is the mother of Caliban, who has become important in postcolonial Caribbean literature as a symbol for the colonial subject who has absorbed the colonizer's culture and language but rejects its authority.

mwe: derived from Haitan Creole, "mwe" in Brathwaite's lexicon signifies a combination of "me" and "we" and the retention of individuality within community.
surrealism: an artistic movement focusing on the unconscious and on creating dream-like scenes.
magical realism: a literary movement originating in Latin America; it blends fantastical elements into the realist novel. Major authors associated with the movement include Alejo Carpentier (1904–1980) and Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014).
Middle Ages: period from the 5th to 15th centuries, between the fall of Rome and the Renaissance.
scrolls: Gutenberg invented the printing press sometime around 1440; this set in motion the printing of books as we know them today. Prior to this, scrolls, made of rolled pieces of parchment or other material, were used for writing and reading. Today, "scrolling" refers to the navigation of computer screens.
broeken: deliberately alternative spelling for "broken."
Urals: a mountain range in Western Russia; commonly referred to as the boundary between Europe and Asia.
illuminated manuscripts: hand-written books with elaborate painted decorations, including borders, large chapter letters, and miniature and full-pages pictures. The majority of them were produced in the Middle Ages.

HIEROGLYPHICS

– Egypt, Maya, Aztec – and 'beyond' that ev
en unto *timehri* before fire. It involves a process of video-
thinking and a presentation – a representation – of illuminated
scrolls which the present concept of the **4½" × 7½"** margin
book with a certain uniform **face,** won't interest and therefo
re can't/won't/won't entertain – hence my struggle with publi
shers and printers over the presentation – the representation –
of all my new 'Sycorax video-style' stuff**: DreamStories [DS]
, The Zea Mexican Diary [ZMD], Trench Town Rock [TTR]** and
especially **DreamStories** which is the nearest of these texts
to dream and why in the end I have to publish **BarabajanPoem
(s)** and later **MR [Magic(al) Realism]** myself [Savacou North 1994 & 1998;
tho the printer succeeded in well **fuckin** up – even tho is 'print ready' –
its pagination + the signatures, so that it wasn't *ready* when i needin
it etc etc etc — *an dat's basically because e tink e know better dan mwe about **MU-
RAL]***

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* * *

HIEROGLYPHICS: writing that uses pictures as characters, rather than a letter-based alphabet. The Egyptian, Mayan, and Aztec empires all used different forms of hieroglyphics.
timehri: Guyanese Amerindian word that means "paintings and drawings on a rock," or "petroglyph." Brathwaite drew on concepts from Indigenous languages as a counterpoint to European thought.
face: typeface. Brathwaite suggests that the standard-size book with uniform typeface cannot adequately represent Sycorax Video Style.

Letter

forest *Nzinga*

1

Dear mamma

*i writin yu dis letter/**wha?***
guess what! pun a computer o/kay?
like i jine de mercantilists!

well not quite!

i mean de same way dem tief/in gun
power from sheena & taken we blues &

gone

■■■

say
wha? get on wid de same ole

story?

okay
okay
okay

okay

if yu cyaan beat prospero
whistle

No mamma!

is not one a dem pensive tings like ibm or
bang & ovid
nor anyting glori. ous like dat!

but is one a de bess tings since cicero o
kay?

it have key
board &

evva

ting. like dat ole
reminton yu have pun top de war. drobe up
there ketchin duss

only wid dis one yu na ave to benn dung over
to out out
de mistake dem wid white liquid paper. de
papyrus

ribbid & soff

before it drei up flakey &
crink. like yu was paintin yu house

um doan even nuse no paper yu does have to

roll
pun dat blk rollin pin like yu rollin dough pun
a flatten

& does go off ping pun de right hann wing a
de paper
when de clatterin words start to fly & fling
like a ping. wing

■

wid dis *now*
long before yu cud say jackie robb
inson or rt-d2 or shout

wre

dis ya obeah blo
get a whole whole para
graph write up &

blink
pun a black
bird

like dat indonesian fella in star
trek
where dem is wear dem permanent wrinkle up
grey

& white flannel cost
ume like dem gettin ready to
jogg

but dem sittin dung dere in such silence a
rome

it not turn
in a hair pun dem wig/wam &

hack/in out hack/in hack/in all sorta back
up & read
out & fail

out & think &
it even have trash
can for garbage from all part/icles a de gal.
a *y*

&
mamma

a doan really know how pascal & co.
balt apple & cogito ergo sum
come to h/invent all these tings since

de rice & fall a de roman empire
& how capitalism & slaveley like it putt
christianity
on ice

so dem cd always open dat cole
smokin door a hell when dem ready for ash or
a psalm
sangridge or

choke

Why i cyaan nuse me hann & crawl

up de white like i use to?

since when i kin type?

dats what i tryin to tell ya!

yu know me cyaan
neither flat
foot pun de key

boards like
say
charlie chap dance/in

far
less touch
tapp/in like bo.

jangles

walk/in doun chauncery lane

yu hear/in me mwa?

but i
mwangles!

■

a mean
a nat farwardin wid star
wars

nor sing
songin no bionicle
songs or like sputnik &

chips
goin bleep bleep bleep bleep bleep bleep bleep
into de peloponnesian wars

but i
mwangles

2

Why a callin it

a doan write.
ly know
but yes.
taday when a was tell.

in a ceratin girl
frenn about

it/she kinda look at i funn.
y like if

she tink i has *er* *es or aids*

so she soffly soffly silk.
in i off like if i is sick.

ly or sorrow or
souse

but is like what i try.
in to sen/seh &

seh about muse.
in computer

& mouse &
learn.

in prospero ling.
go

&
ting

not fe dem/not fe dem
de way caliban

done

but fe we
fe a-we

for nat one a we shd response if prospero get
curse

wid im own
curser

though um not like when covetous ride miss
praedial
mule

but is like we still start
where we start/in out start/in out start/in
out start/in

out
since menelek was a bwoy
& why is dat &

what is de bess way to say so/so it doan sounn
like

brigg
flatts or her. vokitz nor de

n.
san cantos nor de souf sea bible

nor like ink. le & yarico & de anglo sa *on*
chronicles

&
mamma!

a fine
a cyaan get nutten

write
a cyaan get nutten really

rite
while a stannin up hey in me years & like me
inside a me shadow

like de mahn still mekkin mwe walk up de
slope dat e slide
in black down de whole long curve a de arch

i

pell

a

go

some
times smile.
in nice

some
times like e really laughin after we &
some
times like e helpin we up while e push.

in we black dung
again

like when yu rumbellin
dung
into de under

grounn

on one a dem move.
in stair.
crace &

like yu fuh.
get like yu wallet or some
ting like

dat
& yu cyaan nevva turn
back

nor
walk back up
nor

even run back
up

outta there

■

cause de stair.
crace
crazy &

creak.
in & snake
skinn. in

it

down
down
down

&

how. ever
yu
runnin up runnin up runnin up runnin up

it still

goin down
goin down
goin down
goin down

like sa.
hell

like sy.
phyllis

like
the edges of the desert

&

guess who down dey at de top
a de line wid dante & dodo & julie &
nappo & nix & adolph
kaisermann be. havin like one a de boys

but idi & splash & pol
pot

&
a whole rash a economists pullin we up by we
boot

straps & smo. kin

pot

bellied ha/ha/ha/ha havana cigars

& grand master sergeant doe &
brand new imperial corporals smilin of

cordite &
leather

strap & vd & vid.
eo

&

the
striped eyes of nigerian tigritude
& like what yu say happ.

enin inna
libraria

all a dem brooks of the dead
&

mamma

a know yu can plant lettice & ice but yu
cyaan eat ikebana

Yet a sittin dung here in front a dis stone face

eeee
lectrical mallet into me

fist

chipp/in dis poem onta dis tab.
let

chiss. ellin dark.
ness writin in light

like i is a some. is a some. is a some
body.

a
pert or some

thing like moses or aaron or one a dem
dyaaam isra
light

&
mamma!

1993

Glossary

Letter Sycorax
: from the 1993 New Directions edition; an earlier version, titled "X/Self's Xth Letters from the Thirteen Provinces" (Oxford University Press, 1987), had standard typography and explanatory notes, both of which Brathwaite resisted and subsequently removed.

Nzinga

legendary queen of the African kingdoms of Ndonga and Matamba (modern-day Angola), renowned for winning an anticolonial war against the Portuguese and for providing refuge for African resistance.

jine

join (West Indian English).

dem tief

them thieve (West Indian English).

sheena

China (*Brathwaite's note, Oxford edition*).

taken we blues

echoing lines protesting the White appropriation of Black culture for profit in "Note on Commercial Theater" by Langston Hughes: "You've done taken my blues and gone" and "Yep, you done taken my blues and gone."

yu cyaan

you cannot.

prospero

Shakespeare's plantation owner (*Brathwaite's note*); main character in *The Tempest* who uses his magical powers to enslave Caliban.

tings

things.

ibm

IBM—American technology company; dominant in the personal computer market at the time this poem was written.

bang & ovid

Bang & Olufsen, a Danish company known for luxury electronics; punning on Ovid, Roman poet and fixture of the classical canon.

cicero

unit of measurement used in early European typography and a family of computer fonts, named for Marcus Tullius Cicero, Roman statesman and writer.

evva

every.

reminton
: Remington; an early typewriter.

benn dung
: "bend down," with play on "dung."

white liquid paper
: also known as White-Out, an opaque liquid used to correct mistakes in typewritten texts.

papyrus
: ancient paperlike material.

ribbid & soff
: ribbed and soft.

"rollin" "ping"
: a typewriter uses rollers to hold and advance paper, rings a bell ("ping") when approaching the end of the page, and clatters when its keys are depressed.

ping. wing
: pun on the computer font pingwing.

jackie robb-inson
: Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play Major League Baseball; see also the expression "Before I could say Jack Robinson," meaning something happened very fast.

rt-d2
: R2-D2, a robot in the *Star Wars* films.

obeah
: a system of spiritual practices in the African diaspora of the Caribbean and South America.

star trek
: American science fiction television show; it is unclear the actor or character to whom Brathwaite refers.

star trek
: American science fiction television show; it is unclear the actor or character to whom Brathwaite refers.

wig/wam
: play on wig and wigwam, a Native American dwelling with a domed roof, and on "hairpin turn."

hack, back up, readout, trash can

computer-related terms.

hack, back up, readout, trash can
computer-related terms.

hack, back up, readout, trash can
computer-related terms.
hack, back up, readout, trash can
computer-related terms.
hack, back up, readout, trash can
computer-related terms.

pascal
programming language, named after French philosopher Blaise Pascal, who created an adding machine that was a precursor to the calculator.

co.balt
mineral used in some batteries for portable electronics.

apple
computer company founded in 1976.

cogito ergo sum
"I think, therefore I am" (Latin), attributed to philosopher René Déscartes.

h/invent
approximates West Indian pronunciation.

ash or / a psalm / sangridge or / choke
play on Ash Wednesday or Palm Sunday, and on sandwich or coke (and choke also as "stifle").

ash or / a psalm / sangridge or / choke
play on Ash Wednesday or Palm Sunday, and on sandwich or coke (and choke also as "stifle").
ash or / a psalm / sangridge or / choke
play on Ash Wednesday or Palm Sunday, and on sandwich or coke (and choke also as "stifle").

charlie chap
Charlie Chaplin, English silent film actor.

bojangles
: nickname of Bill Robinson, American tap dancer and entertainer, described by Brathwaite as an "underground/submerged teacher and choreographer of many (more famous) in the Fred Astaire/Shirley Temple era."

chauncery lane
: Not the London walkway, but downtown Kingston (Jamaica) reggae-making and recording center (*Brathwaite's note*).

chauncery lane
: Not the London walkway, but downtown Kingston (Jamaica) reggae-making and recording center (*Brathwaite's note*).

farwardin
: possibly a play on "Farvardin," the Persian name for the first month of the Solar Hijri calendar.

bionicle
: bionics is the combination of biological bodies by technological engineering.

sputnik
: the first satellite launched into space, in 1957 by the Soviet Union.

peloponnesian wars
: wars between Athens and Sparta (431–404 B.C.E.), which ended democracy in Athens.

xerxes
: possibly the stylized x's here stand for an "h" and "p," making this herpes, another sexually transmitted disease. "Xerxes" is also a Persian king who invaded ancient Greece.

aids
: AIDS, an immune system disorder caused by the HIV virus.

praedial
: relating to or attached to the land; used to differentiate enslaved people who worked in the field from those who worked in the home (nonpraedial).

menelek
: Menelik I, considered by Rastafarians the founder of the Solomonic dynasty in Ethiopia.

brigg flatts

Briggflatts, 1966 poem by British poet Basil Bunting.

brigg flatts

Briggflatts, 1966 poem by British poet Basil Bunting.

her. vokitz

M. J. Herskovits, American cultural anthropologist whose books trace African culture in African American culture.

π san cantos

mathematical sign for the constant pi. With "san," this is *The Pisan Cantos,* part of poet Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* (1948).

souf sea bible

play on the South Sea Bubble, the 1720 speculation bubble of British investors in the South Sea Company that traded in enslaved people.

ink. le and yarico

Inkle and Yarico, a 1787 comic opera in which Inkle, a British trader, is shipwrecked in the West Indies and falls in love with a Caribbean woman, Yarico.

anglo saxon chronicles

records of English history from the 9th century.

e slide / in black down

allusion to the myth of Sisyphus, condemned in Hades forever to roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down.

e slide / in black down

allusion to the myth of Sisyphus, condemned in Hades forever to roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down.

arch i pell a go

archipelago, a group of islands, like those in the Caribbean.

arch i pell a go

archipelago, a group of islands, like those in the Caribbean.

arch i pell a go

archipelago, a group of islands, like those in the Caribbean.

arch i pell a go

archipelago, a group of islands, like those in the Caribbean.

arch i pell a go

archipelago, a group of islands, like those in the Caribbean.

dante
: Dante Alighieri, Italian poet who described an elaborate hell in the *Divine Comedy.*

dodo
: an extinct species of flightless bird.

julie
: Julius Caesar.

nappo
: Napoleon Bonaparte.

nix
: Richard Nixon.

adolph kaisermann
: Adolph Hitler.

adolph kaisermann
: Adolph Hitler.

idi
: Idi Amin, brutal Ugandan dictator.

splash
: possibly Mao Zedong, who swam across the Yangtze River at the age of 72.

pol pot
: Pol Pot, Cambodian dictator who perpetrated genocide.

pol pot
: Pol Pot, Cambodian dictator who perpetrated genocide.

havana cigars
: Havana is the capital of Cuba, known for its cigars. In 1959 revolutionaries overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and established communism in the country.

grand master sergeant doe
: Samuel Doe, a master sergeant in the Armed Forces of Liberia who staged a military coup in 1980.

cordite
: a propellant used as a replacement for gunpowder, particularly by the British Army.

vd and vid.

play on VD, venereal disease, and *vid.*, the abbreviation of the Latin *vide* ("see").

nigerian tigritude
: allusion to Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka's declaration that "A tiger does not proclaim his tigritude—he pounces," meant to rebut the concept of "négritude," which posited an essential Blackness.

ikebana
: the Japanese art of flower arrangement.

moses
: a prophet in the Old Testament who led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt across the Red Sea to establish the Promised Land.

aaron
: the brother of Moses; also a prophet.

isra light
: Israelite. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were tribes that lived in Canaan.

isra light
: Israelite. In the Old Testament, the Israelites were tribes that lived in Canaan.

co.balt
: mineral used in some batteries for portable electronics.

bojangles
: nickname of Bill Robinson, American tap dancer and entertainer, described by Brathwaite as an "underground/submerged teacher and choreographer of many (more famous) in the Fred Astaire/Shirley Temple era."

sahel(l)
: transitional region between coastal West Africa and the Sahara Desert.

sahel(l)
: transitional region between coastal West Africa and the Sahara Desert.

syphyllis
: syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease.

syphyllis
: syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease.

Sycorax
: Caliban's mother in *The Tempest*, described as a witch. In postcolonial Caribbean literature, Caliban is a figure for the colonial subject who has absorbed the colonizer's culture and language but rejects its authority.

CAROLINE BERGVALL

Born in Germany in 1962 to a Norwegian father and French mother, Caroline Bergvall was raised in Switzerland, France, and Norway. She studied at the Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle in Paris, received her M.Phil. from the University of Warwick in Britain and her Ph.D. from the Dartington College of Arts, where she directed the Performance Writing program from 1995 to 2000. She served as visiting professor at Kings College London from 2017 to 2020 and remains based in London. Bergvall's poetry crosses linguistic and media boundaries. Multilingualism and translation feature in many of her works, and she makes use of historical languages, such as Middle English, as well as modern languages in her collections *Meddle English* (2011), *Drift* (2014), and *Alisoun Sings* (2019). Her performance pieces feature audio recordings, sound distortion, and installations (often in galleries and museums) that draw attention to the relationship between speaking, hearing, and writing across cultural difference. Racial and especially gendered embodiment emerge as major themes of her work in its turn toward the particularities of the voice, dialect, and accent.

Bergvall's performance writing emphasizes the different media in which words may appear. Her allusive poetry puts literary language into conversation with other textual forms drawn from the history of recording technologies ranging from handwriting to hypertext. In "The Franker Tale," she remixes passages from "The Franklin's Tale" and "The Summoner's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer with quotations from the *Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women* (1995). In the letter, the Pope praised women for fulfilling the traditional roles of wife and mother while also entering the workforce. He also reaffirmed the Catholic Church's stance against abortion even when pregnancy is the result of rape. Bergvall uses these sources and their multilingual underpinnings to chronicle, in frank terms, the global history of sexual violence against women.

The Franker Tale[1] (Deus Hic,[2] 2)

Following tweye[3] two breathing crises
and with a tube placidly placed placed
in his esophagus, the papal Pope in Rome[4]
global preacher most powerful suprem
o was not in good form
when the seeds of death's deeth[5]
one by one finally popped in hym him
irreparably tearing the throat and the skin's hem.

Back at the Tavern in London
the dear vinolent[6] drunken queer
painter portreytour[7]
knew all along once ones
the hol hole of the hooly blessed
Sire Father's muth[8] mouth turns
from screm[9] to scream to smear
rising seated darkly in a white frame
of derk purple shoulders drenched in a shower of gold paint
it would be tyme, it's time
to deepen the denn,[1] to coarsen the crust
and seek out the companye!

A new ideology of yvele evell evyl evil manaces society
and it includes gay weddynge jolly marriage
abortion abomination and stem cell studie research
wrote the papal he hey in his bestselling scriptures book,
Memory and Identity.[2]

The Pope's noisy mouth had a mutt
and a deceptively brooding chin.
Ones once both saufly safely shut ad eternam[3]
papal knights guards were quickly positioned.
There will be no collective revelrye,
gaiety merrymaking, drynke drinking,
daunce dancing on tabules tables
or shaking one's booty aboute around
or laying the shrewed cursed poisoned
yifte gift of one's maladye
this sickness our need at the feet of the lifeless pontiff.[4]
A sea of pilgrims mourn move in sylent silent procession
past the hooly holy cors corpse careyne[5] carcass arrayed laid-out
prepared solempnely in full ceremony.
But this deethly Death is short-lived.
Soon cries rise from Seint Peter's square:[6]
The Pope is dead! Long live the Pope's Rottweiler![7]

`*Beloved Sisters in the Lord*!'[8]
(Letter to Women, 10 July 1995
on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing)
To grope tendrely a conscience
In shrift; in prechyng is my diligence,
I walk and I walke, I fish and I fisshe
his word is set al myn entente to spread intent.[9]
'I greet you all most cordially, women throughout the world!
What great appreciation must be shown to those women who, with
a heroic love for the child they have conceived, proceed with a

pregnancy resulting from the injustice of rape. Here we are thinking
of atrocities perpetrated not only in situations of war, still so
common in the world, but also in societies which are blessed by
prosperity and peace and yet are often corrupted by a culture of
hedonistic permissiveness. The choice to have an abortion always
remains a grave sin.'

The wholly painter staring blankly stands between two animal carcasses
suspended on hooks has his photograph taken.
Women of Bosnia! Women of Rwanda! Women of Afghanistan!
Women of Bengal! Kurdish women! Women of Chechnya![1]
Whan thirty tyrants, ful of cursednesse,
Hadde slayn Phidoun in Atthenes, at feste,
They comanded his daughters for tareste,
And bryngen hem biforn hem in despit,
Al naked, to fulfille hir foul delit, their foul delight
And in hir fadres blood their father's blood they made them dance
Upon the pavement, God yeve hem meschaunce![2]
Women and children of Sudan! Women of Colombia!
Kashmiri women! Punjabi women! Women of France!
Women of Britain! Women of Finland! Women of America![3]
They of Mecene leete enquere and seke
Of Lacedomye fifty maidens eke,
On whiche they wolden doon hir lecherye;[4]
And foul delight.

Susters and nieces! Mothers aunts and doghters!
Deus Hic! God is drunk!

At these wordes words heven rose glood[5]
the deepest soun son sound
a song sangen entuned intoned
a dense clamour clamor cries out
Love is leaving! the Earth quakes quaketh shakes under their feet!
some sort of deep tabour[6] of drum or drone.
My tale is almost doon.[7]
Some sawe some saying goes
some seyn some say
they say they saw des foules[8] de crowds
en sang[9] bleeding incensed, suster, the sky
is dreaming drumming up
red clouds of red blod an occean of blood ocean.
Amongst them they say they saw the joly Painter departed
swymmes floating, and all the time farting[1]
in the hoote hot somer summer heat heete
with the glee of an Ashbery John.[2]
Othere say that it was the old Papa's
body finally flying free
quit of its distasteful containee.
Here endeth the Franker Tale.

2011

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  In addition to remixing passages from *The Canterbury Tales* with material from the papal letter, Bergvall also mixes Latin, Middle English, English, and French. "The Franklin's Tale"

centers on the marriage between Dorigen and the knight Averagus. Both pledge to a marriage of equals in which neither exerts absolute sovereignty over the other. When a mission takes Averagus away for two years, Dorigen receives advances from the handsome squire Aurelius. Thinking it will deter Aurelius, Dorigen offers her hand on the condition that Aurelius complete a seemingly impossible task: remove threatening rocks from the coastline. When he succeeds through the services of a learned clerk, Dorigen despairs and contemplates suicide. Upon his return, Averagus tells Dorigen to keep her promise to Aurelius, but upon witnessing the nobility of Averagus, Aurelius releases Dorigen from her promise. In turn, the clerk releases Aurelius from his debt as well.
Return to reference 1

- Note 2: God be here (Latin). The Friar speaks these words in "The Summoner's Tale," a satiric tale highly critical of friars (members of religious order that have taken a vow of poverty). In the tale the Friar offers false promises of prayer in return for gold.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Two (Middle English).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The pope is the head of the Catholic Church and is the bishop of Rome. The pope technically resides in Vatican City, a city entirely surrounded by the city of Rome.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Death (Middle English).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Drunken (Middle English).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Painter (Middle English).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Mouth (Middle English).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Possibly a variation on *screme* (*scream* in Middle English).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Den, or lair (Middle English).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Book published by Pope John Paul II in 2005. Included in it are his controversial claims that abortion and gay marriage belong to "a new ideology of evil, perhaps more insidious and hidden, which attempts to pit human rights against the family and against man."Return to reference 2

- Note 3: To eternity (Latin).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: The Pope.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Corpse (Middle English).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The plaza located in front of St. Peter's Basilica, in the Vatican City.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Breed of working dog known for its strength.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The italicized sections of the poem are direct quotes from Pope John Paul II's *Letter to Women* in which he addresses the rights and dignity of women around the world. The Pope thanks women for being mothers and wives as well as for working outside the home or joining religious orders. He addresses violence against women and inequality, and reaffirms the distinct roles of men and women in society.Return to reference 8
- Note 9:
  Quotations from Chaucer's "The Summoner's Tale," in which the corrupt Friar speaks to Thomas of his calling to preach diligently, study the gospel of Peter and Paul, and spread the work of Christ. The lines from the original tale are as follows:

  > To grope tendrely a conscience / In shrift; in prechyng is my diligence, / And studie in Petres wordes and in Poules. / I walke, and fisshe Cristen mennes soules, / To yelden Jhesu Crist his propre rente; / To sprede his word is set al myn entente.

  Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A republic in Russia. "Bosnia": country in southeast Europe. "Rwanda": country in Central Africa. "Afghanistan": country in Central Asia. "Bengal": region in India and Bangladesh. "Kurdish": of the Iranian Kurd ethnic group.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Quotation from "The Franklin's Tale" regarding Phidon's daughters. Phidon, an Athenian, was killed during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants in the city. His daughters were forced to

dance naked over their father's blood but drowned themselves in a well to preserve their virginity.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Country in North America, or the American continents. "Sudan": country in northeast Africa. "Colombia": country in South America. "Kashmiri": of the Kashmir ethnic group in India. "Punjabi": from the Punjab region of Pakistan and India. "France": country in Europe. "Britain": country in Europe. "Finland:" country in northern Europe.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Quotation from "The Franklin's Tale" about Greek maidens who killed themselves to preserve their virginity. This entire stanza recalls Dorigen's catalog of women who committed suicide rather than compromise their chastity.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Glide (Middle English).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Drum (Middle English).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Done (Middle English).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Crowds (French).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Blood (French).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: In "The Summoner's Tale," Thomas, the man whom the friar asks for gold, gives him a fart instead.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: John Ashbery (1927–2017), American poet.Return to reference 2

bpNICHOL

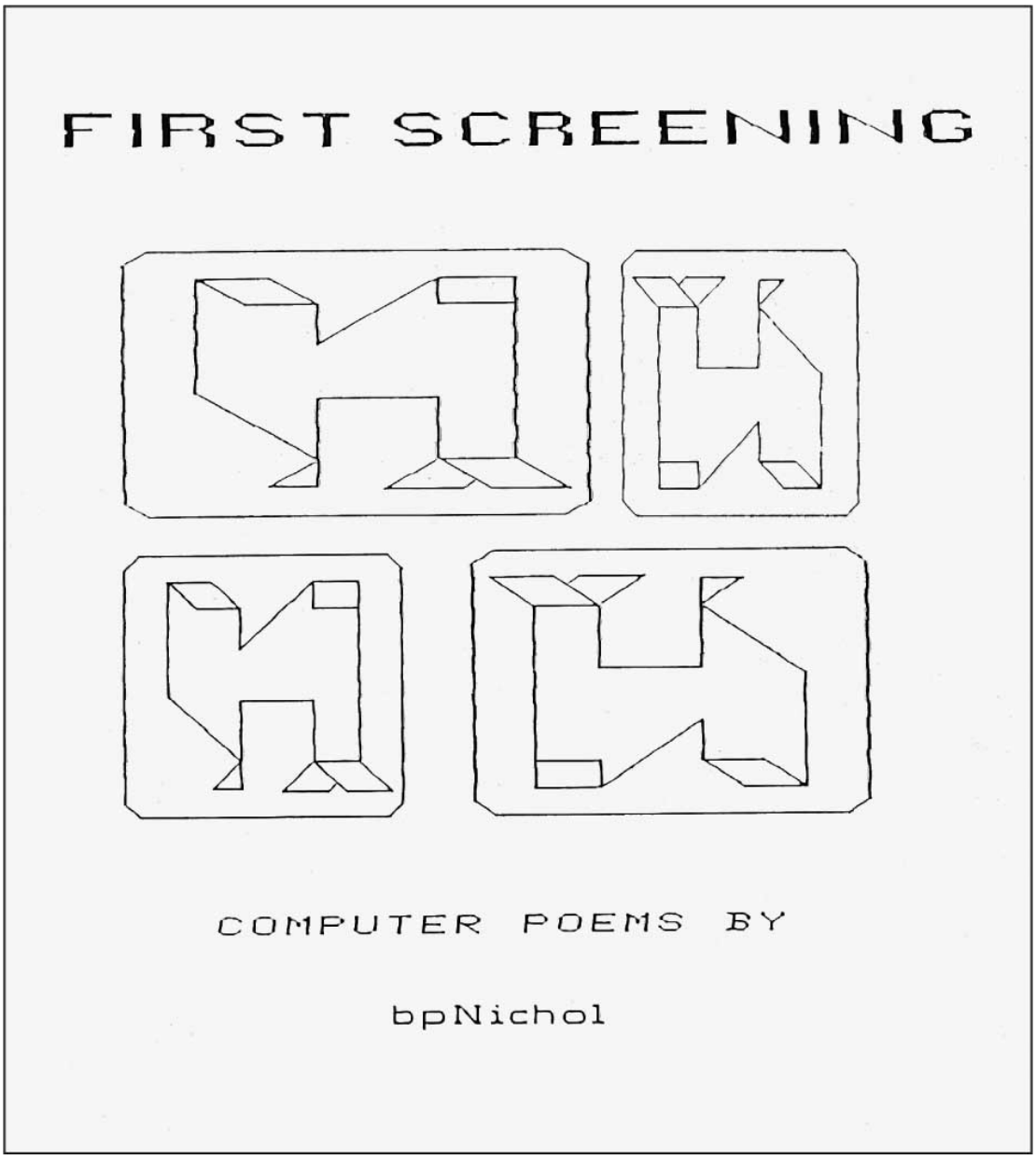
Barrie Phillip Nichol (1944–1988) was a Canadian poet, born in Vancouver, British Columbia. He first came to prominence for his concrete poetry—that is, the visual arrangement of words on a page to create pictures or abstract designs. Concrete poetry treats words like modeling clay to be sculpted and shaped, and Nichol's playful poems of the 1960s and 1970s experimented with breaking words into their component parts (for example, letters and syllables) as well as sculpting images out of words. He won a prestigious Governor General's Award for several poetry collections, including *The Cosmic Chef: An Evening of Concrete* (1970) and *Still Water* (1970).

Nichol described his own poetic practice as animated by the "borderblur" between image, text, and sound. When he moved from the paper page to the computer screen, he introduced the movement of words into his experiments with textual display. *First Screening* (1984) is an early example of kinetic poetry that Nichol created using an Apple IIE computer and the BASIC programming language. Over the course of a dozen poems, Nichol explores the movement of words and letters across the screen and, in the source code for the last poem, "Off Screen Romance," even invites readers to code part of the poem themselves. Such a move reminds readers that born-digital poetry exists in at least two locations—on screen and off screen in the source code that generated it.

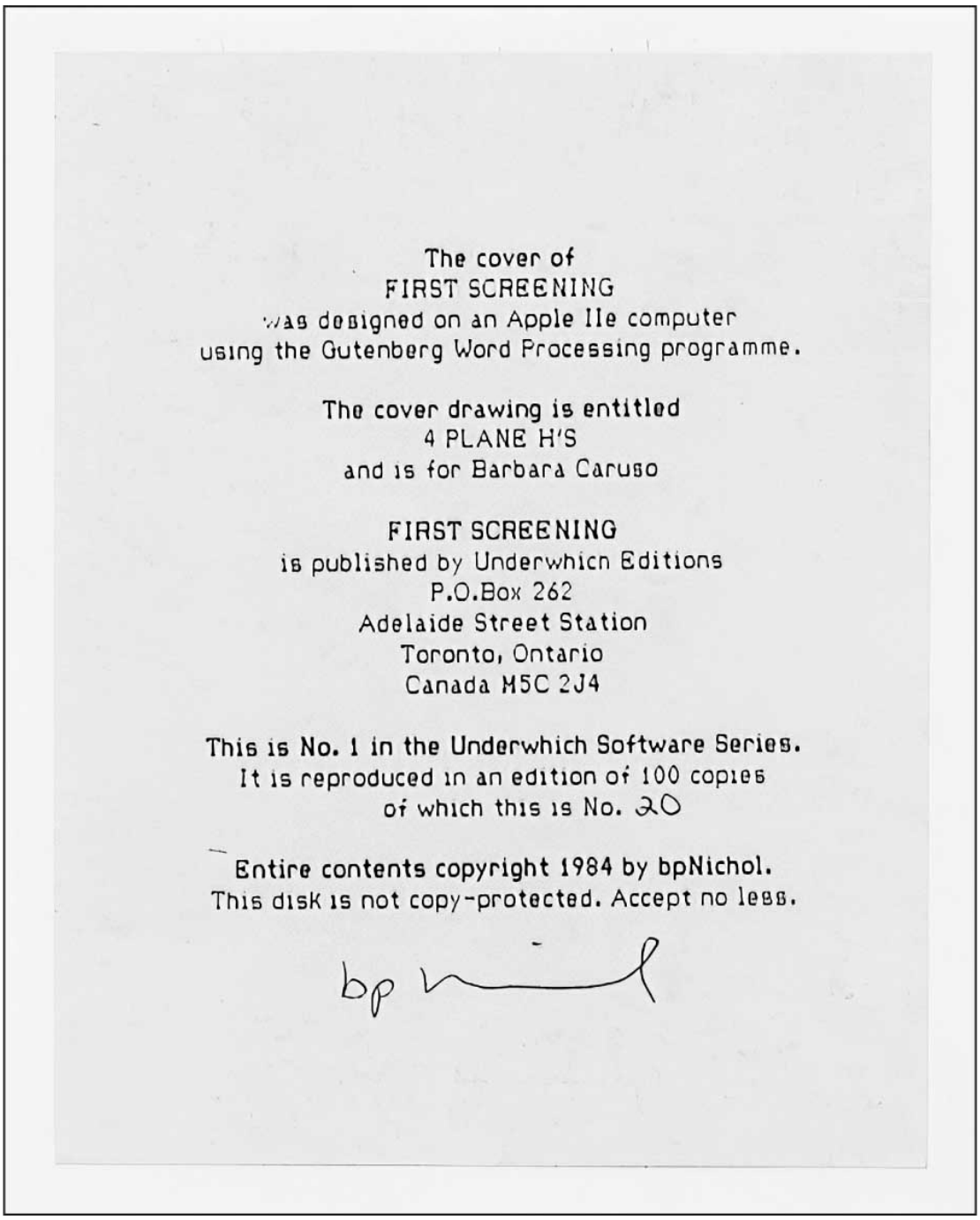
Nichol was a prolific writer in multiple media. Over the course of his life, he extended and revised his major work of long poetry, *The Martyrology* (1972–87; 1990–93). He also created sound poetry as part of a group called *The Four Horsemen*, and he wrote screenplays for the children's television show *Fraggle Rock*. The following pages contain screenshots from *First Screening*. We invite you to read/view the full video of the poems in the Norton Anthology ebook in the

Norton Ebook Reader platform or doing a web search for “bpNichol, First Screening.”

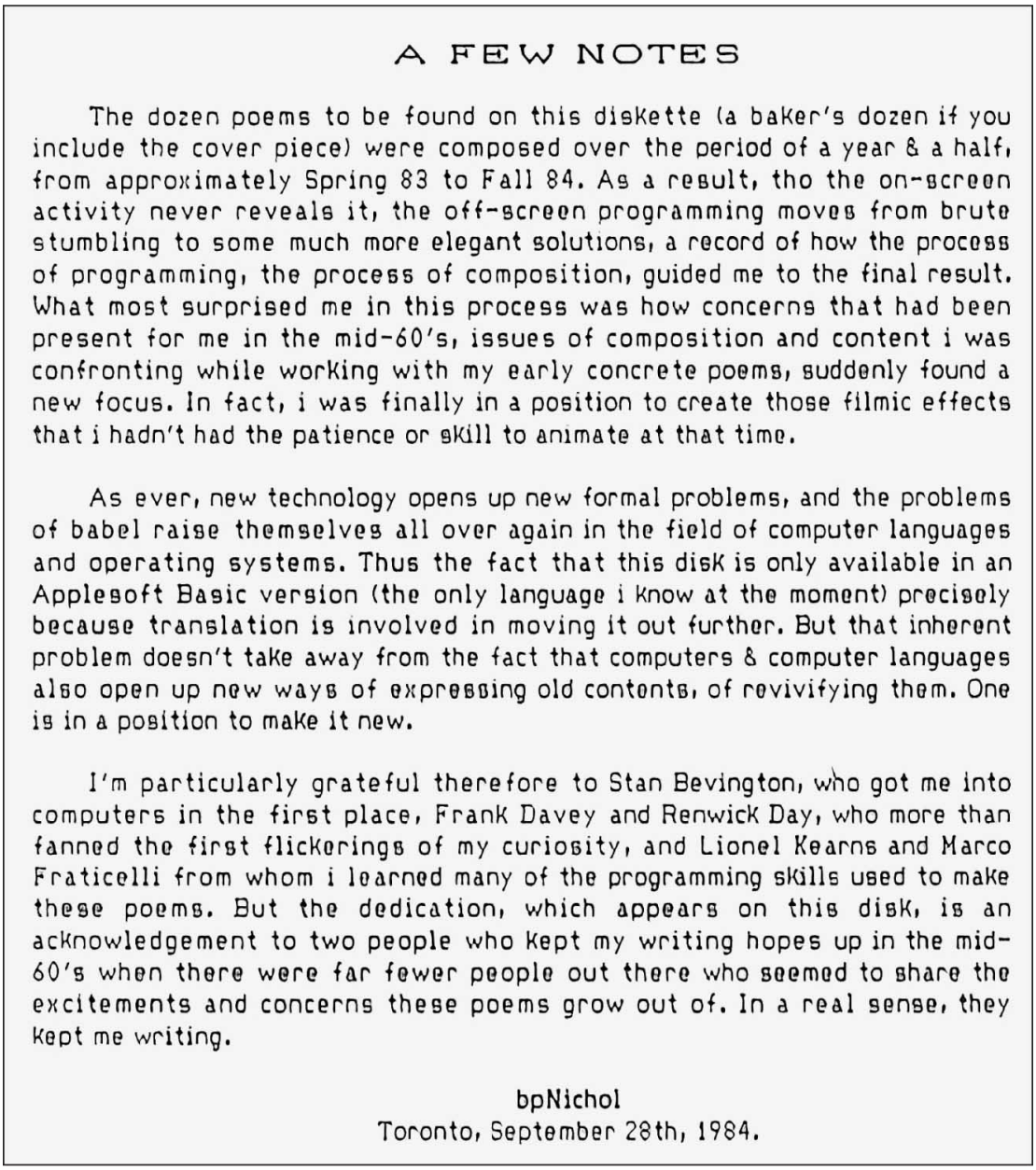
First Screening



Cover of *First Screening.*



Production, publication, and copyright information for *First Screening*.



A FEW NOTES

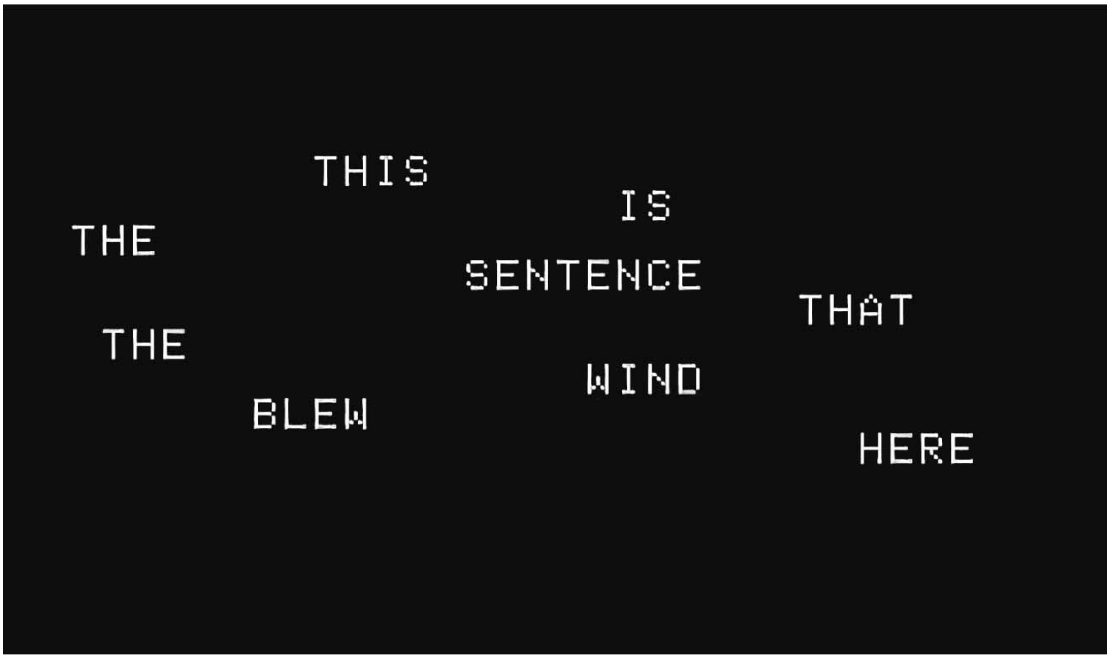
The dozen poems to be found on this diskette (a baker's dozen if you include the cover piece) were composed over the period of a year & a half, from approximately Spring 83 to Fall 84. As a result, tho the on-screen activity never reveals it, the off-screen programming moves from brute stumbling to some much more elegant solutions, a record of how the process of programming, the process of composition, guided me to the final result. What most surprised me in this process was how concerns that had been present for me in the mid-60's, issues of composition and content i was confronting while working with my early concrete poems, suddenly found a new focus. In fact, i was finally in a position to create those filmic effects that i hadn't had the patience or skill to animate at that time.

As ever, new technology opens up new formal problems, and the problems of babel raise themselves all over again in the field of computer languages and operating systems. Thus the fact that this disk is only available in an Applesoft Basic version (the only language i know at the moment) precisely because translation is involved in moving it out further. But that inherent problem doesn't take away from the fact that computers & computer languages also open up new ways of expressing old contents, of revivifying them. One is in a position to make it new.

I'm particularly grateful therefore to Stan Bevington, who got me into computers in the first place, Frank Davey and Renwick Day, who more than fanned the first flickerings of my curiosity, and Lionel Kearns and Marco Fraticelli from whom i learned many of the programming skills used to make these poems. But the dedication, which appears on this disk, is an acknowledgement to two people who kept my writing hopes up in the mid-60's when there were far fewer people out there who seemed to share the excitements and concerns these poems grow out of. In a real sense, they kept me writing.

bpNichol
Toronto, September 28th, 1984.

Introductory notes for *First Screening*.



Screenshot from the kinetic poem “After the Storm.”

```
 104  GOSUB 1000: REM  CONSTRUCTI
     ON 1
 105  GOSUB 3556: REM  ANY OF YOU
     R LIP
 106  GOSUB 425: REM  SELF-RELFEX
     IVE 2
 107  GOSUB 820: REM  POEM FOR MY
      FATHER
 108  GOSUB 1900: REM  AFTER THE
     STORM
 110  REM   FOR THE CURIOUS VIEWE
     R/READER THERE'S AN 'OFF-SCR
     EEN ROMANCE' AT 1748. YOU JU
     ST HAVE TO TUNE IN THE PROGR
     AMME.
 112  GOSUB 495: REM  TIDAL POOL
 114  GOSUB 550: REM  DEDICATION
 116  REM   FOR FURTHER RE-MARKS
     LIST 3900,4000
 118  FOR PAUSE = 1 TO 4000: NEXT
```

Code for the poems in *First Screening* with an invitation to the reader at line 110. The command “Run 1748” reveals a hidden poem called “Off-Screen Romance.”

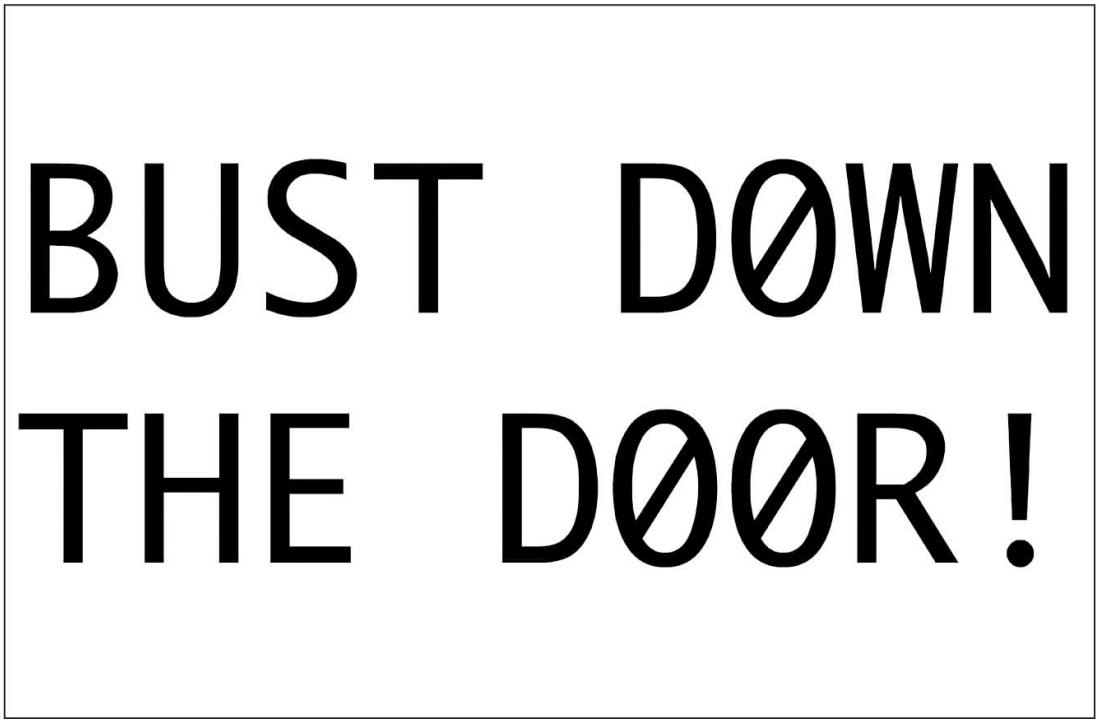
YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES

YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES (YHCHI) is the name of a fake corporation formed in 1999 by Korean artist and translator Young-Hae Chang and Seoul-based poet Mark Voge. The pair use Flash animation, an interactive program for making videos, to create powerful and often dystopian works of kinetic poetry. Many of the works of YHCHI address themes of authoritarianism, as in "BUST DOWN THE DOOR!" and "TRAVELING TO UTOPIA," both of which depict invasive searches by police officers and representatives of the state. In "BUST DOWN THE DOOR!," the pacing of the video increases quickly and becomes almost assaulting as readers/viewers are forced to experience the video as beyond their control. In "TRAVELING TO UTOPIA," policing is explicitly tied to the historical use of surveillance technologies to monitor the movements of people across borders. This work also introduces multiple plotlines: one at the top of the screen in Korean, one in the center in English, and another at the bottom of the screen, also in English. The videos of YHCHI often appear in multiple versions and multiple languages with languages left untranslated. This style of production and distribution both mimics and critiques the business models of corporations that release many versions of a product tailored to distinct sectors of the global market.

Most YHCHI digital videos begin with a countdown from ten that reproduces the opening countdowns associated with analog film reels in early cinema. They also use the Monaco font, which gives the text in their videos a distinctive, even branded, appearance. Their use of jazz music is another signature aspect of their style, and often creates syncopation across music and text. YHCHI deliberately and creatively cross old and new forms of media as they move between the literary and art worlds. They have been called pioneers of internet art and have used their work to examine and reappraise the key promises of the internet as a technology for connecting and

empowering people across the world. The following pages contain screenshots from “BUST DOWN THE DOOR!” and “TRAVELING TO UTOPIA.” Please replace the search text with: We invite you to refer to the Norton Anthology ebook in the Norton Ebook Reader platform or search the web for the full videos.

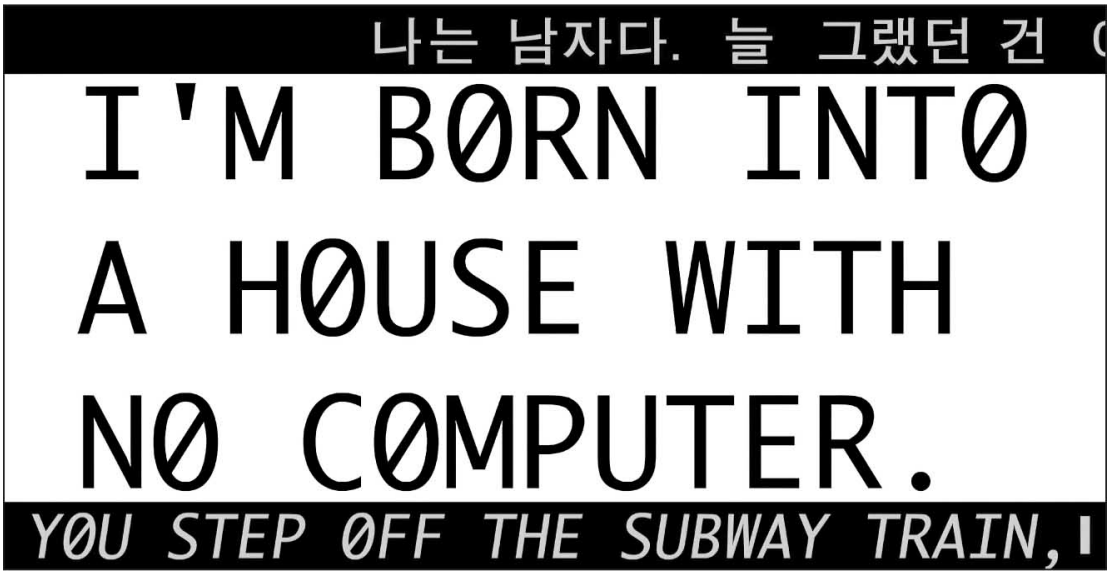
BUST DOWN THE DOOR!



Screenshots of the poem's opening credits, which announce its author and title.

TRAVELING TO UTOPIA

Screenshot of the poem's animated title.



Screenshot of the kinetic poem's opening lines.

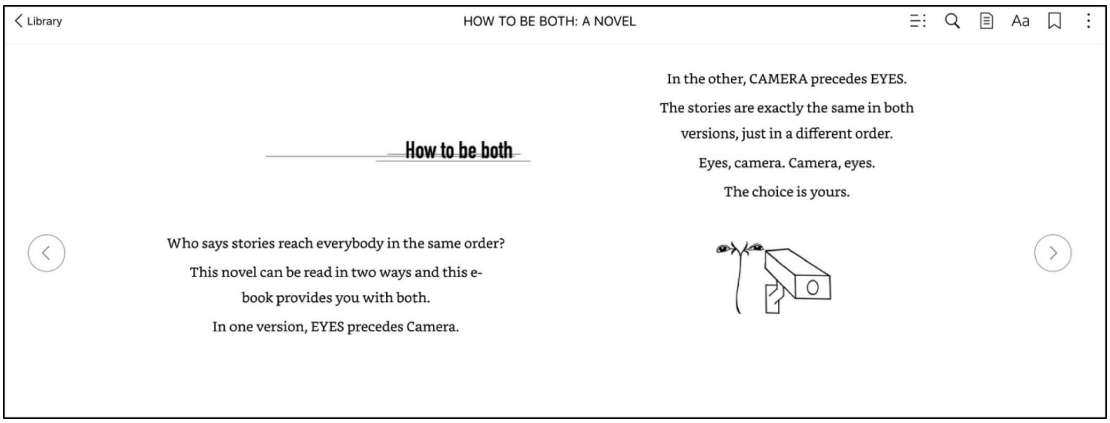
ALI SMITH

Ali Smith was born in 1962 in Inverness, the cultural capital of the Scottish Highlands. She was raised in a working-class family and grew up in a council home (public housing) near the Caledonian Canal. As a child Smith dreamed of becoming a sanitation worker and of finding all sorts of interesting thrown-away things. As a teenager she had a variety of jobs, including waitress, food preparer, and receptionist for the BBC Highlands office. Smith went on to study English language and literature at the University of Aberdeen and later pursued (but did not complete) a doctorate in Irish and American modernism at Cambridge.

While at Cambridge Smith found her passion in playwriting. Her first three plays, *Stalemate, The Dance,* and *Trace of Arc,* premiered at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, a major performing arts festival. Her first short story collection, *Free Love and Other Stories,* appeared in 1995 and received the Saltire First Book of the Year Award. Since then Smith has published three more short story collections, twelve novels, including the Seasonal Quartet (pub. 2016–20), and a number of nonfiction and journalistic pieces. Smith's fiction is admired for its humorous wordplay, genderbending playfulness, and rich engagement with visual art. All of these characteristics are on display in the excerpt here from *How to Be Both* (2014), in which Smith creates a memorable female protagonist named George who is mourning the loss of her mother while also recalling their trip to Italy to view fifteenth-century frescoes. The novel was simultaneously published in two print editions, each presenting the narrative in a different order. Print readers received one of the two versions of the narrative at random, while ebook readers were given both versions from which to choose. Smith wears her erudition lightly via her characters' detailed descriptions of painted images and in their bickering over Latin phrases, etymology,

and grammar rules. In her fiction, errors become portals of discovery and narrative pathways follow more than one direction.

From How to Be Both



A screenshot from the opening of the ebook.

Consider this moral conundrum for a moment, George's mother says to George who's sitting in the front passenger seat.

Not says. Said.

George's mother is dead.

What moral conundrum? George says.

The passenger seat in the hire care is strange, being on the side the driver's seat is on at home. This must be a bit like driving is, except without the actual, you know, driving.

Okay. You're an artist, his mother says.

Am I? George says. Since when? And is that a moral conundrum?

Ha ha, her mother says. Humour me. Imagine it. You're an artist.

This conversation is happening last May, when George's mother is still alive, obviously. She's been dead since September. Now it's January, to be more precise it's just past midnight on New Year's Eve, which means it has just become the year after the year in which George's mother died.

George's father is out. It is better than him being at home, standing maudlin in the kitchen or going round the house switching things off and on. Henry is asleep. She just went in and checked on

him; he was dead to the world, though not as dead as the word dead literally means when it means, you know, dead.

This will be the first year her mother hasn't been alive since the year her mother was born. That is so obvious that it is stupid even to think it and yet so terrible that you can't not think it. Both at once.

Anyway George is spending the first minutes of the new year looking up the lyrics of an old song. Let's Twist again.[1] Lyrics by Kal Mann. The words are pretty bad. Let's twist again like we did last summer. Let's twist again like we did last year. Then there's a really bad rhyme, a rhyme that isn't, properly speaking, even a rhyme.

Do you remember when

Things were really hummin'.

Hummin' doesn't rhyme with summer, the line doesn't end in a question mark, and is it meant to mean, literally, *do you remember that time when things smelt really bad?*

Then Let's twist again, twisting time is here. Or, as all the sites say, twistin' time.

At least they've used an apostrophe, the George from before her mother died says.

I do not give a fuck about whether some site on the internet attends to grammatical correctness, the George from after says.

That before and after thing is about mourning, is what people keep saying. They keep talking about how grief has stages. There's some dispute about how many stages of grief there are. There are three, or five, or some people say seven.

It's quite like the songwriter actually couldn't be bothered to think of words. Maybe he was in one of the three, five or seven stages of mourning too. Stage nine (or twenty three or a hundred and twenty three or ad infinitum, because nothing will ever not be like this again): in this stage you will no longer be bothered with whether songwords mean anything. In fact you will hate almost all songs.

But George has to find a song to which you can do this specific dance.

It being so apparently contradictory and meaningless is no doubt a bonus. It will be precisely why the song sold so many copies and

was such a big deal at the time. People like things not to be too meaningful.

Okay, I'm imagining, George in the passenger seat last May in Italy says at exactly the same time as George at home in England the following January stares at the meaninglessness of the words of an old song. Outside the car window Italy unfurls round and over them so hot and yellow it looks like it's been sandblasted. In the back Henry snuffles lightly, his eyes closed, his mouth open. The band of the seatbelt is over his forehead because he is so small.

You're an artist, her mother says, and you're working on a project with a lot of other artists. And everybody on the project is getting the same amount, salary-wise. But *you* believe that what *you're* doing is worth more than everyone on the project, including you, is getting paid. So you write a letter to the man who's commissioned the work and you ask him to give you more money than everyone else is getting.

Am I worth more? George says. Am I better than the other artists?

Does that matter? her mother says. Is that what matters?

Is it me or is it the work that's worth more? George says.

Good. Keep going, her mother says.

Is this real? George says. Is it hypothetical?

Does that matter? her mother says.

Is this something that already has an answer in reality but you're testing me with the concept of it though you already know perfectly well what you yourself think about it? George says.

Maybe, her mother says. But I'm not interested in what I think. I'm interested in what you think.

You're not usually interested in anything I think, George says.

That's so adolescent of you, George, her mother says.

I *am* adolescent, George says.

Well, yes. That explains that, then, her mother says.

There's a tiny silence, still okay, but if she doesn't give in a bit and soon George knows that her mother, who has been prickly,

unpredictable and misery-faced for weeks now about there being trouble in the paradise otherwise known as her friendship with that woman Lisa Goliard, will get first of all distant then distinctly moody and ratty.

Is it happening now or in the past? George says.

Is the artist a woman or a man?

Do either of those things matter? her mother says.

Does either, George says. Either being singular.

Mea maxima,[2] her mother says.

I just don't get why you won't commit, ever, George says. And that doesn't mean what you think it means. If you say it without the culpa it just means *I'm the most,* or *I'm the greatest,* or *to me the greatest belongs,* or *my most.*

It's true, her mother says. I'm the most greatest. But the most greatest what?

Past or present? George says. Male or female? It can't be both. It must be one or the other.

Who says? Why must it? her mother says.

AUGH, George says too loud.

Don't, her mother says jerking her head towards the back. Unless you want him awake, in which case you're in charge of entertainment.

I. Can't. Answer. Your. Moral. Question. Unless. I. Know. More. Details, George says sotto voce, which, in Italian, though George doesn't speak Italian, literally means below the voice.

Does morality need details? her mother whispers back.

God, George says.

Does morality need God? her mother says.

Talking to you, George says still below the voice, is like talking to a wall.

Oh, very good, you, very good, her mother says.

How exactly is that good? George says.

Because this particular art, artist and conundrum are all about walls, her mother says. And that's where I'm driving you to.

Yeah, George says. Up the wall.

Her mother laughs a real out-loud laugh, so loud that after it they both turn to see if Henry will waken, but he doesn't. This kind of laugh from her mother is so rare right now that it is almost like normal. George is so pleased she feels herself blush with it.

And what you just said is grammatically incorrect, she says.

It is not, her mother says.

It is, George says. Grammar is a finite set of rules and you just broke one.

I don't subscribe to that belief, her mother says.

I don't think you can call language a belief, George says.

I subscribe to the belief, her mother says, that language is a living growing changing organism.

I don't think that belief will get you into heaven, George says.

Her mother laughs for real again.

No, listen, an organism, her mother says—

(and through George's head flashes the cover of the old paperback called How To Achieve Good Orgasm that her mother keeps in one of her bedside cupboards, from way before George was born, from the time in her mother's life when she was, she says, young and easy under some appleboughs)

—which follows its own rules and alters them as it likes and the meaning of what I said is perfectly clear therefore its grammar is perfectly acceptable, her mother says.

(How To Achieve Good Organism.)

Well. Grammatically inelegant then, George says.

I bet you don't even remember what it was I said in the first place, her mother says.

Where I'm driving you to, George says.

Her mother takes both hands off the wheel in mock despair.

How did I, the most maxima unpedantic of all the maxima unpedantic women in the world, end up giving birth to such a pedant? And why the hell wasn't I smart enough to drown it at birth?

Is *that* the moral conundrum? George says.

Consider it, for a moment, yes, why don't you, her mother says.

No she doesn't.

Her mother doesn't say.

Her mother said.

Because if things really did happen simultaneously it'd be like reading a book but one in which all the lines of the text have been overprinted, like each page is actually two pages but with one superimposed on the other to make it unreadable. Because it's New Year not May, and it's England not Italy, and it's pouring with rain outside and regardless of the hum (the hummin') of the rain you can still hear people's stupid New Year fireworks going off and off and off like a small war, because people are standing out in the pouring rain, rain pelting into their champagne glasses, their upturned faces watching their own (sadly) inadequate fireworks light up then go black.

* * *

Is this the place you were talking about in the car? she says. The moral conundrum?

Her mother says nothing.

She is looking.

George looks too.

The room is warm and dark. No, not dark, it's light. Both. It's like a huge dark dance hall with a lit-up picture that goes round some of its walls. There is nothing else in the room, except some low benches on which to sit and look at the walls, and over in the far corner a middle-aged lady (attendant?) on a folding seat. Apart from that, there is just the picture. It is impossible to see it all at once. Half the room is covered in it. The other half has faded picture, or no picture. What there is, though, is so full of life happening that it's actually like life, at least those bits are at the far end. And the people in the broad blue stripe which goes all round the middle of the wall, all through the middle of the picture splitting it into an above and a

below, look like they're floating, or walking on air, especially in that brighter part.

It resembles a giant comic strip. Except it's also like art.

There are ducks. There's a man with his fist round the neck of a duck. The duck looks really surprised, like it's saying *what the f—*. Above the duck's head there's another bird just sitting there completely free. It's sitting next to the man and it's watching him throttling the duck as if it's quite interested in what's happening.

This is only one detail. There are details like it everywhere. There's a paddling dog. George stares at its genitals. In fact, look at the largeness of the testicles on all the creatures who have them everywhere in the picture, except the one creature you'd expect it on, the bull. He doesn't seem to have any.

Then there's a monkey hugging the leg of a boy, who regards it with snobby disdain. Over there there's a very small child in a cap, in yellow, reading or eating something. An old woman holding a piece of paper is being attentive to the child. There are unicorns pulling a chariot here and lovers kissing there, and people with musical instruments here, people working up trees and in fields there. There are cherubs and garlands, crowds of people, women working at what looks like a loom up there, and down here there are eyes looking out of a black archway while people talk and do business and don't notice the looking. There are dogs and horses, soldiers and townspeople, birds and flowers, rivers and riverbanks, water bubbles in the rivers, swans that look like they're laughing. There's a crowd of babies. They look haughty. There are rabbits, or hares, no, both.

The buildings in the picture are sometimes beautiful and sometimes broken open, there are broken road slabs and bricks, broken arches up against fine architecture and plants growing through the whole and broken buildings everywhere.

It is impossible, though, not to keep looking then looking back again at the blue-coloured stripe which runs like a frieze round the room between the upper part and the lower parts of the picture and in which the people and animals seem to float free. The blue calls your eyes every time. It gives you a breather from the things

happening above and below it. In the blue there's a woman in a beautiful red dress just sitting in the air above a cheeky-looking goat or sheep. There's the man in the white rags. That's the man who was in the picture her mother saw at home. He's why they're here. Along from him, on the other side of the woman floating above the goat, there's a young man or a young woman, could be either, dressed in beautiful rich clothes and holding an arrow or a stick and a gold hoop thing, like everything's nothing but a charming game.

Male or female? she says to her mother who's standing under these figures.

I don't know, her mother says.

Her mother, smiling, points to the man in rags then the woman sitting on air then the playful rather dilettante richly dressed figure in turn.

Male, female, both, she says. Beautiful, all of them, including the sheep. And look at that.

She points to the top level, the level it hurts more to look at for longer because it's so high, where there are three chariots, pulled by different creatures, and a lot of people standing about, and birds and rabbits and trees and flowers and far landscapes.

In come the gods, her mother says.

Are they the gods? George says.

And nobody even notices, her mother says. Look at all the people round them. Like the gods are no big deal. In they come and nobody even bats an eyelid.

George turns on her heel to look at the other wall. Down that long side of the room there's more of the picture. It's meant to be the same kind of thing as this wall. The overall design is the same.

But it's just not as good, not as eyecatching or interesting—or maybe it hasn't been as well restored.

George has a closer look at the other picture-wall.

Its figures are just not as beautiful. There are creatures, like that giant lobster there, but they're nothing compared, say, to that horse on that wall looking out almost directly, whose eyes tell you he's not at all sure about having that man on his back. There are people and

flowers here too, even people covered in flowers, but they're less attractive, or more grotesque, than the people there on that end wall where the horses get fatter as the skies get bluer.

It is meant to be the seasons, is it?

She goes back to the good wall.

It is like everything is in layers. things happen right at the front of the pictures and at the same time they continue happening, both separately and connectedly, behind, and behind that, and again behind that, like you can see, in perspective, for miles. Then there are the separate details, like that man with the duck. They're all also happening on their own terms. The picture makes you look at both—the close-up happenings and the bigger picture. Looking at the man with the duck is like seeing how everyday and how almost comic cruelty is. The cruelty happens in among everything else happening. It is an amazing way to show how ordinary cruelty really is.

There doesn't seem to be hunting or cruelty in the top parts, just the lower parts.

The unicorns have horns that look like they're made of lit-up glass.

The clothes all the people are wearing look as if breeze is blowing through them.

George turns towards her mother and is surprised by how young and bright she looks standing under the blue.

What *is* this place? George says.

Her mother shakes her head.

Palazzo,[3] she says.

Then she says a word that George can't catch.

I've never seen anything like it, her mother says. It's so warm it's almost friendly. A friendly work of art. I've never thought such a thing in my life, And look at it. It's never sentimental. It's generous, but it's sardonic too. And whenever it's sardonic, a moment later it's generous again.

She turns to George.

It's a bit like you, she says.

Then she doesn’t say anything. She just looks.

The place is completely silent behind them except for the lady attendant who has been charmed by Henry into leading him from picture to picture and telling him the words for whatever he points at.

Cavallo, the woman says.

Horse, Henry says.

Si! the woman says. Bene. Unicorni. Cielo. Stelle. Terra. Dei e dee e lo zodiaco. Minerva. Venere. Apollo. Minerva Marzo Ariete. Venere Aprile Toro. Apollo Maggio Gemelli. Duca Borso di Ferrara. Dondo la giustizia. Dondo un regalo. Il palio. Un cagnolino.[4]

She sees George and her mother are both listening to her too. She points at the blank and faded walls.

Secco,[5] she says.

She points at the still-picture-covered walls.

Fresco,[6] she says.

She points at the really good bright end wall.

Mando o andato a Venezia per ottenere il meglio azzurro.[7]

I think she’s saying that the blue colour is Venetian, her mother says.

George’s mother goes over to speak to the attendant. She speaks in English. The attendant speaks back in Italian which her mother doesn’t speak. They smile at each other and have a conversation.

What did she say? George asks her mother as they leave the room through the curtained door and go down the stairs.

I’ve no idea, her mother says. But it was nice to talk to her.

Afterwards they sit at an outside restaurant table in the garden of this place. Yellow sweet-smelling flowers drop off the trees on to their heads and on to the table. George notices a huge crack in the outside of the palace building up near the roof.

The earthquake maybe, her mother says. Quite recent. Last year. I think we’re lucky to have got to see it at all. I think it’s just reopened to the public.

Is that why some of the walls have pictures and some just blank plaster? George says. And two of the people in the chariots on the end wall have faces and one of them doesn't?

I don't know, her mother says. I don't know much about it. It was quite hard to find out anything. But I'm finding it quite enjoyable, not knowing.

But what about the moral conundrum? George says.

The what? her mother says.

The getting paid more for the better art, George says.

Oh, yes. That, her mother says. Well.

She tells George again about the artist who did part of the room five hundred and fifty years ago, who thought his work should be paid better than everybody else's in the room and wrote a letter asking the Duke for more money.

In fact, what happened is something even more compelling, she says. because that letter he wrote's the only reason we know anything about that artist even existing. And they only found that letter a hundred years ago. Which was more than four hundred years after he painted his bit of the walls. For four hundred years he didn't exist. No one even knew the room had frescoes in it till only about a hundred or so years ago, end of the eighteen hundreds. They'd been whitewashed over for hundreds of years. Then some whitewash fell off the walls and they found these pictures underneath. The room'd been lost till then.

So if you were in a room, I mean like if you were just sitting in a room. Could the room you were actually in get—lost? Henry says.

He looks stricken.

No, George says. Don't be an idiot.

Don't call your brother an idiot, George's mother says.

You're an idiot, Henry says.

Don't call your sister an idiot, their mother says.

I didn't call him an idiot, I said nidiot, George says. Nidiot is much worse than just idiot.

You're far and away more of a nidiot than me, Henry says.

Than I am, George says.

Her mother laughs.

You can't not do that, can you? she says. It's your nature, isn't it?

Do what? George says.

Henry runs off into the cow parsley at the rough end of the garden where there are some modern-looking sculptures and the meadow has been left to grow as high as it likes. Because the grass is so high he vanishes completely.

This is like a magic place, her mother says.

It's true that it is kind of spectacular here, George thinks—and that's the second time she's thought the word spectacular—because when they walked out here a moment ago and down the garden path to this restaurant, which looked like it might be a junk shop but turns out to serve pasta and wine, a jazz track with old-fashioned piano and trumpets suddenly started playing as if by itself in the air (in reality out of one of the restaurant's speakers) as if especially for them.

Now the garden fills with Italian schoolchildren younger than George and older than Henry. They sit round the tables and talk to each other.

Did he get the money in the end? George says.

Who? her mother says.

The painter, George says. Because he really *was* better. If he painted the part of the room at the far end.

I don't know, George, her mother says. I know almost nothing about it. I only really know what I've told you, which is what it said under the picture when I saw it at home. When we get back I'll read up about it. Though, you know, it might just be that our eyes are more used to finding some parts of the room more beautiful than the others, because of what we now expect beauty to be. It might be *our* standards rather than *theirs.* But I agree. I agree with you. Some of it is really outstandingly beautiful. Some of it is breathtaking. And I find it pretty interesting that the only reason we know that the painter who did that wall existed, even lived at all, is that he asked for more.

Like Oliver Twist,[8] George says.

Her mother smiles.

In some ways, she says.

What was his name? George says.

Her mother screws up her eyes.

You know, I knew this, George, I did know. I read it when we were at home. But right now I can't remember it, her mother says.

We came all this way to see a picture you like that much but you can't remember the name of the man who did it? George says.

Her mother widens her eyes at her.

I know, she says. But it kind of doesn't matter, does it, that we don't know his name. We saw the pictures. What more do we need to know? It's enough just that someone painted them and then one day we came here and saw them. No?

I could look it up on your phone, George says.

Then she immediately feels a mixture of things ranging from unpleasant all the way to bad.

(Guilt and fury:

– Sing me a love song

– No, my singing voice went with pregnancy

– I wonder where it went. I bet its [sic] *in a cathedral city up in some fancy cathedral ceiling hanging out with the carvings of the angels*

Fury and guilt:

– Howre your eyes today and how you doin what you doin where are you & whenll we meet)

Her mother doesn't notice. Her mother has no idea. Her mother is looking down for where her phone is, checking it is safely in the pocket of her bag.

(George's own phone is not a smartphone though she will be given one of her own in less than a year's time, at Christmas, three and a half months after her mother dies.)

Let's not look anything up, her mother says. It's so nice. Not to have to know.

Her mother is going soft.

Not that there's anything wrong with soft. Her mother, soft, forgetful, vague and loving, like other people's mothers always seem to be, is a whole new prospect.

* * *

Is her mother really dead? Is it an elaborate hoax? (All hoaxes, on TV and the radio and in the papers and online, are described as elaborate whether they're elaborate or not.) Has someone elaborately, or not, spirited her mother away like on an episode of Spooks[9] and now she's living a life elsewhere under a new name and just isn't allowed to contact people (even her own children) from her former life?

Because how can someone just vanish?

George had seen her contorted in the hospital bed. Her skin had changed colour and was covered in weals. She could hardly speak. What she did say, in the last part of whatever was happening to her and before they put George outside the door to wait in the corridor, was that she was a book, I'm an open book, she said. Though it was also equally possible that what she'd said was that she was an *un*open book.

I a a u opn ook.

* * *

2014

Endnotes

- Note 1: 1961 song sung by Chubby Checker, following his hit single "The Twist."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Nonsensical Latin phrase, "my maximum." The phrase "mea maxima culpa" means "my most grievous fault."Return to reference 2

- Note 3: An impressive building resembling a palace.Return to reference 3
- Note 4:
  This passage seems to reflect the perspective of the listeners who do not speak Italian and are possibly mishearing it. Translations for the Italian: “Si”: Yes! “Bene”: Good. “Unicorni”: Unicorns. “Cielo”: Sky. “Stelle”: Stars. “Terra”: Earth. “Dei e dee e lo zodiaco”: Gods and goddesses and the zodiac. “Minerva”: Roman equivalent of Athena, goddess of wisdom and justice. “Venere”: Venus, Roman equivalent of Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty. “Apollo”: Roman and Greek god of prophecy and archery. “Minerva Marzo Ariete”: Minerva, March (the month), and Aries, the first astrological sign of the Zodiac, where the Sun is located in the month of March. “Venere Aprile Toro”: Venus, April, Taurus, second sign of the zodiac where the sun is located in the month of April. “Apollo Maggio Gemelli”: Apollo, May, and Gemini, third sign of the zodiac, where the sun is located in May. “Duca Borso di Ferrara”: Borso d’Este (1413–1471), Duke of Ferrara. “Dondo”: Could be a misapprehension of “tondo,” a Renaissance term for a circular painting. “La giustizia”: justice. “Un regalo”: a gift. “Il palio”: The prize. “Un cagnolino”: a puppy.
  The location is the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara, a city in Northern Italy. The “Hall of the Months” contains frescoes divided into twelve sections, one for each month, though only some still exist. The upper section of each shows the world of the gods. The middle section shows the zodiac signs. And a lower part shows the world of humans, including the court and townspeople.
  Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Painting on dry plaster with water-based pigments.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Painting on wet plaster; when it dries it becomes part of the wall.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: I sent or went to Venice to get the best blue.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Protagonist of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838), in which the hungry orphan Oliver says to the master, "Please, sir, I want some more."Return to reference 8
- Note 9: British TV spy series (2002–11).Return to reference 9

DAVID MITCHELL

David Mitchell was born in 1969 in Southport, England, and received an M.A. in comparative literature from the University of Kent. As a child, he struggled with a stammer, a speech impediment that he has said informs his identity as a writer. Today, Mitchell is a novelist renowned for his ability to write in different voices and across different genres. His first novel, *Ghostwritten* (1999), featured nine narrators in nine different locations telling interconnected stories. It was written while Mitchell was living in Hiroshima, Japan, where he taught English. He and his family returned to Europe in 2002 and settled in Ireland, where Mitchell now resides.

Mitchell's follow-ups to *Ghostwritten*, *Number9Dream* (2001) and *Cloud Atlas* (2004), were both shortlisted for the Booker Prize and continued his rich engagement with East Asia. They also cemented his reputation as a stylistic chameleon able to mix literary fiction with the genres of science fiction and fantasy. Mitchell has since tried his hand at the historical novel, *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010), and the horror novel, *Slade House* (2015), which grew out of the Twitter story "The Right Sort." His latest novel, *Utopia Avenue* (2020), features numerous allusions to his previous novels and deepens a self-reflexive streak in Mitchell's oeuvre as he moves toward forging a literary universe populated by related characters and connected by artful cross-references. In this excerpt from "The Right Sort," which Mitchell published on Twitter in serial form over the course of one week (July 14–20, 2014), a young boy from a middle-class background enters the aristocratic home of a lord and lady. We learn he has taken his mother's Valium to relieve his anxiety, but as the story progresses, it becomes difficult to separate the effects of the drug from the supernatural happenings within the home. The story, like the house, begins to resemble a maze in which characters and readers are caught between the world of people and the world of ghosts.

From The Right Sort[1]

David Mitchell ✅[2] @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

.@SceptreBooks are delighted to present a story written by David for Twitter, serialised twice a day this week. We give you #THERIGHTSORT . . .

💬 20 314 170 [3]

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

We get off the Number 10 bus at a pub called ‘The Fox and Hounds’. ‘If anyone asks,’ Mum tells me, ‘say we came by taxi.’

💬 5 95 106

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

‘I thought lying was wrong,’ I say. Butter wouldn’t melt in my mouth. Mum gives me a look. ‘It’s called “creating the right impression”.’

💬 1 39 48

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

A lorry[4] rumbles by. ‘Besides,’ adds Mum, ‘If your “father” paid what the judge told him to pay, on time, we would travel more by taxi.’

💬 1 25 33

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Westwood Road’s not a run-down road, but it’s hardly posh either. Joined-up red-brick houses, like ours. Small drives. Dustbins.

💬 21 31

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Not like you'd expect a Lady to live in. 'Right,' says Mum, double-checking the directions she wrote on an envelope. 'This way.'

💬 21 31

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

'So we're looking out for an alley called "Slade Alley",' says Mum. 'On the left. And mind the puddles.' Off we trudge.

💬 1 18 30

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

It's a grey afternoon. Rain's forecast for later. Through a front window, I see wrestling on the telly.[5] Mum walks ahead. I follow.

💬 19 34

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

I hope to God nobody from school sees me in this tweed jacket and tie Mum bought me from Littlewoods. I look like a total ponce.[6]

💬 1 22 44

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

If any of Gaz Townshend's lot catch me dressed like this, life won't be worth living come Monday. His gang shits on me enough as it is.

💬 21 33

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

It's all very well for Mum to say, 'You shouldn't care what people think': kids have laws and if you break those laws, you're dead meat.

💬 1 36 57

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

(No point telling Mum about getting picked on: she just sighs and says, 'You should have passed the scholarship for King's,[7] Nathan.')

💬 19 36

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Leaves blow down from an overhanging branch. There's more leaves off than there are leaves left. October. The clocks go back tonight.[8]

💬 22 50

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Suddenly here it is: 'SLADE ALLEY' says the old-style sign, high up on the windowless side of one of two houses the alley cuts in between.

💬 1 21 32

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

You can't see Slade Alley till you're smack bang in front of it. Dark. Dunno.[9] It's like Slade Alley shouldn't even be here.

💬 20 34

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

A real live Lady, married to a real live Lord, living down here? If you ask me, Mum's ballsed it up.[1] Wouldn't be the first time.

💬 20 33

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

'Lord and Lady Briggs's main residence is in Oxfordshire,'[2] Mum tells me for the umpteenth time. 'This is only Lady Briggs's town house.'

💬 20 30

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

‘I didn’t say anything,’ I say. ‘Good,’ says Mum. ‘Come on then, don’t dawdle.’ Her voice and footsteps echo a bit.

💬 1 18 34

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

It’s colder in Slade Alley than on Westwood Road. After twenty paces, the alley turns left, then carries on between two high walls.

💬 18 34

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

‘We’re to keep our eyes peeled for a door,’ says Mum. ‘A black iron door. Lady Briggs said it’s easy to miss.’ You can say that again . . .

💬 5 29 60

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

. . .’cause there’s no door down here at all. No gate. No ‘townhouse’. The alley turns right, then after twenty more paces, you’re out . . .

💬 13 23

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

. . .where a sign says ‘CRANBURY ROAD’. Mum scowls at her A to Z, at her scribbled directions, at me. ‘I don’t understand,’ she says.

💬 9 23

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

I think I do. It’s Mum’s Valium.[3] Makes her slapdash. She gets two prescriptions from two different doctors, and takes a double dose.

💬 9 25

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Valium calms Mum down enough to teach her students, but it makes her mix things up. She called me Frank yesterday – Dad's name.

💬 11 23

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Mum doesn't notice that I nick the odd pill. Valium's like my power pill, from Pac-Man.[4] I get nervous too. I took a pill before we left.

💬 16 27

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

The pill's just kicking in now. Valium breaks down the world into bite-sized sentences. Like this one. All lined up. Munch-munch.

💬 1 37 69

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Valium or no Valium, when the dog barks I nearly shit myself and my lungs fill with dark and my blood fills with a scream—

💬 3 17 32

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

But it's okay, it's okay, it's only a yappy little thing through this fence. Not a bull mastiff. Not the mastiff. The dark drains away.

💬 11 26

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

That was three years ago. They had the dog put down. 'Destroyed', it said in the papers. Maybe Mum's noticed I've gone pale and sweaty . . .

💬 10 23

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

. . . but probably not. She's still too flustered about not finding Lady Briggs's house. Our visit's all she's talked about all week.

💬 10 22

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Ever since Lady Briggs invited us over to a soirée after the rehearsal. Mum's a piano teacher. Lady Briggs plays the harp.

💬 9 21

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

Mum made me shine my shoes, like, a gazillion times. 'Don't let me down, Nathan,' she keeps saying. 'These people are the right sort.'

💬 12 23

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

A bald man in overalls with a broken nose walks by, turning off Cranbury Road into Slade Alley. He's carrying a ladder.

💬 2 9 21

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

He's whistling 'I'd like to teach the world to sing'.[5] Mum cuts in. 'Excuse me, do you know where I'll find Lady Norah Briggs's house?'

💬 10 22

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

(She's used her posh voice. 'House' is 'Hice'. I want to die. Being posh at my school is worse than wearing flares[6] or being gay.

Almost.)

💬 1 12 31

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

The ladder man says, ‘Nah, but if you find her, tell her Ladyship I fancy a bit o’ posh if she fancies a bit o’ rough’. He winks at me . . .

💬 3 11 27

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

. . . then the ladder goes down the way we came, into Slade Alley. ‘What a repulsive, greasy oik,’ says Mum, quietly, thank God.

💬 9 21

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

What a waste of time. I could be at home, playing ‘Germans versus British’ on my desert battleground. Rommel’s[7] tanks are cornered.

💬 1 11 27

David Mitchell ✅ @david_mitchell • Jul 14, 2014 . . .

(Me and Dad invented the game before he went back to Rhodesia.[8] We built the landscape from papler-mâché. It’s epic.)

💬 3 12 38

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1: This excerpt presents tweets from the story’s first day of serialized publication on Twitter. To read “The Right Sort” in

its entirety, do a web search for "David Mitchell, The Right Sort, Twitter."Return to reference 1

- Note 2: The checkmark icon (2009–23) referred to users, often public figures or celebrities, with "verified" status, which meant Twitter had confirmed their identities.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: On Twitter, a line of icons sits below each tweet. The word balloon icon indicates the number of user comments; the arrows icon indicates retweets, or the number of times users have re-circulated a tweet; the heart icon indicates the number of users who "liked" a tweet; and the up-arrow icon indicates the capacity to share the tweet via other websites or email.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Truck (British English).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Television (British English).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Effeminate or gay man (derogatory British slang). "Littlewoods": English retail company.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: King's College, a university.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Daylight saving time, when clocks are adjusted.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: "I don't know" (slang).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Made a mistake, botched it (British English).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: County in southeast England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Prescription drug used to treat anxiety, panic attacks, or other conditions.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: 1980s arcade game where Pac-Man must avoid ghosts and eat all the pellets in the level. There are several larger pellets that allow Pac-Man to eat the ghosts.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Pop song (1971) that was the jingle for Coca-Cola before being recorded by both the The Hillside Singers and The New Seekers as a single.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Flared pants. "Posh": elegant; upper-class (British English).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Erwin Rommel (1891–1944), German field marshal during World War II.Return to reference 7

- Note 8: Formerly a British colony; now the country of Zimbabwe.Return to reference 8

TEJU COLE

Teju Cole was born in 1975 to Nigerian parents in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and returned to Nigeria at five months old, where he grew up and lived a comfortable life in the capital city of Lagos. He briefly attended medical school at the University of Michigan before shifting his interests to art history and pursuing a doctorate in the field at Columbia University. Cole is a now a writer and a photographer and serves as the Gore Vidal Professor of the Practice of Creative Writing at Harvard University. He first came to literary attention for his meditative novel *Open City* (2011), which follows a Nigerian immigrant and medical resident through New York and Belgium. He has also published the autofictional *Tremor* (2023) and several well-received essay collections and photography books, including *Known and Strange Things* (2016), *Blind Spot* (2017), and *Black Paper: Writing in a Dark Time* (2021).

Cole has made inventive use of multiple social media platforms, including Twitter, where he posted experimental literary works until 2014, such as "Seven Short Stories about Drones," printed in its entirety here, and "Hafiz," which is excerpted. On Instagram, he posts photography, and on Spotify, he curates playlists. He has also written reflectively about the role these large platforms have on the reception and distribution of the arts. When asked about his interest in internet-based writing and social media in particular, he said, "For sure, some of the smartest and most interesting literary minds of our generation and the generations to come will work in areas that are not 'books' as we currently think of them."

Seven Short Stories about Drones[1]

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

Seven short stories about drones

10 176 75

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

1. Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. Pity. A signature strike leveled the florist's.

4 234 95

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

2. Call me Ishmael. I was a young man of military age. I was immolated at my wedding. My parents are inconsolable.

2 213 83

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

3. Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather. A bomb whistled in. Blood on the walls. Fire from heaven.

2 206 72

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

4. I am an invisible man. My name is unknown. My loves are a mystery. But an unmanned aerial vehicle from a secret location has come for me.

1 262 116

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

5. Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was killed by a Predator drone.

3 386 150

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

6. Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His torso was found, not his head.

2 191 75

Teju Cole @tejucole • Jan 14, 2013 . . .

7. Mother died today. The program saves American lives.[2]

9 225 105

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Cole takes the first lines of seven classic novels and recontextualizes them. The next footnote specifies the title of each novel. When Cole tweeted these lines, he did not give away the allusions. His tweets entered into the personalized news feeds of different users and took on different contexts in each feed. To read the tweets as a sequence, a user needed to go to Cole's Twitter page. This story is not archived in a Twitter collection, but is reprinted in its entirety here.
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: 1: *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf. 2: *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville. 3: *Ulysses*, James Joyce. 4: *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison. 5: *The Trial*, Franz Kafka. 6: *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe. 7: *The Stranger*, Albert Camus. The program refers to the global War on Terror.Return to reference 2

From Hafiz[1]

George Szirtes @george_szirtes • Jan 8, 2014 . . .

Four others were there: a young man busy with a phone, a young woman, a baby in a pram, a girl who was with the woman.

💬 28 25 [2]

Asa Nwa (Chi Baby) @AfricanCeleb • Jan 8, 2014 . . .

The seated man was closer to sixty than to fifty, dressed in an ordinary way, a button-down long-sleeved shirt, trousers.

💬 26 27

Ayesha A. Siddiqi ✅[3] @AyeshaASiddiqi • Jan 8, 2014 . . .

The young man with the phone said, "He's having chest pains. Earlier he said he was having chest pains."

💬 26 37

Divya Sachar @culdivsac • Jan 8, 2014 . . .

"Is it a heart attack?"
"I don't know."
"Did you call 911?"

💬 25 25

Mister Simian @MisterSimian • Jan 8, 2014 . . .

He hesitated. Then he said no, and that maybe I should. The man on the ground grimaced and did not look up.

💬 1 23 27

Matt Pearce ✅ @mattdpearce • Jan 8, 2014 . . .

He gave no indication of being aware of our presence. He was tranquil, wordless. The tears were falling from his eyes.

💬 3 27 32

BRITTLE PAPER @brittlepaper • Jan 8, 2014 . . .

When I finished and had hung up the phone, I tried to talk to my man on the ground but his sound lacked all sound.

💬 26 31

* * *

Endnotes

- Note 1:
  Cole authored the short story "Hafiz" before sending it in tweet-length segments to twenty-one of his Twitter followers. His followers each tweeted their part of the story, which Cole then retweeted in sequence so that the complete story could appear in his Twitter feed as if being told by eyewitnesses on the street. At the same time, his tweets entered the personalized feeds of other Twitter users, which presented them in an even wider range of contexts. An excerpt from "Hafiz" is printed here; the complete story can be found by doing a web search for "Teju Cole, Hafiz."
  Return to reference 1
- Note 2: On Twitter, a line of icons sits below each tweet. The word balloon icon indicates the number of user comments; the arrows icon indicates retweets, or the number of times users have re-circulated a tweet; the heart icon indicates the number of users who "liked" a tweet; and the up-arrow icon indicates the capacity to share the tweet via other websites or email.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: The checkmark icon refers to users, often public figures or celebrities, with “verified” status, meaning Twitter has confirmed their identities. Verified accounts began appearing in 2009, but Twitter paywalled the checkmark in 2023, causing some public figures to lose their icons.Return to reference 3

KAZUO ISHIGURO
b. 1954

"The big emotions loom powerfully in understatement," states Kazuo Ishiguro, and accordingly his novels are often restrained and indirect. Winner of the 2017 Nobel Prize for Literature, he is one of the most acclaimed contemporary novelists living in England, but he was born in Nagasaki, Japan, where his mother had survived the dropping of the atomic bomb. When he was five, his father's work as an oceanographer led the family to move to a small town in southern England. Ishiguro earned a B.A. in English and philosophy at the University of Kent and an M.A. in creative writing at the University of East Anglia.

Ishiguro's first two novels, *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), were set largely in Japan in the aftermath of World War II, both of them cast in the monologue form that he would employ frequently in subsequent fiction. With every novel he has written since, Ishiguro has dramatically changed his work's setting, genre, or style. The location shifts to a grand English estate in his third novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), winner of the Booker Prize, subsequently made into a celebrated movie. It centers on the ruminations and regrets of an English butler named Stevens, so constrained by propriety, class, and duty that he has served a lord with fascist sympathies and has missed a chance for romantic fulfillment with a coworker. *The Unconsoled* (1995) marks a further departure from the crisp realism of the early novels, a

dreamlike, elliptically narrated story about a pianist in an unnamed city. *When We Were Orphans* (2000) warps and fuses detective story with historical fiction in narrating a detective's quest to understand his parents' disappearance in 1930s Shanghai. Like *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) is one of his best-known novels, also re-created as a film. But unlike his earlier work, it takes up and subtly remakes the genre of dystopian science fiction: English boarding school students gradually realize they are fated to play a part in a society that will use them up and brutally discard them. *The Buried Giant* (2015) is yet another leap for Ishiguro, this time into Arthurian fantasy set in medieval England. *Klara and the Sun* (2021) cultivates the innocent air of children's literature with a crucial twist: the child's perspective is narrated by a robot programmed to serve as an "Artificial Friend" to human children. Along with his novels, Ishiguro has also written short stories, film scripts, plays, and songs.

Although his novels dart in different directions, some preoccupations recur. In his early years, Ishiguro devoted himself to songwriting, and he has traced his fiction to this perhaps surprising source: "My style as a novelist comes substantially from what I learnt writing songs. The intimate, first-person quality of a singer performing to an audience, for instance, carried over for me into novels. As did the need to approach meaning subtly, sometimes by nudging it into the spaces between the lines."

Some of Ishiguro's characters grapple with regret over misdeeds and lives unlived. "On the one hand," he remarked, "there is a need for honesty, on the other hand a need to deceive themselves—to preserve a sense of dignity, some sort of self-respect. What I want to suggest is that some sort of dignity and self-respect does come from that sort of honesty." His characters sometimes are racked by conflicting demands for self-understanding and self-pacifying consolation.

Ishiguro wrote the short story "A Village after Dark" when he was preparing to write his dreamlike novel *The Unconsoled*. It frustrates our usual expectations for plot development. As in a play by Samuel

Beckett, little happens. And recalling Franz Kafka's fiction, the setting seems somewhere between dream and reality. The narrative withholds all but a few details of time and place. The narrator, Fletcher, seems a washed-up leader of some kind, but we do not learn anything about the particular ideas or the movement he once advanced. This narrative restraint places less focus on the subject of the story than on how it is told. Like many of Ishiguro's first-person narrators, Fletcher tells his own story in a way that soon raises questions about his reliability. Almost like a dream, the story seems to enact his guilt over his past: a forgotten romantic partner berates him for having ruined her life, and a fellow schoolboy accuses him of having bullied him. His accusers also partly absolve Fletcher of his misdeeds, and he tries in various ways to justify and defend himself. His regrets, self-deceptions, and vanity suggest the limits to human self-understanding. One way to approach this strange story is to consider which of its aspects lend themselves to rational and realistic understanding, and which evoke what he called the "universal language" or "grammar" of dreams. Of "memory and dream" Ishiguro has said, "you manipulate both according to your emotional needs at the time." As in much of his work, Ishiguro challenges us to rethink what we thought we knew about the conventions of fiction and about the relation between dream and reality, between memory and truth.

A Village after Dark

There was a time when I could travel England for weeks on end and remain at my sharpest—when, if anything, the travelling gave me an edge. But now that I am older I become disoriented more easily. So it was that on arriving at the village just after dark I failed to find my bearings at all. I could hardly believe I was in the same village in which not so long ago I had lived and come to exercise such influence.

There was nothing I recognized, and I found myself walking forever around twisting, badly lit streets hemmed in on both sides by the little stone cottages characteristic of the area. The streets often became so narrow I could make no progress without my bag or my elbow scraping one rough wall or another. I persevered nevertheless, stumbling around in the darkness in the hope of coming upon the village square—where I could at least orient myself—or else of encountering one of the villagers. When after a while I had done neither, a weariness came over me, and I decided my best course was just to choose a cottage at random, knock on the door, and hope it would be opened by someone who remembered me.

I stopped by a particularly rickety-looking door, whose upper beam was so low that I could see I would have to crouch right down to enter. A dim light was leaking out around the door's edges, and I could hear voices and laughter. I knocked loudly to insure that the occupants would hear me over their talk. But just then someone behind me said, "Hello."

I turned to find a young woman of around twenty, dressed in raggedy jeans and a torn jumper, standing in the darkness a little way away.

"You walked straight past me earlier," she said, "even though I called to you."

"Did I really? Well, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude."

"You're Fletcher, aren't you?"

"Yes," I said, somewhat flattered.

"Wendy thought it was you when you went by our cottage. We all got very excited. You were one of that lot, weren't you? With David Maggis and all of them."

"Yes," I said, "but Maggis was hardly the most important one. I'm surprised you pick him out like that. There were other, far more important figures." I reeled off a series of names and was interested to see the girl nodding at each one in recognition. "But this must have all been before your time," I said. "I'm surprised you know about such things."

"It was before our time, but we're all experts on your lot. We know more about all that than most of the older ones who were here then. Wendy recognized you instantly just from your photos."

"I had no idea you young people had taken such an interest in us. I'm sorry I walked past you earlier. But you see, now that I'm older, I get a little disoriented when I travel."

I could hear some boisterous talk coming from behind the door. I banged on it again, this time rather impatiently, though I was not so eager to bring the encounter with the girl to a close.

She looked at me for a moment, then said, "All of you from those days are like that. David Maggis came here a few years ago. In '93, or maybe it was '94. He was like that. A bit vague. It must get to you after a while, travelling all the time."

"So Maggis was here. How interesting. You know, he wasn't one of the really important figures. You mustn't get carried away with such an idea. Incidentally, perhaps you could tell me who lives in this cottage." I thumped the door again.

"The Petersons," the girl said. "They're an old house. They'll probably remember you."

"The Petersons," I repeated, but the name meant nothing to me.

"Why don't you come to our cottage? Wendy was really excited. So were the rest of us. It's a real chance for us, actually talking to someone from those days."

"I'd very much like to do that. But first of all I'd better get myself settled in. The Petersons, you say."

I thumped the door again, this time quite ferociously. At last it opened, throwing warmth and light out into the street. An old man was standing in the doorway. He looked at me carefully, then asked, "It's not Fletcher, is it?"

"Yes, and I've just got into the village. I've been travelling for several days."

He thought about this for a moment, then said, "Well, you'd better come in."

I found myself in a cramped, untidy room full of rough wood and broken furniture. A log burning in the fireplace was the only source of light, by which I could make out a number of hunched figures sitting around the room. The old man led me to a chair beside the fire with a grudgingness that suggested it was the very one he had just vacated. Once I sat down, I found I could not easily turn my head to see my surroundings or the others in the room. But the warmth of the fire was very welcome, and for a moment I just stared into its flames, a pleasant grogginess drifting over me. Voices came from behind me, inquiring if I was well, if I had come far, if I was hungry, and I replied as best I could, though I was aware that my answers were barely adequate. Eventually, the questions ceased, and it occurred to me that my presence was creating a heavy awkwardness, but I was so grateful for the warmth and the chance to rest that I hardly cared.

Nonetheless, when the silence behind me had gone unbroken for several minutes, I resolved to address my hosts with a little more civility, and I turned in my chair. It was then, as I did so, that I was suddenly seized by an intense sense of recognition. I had chosen the cottage quite at random, but now I could see that it was none other than the very one in which I had spent my years in this village. My gaze moved immediately to the far corner—at this moment shrouded in darkness—to the spot that had been my corner, where once my mattress had been and where I had spent many tranquil hours browsing through books or conversing with whoever happened to

drift in. On summer days, the windows, and often the door, were left open to allow a refreshing breeze to blow right through. Those were the days when the cottage was surrounded by open fields and there would come from outside the voices of my friends, lazing in the long grass, arguing over poetry or philosophy. These precious fragments of the past came back to me so powerfully that it was all I could do not to make straight for my old corner then and there.

Someone was speaking to me again, perhaps asking another question, but I hardly listened. Rising, I peered through the shadows into my corner, and could now make out a narrow bed, covered by an old curtain, occupying more or less the exact space where my mattress had been. The bed looked extremely inviting, and I found myself cutting into something the old man was saying.

"Look," I said, "I know this is a bit blunt. But, you see, I've come such a long way today. I really need to lie down, close my eyes, even if it's just for a few minutes. After that, I'm happy to talk all you like."

I could see the figures around the room shifting uneasily. Then a new voice said, rather sullenly, "Go ahead then. Have a nap. Don't mind us."

But I was already picking my way through the clutter toward my corner. The bed felt damp, and the springs creaked under my weight, but no sooner had I curled up with my back to the room than my many hours of travelling began to catch up with me. As I was drifting off, I heard the old man saying, "It's Fletcher, all right. God, he's aged."

A woman's voice said, "Should we let him go to sleep like that? He might wake in a few hours and then we'll have to stay up with him."

"Let him sleep for an hour or so," someone else said. "If he's still asleep after an hour, we'll wake him."

At this point, sheer exhaustion overtook me.

It was not a continuous or comfortable sleep. I drifted between sleep and waking, always conscious of voices behind me in the

room. At some point, I was aware of a woman saying, "I don't know how I was ever under his spell. He looks such a ragamuffin now."

In my state of near-sleep, I debated with myself whether these words applied to me or, perhaps, to David Maggis, but before long sleep engulfed me once more.

When I next awoke, the room appeared to have grown both darker and colder. Voices were continuing behind me in lowered tones, but I could make no sense of the conversation. I now felt embarrassed at having gone to sleep in the way I had, and for a few further moments remained motionless with my face to the wall. But something about me must have revealed that I was awake, for a woman's voice, breaking off from the general conversation, said, "Oh, look, look." Some whispers were exchanged, then I heard the sound of someone coming toward my corner. I felt a hand placed gently on my shoulder, and looked up to find a woman kneeling over me. I did not turn my body sufficiently to see the room, but I got the impression that it was lit by dying embers, and the woman's face was visible only in shadow.

"Now, Fletcher," she said. "It's time we had a talk. I've waited a long time for you to come back. I've thought about you often."

I strained to see her more clearly. She was somewhere in her forties, and even in the gloom I noticed a sleepy sadness in her eyes. But her face failed to stir in me even the faintest of memories.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I have no recollection of you. But please forgive me if we met some time ago. I do get very disoriented these days."

"Fletcher," she said, "when we used to know one another, I was young and beautiful. I idolized you, and everything you said seemed like an answer. Now here you are, back again. I've wanted to tell you for many years that you ruined my life."

"You're being unfair. All right, I was mistaken about a lot of things. But I never claimed to have any answers. All I said in those days was that it was our duty, all of us, to contribute to the debate. We knew so much more about the issues than the ordinary people here. If people like us procrastinated, claiming we didn't yet know

enough, then who was there to act? But I never claimed I had the answers. No, you're being unfair."

"Fletcher," she said, and her voice was oddly gentle, "you used to make love to me, more or less every time I wandered in here to your room. In this corner, we did all kinds of beautifully dirty things. It's odd to think how I could have once been so physically excited by you. And here you're just a foul-smelling bundle of rags now. But look at me—I'm still attractive. My face has got a bit lined, but when I walk in the village streets I wear dresses I've made specially to show off my figure. A lot of men want me still. But you, no woman would look at you now. A bundle of stinking rags and flesh."

"I don't remember you," I said. "And I've no time for sex these days. I've other things to worry about. More serious things. Very well, I was mistaken about a lot in those days. But I've done more than most to try and make amends. You see, even now I'm travelling. I've never stopped. I've travelled and travelled trying to undo what damage I may once have caused. That's more than can be said of some others from those days. I bet Maggis, for instance, hasn't worked nearly as hard to try and put things right."

The woman was stroking my hair.

"Look at you. I used to do this, run my fingers through your hair. Look at this filthy mess. I'm sure you're contaminated with all sorts of parasites." But she continued slowly to run her fingers through the dirty knots. I failed to feel anything erotic from this, as perhaps she wished me to do. Rather, her caresses felt maternal. Indeed, for a moment it was as though I had finally reached some cocoon of protectiveness, and I began once more to feel sleepy. But suddenly she stopped and slapped me hard on the forehead.

"Why don't you join the rest of us now? You've had your sleep. You've got a lot of explaining to do." With that she got up and left.

For the first time, I turned my body sufficiently to survey the room. I saw the woman making her way past the clutter on the floor, then sitting down in a rocking chair by the fireplace. I could see three other figures hunched around the dying fire. One I recognized to be the old man who had opened the door. The two others—sitting

together on what looked like a wooden trunk—seemed to be women of around the same age as the one who had spoken to me.

The old man noticed that I had turned, and he indicated to the others that I was watching. The four of them proceeded to sit stiffly, not speaking. From the way they did this, it was clear that they had been discussing me thoroughly while I was asleep. In fact, as I watched them I could more or less guess the whole shape their conversation had taken. I could see, for instance, that they had spent some time expressing concern for the young girl I had met outside, and about the effect I might have on her peers.

"They're all so impressionable," the old man would have said. "And I heard her inviting him to visit them."

To which, no doubt, one of the women on the trunk would have said, "But he can't do much harm now. In our time, we were all taken in because all his kind—they were young and glamorous. But these days the odd one passing through from time to time, looking all decrepit and burned out like that—if anything, it goes to demystify all that talk about the old days. In any case, people like him have changed their position so much these days. They don't know themselves what they believe."

The old man would have shaken his head. "I saw the way that young girl was looking at him. All right, he looks a pitiful mess over there just now. But once his ego's fed a little, once he has the flattery of the young people, sees how they want to hear his ideas, then there'll be no stopping him. It'll be just like before. He'll have them all working for his causes. Young girls like that, there's so little for them to believe in now. Even a stinking tramp like this could give them a purpose."

Their conversation, all the time I slept, would have gone something very much like that. But now, as I observed them from my corner, they continued to sit in guilty silence, staring at the last of their fire. After a while, I rose to my feet. Absurdly, the four of them kept their gazes averted from me. I waited a few moments to see if any of them would say anything. Finally, I said, "All right, I was asleep earlier, but I've guessed what you were saying. Well,

you'll be interested to know I'm going to do the very thing you feared. I'm going this moment to the young people's cottage. I'm going to tell them what to do with all their energy, all their dreams, their urge to achieve something of lasting good in this world. Look at you, what a pathetic bunch. Crouching in your cottage, afraid to do anything, afraid of me, of Maggis, of anyone else from those times. Afraid to do anything in the world out there, just because once we made a few mistakes. Well, those young people haven't yet sunk so low, despite all the lethargy you've been preaching at them down the years. I'll talk to them. I'll undo in half an hour all of your sorry efforts."

"You see," the old man said to the others. "I knew it would be this way. We ought to stop him, but what can we do?"

I crashed my way across the room, picked up my bag, and went out into the night.

The girl was still standing outside when I emerged. She seemed to be expecting me and with a nod began to lead the way.

The night was drizzly and dark. We twisted and turned along the narrow paths that ran between the cottages. Some of the cottages we passed looked so decayed and crumbling that I felt I could destroy one of them simply by running at it with all my weight.

The girl kept a few paces ahead, occasionally glancing back at me over her shoulder. Once she said, "Wendy's going to be so pleased. She was sure it was you when you went past earlier. By now, she'll have guessed she was right, because I've been away this long, and she'll have brought the whole crowd together. They'll all be waiting."

"Did you give David Maggis this sort of reception, too?"

"Oh, yes. We were really excited when he came."

"I'm sure he found that very gratifying. He always had an exaggerated sense of his own importance."

"Wendy says Maggis was one of the interesting ones, but that you were, well, important. She thinks you were really important."

I thought about this for a moment.

"You know," I said, "I've changed my mind on very many things. If Wendy's expecting me to say all the things I used to all those years ago, well, she's going to be in for a disappointment."

The girl did not seem to hear this, but continued to lead me purposefully through the clusters of cottages.

After a little while, I became aware of footsteps following a dozen or so paces behind us. At first, I assumed this was just some villager out walking and refrained from turning round. But then the girl halted under a street lamp and looked behind us. I was thus obliged also to stop and turn. A middle-aged man in a dark overcoat was coming toward us. As he approached, he held out his hand and shook mine, though without smiling.

"So," he said, "you're here."

I then realized I knew the man. We had not seen each other since we were ten years old. His name was Roger Button, and he had been in my class at the school I had attended for two years in Canada before my family returned to England. Roger Button and I had not been especially close, but, because he had been a timid boy, and because he, too, was from England, he had for a while followed me about. I had neither seen nor heard from him since that time. Now, as I studied his appearance under the street lamp, I saw the years had not been kind to him. He was bald, his face was pocked and lined, and there was a weary sag to his whole posture. For all that, there was no mistaking my old classmate.

"Roger," I said, "I'm just on my way to visit this young lady's friends. They've gathered together to receive me. Otherwise I'd have come and looked you up straightaway. As it was, I had it in my mind as the next thing to do, even before getting any sleep tonight. I was just thinking to myself, However late things finish at the young people's cottage, I'll go and knock on Roger's door afterward."

"Don't worry," said Roger Button as we all started to walk again. "I know how busy you are. But we ought to talk. Chew over old times. When you last saw me—at school, I mean—I suppose I was a rather feeble specimen. But, you know, that all changed when I got to fourteen, fifteen. I really toughened up. Became quite a leader

type. But you'd long since left Canada. I always wondered what would have happened if we'd come across each other at fifteen. Things would have been rather different between us, I assure you."

As he said this, memories came flooding back. In those days, Roger Button had idolized me, and in return I had bullied him incessantly. However, there had existed between us a curious understanding that my bullying him was all for his own good; that when, without warning, I suddenly punched him in the stomach on the playground, or when, passing him in the corridor, I impulsively wrenched his arm up his back until he started to cry, I was doing so in order to help him toughen up. Accordingly, the principal effect such attacks had on our relationship was to keep him in awe of me. This all came back to me as I listened to the weary-looking man walking beside me.

"Of course," Roger Button went on, perhaps guessing my train of thought, "it might well be that if you hadn't treated me the way you did I'd never have become what I did at fifteen. In any case, I've often wondered how it would have been if we'd met just a few years later. I really was something to be reckoned with by then."

We were once again walking along the narrow twisted passages between cottages. The girl was still leading the way, but she was now walking much faster. Often we would only just manage to catch a glimpse of her turning some corner ahead of us, and it struck me that we would have to keep alert if we were not to lose her.

"Today, of course," Roger Button was saying, "I've let myself go a bit. But I have to say, old fellow, you seem to be in much worse shape. Compared with you, I'm an athlete. Not to put too fine a point on it, you're just a filthy old tramp now, really, aren't you? But, you know, for a long time after you left I continued to idolize you. Would Fletcher do this? What would Fletcher think if he saw me doing that? Oh, yes. It was only when I got to fifteen or so that I looked back on it all and saw through you. Then I was very angry, of course. Even now, I still think about it sometimes. I look back and think, Well, he was just a thoroughly nasty so-and-so. He had a little more weight and muscle at that age than I did, a little more

confidence, and he took full advantage. Yes, it's very clear, looking back, what a nasty little person you were. Of course, I'm not implying you still are today. We all change. That much I'm willing to accept."

"Have you been living here long?" I asked, wishing to change the subject.

"Oh, seven years or so. Of course, they talk about you a lot around here. I sometimes tell them about our early association. 'But he won't remember me,' I always tell them. 'Why would he remember a skinny little boy he used to bully and have at his beck and call?' Anyway, the young people here, they talk about you more and more these days. Certainly, the ones who've never seen you tend to idealize you the most. I suppose you've come back to capitalize on all that. Still, I shouldn't blame you. You're entitled to try and salvage a little self-respect."

We suddenly found ourselves facing an open field, and we both halted. Glancing back, I saw that we had walked our way out of the village; the last of the cottages were some distance behind us. Just as I had feared, we had lost the young woman; in fact, I realized we had not been following her for some time.

At that moment, the moon emerged, and I saw we were standing at the edge of a vast grassy field—extending, I supposed, far beyond what I could see by the moon.

Roger Button turned to me. His face in the moonlight seemed gentle, almost affectionate.

"Still," he said, "it's time to forgive. You shouldn't keep worrying so much. As you see, certain things from the past will come back to you in the end. But then we can't be held accountable for what we did when we were very young."

"No doubt you're right," I said. Then I turned and looked around in the darkness. "But now I'm not sure where to go. You see, there were some young people waiting for me in their cottage. By now they'd have a warm fire ready for me and some hot tea. And some home-baked cakes, perhaps even a good stew. And the moment I entered, ushered in by that young lady we were following just now,

they'd all have burst into applause. There'd be smiling, adoring faces all around me. That's what's waiting for me somewhere. Except I'm not sure where I should go."

Roger Button shrugged. "Don't worry, you'll get there easily enough. Except, you know, that girl was being a little misleading if she implied you could walk to Wendy's cottage. It's much too far. You'd really need to catch a bus. Even then, it's quite a long journey. About two hours, I'd say. But don't worry, I'll show you where you can pick up your bus."

With that, he began to walk back toward the cottages. As I followed, I could sense that the hour had got very late and my companion was anxious to get some sleep. We spent several minutes walking around the cottages again, and then he brought us out into the village square. In fact, it was so small and shabby it hardly merited being called a square; it was little more than a patch of green beside a solitary street lamp. Just visible beyond the pool of light cast by the lamp were a few shops, all shut up for the night. There was complete silence and nothing was stirring. A light mist was hovering over the ground.

Roger Button stopped before we had reached the green and pointed.

"There," he said. "If you stand there, a bus will come along. As I say, it's not a short journey. About two hours. But don't worry, I'm sure your young people will wait. They've so little else to believe in these days, you see."

"It's very late," I said. "Are you sure a bus will come?"

"Oh, yes. Of course, you may have to wait. But eventually a bus will come." Then he touched me reassuringly on the shoulder. "I can see it might get a little lonely standing out here. But once the bus arrives your spirits will rise, believe me. Oh, yes. That bus is always a joy. It'll be brightly lit up, and it's always full of cheerful people, laughing and joking and pointing out the window. Once you board it, you'll feel warm and comfortable, and the other passengers will chat with you, perhaps offer you things to eat or drink. There may even

be singing—that depends on the driver. Some drivers encourage it, others don't. Well, Fletcher, it was good to see you."

We shook hands, then he turned and walked away. I watched him disappear into the darkness between two cottages.

I walked up to the green and put my bag down at the foot of the lamppost. I listened for the sound of a vehicle in the distance, but the night was utterly still. Nevertheless, I had been cheered by Roger Button's description of the bus. Moreover, I thought of the reception awaiting me at my journey's end—of the adoring faces of the young people—and felt the stirrings of optimism somewhere deep within me.

2001

HANIF KUREISHI
b. 1954

Born in Bromley, a suburb of London, to a Pakistani immigrant father and an English mother, Hanif Kureishi has much in common with the semiautobiographical protagonist of his first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990):

> My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care—Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere.

The biracial and bicultural Karim is troubled by his "odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not." Like Zadie Smith and other black and Asian British writers inspired by his work, Kureishi is the product of postwar migrations, from Britain's former colonies in the Caribbean, South Asia, Africa, and elsewhere, to the empire's heart. The problem of puzzling out issues of identity and race, belonging and estrangement in contemporary Britain is at the core of much of Kureishi's writing.

Kureishi studied philosophy at King's College London, receiving his B.A. in 1977. He worked at theaters in various capacities, rising from usher to writer in residence at the Royal Court Theatre in London. Trying his hand at different kinds of writing, he won international acclaim when his first screenplays were made into

movies. In *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), a Pakistani Briton takes over a run-down commercial laundromat and, with the help of a white friend who becomes his lover and partner, fights off racist attacks and turns the venture into a success. Kureishi's next film venture, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), is also set against the backdrop of the racial tensions of Margaret Thatcher's 1980s, featuring an open marriage between a Pakistani Briton and an Englishwoman. Pathbreaking explorations of the new multiracial Britain, these films figured prominently in discussions of race, multiculturalism, and national identity in subsequent decades. Since their release, other of Kureishi's writings have been made into films, including *London Kills Me* (1992), *The Mother* (2004), *Venus* (2006), *Weddings and Beheadings* (2007) and *Le Week-End* (2013). He has also published many essays, short stories, and novels, including *The Black Album* (1995), which explores the disenfranchisement and radicalization of young British Muslims and the book burnings of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, followed by *Intimacy* (1999), *Gabriel's Gift* (2001), *The Body* (2004), and *Something to Tell You* (2008), in which the London transit-system bombings of July 7, 2005 (killing 52 and wounding 700) touch most of the characters' lives. *The Last Word* (2014) satirizes a postcolonial novelist who turns out to be depraved. On December 26, 2022, he collapsed on a sidewalk in Rome, and realized, when he came to, that he could not move his arms or legs. Several days later, from his hospital bed in Italy, he began dictating tweets to his partner, Isabella, and his son Carlo, publishing his dispatches as threads on Twitter and as "The Kureishi Chronicles" on Substack (a subscriber-driven digital publishing platform).

Among Kureishi's works adapted into films is the short story "My Son the Fanatic," one of his many reflections on Muslim Britain long before the subject received widespread attention. In this story Parvez, who has worked for twenty years as a taxi driver in an unnamed English city, tries to ensure his son Ali's financial success as a future accountant. When his son suddenly dumps his Western movies, books, videos, clothes, and friends, Parvez is baffled. In the ensuing conflict between a partly assimilated Punjabi father, who

drinks alcohol (forbidden in Islam) and befriends a prostitute, and a son who has adopted a strictly observant form of Islam and identifies with oppressed Muslims around the world, Kureishi's story gives narrative form to the collision between different ways of belonging among Britain's people of non-Western descent.

Writing about the screenplay, Kureishi commented: "It perplexed me that young people, brought up in secular Britain, would turn to a form of belief that denied them the pleasures of the society in which they lived. Islam was a particularly firm way of saying no to all sorts of things." He surmised that decades of racial exclusion and economic disappointment help explain the appeal of fundamentalist forms of Islam to the children of South Asian immigrants in Britain:

> It must not be forgotten, therefore, that the backgrounds to the lives of these young people includes colonialism—being made to feel inferior in your own country. And then, in Britain, racism; again, being made to feel inferior in your own country. . . . Yet all along it was taken for granted that 'belonging', which means, in a sense, not having to notice where you are, and more importantly, not being seen as different, would happen eventually. Where it hasn't, there is, in the children and grandchildren of the great postwar wave of immigrants, considerable anger and disillusionment. . . . The 'West' was a dream that didn't come true. But one cannot go home again. One is stuck. . . . If you feel excluded it might be tempting to exclude others.

My Son the Fanatic. A scene from the 1997 film adaptation, directed by Udayan Prasad.

Religious fundamentalists, in his view, wanted to exclude others (non-Muslims, gays, "unsubmissive women," etc.), just as they had been excluded. Never idealizing or sentimentalizing multiracial Britain, Kureishi has been one of its most incisive observers, helping at the same time to reimagine its future.

My Son the Fanatic

Surreptitiously the father began going into his son's bedroom. He would sit there for hours, rousing himself only to seek clues. What bewildered him was that Ali was getting tidier. Instead of the usual tangle of clothes, books, cricket bats, video games, the room was becoming neat and ordered; spaces began appearing where before there had been only mess.

Initially Parvez had been pleased: his son was outgrowing his teenage attitudes. But one day, beside the dustbin, Parvez found a torn bag which contained not only old toys, but computer discs, video tapes, new books and fashionable clothes the boy had bought just a few months before. Also without explanation, Ali had parted from the English girlfriend who used to come often to the house. His old friends had stopped ringing.

For reasons he didn't himself understand, Parvez wasn't able to bring up the subject of Ali's unusual behaviour. He was aware that he had become slightly afraid of his son, who, alongside his silences, was developing a sharp tongue. One remark Parvez did make, 'You don't play your guitar any more,' elicited the mysterious but conclusive reply, 'There are more important things to be done.'

Yet Parvez felt his son's eccentricity as an injustice. He had always been aware of the pitfalls which other men's sons had fallen into in England. And so, for Ali, he had worked long hours and spent a lot of money paying for his education as an accountant. He had bought him good suits, all the books he required and a computer. And now the boy was throwing his possessions out!

The TV, video and sound system followed the guitar. Soon the room was practically bare. Even the unhappy walls bore marks where Ali's pictures had been removed.

Parvez couldn't sleep; he went more to the whisky bottle, even when he was at work. He realised it was imperative to discuss the

matter with someone sympathetic.

Parvez had been a taxi driver for twenty years. Half that time he'd worked for the same firm. Like him, most of the other drivers were Punjabis.[1] They preferred to work at night, the roads were clearer and the money better. They slept during the day, avoiding their wives. Together they led almost a boy's life in the cabbies' office, playing cards and practical jokes, exchanging lewd stories, eating together and discussing politics and their problems.

But Parvez had been unable to bring this subject up with his friends. He was too ashamed. And he was afraid, too, that they would blame him for the wrong turning his boy had taken, just as he had blamed other fathers whose sons had taken to running around with bad girls, truanting from school and joining gangs.

For years Parvez had boasted to the other men about how Ali excelled at cricket, swimming and football, and how attentive a scholar he was, getting straight 'A's in most subjects. Was it asking too much for Ali to get a good job now, marry the right girl and start a family? Once this happened, Parvez would be happy. His dreams of doing well in England would have come true. Where had he gone wrong?

But one night, sitting in the taxi office on busted chairs with his two closest friends watching a Sylvester Stallone film, he broke his silence.

'I can't understand it!' he burst out. 'Everything is going from his room. And I can't talk to him any more. We were not father and son —we were brothers! Where has he gone? Why is he torturing me!'

And Parvez put his head in his hands.

Even as he poured out his account the men shook their heads and gave one another knowing glances. From their grave looks Parvez realised they understood the situation.

'Tell me what is happening!' he demanded.

The reply was almost triumphant. They had guessed something was going wrong. Now it was clear. Ali was taking drugs and selling his possessions to pay for them. That was why his bedroom was emptying.

‘What must I do, then?’

Parvez’s friends instructed him to watch Ali scrupulously and then be severe with him, before the boy went mad, overdosed or murdered someone.

Parvez staggered out into the early morning air, terrified they were right. His boy—the drug-addict killer!

To his relief he found Bettina sitting in his car.

Usually the last customers of the night were local ‘brasses’ or prostitutes. The taxi drivers knew them well, often driving them to liaisons. At the end of the girls’ shifts, the men would ferry them home, though sometimes the women would join them for a drinking session in the office. Occasionally the drivers would go with the girls. ‘A ride in exchange for a ride,’ it was called.

Bettina had known Parvez for three years. She lived outside the town and on the long drive home, when she sat not in the passenger seat but beside him, Parvez had talked to her about his life and hopes, just as she talked about hers. They saw each other most nights.

He could talk to her about things he’d never be able to discuss with his own wife. Bettina, in turn, always reported on her night’s activities. He liked to know where she was and with whom. Once he had rescued her from a violent client, and since then they had come to care for one another.

Though Bettina had never met the boy, she heard about Ali continually. That late night, when he told Bettina that he suspected Ali was on drugs, she judged neither the boy nor his father, but became businesslike and told him what to watch for.

‘It’s all in the eyes,’ she said. They might be bloodshot; the pupils might be dilated; he might look tired. He could be liable to sweats, or sudden mood changes. ‘Okay?’

Parvez began his vigil gratefully. Now he knew what the problem might be, he felt better. And surely, he figured, things couldn’t have gone too far? With Bettina’s help he would soon sort it out.

He watched each mouthful the boy took. He sat beside him at every opportunity and looked into his eyes. When he could he took

the boy's hand, checking his temperature. If the boy wasn't at home Parvez was active, looking under the carpet, in his drawers, behind the empty wardrobe, sniffing, inspecting, probing. He knew what to look for: Bettina had drawn pictures of capsules, syringes, pills, powders, rocks.

Every night she waited to hear news of what he'd witnessed.

After a few days of constant observation, Parvez was able to report that although the boy had given up sports, he seemed healthy, with clear eyes. He didn't, as his father expected, flinch guiltily from his gaze. In fact the boy's mood was alert and steady in this sense: as well as being sullen, he was very watchful. He returned his father's long looks with more than a hint of criticism, of reproach even, so much so that Parvez began to feel that it was he who was in the wrong and not the boy!

'And there's nothing else physically different?' Bettina asked.

'No!' Parvez thought for a moment. 'But he is growing a beard.'

One night, after sitting with Bettina in an all-night coffee shop, Parvez came home particularly late. Reluctantly he and Bettina had abandoned their only explanation, the drug theory, for Parvez had found nothing resembling any drug in Ali's room. Besides, Ali wasn't selling his belongings. He threw them out, gave them away or donated them to charity shops.

Standing in the hall, Parvez heard his boy's alarm clock go off. Parvez hurried into his bedroom where his wife was still awake, sewing in bed. He ordered her to sit down and keep quiet, though she had neither stood up nor said a word. From this post, and with her watching him curiously, he observed his son through the crack in the door.

The boy went into the bathroom to wash. When he returned to his room Parvez sprang across the hall and set his ear at Ali's door. A muttering sound came from within. Parvez was puzzled but relieved.

Once this clue had been established, Parvez watched him at other times. The boy was praying. Without fail, when he was at home, he prayed five times a day.[2]

Parvez had grown up in Lahore,[3] where all the boys had been taught the Koran. To stop him falling asleep when he studied, the Maulvis[4] had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez's hair, so that if his head fell forward he would instantly awake. After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions. Not that the other taxi drivers had more respect. In fact they made jokes about the local mullahs[5] walking around with their caps and beards, thinking they could tell people how to live, while their eyes roved over the boys and girls in their care.

Parvez described to Bettina what he had discovered. He informed the men in the taxi office. The friends, who had been so curious before, now became oddly silent. They could hardly condemn the boy for his devotions.

Parvez decided to take a night off and go out with the boy. They could talk things over. He wanted to hear how things were going at college; he wanted to tell him stories about their family in Pakistan. More than anything he yearned to understand how Ali had discovered the 'spiritual dimension', as Bettina described it.

To Parvez's surprise, the boy refused to accompany him. He claimed he had an appointment. Parvez had to insist that no appointment could be more important than that of a son with his father.

The next day, Parvez went immediately to the street where Bettina stood in the rain wearing high heels, a short skirt and a long mac[6] on top, which she would open hopefully at passing cars.

'Get in, get in!' he said.

They drove out across the moors and parked at the spot where on better days, with a view unimpeded for many miles by nothing but wild deer and horses, they'd lie back, with their eyes half closed, saying 'This is the life.' This time Parvez was trembling. Bettina put her arms around him.

'What's happened?'

'I've just had the worst experience of my life.'

As Bettina rubbed his head Parvez told her that the previous evening he and Ali had gone to a restaurant. As they studied the menu, the waiter, whom Parvez knew, brought him his usual whisky and water. Parvez had been so nervous he had even prepared a question. He was going to ask Ali if he was worried about his imminent exams. But first, wanting to relax, he loosened his tie, crunched a popadom[7] and took a long drink.

Before Parvez could speak, Ali made a face.

'Don't you know it's wrong to drink alcohol?' he said.

'He spoke to me very harshly,' Parvez told Bettina. 'I was about to castigate the boy for being insolent, but managed to control myself.'

He had explained patiently to Ali that for years he had worked more than ten hours a day, that he had few enjoyments or hobbies and never went on holiday. Surely it wasn't a crime to have a drink when he wanted one?

'But it is forbidden,' the boy said.

Parvez shrugged. 'I know.'

'And so is gambling, isn't it?'

'Yes. But surely we are only human?'

Each time Parvez took a drink, the boy winced, or made a fastidious face as an accompaniment. This made Parvez drink more quickly. The waiter, wanting to please his friend, brought another glass of whisky. Parvez knew he was getting drunk, but he couldn't stop himself. Ali had a horrible look on his face, full of disgust and censure. It was as if he hated his father.

Halfway through the meal Parvez suddenly lost his temper and threw a plate on the floor. He had felt like ripping the cloth from the table, but the waiters and other customers were staring at him. Yet he wouldn't stand for his own son telling him the difference between right and wrong. He knew he wasn't a bad man. He had a conscience. There were a few things of which he was ashamed, but on the whole he had lived a decent life.

'When have I had time to be wicked?' he asked Ali.

In a low monotonous voice the boy explained that Parvez had not, in fact, lived a good life. He had broken countless rules of the Koran.

'For instance?' Parvez demanded.

Ali hadn't needed time to think. As if he had been waiting for this moment, he asked his father if he didn't relish pork pies.[8]

'Well . . .'

Parvez couldn't deny that he loved crispy bacon smothered with mushrooms and mustard and sandwiched between slices of fried bread. In fact he ate this for breakfast every morning.

Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her, 'You're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in!'

Parvez was so annoyed and perplexed by this attack that he called for more drink.

'The problem is this,' the boy said. He leaned across the table. For the first time that night his eyes were alive. 'You are too implicated in Western civilisation.'

Parvez burped; he thought he was going to choke. 'Implicated!' he said. 'But we live here!'

'The Western materialists hate us,' Ali said. 'Papa, how can you love something which hates you?'

'What is the answer then?' Parvez said miserably. 'According to you?'

Ali addressed his father fluently, as if Parvez were a rowdy crowd that had to be quelled and convinced. The Law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; the Jews and Christers would be routed. The West was a sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug-takers and prostitutes.

As Ali talked, Parvez looked out of the window as if to check that they were still in London.

'My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn't stop there will be *jihad.*[9] I, and millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause.'

‘But why, why?’ Parvez said.

‘For us the reward will be in paradise.’

‘Paradise!’

Finally, as Parvez’s eyes filled with tears, the boy urged him to mend his ways.

‘How is that possible?’ Parvez asked.

‘Pray,’ Ali said. ‘Pray beside me.’

Parvez called for the bill and ushered his boy out of the restaurant as soon as he was able. He couldn’t take any more. Ali sounded as if he’d swallowed someone else’s voice.

On the way home the boy sat in the back of the taxi, as if he were a customer.

‘What has made you like this?’ Parvez asked him, afraid that somehow he was to blame for all this. ‘Is there a particular event which has influenced you?’

‘Living in this country.’

‘But I love England,’ Parvez said, watching his boy in the mirror. ‘They let you do almost anything here.’

‘That is the problem,’ he replied.

For the first time in years Parvez couldn’t see straight. He knocked the side of the car against a lorry,[1] ripping off the wing mirror. They were lucky not to have been stopped by the police: Parvez would have lost his licence and therefore his job.

Getting out of the car back at the house, Parvez stumbled and fell in the mud, scraping his hands and ripping his trousers. He managed to haul himself up. The boy didn’t even offer him his hand.

Parvez told Bettina he was now willing to pray, if that was what the boy wanted, if that would dislodge the pitiless look from his eyes.

‘But what I object to,’ he said, ‘is being told by my own son that I am going to hell!’

What finished Parvez off was that the boy had said he was giving up accountancy. When Parvez had asked why, Ali had said sarcastically that it was obvious.

‘Western education cultivates an anti-religious attitude.’

And, according to Ali, in the world of accountants it was usual to meet women, drink alcohol and practise usury.[2]

‘But it’s well-paid work,’ Parvez argued. ‘For years you’ve been preparing!’

Ali said he was going to begin to work in prisons, with poor Muslims who were struggling to maintain their purity in the face of corruption. Finally, at the end of the evening, as Ali was going to bed, he had asked his father why he didn’t have a beard, or at least a moustache.[3]

‘I feel as if I’ve lost my son,’ Parvez told Bettina. ‘I can’t bear to be looked at as if I’m a criminal. I’ve decided what to do.’

‘What is it?’

‘I’m going to tell him to pick up his prayer mat and get out of my house. It will be the hardest thing I’ve ever done, but tonight I’m going to do it.’

‘But you mustn’t give up on him,’ said Bettina. ‘Many young people fall into cults and superstitious groups. It doesn’t mean they’ll always feel the same way.’

She said Parvez had to stick by his boy, giving him support, until he came through.

Parvez was persuaded that she was right, even though he didn’t feel like giving his son more love when he had hardly been thanked for all he had already given.

Nevertheless, Parvez tried to endure his son’s looks and reproaches. He attempted to make conversation about his beliefs. But if Parvez ventured any criticism, Ali always had a brusque reply. On one occasion Ali accused Parvez of ‘grovelling’ to the whites; in contrast, he explained, he was not ‘inferior’; there was more to the world than the West, though the West always thought it was best.

‘How is it you know that?’ Parvez said. ‘Seeing as you’ve never left England?’

Ali replied with a look of contempt.

One night, having ensured there was no alcohol on his breath, Parvez sat down at the kitchen table with Ali. He hoped Ali would compliment him on the beard he was growing but Ali didn't appear to notice.

The previous day Parvez had been telling Bettina that he thought people in the West sometimes felt inwardly empty and that people needed a philosophy to live by.

'Yes,' said Bettina. 'That's the answer. You must tell him what your philosophy of life is. Then he will understand that there are other beliefs.'

After some fatiguing consideration, Parvez was ready to begin. The boy watched him as if he expected nothing.

Haltingly Parvez said that people had to treat one another with respect, particularly children their parents. This did seem, for a moment, to affect the boy. Heartened, Parvez continued. In his view this life was all there was and when you died you rotted in the earth. 'Grass and flowers will grow out of me, but something of me will live on—'

'How?'

'In other people. I will continue—in you.' At this the boy appeared a little distressed. 'And your grandchildren,' Parvez added for good measure. 'But while I am here on earth I want to make the best of it. And I want you to, as well!'

'What d'you mean by "make the best of it"?' asked the boy.

'Well,' said Parvez. 'For a start . . . you should enjoy yourself. Yes. Enjoy yourself without hurting others.'

Ali said that enjoyment was a 'bottomless pit'.

'But I don't mean enjoyment like that!' said Parvez. 'I mean the beauty of living!'

'All over the world our people are oppressed,' was the boy's reply.

'I know,' Parvez replied, not entirely sure who 'our people' were, 'but still—life is for living!'

Ali said, 'Real morality has existed for hundreds of years. Around the world millions and millions of people share my beliefs. Are you

saying you are right and they are all wrong?'

Ali looked at his father with such aggressive confidence that Parvez could say no more.

One evening Bettina was sitting in Parvez's car, after visiting a client, when they passed a boy on the street.

'That's my son,' Parvez said suddenly. They were on the other side of town, in a poor district, where there were two mosques.

Parvez set his face hard.

Bettina turned to watch him. 'Slow down then, slow down!' she said. 'He's good-looking. Reminds me of you. But with a more determined face. Please, can't we stop?'

'What for?'

'I'd like to talk to him.'

Parvez turned the cab round and stopped beside the boy.

'Coming home?' Parvez asked. 'It's quite a way.'

The sullen boy shrugged and got into the back seat. Bettina sat in the front. Parvez became aware of Bettina's short skirt, gaudy rings and ice-blue eye shadow. He became conscious that the smell of her perfume, which he loved, filled the cab. He opened the window.

While Parvez drove as fast as he could, Bettina said gently to Ali, 'Where have you been?'

'The mosque,' he said.

'And how are you getting on at college? Are you working hard?'

'Who are you to ask me these questions?' he said, looking out of the window. Then they hit bad traffic and the car came to a standstill.

By now Bettina had inadvertently laid her hand on Parvez's shoulder. She said, 'Your father, who is a good man, is very worried about you. You know he loves you more than his own life.'

'You say he loves me,' the boy said.

'Yes!' said Bettina.

'Then why is he letting a woman like you touch him like that?'

If Bettina looked at the boy in anger, he looked back at her with twice as much cold fury.

She said, 'What kind of woman am I that deserves to be spoken to like that?'

'You know,' he said. 'Now let me out.'

'Never,' Parvez replied.

'Don't worry, I'm getting out,' Bettina said.

'No, don't!' said Parvez. But even as the car moved she opened the door, threw herself out and ran away across the road. Parvez shouted after her several times, but she had gone.

Parvez took Ali back to the house, saying nothing more to him. Ali went straight to his room. Parvez was unable to read the paper, watch television or even sit down. He kept pouring himself drinks.

At last he went upstairs and paced up and down outside Ali's room. When, finally, he opened the door, Ali was praying. The boy didn't even glance his way.

Parvez kicked him over. Then he dragged the boy up by his shirt and hit him. The boy fell back. Parvez hit him again. The boy's face was bloody. Parvez was panting. He knew that the boy was unreachable, but he struck him nonetheless. The boy neither covered himself nor retaliated; there was no fear in his eyes. He only said, through his split lip: 'So who's the fanatic now?'

1997

Endnotes

- Note 1: From the Punjab, a South Asian region including part of Pakistan and northwestern India.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Prayer five times a day is one of the pillars of Islam.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Pakistani city in the Punjab region.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Muslim doctors of the law, teachers, or imams.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Muslim clerics.Return to reference 5

- Note 6: Mackintosh, a rainproof coat.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: South Asian spiced wafer of bread.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Pork is forbidden in Islam.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Religious struggle or duty, sometimes interpreted to mean religious war (Arabic).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Truck.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: To charge interest on a loan, a practice forbidden in Islam.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In some strict interpretations of Islam, a beard is seen as compulsory for men.Return to reference 3

CAROL ANN DUFFY
b. 1955

Carol Ann Duffy was born in Glasgow, Scotland, to an Irish mother and a Scottish father in a working-class Catholic family. After moving as a child to Stafford, England, she was educated there at St. Joseph's Convent and at Stafford Girls' High School, before studying philosophy at the University of Liverpool. She worked in television, edited a poetry magazine, and taught creative writing in London's schools, and since 1996 she has lectured at Manchester Metropolitan University. In 2009 she was appointed Britain's poet laureate, the first woman and first Scot to hold the post; she stepped down in 2019.

A playwright as well as poet, Duffy is especially skillful in her use of dramatic monologue, fashioning and assuming the voices of mythological, historical, and fictive characters, such as Medusa or Lazarus's imaginary wife. Such poetic ventriloquism is well suited to her feminist revisions of myth and history: it enables her to dramatize a silenced or marginalized female perspective, wittily playing on the ironic contrast between the traditional version of a narrative and her own. The biblical story of Lazarus's resurrection, for example, looks different from the perspective of his wife, who upon his miraculous return from the dead scoffs: "I breathed / his stench."

The author of love poetry ("Valentine"), historical poetry ("The Christmas Truce"), and political satire as well as dramatic

monologues, Duffy has a sharp eye for detail and uses it deftly in poems characterized by their sensuality, economy, and exuberance. Working in well-constructed stanzas, carefully pacing her rhythms, playing on half-rhymes, effectively conjuring the senses of touch, smell, and sight, she mobilizes the resources of traditional lyric and turns them to contemporary ends—the remaking of master narratives, the celebration of lesbian desire.

Warming Her Pearls

for Judith Radstone[1]

Next to my own skin, her pearls. My mistress
bids me wear them, warm them, until evening
when I'll brush her hair. At six, I place them
round her cool, white throat. All day I think of her,

resting in the Yellow Room, contemplating silk
or taffeta, which gown tonight? She fans herself
whilst I work willingly, my slow heat entering
each pearl. Slack on my neck, her rope.

She's beautiful. I dream about her
in my attic bed; picture her dancing
with tall men, puzzled by my faint, persistent scent
beneath her French perfume, her milky stones.

I dust her shoulders with a rabbit's foot,
watch the soft blush seep through her skin
like an indolent sigh. In her looking-glass
my red lips part as though I want to speak.

Full moon. Her carriage brings her home. I see
her every movement in my head . . . Undressing,
taking off her jewels, her slim hand reaching
for the case, slipping naked into bed, the way

she always does . . . And I lie here awake,
knowing the pearls are cooling even now
in the room where my mistress sleeps. All night
I feel their absence and I burn.

Endnotes

- Note 1: British political activist and bookseller (1925–2001). According to Radstone's obituary in *The Guardian*, the poem was inspired by a conversation with Radstone about the practice of ladies' maids increasing the luster of their mistresses' pearls by wearing them beneath their clothes.Return to reference 1

Valentine

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears
like a lover.
It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.[1]

I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring,
if you like.
Lethal.
Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

1993

Endnotes

- Note 1: Telegram delivered by a young woman with a kiss.Return to reference 1

Medusa[1]

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy
grew in my mind,
which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes,
as though my thoughts
hissed and spat on my scalp.

My bride's breath soured, stank
in the grey bags of my lungs.
I'm foul mouthed now, foul tongued,
yellow fanged.
There are bullet tears in my eyes.
Are you terrified?

Be terrified.
It's you I love,
perfect man, Greek God, my own;
but I know you'll go, betray me, stray
from home.
So better by far for me if you were stone.

I glanced at a buzzing bee,
a dull grey pebble fell
to the ground.
I glanced at a singing bird,
a handful of dusty gravel
spattered down.

I looked at a ginger cat,
a housebrick
shattered a bowl of milk.
I looked at a snuffling pig,

a boulder rolled
in a heap of shit.

I stared in the mirror.
Love gone bad
showed me a Gorgon.
I stared at a dragon.
Fire spewed
from the mouth of a mountain.

And here you come
with a shield for a heart
and a sword for a tongue
and your girls, your girls.
Wasn't I beautiful?
Wasn't I fragrant and young?

Look at me now.

1999

Endnotes

- Note 1: In Greek mythology the mortal, snake-haired gorgon with the power to turn anyone who gazed upon her into stone. Looking at her reflection in a shield given him by Athena, Perseus cut off Medusa's head as she slept.Return to reference 1

Mrs Lazarus[1]

I had grieved. I had wept for a night and a day
over my loss, ripped the cloth I was married in
from my breasts, howled, shrieked, clawed
at the burial stones till my hands bled, retched
his name over and over again, dead, dead.

Gone home. Gutted the place. Slept in a single cot,
widow, one empty glove, white femur
in the dust, half. Stuffed dark suits
into black bags, shuffled in a dead man's shoes,
noosed the double knot of a tie round my bare neck,

gaunt nun in the mirror, touching herself. I learnt
the Stations of Bereavement,[2] the icon of my face
in each bleak frame; but all those months
he was going away from me, dwindling
to the shrunk size of a snapshot, going,

going. Till his name was no longer a certain spell
for his face. The last hair on his head
floated out from a book. His scent went from the
house.
The will was read. See, he was vanishing
to the small zero held by the gold of my ring.

Then he was gone. Then he was legend, language;
my arm on the arm of the schoolteacher—the shock
of a man's strength under the sleeve of his coat—
along the hedgerows. But I was faithful
for as long as it took. Until he was memory.

So I could stand that evening in the field
in a shawl of fine air, healed, able
to watch the edge of the moon occur to the sky
and a hare thump from a hedge; then notice
the village men running towards me, shouting,

behind them the women and children, barking dogs,
and I knew. I knew by the sly light
on the blacksmith's face, the shrill eyes
of the barmaid, the sudden hands bearing me
into the hot tang of the crowd parting before me.

He lived. I saw the horror on his face.
I heard his mother's crazy song. I breathed
his stench; my bridegroom in his rotting shroud,
moist and dishevelled from the grave's slack chew,
croaking his cuckold name, disinherited, out of his
time.

1999

Endnotes

- Note 1: Lazarus was the man raised from the dead by Jesus (John 11).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Allusion to the Stations of the Cross, a series of fourteen icons (pictures or carvings) corresponding to the stages of Jesus's crucifixion and over each of which a prayer is said.Return to reference 2

The Christmas Truce[1]

Christmas Eve in the trenches of France,
the guns were quiet.
The dead lay still in No Man's Land—
Freddie, Franz, Friedrich, Frank . . .
The moon, like a medal, hung in the clear, cold sky.

Silver frost on barbed wire, strange tinsel,
sparkled and winked.
A boy from Stroud[2] stared at a star
to meet his mother's eyesight there.
An owl swooped on a rat on the glove of a corpse.

In a copse of trees behind the lines,
a lone bird sang.
A soldier-poet noted it down—*a robin*
holding his winter ground—
then silence spread and touched each man like a
hand.

Somebody kissed the gold of his ring;
a few lit pipes;
most, in their greatcoats, huddled,
waiting for sleep.
The liquid mud had hardened at last in the freeze.

But it was Christmas Eve; *believe*; belief
thrilled the night air,
where glittering rime° on unburied sons
treasured their stiff hair.
The sharp, clean, midwinter smell held memory.

On watch, a rifleman scoured the terrain—
no sign of life,
no shadows, shots from snipers,
nowt° to note or report.
The frozen, foreign fields were acres of pain.

Then flickering flames from the other side
danced in his eyes,
as Christmas Trees in their dozens shone,
candlelit on the parapets,
and they started to sing, all down the German lines.

Men who would drown in mud, be gassed, or shot,
or vaporised
by falling shells, or live to tell,
heard for the first time then—
Stille Nacht. Heilige Nacht. Alles schläft, einsam
wacht . . . [3]

Cariad,° the song was a sudden bridge
from man to man;
a gift to the heart from home,
or childhood, some place shared . . .
When it was done, the British soldiers cheered.

A Scotsman started to bawl *The First Noel*
and all joined in,
till the Germans stood, seeing
across the divide,
the sprawled, mute shapes of those who had died.

All night, along the Western Front, they sang,
the enemies—
carols, hymns, folk songs, anthems,
in German, English, French;
each battalion choired in its grim trench.

So Christmas dawned, wrapped in mist,
to open itself
and offer the day like a gift
for Harry, Hugo, Hermann, Henry, Heinz . . .
with whistles, waves, cheers, shouts, laughs.

Frohe Weinachten,[4] *Tommy! MerryChristmas, Fritz!*
A young Berliner,
brandishing schnapps,
was the first from his ditch to climb.
A Shropshire[5] lad ran at him like a rhyme.

Then it was up and over, every man,
to shake the hand
of a foe as a friend,
or slap his back like a brother would;
exchanging gifts of biscuits, tea, Maconochie's stew,

Tickler's jam[6] . . . for cognac, sausages, cigars,
beer, sauerkraut;
or chase six hares, who jumped
from a cabbage-patch, or find a ball
and make of a battleground a football pitch.°

I showed him a picture of my wife.
Ich zeigte ihm
ein Foto meiner Frau.
Sie sei schön, sagte er.[7]
He thought her beautiful, he said.

They buried the dead then, hacked spades
into hard earth
again and again, till a score of men
were at rest, identified, blessed.
Der Herr ist mein Hirt[8] *. . . my shepherd, I shall not want.*

And all that marvellous, festive day and night,
they came and went,
the officers, the rank and file,
their fallen comrades side by side
beneath the makeshift crosses of midwinter graves . . .

. . . beneath the shivering, shy stars
and the pinned moon
and the yawn of History;
the high, bright bullets
which each man later only aimed at the sky.

2011

Endnotes

- Note 1: Series of unofficial but widespread ceasefires between British and German forces along the Western Front around Christmas 1914.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Town in southwest England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Original German of "Stille Nacht," or "Silent Night," which in English is sung as "Silent night. Holy night. All is calm, all is bright . . ."Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Merry Christmas (German).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: County in the West of England. See also *A Shropshire Lad* (1896), collection of poems by English poet A. E. Housman (1859–1936).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: English jam often eaten by British troops in the trenches. "Maconochie's stew": wartime food ration from Scotland.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: I showed him a picture of my wife. He thought her beautiful, he said (German).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The Lord is my shepherd (German, Psalm 23).Return to reference 8

Notes

- °: *frost*Return to reference °
- °: *nothing (Northern English)*Return to reference °
- °: *darling (Welsh)*Return to reference °
- °: *soccer field*Return to reference °

CARYL PHILLIPS
b. 1958

"I am of, and not of, this place," repeats Caryl Phillips in a collection of essays, (2001). Born on the Caribbean island of Saint Kitts when it was still under British rule, he moved with his parents to England when he was only four months old and settled in the northern city of Leeds. Growing up Black in a predominantly White working-class community, he was the first student from his high school to attend Oxford University. After earning his B.A. in English Literature in 1979, he began making his living as a playwright, writing scripts for radio, television, and film. The success of his first novel, (1985), about a young woman who moves from the Caribbean to London with her baby and husband, enabled him to devote more energy to writing the prize-winning novels that have distinguished him as one of Britain's leading writers. The protagonist of his second novel, (1986), reverses the migration, returning to the Caribbean after twenty years in England. Since 1990, Phillips has taught predominantly in the United States, at Amherst, Barnard, and Yale.

Ever since his first novels, the voluntary and forced movement of people has remained at the empathic core of his fiction. As he remarked in an interview, his preoccupations have been "diaspora, dispossession, historical fracture, people being uprooted and displaced." Further emphasizing the mobility, displacement, and dispossession of his characters, he continued: "I am writing stories

about people who find themselves on cattle trucks, I am writing stories about people who find themselves in ships sailing to countries that they don't want to go to, I find myself writing about people who wake up in the morning and their father is gone."

Phillips is best known for his historical novels about the transatlantic slave trade and its aftermath in Britain, the Caribbean, and the United States. It is central to a series of books, including the novels *Higher Ground* (1989), *Cambridge* (1991), and *Crossing the River* (1993), as well as his nonfictional *The Atlantic Sound* (2000). Reimagining the humanity of characters who are enslaved and enslaving, selling and sold, free and in bondage, Phillips deftly interweaves multiple narratives and perspectives in his novels. Sometimes he juxtaposes the radically discontinuous viewpoints of characters whose lives are entangled yet strangely parallel. The dominant narrative voices in *Cambridge* are those of Emily Cartwright, the White daughter of a British plantation owner, horrified by what she sees on the plantation but still racist in her views, and of Cambridge, the repeatedly enslaved and freed title character. Similarly, *Crossing the River* encompasses not only the story of a formerly enslaved man and his well-intentioned former enslaver but also the diary of an eighteenth-century owner of a "slave ship."

In addition to novels that probe human psychology in the historical past, some of Phillips's fictions come closer to the present and range widely in subject matter. *The Nature of Blood* (1997) is centered on the experience of a Jewish survivor of a Nazi death camp but reaches back to the fifteenth-century Venice of Othello. *A Distant Shore* (2003) features the unlikely friendship between a White English schoolteacher and an African refugee. *Dancing in the Dark* (2005) reimagines the lives of two famous minstrel singers, Bert Williams and his partner George Walker. *Foreigners* (2007), ironically subtitled *Three English Lives*, fuses real and historical material to tell the story of three Black migrants struggling and failing to make England their home. Like other of his fictions, *In the Falling Snow* (2009) explores the struggles of Caribbean migration in

Britain, but *The Lost Child* (2015) was an unexpected departure, reimagining the orphan Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Phillips continued his direct engagement with literary history in *A View of the Empire at Sunset* (2018), which weaves a novel around the itinerant life of Gwen Williams, the young woman who would grow up to become Jean Rhys.

Although he has also written books that combine first-person essay, travelogue, and social critique, such as *The European Tribe* (1987) and *Colour Me English* (2011), Phillips prefers in his novels to be invisible, to live through his characters. In the short autobiographical story "Growing Pains," Phillips writes about his early development as a Black child in England in a voice that is at once personal and distanced, intimate and in the third person. The story traces a writer's coming of age. It is wound around a series of encounters with stories by British, Russian, White American, African American, and other writers through which the boy-turned-young-man attempts to understand his identity and purpose. It is the story of one person's maturation, as he negotiates questions of race and class in a 1960s and '70s Britain still partly in denial about its emerging multiracialism. But in the youth's cross-cultural engagements with imaginary characters in far-flung places and times, it is also a story that showcases the expansiveness of the literary imagination.

Growing Pains

A LIFE IN TEN CHAPTERS

There are ten chapters to this story.

Chapter One

He lives in Leeds, in the North of England. His is a strange school for there is a broad white line in the middle of the playground. The boys and girls from the local housing estate have to play on one side of the line. His immigrant parents own their small house and so he is instructed to play on the other side of the line. He is the only black boy in the school. When the bell signals the end of playtime the two groups, one neatly dressed, the other group more discernibly scruffy, retreat into their separate buildings. The five-year-old boy is beginning to understand difference—in the form of *class.* The final lesson of the day is story time. The neatly dressed children sit cross-legged on the floor at the feet of their teacher, Miss Teale. She begins to read them a tale about 'Little Black Sambo'.[1] He can feel eyes upon him. He now wishes that he was on the other side of the line with the scruffy children. Either that, or would the teacher please read them a different story?

Chapter Two

He is a seven-year-old boy, and he has changed schools. At this new school there are no girls. His teacher asks him to stay behind after the lesson has finished. He is told that he must take his story and show it to the teacher in the next classroom. He isn't sure if he is being punished, but slowly he walks the short way up the corridor and shows the story to the other teacher, Miss Holmes. She sits on the edge of her desk and reads it. Then Miss Holmes looks down at him, but at first no words are exchanged. And then she speaks. 'Well done. I'll hold on to this.'

Chapter Three

The eight-year-old boy seems to spend his whole day with his head stuck in books. His mother encourages him to get into the habit of going to the local library every Saturday, but he can only take out four books at a time and by Monday he has read them all. Two brothers up the street sometimes let him borrow their Enid Blyton paperbacks. The Famous Five adventure stories.[2] Julian, Dick, Anne, George and Timmy the dog are the first literary lives that he intimately engages with. However, he tells his mother that he does not understand why the boys' mother warms the Enid Blyton paperbacks in the oven when he returns them. The two brothers have mentioned something to him about germs. His mother is furious. She forbids him to borrow any more books from these two boys. He begins to lose touch with Julian, Dick, Anne, George and Timmy the dog.

Chapter Four

His parents have recently divorced. He is nine and he is spending the weekend with his father, who seems to have little real interest in his son. He senses that his father is merely fulfilling a duty, but the son needs his father's attention and so he writes a story. The story includes the words 'glistening' and 'glittering' which have a glamour that the son finds alluring. When the son eventually hands the story to his father, the father seems somewhat baffled by this offering. His father is an immigrant, this much he already understands. But it is only later that he realises that imaginative writing played no part in his father's colonial education as a subject of the British Empire. His father's rudimentary schooling never embraced poetic conceits such as those his son seems determined to indulge in. As the father hands back the story to his son, a gap begins to open up between the two of them.

Chapter Five

He is only ten years old when his father decides that it is fine to leave him all alone in his spartan flat while he goes to work the night shift at the local factory. There is no television. No radio. Nothing to seize his attention beyond the few comic books and soccer magazines that the son has brought with him from his mother's house. Then, late at night, alone in the huge double bed, he leans over and discovers a paperback in the drawer of the bedside table and he begins to read the book. It is a true story about a white American man who has made himself black in order that he might experience what it is like to be a colored man. The ten-year-old boy reads John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me*[3] and, alone in his father's double bed, he tries hard not to be afraid. That night he leaves the lights on, and in the morning he is still awake as his exhausted father slides into bed next to him.

Chapter Six

At sixteen he has no girlfriend. The truth is, his brothers aside, he has few friends of any kind, and he seldom speaks with his father or stepmother. During the long summer holiday he locks himself away in his bedroom and he reads one large nineteenth-century novel after another. He learns how to lose himself in the world and lives of others, and in this way he does not have to think about the woeful state of his own life. At the moment he is reading *Anna Karenina*.[4] Towards the end of one afternoon his heart leaps, and he has to catch his breath. He puts the book down and whispers to himself, 'My God.' His stepmother calls him downstairs for dinner. He sits at the table in silence but he cannot eat. He stares at his brothers, at his father, at his stepmother. Do they not understand? Anna has thrown herself in front of a train.

Chapter Seven

He is eighteen and he has completed his first term at university. He cannot go back to his father's house and so he travels 150 miles north to his mother's place. Mother and son have not, of late, spent much time in each other's company. His mother does not understand that her eighteen-year-old son is now, according to him, a man. They argue, and he gets in the car and drives off in a fit of frustration. He stops the car in the local park and opens his book. However, he cannot get past the sheer audacity of the first sentence of James Baldwin's *Blues for Mister Charlie*.[5] 'And may every nigger like this nigger end like this nigger—face down in the weeds!' This eighteen-year-old 'man' is completely overwhelmed by Baldwin's brutal prose. He reads this one sentence over and over and over again. And then he closes the book and decides that he should go back and make up with his mother.

Chapter Eight

His tutor has asked to see him in his office. Dr Rabbitt informs the student that he has passed the first part of his degree in Psychology, Neurophysiology and Statistics, but he reassures the student that at nineteen there is still time for him to reconsider his choice of a degree. Does he really wish to pursue psychology? The student patiently explains that he wishes to understand people, and that before university he was assiduously reading Jung and Freud for pleasure. His unmoved tutor takes some snuff, and then he rubs his beard. So you want to know about people, do you? He patiently explains to the student that William James was the first professor of psychology at Harvard, but it was his brother, Henry,[6] who really knew about people. The student looks at Dr Rabbitt, but he is unsure what to say. His tutor helps him to make the decision. 'Literature. If you want to know about people study English literature, not psychology.'

Chapter Nine

He is twenty, and for the first time since arriving in England as a four-month-old baby he has left the country. He has travelled to the United States, and crossed the huge exciting nation by Greyhound bus. After three weeks on the road, he knows that soon he will have to return to England and complete his final year of university. In California he goes into a bookstore. He buys a copy of a book that has on the cover a picture of a young man who looks somewhat like himself. He takes the book to the beach, and sits on a deckchair and begins to read. When he finishes Richard Wright's *Native Son*[7] it is almost dark, and the beach is deserted. But he now knows what he wishes to do with his life. And then, some time later, he is grateful to discover that mere ambition is fading and is being replaced by something infinitely more powerful; purpose.

Chapter Ten

He sits with his great-grandmother in the small village at the far end of St Kitts,[8] the island on which he was born twenty-eight years earlier. He has now published two novels, and on each publication day he has asked his editor to send a copy of the book to his great-grandmother. But she has never mentioned the books and so gingerly he now asks her if she ever received them? *Does* she have them? When she moves it is like watching a statue come to life. She reaches beneath the chair and slowly pulls out two brown cardboard bundles. The books are still in their packaging. She has opened the bundles, looked at the books, and then neatly replaced them. Again she opens the packaging. She fingers the books in the same way that he has seen her finger her bible. Then she looks at her great-grandson and smiles. 'I was the teacher's favourite,' she says. She was born in 1898 and so he realises that she is talking to him about life at the dawn of the twentieth century. 'And,' she continues, 'I missed a lot of school for I had to do all the errands.' Suddenly he understands what she means. She cannot read. He swallows deeply and lowers his eyes. How could he be clumsy enough to cause her this embarrassment? She carefully puts the books back in their cardboard packaging and tucks them back under the chair. She looks at her great-grandson. She doted on this boy for the first four months of his life. The great-grandson who disappeared to England. The great-grandson who all these years later now sends her stories from England.

2005

Endnotes

- Note 1: Illustrated children's book first published in 1899, featuring a highly racialized dark-skinned protagonist, by Scottish writer Helen Bannerman (1862–1946).Return to reference 1

- Note 2: Series of children’s adventure novels by English writer Enid Blyton (1897–1968).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Nonfiction book (1961) describing a six-week period in 1959 in which Griffin (1920–1980), a White man from Dallas, Texas, darkened his skin and passed as a Black man while traveling through the American South.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Novel (1878) by Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Play (1964) by American writer James Baldwin (1924–1987).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Henry James (1843–1916), American fiction writer.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Novel (1940) by American writer Richard Wright (1908–1960).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Island in the West Indies.Return to reference 8

SIMON ARMITAGE
b. 1963

Born in the village of Marsden in West Yorkshire, Simon Armitage writes poetry marked by his working-class upbringing in the rural north of England. After earning a B.A. in geography at Portsmouth University and an M.A. in social work at Manchester University, he became, like his father, a probation officer, though after six years he turned his attention from drug-rehabilitation programs to poetry. His first book of poems, *Zoom!*, was published in 1989, followed by a number of poetry collections, including *Paper Aeroplane: Selected Poems 1989–2014* (2014). His alliterative translations from Middle English of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (2007) and *The Death of King Arthur* (2012) have been widely praised. He also published a dramatic retelling of Homer's *Odyssey* (2006), and he has written novels, plays, and memoirs, including one about a walking tour in northern England and another about his obsession with popular music. Scripts for television, film, and radio have also kept him in the public eye in Britain. He has taught at a number of universities—since 2017 at the University of Leeds—and in 2015 he was elected the Oxford Professor of Poetry, a post in which his predecessors include Geoffrey Hill, Paul Muldoon, and Seamus Heaney. He was appointed Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 2019, succeeding Carol Ann Duffy.

Like Philip Larkin, Armitage writes lyric poems that take inspiration from the everyday rather than the exotic or the extreme.

In a manifesto poem, he writes of not having parachuted from a plane or visited the Taj Mahal; instead, he has skipped stones and "felt each stone's inertia / spend itself against the water; then sink"; he has "held the wobbly head of a boy / at the day centre, and stroked his fat hands" ("It Ain't What You Do, It's What It Does to You"). A poem may be about something as simple as rolling a tire down a hill, though visionary wonder may spring from such mundane sources ("The Tyre"). His diction is pitched in a colloquial register, including slang and Northern English vernacular (for example, *ginnels* and *dunch* in "Horses, M62"). But his poetry accumulates resonances through modulations of enjambment and syntax, deft deployments of internal and end rhyme, and astonishing figurative language (an old tire is compared to "gashed, rhinoceros, sea-lion skin / nursing a gallon of rain in its gut"). Revitalizing the traditional tools of the English-language lyric, Armitage can make a poem about the encounter between cars and horses on a motorway stop in its tracks ("Standstill. / Motor oil pulses. / Black blood.") or burst with a scattering force ("a riderless charge, // a flack of horseshoe and hoof"). Even as he seeks to engage the common reader, he is poet of uncommon formal virtuosity and versatility.

The Tyre

Just how it came to rest where it rested,
miles out, miles from the last farmhouse even,
was a fair question. Dropped by hurricane
or aeroplane perhaps for some reason,
put down as a cairn[1] or marker, then lost.
Tractor-size, six or seven feet across,
it was sloughed, unconscious, warm to the touch,
its gashed, rhinoceros, sea-lion skin
nursing a gallon of rain in its gut.
Lashed to the planet with grasses and roots,
it had to be cut. Stood up it was drunk
or slugged, wanted nothing more than to slump,
to spiral back to its circle of sleep,
dream another year in its nest of peat.
We bullied it over the moor, drove it,
pushed from the back or turned it from the side,
unspooling a thread in the shape and form
of its tread, in its length and in its line,
rolled its weight through broken walls, felt the shock
when it met with stones, guided its sleepwalk
down to meadows, fields, onto level ground.
There and then we were one connected thing,
five of us, all hands steering a tall ship
or one hand fingering a coin or ring.

Once on the road it picked up pace, freewheeled,
then moved up through the gears, and wouldn’t give
to shoulder-charges, kicks; resisted force
until to tangle with it would have been
to test bone against engine or machine,
to be dragged in, broken, thrown out again

minus a limb. So we let the thing go,
leaning into the bends and corners,
balanced and centred, riding the camber,[2]
carried away with its own momentum.
We pictured an incident up ahead:
life carved open, gardens in half, parted,
a man on a motorbike taken down,
a phone-box upended, children erased,
police and an ambulance in attendance,
scuff-marks and the smell of burning rubber,
the tyre itself embedded in a house
or lying in the gutter, playing dead.
But down in the village the tyre was gone,
and not just gone but unseen and unheard of,
not curled like a cat in the graveyard, not
cornered in the playground like a reptile,
or found and kept like a giant fossil.
Not there or anywhere. No trace. Thin air.

Being more in tune with the feel of things
than science and facts, we knew that the tyre
had travelled too fast for its size and mass,
and broken through some barrier of speed,
outrun the act of being driven, steered,
and at that moment gone beyond itself
towards some other sphere, and disappeared.

1997

Endnotes

- Note 1: A mound of stones raised as a monument or marker.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Tilt built into a road at a curve, allowing vehicles to maintain speed.Return to reference 2

Horses, M62[1]

Sprung from a field,
a team
of a dozen or so

is suddenly here and amongst,
silhouettes
in the butterscotch dusk.

One ghosts
between vans,
traverses three lanes,

its chess-piece head
fording the river of fumes;
one jumps the barricades

between carriageways;
a third slows
to a halt

then bends, nosing
the road, tonguing the surface
for salt.

Standstill.
Motor oil pulses.
Black blood.

Some trucker
swings down from his cab
to muster and drove;° but

unbiddable, crossbred nags
they scatter
through ginnels°

of coachwork° and chrome,
and are distant, gone,
then a dunch°

and here alongside
is a horse,
the writhing mat of its hide

pressed on the glass—
a tank of worms—
a flank

of actual horse . . .
It bolts,
all arse and tail

through a valley
of fleet saloons.°
Regrouped they clatter away,

then spooked by a horn
double back,
a riderless charge,

a flack° of horseshoe and hoof
into the idling cars,
now eyeball, nostril, tooth

under the sodium glow,
biblical, eastbound,
against the flow.

2006

Endnotes

- Note 1: Highway in northern England connecting Liverpool and Hull.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *herd*Return to reference °
- °: *narrow passageways*Return to reference °
- °: *car-body work*Return to reference °
- °: *slight collision*Return to reference °
- °: *station wagons*Return to reference °
- °: *burst*Return to reference °

The English Astronaut

He splashed down in rough seas off Spurn Point.[1]
I watched through a coin-op telescope jammed
with a lollipop stick as a trawler fished him out
of the waves and ferried him back to Mission
Control on a trading estate near the Humber Bridge.[2]
He spoke with a mild voice: yes, it was good to be
home; he'd missed his wife, the kids, couldn't wait
for a shave and a hot bath. 'Are there any more
questions?' No, there were not.

I followed him in his Honda Accord to a Little
Chef on the A1[3], took the table opposite, watched
him order the all-day breakfast and a pot of tea.
'You need to go outside to do that,' said the
waitress when he lit a cigarette. He read the paper,
started the crossword, poked at the black pudding[4]
with his fork. Then he stared through the window
for long unbroken minutes at a time, but only at the
busy road, never the sky. And his face was not the
moon. And his hands were not the hands of a man
who had held between finger and thumb the blue
planet, and lifted it up to his watchmaker's eye.

2010

Endnotes

- Note 1: Narrow sandbar off the northeast coast of England, near Hull.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Suspension bridge southwest of Hull. "Trading estate": industrial park.Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Longest highway in Britain, London to Edinburgh. “Little Chef”: chain of British diners.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Type of blood sausage.Return to reference 4

Beck[1]

It is all one chase.
Trace it back: the source
might be nothing more
than a teardrop
squeezed from a curlew's eye,
then follow it down
to the full-throated roar
at its mouth:
a dipper[°]
strolls the river
dressed for dinner
in a white bib.

The unbroken thread
of the beck
with its nose for the sea,
all flux and flex,
soft-soaping a pebble
for thousands of years,
or here
after hard rain
sawing the hillside in half
with its chain.
Or here,
where water unbinds
and hangs
at the waterfall's face,
and just for that one
stretched white moment
becomes lace.

Endnotes

- Note 1: A mountain stream; an attention-getting gesture, such as a nod or wave.Return to reference 1

Notes

- °: *small diving bird*Return to reference °

PATIENCE AGBABI
b. 1965

Born in London to Nigerian parents, Patience Agbabi became a foster child at a young age. Later describing herself as "bi-cultural," she grew up in a White English family in Sussex and Wales while maintaining a close relationship with her birth parents, with whom she also lived from time to time. She attributes her interest in moving across borders and boundaries to her dual family upbringing. She is drawn to moments of metamorphosis, and brings elements of linguistic transformation and translation into her poetry. Agbabi earned a B.A. in English with honors at Oxford and an M.A. in creative writing from the University of Sussex. She is the author of five collections of poetry, from her early autobiographical *R.A.W.* (1995) to *The Infinite* (2020).

Hailed as a "performance" or "spoken word" poet, Agbabi composes for both the stage and the page. In "Prologue" (also performed as "Word"), from her second collection, *Transformatrix* (2000), as in her other work, Agbabi's language and the forms she uses amalgamate high literary art with oral and musical traditions. The poem adapts the insistent rhyme, syncopated rhythms, and self-reflexive wordplay of hip-hop. Dotted with literary terms and techniques, it also draws on the ancient *ars poetica* tradition—poems as instruction manuals for writing poetry. Partly rap boast and partly literary manifesto, Agbabi's exuberantly hybrid art remakes and renews the disparate sources it welds together.

Agbabi's distinctive style improvises upon the history of English-language poetry. In high school she was thrilled by the General Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, which she later reimagined for a contemporary, multiracial Britain as *Telling Tales* (2014). Three poems from that collection are included here, starting with "Prologue" (Grime Mix), a rewriting of the host Harry Bailey's greeting to the pilgrims. Agbabi's version plays with readers' expectations from the first line by transforming "April showers" from a weather event into a female muse for a modern day emcee. The original *Canterbury Tales* proposed a contest between pilgrims. Whoever told the best story would be rewarded with a free dinner. Agbabi embraces the spirit of performance and competition in Chaucer's poems and brings the infectious excitement of slam poetry and rap battles to her cycle of poems. "The Kiss" (The Miller's Tale) and "What Do Women Like Bes'?" (The Wife of Bath's Tale) give voice to two self-identified femme fatales: Robyn Miller and the Nigerian immigrant Alice Ebi Bafa. Robyn's dramatic monologue makes use of single-rhymed quatrains while the Wife of Bafa speaks in free verse (a rarity in Agbabi's poetry) to convey the character's no-nonsense attitude and the cadences of Nigerian English. These formal choices translate the gleeful vulgarity and tragicomedy of the original tales into modern poetic idioms.

Telling Tales returns the *Canterbury Tales* to its roots in oral storytelling and everyday language. Agbabi's long poem "The Doll's House" unfolds in rhyme royal, the rhyme scheme first developed by Chaucer for his long poems such as *Troilus and Criseyde*. Agbabi takes as her target the Harewood House in Yorkshire, a country estate built in 1738 whose wealth and grandeur mark it as one of the "Treasure Houses" of England. "The Doll's House" revisits the stately home through the prism of the transatlantic slave trade and the sugar plantations from which its owners, the Lascelles family, profited. The stanza structure of the poem turns out to be a refined façade, and the verses renovate our perspective of the opulent country home built on enslaved people's labor. "The Doll's House" offers "a beauty whittled from harsh truth." It was shortlisted for the

Forward Prize for Best Single Poem of 2014 and participates in a larger global movement toward decolonizing sites of cultural heritage.

Prologue (Word)

Give me a word
any word
let it roll across your tongue
like a dolly mixture.°
Open your lips
say it loud
let each syllable vibrate
like a transistor.
Say it again again again again again
till it's a tongue twister
till its meaning is in tatters
till its meaning equals sound
now write it down,
letter by letter
loop the loops
till you form a structure.
Do it again again again again again
till it's a word picture.
Does this inspire?
Is your consciousness on fire?
Then let me take you higher.[1]

Give me a noun
give me a verb
and I'm in motion
cos I'm on a mission
to deliver information
so let me take you to the fifth dimension.
No fee, it's free,
you only gotta pay attention.
So sit back, relax,

let me take you back
to when you learnt to walk, talk,
learnt coordination
and communication,
mama
dada.
If you rub two words together you get friction
cut them in half, you get a fraction.
If you join two words you get multiplication.
My school of mathematics
equals verbal acrobatics
so let's make conversation.

Give me a preposition
give me an interjection
give me inspiration.
In the beginning was creation
I'm not scared of revelations
cos I've done my calculations.
I've got high hopes
on the tightrope,
I just keep talking.
I got more skills than I got melanin
I'm fired by adrenaline
if you wanna know what rhyme it is
it's feminine.
Cos I'm Eve on an Apple Mac
this is a rap attack
so rich in onomatopoeia
I'll take you higher than the ozone layer.
So give me Word for Windows
give me 'W' times three
cos I'm on a mission
to deliver information
that is gravity defying
and I'll keep on trying

till you lose your fear of flying.

Give me a pronoun
give me a verb
and I'm living in syntax.
You only need two words to form a sentence.
I am I am I am I am I am
bicultural and sometimes clinical,
my mother fed me rhymes through the umbilical,
I was born waxing lyrical.
I was raised on Watch with Mother[2]
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner[3]
and Fight the Power.[4]
Now I have the perfect tutor
in my postmodern suitor,
I'm in love with my computer.
But let me shut down
before I touch down.

Give me a word
give me a big word
let me manifest
express in excess
the M I X
of my voice box.
Now I've eaten the apple
I'm more subtle than a snake is.
I wanna do poetic things in poetic places.
Give me poetry unplugged
so I can counter silence.
Give me my poetic licence

and I'll give you metaphors that top eclipses
I'll give megabytes and megamixes.

Give me a stage and I'll cut form on it

give me a page and I'll perform on it.

Give me a word
any word.

100

2000

Endnotes

- Note 1: "I Want to Take You Higher" is the title of a song (1969) by Sly and the Family Stone.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: British children's TV series (1953–73).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Long poem (1798) by the English Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Song (1989) by the American hip-hop group Public Enemy.Return to reference 4

Notes

- °: *British candy*Return to reference °

Prologue (Grime Mix)

Harry 'Bells' Bailey[1]

When my April showers me with kisses
I could make her my missus or my mistress
but I'm happily hitched—sorry home girls—
said my vows to the sound of the Bow Bells
yet her breath is as fresh as the west wind,
when I breathe her, I know we're predestined
to make music; my muse, she inspires me,
though my mind's overtaxed, April fires me,
how she pierces my heart to the fond root
till I bleed sweet cherry blossom en route
to our bliss trip; there's days she goes off me,
April loves me not; April loves me
with a passion, dear doctor, I'm wordsick
and I got the itch like I'm allergic
but it could be my shirt's on the cheap side;
serenade overnight with my peeps wide,
nothing like her, liqueur, an elixir,
overproof that she serves as my sick cure,
she's as strong as a ram, she is Aries,[2]
see my jaw-dropping jeans, she could wear these;
see my jaw dropping neat Anglo-Saxon,[3]
I got ink in my veins more than Caxton[4]
and it flows hand to mouth, here's a mouthfeast,
verbal feats from the streets of the South-East
but my April, she blooms every shire's end,
fit or vint, rich or skint,[5] she inspires *them*
from the grime to the clean-cut iambic,[6]
rime royale,[7] rant or rap, get your slam kick.

On this Routemaster bus,[8] get cerebral,
Tabard Inn to Canterbury Cathedral,[9]
poet pilgrims competing for free picks,
Chaucer Tales, track by track, here's the remix
from below-the-belt base to the topnotch;
I won't stop all the clocks with a stopwatch
when the tales overrun, run offensive,
or run clean out of steam, they're authentic
cos we're keeping it real, reminisce this:
Chaucer Tales were an unfinished business.
May the best poet lose, as the saying goes.
May the best poet muse be mainstaying those
on the stage, on the page, on their subject:
me and April, *we're* The Rhyming Couplet.
I'm The Host for tonight, Harry Bailey,
if I'm tongue-tied, April will bail me,
I'm MC but the M is for mistress
when my April shows me what a kiss is . . .

2014

Endnotes

- Note 1: Innkeeper in *The Canterbury Tales* who suggests the storytelling competition that is the frame for the tales.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: The first astrological sign in the zodiac, symbolized by a ram.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Germanic people who migrated to England in the 5th century. *Anglo-Saxon* is sometimes used interchangeably with *Old English*.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: William Caxton, an important printer, publisher, and translator. He printed Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.*Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Having no money (British slang). “Vint”: to make wine.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Metrical feet in poetry, consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Introduced by Chaucer, a rhyming stanza of seven lines of iambic pentameter.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A double-decker bus used in London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Cathedral in Canterbury, Kent, England, where the pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales* travel to visit the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket. “Tabard Inn”: where the pilgrims gather before their journey.Return to reference 9

The Kiss

Robyn Miller[1]

Get me a pint of Southwark piss![2]
It all took place in a pub like this.
My tongue is black as licorice,
my tale is blue an it goes like this:

I'm just eighteen an newly wed.
My husband's old an crap in bed,
my lover's fit, well hung, well read,
his rival's mad, a musclehead.

Three loves I have an two are thick:
My husband John's a jealous prick,
the rival, Abs, thinks with his dick.
My lover's French, il s'appelle Nick,[3]

in his final year at Greenwich,
Engineering Astrophysics,
he's proposed but I'm a bitch,
I'd leave my husband, but he's rich.

A carpenter, an 'ancient oak'
with a heart tattoo, a real bloke's bloke,
crashed out on what he thought was coke[4]
an fifteen pints of ale. Nick's joke.

John owns the pub. We live upstairs
an every night he says his prayers,
while Nick, our lodger, flirts downstairs,
where Abs, our bouncer, sells his wares.

This Abs comes on to guys *and* girls.
He pushes weights an class A pills.[5]
Grey eyes, blond hair with baby curls
an a bod[6] as hard as the drugs he sells.

He buys me wine, real ales an Pimms.[7]
He likes his women weasel slim
with eyebrows plucked till they're pencil thin.
His gear is class: I put up with him.

But Nick's more subtle, tweets an texts,
no kiss-me-quick with a pint of Becks.[8]
Belle femme, je t'aime,[9] he says, an necks
those pills Abs recommends for sex.

Three men walk into a pub like this
but only one can kiss the kiss.
What is it makes my bottle fizz?
Je ne sais quoi my arse,[1] hear this:

What's in a kiss? I'll kiss an tell.
My husband's kiss is Southwark ale,
my lover's 'baiser'[2] 'fuck' in braille
an I'm his fucked-up femme fatale.[3]

So John's upstairs an proper pissed.
I'm in the bar with Nick. We've kissed
in English, French an every lisped
linguistic twist, you get the gist.

High on the pills that kick like tabs,[4]
we crawl around the floor like crabs,
Adam, Eve,[5] on hormone jabs,
we got The Knowledge like black cabs.

Nous faisons l'amour[6] all night,
an by six o'clock it's still not light
when Abs knocks on the window, tight,
Kiss me, babes. I say, *Alright.*

Window's open, total geared
he's tongueing me but something's weird:
too right, cos I ain't got no beard,
stead of my lips, he got my rear!

Fuck you! Storms off down the alleyway.
Then tap, tap, tap on the central bay,
Mr Am-I-straight-or-gay?
back for his petit déjeuner![7]

Àmoi![8] Nick winks, bares his behind
for Abs's probing lips to find:
then farts a fart, the deadly kind,
a blast that almost makes Abs blind!

We laugh, but Abs laughs last, the sod,[9]
Abs has a hard-on, like his bod,
he grabs Nick's arse, I swear to God,
in goes his red-hot iron rod!

Bordel de merde![1] Well sick, that kiss
cos Abs is built like an obelisk.
John wakes, falls headlong, slips a disc,
slurs, *What in great God's name is this?*

My husband's so in shock to see
the men, he sobers instantly
an doesn't even notice me
until I'm dressed. So I'm Scot-free

but Abs an Nick, he throws them out.

It's made him even more devout.
Now, when I see them, *Kiss?* I shout,
raise my eyebrows high, an pout.

So, I got fucked; John's a fuck*wit*;
an Nick my lover, fucked to shit;
an Abs scored hard, he's fucking fit;
both men were fucked by the fucked-off git.[2]

If you drink your beer in a tulip glass[3]
an kiss the air cos you think you're class
but draw the line at this French farce,
bon appétit[4]—French-kiss my arse!

2014

Endnotes

- Note 1: In *The Canterbury Tales,* the Miller is named Robyn and is the narrator of a bawdy tale meant to respond to the gentility of "The Knight's Tale."Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Alcoholic beverage (slang). "Southwark": area of London on the southern bank of the river Thames.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: His name is (French).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Cocaine (slang).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Class of drugs including amphetamines and cocaine.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Body (slang).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: English brand of gin-based liqueur.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: German brand of beer.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Beautiful woman, I love you (French).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Something that can't be described; literally "I don't know what" (French).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Kiss (French).Return to reference 2

- Note 3: Trope of a seductive woman leading her lover into a trap; literally “fatal woman” (French).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A portion of a drug, like ecstasy or LSD (slang).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: In the Bible, the first man and woman created by God.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: We make love (French).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Breakfast (French).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: My turn (French).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: An unpleasant man (British slang), formerly slang for a homosexual male.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: For fuck’s sake (French).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A foolish person (slang).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Kind of beer glass.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Enjoy your meal (French).Return to reference 4

What Do Women Like Bes'? (The Wife of Bath's Tale)[1]

Mrs Alice Ebi Bafa

My name is Mrs Alice Ebi Bafa,
I come from Nigeria.
I'm very fine, isn't it?
My nex' birthday I'll be . . . twenty-nine.
I'm business woman.
Would you like to buy some cloth?
I've all de latest styles from Lagos,[2]
Italian shoe an' handbag to match,
lace, linen an' Dutch wax.[3]
I only buy de bes'
an' I travel first class.
Some say I have blood on my han's
'cause I like to paint my nails red
but others call me femme fatale.[4]
My father had four wives
so I've had five husband.
I cast a spell with my gap-tooth smile
an' my bottom power!
Three were good and two were bad.
The first three were old and rich
an' I was young and fit.
They died of exhaustion!
The first from Ghana, second Sierra Leone,[5]
the third was white Englishman.
Short or tall, black or white,
I had race relations with dem.
They were quiet simple men
so I told lie to pepper de marriage.
Why you drink Guinness[6] *in my neighbour's house-o?*
Is she so fine in her Jimmy Shoe?[7]

You go vex if I meet Justice Bafa
in Lagos bar and off my phone! Ah-ah!
Am I Delilah to cut off your head?[8]
I accused them of fornication
when they could barely stand on their two legs.
To enter my good book, they go beg!
The fourth one was ladies' man,
I could not count his women on one han'
but he'd rage if I looked at another man.
He puff his ches' like King Solomon[9]
with wife and concubine
but woman must be faithful and sober.
Such talk is not worth one kobo![1]
I am not a feminax,[2]
I do not believe women are equal to men,
women are better!
Our chamber of Venus[3]
is for both birth and pleasure.
I was very wild when I was young.
They called me Miss Highlife,
I was not considered a good wife
but I always respected my husban'.
He died when I returned from dis London.
The fifth one I married for love.
Chief Justice 'Aboniki' Bafa.
He was studying law at University of Ibadon.[4]
He was not yet twenty-one,
wicked in bed and so handsome
but he liked pornographic magazine.
His favourite was *Playboy*.[5]
One day I threw it on fire
to teach him a lesson.
He turned into wife batterer.
He was to regret his action.
I beat him till he begged for his ancestors!

Now we get on like house on fire.
   Some say I'm a witchcraft
'cause I did not bear dem children.
They do not understand the Western medicine.
Since my first husban', from Ghana,
I had freedom of procreation.
He wanted ten children to pass my hip
but I learnt how to wield de whip.
Ghana is very advanced,
the female owns the children not de male.
This is their folktale
I tell in my own tongue:
'What Do Women Most Desire?'
   A big man soldier
resided in king's household.
But outside de compound
he saw small girl, fourteen years of age
and took her by force!
He was disgraced and sentenced to death!
They must cut off his . . . head.
In Ghana, woman was goddess.
But the queen pitied his sorrow,
she would spare his life
if he could answer question
What thing is it that women most desire?
in a year and tomorrow.
   The soldier went on his two legs.
What do women like bes'?
Some said gold coin, or fine cloth,
some said man be chilli-pepper hot,
some said freedom, some said marriage,
some said we want husband think
we can keep secret to chest.
None were correct
and he failed the brain to guess.
   The year end he mus' return.

Off road he heard beating of drum
an' saw plenty women, fit and young,
dancing in kente cloth,[6]
traditional dress of Ghana.
They must give him answer.
But they disappeared into hot air.
Only an old old madame
suffering from eyes, leg rough like yam.
Greetings, Nana! I beg you your wisdom.
What is the greatest desire of women?
She smiled, *I reveal secret!*
But sozaboy,[7] *promise*
to grant my bes' wish.
He gives her his word.
The old madame is elated.
Nex' day old and young congregated
to hear soldier response.
Even mosquito quiet for his reply:
Women desire to have sovereignty
over their husbands, or lovers.
They want to have mastery over him.
If I lie, I forfeit my head for sin.
The palace sings jubilation.
No woman can contradict him,
wife, widow or virgin.
But the old madame with eyes
must have her wish:
That he must take her hand in marriage!
He think say it worse than death
but soldier mus' honour his debt.
That night old madame be smiling in bed.
It pain him to look his newlywed.
Husban', pay your dues to wife!
Am I too poor for love?
I can amen' myself, Sir,

but you must amen' yourself also.
Your family not give virtue, dat from God.
Your pride not worth one cedi!
You say I old. Respect your elder!
And if I ugly, I not take lover.
Ugliness an' age keep me chaste.
Still he refuse to look her face.
I make amen', my husban'. Choose!
I remain ugly an' old
an' faithful to your body,
What a dilemma!
He frown till he resemble old papa.
My wife, he says, *Choose for your husband.*
I place myself in your capable hands.
This so pleases the old old madame.
Kiss me, my husban', so handsome!
You have given me power you should.
I shall be both beautiful an' good.
Look my face when cock crow,
I am very pleasing to you.
Her prophecy came to pass
and the marriage consummated in bliss . . .
So she married a rapist
but he learnt his lesson.
May God give us young submissive husband!
You like my headtie?
It's de latest fashion.
They sell like hot cake on Victoria Island.[8]
Fifty pounds.
I give you discount 'cause I like your smile.
The quality is very good.
If I take off more I will not make profit
an' I travel to Lagos nex' week.
Make it my lucky day.
Please, I beg you!

Endnotes

- Note 1: Female narrator who has been married five times in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*; she gives rare insight into how women should navigate the institution of marriage.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Largest city in Nigeria.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: A type of cotton fabric common in African textiles.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Trope of a seductive woman leading her lover into a trap; literally "fatal woman" (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Countries in West Africa.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Irish brand of beer.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Reference to Jimmy Choo, a luxury brand of shoes.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: In the Hebrew Bible, the lover of Samson who is bribed to find the source of his strength. When she learns it is his hair, she orders a servant to cut Samson's hair. Delilah is associated with treacherous women.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: In the Old Testament and Hebrew Bible, a king of Israel.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Denomination of Nigerian currency.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Possible pun on "feminist" and Feminax, a pill to relieve menstrual pain.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: In Roman mythology, the goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Oldest university in Nigeria.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Magazine known for nude and semi-nude photos of women.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Ghanian fabric hand woven from lengths of colorful cotton and silk.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Pronunciation spelling of *soldier boy.*Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Affluent area of Lagos, Nigeria.Return to reference 8

The Doll's House

The source of the wealth that built Harewood[1] *is historical fact. There is nothing anyone can do to change the past, however appalling or regrettable that past might be. What we can do, however, what we must do, is engage with that legacy and in so doing stand a chance of having a positive effect on the future.*—David Lascelles[2]

Art is a lie that makes us realise truth.—Pablo Picasso[3]

Welcome to my house, this stately home
where, below stairs, my father rules as chef:
confecting, out of sugar-flesh and -bone,
decor so fine, your tongue will treble clef
singing its name. Near-sighted and tone-deaf,
I smell-taste-touch; create each replica
in my mind's tongue. My name? Angelica.

This is my world, the world of haute cuisine:
high frosted ceilings, modelled on high art,
reflected in each carpet's rich design;
each bed, each armchair listed a la carte.
Come, fellow connoisseur of taste, let's start
below stairs, where you'll blacken your sweet tooth,
sucking a beauty whittled from harsh truth . . .

Mind your step! The stairway's worn and steep,
let your sixth senses merge in the half-light . . .
This muted corridor leads to the deep
recesses of the house. Here, to your right,
my father's realm of uncurbed appetite—
private! The whiff of strangers breaks his spell.

Now left, to the dead end. Stop! Can you smell

cinnamon, brown heat in the afternoon
of someone else's summer? This rust key
unlocks the passage to my tiny room,
stick-cabin, sound-proofed with a symphony
of cinnamon; shrine to olfactory
where I withdraw to paint in cordon bleu,[4]
shape, recreate this house; in miniature

All art is imitation: I'm a sculptor
of past-imperfect; hungry, I extract
molasses; de- and reconstruct high culture
from base material; blend art and fact
in every glazed and glistening artefact
housed in this doll's house. Stately home of sugar.
Of Demerara[5] cubes secured with nougat.

Look at its hall bedecked with royal icing—
the ceiling's crossbones mirrored in the frieze,
the chimneypiece. The floor is sugar glazing
clear as a frozen lake. My centrepiece
statute of Eve, what a creative feast!
A crisp Pink Lady,[6] sculpted with my teeth,
its toffee glaze filming the flesh beneath.

The music room's my favourite. I make music
by echoing design: the violet-rose
piped ceiling is the carpet's fine mosaic
of granulated violet and rose,
aimed to delight the eye, the tongue, the nose.
Even the tiny chairs are steeped in flavour
delicate as a demisemiquaver.[7]

Taste, if you like, sweet as a mothertongue . . .
See how this bedroom echoes my refrain:

the chairs, the secretaire, commode, chaise longue,
four-poster bed, all carved from sugarcane;
even the curtains that adorn its frame,
chiselled from the bark, each lavish fold
drizzled with tiny threads of spun ‘white gold’.

The library was hardest. How to forge
each candied volume wafer-thin, each word
burnt sugar. In the midnight hours, I’d gorge
on bubbling syrup, mouth its language; learned
the temperature at which burnt sugar burned,
turned sweet to bitter; inked a tiny passage
that overflowed into a secret passage,

the Middle Passage;[8] made definitive
that muted walkway paved with sugar plate,
its sugar-paper walls hand-painted with
hieroglyphs invisible as sweat
but speaking volumes; leading to the sweet
peardrop of a stairwell down and down
to this same room of aromatic brown

in miniature. Here, connoisseur, I’ve set
the doll, rough hewn from sugarcane’s sweet wood:
her choker, hardboiled sweets as black as jet;
her dress, molasses-rich; her features, hard.
This handcarved doll, with sugar in her blood—
Europe, the Caribbean, Africa;
baptised in sugar, named Angelica,

has built a tiny house in Demerara
sugar grains secured with sugarpaste,
each sculpted room a microscopic mirror
of its old self; and below stairs, she’s placed
a blind doll with kaleidoscopic taste,

who boils, bakes, moulds, pipes, chisels, spins and
blows
sugar, her art, the only tongue she knows.

2014

Endnotes

- Note 1: Harewood House, a country house in England built in 1759 for a plantation owner and enslaver.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Eighth Earl of Harewood; worked as a film and television producer.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Major Spanish painter (1851–1973) associated with the modernist movement of Cubism.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Blue ribbon (French).Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Historical region previously a Dutch and then British colony, now part of the country of Guyana. Demerara sugar is raw sugar extracted from sugarcane and originated in the colony.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A variety of apple.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In music, a thirty-second note.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: The stage of the transatlantic slave trade where enslaved Africans were transported from Africa to the Americas across the Atlantic Ocean.Return to reference 8

RACHEL CUSK
b. 1967

Rachel Cusk was born in Saskatoon, Canada, to affluent British parents. Her father, a Protestant, converted to Catholicism prior to marrying her mother and the Cusk children were raised Catholic. Cusk lived briefly in Canada and Los Angeles, California, before moving to Suffolk, England, in 1974. She recalls moving frequently as a child and associating relocation with her family's discomfort with emotional confrontation. Rather than address difficult feelings, they would simply change settings. Cusk attended St. Mary's, a convent boarding school in Cambridge, and studied English at New College, Oxford. She has taught Creative Writing at Kingston University.

Cusk's early novels *Saving Agnes* (1993), which won the Whitbread First Novel Award, *The Temporary* (1995), and *The Country Life* (1997) feature young, well-educated women as their protagonists. Each of these women shares a sense of dissatisfaction and lack of direction: they are not living up to their potential. Cusk delves into the consciousness of her characters with a satire and wit that illuminates the gap between their desire for iconoclasm and their tendency to fall back into the roles of conventional femininity. Such protagonists are vulnerable to self-delusion, and Cusk's cool, sometimes cruel, narrative voice uses their own ruminations to skewer them.

Moving between fiction and autobiography in the early 2000s, Cusk continued to explore the compromises and disappointments of

the privileged classes. *In the Fold* (2006) and *Arlington Park* (2006) explore the ennui of parents, especially wives and mothers who find little reward in the mundanity of their suburban lives. In this period, Cusk also published a searing memoir about pregnancy. In *A Life's Work: On Becoming a Mother* (2001), she contextualizes the experience of her first pregnancy within the public culture of motherhood. She finds such a culture, with its parenting manuals, dietary guidelines, and standards of achievement, to be conformist to its core. Further, it belittles the loss of female freedom as one's body becomes the object of another's needs, expectations, and demands: "My sex has become an exiguous, long-laid, lovingly furnished trap into which I have inadvertently wandered and from which now there is no escape. I have been tagged, as if electronically, by pregnancy. My womanly movements are being closely monitored." Cusk's dissection of sex and gender opens up meditations on the buried monstrosities of motherhood and the panic that issues from its confinements.

Cusk's memoirs allude to the absence of pregnant women and struggling mothers from canonical literature and how that literary invisibility compounds the sense of erasure she felt during her own early days of motherhood. Rather than regard marriage and motherhood as essential conditions of female accomplishment, she gives written form to the negative and improper feelings that accompany them. She also admits failure in *Aftermath: On Marriage and Separation* (2012), which chronicled the dissolution of her first marriage and laid the groundwork for the experimental shift that would characterize her most important work to date: *The Outline Trilogy*.

Consisting of *Outline* (2014), *Transit* (2016), and *Kudos* (2018), *The Outline Trilogy* established Cusk as a leading writer of "autofiction," a subgenre of the novel in which the distinction between the author and the protagonist is deliberately blurred. While autobiographical novels are nothing new (as James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* attest), twenty-first-century novelists associated with autofiction (for

example, Sheila Heti, Karl Ove Knausgård, and Ben Lerner) have expressed doubt about the capacity of the novel to represent reality. They turn instead to a highly personal interrogation of the writing process and question the foundational components of the novel as a genre. Cusk in particular has professed her lack of interest in the components of character and plot. She regards these elements of the novel as artifices of fiction-writing rather than the necessary formal devices for creating a literary work authentic to life.

Cusk published excerpts of *The Outline Trilogy* in *The Paris Review* while completing each volume. "Freedom" is one such excerpt that shows the relationship between choice and constraint to be more complicated than a simple opposition. Set in an upscale hair salon, it features a female first-person narrator whose primary role is to observe and become a medium for others, in this case, her hair stylist, to reflect on their own lives. Such a technique serves to establish and then question the truth of perception until the ground beneath the storyteller's feet falls away. As Cusk's style reveals itself, the reader, like the narrator, observes how ordinary choices, such as the decision to color graying hair, can lead to minor constraint, and how minor constraint can portend the extraordinary need for release.

Freedom

I asked Dale whether he could try to get rid of the gray.

It was growing dark outside, and the rain against the salon's big windows looked like ink running down a page. The traffic crawled along the blackened road beyond. The cars all had their lights on. Dale was standing behind me in the mirror, lifting long, dry fistfuls of hair and then letting them fall. His eyes were moving all over my image with a devouring expression. His face was portentous, and I watched it in the glass.

"There's nothing wrong with a few sparkles," he said reproachfully.

The other stylist, who was standing behind a customer at the next chair, half closed her long sleepy lids and smiled.

"I get mine done," she said. "A lot of people do."

"We're talking about a commitment," Dale said. "You have to keep coming back every six weeks. That's a life sentence," he added darkly, his eyes meeting mine in the mirror. "I'm just saying you need to be sure."

The other stylist looked at me sidelong with her sphinxlike smile.

"A lot of people don't find that a problem," she said. "Their lives are mostly commitments anyway. At least if it makes you feel good, that's something."

Dale asked whether my hair had ever been dyed before. The dye could accumulate, apparently, and the hair become synthetic looking and dull. It was the accumulation rather than the color itself that resulted in an unnatural appearance. People bought box after box of those home dyeing kits in search of a lifelike shade, and all they were doing was making their hair look more and more like a matted wig. But that was apparently preferable to a natural touch of frost. In fact, where hair was concerned, Dale said, the fake generally seemed to be more real than the real: so long as what they saw in

the mirror wasn't the product of nature, it didn't seem to matter to most people if their hair looked like a shop-front dummy's. Though he did have one client, an older lady, who wore her gray hair loose all the way to her waist. Like an elder's beard, her hair struck Dale as her wisdom: she carried herself like a queen, he said, streaming power in the form of this gray mane. He lifted my hair again in his hands, holding it aloft and then letting it drop, while we looked at each other in the mirror.

"We're talking about your natural authority," Dale said.

The woman in the next chair was reading *Glamour* magazine with an expressionless face, while the other stylist's fingers worked at her intricately tinseled head, painting each strand of hair and folding it into a neat foil parcel. The stylist was diligent and careful, though her client didn't once glance up to look.

The salon was a lofty, white, brilliantly lit room with white-painted floorboards and baroque, velvet-upholstered furniture. The tall mirrors had elaborately carved white-painted frames. The light came from three big branching chandeliers that hung from the ceiling and were duplicated in dazzling reflection all around the mirrored walls. It stood in a row of dingy shops and fast-food outlets and hardware stores. The big plate-glass shop front sometimes rattled when a heavy vehicle passed outside.

In the mirror, Dale's expression was unyielding. His own hair was a dark, artful mop of gray-streaked curls. He was somewhere in his mid-forties, tall and narrow, with the elegant, upright bearing of a dancer. He wore a dark, closely fitted jersey that showed the suggestion of a potbelly above his lean hips.

"It doesn't fool anyone, you know," he said. "It just makes it obvious that you've got something to hide."

I said that seemed preferable to having what you wished hidden on public display.

"Why?" Dale said. "What's so terrible about looking like what you are?"

I didn't know, I said, but it was obviously something a lot of people feared.

"You're telling me," Dale said glumly. "A lot of people," he went on, "say it's because what they see in the mirror doesn't feel like them. I say to them, Why doesn't it? I say, What you need isn't a color wash, it's a change of attitude. I think it's the pressure," Dale said. "What people are frightened of," he said, lifting the back of my hair to look underneath, "is being unwanted."

At the other end of the room, the big glass door jangled open and a boy of twelve or thirteen came in out of the darkness. He left the door standing ajar and the cold wet air and roaring noise of traffic came in great gusts into the warm, lit-up salon.

"Can you close the door, please?" Dale called in a peevish voice.

The boy stood, frozen, a panicked expression on his face. He wore no coat, only a gray school shirt and trousers. His shirt and hair were wet from the rain. A few seconds later, a woman came in after him through the open door and closed it carefully behind her. She was very tall and upright, with a large, angular face and mahogany-colored hair carefully cut in a bob that hung exactly at the square line of her jaw. Seeing her, the boy raised his hand to plaster his own hair sideways over his forehead. The woman stood for a moment, her large eyes moving around the room, and then she said to the boy:

"Go on then. Go and give them your name."

The boy looked at her with a pleading expression. His shirt was undone at the collar, and a patch of his pale, bony chest could be seen. His arms hung by his sides, the palms opened in protest.

"Go on," she said.

Dale asked whether I was ready to have my hair washed; he would go through the color charts while I was gone and see if he could find a match. Nothing too dark, he said; I'm thinking more browns and reds, something lighter. Even if it's not what you naturally are, he said, I think you'll look more real that way. He called across to the girl who was sweeping the floors that there was a customer ready to go down. She automatically stopped sweeping and leaned the broom against the wall.

"Don't leave it there," Dale said. "Someone might trip over it and hurt themselves."

Again automatically, she turned around and, retrieving the broom, stood there holding it.

"In the cupboard," Dale said wearily. "Just put it in the cupboard."

She went away and returned empty-handed, and then came to stand beside my chair. I rose and followed her down some steps to the warm, lightless alcove where the sinks were. She fastened a nylon cape around my shoulders, and then arranged a towel on the edge of the sink so that I could lean back.

"Is that all right?" she said.

The water came in a spray, with alternating passages of hot and cold. I closed my eyes, following the successions and returns, the displacement of one temperature by another and then its reinstatement: they were so different from one another, yet each was mildly uncomfortable to the same degree. The girl rubbed shampoo over my head with tentative fingers. Later she tugged a comb through the hair and I waited, as though waiting for someone to untangle a mathematical problem.

"There you are," she said finally, stepping back from the sink.

I thanked her and returned to the salon, where Dale was absorbedly mixing a paste with a small paintbrush in a pink plastic dish. The boy was now sitting in the chair next to mine, and the *Glamour*-reading woman had withdrawn, her hair still in its foil parcels, to the sofa by the window, where she continued to turn the pages expressionlessly one after another. Next to her sat the woman who had come in with the boy. She was tapping at the screen of her mobile phone; a book lay beside her on the seat. The other stylist was leaning with her elbow on the reception desk, a cup of coffee beside her, talking to the receptionist.

"Sammy," Dale called to her, "your client's waiting."

Sammy exchanged a few more remarks with the receptionist and then ambled back to the chair.

"So," she said, putting her hands on the boy's shoulders so that he involuntarily flinched. "What's it going to be, then?"

"Do you ever get the feeling," Dale said to me, "that if you weren't there to make things happen, it would all just go tits-up?"[1]

I said it seemed to me that just as often the reverse was true: people could become more capable when the person they relied on to tell them what to do wasn't there.

"I must be doing something wrong then," Dale said. "This lot couldn't run a bath without my help."

He picked up one of a set of silver clips and fastened it to a section of my hair. The dye would need to stay in for at least half an hour, he said: he hoped I wasn't in a hurry. He took a second clip and isolated another section. I watched his face in the mirror as he worked. He took a third clip and held it between his lips while he separated one strand of hair from another.

"Actually I'm in no particular rush myself," he said presently. "My date for this evening just canceled. Luckily," he said, "as it turns out."

In the next-door chair, the boy sat staring interestedly at himself in the mirror.

"What do you fancy?" Sammy said. "Mohican?[2] Buzz cut?"

He gave a sort of twitch of his shoulders and looked away. He had a soft, sallow face, with a long, rounded nose that gave him a ruminative expression. A strange, secretive smile was forever playing around his plump pink mouth. Finally he murmured something, so quietly that it was inaudible.

"What's that?" Sammy said.

She bent her head down toward him but he failed to repeat it.

"Strange as it might sound," Dale was saying, "I was quite relieved. And this is a person I really like." He paused while he fastened a section of hair with a clip. "I just keep getting this feeling more and more these days"—he paused again to fasten another —"that it's more trouble than it's worth."

What was, I asked him.

"Oh, I don't know," he said, "maybe it's just an age thing. I just feel like I can't be bothered."

There had been a time, he went on, when the prospect of spending an evening alone would have terrified him, would actually have seemed so weird and immense and empty that he would have gone anywhere and done anything just to avoid it. But now he found that he'd just as soon be on his own.

"And if other people have a problem with that," he said, "like I say, I can't be bothered with them."

I watched his dark figure in the glass, the fastidiousness of his quick fingers, the concentration on his long, narrow face. Behind him, the receptionist was approaching with a phone in her hand. She tapped his shoulder and held it out to him.

"For you," she said.

"Ask them to leave a message," Dale said. "I'm with a client."

The receptionist went away again and he rolled his eyes.

"I persist in the belief that this is a creative job," he said. "But sometimes you have to wonder."

He knew quite a lot of creative people, he went on after a while. It was just a type he happened to get on with. He had one friend in particular, a plumber, who made sculptures in his spare time. These sculptures were constructed entirely from materials he used in his plumbing job: lengths of pipe, valves and washers, drains, waste traps, you name it. He had a sort of blowtorch he used to heat the metal and bend it into different shapes.

"He makes them in his garage," Dale said. "They're actually quite good. The thing is, he can only do it when he's off his trolley."[3]

He took a new section of hair and began to fix the clips around it.

On what, I said.

"Crystal meth," Dale said. "The rest of the time he's quite a normal bloke. But like I say, in his spare time he gets himself tanked up on crystal meth and locks himself in his garage. He says that sometimes he'll wake up on his garage floor in the morning and there'll be this thing beside him that he's made and he's got no memory at all of making it. He can't remember a thing. It must be

really strange," Dale said, inserting the last clip with pincer-like fingers. "Like seeing a part of yourself that's invisible."

He liked his friends—he thought he might have given me the wrong impression earlier—though he knew plenty of people who were still carrying on at forty the way they had been at twenty-five: he actually found it slightly depressing, the spectacle of grown men frenziedly partying, still shoving things up their noses and whirling like brides on packed dance floors; personally, he had better things to do.

He straightened up and examined his work in the mirror, his fingertips resting lightly on my shoulders.

"The thing is," he said, "that kind of life—the parties, the drugs, the staying up all night—is basically repetitive. It doesn't get you anywhere and it isn't meant to, because what it represents is freedom." He picked up the pink plastic dish and stirred its contents with the paintbrush. "And to stay free," he said, coating the brush with the thick brown paste, "you have to reject change."

I asked him what he meant by that, and he stood for a moment with his eyes fixed on mine in the mirror, the paintbrush suspended in midair. Then he looked away again, taking a strand of hair and applying the paste to it with careful strokes.

"Well it's true, isn't it," he said, somewhat petulantly.

I said I wasn't sure: when people freed themselves, they usually forced change on everyone else. But it didn't necessarily follow that to stay free was to stay the same. In fact, the first thing people sometimes did with their freedom was to find another version of the thing that had imprisoned them. Not changing, in other words, deprived them of what they'd gone to such trouble to attain.

"It's a bit like a revolving door," Dale said. "You're not inside and you're not outside. You can stay in it going round and round for as long as you like, and as long as you're doing that you can call yourself free." He laid aside the strand of painted hair and began to paint a new section. "All I'm saying," he said, "is that freedom is overrated."

Next door to us, Sammy was running her fingers through the boy's dark, unruly hair, feeling its texture and its length, while his eyes looked sideways in alarm. His hands gripped the chrome armrests of his chair. She swept the hair first to one side, then the other, looking closely at him in the mirror, then picked up her comb and made a neat parting down the middle. The boy looked immediately anxious and Sammy laughed.

"I'll leave it like that, shall I?" she said, "Don't panic, only joking. It's just so that I can get it the same length on both sides. You don't want to go around with your hair all different lengths, do you?"

The boy looked away again silently.

"What's it called," Dale said, "when you have one of those bloody great blinding flashes of insight that changes the way you look at things?"

I said I wasn't sure: a few different words sprang to mind.

Dale twitched his paintbrush irritably.

"It's something to do with a road," he said.

Road to Damascus,[4] I said.

"I had a road to Damascus moment," he said. "Last New Year's Eve, of all times. I bloody hate New Year's. That was part of it, realizing that I bloody hated New Year's Eve."

A group of them had been at his flat, he said. They were getting ready to go out, and he starting thinking about the fact that he hated it and thinking that everyone else probably hated it, too, but that no one was prepared to say so. When everyone had their coats on, he announced that he'd decided to stay at home.

"I just suddenly couldn't be bothered," he said.

Why not, I said.

For a long time he didn't reply, painting the strands of hair one after another until I thought he either hadn't heard my question or was choosing to ignore it.

"I was sitting there on my sofa," he said, "and it just suddenly happened."

He stirred the paintbrush in the dish, coating each side again carefully with the brown paste.

"It was this bloke," he said. "I didn't really know him. He was sitting there doing lines[5] that he'd laid out all neatly for himself on the coffee table. I suddenly just felt really sorry for him. I don't know what it was about him," Dale said. "He'd lost all his hair, poor bastard."

He unclipped a new section and began to paint it. I watched the way he distributed the paste all along the strand in even strokes. He started at the root but became more meticulous the further away from it he got, as though he had learned to resist the temptation to concentrate his labors there at the beginning.

"He had this funny, pudgy little face," Dale said, pausing with his paintbrush in the air. "It must have been the combination of the baldness and the funny face that did it. I thought, That bloke looks like a baby. What's a baby doing sitting on my sofa shoving coke up his nose? And once I'd started seeing it that way, I couldn't stop. Suddenly they all started looking like that. It was a bit like being on acid," he said, dipping his paintbrush again in the dish, "if I can cast my mind back that far."

Sammy had started gingerly snipping the boy's hair with a pair of scissors.

"What sort of things are you into, then?" she asked him.

He gave a little shrug, the secretive smile on his lips.

"Football?" she said. "Or the what's it called—the Xbox.[6] All you boys are into those, aren't you? Do you play Xbox with your friends?"

The boy shrugged again.

Everyone obviously thought he was completely mad, Dale went on, for staying at home while all of them went off clubbing. He had had to pretend he was ill. Once upon a time it would have terrified him, the prospect of spending New Year's Eve alone, but on this occasion he couldn't get rid of them fast enough. He suddenly felt he'd seen through it, seen through them all. What he'd realized in his Damascene moment was that the people in his sitting room—

himself included—weren't adults: they were children in overgrown bodies.

"And I don't mean," he said, "to sound patronizing when I say that."

"My little girl's about your age," Sammy was saying to the boy in the next chair. "You're what, eleven, twelve?"

The boy did not reply.

"You look about the same age as her," Sammy said. "With her and her friends it's all makeup and boys now. You'd think they're a bit young to be starting all that, wouldn't you? But you can't stop them. The problem with girls," she went on, "is they don't have as many hobbies as boys. They don't have as many things to do. They sit around talking while the boys are out playing football. You wouldn't believe," she said, "how complicated their relationships are already. It's all that talking: if they were outside running around they wouldn't have time for all the politics." She moved around the back of his chair, still snipping. "Girls can be quite nasty, can't they?"

The boy glanced over at the woman he had come in with. She had put down her phone and was now sitting reading her book.

"That your mum?" Sammy said.

The boy nodded.

"She must find you quiet," Sammy said. "My daughter never shuts up. Can you hold your head still, please?" she added, pausing the scissors in mid-air. "I can't cut it if you keep moving your head. No," she went on, "she never stops talking, my daughter. She's yakking all day from morning to night, on the phone to her friends."

While she spoke, the boy was moving his eyes up and down and from side to side while his head remained motionless, as if he were having an eye test.

"It's all about your friends at your age, isn't it?" Sammy said.

By now it was completely dark outside. Inside the salon, all the lights were on. There was music playing, and the droning sound of passing traffic could be faintly heard from the street. There was a great bank of glass shelves against one wall where hair products

stood for sale in pristine rows, and when a lorry[7] passed too close outside, it shuddered slightly and the jars and bottles rattled in their places. The room had become a chamber of reflecting surfaces while the world outside became opaque. Everywhere you looked, there was only the reflection of what was already there. Often I had walked past the salon in the dark and had glanced in through the windows. From the darkness of the street, it was almost like a theater, with the characters moving around in the bright light of the stage.

After that episode, Dale said, he had had a period in which every time he saw someone he knew or spoke to them—and increasingly with people he didn't know, with clients or strangers in the street—he was literally plagued by this sense of them as children in adults' bodies. He saw it in their gestures and mannerisms, in their competitiveness, their anxiety, their anger and joy, most of all in their needs, both physical and emotional: even the people he knew who were in stable partnerships—relationships he had once envied for their companionship and intimacy—now looked to him like no more than best friends in the playground. For weeks he went around in a sort of fog of pity for the human race, "like some bloke from the Middle Ages wandering about in sackcloth[8] ringing a bell." It was quite disabling, he said: some days he actually felt physically weak and could barely drag himself to the salon. People assumed he was depressed, "and maybe I was," Dale said, "but I knew I was doing something I had to do, I was going somewhere, and I wasn't going back if it bloody killed me." At the end of it, he felt empty, in the sense of minimalism, like he'd had a massive mental clear-out. Thinking back to that New Year's Eve, what he'd felt was that there had been something enormous in the room that everyone else was pretending wasn't there.

I asked him what it was.

He was squatting down behind me by now, painting the hair at the back, so I couldn't see his face. After a while he stood up, reappearing in the mirror with the plastic dish in one hand and the paintbrush in the other.

"Fear," he said. "And I thought, I'm not running away from it. I'm going to stay here until it's gone." He scrutinized the painted hair from all sides, like an artist examining a finished canvas. "It shouldn't be long now," he said. "We'll leave it to settle in for a bit."

He just had to go and make a quick call, if I would excuse him. He had his nephew staying with him at the moment; he ought to let him know that his plans for this evening had changed and that he'd be home after all.

"With any luck," Dale said, "he might even have found it in himself to cook something."

I asked where his nephew had come from, and he said Scotland.

"And not one of the trendy bits," he said. "For some reason my sister keeps herself in the arse-end of nowhere." He'd been there once or twice to visit her, and it was only forty-eight hours before he was seriously considering talking to the sheep.

The nephew was a funny fellow, Dale said: everyone had decided he was autistic or had Asperger's or whatever it is people call you these days when you're not like everyone else. He'd left school with no qualifications: when Dale went up to visit, he was unemployed and would sit throwing rocks down the hill into the quarry for amusement.

"He's changed a bit since then, fortunately. The other night he even asked me whether I'd used fresh herbs in the pasta sauce, or 'just' "—Dale made the inverted commas with his fingers—"the dried ones."

I asked how the boy had ended up coming to London, and Dale said it was after a conversation he'd had with his sister. She told him the boy had started saying things to her that were freaking her out, that he felt he was living in the wrong body or living in the wrong person or something like that.

"He doesn't say a word in months," Dale said, "and then he suddenly comes out with that. She didn't know what to make of it. She asked me what I thought it meant." He shrugged. "I'm a hairdresser," he said, "not a psychologist." He picked at a few stray strands on my head. "But obviously I had a hunch. I told him if he

could pack a bag and get himself on a train, he could stay with me in London. I said to him, I'm not looking for company: I like my life just the way it is. I've got a nice flat and a nice business and I want to keep them that way. You'd have to do your share, I said, and I'm not putting someone up who doesn't work, because I'm not a bloody charity. But you'd have your freedom, I said, and London's a big place. If you can't find what you're looking for here, you won't find it anywhere. And a week later," Dale said, "the doorbell rings and there he is."

He hadn't been entirely surprised, he admitted: his sister had tipped him off a couple of days earlier, "just so I'd have time to hide anything she might not approve of." And for those two days, he did find himself having some second thoughts. He wandered around the rooms of his flat, noticing their cleanliness and order; he savored the peace of the place, his freedom to come and go as he liked, to return home after work and find it all just as he had left it. "The idea," he said, "of having someone always there, someone I had to talk to and clean up after, someone I would basically have responsibility for, because at sixteen you're really still a child and this one had never been outside a tiny Scottish village in his life: well, you get my drift," Dale said. "I thought, I must be insane, giving all this up."

I asked whether any of those fears had been realized, and he was silent for a moment. I watched him in the mirror, his arms crossed over his stomach, where the faint paunch stood out from his lean, wolflike frame.

Obviously at the beginning, he said, they'd had some moments. He had to teach his nephew to do things as he liked them done, and nobody learns in an instant: he of all people knew that, from training up novices at the salon. You need time, he said, time and consistency. But it had been two months now, and they rubbed along together quite well. The boy had found work as a trainee mechanic; he had a bit of a budding social life, and even came out clubbing with Dale on occasion.

"When I can be bothered to put away the pipe and slippers," Dale said, "and haul myself out the door. Shared life," he went on, "can never be the same as being on your own. You lose something," he said, "and I don't know if you ever get it back. One day he'll leave, and the thought has occurred to me that I'll probably miss him; that the place might feel empty, where before it felt complete. I might have given up more than I bargained for," he said. "But you can't stop people coming in," he said, "and you can't ask what's in it for you when they do."

He crossed to the reception desk to get his phone, and I looked at the boy in the chair beside me, whose wild dark hair was now cropped short. He was shooting frequent, imploring looks at his mother, who remained determinedly absorbed in her book.

"That's coming on nicely," Sammy said to me. "You going anywhere special tonight?"

I said that I wasn't, though I had to go somewhere the following evening.

"You're usually good for two or three days if he styles it properly," Sammy said. "You should be all right. Right then," she said to the boy, "let's have a look at you."

She put her hands on his shoulders and faced him in the mirror.

"What do you think?" she said.

There was no reply.

"Come on," she said, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

I saw the boy's mother glance up from her book.

"We've got a right one here," Sammy said. "A right man of mystery."

The boy's knuckles were white where they gripped the armrests of his chair. His sallow face was pale and clenched. Sammy released her hands and in an instant he had sprung to his feet and was tearing off the nylon gown that was fastened around his shoulders.

"Take it easy!" Sammy said, stepping back with her palms raised. "There's expensive equipment in here, you know."

With strange, lunging movements, the boy strode away from the chair toward the big glass door. His mother got to her feet, the book still in her hand, and watched as he yanked the door open and the black rainy street with its hissing traffic was revealed. He had pulled the handle so forcefully that the door continued to revolve all the way around on its hinges after he had let it go. It traveled farther and farther, until finally it collided heavily with the tiers of glass shelving where the hair-care products stood in their neat rows. The boy stood frozen in the open doorway, his pale face lit up, his hair as though standing on end, and watched as the bank of shelves disgorged a landslide of bottles and jars which fell and rolled with a great thundering sound out across the salon floor, and then itself collapsed in a tremendous shrieking cascade of breaking glass.

There was a moment of silence in which everyone stood absolutely still, Dale with the phone in his hand, Sammy holding the boy's discarded cape, the mother with the book clasped in her fingers; even the *Glamour*-reading woman finally looked up from her magazine.

"Jesus fucking Christ," Sammy said.

The boy shot out through the doorway and disappeared into the wet, black street. For a few instants, his mother stayed where she was, in the glittering field of bottles and broken glass. She wore an expression of stony dignity. She stared at Sammy, her eyes unblinking. Then she picked up her bag, carefully put her book in it, and walked out after her son, leaving the door open behind her.

2016

Endnotes

- Note 1: Fail or fall apart (slang).Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A hairstyle with the sides of the head shaved, leaving long hair down the middle of the scalp.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Crazy (British slang).Return to reference 3

- Note 4: The site of Paul's conversion to Christianity. Paul, under his birth name Saul, had been a Pharisee and persecutor of early Christians. A road-to-Damascus (Damascene) moment is one of insight or revelation.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Lines of powdered drugs for snorting.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Video game console.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Transport truck (British English).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Coarse fabric worn in the Bible to signify grief or self-punishment.Return to reference 8

KIRAN DESAI
b. 1971

Born in New Delhi to Indian parents, Kiran Desai emigrated from India to England in 1985, when she was fourteen years old, and then to the United States a year later. Her mother, Anita Desai (b. 1937), is an acclaimed fiction writer, whose own mother was a German Jew and whose father was Bengali. Kiran Desai received a B.A. from Bennington College in Vermont in 1993, before continuing to study creative writing at Hollins University in Virginia and Columbia University in New York City, where she received her M.F.A. in 1999. An Indian citizen, she emphasizes in interviews that, despite living in the United States, she sees "everything through the lens of being an Indian," working from the "precise emotional location" of being "part of the Indian diaspora."

Anthologizing an early story of Desai's, Salman Rushdie hailed her work as "welcome proof that India's encounter with the English language, far from proving abortive, continues to give birth to new children, endowed with lavish gifts." Desai's fiction alludes to, and builds on, Rushdie's carnivalesque humor, magically talented children, and fusion of folktale with historical fiction; V. S. Naipaul's bleak transnational portraits of postcolonial despair; and Gabriel García Márquez's family dramas and magical realist plots. As a writer with a global array of influences, when Desai won the Man Booker Prize in 2006 (as well as the National Book Critics Circle Award), she celebrated literature's boundary-traversing capacities:

> Literature is located beyond flags and anthems, simple ideas of loyalty. The vocabulary of immigration, of exile, of translation, inevitably overlaps with a realization of the multiple options for reinvention, of myriad perspectives, shifting truths, telling of lies—the great big wobbliness of it all. In a world obsessed with national boundaries and belonging, as a novelist working with a form also traditionally obsessed with place, it was a journey to come to this thought, that the less structured, the multiple, may be a possible location for fiction, perhaps a more valid ethical location in general.

The work for which Desai won the Man Booker, her expansive second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), interleaves and layers plots in multiple locations, spanning India, England, and the United States, tracking a variety of characters in India and the Indian diaspora who live out the disparate impact of globalization and postcolonial history on the world's rich and its poor.

Desai's comic first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), is more firmly situated in a single locale, a small town in northern India, south of the Himalayas, although even this relatively isolated place is traversed by modernity. Part folktale, part realist short story, "The Sermon on the Guava Tree," which was published separately but later incorporated into the novel, offers a glimpse into Desai's fruitful commingling of the English language and its literatures with the author's Indian heritage. A dreamy, indolent young man, Sampath Chawla, refusing his father's proddings toward material success, has taken refuge in a guava tree. His predictably middle-class father, the cartoonish Mr. Chawla, had found him a solid job at a post office, but once Sampath is fired, he climbs to the solitude of his leafy new home. In a 1998 interview, Desai commented on the story's origins:

> I started with a very small idea, really. I'd read a story in the *Times* of India and heard about a character from many people, a man who was a very famous hermit in India who really did climb up a tree, who lived in a tree for many, many years, until

> he died. He died last year, I believe. So I began to wonder what it was about someone like this who would do something as extreme as to spend his life in a tree. So it started really with that character, and then the story built up around it.

This bizarre situation takes a still stranger turn when Sampath, whose name means "wealth" or "good fortune" in Hindi, turns out to be not such a deadbeat after all, assuming unsuspected powers akin to those of an omniscient narrator. Telling his story, Desai ironically examines intergenerational and gender relations amid the small town's social panoply. Along with memorable characterization, good-humored satire, and realism interfused with folktale, Desai builds the story through the precise use of figurative language ("the breeze ran over the foliage the way a hand runs over an animal's dark fur to expose a silvery underside") and comic dialogue in Indianized English ("You are the Number One most strange mother in the world"). Desai both expands and refines the array of characters, settings, plots, tropes, and themes to be found in contemporary literature in English.

The Sermon in the Guava Tree

The day that Sampath Chawla moved into a guava tree, his family—father, mother, grandmother, and sister Pinky—took up residence outside the local police station of the small town of Shahkot. They sat on the bench beneath the station's prize yellow rose creeper and waited for news. That is, the three women sat on the bench while Mr. Chawla walked around and around the building, making the policemen dizzy by shouting through every window he passed during his revolutions. If he himself were the police chief, he said, Sampath would be right this minute ensconced in his usual vegetable-like stupor among them.

"How is it you cannot find my son?" he shouted. Surely he had suffered quite enough already where Sampath was concerned. Look at how badly he had turned out! At school, he succeeded only at failing more reliably than anyone else. And then, instead of pulling up his socks and working hard at the job Mr. Chawla begged for him at the post office, he had gotten himself fired for his incompetence. "How could you do that?" his father had said. "You have done it on purpose so now you can spend all your time doing nothing." But Sampath had merely looked at him with a blank and hopeless expression. No doubt he would spend the rest of his days drooping about the house and dreaming in the tea stalls, or singing to himself in the public gardens. If they managed to find him again, that is. "You must find my son!" he shouted at the police chief.

The town made the most of the drama. Neighbors came by regularly for news, and everyone called out their support on their way back and forth from the marketplace. In some places there are people of quiet disposition and few words. But around Shahkot this was the very rare exception.

For one awful day it seemed as if Sampath had vanished forever. But the next morning the watchman of the university research forest, who had bicycled into town to bring his married sister some

curd,[1] also brought the news that beyond the compound of the retired district judge a strange man had climbed a tree and not come back down. Nobody knew why. The man, he said, would answer no questions.

"If someone in this country is crazy enough to climb up a tree, you can be sure it is Sampath," said Mr. Chawla. "There is no doubting the matter."

Holding hands, the family ran together to the bus stop, their rubber slippers slapping against their heels. They caught the same bus Sampath had taken the day before, when who knows what compulsion had driven him far from his home up into the guava tree. Here, in the place where he had taken up residence, the Chawlas made their way down the crisscross of little paths leading into an old orchard that had once borne enough fruit for it to be shipped and sold in New Delhi. But the orchard had been abandoned long ago, the fruit turning sour and the branches growing into each other, and was used now only by an occasional goatherd grazing his flock.

Searching for Sampath, the family clacked about the trees and shouted up into the leaves, the three women uttering his name with mournful wails, Mr. Chawla shouting like an Army major. At last, at the far corner of the farthest guava grove, right near the crumbling wall that bordered the forst, they discovered Sampath, sitting in his tree, his legs dangling beneath him. He had been watching their efforts with some alarm.

What on earth was he to say? He imagined himself declaring, "I am happy over here." Or asking, in a surprised fashion, "But why have you come to visit me?" He could answer their accusations with a defiant "But for some people it is normal to sit in trees." Or, serene with newfound dignity, he could say, "I am adopting a simple way of life. From now on I have no relatives." However, he did not like the thought of hurting anyone's feelings.

In the end, as it happened, he said nothing at all.

"What are you doing up there?" shouted Mr. Chawla. "Get down at once!" Sampath looked sturdily into the leafy world about him, trying to steady his wildly fluttering heart. He concentrated on the

way the breeze ran over the foliage the way a hand runs over an animal's dark fur to expose a silvery underside.

Pinky felt a sudden surge of embarrassment for her brother. "Get out of the tree—the whole family is being shamed," she said bitterly.

His grandmother exclaimed, "Come down, Sampath, please. You are going to fall sick up there. Look at his thin yellow face! We had better go for the doctor."

Still he was silent.

Looking at her son, Mrs. Chawla felt her girlhood come rushing back to her, engulfing her in the memory of a time when a desperation she had sometimes felt rose and surrounded her like an enormous wall. "Let him be," she said.

"Let him be!" said Mr. Chawla. "Do families allow their sons to climb up trees? You are the Number One most strange mother in the world. Your son leaves home and climbs up a tree and you say, 'Let him be.' With you as his mother no wonder he has turned out like this. How can I keep normality within this family? I take it as a full-time job and yet it defies possibility. We must formulate a plan. Only monkeys climb up trees."

Sampath clutched at the branch he was sitting on and held on tight.

Monkeys climbed trees. Beetles lived in trees. Ants crawled up and down them. Birds sat in them. People used them for fruit and firewood, and underneath them they made each other's acquaintance in the few months between the time they got married and the time the babies arrived. But for someone to travel a considerable distance just to sit in a tree was preposterous. For that person to be sitting there a few days later was more preposterous still.

In desperation, the family called upon Dr. Banerjee, from the clinic in the bazaar, and, an energetic man, he arrived at once to view his patient. He had a mustache and round glasses and a degree from the medical school in Ranchi.[2] "Come down!" he shouted good-humoredly. "How do you expect me to examine you while you're sitting up in a tree?"

But, oh no, Sampath was no fool. He would not climb down to be caught and—who knows!—be put into a cage and driven off to the insane asylum on Alipur Road like the madman who had interrupted the ladies' home-economics class in the university and been lured and trapped by a single sweet. So, at the family's pleading, Dr. Banerjee, who prided himself on being a good sport, hoisted himself into the tree, stethoscope and blood-pressure pump about his neck. He climbed all the way up to Sampath so he could look into his eyes and ears, check his tongue, listen to his heart, take his blood pressure, and hit his knee with an expertly aimed karatelike move of his hand. Then he climbed down and got back into the scooter rickshaw he had arrived in. "He is a crazy person," he said, beaming, the mirth of the entire situation too much for him. "Nobody except for God can do anything about that." And he disappeared back into town.

The family went to see the doctor of Tibetan medicine who had been recommended by their neighbor Lakshmiji. "A variety of cures may be prescribed," he said. "For example, medicines derived from the scorpion, the sea scorpion, the sea dragon, and the sea mouse."

"What sea mouse? There is no such thing as sea mouse!" shouted Mr. Chawla, and he dragged the family from the dark little clinic to the homeopathic and Ayurvedic doctors, and then to the naturopath who lived all the way in Kajuwala.[3]

Dutifully, they pounded pellets into powders, brewed teas, and counted out the homeopathic pills that looked and smelled promising but wrought none of the miraculous changes they had been assured of.

Finally, they visited the holy man who lived outside the tea stall near the deer park. "Sorry to disturb you. Our son is afflicted."

"How is he afflicted?"

"He is suffering from madness."

"Is he shouting?"

"No."

"Having fits?"

"No."

"Is he tearing his hair out?"

"No."

"Is he biting his neighbors? Biting himself? Is he sleepwalking? Does he stick out his tongue and roll his eyes? Is he rude to strangers?"

"No. He eats and sleeps and takes good care of his hair. He doesn't shout and he doesn't bite himself. He has never been rude to strangers."

"Then he is not mad."

"But he is sitting up in a tree!"

"Arrange a marriage for him. Then you can rest in peace. You will have no further problems."

It is necessary at some point for every family to acquire a daughter-in-law.[4] This girl must come from a good family. She must have a pleasant personality—decent and not shameless and bold. This girl should keep her eyes lowered and, because she is embarrassed and shy, her head bowed, as well. Nobody wants a girl who stares people right in the face with big froggy eyes. She should be fair-complexioned, but if she is dark the dowry must include at least one of the following items: a television set, a refrigerator, a Godrej brand steel cupboard,[5] or a motor scooter. When this girl sings, her voice must bring tears of feeling to the eyes. When she dances, people should exclaim "Wah!" in astounded pleasure. It should be made clear that she will not dance and sing after marriage and shame the family. This girl should have passed all her examinations in the first division[6] but will listen respectfully as you lecture her on various subjects you yourself failed in secondary school. She must not stride, or kick up her legs like a horse. She must sit quietly, with knees together. She should talk just a little to show she can: one word, or maybe two after she has been coaxed and begged several times, "Just a few sentences. Just one sentence." Her mother should urge, "Eat something. Eat a laddoo.[7] My daughter made these with her own hands." And these laddoos must not be recognizable as coming from the sweetmeat shop down the road.

She must be able to eat with knife and fork, or at least with a spoon. She should not be fat. She should be pleasantly plump, with large hips and breasts but a small waist. Talk of husband and children should so overcome her with shyness and embarrassment that she should hide her face, pink as a rosebud, in the fold of her sari. Then, if she has fulfilled all the requirements for a sound character and impressive accomplishments, if her parents have agreed to meet all the necessary financial contributions, if the fortune-tellers have decided the stars are lucky and the planets are compatible, everyone can laugh with relief and tilt her face up by the chin and say she is exactly what the family have been looking for, that she will be a daughter to their household. This, after all, is the boy's family. They're entitled to their sense of pride.

But the family could find only one prospective daughter-in-law. She was scrawny and dark. "Like a crow," Mrs. Chawla said indignantly when the first photograph was shown to them by their old neighbor Lakshmiji, who was acting as marriage broker. "You are trying to marry poor Sampath to a crow."

"He is lucky to find anyone at all," said Mr. Chawla, who had given up all hope of motor scooters and wedding parties at the Hans Raj Hotel.

The girl arrived, along with her family, on the public bus. Apart from her family, the bus was full of singing ladies and gentlemen, pilgrims returning from a trip to the Krishna temple[8] in a neighboring town. The Chawla family watched as the bus veered off the road like a crazy beetle and moved toward them in a cloud of dust.

The bus driver had obligingly offered to drop off the family right at Sampath's orchard. A bride-to-be should not have to walk and grow dusty and be shown to disadvantage, he said sympathetically. He himself had a daughter to marry. "Yes, yes, let's take them directly to the boy," chorused the other passengers, pausing to make this decision before resuming their hymn singing.

Despite the driver's kindness and the attention she had received with the help of a handkerchief, a little spit, and a large amount of

talcum powder, the girl descended from the bus looking extremely dusty. The pilgrims, curious about what might happen during this unusual encounter between prospective marriage partners, tumbled out of the bus as well, in a messy and chaotic heap. They needed a break for lunch anyway, and a little private time behind some trees. Holding the prospective bride before them like a gift, the group moved toward the guava tree.

Sampath had always had a soft corner for the lady on the label of the coconut hair-oil bottle. He had spent a rather large amount of time in consideration of her mysterious smile upon the bathroom shelf. While squatting on the mildewed wooden platform taking his bucket baths, he had conducted a series of imagined encounters with her, complete with imagined conversations and imagined quarrels and reconciliations. She would meet him wreathed in the scent of the oil, with a smile as white as the gleaming inside of a coconut. A braid of hair had travelled downward from the top of the coconut lady's head and followed the undulations of the bottle. Sampath looked down at the veiled woman standing underneath his tree, and felt hot and horrified.

"Please come down and be introduced. You have sat in the tree long enough," said Mr. Chawla. Sampath thought he might faint.

"Climb up, daughter," the girl's father urged her. "Climb up. Come on. One step. Just a step."

The devotees raised the girl's rigid, unwilling form into the tree. "Up," they urged. Slowly she began to climb. She was encased in layers of shiny material like a large, expensive toffee. The cloth billowed about her, making her look absurdly stout. Her gold slippers slipped with every step. Her sari was pulled over her head and she held the edge of it between her teeth so as to keep as much of her face modestly covered as possible. It was clear this girl would not take well to life in a tree. It seemed an eternity before she neared Sampath. She paused and looked back down for further directions. Nobody knew quite what to expect, or how she should proceed. Even Mr. Chawla was at a loss as to what should happen next.

"Touch his feet!" someone finally shouted, in a moment of inspiration.

"Yes, touch his feet," the rest of the pilgrims cried, and, extending a single timid finger like a snail peeping from its shell, she gingerly poked at Sampath's toe. Her finger was as cold as ice, and moist. Sampath leaped up in horror. In an equal state of distress, the girl let out a faint cry. Losing her balance and her gold slippers, she tumbled indecorously out of the tree, accompanied by the more robust cries of the pilgrims and her family, who rushed at her with arms outstretched. But they failed to catch her as she fell, and she landed with a dull thump upon the ground.

The signs for marriage were not auspicious.

The devotees propped her against a tree and fanned her with a leafy branch. "What am I to do with this boy?" Mr. Chawla said, throwing his hands up in the air. "Tell me what I should do. The best education. A job. A wife. The world served to him on a platter, but, oh no, none of it is good enough for him. Mister here must run and sit in a tree. He is not in the least bit thankful for all that has been done for him."

The girl began to sneeze in tiny mouselike squeals. "Stop fanning her with that dirty branch!" someone shouted. "All the dust must have gone up her nose."

"Dust or no dust, it is yet one more inauspicious sign," another onlooker said.

Pinky felt terribly scornful of this third-rate woman who had responded to such a greatly consequential moment in her life by sneezing and whimpering. She gave her a good pinch from behind, hoping to see her jump, but the girl continued to squeak and sniffle. The talcum powder slid down her face in a milky river.

"What can I do?" Mr. Chawla asked of the crowd. "What am I to do with this boy?" He was sweating despite the pleasant breeze that rotated about them, laden with the scent of earth and burgeoning vegetation.

He was the head of a family and he liked it that way.

But oh! What good was it to be the head of a family when you had a son who ran and sat in a tree? Who slipped from beneath your fingers and shamed you?

"What am I to do?" he demanded of the devotees still milling about, to show them it was not for lack of effort and concern on his behalf that Sampath had ended up in such a pitiful state. He hit his forehead with the flat of his palm, for drama has a way of overriding the embarrassment of a situation that should be privately experienced.

The ladies and gentlemen from the bus felt a little sorry for him. "Yes, yes, how shameful," they muttered. "And coming from a decent family and all. Clearly the boy has been derailed."

They stared at Sampath, watching to see how his father's distress would affect him. Surely any son, even a son like Sampath, would respond to such a moving show of emotion. Sensitive to the atmosphere of expectation beneath him, Sampath looked down into their upturned eyes. He thought of his old school and the post office and entire roomfuls of people awaiting the answer to questions he had often not even heard. He wondered how it could be that he had never felt comfortable among people. "Go on with your own lives!" he wanted to shout. "Go on, go on! Leave me to mine."

But of course he could not say any such thing. In desperation he looked around him. Among the crowd of faces down below he recognized that of Mr. Singh, the brother-in-law of a neighbor in Shahkot. Mr. Singh, whose letters he had sometimes read in idle moments in the post office, steaming them open over glasses of tea or just prying them open, the humidity in the air having rendered the gum almost entirely ineffectual. Lazily, he had perused the contents of a large quantity of letters during his time at work. In a frantic plea for help, he shouted, "Mr. Singhji!"[9]

He remembered one particular letter sent by Mr. Singh to his father.

"Is your jewelry still safely buried beneath the tulsi[1] plant?"

Mr. Singh turned pale. "How do you know about my circumstances?" he asked.

Sampath caught sight of Mrs. Chopra. "How is that lump in your throat that travels up and down your windpipe, whispering threats and almost bursting right out of your chest?"

"*Hai*,"[2] she gasped, "who told you?"

Encouraged now by his success, Sampath brightened a little. He jabbed his finger at a bald-headed man in the crowd, and said. "And you, sir, that secret oil you got from the doctor in Side Gully. Clearly it is not working. Try a good massage with mustard oil, and your hair will sprout as thick and as plentiful as grass in the Cherrapunji rain."[3]

The devotees drove back into Shahkot with the news. There was a man up in the guava tree, a remarkable man. He had known all sorts of things. The dacoits[4] were blackmailing poor Mr. Singh. Ratan Sinha had been using a special hair oil to no effect. An evil spirit had established itself in Mrs. Chopra's throat.

Clearly, there was more to this post-office clerk than to ordinary mortals. In his eyes they had detected a rare spirit.

It was at this point that Mr. Chawla had a realization—all of a sudden, with a tumble and rush of understanding, a realization so quick and so incredible in nature that his heart was caught in a state of constant pounding. Sampath might make his family's fortune. They could be rich! How many hermits were secretly wealthy? How many holy men were not at all the beggars they appeared to be? How many men of unfathomable wisdom possessed unfathomable bank accounts? What an opportunity had arisen out of nowhere. Already there was a change in the way people looked at Sampath; no longer did they snigger and smirk or make sympathetic noises with their tongues. Mr. Chawla kept his thoughts to himself and didn't say a word to anyone, but, in a sudden turnabout of policy, which both surprised and pleased his wife and his mother, who were already settling into the orchard as if it were their own long-lost home, he stopped berating Sampath for having climbed up the tree, and turned his attention to other matters.

Gradually, Sampath was provided with all sorts of comforts, and the more elaborate his living arrangements the happier he was. A

cot was raised up into the tree and fastened with rope. A striped umbrella donated by a friendly servant of the retired judge was positioned over Sampath's head. He made a lovely picture seated there amid the greenery, reclining on his cot at a slight angle to the world; propped against numerous cushions tucked up, during chilly evenings, in a glamorous satin quilt covered with leopard skin spots. On his head he sported a tea-cozy-like[5] red woollen hat that had been knitted by his grandmother and raised to him on a stick. He was particularly fond of this hat, for it kept his head snug and warm at night when the breeze was chilly, and it kept the night rustlings, the crawling of little black beetles, ants, and moths, out of his ears as well.

"I'm comfortable," he announced to his family with a gesture of dismissal when he found everything to his satisfaction, leaving them for a minute bewildered, for they were yet to get used to this reversal in their relationship. How they had scolded him once upon a time for every little thing he had done. Now here he was waving at them as if he were a rajah[6] wishing to be left alone. When they were needed again, he summoned them with shouts, starting right at dawn, when he desired his morning tea, and then a little later when he was ready for his bath, which required elaborate arrangements to be made by the family, who were, after all, willing to do quite a bit of work in this regard, for they had always been a clean family. Bucketfuls of hot water were raised to Sampath via a rope levering system designed especially for this purpose by his father.

When it came to his meals, Pinky's efforts in climbing up with bowls and dishes had ended more often in accidents than in success, with Sampath's dinner either in the grass or, worse, splattered and scalding over the poor bearer of food.

"This is absurd," said Mr. Chawla. "This isn't working." And he attached an old wooden crate to the elementary pulley system used to deliver Sampath's bathwater, and thereafter Sampath's meals were given to him simply by pulling on a rope and raising the crate. As the fluffy chapatis and puris[7] were made down below they were

proffered up to him speared atop a bamboo stick, as were slices of pickle, bits of fruit, and other tasty tidbits.

Thus ensconced in his orchard bower, Sampath gave what came to be known as the Sermon in the Guava Tree, in which he responded to people's queries with such a mysterious charm and wit that they arrived in growing numbers to see him, making their way down the narrow path to stare with amazement at this skinny, long-legged apparition amid the leaves.

Among the first to make this trip were Miss Jyotsna and Mr. Gupta, his two colleagues from the post office.

"He must have gone through a thorough and complete transformation," said Miss Jyotsna. "Look how his face is being so different now."

Certainly it was a happier, calmer face. "*Namasteji*,"[8] said Sampath, greeting them cheerfully from his cot in the tree, his new position of power. Really, he thought, he was quite fond of them. They had always meant well, unlike many others he could name.

"Hello, Sampath," said Mr. Gupta. "Why did you not take me with you? I could have had a little rest from this one here." He pointed at Miss Jyotsna with a comic expression on his face.

"Any time you want a rest from her you should send her to the sari and shalwar kameez[9] shop," said Sampath, laughing. "You know how much this lady is loving clothes. . . . Oh, but maybe that is not such a good idea. Already she owes the Ladies' Fashion Shop a hundred and fifty-two rupees and eighty paise."[1]

Once when Miss Jyotsna had been summoned to the office of the head of the post office, Sampath had had the occasion to examine the contents of her purse: the lipstick and comb, the embroidered handkerchief, the receipts and safety pins, the toffees and little vials of homeopathic medicine.

Miss Jyotsna raised a trembling hand to her mouth. The blood rushed to her face. She had kept her debt to the sari shop a strict secret. What else could Sampath say about her? She had heard of

the way he had stunned the devotees of the Krishna temple with his clairvoyance; now he had used his powers to examine her.

She nudged Mr. Gupta with her elbow. "Treat him with some respect," she said, surprising him with the strange new note of reverence in her voice. She was apparently awestruck by what she saw. And even the paan-shop[2] man, who had also come to visit, thinking that maybe he would sell a few paans while satisfying his curiosity, turned to give Mr. Gupta a dirty look, and said, "Clearly this fellow here is unversed in spiritual matters."

"But it is only Sampath," protested Mr. Gupta.

But clearly it was not only Sampath. It was Sampath of unfathomable wisdom, sitting in his tree abode.

The sweetshop man joined them after work, then two college students skipping a lecture, the washerman on his bicycle, and a pregnant lady who wished to know if her baby would be a boy or a girl. "Ah, yes," she said with satisfaction, to those standing about the tree with her, "he has the same expression as the Tajewala sage in samadhi.[3] Perhaps you have seen the photographs?"

"My son is keeping bad company," interrupted a distressed but spirited relative of Lakshmiji's who was dressed in a canary-yellow sari. "What is there to do?" she asked.

"Add lemons to milk and it will grow sour," answered Sampath in an exceptionally sociable and happy temper, mimicking the old men of Shahkot, who liked to sit at their gates on winter afternoons, basking in their socks and hats, while they lectured passersby. "But add some sugar, Madam, and wah! how good that milk will taste. These are things I do not have to tell you. You yourself know you behaved just like your son when you were young."

He impressed himself by how many details he had stowed away while reading in the post office. Why, he could just pull them out of some secret compartment in his brain the way a magician pulled rabbits from a hat. How admiringly the people below the tree were looking at him! Never before had he felt the sweet and unique pleasure of giving advice which now suffused his being and spread to shine about his face.

"By this, do you mean I should remove him from the presence of these undesirable characters?" Lakshmiji's relative asked.

"If you put a chicken on the fire and leave it, in a little while it will be no longer a chicken but ash and bones. Leave a kettle on the flames, the water will grow hot, and then, if someone does not lift it off, it will all boil away until there is nothing left. If your child is playing with a dead smelly mouse, you will not debate, 'Should I let him be, should I let him play.' No, straightaway you will throw away the mouse and take your child indoors to wash his hands."

Mr. Chawla and Pinky, who had just arrived from a trip to the market in time to hear this last sentence, looked at each other in disbelief when they saw how closely people listened to Sampath.

"Did you hear?" Mr. Chawla asked Pinky.

"Dead smelly mouse?" said Pinky, incredulous.

"If you do not weed," said Sampath, "your tomato plant will not flower."

Sampath's grandmother and Mrs. Chawla, flushed with pride, were already part of the crowd. They listened to every word that was being uttered, leaning forward to hear a round-faced man ask, "I am being overtaken by spiritual matters. How can I keep my mind on my responsibilities?"

"If you talk to a young girl as she stands before the mirror, it is like talking to a deaf person. And can you keep a moth from flying into the lantern by saying she should worry about her three children?"

"But are you saying I should forgo my duties to my wife and children?"

"Once my uncle had a rooster, and an insect laid its eggs in the flesh of its rear end. It knew the young ones would have a warm place to live in and plenty to eat before they were old enough to leave."

"Which is the better way to realize God? The way of devotion or the way of knowledge?"

The questions came fast and furious.

"Some people can only digest fish cooked in a light curry. Others are of a sour disposition and should not eat pickled fish. In the South they enjoy fish cooked with coconut water. I myself have a preference for pomfret in a sauce of chili and tamarind thickened with gram flour."[4]

"Where can I begin my search? What is the starting point?"

"POST-OFFICE CLERK CLIMBS TREE," Mr. Chawla read to his astounded family a little later in the week when the news had reached the local news bureau and was deemed worthy of attention. "Fleeing tedious duties at the Shahkot Post Office, a clerk has been reported to have settled in a large guava tree. According to popular speculation, he is one of an unusual spiritual nature, his childlike ways being coupled with unfathomable wisdom."

There it was—a modest column introducing Sampath to the world, along with news of a scarcity of groundnut and an epidemic of tree frogs, and the rumor that Coca-Cola might soon be arriving in India.[5]

1997

Endnotes

- Note 1: Yogurt, or coagulated milk.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Capital of the state of Jharkand, in eastern India.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Town in the Bikaner district of the northwestern Indian state of Rajasthan, on the border with Pakistan. "Ayurvedic": practicing a traditional Indian system of medicine.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: See the opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by English novelist Jane Austen (1775–1817): "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife."Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Locker or cabinet made by a large Indian company headquartered in Mumbai.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: That is, in the highest-scoring group.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: A ball-shaped, fried Indian sweet.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hindu temple dedicated to the god Krishna, often worshiped as a god of joy and fertility.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: As a suffix attached to a name, "-ji" shows respect in many languages of the Indian subcontinent.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Species of basil cultivated by Hindus as a sacred plant.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Exclamation of grief or frustration (Hindi and Punjabi).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Of the town in eastern India near Bangladesh, subject to very heavy rainfall and believed to be the wettest place on Earth. Mustard oil is widely used in northern India for many purposes.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Robbers.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: That is, like a quilted or knitted teapot cover.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Indian prince, chief, or noble.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Round, unleavened cakes, usually fried. "Chapatis": unleavened bread.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Hello, or welcome (Hindi).Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Outfit of loose tunic and trousers.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: One Indian rupee is equal to 100 paise (singular paisa). In 1990, 17 rupees were worth about one U.S. dollar; thus, she owes about nine dollars.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Shop selling cigarettes and paan, a preparation of betel leaf, areca nut, and lime chewed as a stimulant.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Highest state of meditation. "Tajewala": site of a dam on the Yamuna River in northern India.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Flour made from ground chickpeas. "Pomfret": a type of fish. "Tamarind": sweet, acidic fruit.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: The Coca-Cola Company was forced out of India in 1977 after it refused to reveal its secret formula to the government; it was permitted to return in 1993. “Groundnut”: peanut.Return to reference 5

ZADIE SMITH
b. 1975

The London-born daughter of an English father and a Jamaican mother, Zadie Smith was a product of the great postwar demographic change in Britain, the influx of Black and Asian immigrants from the empire's former colonies. Her mother had grown up in Jamaica and, like many other West Indians, settled in Britain in the 1960s. Of her mixed heritage Smith has written, "When your personal multiplicity is printed on your face, in an almost too obviously thematic manner, in your DNA, in your hair and in the neither-this-nor-that beige of your skin—well, anyone can see you come from Dream City," her tongue-in-cheek name for the space of hybridity. "It is a place of many voices, where the unified singular self is an illusion," where "everything is doubled, everything is various. You have no choice but to cross borders and speak in tongues." Springing from the experience of "personal multiplicity," Smith's fiction has vigorously crossed borders and spoken in a cacophony of tongues.

Smith grew up in what she has called "the big, colorful, working-class sea" of the Willesden area of northwest London that figures in her fiction. When she was studying English literature at the "smaller, posher pond" (her words) of Cambridge University, where she earned her B.A. in 1997, her fiction had already attracted the interest of major publishers. The result was her prize-winning first novel, *White Teeth* (2000). Before its publication, no work had captured

with such humor and zest the multicultural jangle of different peoples, dialects, and styles in contemporary Britain. Less riotously comic, her second novel, *The Autograph Man* (2002), tracks the celebrity quest of a Chinese-Jewish Londoner named Alex-Li Tandem, mourning his father's death in a world made shallow by the commodification of culture, the arts, personality, and ethnicity. Her third novel, *On Beauty* (2005), shifts locales from London largely to the Boston environs, where Smith spent a year, and deliberately echoes English author E. M. Forster's *Howards End* (1910) in telling the story of two entangled families. *NW* (2012) returns to North West London but in a more experimental style reminiscent of the paratactic and fractured perspectives of high modernism, while *Swing Time* (2016) extends across London, New York, and West Africa as it explores the complicated friendship of two women who grew up in council housing in the neighborhood of Smith's youth. *The Fraud* (2023), set around a real-life trial in the nineteenth century, draws a multicultural cast of characters together to ask who gets the right to narrate and why some people are believed over others.

Smith became a celebrity after the publication of *White Teeth* and the literary face of millennial Britain. Her wisecracking humor and rapid-fire dialogue, mimicry of an array of finely distinguished dialects and accents, and vibrant characterization of people from London's South Asian, Black, and other communities offer a portrait of London finally at home with its diversity. The focus of *White Teeth* is less on intercultural strife than on fluid—if often bumpy—relationships across ethnic divisions. Smith has always presented a multiracial Britain as a given rather than a novelty, but after 2010 her focus shifted more explicitly to matters of class, income inequality, gentrification, and, in the aftermath of the vote to withdraw from the European Union (Brexit), British isolationism. The epigraph to *NW* is from a sermon by Lollard priest John Ball given during the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. While writing the novel, Smith also published a series of essays in defense of the welfare state, which despite being slowly and systematically dismantled during the

Thatcher years, provided the young Smith with essential support. Smith writes: "Some people owe everything they have to the bank accounts of their parents. I owe the state. Put simply, the state educated me, fixed my leg when it was broken, and gave me a grant that enabled me to go to university. It fixed my teeth (a bit) and found housing for my veteran father in his dotage. . . . To steal another writer's title: England made me."

In "The Embassy of Cambodia" (2013), presented here, the England that enabled Smith's upward mobility is disappearing under rising rents and the replacement of public programs with private facilities, such as the health club, which offers limited guest passes to members. The protagonist Fatou is a migrant from the Ivory Coast working under exploitative conditions in a wealthy household. The unnamed narrator claims to speak for "the people of Willesden," and the story presents a meditation on the ability of neighborhood locals to sympathize with those who have experienced adversity and atrocity in faraway countries (Cambodia and Rwanda were both sites of genocide). The story is punctuated by the "pock, smash" of a shuttlecock and organized by the increasingly lopsided score of a badminton match that Fatou hears but never sees. With her characteristic irony and wit, Smith captures, in the form of a game, a world divided into haves and have nots.

The Embassy of Cambodia

0–1[1]

Who would expect the Embassy of Cambodia?[2] Nobody. Nobody could have expected it, or be expecting it. It's a surprise, to us all. The Embassy of Cambodia!

Next door to the embassy is a health centre. On the other side, a row of private residences, most of them belonging to wealthy Arabs (or so we, the people of Willesden,[3] contend). They tend to have Corinthian pillars[4] on either side of their front doors, and—it's widely believed—swimming pools out the back. The embassy, by contrast, is not very grand. It is only a four- or five-bedroom north London suburban villa, built at some point in the 1930s, surrounded by a red-brick wall, about eight feet high. And back and forth, cresting this wall horizontally, flies a shuttlecock. They are playing badminton in the Embassy of Cambodia. Pock, smash. Pock, smash.

The only real sign that the embassy is an embassy at all is the little brass plaque on the door (which reads: 'THE EMBASSY OF CAMBODIA') and the national flag of Cambodia (we assume that's what it is—what else could it be?) flying from the red-tiled roof. Some say, 'Oh, but it has a high wall around it, and this is what signifies that it is not a private residence, like the other houses on the street, but rather an embassy.' The people who say so are foolish. Many of the private houses have high walls, quite as high as the Embassy of Cambodia—but they are not embassies.

0–2

On 6 August, Fatou walked past the embassy for the first time, on her way to a swimming pool. It is a large pool, although not quite Olympic size. To swim a mile you must complete eighty-two lengths, which, in its very tedium, often feels as much a mental exercise as a

physical one. The water is kept unusually warm, to please the majority of people who patronize the health centre, the kind who come not so much to swim as to lounge poolside or rest their bodies in the sauna. Fatou has swum here five or six times now, and she is often the youngest person in the pool by several decades. Generally, the clientele are white, or else South Asian or from the Middle East, but now and then Fatou finds herself in the water with fellow Africans. When she spots these big men, paddling frantically like babies, struggling simply to stay afloat, she prides herself on her own abilities, having taught herself to swim, several years earlier, at the Carib Beach Resort, in Accra.[5] Not in the hotel pool—no employees were allowed in the pool. No, she learned by struggling through the rough grey sea, on the other side of the resort walls. Rising and sinking, rising and sinking, on the dirty foam. No tourist ever stepped on to the beach (it was covered with trash), much less into the cold and treacherous sea. Nor did any of the other chambermaids. Only some reckless teenage boys, late at night, and Fatou, early in the morning. There is almost no way to compare swimming at Carib Beach and swimming in the health centre, warm as it is, tranquil as a bath. And, as Fatou passes the Embassy of Cambodia, on her way to the pool, over the high wall she sees a shuttlecock, passed back and forth between two unseen players. The shuttlecock floats in a wide arc softly rightwards, and is smashed back, and this happens again and again, the first player always somehow able to retrieve the smash and transform it, once more, into a gentle, floating arc. High above, the sun tries to force its way through a cloud ceiling, grey and filled with water. Pock, smash. Pock, smash.

0–3

When the Embassy of Cambodia first appeared in our midst, a few years ago, some of us said, ‘Well, if we were poets perhaps we could have written some sort of an ode about this surprising appearance of the embassy.’ (For embassies are usually to be found in the centre of the city. This was the first one we had seen in the suburbs.) But

we are not really a poetic people. We are from Willesden. Our minds tend towards the prosaic. I doubt there is a man or woman among us, for example, who—upon passing the Embassy of Cambodia for the first time—did not immediately think: 'genocide'.[6]

0–4

Pock, smash. Pock, smash. This summer we watched the Olympics, becoming well attuned to grunting, and to the many other human sounds associated with effort and the triumph of the will. But the players in the garden of the Embassy of Cambodia are silent. (We can't say for sure that it is a garden—we have a limited view over the wall. It may well be a paved area, reserved for badminton.) The only sign that a game of badminton is under way at all is the motion of the shuttlecock itself, alternately being lobbed and smashed, lobbed and smashed, and always at the hour that Fatou passes on her way to the health centre to swim (just after ten in the morning on Mondays). It should be explained that it is Fatou's employers—and not Fatou—who are the true members of this health club; they have no idea she uses their guest passes in this way. (Mr and Mrs Derawal and their three children—aged seventeen, fifteen and ten—live on the same street as the embassy, but the road is almost a mile long, with the embassy at one end and the Derawals at the other.) Fatou's deception is possible only because on Mondays Mr Derawal drives to Eltham[7] to visit his mini-market there, and Mrs Derawal works the counter in the family's second mini-mart, in Kensal Rise.[8] In the slim drawer of a faux-Louis XVI console,[9] in the entrance hall of the Derawals' primary residence, one can find a stockpile of guest passes. Nobody besides Fatou seems to remember that they are there.

Since 6 August (the first occasion on which she noticed the badminton), Fatou has made a point of pausing by the bus stop opposite the embassy for five or ten minutes before she goes in to swim, idle minutes she can hardly afford (Mrs Derawal returns to the house at lunchtime) and yet seems unable to forgo. Such is the

strangely compelling aura of the embassy. Usually, Fatou gains nothing from this waiting and observing, but on a few occasions she has seen people arrive at the embassy and watched as they are buzzed through the gate. Young white people carrying rucksacks.[1] Often they are scruffy, and wearing sandals, despite the cool weather. None of the visitors so far have been visibly Cambodian. These young people are likely looking for visas. They are buzzed in and then pass through the gate, although Fatou would really have to stand on top of the bus stop to get a view of whoever it is that lets them in. What she can say with certainty is that these occasional arrivals have absolutely no effect on the badminton, which continues in its steady pattern, first gentle, then fast, first soft and high, then hard and low.

0–5

On 20 August, long after the Olympians had returned to their respective countries, Fatou noticed that a basketball hoop had appeared in the far corner of the garden, its net of synthetic white rope rising high enough to be seen over the wall. But no basketball was ever played—at least not when Fatou was passing. The following week it had been moved closer to Fatou's side of the wall. (It must be a mobile hoop, on casters.) Fatou waited a week, two weeks, but still no basketball game replaced the badminton, which carried on as before.

0–6

When I say that we were surprised by the appearance of the Embassy of Cambodia, I don't mean to suggest that the embassy is in any way unique in its peculiarity. In fact, this long, wide street is notable for a number of curious buildings, in the context of which the Embassy of Cambodia does not seem especially strange. There is a mansion called GARYLAND, with something else in Arabic engraved below GARYLAND, and both the English and the Arabic text are inlaid in pink-and-green marble pillars that bookend a gigantic fence,

far higher than the embassy's, better suited to a fortress. Dramatic golden gates open automatically to let vehicles in and out. At any one time, GARYLAND has five to seven cars parked in its driveway.

There is a house with a huge pink elephant on the doorstep, apparently made of mosaic tiles.

There is a Catholic nunnery with a single red Ford Focus parked in front. There is a Sikh institute. There is a faux-Tudor[2] house with a pool that Mickey Rooney[3] rented for a season, while he was performing in the West End fifteen summers ago. That house sits opposite a dingy retirement home, where one sometimes sees distressed souls, barely covered by their dressing gowns, standing on their tiny balconies, staring into the tops of the chestnut trees.

So we are hardly strangers to curious buildings, here in Willesden and Brondesbury.[4] And yet still we find the Embassy of Cambodia a little surprising. It is not the right sort of surprise, somehow.

0–7

In a discarded *Metro*[5] found on the floor of the Derawal kitchen, Fatou read with interest a story about a Sudanese[6] 'slave' living in a rich man's house in London. It was not the first time that Fatou had wondered if she herself was a slave, but this story, brief as it was, confirmed in her own mind that she was not. After all, it was her father, and not a kidnapper, who had taken her from Ivory Coast[7] to Ghana, and when they reached Accra they had both found employment in the same hotel. Two years later, when she was eighteen, it was her father again who had organized her difficult passage to Libya[8] and then on to Italy[9]—a not insignificant financial sacrifice on his part. Also, Fatou could read English—and speak a little Italian—and this girl in the paper could not read or speak anything except the language of her tribe. And nobody beat Fatou, although Mrs Derawal had twice slapped her in the face, and the two older children spoke to her with no respect at all and thanked her for nothing. (Sometimes she heard her name used as a term of abuse between them. 'You're as black as Fatou.' Or 'You're as stupid as

Fatou.') On the other hand, just like the girl in the newspaper, she had not seen her passport with her own eyes since she arrived at the Derawals', and she had been told from the start that her wages were to be retained by the Derawals to pay for the food and water and heat she would require during her stay, as well as to cover the rent for the room she slept in. In the final analysis, however, Fatou was not confined to the house. She had an Oyster Card,[1] given to her by the Derawals, and was trusted to do the food shopping and other outside tasks, for which she was given cash and told to return with change and receipts for everything. If she did not go out in the evenings that was only because she had no money with which to go out, and anyway knew very few people in London. Whereas the girl in the paper was not allowed to leave her employers' premises, not ever—she was a prisoner.

On Sunday mornings, for example, Fatou regularly left the house, to meet her church friend Andrew Okonkwo at the 98 bus stop and go with him to worship at the Sacred Heart of Jesus, just off the Kilburn High Road. Afterwards Andrew always took her to a Tunisian[2] café, where they had coffee and cake, which Andrew, who worked as a night guard in the City, always paid for. And on Mondays Fatou swam. In very warm water, and thankful for the semi-darkness in which the health club, for some reason, kept its clientele, as if the place were a nightclub, or a midnight Mass. The darkness helped disguise the fact that her swimming costume was in fact a sturdy black bra and a pair of plain black cotton knickers. No, on balance she did not think she was a slave.

O–8

The woman exiting the Embassy of Cambodia did not look especially like a New Person or an Old Person[3]—neither clearly of the city nor the country—and of course it is a long time since this division meant anything in Cambodia. Nor did these terms mean anything to Fatou, who was curious only to catch her first sighting of a possible Cambodian anywhere near the Embassy of Cambodia. She was

particularly interested in the woman's clothes, which were precise and utilitarian—a grey shirt tucked tightly into a pair of tan slacks, a blue mackintosh,[4] a droopy rain hat—just as if she were a man, or no different from a man. Her straight black hair was cut short. She had in her hands many bags from Sainsbury's,[5] and this Fatou found a little mysterious: where was she taking all that shopping? It also surprised her that the woman from the Embassy of Cambodia should shop in the same Willesden branch of Sainsbury's where Fatou shopped for the Derawals. She had an idea that Oriental people had their own, secret establishments and shopped there. (She believed the Jews did, too.) She both admired and slightly resented this self-reliance, but had no doubt that it was the secret to holding great power, as a people. For example, when the Chinese had come to Fatou's village to take over the mine, an abiding local mystery had been: what did they eat and where did they eat it? They certainly did not buy food in the market, or from the Lebanese[6] traders along the main road. They made their own arrangements. (Whether back home or here, the key to surviving as a people, in Fatou's opinion, was to make your own arrangements.)

But, looking again at the bags the Cambodian woman carried, Fatou wondered whether they weren't in fact very old bags—hadn't their design changed? The more she looked at them the more convinced she became that they contained not food but clothes or something else again, the outline of each bag being a little too rounded and smooth. Maybe she was simply taking out the rubbish. Fatou stood at the bus stop and watched until the Cambodian woman reached the corner, crossed and turned left towards the high road. Meanwhile, back at the embassy the badminton continued to be played, though with a little more effort now because of a wayward wind. At one point it seemed to Fatou that the next lob would blow southwards, sending the shuttlecock over the wall to land lightly in her own hands. Instead the other player, with his vicious reliability (Fatou had long ago decided that both players were men), caught the shuttlecock as it began to drift and sent it back to his opponent—another deathly, downward smash.

O–9

No doubt there are those who will be critical of the narrow, essentially local scope of Fatou's interest in the Cambodian woman from the Embassy of Cambodia, but we, the people of Willesden, have some sympathy with her attitude. The fact is if we followed the history of every little country in this world—in its dramatic as well as its quiet times—we would have no space left in which to live our own lives or to apply ourselves to our necessary tasks, never mind indulge in occasional pleasures, like swimming. Surely there is something to be said for drawing a circle around our attention and remaining within that circle. But how large should this circle be?

O–10

It was the Sunday after Fatou saw the Cambodian that she decided to put a version of this question to Andrew, as they sat in the Tunisian café eating two large fingers of dough stuffed with cream and custard and topped with a strip of chocolate icing. Specifically, she began a conversation with Andrew about the Holocaust,[7] as Andrew was the only person she had found in London with whom she could have these deep conversations, partly because he was patient and sympathetic to her, but also because he was an educated person, presently studying for a part-time business degree at the College of North West London. With his student card he had been given free, twenty-four-hour access to the Internet.

'But more people died in Rwanda,'[8] Fatou argued. 'And nobody speaks about that! Nobody!'

'Yes, I think that's true,' Andrew conceded, and put the first of four sugars in his coffee. 'I have to check. But, yes, millions and millions. They hide the true numbers, but you can see them online. There's always a lot of hiding; it's the same all over. It's like this bureaucratic Nigerian[9] government—they are the greatest at numerology, hiding figures, changing them to suit their purposes. I have a name for it: I call it "demonology". Not "numerology"—"demonology".'

‘Yes, but what I am saying is like this,’ Fatou pressed, wary of the conversation’s drifting back, as it usually did, to the financial corruption of the Nigerian government. ‘Are we born to suffer? Sometimes I think we were born to suffer more than all the rest.’

Andrew pushed his professorial glasses up his nose. ‘But, Fatou, you’re forgetting the most important thing. Who cried most for Jesus? His mother. Who cries most for you? Your father. It’s very logical, when you break it down. The Jews cry for the Jews. The Russians cry for the Russians. We cry for Africa, because we are Africans, and, even then, I’m sorry, Fatou’—Andrew’s chubby face creased up in a smile—‘if Nigeria plays Ivory Coast and we beat you into the ground, I’m laughing, man! I can’t lie. I’m celebrating. Stomp! Stomp!’

He did a little dance with his upper body, and Fatou tried, not for the first time, to imagine what he might be like as a husband, but could see only herself as the wife, and Andrew as a teenage son of hers, bright and helpful, to be sure, but a son all the same—though in reality he was three years older than she. Surely it was wrong to find his baby fat and struggling moustache so off-putting. Here was a good man! She knew that he cared for her, was clean and had given his life to Christ. Still, some part of her rebelled against him, some unholy part.

‘Hush your mouth,’ she said; trying to sound more playful than disgusted, and was relieved when he stopped jiggling and laid both his hands on the table, his face suddenly quite solemn.

‘Believe me, that’s a natural law, Fatou, pure and simple. Only God cries for us all, because we are *all* his children. It’s very, very logical. You just have to think about it for a moment.’

Fatou sighed, and spooned some coffee foam into her mouth. ‘But I still think we have more pain. I’ve seen it myself. Chinese people have never been slaves. They are always protected from the worst.’

Andrew took off his glasses and rubbed them on the end of his shirt. Fatou could tell that he was preparing to lay knowledge upon her.

‘Fatou, think about it for a moment, please: what about Hiroshima?’[1]

It was a name Fatou had heard before, but sometimes Andrew’s superior knowledge made her nervous. She would find herself struggling to remember even the things she had believed she already knew.

‘The big wave . . .’ she began, uncertainly—it was the wrong answer. He laughed mightily and shook his head at her.

‘No, man! Big bomb. Biggest bomb in the world, made by the USA, of course. They killed five million people in *one second.* Can you imagine that? You think just because your eyes are like this’—he tugged the skin at both temples—‘you’re always protected? Think again. This bomb, even if it didn’t blow you up, a week later it melted the skin off your bones.’

Fatou realized she had heard this story before, or some version of it. But she felt the same vague impatience with it as she did with all accounts of suffering in the distant past. For what could be done about the suffering of the distant past?

‘OK,’ she said. ‘Maybe all people have their hard times, in the past of history, but I still say—’

‘Here is a counterpoint,’ Andrew said, reaching out and gripping her shoulder. ‘Let me ask you, Fatou, seriously, think about this. I’m sorry to interrupt you, but I have thought a lot about this and I want to pass it on to you, because I know you care about things seriously, not like these people—’ He waved a hand at the assortment of cake eaters at other tables. ‘You’re not like the other girls I know, just thinking about the club and their hair. you’re a person who thinks. I told you before, anything you want to know about, ask me—I’ll look it up, I’ll do the research. I have access. Then I’ll bring it to you.’

‘You’re a very good friend to me, Andrew, I know that.’

‘Listen, we are friends to each other. In this world you need friends. But, Fatou, listen to my question. It’s a counterpoint to what you have been saying. Tell me, why would God choose us especially for suffering when we, above all others, praise his name? Africa is

the fastest-growing Christian continent! Just think about it for a minute! It doesn't even make sense!'

'But it's not him,' Fatou said quietly, looking over Andrew's shoulder to the rain beating on the window. 'It's the Devil.'

O–11

Andrew and Fatou sat in the Tunisian coffee shop, waiting for it to stop raining, but it did not stop raining and at three p.m. Fatou said she would just have to get wet. She shared Andrew's umbrella as far as the Overground,[2] letting him pull her into his clammy, high-smelling body as they walked. At Brondesbury station Andrew had to get the train, and so they said goodbye. Several times he tried to press his umbrella on her, but Fatou knew the walk from Acton Central to Andrew's bedsit was long and she refused to let him suffer on her account.

'Big woman. Won't let anybody protect you.'

'Rain doesn't scare me.'

Fatou took from her pocket a swimming cap she had found on the floor of the health club changing room. She wound her plaits into a bun and pulled the cap over her head.

'That's a very original idea,' Andrew said, laughing. 'You should market that! Make your first million!'

'Peace be with you,' Fatou said, and kissed him chastely on the cheek.

Andrew did the same, lingering a little longer with his kiss than was necessary.

O–12

By the time Fatou reached the Derawals' only her hair was dry, but before going to get changed she rushed to the kitchen to take the lamb out of the freezer, though it was pointless—there were not enough hours before dinner—and then upstairs to collect the dirty clothes from the matching wicker baskets in four different bedrooms.

There was no one in the master bedroom, or in Faizul's or Julie's. Downstairs a television was blaring. Entering Asma's room, hearing nothing, assuming it empty, Fatou headed straight for the laundry basket in the corner. As she opened the lid she felt a hand hit her hard on the back: she turned around.

There was the youngest, Asma, in front of her, her mouth open like a trout fish. Before Fatou could understand, Asma punched the huge pile of clothes out of her hands. Fatou stooped to retrieve them. While she was kneeling on the floor, another strike came, a kick to her arm. She left the clothes where they were and got up, frightened by her own anger. But when she looked at Asma now she saw the girl gesturing frantically at her own throat, then putting her hands together in prayer and then back to her throat once more. Her eyes were bulging. She veered suddenly to the right; she threw herself over the back of a chair. When she turned back to Fatou her face was grey and Fatou understood finally and ran to her, grabbed her round her waist and pulled upwards as she had been taught in the hotel. A marble—with an iridescent ribbon of blue at its centre, like a wave—flew from the child's mouth and landed wetly in the carpet's plush.

Asma wept and drew in frantic gulps of air. Fatou gave her a hug, and worried when the clothes would get done. Together they went down to the den, where the rest of the family was watching *Britain's Got Talent*[3] on a flat-screen TV attached to the wall. Everybody stood at the sight of Asma's wild weeping. Mr Derawal paused the Sky[4] box. Fatou explained about the marble.

'How many times I tell you not to put things in your mouth?' Mr Derawal asked, and Mrs Derawal said something in their language—Fatou heard the name of their God—and pulled Asma on to the sofa and stroked her daughter's silky black hair.

'I couldn't breathe, man! I couldn't call nobody,' Asma cried. 'I was gonna die!'

'What you putting marbles in your mouth for anyway, you idiot?' Faizul said, and unpaused the Sky box. 'What kind of chief puts a marble in her mouth? Idiot. Bet you was bricking it.'[5]

‘Oi, she saved your life,’ said Julie, the eldest child, whom Fatou generally liked the least. ‘Fatou saved your life. That’s deep.’

‘I woulda just done this,’ Faizul said, and performed an especially dramatic Heimlich to his own skinny body. ‘And if that didn’t work I woulda just start pounding myself karate style, bam bam bam bam bam—’

‘Faizul!’ Mr Derawal shouted, and then turned stiffly to Fatou, and spoke not to her, exactly, but to a point somewhere between her elbow and the sunburst mirror behind her head. ‘Thank you, Fatou. It’s lucky you were there.’

Fatou nodded and went to leave, but at the doorway to the den Mrs Derawal asked her if the lamb had defrosted and Fatou had to confess that she had only just taken it out. Mrs Derawal said something sharply in her language. Fatou waited for something further, but Mr Derawal only smiled awkwardly at her, and nodded as a sign that she could go now. Fatou went upstairs to collect the clothes.

O–13

‘To keep you is no benefit. To destroy you is no loss’ was one of the mottoes of the Khmer Rouge. It referred to the New People, those city dwellers who could not be made to give up city life and work on a farm. By returning everybody back to the land, the regime hoped to create a society of Old People—that is to say, of agrarian peasants. When a New Person was relocated from the city to the country, it was vital not to show weakness in the fields. Vulnerability was punishable by death.

In Willesden, we are almost all New People, though some of us, like Fatou, were, until quite recently, Old People, working the land in our various countries of origin. Of the Old and New People of Willesden I speak; I have been chosen to speak for them, though they did not choose me and must wonder what gives me the right. I could say, ‘Because I was born at the crossroads of Willesden, Kilburn and Queen’s Park!’ But the reply would be swift and damning: ‘Oh, don’t be foolish, many people were born right there;

it doesn’t mean anything at all. We are not one people and no one can speak for us. It’s all a lot of nonsense. We see you standing on the balcony, overlooking the Embassy of Cambodia, in your dressing gown, staring into the chestnut trees, looking gormless.[6] The real reason you speak in this way is because you can’t think of anything better to do.’

O–14

On Monday, Fatou went swimming. She paused to watch the badminton. She thought that the arm that delivered the smashes must make a movement similar to the one she made in the pool, with her clumsy yet effective front crawl. She entered the health centre and gave a guest pass to the girl behind the desk. In the dimly lit changing room, she put on her sturdy black underwear. As she swam, she thought of Carib Beach. Her father serving snapper to the guests on the deck, his bow tie always a little askew, the ugly tourists, the whole scene there. Of course, it was not surprising in the least to see old white men from Germany with beautiful local girls on their laps, but she would never forget the two old white women from England—red women, really, thanks to the sun—each of them as big as two women put together, with Kweku and Osai lying by their sides, the boys hooking their scrawny black bird-arms round the women’s massive red shoulders, and dancing with them in the hotel ‘ballroom’, answering to the names Michael and David, and disappearing into the women’s cabins at night. She had known the boys’ real girlfriends; they were chambermaids like Fatou. Sometimes they cleaned the rooms where Kweku and Osai spent the night with the English women. And the girls themselves had ‘boyfriends’ among the guests. It was not a holy place, that hotel. And the pool was shaped like a kidney bean: nobody could really swim in it, or showed any sign of wanting to. Mostly, they stood in it and drank cocktails. Sometimes they even had their burgers delivered to the pool. Fatou hated to watch her father crouching to hand a burger to a man waist-high in water.

The only good thing that happened in Carib Beach was this: once a month, on a Sunday, the congregation of a local church poured out of a coach at the front gates, lined up fully dressed in the courtyard and then walked into the pool for a mass baptism. The tourists were never warned, and Fatou never understood why the congregants were allowed to do it. But she loved to watch their white shirts bloat and spread across the surface of the water, and to hear the weeping and singing. At the time—though she was not then a member of that church, or of any church except the one in her heart—she had felt that this baptism was for her, too, and that it kept her safe, and that this was somehow the reason she did not become one of the 'girls' at the Carib Beach Resort. In almost two years—between her father's efforts and the grace of an unseen and unacknowledged God—she did her work, and swam Sunday mornings at the crack of dawn, and got along all right. But the Devil was waiting.

She had only a month left in Accra when she entered a bedroom to clean it one morning and heard the door shut softly behind her before she could put a hand to it. He came, this time, in Russian form. Afterwards, he cried and begged her not to tell anyone: his wife had gone to see the Cape Coast Castle[7] and they were leaving the following morning. Fatou listened to his blubbering and realized that he thought the hotel would punish him for his action, or that the police would be called. That was when she knew that the Devil was stupid as well as evil. She spat in his face and left. Thinking about the Devil now made her swimming fast and angry, and for a while she easily lapped the young white man in the lane next to hers, the faster lane.

O–15

'Don't give the Devil your anger, it is his food,' Andrew said to her, when they first met, a year ago. He handed her a leaflet as she sat eating a sandwich on a bench in Kilburn Park. 'Don't make it so easy for him.' Without being invited, he took the seat next to hers and began going through the text of his leaflet. It was printed to look like a newspaper, and he started with the headline: 'WHY IS THERE

PAIN?' She liked him. They began a theological conversation. It continued in the Tunisian café, and every Sunday for several months. A lot of the things he said she had heard before from other people, and they did not succeed in changing her attitude. In the end, it was one thing that he said to her that really made the difference. It was after she'd told him this story:

'One day, at the hotel, I heard a commotion on the beach. It was early morning. I went out and I saw nine children washed up dead on the beach. Ten or eleven years old, boys and girls. They had gone into the water, but they didn't know how to swim. Some people were crying, maybe two people. Everyone else just shook their heads and carried on walking to where they were going. After a long time, the police came. The bodies were taken away. People said, "Well, they are with God now." Everybody carried on like before. I went back to work. The next year I was in Rome. I saw a boy who was about fifteen years old knocked down on his bike. He was dead. People were screaming and crying in the street. Everybody crying. They were not his family. They were only strangers. The next day, it was in the paper.'

And Andrew replied, 'A tap runs fast the first time you switch it on.'

O–16

Twenty more laps. Fatou tried to think of the last time she had cried. It was in Rome, but it wasn't for the boy on the bike. She was cleaning toilets in a Catholic girls' school. She did not know Jesus then, so it made no difference what kind of school it was—she only knew she was cleaning toilets. At midday, she had a fifteen-minute break. She would go to the little walled garden across the road to smoke a cigarette. One day, she was sitting on a bench near a fountain and spotted something odd in the bushes. A tin of green paint. A gold spray can. A Statue of Liberty costume. An identity card with the name Rajib Devanga. One shoe. An empty wallet. A plastic tub with a slit cut in the top meant for coins and euro notes—empty. A little stain of what looked like blood on this tub. Until that point,

she had been envious of the Bengali boys on Via Nazionale.[8] She felt that she, too, could paint herself green and stand still for an hour. But when she tried to find out more the Bengalis would not talk to her. It was a closed shop, for brown men only. Her place was in the toilet stalls. She thought those men had it easy. Then she saw that little sad pile of belongings in the bush and cried; for herself or for Rajib, she wasn't sure.

Now she turned on to her back in the water for the final two laps, relaxed her arms and kicked her feet out like a frog. Water made her think of more water. 'When you're baptized in our church, all sin is wiped, you start again': Andrew's promise. She had never told Andrew of the sin precisely, but she knew that he knew she was not a virgin. The day she finally became a Catholic, 6 February 2011, Andrew had taken her, hair still wet, to the Tunisian café and asked her how it felt.

She was joyful! She said, 'I feel like a new person!'

But happiness like that is hard to hold on to. Back at work the next day, picking Julie's dirty underwear up off the floor inches from the wicker basket, she had to keep reminding herself of her new relationship with Jesus and how it changed everything. Didn't it change everything? The following Sunday she expressed some of her doubt, cautiously, to Andrew.

'But did you think you'd never feel sad again? Never angry or tired or just pissed off—sorry about my language. Come on, Fatou! Wise up, man!'

Was it wrong to hope to be happy?

O–17

Lost to these watery thoughts, Fatou got home a little later than usual and was through the door only minutes before Mrs Derawal.

'How is Asma?' Fatou asked. She had heard the girl cry out in the night.

'My goodness, it was just a little marble,' Mrs Derawal said, and Fatou realized that it was not in her imagination: since Sunday night,

neither of the adult Derawals had been able to look her in the eye. 'What a fuss everybody is making. I have a list for you—it's on the table.'

O–18

Fatou watched Andrew pick his way through the tables in the Tunisian café, holding a tray with a pair of mochas on it and some croissants. He hit the elbow of one man with his backside and then trailed the belt of his long, silly leather coat through the lunch of another, apologizing as he went. You could not say he was an elegant man. But he was generous, he was thoughtful. She stood up to push a teetering croissant back on to its plate. They sat down at the same time, and smiled at each other.

'A while ago you asked me about Cambodia,' Andrew said. 'Well, it's a very interesting case.' He tapped the frame of his glasses. 'If you even wore a pair of these? They would kill you. Glasses meant you thought too much. They had very primitive ideas. They were enemies of logic and progress. They wanted everybody to go back to the country and live like simple people.'

'But sometimes it's true that things are simpler in the country.'

'In some ways. I don't really know. I've never lived in the country.'

I don't really know. It was good to hear him say that! It was a good sign. She smiled cheekily at him. 'People are less sinful in the country,' she said, but he did not seem to see she was flirting with him, and began upon another lecture.

'That's true. But you can't force people to live in the country. That's what I call a Big Man Policy. I invented this phrase for my dissertation. We know all about Big Man Policies[9] in Nigeria. They come from the top and they crush you. There's always somebody who wants to be the Big Man, and take everything for themselves, and tell everybody how to think and what to do. When, actually, it's he who is weak. But if the Big Men see that *you* see that *they* are

weak they have no choice but to destroy you. That is the real tragedy.'

Fatou sighed. 'I never met a man who didn't want to tell everybody how to think and what to do,' she said.

Andrew laughed. 'Fatou, you include me? Are you a feminist now, too?'

Fatou brought her mug up to her lips and looked penetratingly at Andrew. There were good and bad kinds of weakness in men, and she had come to the conclusion that the key was to know which kind you were dealing with.

'Andrew,' she said, putting her hand on his, 'would you like to come swimming with me?'

O–19

Because Fatou believed that the Derawals' neighbours had been instructed to spy on her, she would not let Andrew come to the house to pick her up on Monday, instead leaving as she always did, just before ten, carrying misleading Sainsbury's bags and walking towards the health centre. She spotted him from a long way off—the road was so straight and he had arrived early. He stood shivering in the drizzle. She felt sorry, but also a little prideful: it was the prospect of seeing her body that had raised this big man from his bed. Still, it was a sacrifice, she knew, for her friend to come out to meet her on a weekday morning. He worked all night long and kept the daytime for sleeping. She watched him waving at her from their agreed meeting spot, just on the corner, in front of the Embassy of Cambodia. After a while, he stopped waving—because she was still so far away—and then, a little later, he began waving again. She waved back, and when she finally reached him they surprised each other by holding hands. 'I'm an excellent badminton player,' Andrew said, as they passed the Embassy of Cambodia. 'I would make you weep for mercy! Next time, instead of swimming we should play badminton somewhere.' Next time, we should go to Paris. Next time, we should go to the moon. He was a dreamer. But there are worse things, Fatou thought, than being a dreamer.

O–20

‘So you’re a guest and this is your guest?’ the girl behind the desk asked.

‘I am a guest and this is another guest,’ Fatou replied.

‘Yeah . . . that’s not really how it works?’

‘Please,’ Fatou said. ‘We’ve come from a long way.’

‘I appreciate that,’ the girl said. ‘But I really shouldn’t let you in, to be honest.’

‘Please,’ Fatou said again. She could think of no other argument.

The girl took out a pen and made a mark on Fatou’s guest pass.

‘This one time. Don’t tell no one I did this, please. One time only! I’ll need to cross off two separate visits.’

For one time only, then, Andrew and Fatou approached the changing rooms together and parted at the doors that led to the men’s and the women’s. In her changing room, Fatou got ready with lightning speed. Yet somehow he was already there on a lounger when she came out, eyes trained on the women’s changing-room door, waiting for her to emerge.

‘Man, this is the life!’ he said, putting his arms behind his head.

‘Are you getting in?’ Fatou asked, and tried to place her hands, casually, in front of her groin.

‘Not yet, man, I’m just taking it all in, taking it all in. You go in. I’ll come in a moment.’

Fatou climbed down the steps and began to swim. Not elegant, not especially fast, but consistent and determined. Every now and then she would angle her head to try to see if Andrew was still on his chair, smiling to himself. After twenty laps, she swam to where he lay and put her elbows on the tiles.

‘You’re not coming in? It’s so warm. Like a bath.’

‘Sure, sure,’ he said. ‘I’ll try it.’

As he sat up his stomach folded in on itself, and Fatou wondered whether he had spent all that time on the lounger to avoid her seeing its precise bulk and wobble. He came towards the stairs;

Fatou held out a hand to him, but he pushed it away. He made his way down and stood in the shallow end, splashing water over his shoulders like a prince fanning himself, and then crouching down into it.

'It is warm! Very nice. This is the life, man! You go, swim—I'll follow you.'

Fatou kicked off, creating so much splash she heard someone in the adjacent lane complain. At the wall, she turned and looked for Andrew. His method, such as it was, involved dipping deep under the water and hanging there like a hippo, then batting his arms till he crested for air, and then diving down again and hanging. It was a lot of energy to expend on a short distance, and by the time he reached the wall he was panting like a maniac. His eyes—he had no goggles—were painfully red.

'It's OK,' Fatou said, trying to take his hand again. 'If you let me, I'll show you how.' But he shrugged her off and rubbed at his eyes.

'There's too much bloody chlorine in this pool.'

'You want to leave?'

Andrew turned back to look at Fatou. His eyes were streaming. He looked, to Fatou, like a little boy trying to disguise the fact he had been crying. But then he held her hand, under the water.

'No. I'm just going to take it easy right here.'

'OK,' Fatou said.

'You swim. You're good. You swim.'

'OK,' Fatou said, and set off, and she found that each lap was more distracted and rhythmless than the last. She was not used to being watched while she swam. Ten laps later, she suddenly stood up halfway down the lane and walked the rest of the distance to the wall.

'You want to go in the Jacuzzi?' she asked him, pointing to it.

In the hot tub sat a woman dressed in a soaking tracksuit, her head covered with a headscarf. A man next to the woman, perhaps her husband, stared at Fatou and said something to the woman. He was so hairy he was almost as covered as she was. Together they rose up out of the water and left. He was wearing the tiniest of

Speedos, the kind Fatou had feared Andrew might wear, and was grateful he had not. Andrew's shorts were perfectly nice, knee-length, red and solid, and looked good against his skin.

'No,' Andrew said. 'It's great just to be here with you, watching the world go by.'

O–21

That same evening, Fatou was fired. Not for the guest passes—the Derawals never found out how many miles Fatou had travelled on their membership. In fact, it was hard for Fatou to understand exactly why she was being fired, as Mrs Derawal herself did not seem able to explain it very precisely.

'What you don't understand is that we have no need for a nanny,' she said, standing in the doorway of Fatou's room—there was not really enough space in there for two people to stand without one of them being practically on the bed. 'The children are grown. We need a housekeeper, one who cleans properly. These days you care more about the children than the cleaning,' Mrs Derawal added, though Fatou had never cared for the children, not even slightly. 'And that is of no use to us.'

Fatou said nothing. She was thinking that she did not have a proper suitcase and would have to take her things from Mrs Derawal's house in plastic bags.

'And so you will want to find somewhere else to live as soon as possible,' Mrs Derawal said. 'My husband's cousin is coming to stay in this room on Friday—this Friday.'

Fatou thought about that for a moment. Then she said, 'Can I please use the phone for one call?'

Mrs Derawal inspected a piece of wood that had flaked from the doorframe. But she nodded.

'And I would like to have my passport, please.'

'Excuse me?'

'My passport, please.'

At last Mrs Derawal looked at Fatou, right into her eyes, but her face was twisted, as if Fatou had just reached over and slapped her. Anyone could see the Devil had climbed inside poor Mrs Derawal. He was lighting her up with a pure fury.

'For goodness' sake, girl, I don't have your passport! What would I want with your passport? It's probably in a drawer in the kitchen somewhere. Is that my job now, too, to look for your things?'

Fatou was left alone. She packed her things into the decoy shopping bags she usually took to the swimming pool. While she was doing this, someone pushed her passport under her door. An hour later she carried her bags downstairs and went directly to the phone in the hall. Faizul walked by and lifted his hand for a high-five. Fatou ignored him and dialled Andrew's number. From her friend's voice she knew that she had woken him, but he was not even the slightest bit angry. He listened to all she had to say and seemed to understand, too, without her having to say so, that at this moment she could not speak freely. After she had said her part, he asked a few quick technical questions and then explained clearly and carefully what was to happen.

'It will all be OK. They need cleaners in my offices—I will ask for you. In the meantime, you come here. We'll sleep in shifts. You can trust me. I respect you, Fatou.'

But she did not have her Oyster Card; it was in the kitchen, on the fridge under a magnet of Florida, and she would rather die than go in there. Fine: he could meet her at six p.m. at Brondesbury Overground station. Fatou looked at the grandfather clock in front of her: she had four hours to kill.

'Six o'clock,' she repeated. She put the phone down, took the rest of the guest passes from the drawer of the faux-Louis XVI console and left the house.

'Weighed down a bit today,' the girl at the desk of the health club said, nodding at Fatou's collection of plastic bags. Fatou held out a guest pass for a stamp and did not smile. 'See you next time,' this same girl said, an hour and a half later, as Fatou strode past, still weighed down and still unwilling to be grateful for past favours.

Gratitude was just another kind of servitude. Better to make your own arrangements.

Walking out into the cold grey, Fatou felt a sense of brightness, of being washed clean, that neither the weather nor her new circumstances could dim. Still, her limbs were weary and her hair was wet; she would probably catch a cold, waiting out here. It was only four thirty. She put her bags on the pavement and sat down next to them, just by the bus stop opposite the Embassy of Cambodia. Buses came and went, slowing down for her and then jerking forward when they realized that she had no interest in getting up and on. Many of us walked past her that afternoon, or spotted her as we rode the bus, or through the windscreens of our cars, or from our balconies. Naturally, we wondered what this girl was doing, sitting on the damp pavement in the middle of the day. We worried for her. We tend to assume the worst, here in Willesden. We watched her watching the shuttlecock. Pock, smash. Pock, smash. As if one player could imagine only a violent conclusion and the other only a hopeful return.

2013

Endnotes

- Note 1: The story is divided into twenty-one sections, which mirrors the twenty-one points needed to win a game of badminton.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Country in southeast Asia.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Area in North West London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: An architectural style from ancient Greece characterized by ornate columns, with ornamentation at the top of the columns.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Capital of Ghana, a West African country.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: The Cambodian Genocide (1975–79) saw roughly 1.7 million people die at the hands of the Khmer Rouge regime, especially targeting ethnic minorities.Return to reference 6

- Note 7: Area in South East London.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Area in North West London.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: A style of table coming out of France during the reign of Louis XVI (1774–93), characterized by classical influences and a turn from the more ornamental Baroque furniture.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Backpacks.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: A style of architecture from the Tudor period in England (1485–1603).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: American actor (1920–2014).Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Area in North West London.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Newspaper circulating in the UK.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Inhabitant or native of Sudan, a country in Northeast Africa.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Country in West Africa.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Country in North Africa.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Country in Europe across the Mediterranean Sea from North Africa. The Italian island of Lampedusa is a primary point of entry to Europe for African immigrants.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: A card used to pay for London's public transportation system.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: From Tunisia, a country in North Africa.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: The Khmer Rouge targeted "New People," members of the urban and educated elite, who were forced into work camps. The regime defended "Old People," those from rural areas, farms, and villages.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: A kind of raincoat.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: A chain of supermarkets in the UK.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Inhabitant or native of Lebanon, a country in the Middle East.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: The genocide of millions of European Jewish people during World War II by Nazi Germany and its allies (1941–45).Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Country in Central Africa. In 1994, armed militias killed around 600,000 people of the Tutsi ethnic minority group, and

as many as 200,000 moderate Hutus.Return to reference 8

- Note 9: From Nigeria, a country in West Africa.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: City in Japan. In 1945 the United States dropped an atomic bomb over the city, followed by another one three days later over the city of Nagasaki. At least 70,000 citizens were killed in Hiroshima immediately, with as many as 140,000 dying later from the effects of injury and radiation.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: London public transit rail system.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: British talent competition show.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: British broadcasting company providing television service.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Being nervous or scared (British slang).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Stupid or slow (British slang).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Built in 1555 as a Portuguese trading post, it was later used as part of the transatlantic slave trade to hold enslaved Africans before they were transported to the Americas.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: A major road in Rome, Italy. “Bengali”: inhabitant or native of the Bengal region in South Asia.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Shorthand for an authoritarian government led by a dictator.Return to reference 9

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE
b. 1977

The novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie may be most widely known for her feminism. Her TEDx talk, "We Should All Be Feminists," was sampled by the American singer Beyoncé in "Flawless" (2013). Adichie published a sequel called *Dear Ijeawele, or a Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* (2017), in which she builds on her earlier pronouncements that girls are taught to "shrink themselves," that is, to limit their ambition and success, while boys are raised in a "hard, small cage" of masculinity in which they learn to avoid exposing their fear and doubts. In *Dear Ijeawele* she adopts the intimate form of a letter to a friend who has sought advice on how to raise her daughter as a feminist. Adichie suggests that women resist predetermined gender roles and seek out full personhood—an ambition that the most memorable characters of her novels achieve. In the short story "Checking Out," about the fate of an undocumented Nigerian migrant in contemporary London, she exposes the vulnerability and humanity of a young man named Obinze. In this story, as in her novels, she narrates the enmeshment of private lives within the racial, gender, and cultural structures that shape them.

Adichie was born in Enugu, Nigeria, raised a Roman Catholic in the university town of Nsukka, and lived in a house that was once the residence of a Nigerian Igbo writer of an earlier generation, Chinua Achebe—a novelist she has credited as her literary

inspiration. Adichie's father was a professor of statistics at the University of Nigeria and her mother the university registrar. She tried to focus on medicine and pharmacy for a year and a half at the University of Nigeria but left for the United States at the age of nineteen to escape a medical career. She studied communication and political science at Drexel University and Eastern Connecticut University before earning master's degrees in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University and in African studies at Yale. She has held fellowships at Princeton and Harvard, and in 2008 was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship. In recent years she has divided her time between the United States and Nigeria.

Adichie's fiction has been praised for its vivid characterization, bold reach, and humane warmth. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), begins with a nod to Achebe: "Things started to fall apart at home." But her novel explores tensions between Western and Igbo cultures from the perspective of a young woman, fifteen-year-old Kambili, coming of age against the backdrop of Nigeria's military coups. Her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), pushes back in time to the Nigerian Civil War of the 1960s, reimagining the first of many such postcolonial conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa as endured by two sisters. But Adichie has also resisted what she calls the "war and hunger" representation of Africa in the West, arguing that, beyond such crises, millions of Africans live out "ordinary" experiences of love, pain, and loss, "just like everyone else." A transcript of her 2013 TED talk, "The Danger of a Single Story," which engages with the absurdity and potential harmfulness of monolithic presentations of Africa, is included earlier in this volume. Her third novel, *Americanah* (2013), winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award, widened her canvas, spanning Nigeria, England, and the United States in tracking the love lives and migrant hardships of her Nigerian protagonists, Ifemelu and Obinze, who fall in love as teenagers in Lagos. The title is a term for Nigerians who return from the United States with American affectations, and the book cannily observes constructions of race and gender in transnational contexts. Extending beyond Achebe's Nigerian-

centered fiction, the book's intercontinental scope exemplifies what is sometimes called the "global novel."

Part of Obinze's story also appears in Adichie's "Checking Out," among her many tightly constructed short stories (an earlier collection is *The Thing Around Your Neck* [2009]). A reflective young man, Obinze has dreamed of relocating to the United States, but, deterred by heightened restrictions after 9/11, he winds up in London, where he struggles to make a new life for himself. Lacking legal credentials, at the mercy of unscrupulous and exploitative fellow Africans, Obinze gazes wistfully at the people around him near the London Underground: "His eyes would follow them, with a lost longing, and he would think, You can work, you are legal, you are visible, and you don't even know how fortunate you are." Although the mass media constantly circulate pictures and news of multitudes on the move, Adichie harnesses the power of fiction to take readers inside the hopes, disappointments, and musings of one such person. Granted, he is more fortunate than many. Elsewhere she has remarked: "Obinze's journey is about the ways in which we become different versions of ourselves. The generally known immigration story, especially for the African immigrant, is that of leaving war or poverty. But this is about another kind of immigration, of people who do not come from burned villages, but are seeking that sublime thing: choice." For Obinze, as for millions of migrants with similar dreams and aspirations, that sublime thing is far from being within easy reach.

Checking Out

In London, night came too soon. It hung in the morning air like a threat and then in the afternoon a blue-gray dusk descended, and the Victorian buildings all wore a mournful face. In those first weeks, the weightless menace of the cold startled Obinze, drying his nostrils, deepening his anxieties, making him urinate too often. He would walk fast, his hands swallowed up by the sleeves of the gray wool coat his cousin had lent him. Sometimes he would stop outside a tube station,[1] often by a flower or a newspaper vender, and watch the people brushing past. They walked so quickly, as if they had an important destination, a purpose to their lives. His eyes would follow them, with a lost longing, and he would think, You can work, you are legal, you are visible, and you don't even know how fortunate you are.

It was at a tube station that he met the Angolans who would arrange his marriage, exactly two years and three days after he had arrived in England; he kept count.

"We'll talk in the car," one of them had said over the phone. Their old black Mercedes was fussily maintained, the floor mats wavy from vacuuming, the leather seats shiny with polish. The two Angolans looked alike, with thick eyebrows that almost touched, and they were dressed alike, too, in leather jackets and long gold chains. Their tabletop hair, which sat on their heads like tall hats, surprised him, but perhaps having retro haircuts was part of their hip image. They spoke to him with the authority of people who had done this before, and also with a slight condescension; his fate, after all, was in their hands.

"We decided on Newcastle[2] because we know people there and London is too hot right now—too many marriages happening in London, yeah?—so we don't want trouble," one of them said. "Everything is going to work out. Just make sure you keep a low

profile, yeah? Don't attract any attention to yourself until the marriage is done. Don't fight in the pub, yeah?"

"I've never been a very good fighter," Obinze said dryly, but the Angolans did not smile.

"You have the money?" the other one asked.

Obinze handed over two hundred pounds, all in twenty-pound notes that he had taken out of the cash machine over two days. It was a deposit, to prove that he was serious. Later, after he met the girl, he would pay two thousand pounds.

"The rest has to be up front, yeah? We'll use some of it to do the running around and the rest goes to the girl. Man, you know we're not making anything from this. We usually ask for much more, but we're doing this for your cousin," the first one said.

Obinze did not believe them, even then. He met the girl, Cleotilde, a few days later, at a shopping center, in a McDonald's whose windows looked out onto the dank entrance of a tube station across the street. He sat at a table with the Angolans and watched people hurry past, wondering if one of them was she, while the Angolans whispered into their phones; perhaps they were arranging other marriages.

"Hello there!" she said.

She surprised him. He had expected someone with pockmarks smothered under heavy makeup, someone tough and knowing. But here she was, dewy and fresh, bespectacled, olive-skinned, almost childlike, smiling shyly at him and sucking a milkshake through a straw. She looked like a university freshman who was innocent or dumb, or both.

"I just want to be sure that you're sure about doing this," he told her. Then, worried that he might frighten her away, he added, "I'm very grateful, and it won't take too much from you—in a year I'll have my papers and we'll do the divorce. But I just wanted to meet you first and make sure you are O.K. to do this."

"Yes," she said.

He watched her, expecting more. She played with her straw, not meeting his eyes, and it took him a while to realize that she was

reacting more to him than to the situation. She was attracted to him.

"I want to help my mom out. Things are tight at home," she said, a trace of a non-British accent underlining her words.

"She's with us, yeah," one of the Angolans said impatiently.

"Show him your details, Cleo," the other Angolan said.

His calling her Cleo rang false; Obinze sensed this from the slight surprise on her face. It was a forced intimacy: the Angolan had never called her Cleo before. Obinze wondered how the Angolans knew her. Did they have a list of young women with European Union passports who needed money? Cleotilde pushed at her hair, a mass of tight coils, and adjusted her glasses, as though preparing herself, then presented her passport and license. Obinze examined them. He would have thought her younger than twenty-three.

"Can I have your number?" Obinze asked.

"Just call us for anything," the Angolans said, almost at the same time. But Obinze wrote his number on a napkin and pushed it across to Cleotilde. The Angolans gave him a sly look.

The next day, on the phone, she told him that she had been living in London for six years, and was saving money to go to fashion school; the Angolans had told him that she lived in Portugal.

"Would you like to meet again?" he asked. "It will be much easier if we try to get to know each other a little."

"Yes," she said without hesitation.

They ate fish-and-chips in a pub, a thin crust of grime on the sides of the wooden table, while she talked about her love of fashion and asked him about Nigerian traditional dress. She seemed a little more mature this time; he noticed the shimmer on her cheeks, the more defined curl of her hair, and knew that she had made an effort with her appearance.

"What will you do after you get your papers?" she asked him. "Will you bring your girlfriend from Nigeria?"

He was touched by her obviousness. "I don't have a girlfriend."

"I've never been to Africa. I'd love to go." She said "Africa" wistfully, like an admiring foreigner, loading the word with exotic

excitement. Her black Angolan father had left her white Portuguese mother when she was three, she told him, and she had not seen him since, nor had she ever been to Angola. She said this with a shrug and a cynical raise of her eyebrows, as though it had never bothered her, an effort so out of character, so jarring, that it showed him just how deeply it did bother her. There were difficulties in her life that he wanted to know more about, parts of her thick, shapely body that he longed to touch, but he was wary of complicating things. He would wait until after the wedding, until the business side of their relationship was finished. She seemed to understand this without their talking about it. And so, as they met in the following weeks, sometimes practicing how they would answer questions during their immigration interview and other times just talking about football,[3] there was, between them, the growing urgency of restrained desire. It was there in how close they stood, not touching, as they waited at the tube station, and in their teasing each other about his support of Arsenal and her support of Manchester United.[4] After he paid the Angolans the additional two thousand pounds, she told him that they had given her only five hundred.

"I'm just telling you. I know you don't have any more money. I want to do this for you," she said.

He wanted to kiss her, her upper lip pinker and shinier with lip gloss than the lower, to hold her, to tell her how deeply, irrepressibly grateful he was. She would never flaunt her power over him. One Eastern European woman, Iloba had told him, had asked a Nigerian man, an hour before their wedding, to give her a thousand pounds extra not to walk away. In a panic, the man had had to call all of his friends to raise the money.

When Obinze asked the Angolans how much they had given Cleotilde, they said, "Man, we gave you a good deal," in the tone of people who knew how much they were needed. It was they, after all, who took him to a lawyer, a low-voiced Nigerian in a swivel chair, who slid backward to reach a file cabinet as he said, "You can still get married, even though your visa is expired. In fact, getting married is now your only choice." It was they who provided water

and gas bills, going back six months, with his name and a Newcastle address. And it was they who found a man who would "sort out" his driver's license, a man called Brown. Obinze met Brown at the train station in Barking;[5] he stood near the gate, amid the bustle of people, looking around and waiting for his phone to ring, since Brown had refused to give him a phone number.

"Are you waiting for somebody?" Brown asked, when he appeared. He was a slight man, his winter hat pulled down to his eyebrows.

"Yes. I'm Obinze," he said, feeling like a character in a spy novel. Brown led him to a quiet corner, handed over an envelope, and there it was, his license, with his photo. It had the genuine, slightly worn look of something owned for a year. A small plastic card, but it weighed down his pocket. A few days later, he walked with it into a London building that looked like a church, steepled and grave from the outside, but inside was shabby, harried, knotted with people. Signs were scrawled on whiteboards:

Births and deaths this way. Marriage registration this way.

Obinze, his expression carefully frozen in neutrality, handed the license over to the registrar behind the desk.

A woman was walking toward the door, talking loudly to her companion. "Look how crowded this place is," she said. "It's all sham marriages, all of them, now that Blunkett[6] is after them."

Perhaps she had come to register a death, and her words were merely the lonely lashings-out of grief, but he felt the familiar tightening of panic in his chest. The registrar was examining his license, taking too long. The seconds lengthened and curdled. *"All sham marriages, all of them,"* rang in Obinze's head. Finally, the registrar looked up and pushed across a form.

"Getting married, are we? Congratulations!" The words came out with the mechanical good cheer of frequent repetition.

"Thank you," Obinze said, and tried to unfreeze his face.

Behind the desk, a whiteboard was propped against a wall, with venues and dates of intended marriages scrawled in blue; a name at the bottom caught his eye. Okoli Okafor and Crystal Smith. Okoli Okafor had been his classmate in secondary school and at university, a quiet boy who had been teased for having a surname for a first name, who later joined a vicious cult at university, and then left Nigeria during one of the long strikes.[7]

The memory, clear as a beam of light, took Obinze back to a time when he still believed the universe would bend according to his will. Once, during his final year at university, the year that people danced in the streets because General Abacha[8] had died, his mother had said, "One day, I will look up and all the people I know will be dead or abroad." For a moment, he felt as if he had betrayed her by having his own plan: to get a postgraduate degree in America, to work in America, to live in America. Of course, he knew how unreasonable the American Consulate could be—the vice-chancellor, of all people, had once been refused a visa to attend a conference—but he had never doubted his plan. He would wonder, later, why he had been so sure. Perhaps it was because he had never just wanted to go abroad, as many others did; some people were now even going to South Africa, which amused him. It had always been America, only America. A longing nurtured and nursed over many years. An advertisement on NTA[9] for "Andrew Checking Out," which he had watched as a child, had given shape to his longings. "Men, I'm checkin' out," the character Andrew had said, staring cockily at the camera. "No good roads, no light, no water. Men, you can't even get a common bottle of soft drink!" While Andrew was checking out, General Buhari's[1] soldiers were flogging adults in the streets, lecturers were striking for better pay, and Obinze's mother decided that he could no longer have Fanta whenever he wanted but only on Sundays. America became a place where bottles of Fanta could be had without permission. Obinze would stand in front of the mirror and repeat Andrew's words: "Men, I'm checkin' out!" Later, when he sought out magazines and books and films and secondhand stories about America, his longing took on a minor mystical quality. He saw

himself walking the streets of Harlem, discussing the merits of Mark Twain with his American friends, gazing at Mt. Rushmore. Days after he graduated from university, bloated with knowledge about America, he applied for a visa at the consulate in Lagos.

He already knew that the best interviewer was the man with the blond beard, and, as the line moved forward, he hoped that he would not be interviewed by the horror story, a pretty white woman famous for screaming into her microphone and insulting even grandmothers. Finally, it was his turn, and the blond-bearded man said, "Next person!" Obinze walked up and slid his forms underneath the glass. The man glanced at the forms and said, kindly, "Sorry, you don't qualify. Next person!" Obinze was stunned. He went three more times in the next few months. Each time, he was told, with barely a glance at his documents, "Sorry, you don't qualify," and each time he emerged from the air-conditioned cool of the consulate into the harsh sunlight stunned and unbelieving.

"It's the terrorism fears," his mother said. "The Americans are now averse to foreign young men."

She told him to find a job and try again in a year. But his job applications yielded nothing. He travelled to Lagos and to Port Harcourt and to Abuja to take assessment tests, which he found easy, and then attended interviews, answering questions fluidly, but only long silences followed. Some of his friends got jobs, people who did not have his second-class upper degree and who did not speak as well as he did. He wondered if employers could smell his America-pining on his breath, or sense how obsessively he still looked at the Web sites of American universities.

One day, his mother left him a note on the bathroom sink: "I have been invited to an academic conference in London. We should speak." He was puzzled. When she came home from her lecture, he was in the living room waiting for her.

"Mummy, *nno*,"[2] he said.

She acknowledged his greeting with a nod. "I'm going to put your name on my British visa application as my research assistant," she said quietly. "That should get you a six-month visa. You can stay

with Nicholas in London. See what you can do with your life. Maybe you can get to America from there. I know that your mind is no longer here."

He stared at her.

"I understand this sort of thing is done nowadays," she said, sitting down on the sofa beside him, and trying to sound offhand, but in the uncommon briskness of her words he sensed her discomfort. She was a woman who asked no favors, who would not lie, who would not accept even a Christmas card from her students, because it might compromise her. Yet here she was, behaving as though truth-telling were a luxury that they could no longer afford. She had lied for him. If anyone else had lied for him, it would not have mattered as much or even at all, but she lied for him and he got a six-month visa to the United Kingdom. He felt, even before he left, like a failure. He did not contact her for months, while he stayed with his cousin Nicholas, in Essex.[3] He did not contact her because there was nothing to tell and he wanted to wait until he had something to tell. Throughout his stay in England, he had spoken to her only a few times, strained conversations during which he felt her wondering why he had made nothing of himself. But she never asked for details; she only waited to hear what he was willing to tell.

Everyone joked about people who went abroad to clean toilets, and so Obinze approached his first job with irony: he was indeed abroad cleaning toilets, wearing rubber gloves and carrying a pail, in an estate agent's office on the second floor of a London building. Each time he opened the swinging door of a stall, it seemed to sigh. The beautiful woman who cleaned the ladies' toilet was Ghanaian, about his age, with the shiniest dark skin he had ever seen. He sensed, in the way she spoke and carried herself, that she came from a background similar to his, a childhood cushioned by family, regular meals, and dreams in which there was no conception of cleaning toilets in London. She ignored his friendly gestures, saying only "Good evening" as formally as she could, but she was friendly with the Polish woman who cleaned the offices upstairs, and once he saw

them in a deserted café, drinking tea and talking in low tones. He stood watching them for a while, a great grievance exploding in his mind. He was too close to what she was; he knew her nuances, while with the Polish woman she was free to reinvent herself, to be whoever she wanted to be.

The toilets were not bad—some urine outside the urinal, some unfinished flushing. So he was shocked, one evening, to walk into a stall and discover a mound of shit on the toilet lid, solid, tapering, centered as though it had been carefully arranged. It looked like a puppy curled on a mat. It was a performance. He thought about the famed repression of the English. There was, in this performance, something of an unbuttoning. A person who had been fired? Denied a promotion? Obinze stared at that mound of shit for a long time, feeling smaller and smaller as he did so, until it became a personal affront, a punch to his jaw. And all for three quid[4] an hour. He took off his gloves, placed them next to the mound of shit, and left the building.

Obinze had not remembered that Iloba now lived in London; he had last seen him days before graduation. Iloba was merely from his mother's hometown, but he had been so enthusiastic about their kinship that everyone on campus assumed that they were cousins. Iloba would often pull up a chair, smiling and uninvited, and join Obinze and his friends at a roadside bar, or appear at Obinze's door on Sunday afternoons. Once, Iloba had stopped Obinze on the General Studies quad, cheerfully calling out "Kinsman!" and then giving him a rundown of marriages and deaths of people from his mother's home town whom he hardly knew. "Udoakpuanyi died some weeks ago. Don't you know him? Their homestead is next to your mother's." Obinze nodded and made appropriate sounds, humoring Iloba, because Iloba's demeanor was always so pleasant and oblivious, his trousers always too tight and too short, showing his bony ankles; they had earned him the nickname Iloba Jump Up.

Obinze got his phone number from Nicholas and called him.

"The Zed![5] Kinsman! You did not tell me you were coming to London!" Iloba said, using Obinze's old nickname. "How is your mother? What of your uncle, the one who married from Abagana? How is Nicholas?" Iloba sounded full of a simple happiness. There were people who were born with an inability to be tangled up in dark emotions, in complications, and Iloba was one of them. With such people, Obinze felt both admiration and boredom. When Obinze asked if Iloba might be able to help him find a National Insurance number, he would have understood a little resentment, a little churlishness—after all, he was contacting Iloba only because he needed something—but it surprised him how sincerely eager to help Iloba was.

"I would let you use mine, but I am working with it and it is risky," Iloba said.

"Where do you work?"

"In central London. Security. It's not easy, this country is not easy, but we are managing. I like the night shifts, because it gives me time to read for my course. I'm doing a master's in management at Birkbeck College."[6] Iloba paused. "The Zed, don't worry, we will put our heads together. Let me ask around and let you know."

Iloba called back two weeks later to say that he had found somebody. "His name is Vincent Obi. He is from Abia State.[7] A friend of mine did the connection. He wants to meet you tomorrow evening."

They met in Iloba's flat. A claustrophobic feel pervaded the concrete neighborhood with scarred walls and no trees. Everything seemed too small, too tight.

"Nice place," Obinze said, not because the flat was nice but because Iloba had a flat in London.

"I would have told you to come and stay with me, the Zed, but I live with two of my cousins." Iloba placed bottles of beer and a small plate of fried chin-chin[8] on the table. The ritual of hospitality raised a sharp homesickness in Obinze. He was reminded of going back to

his mother's village with her at Christmas, aunties offering him plates of chin-chin.

Vincent Obi was a small round man, submerged in a large pair of jeans and an ungainly coat. As he and Obinze shook hands, they sized each other up. From the set of Vincent's shoulders and the abrasiveness of his manner, Obinze sensed that he had learned early on, as a matter of necessity, to solve his own problems. Obinze imagined Vincent's Nigerian life: a community secondary school full of barefoot children; a polytechnic paid for with the help of a number of uncles; a family of many children; and a crowd of dependents in his hometown who, whenever he visited, would expect large loaves of bread and pocket money carefully distributed to each of them. Obinze saw himself through Vincent's eyes: a university staff child who grew up eating butter and now needed his help. At first, Vincent affected a British accent, saying "innit"[9] too many times.

"This is business, innit, but I'm helping you. You can use my N.I. number and pay me forty per cent of what you make," Vincent said. "It's business, innit. If I don't get what we agree on, I will report you."

"My brother," Obinze said. "That's a little too much. You know my situation. I don't have anything. Please try and come down."

"Thirty-five per cent is the best I can do. This is business." He lost his accent and now spoke Nigerian English. "Let me tell you, there are many people in your situation."

Iloba spoke in Igbo: "Vincent, my brother here is trying to save money and do his papers. Thirty-five is too much. Please just try and help us."

"You know that some people take half. Yes, he is in a situation, but all of us are in a situation. I am helping him, but this is business." Vincent's Igbo had a rural accent. He put the National Insurance card on the table and started to write his bank-account number on a piece of paper. That evening, as dusk fell, the sky muting to a pale violet, Obinze became Vincent.

The warehouse chief looked like the archetype of an Englishman that Obinze carried in his mind: tall and spare, sandy-haired and blue-eyed. But he was a smiling man, and in Obinze's imagination Englishmen were not smiling men. His name was Roy Snell. He vigorously shook Obinze's hand.

"So, Vincent, you're from Africa?" he asked, as he took Obinze around the warehouse, which was the size of a football field and alive with trucks being loaded, flattened cardboard boxes being folded into a deep pit, and men talking.

"Yes. I was born in Birmingham[1] and went back to Nigeria when I was six." It was the story that he and Iloba had agreed was most convincing.

"Why did you come back? How bad are things in Nigeria?"

"I just wanted to see if I could have a better life here."

Roy Snell nodded. He seemed like a person for whom the word "jolly" would always be apt. "You'll work with Nigel today—he's our youngest," he said, gesturing toward a man with a pale doughy body, spiky dark hair, and an almost cherubic face. "I think you'll like working here, Vinny Boy!" It had taken him five minutes to go from Vincent to Vinny Boy and, in the following months, when they played table tennis during lunch break, Roy would tell the men, "I've got to beat Vinny Boy for once!" And they would titter and repeat "Vinny Boy."

It amused Obinze how keenly the men flipped through their newspapers every morning, stopping at the photo of the big-breasted woman, examining it as though it were an article of great interest, different from the photo on that same page the previous day, the previous week. Their conversations, as they waited for their trucks to be loaded up, were always about cars and football and, most of all, women, each man telling stories that sounded similar to stories told the day before, the week before. Each time they mentioned knickers—"the bird flashed her knickers"—Obinze was even more amused, because knickers, in Nigerian English, were shorts rather than underwear, and he imagined these nubile women

in ill-fitting khaki shorts, the kind he had worn as a junior student in secondary school.

Roy Snell's greeting every morning was a jab to his belly. "Vinny Boy! You all right? You all right?" he would ask. He always put Obinze's name up for the outside work that paid better, always asked if he wanted to work weekends, which was double time, always asked about girls. It was as if Roy held a special affection for him, which was both protective and kind.

"You haven't had a shag since you came to the U.K., have you, Vinny Boy? I could give you this bird's number," he said once.

"I have a girlfriend back home," Obinze said.

"So what's wrong with a little shag, then?"

A few men nearby laughed.

"My girlfriend has magical powers," Obinze said.

Roy found this funnier than Obinze thought it was. He laughed and laughed. "She's into witchcraft, is she? All right, then, no shags for you. I've always wanted to go to Africa, Vinny Boy. I think I'll take a holiday and go to Nigeria when you're back there for a visit. You can show me around, find me some Nigerian birds, Vinny Boy, but no witchcraft!"

"Yes, I could do that."

"Oh, I know you could! You look like you know what to do with the birds," Roy said, with another jab at Obinze's belly.

Roy often assigned Obinze to work with Nigel, perhaps because they were the youngest men in the warehouse. That first morning, Obinze noticed that the other men, drinking coffee from paper cups and checking the board to see who would be working with whom, were laughing at Nigel. Nigel had no eyebrows; the patches of slightly pink skin where his eyebrows should have been gave his plump face an unfinished, ghostly look.

"I got pissed[2] at the pub and my mates shaved off my eyebrows," Nigel told Obinze, almost apologetically, as they shook hands.

"No shagging for you until you grow your eyebrows back, mate," one of the men called out as Nigel and Obinze headed for the truck. Obinze secured the washing machines at the back, tightening the straps until they were snug, and then climbed in and studied the map to find the shortest routes to their delivery addresses. Nigel took bends sharply and muttered about how people drove these days. At a traffic light, he brought out a bottle of cologne from a bag he had placed at his feet, sprayed it on his neck, and then offered it to Obinze.

"No, thanks," Obinze said. Nigel shrugged. Days later, he offered it again. The truck interior was dense with the scent of his cologne and, from time to time, Obinze would take deep gulps of fresh air through the open window.

"You're just new from Africa. You haven't seen the London sights, have you, mate?" Nigel asked.

"No," Obinze said.

And so, after early deliveries in central London, Nigel would take him for a drive, showing him Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament, Tower Bridge, all the while talking about his mother's arthritis, and about his girlfriend Haley's knockers. It took a while for Obinze to completely understand what Nigel said, because of his accent, each word twisted and stretched. Once Nigel said "male" and Obinze thought he had said "mile," and, when Obinze finally understood what Nigel meant, Nigel laughed and said, "You talk kind of posh, don't you? African posh."

One day, months into his job, after they had delivered a fridge to an address in Kensington,[3] Nigel said, of the elderly man who had come into the kitchen while they were installing it, "He's a real gent, he is." Nigel's tone was admiring, slightly cowed. The man had looked dishevelled and hungover, his hair tousled, his robe open at the chest, and he had said, archly, "You do know how to put it all together," as though he did not think they did. It amazed Obinze that, because Nigel thought the man was a "real gent," he did not complain about the dirty kitchen, as he ordinarily would have done.

If the man had spoken with a different accent, Nigel would have called him miserly for not giving them a tip.

They were approaching their next delivery address, in South London, and Obinze had just called the homeowner to say that they were almost there, when Nigel blurted out, "What do you say to a girl you like?"

"What do you mean?" Obinze asked.

"Truth is, I'm not really shagging Haley. I like her, but I don't know how to tell her. The other day, I went round her house and there was another bloke there." Nigel paused. Obinze tried to keep his face expressionless. "You look like you know what to say to the birds, mate," Nigel added.

"Just tell her you like her," Obinze said, thinking how seamlessly Nigel, at the warehouse with the other men, contributed stories about shagging Haley, and, once, about shagging her friend while Haley was away on holiday. "No games and no lines. Just say, 'Look, I like you and I think you're beautiful.' "

Nigel gave him a wounded glance. It was as if he had convinced himself that Obinze was skilled in the art of women; he expected some profundity, which Obinze wished, as he loaded a dishwasher onto a trolley and wheeled it to the door, that he had. An Indian woman opened the door, a portly, kindly housewife, who offered them tea. Many people offered tea or water. A sad-looking woman had once offered Obinze a small pot of homemade jam, and he had hesitated, but he sensed that whatever deep unhappiness she had would be compounded if he said no, and so he had taken the jam home, where it was still languishing in the fridge, unopened.

"Thank you, thank you," the Indian woman said, as Obinze and Nigel installed the new dishwasher and rolled away the old one.

At the door, she gave Nigel a tip. Nigel was the only driver who split the tips down the middle with Obinze; the others pretended not to remember to share. Once, when Obinze was working with another driver, an old Jamaican woman pushed ten pounds into his pocket when the driver wasn't looking. "Thank you, brother," she said, and it made him want to call his mother in Nsukka[4] and tell her about it.

One morning in early summer, Obinze arrived at the warehouse and knew right away that something was amiss. The men avoided his eyes, and Nigel turned swiftly—too swiftly—toward the toilet when he saw Obinze. They knew. They had somehow found out. They saw the headlines about asylum seekers draining the National Health Service, they thought of the hordes further crowding a crowded island, and now they knew that he was one of the damned, working with a name that was not his. Where was Roy Snell? Had he gone to call the police? Was it the police that you called? Obinze tried to remember details from the stories of people who had been caught and deported, but his mind was numb. He felt naked. He wanted to turn and run, but his body kept moving, against his will, toward the loading area. Then he sensed a movement behind him, quick and violent and too close, and, before he could turn around, a paper hat was pushed onto his head. It was Nigel, and with him a crowd of grinning men.

"Happy birthday, Vinny Boy!" they all said.

Obinze froze, frightened by the complete blankness of his mind. Then he realized what it was. Vincent's birthday. Roy must have told the men. Even he had not remembered to remember Vincent's date of birth.

"Oh!" was all he said, nauseated with relief.

Nigel asked him to come into the coffee room, where all the men were trooping in, passing around the muffins and Coke they had bought with their own money in honor of a birthday they believed was his. A realization brought tears to his eyes: he felt safe.

Obinze was mildly surprised when Vincent called him that night, because he had called him only once before, months ago, when he changed his bank and wanted to give him the new account number. He wondered whether to say "Happy birthday" to Vincent, whether the call was indeed related to his birthday.

"Vincent, *kedu*?"[5] he said.

"I want a raise."

Had Vincent learned that from a film? The words sounded contrived and comical. "I want forty-five per cent. I know you are working more now."

"Vincent, ahn-ahn.[6] How much am I making? You know I am saving money to do this marriage thing."

"Forty-five per cent," Vincent said, and hung up.

Obinze decided to ignore him. He knew Vincent's type; he would push to see how far he could go and then he would retreat. If Obinze called back and tried to negotiate, it might embolden Vincent to make more demands. But he would not risk losing Obinze's regular weekly deposit entirely.

And so when, a week later, in the morning bustle of drivers and trucks, Roy said, "Vinny Boy, step into my office for a minute," Obinze thought nothing of it. On Roy's desk was a newspaper, folded at the page with the photo of the big-breasted woman. Roy slowly put his cup of coffee on top of the newspaper. He seemed uncomfortable, and wouldn't look directly at Obinze.

"Somebody called yesterday," he told Obinze. "Said you're not who you say you are—that you're illegal and working with a Brit's name." There was a pause. Obinze was stung with surprise. Roy picked up the coffee cup again. "Why don't you just bring in your passport tomorrow and we'll clear it up, all right?"

Obinze mumbled the first words that came to him. "O.K. I'll bring my passport tomorrow." He walked out of the office knowing that he would never feel again what he had felt moments ago. Was Roy merely asking him to bring in his passport to make the dismissal easier for him, to give him an exit, or did Roy really believe that the caller had been lying? Why would anybody call about such a thing unless it was true? Obinze had never made as much of an effort as he did the rest of the day to seem normal, to tame the rage that was engulfing him. It was not the thought of the power that Vincent had over him that infuriated him but the recklessness with which Vincent had exercised it. He left the warehouse that evening for the final time, wishing more than anything that he had told Nigel and Roy his real name.

The Angolans told him that things had "gone up," or were "tough," opaque words that were supposed to explain each new request for more money.

"This is not what we agreed to," Obinze would say, or "I don't have any extra cash right now," and they would reply, "Things have gone up, yeah," in a tone that he imagined was accompanied by a shrug. A silence would follow, a wordlessness over the phone line that told him that it was his problem, not theirs. "I'll pay it in by Friday," he would say, finally, before hanging up.

Nicholas gave Obinze a suit for the wedding. "It's a good Italian suit," he said. "It's small for me, so it should fit you." The trousers were big, and they bunched up when Obinze tightened his belt, but the jacket, also big, shielded the unsightly pleat of cloth at his waist. Not that he minded. He was so focussed on finally beginning his life that he would have swaddled his lower parts in a baby's napkin[7] if it had been required. He and Iloba met Cleotilde near City Center. She was standing under a tree with some friends, her hair pushed back with a white band, her eyes boldly lined in black; she looked like an older, sexier person. Her ivory dress was tight at the hips. He had paid for the dress. "I haven't got any proper going-out dress," she had said, in apology, when she called to tell him that she had nothing that looked convincingly bridal.

She hugged him. She looked nervous, and he tried to deflect his own nervousness by thinking about them together after this—how, in less than an hour, he would be free to walk with surer steps on Britain's streets, and free to kiss her.

"You have the rings?" Iloba asked her.

"Yes," Cleotilde said.

She and Obinze had bought them the week before, plain, cheap matching rings from a side-street shop, and she had looked so delighted, laughingly slipping different rings on and off her finger, that he wondered if she wished it were a real wedding.

"Fifteen minutes to go," Iloba said. He took pictures, his digital camera held away from his face, saying, "Move closer! O.K., one more!" His sprightly good spirits annoyed Obinze. On the train up to Newcastle the previous day, while Obinze had spent his time looking out the window, unable even to read, Iloba had talked and talked, until his voice became a distant murmur, perhaps because he was trying to keep Obinze from worrying too much. Now he talked to Cleotilde's friends with easy friendliness about the new Chelsea manager, about "Big Brother,"[8] as if they were all there for something ordinary and normal.

"Time to go," Iloba said. They walked toward the civic center. The afternoon was bright with sunshine. Obinze opened the door and stood aside for the others to go ahead, into the sterile hallway, where they paused to get their bearings, to be sure which way the registry office was. Two policemen stood behind the door, watching them with stony eyes. Obinze quieted his panic. There was nothing to worry about, nothing at all, he told himself; the civic center probably had policemen present as a matter of routine. But he sensed in the sudden smallness of the hallway, the sudden thickening of doom in the air, that something was wrong. Then another man approached him, his shirtsleeves rolled up, his cheeks so red that he looked as though he were wearing terrible makeup.

"Are you Obinze Maduewesi?" the red-cheeked man asked. In his hands was a sheaf of papers in which Obinze could see a photocopy of his passport.

"Yes," Obinze said quietly, and that word was an acknowledgment to the red-cheeked immigration officer, to Iloba, to Cleotilde, and to himself that it was over.

"Your visa is expired and you are not allowed to be present in the U.K.," the man said.

One of the policemen clamped handcuffs around his wrists. He felt himself watching the scene from far away, watching himself walk to the police car outside, and sink into the too-soft seat in the back. There had been so many times in the past when he had feared that this would happen, so many moments that had become one single

blur of panic, and now it felt like the dull echo of an aftermath. Cleotilde flung herself on the ground and began to cry. She may never have visited her father's country, but he was convinced at that moment of her Africanness; how else would she have been able to fling herself to the ground with that perfect dramatic flourish? He wondered if her tears were for him or for herself, or for what might have been between them. She had no need to worry; the policemen barely glanced at her. It was he who felt the heaviness of the handcuffs during the drive to the police station, he who silently handed over his watch and his belt and his wallet and his phone. Nicholas's large trousers were slipping down his hips.

"Your shoes, too. Take off your shoes," the policeman said.

He took off his shoes. He was led to a cell. It was small, with brown walls, and metal bars so thick that his hand could not get around one. It reminded him of the chimpanzee cage at Nsukka's dismal, forgotten zoo. From the high ceiling, a single bulb burned. There was an emptying, echoing vastness in the tiny cell.

"Were you aware that your visa had expired?"

"Yes," Obinze said.

"Were you about to have a sham marriage?"

"No. Cleotilde and I have been dating for a while."

"I can arrange for a lawyer for you, but it's obvious you'll be deported," the immigration officer said evenly.

When the lawyer came, puffy-faced, dark arcs under his eyes, Obinze thought of all the films in which the state lawyer is distracted and exhausted. He came with a bag but did not open it, and he sat across from Obinze, holding nothing—no file, no paper, no pen. He was pleasant and sympathetic.

"The government has a strong case. We can appeal, but, to be honest, it will only delay the case. You will eventually be removed from the U.K.," he said, with the air of a man who had said those same words, in the same tone, more times than he wished to, or could, remember.

"I'm willing to go back to Nigeria," Obinze said. The last shred of his dignity was like a wrapper slipping off his waist that he was

desperate to retie.

The lawyer looked surprised. "O.K., then," he said, and got up a little too hastily, as though grateful that his job had been made easier. Obinze watched him leave. He was going to check a box on a form that said that his client was willing to be removed. Removed. The word made Obinze feel inanimate. A thing to be removed. A thing without breath and mind. A thing.

2013

Endnotes

- Note 1: London Underground (subway) station.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: City in northern England.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Soccer.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Soccer team, with Arsenal, in the English Premier League.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: Suburban town in East London.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: David Blunkett (b. 1947), former British politician who endorsed tighter immigration measures after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Faculty and staff labor strikes, some lasting months during the 1980s and 1990s.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: General Sani Abacha (1943–1998), president of Nigeria after a military coup in 1993, responsible for human-rights abuses.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Nigerian Television Authority.Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Muhammadu Buhari (b. 1942), who seized control of Nigeria in 1983 after a military coup, responded harshly to critics. He was deposed in 1985 but elected president in 2015.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Welcome (Igbo).Return to reference 2
- Note 3: County northeast of London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Pounds sterling.Return to reference 4

- Note 5: Obinze's nickname. The letter "z" is pronounced "zed" in Britain and most of its former colonies.Return to reference 5
- Note 6: A constituent college of the University of London.Return to reference 6
- Note 7: In southeastern Nigeria.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Deep-fried Nigerian snack.Return to reference 8
- Note 9: Isn't it? (British slang).Return to reference 9
- Note 1: Major city in central England.Return to reference 1
- Note 2: Drunk.Return to reference 2
- Note 3: Affluent district in West London.Return to reference 3
- Note 4: Town in southeastern Nigeria.Return to reference 4
- Note 5: What's up? (Igbo).Return to reference 5
- Note 6: Or "ah-ah," expression of surprise (Igbo).Return to reference 6
- Note 7: Diaper.Return to reference 7
- Note 8: Reality TV show. "Chelsea manager": soccer coach of Chelsea, another Premier League team.Return to reference 8

APPENDICES

Volume D: The Romantic Period

General Bibliography

This bibliography consists of a list of suggested general readings on English literature. Bibliographies for the authors and topical clusters in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* are available online at the NAEL student site.

Histories of England and of English Literature

Even the most distinguished of the comprehensive general histories written in past generations have come to seem outmoded. Innovative research in social, cultural, and political history has made it difficult to write a single coherent account of England from the Middle Ages to the present, let alone to accommodate in a unified narrative the complex histories of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and the other nations where writing in English has flourished. Readers who wish to explore the historical matrix out of which the works of literature collected in this anthology emerged are advised to consult the studies of particular periods listed in the appropriate sections of this bibliography. The multivolume *Oxford History of England* (1934–65) and *New Oxford History of England* (1992–2009) are useful, as are the three-volume *Peoples of the British Isles: A New History*, by Stanford E. Lehmberg, Samantha A. Meigs, and Thomas William Heyck (3rd ed., 1992); the nine-volume *Cambridge Cultural History of Britain*, ed. Boris Ford (1992); the three-volume *Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (1990); and the multivolume *Penguin History of Britain*, gen. ed. David Cannadine (1996–). For Britain's imperial history, readers can consult the five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis (1998–99), as well as *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (2004). Also of interest is Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015). Given the cultural centrality of London, readers may find particular interest in *The London Encyclopaedia*, ed. Ben Weinreb et al. (3rd ed., 2008); Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (1994); and Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: "A Human Awful Wonder of God"* (2007) and *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* (2001).

Similar observations may be made about literary history. In the light of such initiatives as women's studies, New Historicism, and postcolonialism, the range of authors deemed significant has expanded, along with the geographical and conceptual boundaries of literature in English. Attempts to capture in a unified account the great sweep of literature from *Beowulf* to the early twenty-first century have largely given way to studies of individual genres, carefully delimited time periods, and specific authors. Among the large-scale literary surveys, *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, ed. Dominic Head (3rd ed., 2006), is useful, as is the nine-volume *Penguin History of Literature* (1987–94) and the multivolume *Oxford History of Poetry in English* (2022–). *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy, and Patricia Clements (1990), is an important resource, and the

editorial materials in the two-volume *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (3rd ed., 2007), constitute a concise history and set of biographies of women authors since the Middle Ages. *Annals of English Literature, 1475–1950* (2nd ed., 1961), lists important publications year by year, together with the significant literary events for each year. Seven volumes have been published in *The Oxford English Literary History*, gen. eds. Jonathan Bate and Colin Burrow (2002–): Laura Ashe, *1000–1350: Conquest and Transformation*; James Simpson, *1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution*; Margaret J. M. Ezell, *1645–1714: The Later Seventeenth Century*; Philip Davis, *1830–1880: The Victorians*; Chris Baldick, *1830–1880: The Modern Movement (1910–1940)*; Randall Stevenson, *1960–2000: The Last of England?*; and Bruce King, *1948–2000: The Internationalization of English Literature*. See also *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (1999); *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare E. Lees (2013); *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, ed. David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (2002); *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780*, ed. John Richetti (2005); *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler (2009); *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, ed. Kate Flint (2012); and *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (2004).

Helpful treatments and surveys of English meter, rhyme, and stanza forms are Paul Fussell Jr., *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (rev. ed., 1979); Donald Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme: Device and Modernity* (1980); Charles O. Hartman, *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody* (1980); Derek Attridge, *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction* (1995); Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide* (1998); *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*, ed. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland (2000); John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* (3rd ed., 2001); *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*, ed. Helen Vendler (3rd ed., 2010); *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (2014); and Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (2015).

On the development and functioning of the novel as a form, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1970; trans. 1980); *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. Michael McKeon (2000); *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti (2 vols.; 2001–03, trans. 2006); McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (15th anniversary ed., 2002); *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (2012); *A Companion to the English Novel*, ed. Stephen Arata et al. (2015); and the ten volumes to date of *The Oxford History of the Novel in English* (2012–). On women novelists and readers, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (1987), and Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (1994).

On the history of playhouse design, see Richard Leacroft, *The Development of the English Playhouse: An Illustrated Survey of Theatre Building in England from Medieval to Modern Times* (1988). For a survey of the plays that have appeared on these and other stages, see Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama*, rev. J. C. Trewin (6th ed., 1978); the eight-volume *The Revels History of Drama in English*, gen. eds. Clifford Leech and T. W. Craik (1975–83); Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, rev. S. Schoenbaum and Sylvia Wagonheim (3rd ed., 1989); and the three volumes of *The Cambridge History of*

British Theatre, ed. Jane Milling, Peter Thomson, Joseph Donohue, and Baz Kershaw (2004).

On some of the key intellectual currents that are at once reflected in and shaped by literature and contemporary literary criticism, Arthur O. Lovejoy's classic studies *The Great Chain of Being* (1936) and *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948) remain valuable, along with such works as Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (1900; trans. 1907; 3rd enl. ed., 2004); Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (4 vols., 1923–95; trans. 1953–96); Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (1935); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (2 vols., 1939; trans. 1979–82); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2 vols., 1949; trans. 1953, new trans. 2009); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952; trans. 1957, new trans. 2008); Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1957; new eds. 1997, 2016); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958; 2nd ed., 1998); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958; trans. 1969, new ed. 1994); Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (1960; rev. ed., 1964; rev. and expanded as *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, 2003); Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966; trans. 1983); M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (1971); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1964; trans. 1965) and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; trans. 1970); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967; trans. 1976, 40th anniversary ed. 2016) and *Dissemination* (1972; trans. 1981); Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (1973); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973); Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973; trans. 1975); Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976; new ed., 2015); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979; trans. 1984); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979; 39th anniversary ed., 2009); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980; trans. 1987); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2 vols., 1980; trans. 1984–98); Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (1985; trans. 1987); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; new ed., 2004); Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997); Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature*, ed. Neil Hertz (1997); and N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999).

Reference Works

The single most important tool for the study of literature in English is the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1884–1924; 2nd ed., 1989; 3rd ed. in process). The most current edition, updated quarterly, is available online to subscribers. The *OED* is written on historical principles: that is, it attempts not only to describe current word use but also to record the history and development of the language from its origins before the Norman Conquest to the present. It thus provides, for familiar as well as archaic and obscure words, the widest possible range of meanings and uses, organized chronologically and illustrated with quotations. The *OED* can be searched as a conventional dictionary arranged a–z and also by

subject, usage, region, origin, and timeline (the first appearance of a word). Resources available for early forms of English include the online Old English and Middle English dictionaries at Lexilogos (https://www.lexilogos.com/english/english_old.htm and https://www.lexilogos.com/english/english_middle.htm); also valuable are the *Dictionary of Old English* (1986–) and the *Middle English Dictionary* (1952; digitized 2008). Beyond the *OED* there are many other valuable dictionaries, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary* (5th ed., 50th anniversary printing, 2018); *The Oxford Dictionary of Abbreviations* (1992); T. F. Hoad, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (1993); Bas Aarts, Sylvia Chalker, and Edmund Weiner, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* (2nd ed., 2014); Morton S. Freeman, *A New Dictionary of Eponyms* (1997); *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English* (1999); *The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, ed. Judith Siefring (2nd ed., 2004); P. H. Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (3rd ed., 2014); Tom McArthur, *The Oxford Guide to World English* (2002); and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, ed. Jennifer Speake (4th ed., 2003). Other valuable reference works include *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, ed. David Crystal (3rd ed., 2018); *The Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*, ed. Tom McArthur (1998); *Fowler's Concise Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, ed. Jeremy Butterfield (3rd ed., 2016); and the numerous guides to specialized vocabularies, slang, regional dialects, and the like.

There is a steady flow of new editions of most major and many minor writers in English, along with the publication of critical appraisals and scholarship. James L. Harner's *Literary Research Guide: An Annotated List of Reference Sources in English Literary Studies* (6th ed., 2014; available online at www.mlalrg.org/public) offers thorough, evaluative annotations of a wide range of sources. For the historical record of scholarship and critical discussion, *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. George Watson (5 vols., 1969–77), and the third edition in process, *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. Joanne Shattock (1 vol. to date, 2000–), are useful. The *MLA International Bibliography* (also online) is a key resource for following critical discussion of literatures in English. Ranging from 1926 to the present, it includes journal articles, essays, chapters from collections, books, and dissertations, and covers folklore, linguistics, and film. The *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* (*ABELL*), compiled by the Modern Humanities Research Association, lists monographs, periodical articles, critical editions of literary works, book reviews, and collections of essays published anywhere in the world; unpublished doctoral dissertations are covered for the period 1920–99 (available online to subscribers directly and as part of Literature Online, http://literature.proquest.com/marketing/index.jsp).

For compact biographies of English authors, see the multivolume *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*), ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (2004); since 2004 the *DNB* has been extended online with updates (now monthly). Handy reference books of authors, works, and various literary terms and allusions include many volumes in the *Cambridge Companion* and *Oxford Companion* series: e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (2007); *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Dinah Birch (7th ed., 2009); and *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Rita Copeland and Peter Struck (2010). *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, editor-in-chief Roland Greene (4th ed., 2012), is available online to subscribers in Oxford Reference. Handbooks that define and illustrate literary concepts and terms include *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. J. A. Cuddon and M. A. R. Habib (5th

ed., 2015); William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (12th ed., 2011); *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (2nd ed., 1995); and M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (11th ed., 2014). Also useful are Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (2nd ed., 1991); Arthur Quinn, *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase* (1982); the *Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology*, ed. Robert K. Barnhart (1995); and George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (1994).

On Greek and Roman backgrounds, see *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*—vol. 1, *Greek Literature*, ed. P. E. Easterling and Bernard M. W. Knox (1985), and vol. 2, *Latin Literature*, ed. E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (1982), both available to subscribers online; *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, ed. M. C. Howatson (3rd ed., 2011); Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History* (1987; trans. 1994); *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (4th ed., 2012); Richard Rutherford, *Classical Literature: A Concise History* (2005); and Mark P. O. Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham, *Classical Mythology* (11th ed., 2018). The Loeb Classical Library of Greek and Roman texts with facing-page English translations is now available online to subscribers at www.loebclassics.com.

Digital resources in the humanities continue to grow rapidly. Among the many useful electronic resources for the study of English literature are enormous digital archives, available to subscribers: Early English Books Online (EEBO), http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home; Literature Online, http://literature.proquest.com/marketing/index.jsp; and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online. There are also numerous free sites of variable quality. Many of the best of these are period- or author-specific and hence are listed in the period/author bibliographies on the NAEL website. Among the general sites, one of the most useful and wide-ranging is Voice of the Shuttle (http://vos.ucsb.edu), which includes links to Bartleby.com and Project Gutenberg.

Literary Criticism and Theory

The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism comprises nine volumes (1989–2013): *Classical Criticism*, ed. George A. Kennedy; *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson; *The Renaissance*, ed. Glyn P. Norton; *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson; *Romanticism*, ed. Marshall Brown; *The Nineteenth Century, c. 1830–1914*, ed. M. A. R. Habib; *Modernism and the New Criticism*, ed. A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey; *From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, ed. Raman Selden; and *Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris. See also M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953); William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (1957); René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950* (8 vols., 1955–92); Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (1980); J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (2002); and John Frow, *Character and Person* (2014). Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker have written *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (6th ed., 2017). Other useful resources include *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and*

Criticism, ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (2nd ed., 2005); *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (3rd ed., 2017); and *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, gen. ed. Vincent B. Leitch (3rd ed., 2018).

Modern approaches to English literature and literary theory were shaped by certain landmark works: William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930; 3rd ed., 1953), *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), and *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951; 3rd ed., 1977); T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (1932; 3rd ed., 1951) and *On Poetry and Poets* (1957); F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (1936) and *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948); Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946; trans. 1953); Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (1950); William K. Wimsatt Jr., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (1954); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961; 2nd ed., 1983); and W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (1970). René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (3rd ed., 1963), is a useful introduction to the variety of scholarly and critical approaches to literature up to the time of its publication. Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd ed., 2011), discusses recurrent issues and debates. On the discipline of criticism, see John Guillory's *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study* (2022); Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* (2015) is a critical assessment of contemporary criticism.

Beginning in the late 1960s, interest in literary theory as a specific field markedly intensified. Certain forms of literary study had already been influenced by the work of the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson and the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky—and, still more, by conceptions that derived or claimed to derive from Marx and Engels—but the full impact of these theories was not felt until what became known as the "theory revolution" of the 1970s and '80s. For Marxist literary criticism, see Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (1920; trans. 1971), *The Historical Novel* (1937; trans. 1962), and *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki, and Others* (trans. 1950); Walter Benjamin's essays from the 1920s and '30s, represented in *Illuminations* (1955; trans. 1968) and *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (1975; trans. 1978); Mikhail Bakhtin's essays from the 1930s represented in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (trans. 1981) and *Rabelais and His World* (1965; trans. 1968); *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971); Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (1977); Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (1979; 2nd ed., 2003); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981); and Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983; anniversary ed., 2008) and *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990).

Structural linguistics and anthropology gave rise to a flowering of structuralist literary criticism; convenient introductions include Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (1974), and Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (new ed., 2002). Poststructuralist challenges to this approach are epitomized in such influential works as Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (1967; trans. 1978), and Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (1971; 2nd ed., 1983). Poststructuralism is discussed in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (1982; 25th anniversary ed., 2007); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989); Fredric Jameson,

Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1991); John McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (1991); and *Beyond Structuralism: The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Reading*, ed. Wendell V. Harris (1996). A figure who greatly influenced both structuralism and poststructuralism is Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies* (1957; trans. 1972, new trans. 2012) and *S/Z* (1970; trans. 1974). Among other influential contributions to literary theory are the psychoanalytic approach in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973; 2nd ed., 1997), and the reader-response approach in Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980). For a retrospect on these decades, see Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (2003).

Influenced by these theoretical currents but not restricted to them, modern feminist literary criticism was fashioned by such works as Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (1975); Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1976; new ed., 1986); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977; expanded ed., 1999); and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). Subsequent studies include Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1982); Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977; trans. 1985); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987; new ed., 2006); Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (1987); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (3 vols., 1988–94); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; 2nd ed., 1999); and the critical views sampled in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (1985); *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Mary Eagleton (1986; 3rd ed., 2011); and *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (1991; rev. in 2009 as *Feminisms Redux: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*); *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (1994); *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*, ed. Ellen Rooney (2006); and *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism: A Norton Reader*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2007).

Just as feminist critics used poststructuralist and psychoanalytic methods to place literature in conversation with gender theory, a new school emerged placing literature in conversation with critical race theory. Comprehensive introductions include *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement,* ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (1995); and Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (3rd ed., 2017); and *The Routledge Companion to Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Stephen M. Caliendo and Charlton D. McIlwain (2nd ed., 2021). For an important precursor in cultural studies, see Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (1978; 2nd ed., 2013). Seminal works include Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1988; 25th anniversary ed., 2014); Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (1993; 25th anniversary ed., 2017); Gene Andrew Jarrett, *Representing the Race: A New Political History of African American Literature* (2011); Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (2017); and Saidiya V. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (2019). Other important works include Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (2008; rpt. 2017); Alexander G.

Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014); Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016); and Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (2018). Helpful anthologies and collections of essays have emerged in recent decades, such as *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature,* ed. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (1997), and also their *Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (2001); *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Vincent Carretta (1996; updated 2003); *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature,* ed. Hana Wirth-Nesher and Michael P. Kramer (2003); *A Companion to African American Literature*, ed. Gene Andrew Jarrett (2010); *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature,* ed. Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell (2011); *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature,* ed. Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio (2013); *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature*, ed. Rachel C. Lee (2014); *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim (2015); and *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature*, *1945–2010*, ed. Deirdre Osborne (2016).

Gay literature and queer studies are represented in collections including *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (1991); *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David Halperin (1993); *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature: Readings from Western Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Byrne R. S. Fone (1998); *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, ed. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (2014); and *The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature*, ed. Jodie Medd (2015), and by such books as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985; 30th anniversary ed., 2015) and *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990; updated ed., 2008); Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (1989); Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (1993); Leo Bersani, *Homos* (1995); Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (1998); David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (2002); Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007); and Brian Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-garde: Modernism, Sexuality, and Queer Ekphrasis* (2016).

New Historicism is represented in Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990; new ed., 2007); *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (1993); *The New Historicism Reader*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (1994); and Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (2000). The related social and historical dimension of texts is discussed in Jerome McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983), and *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D. C. Greetham (1995). Characteristic of New Historicism is an expansion of the field of literary interpretation still further in cultural studies; for a broad sampling of the range of interests, see *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (1992); *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (1995); and *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (3rd ed., 2007).

This expansion of the field is similarly reflected in postcolonial studies: see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (cited above) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; trans. 1963, 60th anniversary ed. 2021); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and*

Imperialism (1993); *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (1990); *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2nd ed., 2006); and such influential books as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989; 2nd ed., 2002); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; new ed., 2004); Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995; 2nd ed., 2005); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000; new ed., 2008); and Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001; anniversary ed., 2016). Useful collections include *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, ed. Ato Quayson (2 vols., 2011–12); *The Cambridge Companion to the Postcolonial Novel*, ed. Ato Quayson (2016); and *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*, ed. Jahan Ramazani (2017).

In the wake of the theory revolution, critics have focused on a wide array of topics, which can be only briefly surveyed here. One current of work, focusing on the history of emotion, is represented in Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002); Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (2005); *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (2010); and Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject* (2015). A somewhat related current, examining the special role of traumatic memory in literature, is exemplified in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (1995), and Dominic LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001; new ed., 2014). Work on the literary implications of cognitive science may be glimpsed in *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*, ed. Lisa Zunshine (2010). Interest in quantitative approaches to literature was sparked by Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (2005). For the field of digital humanities, see Moretti, *Distant Reading* (2013); *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader*, ed. Melissa Terras, Julianne Nyhan, and Edward Vanhoutte (2013); and *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (2016). For ecocriticism, or studies of literature and the environment, see *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996); *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (1998); Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (2000); Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005); Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010); Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011); *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. Greg Garrard (2014); and *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geologic Times*, ed. Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor (2017). Related are the fields of animal studies and posthumanism, whose key works include Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991; trans. 1993); Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (2000); Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003) and *What Is Posthumanism?* (2009); Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2006; trans. 2008); Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012); *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*, ed. Aaron Gross and Anne Vallely (2012); and *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable*, ed. John Sorenson (2014). The relationship between literature and law is central to such works as *Interpreting Law and Literature: A Hermeneutic Reader*, ed. Sanford Levinson and Steven Mailloux (1988); *Law's Stories: Narrative and Rhetoric in the Law*, ed. Peter Brooks and Paul Gewirtz (1996); *Literature and Legal Problem Solving: Law and Literature as Ethical Discourse*, ed. Paul J. Heald (1998); and *New Directions in Law and Literature*, ed. Elizabeth

S. Anker and Bernadette Meyler (2017). Ethical questions in literature have been usefully explored by, among others, Geoffrey Galt Harpham in *Getting It Right: Language, Literature, and Ethics* (1992) and Derek Attridge in *The Singularity of Literature* (2004). Finally, some approaches to literature, such as formalism and literary biography, that seemed superseded in the theoretical ferment of the late twentieth century have had a resurgence. A renewed interest in form is evident in Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002); *Reading for Form*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown (2006); and Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015). Interest in the history of the book was spearheaded by D. F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1986), Jerome J. McGann's *The Textual Condition* (1991), and Roger Chartier's *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1992; trans. 1994). See also *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (1996); *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (7 vols., 1999–2019); *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (2nd ed., 2006); and *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Leslie Howsam (2015). For studies in new media and digital or electronic literature, see N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008); Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing* (2016); and Jessica Pressman's *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (2020).

Anthologies representing a range of recent approaches include *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. David Lodge with Nigel Wood (2nd ed., 2000); *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (4th ed., 1998); and *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (cited above).

Literary Terminology*

Using simple technical terms can sharpen our understanding and streamline our discussion of literary works. Some terms, such as the ones in section A, below, help us address the internal style, structure, form, and kind of works. Other terms, such as those in section B, provide insight into the material forms in which literary works have been produced.

In analyzing what they called "rhetoric," ancient Greek and Roman writers determined the elements of what we call "style" and "structure." Most of our literary terms are derived, via medieval and Renaissance intermediaries, from the Greek and Latin sources. In the definitions that follow, the etymology, or root, of the word is given when it helps illuminate the word's current usage.

Many of the examples are drawn from texts in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature.*

Words **boldfaced** within definitions are themselves defined in this appendix. Some terms are defined within definitions; such words are *italicized.*

A. Terms of Style, Structure, Form, and Kind

accent (synonym "stress"): a term of **rhythm.** The special force devoted to the voicing of one syllable in a word over others. In the noun "accent," for example, the accent, or stress, is on the first syllable.

act: the major subdivision of a play, usually divided into **scenes.**

aesthetics (from Greek, "to feel, apprehend by the senses"): the philosophy of artistic meaning as a distinct mode of apprehending untranslatable truth, defined as an alternative to rational enquiry, which is purely abstract. Developed in the late eighteenth century by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant especially.

Alexandrine: a term of **meter.** In French verse a line of twelve syllables, and, by analogy, in English verse a line of six stresses. See **hexameter.**

allegory (Greek "saying otherwise"): saying one thing (the "vehicle" of the allegory) and meaning another (the allegory's "tenor"). Allegories may be momentary aspects of a work, as in **metaphor** ("John is a lion"), or, through extended metaphor, may constitute the basis of narrative, as in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: this second meaning is the dominant one. See also **symbol** and **type.** Allegory is one of the most significant **figures of thought.**

alliteration (from Latin "litera," alphabetic letter): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of an initial consonant sound or consonant cluster in consecutive or closely positioned words.

This pattern is often an inseparable part of the meter in Germanic languages, where the tonic, or accented **syllable,** is usually the first syllable. Thus all Old English poetry and some varieties of Middle English poetry use alliteration as part of their basic metrical practice. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 1: "Once the siege and assault of Troy had ceased" (see vol. A, p. 415). Otherwise used for local effects; Stevie Smith, "Pretty," lines 4–5: "And in the pretty pool the pike stalks / He stalks his prey . . ." (see vol. F, p. 589).

allusion: Literary allusion is a passing but illuminating reference within a literary text to another, well-known text (often biblical or **classical**). Topical allusions are also, of course, common in certain modes, especially **satire.**

anagnorisis (Greek "recognition"): the moment of **protagonist's** recognition in a narrative, which is also often the moment of moral understanding.

anapest: a term of **rhythm.** A three-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of two unstressed (uu) syllables followed by one stressed (/). Thus, for example, "Illinois."

anaphora (Greek "carrying back"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of words or groups of words at the beginning of consecutive sentences, clauses, or phrases. Blake, "London," lines 5–8: "In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban . . ." (see vol. D, p. 137); Louise Bennett, "Jamaica Oman," lines 17–20: "Some backa man a push, some side-a / Man a hole him han, / Some a lick sense eena him head, / Some a guide him pon him plan!" (see vol. F, p. 724).

animal fable: a **genre.** A short narrative of speaking animals, followed by moralizing comment, written in a low style and gathered into a collection. Robert Henryson, "The Cock and the Jasper" (see vol. A, p. 679).

antithesis (Greek "placing against"): a **figure of thought.** The juxtaposition of opposed terms in clauses or sentences that are next to or near each other. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.777–80: "They but now who seemed / In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons / Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room / Throng numberless" (see vol. B, p. 1448).

apostrophe (from Greek "turning away"): a **figure of thought.** An address, often to an absent person, a force, or a quality. For example, a poet makes an apostrophe to a Muse when invoking her for inspiration.

apposition: a term of **syntax.** The repetition of elements serving an identical grammatical function in one sentence. The effect of this repetition is to arrest the flow of the sentence, but in doing so to add extra semantic nuance to repeated elements. This is an especially important feature of Old English poetic style. See, for example, Caedmon's *Hymn* (vol. A, p. 31), where the phrases "heaven-kingdom's Guardian," "the Measurer's might," "his mind-plans," and "the work of the Glory-Father" each serve an identical syntactic function as the direct objects of "praise."

assonance (Latin "sounding to"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of identical or near identical stressed vowel sounds in words whose final consonants differ, producing half-

rhyme. Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott," line 100: "His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed" (see vol. E, p. 210).

aubade (originally from Spanish "alba," dawn): a **genre.** A lover's dawn song or lyric bewailing the arrival of the day and the necessary separation of the lovers; Donne, "The Sun Rising" (see vol. B, p. 888). Larkin recasts the genre in "Aubade" (see vol. F, p. 795).

autobiography (Greek "self-life writing"): a **genre.** A narrative of a life written by the subject; Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (see vol. D, p. 391). There are subgenres, such as the spiritual autobiography, narrating the author's path to conversion and subsequent spiritual trials, as in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding.*

ballad stanza: a **verse form.** Usually a **quatrain** in alternating **iambic tetrameter** and **iambic trimeter** lines, rhyming abcb. See "Sir Patrick Spens" (vol. D, p. 38); Louise Bennett's poems (vol. F, pp. 719–24); Eliot, "Sweeney among the Nightingales" (vol. F, p. 501); Larkin, "This Be The Verse" (vol. F, p. 795).

ballade: a **verse form.** A form consisting usually of three stanzas followed by a four-line envoi (French, "send off"). The last line of the first stanza establishes a **refrain,** which is repeated, or subtly varied, as the last line of each stanza. The form was derived from French medieval poetry; English poets, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries especially, used it with varying stanza forms. Chaucer, "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse" (see vol. A, p. 575).

bathos (Greek "depth"): a **figure of thought.** A sudden and sometimes ridiculous descent of tone; Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* 3.157–58: "Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast, / When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last" (see vol. C, p. 549).

beast epic: a **genre.** A continuous, unmoralized narrative, in prose or verse, relating the victories of the wholly unscrupulous but brilliant strategist Reynard the Fox over all adversaries. Chaucer arouses, only to deflate, expectations of the genre in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (see vol. A, p. 556).

biography (Greek "life-writing"): a **genre.** A life as the subject of an extended narrative.

blank verse: a **verse form.** Unrhymed **iambic pentameter** lines. Blank verse has no stanzas, but is broken up into uneven units (verse paragraphs) determined by sense rather than form. First devised in English by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in his translation of two books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, this very flexible verse type became the standard form for dramatic poetry in the seventeenth century, as in most of Shakespeare's plays. Milton and Wordsworth, among many others, also used it to create an English equivalent to **classical epic.**

blazon: strictly, a heraldic shield; in rhetorical usage, a **topos** whereby the individual elements of a beloved's face and body are singled out for **hyperbolic** admiration. Spenser, *Epithalamion*, lines 167–84 (see vol. B, p. 459). For an inversion of the **topos,** see Shakespeare, Sonnet 130 (vol. B, p. 637).

burlesque (French and Italian "mocking"): a work that adopts the **conventions** of a genre with the aim less of comically mocking the genre than of satirically mocking the society so represented (see **satire**). Thus Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (see vol. C, p. 537) does not mock **classical epic** so much as contemporary mores.

caesura (Latin "cut") (plural "caesurae"): a term of **meter.** A pause or breathing space within a line of verse, generally occurring between syntactic units; Louise Bennett, "Colonization in Reverse," lines 5–8: "By de hundred, by de tousan, / From country an from town, / By de ship-load, by de plane-load, / Jamaica is Englan boun" (see vol. F, p. 722), where the caesurae occur in lines 5 and 7.

canon (Greek "rule"): the group of texts regarded as worthy of special respect or attention by a given institution. Also, the group of texts regarded as definitely having been written by a certain author.

catastrophe (Greek "overturning"): the decisive turn in **tragedy** by which the plot is resolved and, usually, the **protagonist** dies.

catharsis (Greek "cleansing"): According to Aristotle, the effect of **tragedy** on its audience, through their experience of pity and terror, was a kind of spiritual cleansing, or catharsis.

character (Greek "stamp, impression"): a person, personified animal, or other figure represented in a literary work, especially in narrative and drama. The more a character seems to generate the action of a narrative, and the less he or she seems merely to serve a preordained narrative pattern, the "fuller," or more "rounded," a character is said to be. A "stock" character, common particularly in many comic genres, will perform a predictable function in different works of a given genre.

chiasmus (Greek "crosswise"): a **figure of speech.** The inversion of an already established sequence. This can involve verbal echoes: Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard," line 104, "The crime was common, common be the pain" (see vol. C, p. 560); or it can be purely a matter of syntactic inversion: Pope, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, line 8: "They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide" (see vol. C, p. 575).

classical, classicism, classic: Each term can be widely applied, but in English literary discourse, "classical" primarily describes the works of either Greek or Roman antiquity. "Classicism" denotes the practice of art forms inspired by classical antiquity, in particular the observance of rhetorical norms of **decorum** and balance, as opposed to following the dictates of untutored inspiration, as in Romanticism. "Classic" denotes an especially famous work within a given **canon.**

climax (Greek "ladder"): a moment of great intensity and structural change, especially in drama. Also a **figure of speech** whereby a sequence of verbally linked clauses is made, in which each successive clause is of greater consequence than its predecessor. Bacon, *Of Studies*: "Studies serve for pastimes, for ornaments, and for abilities. Their chief use for pastimes is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in judgement" (see vol. B, pp. 1167–68).

comedy: a **genre.** A term primarily applied to drama, and derived from ancient drama, in opposition to **tragedy.** Comedy deals with humorously confusing, sometimes ridiculous situations in which the ending is, nevertheless, happy. A comedy often ends in one or more marriages.

comic mode: Many genres (for example, **romance, fabliau, comedy**) involve a happy ending in which justice is done, the ravages of time are arrested, and that which is lost is found. Such genres participate in a comic mode.

connotation: To understand connotation, we need to understand **denotation.** While many words can denote the same concept—that is, have the same basic meaning—those words can evoke different associations, or connotations. Contrast, for example, the clinical-sounding term "depression" and the more colorful, musical, even poetic phrase "the blues."

consonance (Latin "sounding with"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of final consonants in words or stressed syllables whose vowel sounds are different. Herbert, "Easter," line 13: "Consort, both heart and lute . . ." (see vol. B, p. 1183).

convention: a repeatedly recurring feature (in either form or content) of works, occurring in combination with other recurring formal features, which constitutes a convention of a particular genre.

couplet: a **verse form.** In English verse two consecutive, rhyming lines usually containing the same number of stresses. Chaucer first introduced the **iambic pentameter** couplet into English (*Canterbury Tales*); the form was later used in many types of writing, including drama; imitations and translations of **classical epic** (thus *heroic couplet*); essays; and **satire** (see Dryden and Pope). The *distich* (Greek "two lines") is a couplet usually making complete sense; Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, lines 5–6: "Read it fair queen, though it defective be, / Your excellence can grace both it and me" (see vol. B, p. 925).

dactyl (Greek "finger," because of the finger's three joints): a term of **rhythm.** A three-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of one stressed followed by two unstressed syllables. Thus, for example, "Oregon."

decorum (Latin "that which is fitting"): a rhetorical principle whereby each formal aspect of a work should be in keeping with its subject matter and/or audience.

deixis (Greek "pointing"): relevant to **point of view.** Every work has, implicitly or explicitly, a "here" and a "now" from which it is narrated. Words that refer to or imply this point from which the voice of the work is projected (such as "here," "there," "this," "that," "now," "then") are examples of deixis, or "deictics." This technique is especially important in drama, where it is used to create a sense of the events happening as the spectator witnesses them.

denotation: A word has a basic, "prosaic" (factual) meaning prior to the associations it connotes (see **connotation**). The word "steed," for example, might call to mind a horse fitted with battle gear, to be ridden by a warrior, but its denotation is simply "horse."

denouement (French "unknotting"): the point at which a narrative can be resolved and so ended.

dialogue (Greek "conversation"): a **genre.** Dialogue is a feature of many genres, especially in both the **novel** and drama. As a genre itself, dialogue is used in philosophical traditions especially (most famously in Plato's *Dialogues*), as the representation of a conversation in which a philosophical question is pursued among various speakers.

diction, or **"lexis"** (from, respectively, Latin *dictio* and Greek *lexis*, each meaning "word"): the actual words used in any utterance—speech, writing, and, for our purposes here, literary works. The choice of words contributes significantly to the style of a given work.

didactic mode (Greek "teaching mode"): **Genres** in a didactic mode are designed to instruct or teach, sometimes explicitly (for example, sermons, philosophical **discourses, georgic**), and sometimes through the medium of fiction (for example, **animal fable, parable**).

diegesis (Greek for "narration"): a term that simply means "narration," but is used in literary criticism to distinguish one kind of story from another. In a *mimetic* story, the events are played out before us (see **mimesis**), whereas in diegesis someone recounts the story to us. Drama is for the most part *mimetic*, whereas the novel is for the most part diegetic. In novels the narrator is not, usually, part of the action of the narrative; they is therefore extradiegetic.

dimeter (Greek "two measure"): a term of **meter.** A two-stress line, rarely used as the meter of whole poems, though used with great frequency in single poems by Skelton, for example, "The Tunning of Elinour Rumming" (see vol. B, p. 41). Otherwise used for single lines, as in Herbert, "Discipline," line 3: "O my God" (see vol. B, p. 1197).

discourse (Latin "running to and fro"): broadly, any nonfictional speech or writing; as a more specific genre, a philosophical meditation on a set theme.

dramatic irony: a feature of narrative and drama, whereby the audience knows that the outcome of an action will be the opposite of that intended by a **character.**

dramatic monologue (Greek "single speaking"): a **genre.** A poem in which the voice of a historical or fictional **character** speaks, unmediated by any narrator, to an implied though silent audience. See Tennyson, "Ulysses" (vol. E, p. 217); Browning, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb" (vol. E, p. 416); Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (vol. F, p. 498); Carol Ann Duffy, "Medusa" and "Mrs Lazarus" (vol. F).

ecphrasis (Greek "speaking out"): a **topos** whereby a work of visual art is represented in a literary work. Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts" (see vol. F, p. 677).

elegy: a **genre.** In **classical** literature elegy was a form written in elegiac **couplets** (a **hexameter** followed by a **pentameter**) devoted to many possible topics. In Ovidian elegy a lover meditates on the trials of erotic desire (for example, Ovid's *Amores*). The **sonnet** sequences of both Sidney and Shakespeare exploit this genre, and, while it was still practiced in classical tradition by Donne ("On His Mistress" [see vol. B, p. 903]), by the later

seventeenth century the term came to denote the poetry of loss, especially through the death of a loved person. See Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (vol. E, p. 231); Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (see vol. F, p. 677); Heaney, "Clearances" (vol. F).

emblem (Greek "an insertion"): a **figure of thought.** A picture allegorically expressing a moral, or a verbal picture open to such interpretation.

end-stopping: the placement of a complete syntactic unit within a complete poetic line, fulfilling the metrical pattern; Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," line 42: "Earth, receive an honoured guest" (see vol. F, p. 679). Compare **enjambment.**

enjambment (French "striding," encroaching): The opposite of **end-stopping,** enjambment occurs when the syntactic unit does not end with the end of the poetic line and the fulfillment of the metrical pattern. When the sense of the line overflows its meter and, therefore, the line break, we have enjambment; Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," lines 44–45: "Let the Irish vessel lie / Emptied of its poetry" (see vol. F, p. 679).

epic (synonym, *heroic poetry*): a **genre.** An extended narrative poem celebrating martial heroes, invoking divine inspiration, beginning in medias res (see **order**), written in a high style (including the deployment of **epic similes;** on high style, see **register**), and divided into long narrative sequences. Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* were the prime models for English writers of epic verse. Thus Milton, *Paradise Lost* (see vol. B, p. 1427); Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (see vol. D, p. 391); and Walcott, *Omeros* (see vol. F, p. 808). With its precise repertoire of stylistic resources, epic lent itself easily to **parodic** and **burlesque** forms, known as **mock epic;** thus Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* (see vol. C, p. 537).

epigram: a **genre.** A short, pithy poem wittily expressed, often with wounding intent. See Jonson, *Epigrams* (see vol. B, p. 1049).

epigraph (Greek "inscription"): a **genre.** Any formal statement inscribed on stone; also the brief formulation on a book's title page, or a quotation at the beginning of a poem, introducing the work's themes in the most compressed form possible.

epistle (Latin "letter"): a **genre.** The letter can be shaped as a literary form, involving an intimate address often between equals. The *Epistles* of Horace provided a model for English writers from the sixteenth century. Thus Wyatt, "Mine Own John Poins" (see vol. B, p. 131), or Leapor, "An Epistle to a Lady" (vol. C, p. 771). Letters can be shaped to form the matter of an extended fiction, as the eighteenth-century epistolary **novel** (for example, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*).

epitaph: a **genre.** A pithy formulation to be inscribed on a funeral monument. Thus Ralegh, "The Author's Epitaph, Made by Himself" (see vol. B, p. 479).

epithalamion (Greek "concerning the bridal chamber"): a **genre.** A wedding poem, celebrating the marriage and wishing the couple good fortune. Thus Spenser, *Epithalamion* (see vol. B, p. 455).

epyllion (plural "epyllia") (Greek: "little epic"): a **genre.** A relatively short poem in the meter of epic poetry. See, for example, Marlowe, *Hero and Leander* (vol. B, p. 562).

essay (French "trial, attempt"): a **genre.** An informal philosophical meditation, usually in prose and sometimes in verse. The journalistic periodical essay was developed in the early eighteenth century. Thus Addison and Steele, periodical essays (see vol. C, p. 281); Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (see vol. C, p. 521).

euphemism (Greek "sweet saying"): a **figure of thought.** The figure by which something distasteful is described in alternative, less repugnant terms (for example, "he passed away").

exegesis (Greek "leading out"): interpretation, traditionally of the biblical text, but, by transference, of any text.

exemplum (Latin "example"): an example inserted into a usually nonfictional writing (for example, sermon or **essay**) to give extra force to an abstract thesis.

fabliau (French "little story," plural *fabliaux*): a **genre.** A short, funny, often bawdy narrative in low style (see **register**) imitated and developed from French models, most subtly by Chaucer; see *The Miller's Prologue and Tale* (vol. A, p. 494).

farce (French "stuffing"): a **genre.** A play designed to provoke laughter through the often humiliating antics of stock **characters.** Congreve's *The Way of the World* (see vol. C, p. 221) draws on this tradition.

figures of speech: Literary language often employs patterns perceptible to the eye and/or to the ear. Such patterns are called "figures of speech"; in classical rhetoric they were called "schemes" (from Greek *schema*, meaning "form, figure").

figures of thought: Language can also be patterned conceptually, even outside the rules that normally govern it. Literary language in particular exploits this licensed linguistic irregularity. Synonyms for figures of thought are "trope" (Greek "twisting," referring to the irregularity of use) and "conceit" (Latin "concept," referring to the fact that these figures are perceptible only to the mind). Be careful not to confuse **trope** with **topos** (a common error).

first-person narration: relevant to **point of view,** a narrative in which the voice narrating refers to itself with forms of the first-person pronoun ("I," "me," "my," etc., or possibly "we," "us," "our"), and in which the narrative is determined by the limitations of that voice. Thus Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein.*

frame narrative: Some narratives, particularly collections of narratives, involve a frame narrative that explains the genesis of, and/or gives a perspective on, the main narrative or narratives to follow. Thus Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*; Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*; or Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.

free indirect style: relevant to **point of view,** a narratorial voice that manages, without explicit reference, to imply, and often implicitly to comment on, the voice of a **character** in the narrative itself. Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," where the voice, although strictly that of the adult narrator, manages to convey the child's manner of perception: "—I begin:

the first memory. This was of red and purple flowers on a black background—my mother's dress."

genre and mode: The **style,** structure, and, often, length of a work, when coupled with a certain subject matter, raise expectations that a literary work conforms to a certain **genre** (French "kind"). Good writers might upset these expectations, but they remain aware of the expectations and thwart them purposefully. Works in different genres may nevertheless participate in the same **mode,** a broader category designating the fundamental perspectives governing various genres of writing. For mode, see **tragic, comic, satiric,** and **didactic modes.** Genres are fluid, sometimes very fluid (for example, the **novel**); the word "usually" should be added to almost every account of the characteristics of a given genre!

georgic (Greek "farming"): a **genre.** Virgil's *Georgics* treat agricultural and occasionally scientific subjects, giving instructions on the proper management of farms. Unlike **pastoral,** which treats the countryside as a place of recreational idleness among shepherds, the georgic treats it as a place of productive labor.

hermeneutics (from the Greek god Hermes, messenger between the gods and humankind): the science of interpretation, first formulated as such by the German philosophical theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher in the early nineteenth century.

heroic poetry: see **epic.**

hexameter (Greek "six measure"): a term of **meter.** The hexameter line (a six-stress line) is the meter of **classical** Latin **epic;** while not imitated in that form for epic verse in English, some instances of the hexameter exist. See, for example, the last line of a Spenserian stanza, *Faerie Queene* 1.1.2: "O help thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong" (vol. B, p. 269), or Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," line 1: "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree" (vol. F, p. 221).

homily (Greek "discourse"): a **genre.** A sermon, to be preached in church; *Book of Homilies* (see vol. B, p. 164). Writers of literary fiction sometimes exploit the homily, or sermon, as in Chaucer, *The Pardoner's Tale* (see vol. A, p. 540).

homophone (Greek "same sound"): a **figure of speech.** A word that sounds identical to another word but has a different meaning ("bear" / "bare").

hyperbaton (Greek "overstepping"): a term of **syntax.** The rearrangement, or inversion, of the expected word order in a sentence or clause. Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," line 38: "If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise" (vol. C, p. 899). Poets can suspend the expected syntax over many lines, as in the first sentences of the *Canterbury Tales* (vol. A, p. 474) and of *Paradise Lost* (vol. B, p. 1430).

hyperbole (Greek "throwing over"): a **figure of thought.** Overstatement, exaggeration; Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress," lines 11–12: "My vegetable love should grow / Vaster than empires, and more slow" (see vol. B, p. 1273); Auden, "As I Walked Out One Evening," lines 9–12: " 'I'll love you, dear, I'll love you / Till China and Africa meet / And the river jumps over the mountain / And the salmon sing in the street" (see vol. F, p. 675).

hypermetrical (adj.; Greek "over measured"): a term of **meter;** the word describes a breaking of the expected metrical pattern by at least one extra syllable.

hypotaxis, or **subordination** (respectively Greek and Latin "ordering under"): a term of **syntax.** The subordination, by the use of subordinate clauses, of different elements of a sentence to a single main verb. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 9.513–15: "As when a ship by skillful steersman wrought / Nigh river's mouth or foreland, where the wind / Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her sail; So varied he" (vol. B, p. 1588). The contrary principle to **parataxis.**

iamb: a term of **rhythm.** The basic foot of English verse; two syllables following the rhythmic pattern of unstressed followed by stressed and producing a rising effect. Thus, for example, "Vermont."

imitation: the practice whereby writers strive ideally to reproduce and yet renew the **conventions** of an older form, often derived from **classical** civilization. Such a practice will be praised in periods of classicism (for example, the eighteenth century) and repudiated in periods dominated by a model of inspiration (for example, Romanticism).

irony (Greek "dissimulation"): a **figure of thought.** In broad usage, irony designates the result of inconsistency between a statement and a context that undermines the statement. "It's a beautiful day" is unironic if it's a beautiful day; if, however, the weather is terrible, then the inconsistency between statement and context is ironic. The effect is often amusing; the need to be ironic is sometimes produced by censorship of one kind or another. Strictly, irony is a subset of allegory: whereas allegory says one thing and means another, irony says one thing and means its opposite. For an extended example of irony, see Swift's "Modest Proposal" (vol. C, p. 511). See also **dramatic irony.**

journal (French "daily"): a **genre.** A diary, or daily record of ephemeral experience, whose perspectives are concentrated on, and limited by, the experiences of single days. Thus Pepys, *Diary* (see vol. C, p. 74).

lai: a **genre.** A short narrative, often characterized by images of great intensity; a French term, and a form practiced by Marie de France (see vol. A, p. 159).

legend (Latin "requiring to be read"): a **genre.** A narrative of a celebrated, possibly historical, but mortal **protagonist.** To be distinguished from **myth.** Thus the "Arthurian legend" but the "myth of Proserpine."

lexical set: Words that habitually recur together (for example, January, February, March, etc.; or red, white, and blue) form a lexical set.

litotes (from Greek "smooth"): a **figure of thought.** Strictly, understatement by denying the contrary; More, *Utopia*: "differences of no slight import" (see vol. B, p. 49). More loosely, understatement; Stevie Smith, "Sunt Leones," lines 11–12: "And if the Christians felt a little blue— / Well people being eaten often do" (see vol. F, p. 585).

lullaby: a **genre.** A bedtime, sleep-inducing song for children, in simple and regular meter. Adapted by Auden, "Lullaby" (see vol. F, p. 671).

lyric (from Greek "lyre"): Initially meaning a song, "lyric" refers to a short poetic form, without restriction of meter, in which the expression of personal emotion, often by a voice in the first person, is given primacy over narrative sequence. Thus "The Wife's Lament" (see vol. A, p. 126); Yeats, "The Wild Swans at Coole" (see vol. F, p. 229).

masque: a **genre.** Costly entertainments of the Stuart court, involving dance, song, speech, and elaborate stage effects, in which courtiers themselves participated.

metaphor (Greek "carrying across," etymologically parallel to Latin "translation"): One of the most significant **figures of thought,** metaphor designates identification or implicit identification of one thing with another with which it is not literally identifiable. Blake, "London," lines 11–12: "And the hapless Soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls" (see vol. D, p. 137).

meter: Verse (from Latin *versus*, turned) is distinguished from prose (from Latin *prorsus*, "straightforward") as a more compressed form of expression, shaped by metrical norms. **Meter** (Greek "measure") refers to the regularly recurring sound pattern of verse lines. The means of producing sound patterns across lines differ in different poetic traditions. Verse may be **quantitative,** or determined by the quantities of syllables (set patterns of long and short syllables), as in Latin and Greek poetry. It may be **syllabic,** determined by fixed numbers of syllables in the line, as in the verse of Romance languages (for example, French and Italian). It may be **accentual,** determined by the number of accents, or stresses in the line, with variable numbers of syllables, as in Old English and some varieties of Middle English alliterative verse. Or it may be **accentual-syllabic,** determined by the numbers of accents, but possessing a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, so as to produce regular numbers of syllables per line. Since Chaucer, English verse has worked primarily within the many possibilities of accentual-syllabic meter. The unit of meter is the **foot.** In English verse the number of feet per line corresponds to the number of accents in a line. For the types and examples of different meters, see **monometer, dimeter, trimester, tetrameter, pentameter,** and **hexameter.** In the definitions below, "u" designates one unstressed syllable, and "/" one stressed syllable.

metonymy (Greek "change of name"): one of the most significant **figures of thought.** Using a word to **denote** another concept or other concepts, by virtue of habitual association. Thus "The Press," designating printed news media. Fictional names often work by associations of this kind. Closely related to **synecdoche.**

mimesis (Greek for "imitation"): A central function of literature and drama has been to provide a plausible imitation of the reality of the world beyond the literary work; mimesis is the representation and imitation of what is taken to be reality.

mise-en-abyme (French for "cast into the abyss"): Some works of art represent themselves in themselves; if they do so effectively, the represented artifact also represents itself, and so ad infinitum. The effect achieved is called "*mise-en-abyme.*" Hoccleve's *Complaint*, for example, represents a depressed man reading about a depressed man. This sequence threatens to become a *mise-en-abyme.*

monometer (Greek "one measure"): a term of **meter.** An entire line with just one stress; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 15, "most (u) grand (/)" (see vol. A, p. 415).

myth: a **genre.** The narrative of **protagonists** with, or subject to, superhuman powers. A myth expresses some profound foundational truth, often by accounting for the origin of natural phenomena. To be distinguished from **legend.** Thus the "Arthurian legend" but the "myth of Proserpine."

novel: an extremely flexible **genre** in both form and subject matter. Usually in prose, giving high priority to narration of events, with a certain expectation of length, novels are preponderantly rooted in a specific, and often complex, social world; sensitive to the realities of material life; and often focused on one **character** or a small circle of central characters. By contrast with chivalric **romance** (the main European narrative genre prior to the novel), novels tend to eschew the marvelous in favor of a recognizable social world and credible action. The novel's openness allows it to participate in all modes, and to be co-opted for a huge variety of subgenres. In English literature the novel dates from the late seventeenth century and has been astonishingly successful in appealing to a huge readership, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The English and Irish tradition of the novel includes, for example, Fielding, Austen, the Brontë sisters, Dickens, George Eliot, Conrad, Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, to name but a few very great exponents of the genre.

novella: a **genre.** A short **novel,** often characterized by imagistic intensity. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (see vol. F, p. 70).

occupatio (Latin "taking possession"): a **figure of thought.** Denying that one will discuss a subject while actually discussing it; also known as "praeteritio" (Latin "passing by"). See Chaucer, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, lines 414–31 (see vol. A, p. 565).

ode (Greek "song"): a **genre.** A **lyric** poem in elevated, or high style (see **register**), often addressed to a natural force, a person, or an abstract quality. The Pindaric ode in English is made up of **stanzas** of unequal length, while the Horatian ode has stanzas of equal length. For examples of both types, see, respectively, Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (vol. D, p. 381); and Marvell, "An Horatian Ode" (vol. B, p. 1282), or Keats, "Ode on Melancholy" (vol. D, p. 973). For a fuller discussion, see the headnote to Jonson's "Ode on Cary and Morison" (vol. B, pp. 1058–59).

omniscient narrator (Latin "all-knowing narrator"): relevant to **point of view.** A narrator who, in the fiction of the narrative, has complete access to both the deeds and the thoughts of all **characters** in the narrative. Thus Thomas Hardy, "On the Western Circuit" (see vol. F, p. 36).

onomatopoeia (Greek "name making"): a **figure of speech.** Verbal sounds that imitate and evoke the sounds they denotate. Hopkins, "Binsey Poplars," lines 10–12 (about some felled trees): "O if we but knew what we do / When we delve [dig] or hew— / Hack and rack the growing green!" (see vol. E, p. 726).

order: A story may be told in different narrative orders. A narrator might use the sequence of events as they happened, and thereby follow what **classical** rhetoricians called the *natural order*; alternatively, the narrator might reorder the sequence of events, beginning the narration either in the middle or at the end of the sequence of events, thereby following an *artificial order.* If a narrator begins in the middle of events, he or she is said to begin *in*

medias res (Latin "in the middle of the matter"). For a brief discussion of these concepts, see Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, "A Letter of the Authors" (vol. B, p. 265). Modern narratology makes a related distinction, between *histoire* (French "story") for the natural order that readers mentally reconstruct, and *discours* (French, here "narration") for the narrative as presented. See also **plot** and **story.**

ottava rima: a **verse form.** An eight-line stanza form, rhyming abababcc, using **iambic pentameter;** Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" (see vol. F, p. 234). Derived from the Italian poet Boccaccio, an eight-line stanza was used by fifteenth-century English poets for inset passages (for example, Christ's speech from the Cross in Lydgate's *Testament*, lines 754–897). The form in this rhyme scheme was used in English poetry for long narrative by, for example, Byron (*Don Juan*; see vol. D, p. 690).

oxymoron (Greek "sharp blunt"): a **figure of thought.** The conjunction of normally incompatible terms; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.63: "darkness visible" (see vol. B, p. 1431).

panegyric: a **genre.** Demonstrative, or epideictic (Greek "showing"), rhetoric was a branch of **classical** rhetoric. Its own two main branches were the rhetoric of praise on the one hand and of vituperation on the other. Panegyric, or eulogy (Greek "sweet speaking"), or encomium (plural *encomia*), is the term used to describe the speeches or writings of praise.

parable: a **genre.** A simple story designed to provoke, and often accompanied by, **allegorical** interpretation, most famously by Christ as reported in the Gospels.

paradox (Greek "contrary to received opinion"): a **figure of thought.** An apparent contradiction that requires thought to reveal an inner consistency. Chaucer, "Troilus's Song," line 12: "O sweete harm so quainte" (see vol. A, p. 574).

parataxis, or **coordination** (respectively Greek and Latin "ordering beside"): a term of **syntax.** The coordination, by the use of coordinating conjunctions, of different main clauses in a single sentence. Malory, *Morte Darthur*: "So Sir Lancelot departed and took his sword under his arm, and so he walked in his mantel, that noble knight, and put himself in great jeopardy" (see vol. A, p. 607). The opposite principle to **hypotaxis.**

parody: a work that uses the **conventions** of a particular genre with the aim of comically mocking a **topos,** a genre, or a particular exponent of a genre. Shakespeare parodies the topos of **blazon** in Sonnet 130 (see vol. B, p. 637).

pastoral (from Latin *pastor*, "shepherd"): a **genre.** Pastoral is set among shepherds, making often refined **allusion** to other apparently unconnected subjects (sometimes politics) from the potentially idyllic world of highly literary if illiterate shepherds. Pastoral is distinguished from **georgic** by representing recreational rural idleness, whereas the georgic offers instruction on how to manage rural labor. English writers had classical models in the *Idylls* of Theocritus in Greek and Virgil's *Eclogues* in Latin. Pastoral is also called bucolic (from the Greek word for "herdsman"). Thus Spenser, *Shepheardes Calender* (see vol. B, p. 257).

pathetic fallacy: the attribution of sentiment to natural phenomena, as if they were in sympathy with human feelings. Thus Milton, *Lycidas*, lines 146–47: "With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head, / And every flower that sad embroidery wears" (see vol. B, p. 1406). For critique of the practice, see Ruskin (who coined the term), "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" (vol. E, p. 467).

pentameter (Greek "five measure"): a term of **meter.** In English verse, a five-stress line. Between the late fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries, this meter, frequently employing an iambic rhythm, was the basic line of English verse. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth each, for example, deployed this very flexible line as their primary resource; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.128: "O Prince, O Chief of many thronèd Powers" (see vol. B, p. 1433).

performative: Verbal expressions have many different functions. They can, for example, be descriptive, or constative (if they make an argument), or performative, for example. A performative utterance is one that makes something happen in the world by virtue of its utterance. "I hereby sentence you to ten years in prison," if uttered in the appropriate circumstances, itself performs an action; it makes something happen in the world. By virtue of its performing an action, it is called a "performative." See also **speech act.**

peripeteia (Greek "turning about"): the sudden reversal of fortune (in both directions) in a dramatic work.

periphrasis (Greek "declaring around"): a **figure of thought.** Circumlocution; the use of many words to express what could be expressed in few or one; Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 39.1–4.

persona (Latin "sound through"): originally the mask worn in the Roman theater to magnify an actor's voice; in literary discourse persona (plural *personae*) refers to the narrator or speaker of a text, whose voice is coherent and whose person need have no relation to the person of the actual author of a text. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (see vol. F, p. 498).

personification, or **prosopopoeia** (Greek "person making"): a **figure of thought.** The attribution of human qualities to nonhuman forces or objects; Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," lines 1–2: "Thou still unvanish'd bride of quietness, / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time" (see vol. D, p. 971).

plot: the sequence of events in a story as narrated, as distinct from **story,** which refers to the sequence of events as we reconstruct them from the plot. See also **order.**

point of view: All of the many kinds of writing involve a point of view from which a text is, or seems to be, generated. The presence of such a point of view may be powerful and explicit, as in many novels, or deliberately invisible, as in much drama. In some genres, such as the **novel,** the narrator does not necessarily tell the story from a position we can predict; that is, the needs of a particular story, not the **conventions** of the genre, determine the narrator's position. In other genres, the narrator's position is fixed by convention; in certain kinds of love poetry, for example, the narrating voice is always that of

a suffering lover. Not only does the point of view significantly inform the style of a work, but it also informs the structure of that work.

protagonist (Greek "first actor"): the hero or heroine of a drama or narrative.

pun: a **figure of thought.** A sometimes irresolvable doubleness of meaning in a single word or expression; Shakespeare, Sonnet 135, line 1: "Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*" (see vol. B, p. 637).

quatrain: a **verse form.** A stanza of four lines, usually rhyming abcb, abab, or abba. Of many possible examples, see Crashaw, "On the Wounds of Our Crucified Lord" (see vol. B, p. 1214).

refrain: usually a single line repeated as the last line of consecutive stanzas, sometimes with subtly different wording and ideally with subtly different meaning as the poem progresses.

register: The register of a word is its stylistic level, which can be distinguished by degree of technicality but also by degree of formality. We choose our words from different registers according to context, that is, audience and/or environment. Thus a chemist in a laboratory will say "sodium chloride," a cook in a kitchen "salt." A formal register designates the kind of language used in polite society (for example, "Mr. President"), while an informal or colloquial register is used in less formal or more relaxed social situations (for example, "the boss"). In **classical** and medieval rhetoric, these registers of formality were called *high style* and *low style.* A *middle style* was defined as the style fit for narrative, not drawing attention to itself.

rhetoric: the art of verbal persuasion. **Classical** rhetoricians distinguished three areas of rhetoric: the forensic, to be used in law courts; the deliberative, to be used in political or philosophical deliberations; and the demonstrative, or epideictic, to be used for the purposes of public praise or blame. Rhetorical manuals covered all the skills required of a speaker, from the management of style and structure to delivery. These manuals powerfully influenced the theory of poetics as a separate branch of verbal practice, particularly in the matter of style.

rhyme: a **figure of speech.** The repetition of identical vowel sounds in stressed syllables whose initial consonants differ ("dead" / "head"). In poetry, rhyme often links the end of one line with another. *Masculine rhyme*: full rhyme on the final syllable of the line ("decays" / "days"). *Feminine rhyme*: full rhyme on syllables that are followed by unaccented syllables ("fountains" / "mountains"). *Internal rhyme*: full rhyme within a single line; Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, line 7: "The guests are met, the feast is set" (see vol. D, p. 475). *Rhyme riche*: rhyming on **homophones;** Chaucer, *General Prologue*, lines 17–18: "seeke" / "seke." *Off rhyme* (also known as *half rhyme*, *near rhyme*, or *slant rhyme*): differs from perfect rhyme in changing the vowel sound and/or the concluding consonants expected of perfect rhyme; Byron, "They say that Hope is Happiness," lines 5–7: "most" / "lost." *Pararhyme*: stressed vowel sounds differ but are flanked by identical or similar consonants; Owen, "Miners," lines 9–11: "simmer" / "summer" (see vol. F, p. 169).

rhyme royal: a **verse form.** A **stanza** of seven **iambic pentameter** lines, rhyming ababbcc; first introduced by Chaucer and called "royal" because the form was used by James I of Scotland for his *Kingis Quair* in the early fifteenth century. Chaucer, "Troilus's Song" (see vol. A, p. 574).

rhythm: Rhythm is not absolutely distinguishable from **meter.** One way of making a clear distinction between these terms is to say that rhythm (from the Greek "to flow") denotes the patterns of sound within the feet of verse lines and the combination of those feet. Very often a particular meter will raise expectations that a given rhythm will be used regularly through a whole line or a whole poem. Thus in English verse the pentameter regularly uses an iambic rhythm. Rhythm, however, is much more fluid than meter, and many lines within the same poem using a single meter will frequently exploit different rhythmic possibilities. For examples of different rhythms, see **iamb, trochee, anapest, spondee,** and **dactyl.**

romance: a **genre.** From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, the main form of European narrative, in either verse or prose, was that of chivalric romance. Romance, like the later **novel,** is a very fluid genre, but romances are often characterized by (i) a tripartite structure of social integration, followed by disintegration, involving moral tests and often marvelous events, itself the prelude to reintegration in a happy ending, frequently of marriage; and (ii) aristocratic social milieux. Thus *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (see vol. A, p. 415); Spenser's (unfinished) *Faerie Queene* (vol. B, p. 263). The immensely popular, fertile genre was absorbed, in both domesticated and undomesticated form, by the novel. For an adaptation of romance, see Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Tale* (vol. A, p. 512).

sarcasm (Greek "flesh tearing"): a **figure of thought.** A wounding expression, often expressed ironically; Boswell, *Life of Johnson*: Johnson [asked if any man of the modern age could have written the **epic** poem *Fingal*] replied, "Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children" (see vol. C, p. 891).

satire (Latin for "a bowl of mixed fruits"): a **genre.** In Roman literature (for example, Juvenal), the communication, in the form of a letter between equals, complaining of the ills of contemporary society. The genre in this form is characterized by a first-person narrator exasperated by social ills; the letter form; a high frequency of contemporary reference; and the use of invective in **low-style** language. Pope practices the genre thus in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (see vol. C, p. 573). Wyatt's "Mine Own John Poins" (see vol. B, p. 131) draws ultimately on a gentler, Horatian model of the genre.

satiric mode: Works in a very large variety of genres are devoted to the more or less savage attack on social ills. Thus Swift's travel narrative *Gulliver's Travels* (see vol. C, p. 377), his **essay** "A Modest Proposal" (vol. C, p. 511), and Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (vol. C, p. 587), to look no further than the eighteenth century, are all within a satiric mode.

scene: a subdivision of an **act,** itself a subdivision of a dramatic performance and/or text. The action of a scene usually occurs in one place.

sensibility (from Latin, "capable of being perceived by the senses"): as a literary term, an eighteenth-century concept derived from moral philosophy that stressed the social importance of fellow feeling and particularly of sympathy in social relations. The concept generated a literature of "sensibility," such as the sentimental **novel** (the most famous of

which was Goethe's *Sorrows of the Young Werther* [1774]), or sentimental poetry, such as Cowper's passage on the stricken deer in *The Task* (see vol. C, p. 1076).

short story: a **genre.** Generically similar to, though shorter and more concentrated than, the **novel;** often published as part of a collection. Thus Mansfield, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" (see vol. F, p. 542).

simile (Latin "like"): a **figure of thought.** Comparison, usually using the word "like" or "as," of one thing with another so as to produce sometimes surprising analogies. Donne, "The Storm," lines 29–30: "Sooner than you read this line did the gale, / Like shot, not feared till felt, our sails assail." Frequently used, in extended form, in **epic** poetry; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.338–46 (see vol. B, p. 1438).

soliloquy (Latin "single speaking"): a **topos** of drama, in which a **character,** alone or thinking to be alone on stage, speaks so as to give the audience access to his or her private thoughts.

sonnet: a **verse form.** A form combining a variable number of units of rhymed lines to produce a fourteen-line poem, usually in rhyming **iambic pentameter** lines. In English there are two principal varieties: the Petrarchan sonnet, formed by an octave (an eight-line stanza, often broken into two **quatrains** having the same rhyme scheme, typically abba abba) and a sestet (a six-line stanza, typically cdecde or cdcdcd); and the Shakespearean sonnet, formed by three quatrains (abab cdcd efef) and a **couplet** (gg). The declaration of a sonnet can take a sharp turn, or "volta," often at the decisive formal shift from octave to sestet in the Petrarchan sonnet, or in the final couplet of a Shakespearean sonnet, introducing a trenchant counterstatement. Derived from Italian poetry, and especially from the poetry of Petrarch, the sonnet was first introduced to English poetry by Wyatt, and initially used principally for the expression of unrequited erotic love, though later poets used the form for many other purposes. See Wyatt, "Whoso List to Hunt" (vol. B, p. 123); Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (vol. B, p. 541); Shakespeare, Sonnets (vol. B, p. 624); Wordsworth, "London, 1802" (vol. D, p. 390); McKay, "If We Must Die" (vol. F, p. 576); Heaney, "Clearances" (vol. F).

speech act: Words and deeds are often distinguished, but words are often (perhaps always) themselves deeds. Utterances can perform different speech acts, such as promising, declaring, casting a spell, encouraging, persuading, denying, lying, and so on. See also **performative.**

Spenserian stanza: a **verse form.** The stanza developed by Spenser for *The Faerie Queene*; nine **iambic** lines, the first eight of which are **pentameters,** followed by one **hexameter,** rhyming ababbcbcc. See also, for example, Shelley, *Adonais* (vol. D, p. 851), and Keats, *The Eve of St. Agnes* (vol. D, p. 953).

spondee: a term of **meter.** A two-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of two stressed syllables. Thus, for example, "Utah."

stanza (Italian "room"): groupings of two or more lines, though "stanza" is usually reserved for groupings of at least four lines. Stanzas are often joined by rhyme, often in sequence, where each group shares the same metrical pattern and, when rhymed, rhyme

scheme. Stanzas can themselves be arranged into larger groupings. Poets often invent new **verse forms,** or they may work within established forms.

story: a narrative's sequence of events, which we reconstruct from those events as they have been recounted by the narrator (i.e., the **plot**). See also **order.**

stream of consciousness: usually a **first-person** narrative that seems to give the reader access to the narrator's mind as it perceives or reflects on events, prior to organizing those perceptions into a coherent narrative. Thus (though generated from a **third-person** narrative) Joyce, *Ulysses*, "Penelope" (see vol. F, p. 452).

style (from Latin for "writing instrument"): In literary works the manner in which something is expressed contributes substantially to its meaning. The expressions "sun," "mass of helium at the center of the solar system," "heaven's golden orb" all designate "sun," but do so in different manners, or styles, which produce different meanings. The manner of a literary work is its "style," the effect of which is its "tone." We often can intuit the tone of a text; from that intuition of tone we can analyze the stylistic resources by which it was produced. We can analyze the style of literary works through consideration of different elements of style; for example, **diction, figures of thought, figures of speech, meter and rhythm, verse form, syntax, point of view.**

sublime: As a concept generating a literary movement, the sublime refers to the realm of experience beyond the measurable, and so beyond the rational, produced especially by the terrors and grandeur of natural phenomena. Derived especially from the first-century Greek treatise *On the Sublime*, sometimes attributed to Longinus, the notion of the sublime was in the later eighteenth century a spur to Romanticism.

syllable: the smallest unit of sound in a pronounced word. The syllable that receives the greatest stress is called the *tonic* syllable.

symbol (Greek "token"): a **figure of thought.** Something that stands for something else, and yet seems necessarily to evoke that other thing. In Neoplatonic, and therefore Romantic, theory, to be distinguished from **allegory** thus: whereas allegory involves connections between vehicle and tenor agreed by convention or made explicit, the meanings of a symbol are supposedly inherent to it.

synecdoche (Greek "to take with something else"): a **figure of thought.** Using a part to express the whole, or vice versa; for example, "all hands on deck." Closely related to **metonymy.**

syntax (Greek "ordering with"): Syntax designates the rules by which sentences are constructed in a given language. Discussion of meter is impossible without some reference to syntax, since the overall effect of a poem is, in part, always the product of a subtle balance of meter and sentence construction. Syntax is also essential to the understanding of prose style, since prose writers, deprived of the full shaping possibilities of meter, rely all the more heavily on syntactic resources. A working command of syntactical practice requires an understanding of the parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions, and interjections), since writers exploit syntactic possibilities by using particular combinations and concentrations of the parts of speech.

taste (from Italian "touch"): Although medieval monastic traditions used eating and tasting as a metaphor for reading, the concept of taste as a personal ideal to be cultivated by, and applied to, the appreciation and judgment of works of art in general was developed in the eighteenth century.

tercet: a **verse form.** A stanza or group of three lines, used in larger forms such as **terza rima,** the **Petrarchan sonnet,** and the **villanelle.**

terza rima: a **verse form.** A sequence of rhymed **tercets** linked by rhyme thus: aba bcb cdc, etc. first used extensively by Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, the form was adapted in English **iambic pentameters** by Wyatt and revived in the nineteenth century. See Wyatt, "Mine Own John Poins" (vol. B, p. 131); Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind" (vol. D, p. 802); and Morris, "The Defence of Guinevere" (vol. E, p. 657). For modern adaptations see Eliot, lines 78–149 (though unrhymed) of "Little Gidding" (vol. F, pp. 523–25); Heaney, "Station Island" (vol. F); Walcott, *Omeros* (vol. F, p. 808).

tetrameter (Greek "four measure"): a term of **meter.** A line with four stresses. Coleridge, *Christabel*, line 31: "She stole along, she nothing spoke" (see vol. D, p. 495).

theme (Greek "proposition"): In literary criticism the term designates what the work is about; the theme is the concept that unifies a given work of literature.

third-person narration: relevant to **point of view.** A narration in which the narrator recounts a narrative of **characters** referred to explicitly or implicitly by third-person pronouns ("he," she," etc.), without the limitation of a **first-person narration.** Thus Johnson, *The History of Rasselas.*

topographical poem (Greek "place writing"): a **genre.** A poem devoted to the meditative description of particular places.

topos (Greek "place," plural *topoi*): a commonplace in the content of a given kind of literature. Originally, in **classical** rhetoric, the topoi were tried-and-tested stimuli to literary invention: lists of standard headings under which a subject might be investigated. In medieval narrative poems, for example, it was commonplace to begin with a description of spring. Writers did, of course, render the commonplace uncommon, as in Chaucer's spring scene at the opening of *The Canterbury Tales* (see vol. A, p. 474).

tradition (from Latin "passing on"): A literary tradition is whatever is passed on or revived from the past in a single literary culture, or drawn from others to enrich a writer's culture. "Tradition" is fluid in reference, ranging from small to large referents: thus it may refer to a relatively small aspect of texts (for example, the tradition of **iambic pentameter**), or it may, at the other extreme, refer to the body of texts that constitute a **canon.**

tragedy: a **genre.** A dramatic representation of the fall of kings or nobles, beginning in happiness and ending in catastrophe. Later transferred to other social milieux. The opposite of **comedy;** thus Shakespeare, *Othello* (see vol. B, p. 640).

tragic mode: Many genres (**epic** poetry, **legend**ary chronicles, **tragedy,** the **novel**) either do or can participate in a tragic mode, by representing the fall of noble

protagonists and the irreparable ravages of human society and history.

tragicomedy: a **genre.** A play in which potentially tragic events turn out to have a happy, or **comic,** ending. Thus Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure.*

translation (Latin "carrying across"): the rendering of a text written in one language into another.

trimeter (Greek "three measure"): a term of **meter.** A line with three stresses. Herbert, "Discipline," line 1: "Throw away thy rod" (see vol. B, p. 1197).

triplet: a **verse form.** A **tercet** rhyming on the same sound. Pope inserts triplets among heroic **couplets** to emphasize a particular thought; see *Essay on Criticism*, 315–17 (vol. C, p. 521).

trochee: a term of **rhythm.** A two-syllable foot following the pattern, in English verse, of stressed followed by unstressed syllable, producing a falling effect. Thus, for example, "Texas."

type (Greek "impression, figure"): a **figure of thought**. In Christian allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament, pre-Christian figures were regarded as "types," or foreshadowings, of Christ or the Christian dispensation. *Typology* has been the source of much visual and literary art in which the parallelisms between old and new are extended to nonbiblical figures; thus the virtuous plowman in *Piers Plowman* becomes a type of Christ.

unities: According to a theory supposedly derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, the events represented in a play should have unity of time, place, and action: that the play take up no more time than the time of the play, or at most a day; that the space of action should be within a single city; and that there should be no subplot. See Johnson, *The Preface to Shakespeare* (vol. C, p. 876).

vernacular (from Latin *verna*, "servant"): the language of the people, as distinguished from learned and arcane languages. From the later Middle Ages especially, the "vernacular" languages and literatures of Europe distinguished themselves from the learned languages and literatures of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

verse form: The terms related to **meter** and **rhythm** describe the shape of individual lines. Lines of verse are combined to produce larger groupings, called verse forms. These larger groupings are in the first instance **stanzas.** The combination of a certain meter and stanza shape constitutes the verse form, of which there are many standard kinds.

villanelle: a **verse form.** A fixed form of usually five **tercets** and a **quatrain** employing only two rhyme sounds altogether, rhyming aba for the tercets and abaa for the quatrain, with a complex pattern of two **refrains.** Derived from a French fixed form. Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (see vol. F, p. 693).

wit: Originally a synonym for "reason" in Old and Middle English, "wit" became a literary ideal in the Renaissance as brilliant play of the full range of mental resources. For eighteenth-century writers, the notion necessarily involved pleasing expression, as in Pope's

definition of true wit as "Nature to advantage dressed, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" (*Essay on Criticism*, lines 297–98; see vol. C, p. 527). Romantic theory of the imagination deprived wit of its full range of apprehension, whence the word came to be restricted to its modern sense, as the clever play of mind that produces laughter.

zeugma (Greek "a yoking"): a **figure of thought.** A figure whereby one word applies to two or more words in a sentence, and in which the applications are surprising, either because one is unusual, or because the applications are made in very different ways; Pope, *Rape of the Lock* 3.7–8, in which the word "take" is used in two senses: "Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey, / Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea" (see vol. C, p. 546).

B: Publishing History, Censorship

By the time we read texts in published books, they have already been treated—that is, changed by authors, editors, and printers—in many ways. Although there are differences across history, in each period literary works are subject to pressures of many kinds, which apply before, while, and after an author writes. The pressures might be financial, as in the relations of author and patron; commercial, as in the marketing of books; and legal, as in, during some periods, the negotiation through official and unofficial censorship. In addition, texts in all periods undergo technological processes, as they move from the material forms in which an author produced them to the forms in which they are presented to readers. Some of the terms below designate important material forms in which books were produced, disseminated, and surveyed across the historical span of this anthology. Others designate the skills developed to understand these processes. The anthology's introductions to individual periods discuss the particular forms these phenomena took in different eras.

bookseller: In England, and particularly in London, commercial bookmaking and -selling enterprises came into being in the early fourteenth century. These were loose organizations of artisans who usually lived in the same neighborhoods (around St. Paul's Cathedral in London). A bookseller or dealer would coordinate the production of hand-copied books for wealthy patrons (see **patronage**), who would order books to be custom-made. After the introduction of **printing** in the late fifteenth century, authors generally sold the rights to their work to booksellers, without any further **royalties.** Booksellers, who often had their own shops, belonged to the **Stationers' Company.** This system lasted into the eighteenth century. In 1710, however, authors were for the first time granted **copyright,** which tipped the commercial balance in their favor, against booksellers.

censorship: The term applies to any mechanism for restricting what can be published. Historically, the reasons for imposing censorship are heresy, sedition, blasphemy, libel, or obscenity. External censorship is imposed by institutions having legislative sanctions at their disposal. Thus the pre-Reformation Church imposed the Constitutions of Archbishop Arundel of 1409, aimed at repressing the Lollard "heresy." After the Reformation, some key events in the history of censorship are as follows: 1547, when anti-Lollard legislation and legislation made by Henry VIII concerning treason by writing (1534) were abolished; the Licensing Order of 1643, which legislated that works be licensed, through the Stationers' Company, prior to publication; and 1695, when the last such Act stipulating prepublication licensing lapsed. Postpublication censorship continued in different periods for different reasons. Thus, for example, British publication of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) was obstructed (though unsuccessfully) in 1960, under the Obscene Publications Act of 1959. Censorship can also be international: although not published in Iran, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988) was censored in that country, where the leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, proclaimed a fatwa (religious decree) promising the author's execution. Very often censorship is not imposed externally, however: authors or publishers can censor work in anticipation of what will incur the wrath of readers or the penalties of the law. Victorian and Edwardian publishers of **novels,** for example, urged authors to remove potentially offensive material, especially for serial publication in popular magazines.

codex: the physical format of most modern books and medieval manuscripts, consisting of a series of separate leaves gathered into quires and bound together, often with a cover. In late antiquity, the codex largely replaced the scroll, the standard form of written documents in Roman culture.

copy text: the particular text of a work used by a textual editor as the basis of an edition of that work.

copyright: the legal protection afforded to authors for control of their work's publication, in an attempt to ensure due financial reward. Some key dates in the history of copyright in the United Kingdom are as follows: 1710, when a statute gave authors the exclusive right to publish their work for fourteen years, and fourteen years more if the author were still alive when the first term had expired; 1842, when the period of authorial control was extended to forty-two years; and 1911, when the term was extended yet further, to fifty years after the author's death. In 1995 the period of protection was harmonized with the laws in other European countries to be the life of the author plus seventy years. In the United States no works first published before 1923 are in copyright. Works published since 1978 are, as in the United Kingdom, protected for the life of the author plus seventy years.

folio: the leaf formed by both sides of a single page. Each folio has two sides: a *recto* (the front side of the leaf, on the right side of a double-page spread in an open codex), and a *verso* (the back side of the leaf, on the left side of a double-page spread). Modern book pagination follows the pattern 1, 2, 3, 4, while medieval manuscript pagination follows the pattern 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v. "Folio" can also designate the size of a printed book. Books come in different shapes, depending originally on the number of times a standard sheet of paper is folded. One fold produces a large volume, a *folio* book; two folds produce a *quarto*, four an *octavo*, and six a very small *duodecimo.* Generally speaking, the larger the book, the

grander and more expensive. Shakespeare's plays were, for example, first printed in quartos, but were gathered into a folio edition in 1623.

foul papers: versions of a work before an author has produced, if she or he has, a final copy (a "fair copy") with all corrections removed.

incunabulum (plural "incunabula"): any printed book produced in Europe before 1501. Famous incunabula include the Gutenberg Bible, printed in 1455.

manuscript (Latin, "written by hand"): Any text written physically by hand is a manuscript. Before the introduction of **printing** with moveable type in 1476, all texts in England were produced and reproduced by hand, in manuscript. This is an extremely labor-intensive task, using expensive materials (for example, **vellum,** or **parchment**); the cost of books produced thereby was, accordingly, very high. Even after the introduction of printing, many texts continued to be produced in manuscript. This is obviously true of letters, for example, but until the eighteenth century, poetry written within aristocratic circles was often transmitted in manuscript copies.

paleography (Greek "ancient writing"): the art of deciphering, describing, and dating forms of handwriting.

parchment: animal skin, used as the material for handwritten books before the introduction of paper. See also **vellum.**

patronage, patron (Latin "protector"): Many technological, legal, and commercial supports were necessary before professional authorship became possible. Although some playwrights (for example, Shakespeare) made a living by writing for the theater, other authors needed, principally, the large-scale reproductive capacities of **printing** and the security of **copyright** to make a living from writing. Before these conditions obtained, many authors had another main occupation, and most authors had to rely on patronage. In different periods, institutions or individuals offered material support, or patronage, to authors. Thus in Anglo-Saxon England, monasteries afforded the conditions of writing to monastic authors. Between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries, the main source of patronage was the royal court. Authors offered patrons prestige and ideological support in return for financial support. Even as the conditions of professional authorship came into being at the beginning of the eighteenth century, older forms of direct patronage were not altogether displaced until the middle of the century.

periodical: Whereas journalism, strictly, applies to daily writing (from French *jour*, "day"), periodical writing appears at larger, but still frequent, intervals, characteristically in the form of the **essay.** Periodicals were developed especially in the eighteenth century.

printing: Printing, or the mechanical reproduction of books using moveable type, was invented in Germany in the mid-fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg; it quickly spread throughout Europe. William Caxton brought printing into England from the Low Countries in 1476. Much greater powers of reproduction at much lower prices transformed every aspect of literary culture.

publisher: the person or company responsible for the commissioning and publicizing of printed matter. In the early period of **printing,** publisher, printer, and bookseller were often the same person. This trend continued in the ascendancy of the **Stationers' Company,** between the middle of the sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth centuries. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, these three functions began to separate, leading to their modern distinctions.

quire: When medieval manuscripts were assembled, a few loose sheets of parchment or paper would first be folded together and sewn along the fold. This formed a quire (also known as a "gathering" or "signature"). Folded in this way, four large sheets of parchment would produce eight smaller manuscript leaves. Multiple quires could then be bound together to form a codex.

royalties: an agreed-upon proportion of the price of each copy of a work sold, paid by the publisher to the author, or an agreed-upon fee paid to the playwright for each performance of a play.

scribe: In **manuscript** culture, the scribe is the copyist who reproduces a text by hand.

scriptorium (plural "scriptoria"): a place for producing written documents and manuscripts.

serial publication: generally referring to the practice, especially common in the nineteenth century, of publishing novels a few chapters at a time, in periodicals.

Stationers' Company: The Stationers' Company was an English guild incorporating various tradesmen, including printers, publishers, and booksellers, skilled in the production and selling of books. It was formed in 1403, received its royal charter in 1557, and served as a means both of producing and of regulating books. Authors would sell the manuscripts of their books to individual stationers, who incurred the risks and took the profits of producing and selling the books. The stationers entered their rights over given books in the Stationers' Register. They also regulated the book trade and held their monopoly by licensing books and by being empowered to seize unauthorized books and imprison resisters. This system of licensing broke down in the social unrest of the Civil War and Interregnum (1640–60), and it ended in 1695. Even after the end of licensing, the Stationers' Company continued to be an intrinsic part of the **copyright** process, since the 1710 copyright statute directed that copyright had to be registered at Stationers' Hall.

subscription: An eighteenth-century system of bookselling somewhere between direct **patronage** and impersonal sales. A subscriber paid half the cost of a book before publication and half on delivery. The author received these payments directly. The subscriber's name appeared in the prefatory pages.

textual criticism: Works in all periods often exist in many subtly or not so subtly different forms. This is especially true with regard to manuscript textual reproduction, but it also applies to printed texts. Textual criticism is the art, developed from the fifteenth century in Italy but raised to new levels of sophistication from the eighteenth century, of deciphering different historical states of texts. This art involves the analysis of textual **variants,** often with the aim of distinguishing authorial from scribal forms.

variants: differences that appear among different manuscripts or printed editions of the same text.

vellum: animal skin, used as the material for handwritten books before the introduction of paper. See also **parchment.**

watermark: the trademark of a paper manufacturer, impressed into the paper but largely invisible unless held up to light.

Endnotes

- Note *: This appendix was devised and compiled by James Simpson with the collaboration of all the editors. We especially thank Professor Lara Bovilsky of the University of Oregon at Eugene for her help.Return to reference *

Geographic Nomenclature

The British Isles refers to the prominent group of islands off the northwest coast of Europe, especially to the two largest, **Great Britain** and **Ireland**. At present these comprise two sovereign states: **the Republic of Ireland**, and **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**—known for short as the **United Kingdom** or the **U.K.** Most of the smaller islands are part of the **U.K.** but a few, like the **Isle of Man** and the tiny **Channel Islands,** are largely independent. The **U.K.** is often loosely referred to as **"Britain"** or **"Great Britain"** and is sometimes called simply, if inaccurately, **"England."** For obvious reasons, the latter usage is rarely heard among the inhabitants of the other countries of the **U.K.—Scotland, Wales,** and **Northern Ireland** (sometimes called **Ulster**). England is by far the most populous part of the kingdom, as well as the seat of its capital, London.

From the first to the fifth century C.E. most of what is now **England** and **Wales** was a province of the Roman Empire called **Britain** (in Latin, **Britannia**). After the fall of Rome, much of the island was invaded and settled by peoples from northern Germany and Denmark speaking what we now call Old English. These peoples are known as the Angles and the Saxons (the word **England** is related to **Angles**). By the time of the Norman Conquest (1066) most of the kingdoms founded by the Angles, the Saxons, and the subsequent Viking invaders had coalesced into the kingdom of **England,** which, in the latter Middle Ages, conquered and largely absorbed the neighboring Celtic kingdom of **Wales.** In 1603 James VI of **Scotland** inherited the island's other throne as James I of **England,** and for the next hundred years—except for the two decades of Puritan rule—**Scotland** (both its English-speaking **Lowlands** and its Gaelic-speaking **Highlands**) and **England** (with **Wales**) were two kingdoms under a single king. In 1707 the Act of Union brought them together as **the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Ireland,** where English rule had begun in the twelfth century and been tightened in the sixteenth, was incorporated by the 1800–1801 Act of Union into **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**. With the division of Ireland and the establishment of **the Irish Free State** after World War I, this name was modified to its present form, and in 1949 **the Irish Free State** became **the Republic of Ireland,** or **Éire**. In 1999 **Scotland** elected a separate parliament it had relinquished in 1707, and **Wales** elected an assembly it lost in 1409; neither Scotland nor Wales ceased to be part of the **United Kingdom**.

The **British Isles** are further divided into counties, which in **Great Britain** are also known as shires. This word, with its vowel shortened in pronunciation, forms the suffix in the names of many counties, such as **Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Somersetshire**.

The Latin names **Britannia (Britain), Caledonia (Scotland)**, and **Hibernia (Ireland)** are sometimes used in poetic diction; so too is **Britain**'s ancient Celtic name, **Albion**. Because of its accidental resemblance to *albus* (Latin for "white"), **Albion** is especially associated with the chalk cliffs that seem to gird much of the English coast like defensive walls.

The British Empire took its name from **the British Isles** because it was created not only by the **English** but also by the **Irish, Scots,** and **Welsh**, as well as by civilians and

servicemen from other constituent countries of the empire. Some of the empire's **overseas colonies**, or **crown colonies**, were populated largely by settlers of European origin and their descendants. These predominantly White **settler col onies**, such as **Canada**, **Australia**, and **New Zealand**, were allowed significant self-government in the nineteenth century and recognized as **dominions** in the early twentieth century. The **White dominions** became members of **the Commonwealth of Nations**, also called **the Commonwealth, the British Commonwealth**, and "**the Old Commonwealth"** at different times, an association of sovereign states under the symbolic leadership of the British monarch.

Other **overseas colonies** of the empire had mostly Indigenous populations (or, in the Caribbean, the descendants of enslaved people, indentured servants, and others). These **colonies** were granted political independence after World War II, later than the **dominions**, and have often been referred to since as **postcolonial** nations. In South and Southeast Asia, **India** and **Pakistan** gained independence in 1947, followed by other countries including **Sri Lanka** (formerly **Ceylon**), **Burma** (now **Myanmar**), **Malaya** (now **Malaysia**), and **Singapore**. In West and East Africa, the **Gold Coast** was decolonized as **Ghana** in 1957, **Nigeria** in 1960, **Sierra Leone** in 1961, **Uganda** in 1962, **Kenya** in 1963, and so forth, while in southern Africa, the White minority government of **South Africa** was already independent in 1931, though majority rule did not come until 1994. In the Caribbean, **Jamaica** and **Trinidad and Tobago** became independent in 1962, followed by **Barbados** in 1966, and other islands of the British West Indies in the 1970s and '80s. Other regions from which nations emerged out of British colonial rule included Central America (**British Honduras**, now **Belize**), South America (**British Guiana**, now **Guyana),** the Pacific islands (**Fiji**), and Europe (**Cyprus**, **Malta**). After decolonization, many of these nations chose to remain within a newly conceived **Commonwealth** and are sometimes referred to as "**New Commonwealth**" countries. Some nations, such as **Ireland**, **Pakistan**, and **South Africa,** withdrew from the **Commonwealth**, though **South Africa** and **Paki stan** eventually rejoined, and others, such as **Burma** (now **Myanmar**), gained independence outside the **Commonwealth**. Britain's last major overseas colony, **Hong Kong**, was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, but while Britain retains only a handful of dependent territories, such as **Bermuda** and **Montserrat**, the scope of the **Commonwealth** remains vast, with approximately 30 percent of the world's population.

British Money

One of the most dramatic changes to the system of British money came in 1971. In the system previously in place, the pound consisted of 20 shillings, each containing 12 pence, making 240 pence to the pound. Since 1971, British money has been calculated on the decimal system, with 100 pence to the pound. Britons' experience of paper money did not change very drastically: as before, 5- and 10-pound notes constitute the majority of bills passing through their hands (in addition, 20- and 50-pound notes have been added). But the shift necessitated a whole new way of thinking about and exchanging coins and marked the demise of the shilling, one of the fundamental units of British monetary history. Many other coins, still frequently encountered in literature, had already passed. These include the groat, worth 4 pence (the word "groat" is often used to signify a trifling sum); the angel (which depicted the archangel Michael triumphing over a dragon), valued at 10 shillings; the mark, worth in its day two-thirds of a pound or 13 shillings 4 pence; and the sovereign, a gold coin initially worth 22 shillings 6 pence, later valued at 1 pound, last circulated in 1932. One prominent older coin, the guinea, was worth a pound and a shilling; though it has not been minted since 1813, a very few quality items or prestige awards (like the purse in a horse race) may still be quoted in guineas. (The table below includes some other obsolete coins.) Colloquially, a pound was (and is) called a quid; a shilling a bob; sixpence, a tanner; a copper could refer to a penny, a half-penny, or a farthing (¼ penny).

Old Currency	*New Currency*
1 pound note	1 pound coin (or note in Scotland)
10 shilling (half-pound note)	50 pence
5 shilling (crown)	
21/2 shilling (half crown)	20 pence
2 shilling (florin)	10 pence
1 shilling	5 pence
6 pence	
21/2 pence	1 penny
2 pence	
1 penny	
1/2 penny	
1/4 penny (farthing)	

Throughout its tenure as a member of the European Union (1973–2020), Britain contemplated but did not make the change to the EU's common currency, the Euro, reflecting many Britons' strong identification of their country with its rich commercial history and view of their currency as a national symbol.

Even more challenging than sorting out the values of obsolete coins is calculating for any given period the purchasing power of money, which fluctuates over time by its very nature. As difficult as it is to generalize, it is clear that money used to be worth much more than it is currently. During the early Middle Ages, the most valuable circulating coin was the silver penny: four would

buy a sheep. Beyond long-term inflationary trends, prices varied from times of plenty to those marked by poor harvests; from peacetime to wartime; from the country to the metropolis (life in London has always been very expensive); and wages varied according to the availability of labor (wages would sharply rise, for instance, during the devastating Black Death in the fourteenth century). The following chart provides a glimpse of some actual prices of given periods and their changes across time, though all the variables mentioned above prevent them from being definitive. Even from one year to the next, an added tax on gin or tea could drastically raise prices, and a lottery ticket could cost much more the night before the drawing than just a month earlier. Still, the prices quoted below do indicate important trends, such as the disparity of incomes in British society and the costs of basic commodities. In the chart on the following pages, the symbol £ is used for pound, s. for shilling, d. for a penny (from Latin *denarius*); a sum would normally be written £2.19.3—that is 2 pounds, 19 shillings, 3 pence. (This is Leopold Bloom's budget for the day depicted in Joyce's novel *Ulysses* [1922]; in the new currency, it would be about £2.96.)

circa	1390	1590	1650	1750	1815	1875	1950
food and drink	gallon (8 pints) of ale, 1.5d.	tankard of beer, .5d.	coffee, 1d. a dish	"drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two-pence" (gin shop sign in Hogarth print)	ounce of laudanum, 3d.	pint of beer, 3d.	pint of Guinness stout, 11d.
	gallon (8 pints) of wine, 3 to 4d.	pound of beef, 2s. 5d.	chicken, 1s. 4d.	dinner at a steakhouse, 1s.	ham and potato dinner for two, 7s.	dinner in a good hotel, 5s.	pound of beef, 2s. 2d.
	pound of cinnamon, 1 to 3s.	pound of cinnamon, 10s. 6d.	pound of tea, £3 10s.	pound of tea, 16s.	bottle of French claret, 12s.	pound of tea, 2s.	dinner on railway car, 7s. 6d.
entertainment	no cost to watch a cycle play	admission to public theater, 1 to 3d.	falcon, £11 5s.	theater tickets, 1 to 5s.	admission to Covent Garden theater, 1 to 7s.	theater tickets, 6d. to 7s.	admission to Old Vic theater, 1s. 6d. to 10s. 6d.
	contributory admission to professional troupe theater	cheap seat in private theater, 6d.	billiard table, £25	admission to Vauxhall Gardens, 1s.	annual subscription to Almack's (exclusive club), 10 guineas	admission to Madam Tussaud's waxworks, 1s.	admission to Odeon cinema, Manchester, 1s 3d.
	maintenance for royal hounds at Windsor, .75d. a day	"to see a dead Indian" (*The Tempest* 2.2.32), 1.25d. (ten "doits")	three-quarter length portrait painting, £31	lottery ticket, £20 (shares were sold)	Jane Austen's piano, 30 guineas	annual fees at a gentleman's club, 7 to 10 guineas	tropical fish tank, £4 4s.
reading	cheap romance, 1s.	play quarto, 6d.	pamphlet, 1 to 6d.	issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 6d.	issue of *Edinburgh Review*, 6s.	copy of the *Times*, 3d.	copy of the *Times*, 3d.

	a Latin Bible, 2 to £4	Shakespeare's *First Folio* (1623), £1	student Bible, 6s.	cheap edition of Milton, 2s.	membership in circulating library (3rd class), £1 4s. a year	illustrated edition of *Through the Looking-glass*, 6s.	issue of *Eagle* comics, 4.5d.
	payment for illuminating a liturgical book, £22 9s.	Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, 24s.	Hobbes's *Leviathan*, 8s.	Johnson's *Dictionary*, folio, 2 vols., £4 10s.	1st edition of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, 18s.	1st edition of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, 2 vols., £1 1s.	Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty Four,* paperback, 3s. 6d.
transportation	night's supply of hay for horse, 2d.	wherry (whole boat) across Thames, 1d.	day's journey, coach, 10s.	boat across Thames, 4d.	coach ride, outside, 2 to 3d. a mile; inside, 4 to 5d. a mile	15-minute journey in a London cab, 1s. 6d.	London tube fare, about 2d. a mile
	coach, £8	hiring a horse for a day, 12d.	coach horse, £30	coach fare, London to Edinburgh, £4 10s.	palanquin transport in Madras, 5s. a day	railway, 3rd class, London to Plymouth, 18s. 8d. (about 1d. a mile)	petrol, 3s. a gallon
	quality horse, £10	hiring a coach for a day, 10s.	fancy carriage, £170	transport to America, £5	passage, Liverpool to New York, £10	passage to India, 1st class, £50	midsize Austin sedan, £449 plus £188 4s. 2d. tax
clothes	clothing allowance for peasant, 3s. a year	shoes with buckles, 8d.	footman's frieze coat, 15s.	working woman's gown, 6s. 6d.	checked muslin, 7s. per yard	flannel for a cheap petticoat, 1s. 3d. a yard	woman's sundress, £3 13s. 10d.
	shoes for gentry wearer, 4d.	woman's gloves, £1 5s.	falconer's hat, 10s.	gentleman's suit, £8	hiring a dressmaker for a pelisse, 8s.	overcoat for an Eton schoolboy, £1 1s.	tweed sports jacket, £3 16s. 6d.
	hat for gentry wearer, 10d.	fine cloak, £16	black cloth for mourning household of an earl, £100	very fine wig, £30	ladies silk stockings, 12s.	set of false teeth, £2 10s.	"Teddy boy" drape suit, £20
labor/incomes	hiring a skilled building worker, 4d. a day	actor's daily wage during playing season, 1s.	agricultural laborer, 6s. 5d. a week	price of enslaved boy, £32	lowest-paid sailor on Royal Navy ship, 10s. 9d. a month	seasonal agricultural laborer, 14s. a week	minimum wage, agricultural laborer, £4 14s. per

							47-hour week
	wage for professional scribe, £2 3s. 4d. a year + cloak	household servant 2 to £5 a year + food, clothing	tutor to nobleman's children, £30 a year	housemaid's wage, £6 to £8 a year	contributor to *Quarterly Review*, 10 guineas per sheet	housemaid's wage, £10 to £25 a year	shorthand typist, £367 a year
	minimum income to be called gentleman, £10 a year; for knighthood, 40 to £400	minimum income for eligibility for knighthood, £30 a year	Milton's salary as Secretary of Foreign Tongues, £288 a year	Boswell's allowance, £200 a year	minimum income for a "genteel" family, £100 a year	income of the "comfortable" classes, £800 and up a year	middle manager's salary, £1,480 a year
	income from land of richest magnates, £3,500 a year	income from land of average earl, £4,000 a year	Earl of Bedford's income, £8,000 a year	Duke of Newcastle's income, £40,000 a year	Mr. Darcy's income, *Pride and Prejudice*, £10,000	Trollope's income, £4,000 a year	barrister's salary, £2,032 a year

The British Baronage

The English monarchy is in principle hereditary, though at times during the Middle Ages the rules were subject to dispute. As it stands now, authority passes from parent to eldest surviving child, to siblings in order of seniority if there are no children, and in default of direct descendants to collateral lines (cousins, nephews, nieces) in order of closeness. There have been breaks in the order of succession (1066, 1399, 1688), but so far as possible the usurpers have always sought to paper over the break with a legitimate, that is, hereditary, claim. When a queen succeeds to the throne and takes a husband, he does not become king unless he is in the line of blood succession; rather, he is named prince consort, as Albert was to Victoria. He may be the father of kings, but he is not one himself.

The original Saxon nobles were the king's thanes, ealdormen, or earls, who provided the king with military service and counsel in return for booty, gifts, or landed estates. William the Conqueror, arriving from France, where feudalism was fully developed, considerably expanded this group. In addition, as the king distributed the lands of his new kingdom, he also distributed dignities to men who became known collectively as "the baronage." "Baron" in its root meaning signifies simply "man," and barons were the king's men. As the title was common, a distinction was early made between greater and lesser barons, the former gradually assuming loftier and more impressive titles. The first English "duke" was created in 1337; the title of "marquess," or "marquis" (pronounced "markwis"), followed in 1385, and "viscount" ("vyekount") in 1440. Though "earl" is the oldest title of all, an earl now comes between a marquess and a viscount in order of dignity and precedence, and the old term "baron" now designates a rank just below viscount. "Baronets" were created in 1611 as a means of raising revenue for the crown (the title could be purchased for about £1,000); they are marginal nobility and have never sat in the House of Lords.

Kings and queens are addressed as "Your Majesty," princes and princesses as "Your Highness," the other hereditary nobility as "My Lord" or "Your Lordship." Peers receive their titles either by inheritance (like Lord Byron, the sixth baron of that line) or from the monarch (like Alfred, Lord Tennyson, created 1st Baron Tennyson by Victoria). The children, even of a duke, are commoners unless they are specifically granted some other title or inherit their father's title from him. A peerage can be forfeited by act of attainder, as for example when a lord is convicted of treason; and, when forfeited, or lapsed for lack of a successor, can be bestowed on another family. Thus in 1605 Robert Cecil was made first Earl of Salisbury in the third creation, the first creation dating from 1149, the second from 1337, the title having been in abeyance since 1539. Titles descend by right of succession and do not depend on tenure of land; thus, a title does not always indicate where a lord dwells or holds power. Indeed, noble titles do not always refer to a real place at all. At Prince Edward's marriage in 1999, the queen created him Earl of Wessex, although the old kingdom of Wessex has had no political existence since 1066, and the name was all but forgotten until it was resurrected by Thomas Hardy as the setting of his novels. (This is perhaps but one of many ways in which the world of the aristocracy increasingly resembles the realm of literature.)

The king and queen	(These are all of the royal line.)
Prince and princess	
Duke and duchess	(These may or may not be of the royal line, but are ordinarily remote from the succession.)
Marquess and marchioness	
Earl and countess	
Viscount and viscountess	
Baron and baroness	
Baronet and lady	

Scottish peers sat in the parliament of Scotland, as English peers did in the parliament of England, till at the Act of Union (1707) Scottish peers were granted sixteen seats in the English House of Lords, to be filled by election. (In 1963, all Scottish lords were allowed to sit.) Similarly, Irish peers, when the Irish parliament was abolished in 1801, were granted the right to elect twenty-eight of their number to the House of Lords in Westminster. (Now that the Republic of Ireland is a separate nation, this no longer applies.) Women members (peeresses) were first allowed to sit in the House as nonhereditary Life Peers in 1958 (when that status was created for members of both genders); women first sat by their own hereditary right in 1963. Today the House of Lords still retains some power to influence or delay legislation, but its future is uncertain. In 1999, the hereditary peers (then amounting to 750) were reduced to 92 temporary members elected by their fellow peers. Holders of Life Peerages remain, as do senior bishops of the Church of England and high-court judges (the "Law Lords").

Below the peerage the chief title of honor is "knight." Knighthood, which is not hereditary, is generally a reward for services rendered. A knight (Sir John Black) is addressed, using his first name, as "Sir John"; his wife, using the last name, is "Lady Black"—unless she is the daughter of an earl or nobleman of higher rank, in which case she will be "Lady Arabella." The female equivalent of a knight bears the title of "Dame." Though

the word *knight* itself comes from the Old English *cniht*, there is some doubt as to whether knighthood amounted to much before the arrival of the Normans. The feudal system required military service as a condition of land tenure, and a man who came to serve his king at the head of an army of tenants required a title of authority and badges of identity—hence the title of knighthood and the coat of arms. During the Crusades, when men were far removed from their land (or even sold it in order to go on crusade), more elaborate forms of fealty sprang up that soon expanded into orders of knighthood. The Templars, Hospitallers, Knights of the Teutonic Order, Knights of Malta, and Knights of the Golden Fleece were but a few of these companionships; not all of them were available at all times in England.

Gradually, with the rise of centralized government and the decline of feudal tenures, military knighthood became obsolete, and the rank largely honorific; sometimes, as under James I, it degenerated into a scheme of the royal government for making money. For hundreds of years after its establishment in the fourteenth century, the Order of the Garter was the only English order of knighthood, an exclusive courtly companionship. Then, during the late seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the nineteenth centuries, a number of additional orders were created, with names such as the Thistle, Saint Patrick, the Bath, Saint Michael, and Saint George, plus a number of special Victorian and Indian orders. They retain the terminology, ceremony, and dignity of knighthood, but the military implications are vestigial.

Although the British Empire now belongs to history, appointments to the Order of the British Empire continue to be conferred for services to that empire at home or abroad. Such honors (commonly referred to as "gongs") are granted by the monarch in New Year's and Birthday lists, but the decisions are now made by the government in power. In recent years there have been efforts to popularize and democratize the dispensation of honors, with recipients including celebrities of all types. But this does not prevent large sectors of British society from regarding both knighthood and the peerage as largely irrelevant to modern life.

The Royal Lines of England and Great Britain

England

SAXONS AND DANES

Egbert, king of Wessex802–839

Ethelwulf, son of Egbert839–858

Ethelbald, second son of Ethelwulf858–860

Ethelbert, third son of Ethelwulf860–866

Ethelred I, fourth son of Ethelwulf866–871

Alfred the Great, fifth son of Ethelwulf871–899

Edward the Elder, son of Alfred899–924

Athelstan the Glorious, son of Edward924–940

Edmund I, third son of Edward940–946

Edred, fourth son of Edward946–955

Edwy the Fair, son of Edmund955–959

Edgar the Peaceful, second son of Edmund959–975

Edward the Martyr, son of Edgar975–978 (murdered)

Ethelred II, the Unready, second son of Edgar978–1016

Edmund II, Ironside, son of Ethelred II1016–1016

Canute the Dane1016–1035

Harold I, Harefoot, natural son of Canute1035–1040

Hardecanute, son of Canute1040–1042

Edward the Confessor, son of Ethelred II1042–1066

Harold II, brother-in-law of Edward1066–1066 (died in battle)

HOUSE OF NORMANDY

William I, the Conqueror1066–1087

William II, Rufus, third son of William I1087–1100 (shot from ambush)

Henry I, Beauclerc, youngest son of William I1100–1135

HOUSE OF BLOIS

Stephen, son of Adela, daughter of William I1135–1154

HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET

Henry II, son of Geoffrey Plantagenet by Matilda, daughter of Henry I1154–1189

Richard I, Coeur de Lion, son of Henry II1189–1199

John Lackland, son of Henry II1199–1216

Henry III, son of John1216–1272

Edward I, Longshanks, son of Henry III1272–1307

Edward II, son of Edward I1307–1327 (deposed)

Edward III of Windsor, son of Edward II1327–1377

Richard II, grandson of Edward III1377–1399 (deposed)

HOUSE OF LANCASTER

Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt, son of Edward III1399–1413

Henry V, Prince Hal, son of Henry IV1413–1422

Henry VI, son of Henry V1422–1461 (deposed),

1470–1471 (deposed)

HOUSE OF YORK

Edward IV, great-great-grandson of Edward III1461–1470 (deposed),

1471–1483

Edward V, son of Edward IV1483–1483 (murdered)

Richard III, Crookback1483–1485 (died in battle)

HOUSE OF TUDOR

Henry VII, married daughter of Edward IV1485–1509

Henry VIII, son of Henry VII1509–1547

Edward VI, son of Henry VIII1547–1553

Mary I, "Bloody," daughter of Henry VIII1553–1558

Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII1558–1603

HOUSE OF STUART

James I (James VI of Scotland)1603–1625

Charles I, son of James I1625–1649 (executed)

COMMONWEALTH & PROTECTORATE

Council of State1649–1653

Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector1653–1658

Richard Cromwell, son of Oliver1658–1660 (resigned)

HOUSE OF STUART (RESTORED)

Charles II, son of Charles I1660–1685

James II, second son of Charles I1685–1688

(INTERREGNUM, 11 DECEMBER 1688 TO 13 FEBRUARY 1689)

HOUSE OF ORANGE-NASSAU

William III of Orange, by
Mary, daughter of Charles I
and Mary II, daughter of James II 1689–1701–1694

Anne, second daughter of James II1702–1714

Great Britain

HOUSE OF HANOVER

George I, son of Elector of Hanover and Sophia, granddaughter of James I1714–1727

George II, son of George I1727–1760

George III, grandson of George II1760–1820

George IV, son of George III1820–1830

William IV, third son of George III1830–1837

Victoria, daughter of Edward, fourth son of George III1837–1901

HOUSE OF SAXE-COBURG AND GOTHA

Edward VII, son of Victoria1901–1910

HOUSE OF WINDSOR (NAME ADOPTED 17 JULY 1917)

George V, second son of Edward VII1910–1936

Edward VIII, eldest son of George V1936–1936 (abdicated)

George VI, second son of George V1936–1952

Elizabeth II, daughter of George VI1952–2022

Charles III, son of Elizabeth II2022–

Religions in Great Britain

In the late sixth century C.E., missionaries from Rome introduced Christianity to Britons—actually, reintroduced it, since it had briefly flourished in the southern parts of the British Isles during the Roman occupation, and even after the Roman withdrawal had persisted in the Celtic regions of Scotland and Wales. By the time the earliest poems included in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* were composed (the seventh century), therefore, there had been a Christian presence in the British Isles for hundreds of years. The conversion of the Germanic occupiers of England can, however, be dated only from 597. Our knowledge of the religion of pre-Christian Britain is sketchy, but it is likely that vestiges of Germanic polytheism assimilated into, or coexisted with, the practice of Christianity: fertility rites were incorporated into the celebration of Easter resurrection, rituals commemorating the dead into All-Hallows Eve and All Saints Day, and elements of winter solstice festivals into the celebration of Christmas. The most durable polytheistic remains are the days of the week, each of which except "Saturday" derives from the name of a Germanic pagan god, and the word "Easter," deriving, according to the great monastic scholar Bede (ca. 673–735), from the name of a Germanic pagan goddess, Eostre. In English literature such "folkloric" elements sometimes elicit romantic nostalgia. Geoffrey Chaucer's "Wife of Bath" looks back to a magical time before the arrival of Christianity in which the land was "fulfild of fairye." Hundreds of years later, the seventeenth-century writer Robert Herrick honors the amalgamation of Christian and pagan elements in agrarian British culture in such poems as "Corinna's Gone A-Maying" and "The Hock Cart."

Medieval Christianity was fairly uniform, if complex, across Western Europe—hence called "catholic," or universally shared. The Church was composed of the so-called "regular" and "secular" orders, the regular orders being those who followed a rule in a community under an abbot or an abbess (that is, monks, nuns, friars, and canons), while the secular clergy of priests served parish communities under the governance of a bishop. In the unstable period from the sixth until the twelfth century, monasteries were the intellectual powerhouse of the Church. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, with the development of an urban Christian spirituality in Europe, friars dominated the recently invented institution of universities, as well as devoting themselves, in theory at least, to the urban poor.

The Catholic Church was also an international power structure. With its hierarchy of pope, cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, it offered a model of the centralized, bureaucratic state from the late eleventh century. That ecclesiastical power structure coexisted alongside a separate, often less centralized and feudal structure of lay authorities, with theoretically different and often competing spheres of social responsibilities. The sharing of lay and ecclesiastical authority in medieval England was sometimes a source of conflict. Chaucer's pilgrims are on their way to visit the memorial shrine to one victim of such exemplary struggle: Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, who opposed the policies of King Henry II, was assassinated by indirect suggestion of the king in 1170, and later made a saint. The Church, in turn, produced its own victims: Jews were subject to persecution in the late twelfth century in England, before being expelled in 1290. From the

beginning of the fifteenth century, the English Church targeted Lollard heretics (see below) with capital punishment, for the first time.

As an international organization, the Church conducted its business in the universal language of Latin. Thus although in the period the largest segment of literate persons was made up of clerics, the clerical contribution to great literary writing in vernacular languages (for example, French and English) was, so far as we know, relatively modest, with some great exceptions in the later Middle Ages (for example, William Langland). Lay, vernacular writers of the period certainly reflect the importance of the Church as an institution and the pervasiveness of religion in the rituals that marked everyday life, as well as contesting institutional authority. From the late fourteenth century, indeed, England witnessed an active and articulate, proto-Protestant movement known as Lollardy, which attacked clerical hierarchy and promoted vernacular scriptures.

Beginning in 1517 the German monk Martin Luther, in Wittenberg, Germany, openly challenged many aspects of Catholic practice and by 1520 had completely repudiated the authority of the pope, setting in motion the Protestant Reformation. Luther argued that the Roman Catholic Church had strayed far from the pattern of Christianity laid out in scripture. He rejected Catholic doctrines for which no biblical authority was to be found, such as the belief in Purgatory, and translated the Bible into German, on the grounds that the importance of scripture for all Christians made its translation into the vernacular tongue essential. Luther was not the first to advance such views—Lollard followers of the Englishman John Wycliffe had translated the Bible in the late fourteenth century. But Luther, protected by powerful German rulers, was able to speak out without fear of punishment and convert others to his views, rather than suffer the persecution usually meted out to heretics. Soon other reformers were following in Luther's footsteps: of these, the Swiss Ulrich Zwingli and the French Jean Calvin would be especially influential for English religious thought.

At first England remained staunchly Catholic. Its king, Henry VIII, was so severe to heretics that the pope awarded him the title "Defender of the Faith," which British monarchs have retained to this day. In 1534, however, Henry rejected the authority of the pope to prevent his divorce from his queen, Catherine of Aragon, and his marriage to his mistress, Ann Boleyn. In doing so, Henry appropriated to himself ecclesiastical as well as secular authority. Thomas More, author of *Utopia*, was executed in 1535 for refusing to endorse Henry's right to govern the English church. Over the following six years, Henry consolidated his grip on the ecclesiastical establishment by dissolving the powerful, populous Catholic monasteries and redistributing their massive landholdings to his own lay followers. Yet Henry's church largely retained Catholic doctrine and liturgy. When Henry died and his young son, Edward, came to the throne in 1547, the English church embarked on a more Protestant path, a direction abruptly reversed when Edward died and his older sister Mary, the daughter of Catherine of Aragon, took the throne in 1553 and attempted to reintroduce Roman Catholicism. Mary's reign was also short, however, and her successor, Elizabeth I, the daughter of Ann Boleyn, was a Protestant. Elizabeth attempted to establish a "middle way" Christianity, compromising between Roman Catholic practices and beliefs and reformed ones.

The Church of England, though it laid claim to a national rather than pan-European authority, aspired like its predecessor to be the universal church of all English subjects. It retained the Catholic structure of parishes and dioceses and the Catholic hierarchy of bishops, though the ecclesiastical authority was now the Archbishop of Canterbury and the

Church's "Supreme Governor" was the monarch. Yet disagreement and controversy persisted. Some members of the Church of England wanted to retain many of the ritual and liturgical elements of Catholicism. Others, the Puritans, advocated a more thoroughgoing reformation. Most Puritans remained within the Church of England, but a minority, the "Separatists" or "Congregationalists," split from the established church altogether. These dissenters no longer thought of the ideal church as an organization to which everybody belonged; instead, they conceived it as a more exclusive group of likeminded people, one not necessarily attached to a larger body of believers.

In the seventeenth century, the succession of the Scottish king James to the English throne produced another problem. England and Scotland were separate nations, and in the sixteenth century Scotland had developed its own national Presbyterian church, or "kirk," under the leadership of the reformer John Knox. The kirk retained fewer Catholic liturgical elements than did the Church of England, and its authorities, or "presbyters," were elected by assemblies of their fellow clerics, rather than appointed by the king. James I and his son Charles I, especially the latter, wanted to bring the Scottish kirk into conformity with Church of England practices. The Scots violently resisted these efforts, with the collaboration of many English Puritans, in a conflict that eventually developed into the English Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century. The effect of these disputes is visible in the poetry of such writers as John Milton, Robert Herrick, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne, and in the prose of Thomas Browne, Lucy Hutchinson, and Dorothy Waugh. Just as in the mid-sixteenth century, when a succession of monarchs with different religious commitments destabilized the church, so the seventeenth century endured spiritual whiplash. King Charles I's highly ritualistic Church of England was violently overturned by the Puritan victors in the Civil War—until 1660, after the death of the Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell, when the Church of England was restored along with the monarchy.

The religious and political upheavals of the seventeenth century produced Christian sects that de-emphasized the ceremony of the established church and rejected as well its top-down authority structure. Some of these groups were ephemeral, but the Baptists (founded in 1608 in Amsterdam by the English expatriate John Smyth) and Quakers, or Society of Friends (founded by George Fox in the 1640s), flourished outside the established church, sometimes despite cruel persecution. John Bunyan, a Baptist, wrote the Christian allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison. Some dissenters, like the Baptists, shared the reformed reverence for the absolute authority of scripture but interpreted the scriptural texts differently from their fellow Protestants. Others, like the Quakers, favored, even over the authority of the Bible, the "inner light" or voice of individual conscience, which they took to be the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals.

The Protestant dissenters were not England's only religious minorities. Despite crushing fines and the threat of imprisonment, a minority of Catholics under Elizabeth and James openly refused to give their allegiance to the new church, and others remained secret adherents to the old ways. John Donne was brought up in an ardently Catholic family, and several other writers converted to Catholicism as adults—Ben Jonson for a considerable part of his career, Elizabeth Carey and Richard Crashaw permanently, and at profound personal cost. In the eighteenth century, Catholics remained objects of suspicion as possible agents of sedition, especially after the "Glorious Revolution" in 1688 deposed the Catholic James II in favor of the Protestant William and Mary. Anti-Catholic prejudice affected John Dryden, a Catholic convert, as well as the lifelong Catholic Alexander Pope. By contrast, the English colony of Ireland remained overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, the fervor of its religious

commitment at least partly inspired by resistance to English occupation. Starting in the reign of Elizabeth, England shored up its own authority in Ireland by encouraging Protestant immigrants from Scotland to settle in the north of Ireland, producing a virulent religious divide the effects of which are still felt today.

A small community of Jews had moved from France to London after 1066, when the Norman William the Conqueror came to the English throne. Although despised and persecuted by many Christians, they were allowed to remain as moneylenders to the Crown, until the thirteenth century, when the king developed alternative sources of credit. At this point, in 1290, the Jews were expelled from England. In 1655 Oliver Cromwell permitted a few to return, and in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the Jewish population slowly increased, mainly by immigration from Germany. In the mid-eighteenth century some prominent Jews had their children brought up as Christians so as to facilitate their full integration into English society: thus the nineteenth-century writer and politician Benjamin Disraeli, although he and his father were members of the Church of England, was widely considered a Jew insofar as his ancestry was Jewish.

In the late seventeenth century, as the Church of England reasserted itself, Catholics, Jews, and dissenting Protestants found themselves subject to significant legal restrictions. The Corporation Act, passed in 1661, and the Test Act, passed in 1673, excluded all who refused to take communion in the Church of England from voting, attending university, or working in government or in the professions. Members of religious minorities, as well as Church of England communicants, paid mandatory taxes in support of Church of England ministers and buildings. In 1689 the dissenters gained the right to worship in public, but Jews and Catholics were not permitted to do so.

During the eighteenth century, political, intellectual, and religious history remained closely intertwined. The Church of England came to accommodate a good deal of variety. "Low church" services resembled those of the dissenting Protestant churches, minimizing ritual and emphasizing the sermon; the "high church" retained more elaborate ritual elements, yet its prestige was under attack on several fronts. Many Enlightenment thinkers subjected the Bible to rational critique and found it wanting: the philosopher David Hume, for instance, argued that the "miracles" described therein were more probably lies or errors than real breaches of the laws of nature. Within the Church of England, the "broad church" Latitudinarians welcomed this rationalism, advocating theological openness and an emphasis on ethics rather than dogma. More radically, the Unitarian movement rejected the divinity of Christ while professing to accept his ethical teachings. Taking a different tack, the preacher John Wesley, founder of Methodism, responded to the rationalists' challenge with a newly fervent call to evangelism and personal discipline; his movement was particularly successful in Wales. Revolutions in America and France at the end of the century generated considerable millenarian excitement and fostered more new religious ideas, often in conjunction with a radical social agenda. Many important writers of the Romantic period were indebted to traditions of protestant dissent: Unitarian and rationalist protestant ideas influenced William Hazlitt, Anna Barbauld, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the young Samuel Taylor Coleridge. William Blake created a highly idiosyncratic poetic mythology loosely indebted to radical strains of Christian mysticism. Others were even more heterodox: Lord Byron and Robert Burns, brought up as Scots Presbyterians, rebelled fiercely, and Percy Shelley's writing of an atheistic pamphlet resulted in his expulsion from Oxford.

Great Britain never erected an American-style "wall of separation" between church and state, but in practice religion and secular affairs grew more and more distinct during the

nineteenth century. In consequence, members of religious minorities no longer seemed to pose a threat to the commonweal. A movement to repeal the Test Act failed in the 1790s, but a renewed effort resulted in the extension of the franchise to dissenting Protestants in 1828 and to Catholics in 1829. The numbers of Roman Catholics in England were swelled by immigration from Ireland, but there were also some prominent English adherents. Among writers, the converts John Newman and Gerard Manley Hopkins are especially important. The political participation and social integration of Jews presented a thornier challenge. Lionel de Rothschild, repeatedly elected to represent London in Parliament during the 1840s and 1850s, was not permitted to take his seat there because he refused to take his oath of office "on the true faith of a Christian"; finally, in 1858, the Jewish Disabilities Act allowed him to omit these words. Only in 1871, however, were Oxford and Cambridge opened to non-Anglicans.

Meanwhile geological discoveries and Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories increasingly cast doubt on the literal truth of the Creation story, and close philological analysis of the biblical text suggested that its origins were human rather than divine. By the end of the nineteenth century, many writers were bearing witness to a world in which Christianity no longer seemed fundamentally plausible. In his poetry and prose, Thomas Hardy depicts a world devoid of benevolent providence. Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach" is in part an elegy to lost spiritual assurance, as the "Sea of Faith" goes out like the tide: "But now I only hear / Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar / Retreating." For Arnold, literature must replace religion as a source of spiritual truth, and intimacy between individuals substitute for the lost communal solidarity of the universal church.

The work of many twentieth-century writers shows the influence of a religious upbringing or a religious conversion in adulthood. T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden embrace Anglicanism, William Butler Yeats spiritualism. James Joyce repudiates Irish Catholicism but remains obsessed with it. Yet religion, or lack of it, is a matter of individual choice and conscience, not social or legal mandate. Over the past several decades, church attendance has plummeted in Great Britain. Only about 46 percent of the population identified itself as "Christian" on the 2021 census. Meanwhile, immigration from former British colonies as well as other countries has swelled the ranks of religions once uncommon in the British Isles—Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist—though the numbers of adherents remain small relative to the total population.

Volume E: The Victorian Age

General Bibliography

This bibliography consists of a list of suggested general readings on English literature. Bibliographies for the authors and topical clusters in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* are available online at the NAEL student site.

Histories of England and of English Literature

Even the most distinguished of the comprehensive general histories written in past generations have come to seem outmoded. Innovative research in social, cultural, and political history has made it difficult to write a single coherent account of England from the Middle Ages to the present, let alone to accommodate in a unified narrative the complex histories of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and the other nations where writing in English has flourished. Readers who wish to explore the historical matrix out of which the works of literature collected in this anthology emerged are advised to consult the studies of particular periods listed in the appropriate sections of this bibliography. The multivolume *Oxford History of England* (1934–65) and *New Oxford History of England* (1992–2009) are useful, as are the three-volume *Peoples of the British Isles: A New History*, by Stanford E. Lehmberg, Samantha A. Meigs, and Thomas William Heyck (3rd ed., 1992); the nine-volume *Cambridge Cultural History of Britain*, ed. Boris Ford (1992); the three-volume *Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (1990); and the multivolume *Penguin History of Britain*, gen. ed. David Cannadine (1996–). For Britain's imperial history, readers can consult the five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis (1998–99), as well as *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (2004). Also of interest is Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four*

Continents (2015). Given the cultural centrality of London, readers may find particular interest in *The London Encyclopaedia*, ed. Ben Weinreb et al. (3rd ed., 2008); Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (1994); and Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: "A Human Awful Wonder of God"* (2007) and *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* (2001).

Similar observations may be made about literary history. In the light of such initiatives as women's studies, New Historicism, and postcolonialism, the range of authors deemed significant has expanded, along with the geographical and conceptual boundaries of literature in English. Attempts to capture in a unified account the great sweep of literature from *Beowulf* to the early twenty-first century have largely given way to studies of individual genres, carefully delimited time periods, and specific authors. Among the large-scale literary surveys, *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, ed. Dominic Head (3rd ed., 2006), is useful, as is the nine-volume *Penguin History of Literature* (1987–94) and the multivolume *Oxford History of Poetry in English* (2022–). *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy, and Patricia Clements (1990), is an important resource, and the editorial materials in the two-volume *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (3rd ed., 2007), constitute a concise history and set of biographies of women authors since the Middle Ages. *Annals of English Literature, 1475–1950* (2nd ed., 1961), lists important publications year by year, together with the significant literary events for each year. Seven volumes have been published in *The Oxford English Literary History*, gen. eds. Jonathan Bate and Colin Burrow (2002–): Laura Ashe, *1000–1350: Conquest and Transformation*; James Simpson, *1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution*; Margaret J. M. Ezell, *1645–1714: The Later Seventeenth Century*; Philip Davis, *1830–1880: The Victorians*; Chris Baldick, *1830–1880: The Modern Movement (1910–1940)*; Randall Stevenson, *1960–2000: The Last of England?*; and Bruce King, *1948–2000: The Internationalization of English*

Literature. See also *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (1999); *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare E. Lees (2013); *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, ed. David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (2002); *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780*, ed. John Richetti (2005); *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler (2009); *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, ed. Kate Flint (2012); and *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (2004).

Helpful treatments and surveys of English meter, rhyme, and stanza forms are Paul Fussell Jr., *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (rev. ed., 1979); Donald Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme: Device and Modernity* (1980); Charles O. Hartman, *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody* (1980); Derek Attridge, *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction* (1995); Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide* (1998); *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*, ed. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland (2000); John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* (3rd ed., 2001); *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*, ed. Helen Vendler (3rd ed., 2010); *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (2014); and Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (2015).

On the development and functioning of the novel as a form, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1970; trans. 1980); *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. Michael McKeon (2000); *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti (2 vols.; 2001–03, trans. 2006); McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (15th anniversary ed., 2002); *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (2012); *A Companion to the English Novel*, ed. Stephen Arata et al. (2015); and the ten volumes to date of *The Oxford History of the Novel in English* (2012–). On women novelists and readers, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of*

the Novel (1987), and Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (1994).

On the history of playhouse design, see Richard Leacroft, *The Development of the English Playhouse: An Illustrated Survey of Theatre Building in England from Medieval to Modern Times* (1988). For a survey of the plays that have appeared on these and other stages, see Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama*, rev. J. C. Trewin (6th ed., 1978); the eight-volume *The Revels History of Drama in English*, gen. eds. Clifford Leech and T. W. Craik (1975–83); Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, rev. S. Schoenbaum and Sylvia Wagonheim (3rd ed., 1989); and the three volumes of *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, ed. Jane Milling, Peter Thomson, Joseph Donohue, and Baz Kershaw (2004).

On some of the key intellectual currents that are at once reflected in and shaped by literature and contemporary literary criticism, Arthur O. Lovejoy's classic studies *The Great Chain of Being* (1936) and *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948) remain valuable, along with such works as Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (1900; trans. 1907; 3rd enl. ed., 2004); Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (4 vols., 1923–95; trans. 1953–96); Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (1935); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (2 vols., 1939; trans. 1979–82); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2 vols., 1949; trans. 1953, new trans. 2009); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952; trans. 1957, new trans. 2008); Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1957; new eds. 1997, 2016); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958; 2nd ed., 1998); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958; trans. 1969, new ed. 1994); Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (1960; rev. ed., 1964; rev. and expanded as *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, 2003); Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966; trans. 1983); M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*

(1971); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1964; trans. 1965) and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; trans. 1970); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967; trans. 1976, 40th anniversary ed. 2016) and *Dissemination* (1972; trans. 1981); Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (1973); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973); Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973; trans. 1975); Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976; new ed., 2015); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979; trans. 1984); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979; 39th anniversary ed., 2009); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980; trans. 1987); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2 vols., 1980; trans. 1984–98); Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (1985; trans. 1987); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; new ed., 2004); Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997); Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature*, ed. Neil Hertz (1997); and N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999).

Reference Works

The single most important tool for the study of literature in English is the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1884–1924; 2nd ed., 1989; 3rd ed. in process). The most current edition, updated quarterly, is available online to subscribers. The *OED* is written on historical principles: that is, it attempts not only to describe current word use but also to record the history and development of the language from its origins before the Norman Conquest to the present. It thus provides, for familiar as well as archaic and obscure words, the widest possible

range of meanings and uses, organized chronologically and illustrated with quotations. The *OED* can be searched as a conventional dictionary arranged a–z and also by subject, usage, region, origin, and timeline (the first appearance of a word). Resources available for early forms of English include the online Old English and Middle English dictionaries at Lexilogos (https://www.lexilogos.com/english/english_old.htm and https://www.lexilogos.com/english/english_middle.htm); also valuable are the *Dictionary of Old English* (1986–) and the *Middle English Dictionary* (1952; digitized 2008). Beyond the *OED* there are many other valuable dictionaries, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary* (5th ed., 50th anniversary printing, 2018); *The Oxford Dictionary of Abbreviations* (1992); T. F. Hoad, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (1993); Bas Aarts, Sylvia Chalker, and Edmund Weiner, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* (2nd ed., 2014); Morton S. Freeman, *A New Dictionary of Eponyms* (1997); *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English* (1999); *The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, ed. Judith Siefring (2nd ed., 2004); P. H. Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (3rd ed., 2014); Tom McArthur, *The Oxford Guide to World English* (2002); and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, ed. Jennifer Speake (4th ed., 2003). Other valuable reference works include *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, ed. David Crystal (3rd ed., 2018); *The Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*, ed. Tom McArthur (1998); *Fowler's Concise Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, ed. Jeremy Butterfield (3rd ed., 2016); and the numerous guides to specialized vocabularies, slang, regional dialects, and the like.

There is a steady flow of new editions of most major and many minor writers in English, along with the publication of critical appraisals and scholarship. James L. Harner's *Literary Research Guide: An Annotated List of Reference Sources in English Literary Studies* (6th ed., 2014; available online at www.mlalrg.org/public) offers thorough, evaluative annotations of a wide range of sources. For the historical record of scholarship and critical discussion, *The*

New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, ed. George Watson (5 vols., 1969–77), and the third edition in process, *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. Joanne Shattock (1 vol. to date, 2000–), are useful. The *MLA International Bibliography* (also online) is a key resource for following critical discussion of literatures in English. Ranging from 1926 to the present, it includes journal articles, essays, chapters from collections, books, and dissertations, and covers folklore, linguistics, and film. The *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* (*ABELL*), compiled by the Modern Humanities Research Association, lists monographs, periodical articles, critical editions of literary works, book reviews, and collections of essays published anywhere in the world; unpublished doctoral dissertations are covered for the period 1920–99 (available online to subscribers directly and as part of Literature Online, http://literature.proquest.com/marketing/index.jsp).

For compact biographies of English authors, see the multivolume *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*), ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (2004); since 2004 the *DNB* has been extended online with updates (now monthly). Handy reference books of authors, works, and various literary terms and allusions include many volumes in the *Cambridge Companion* and *Oxford Companion* series: e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (2007); *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Dinah Birch (7th ed., 2009); and *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Rita Copeland and Peter Struck (2010). *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, editor-in-chief Roland Greene (4th ed., 2012), is available online to subscribers in Oxford Reference. Handbooks that define and illustrate literary concepts and terms include *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. J. A. Cuddon and M. A. R. Habib (5th ed., 2015); William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (12th ed., 2011); *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (2nd ed., 1995); and M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (11th ed., 2014). Also useful are Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (2nd ed., 1991); Arthur

Quinn, *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase* (1982); the *Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology*, ed. Robert K. Barnhart (1995); and George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (1994).

On Greek and Roman backgrounds, see *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*—vol. 1, *Greek Literature*, ed. P. E. Easterling and Bernard M. W. Knox (1985), and vol. 2, *Latin Literature*, ed. E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (1982), both available to subscribers online; *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, ed. M. C. Howatson (3rd ed., 2011); Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History* (1987; trans. 1994); *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (4th ed., 2012); Richard Rutherford, *Classical Literature: A Concise History* (2005); and Mark P. O. Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham, *Classical Mythology* (11th ed., 2018). The Loeb Classical Library of Greek and Roman texts with facing-page English translations is now available online to subscribers at www.loebclassics.com.

Digital resources in the humanities continue to grow rapidly. Among the many useful electronic resources for the study of English literature are enormous digital archives, available to subscribers: Early English Books Online (EEBO), http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home; Literature Online, http://literature.proquest.com/marketing/index.jsp; and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online. There are also numerous free sites of variable quality. Many of the best of these are period- or author-specific and hence are listed in the period/author bibliographies on the NAEL website. Among the general sites, one of the most useful and wide-ranging is Voice of the Shuttle (http://vos.ucsb.edu), which includes links to Bartleby.com and Project Gutenberg.

Literary Criticism and Theory

The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism comprises nine volumes (1989–2013): *Classical Criticism*, ed. George A. Kennedy; *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson; *The Renaissance*, ed. Glyn P. Norton; *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson; *Romanticism*, ed. Marshall Brown; *The Nineteenth Century, c. 1830–1914*, ed. M. A. R. Habib; *Modernism and the New Criticism*, ed. A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey; *From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, ed. Raman Selden; and *Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris. See also M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953); William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (1957); René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950* (8 vols., 1955–92); Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (1980); J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (2002); and John Frow, *Character and Person* (2014). Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker have written *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (6th ed., 2017). Other useful resources include *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (2nd ed., 2005); *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (3rd ed., 2017); and *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, gen. ed. Vincent B. Leitch (3rd ed., 2018).

Modern approaches to English literature and literary theory were shaped by certain landmark works: William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930; 3rd ed., 1953), *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), and *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951; 3rd ed., 1977); T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (1932; 3rd ed., 1951) and *On Poetry and Poets* (1957); F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (1936) and *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948); Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946; trans. 1953); Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (1950); William K. Wimsatt Jr., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (1954); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism:*

Four Essays (1957); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961; 2nd ed., 1983); and W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (1970). René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (3rd ed., 1963), is a useful introduction to the variety of scholarly and critical approaches to literature up to the time of its publication. Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd ed., 2011), discusses recurrent issues and debates. On the discipline of criticism, see John Guillory's *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study* (2022); Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* (2015) is a critical assessment of contemporary criticism.

Beginning in the late 1960s, interest in literary theory as a specific field markedly intensified. Certain forms of literary study had already been influenced by the work of the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson and the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky—and, still more, by conceptions that derived or claimed to derive from Marx and Engels—but the full impact of these theories was not felt until what became known as the "theory revolution" of the 1970s and '80s. For Marxist literary criticism, see Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (1920; trans. 1971), *The Historical Novel* (1937; trans. 1962), and *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki, and Others* (trans. 1950); Walter Benjamin's essays from the 1920s and '30s, represented in *Illuminations* (1955; trans. 1968) and *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (1975; trans. 1978); Mikhail Bakhtin's essays from the 1930s represented in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (trans. 1981) and *Rabelais and His World* (1965; trans. 1968); *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971); Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (1977); Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (1979; 2nd ed., 2003); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981); and Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An*

Introduction (1983; anniversary ed., 2008) and *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990).

Structural linguistics and anthropology gave rise to a flowering of structuralist literary criticism; convenient introductions include Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (1974), and Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (new ed., 2002). Poststructuralist challenges to this approach are epitomized in such influential works as Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (1967; trans. 1978), and Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (1971; 2nd ed., 1983). Poststructuralism is discussed in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (1982; 25th anniversary ed., 2007); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991); John McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (1991); and *Beyond Structuralism: The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Reading*, ed. Wendell V. Harris (1996). A figure who greatly influenced both structuralism and poststructuralism is Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies* (1957; trans. 1972, new trans. 2012) and *S/Z* (1970; trans. 1974). Among other influential contributions to literary theory are the psychoanalytic approach in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973; 2nd ed., 1997), and the reader-response approach in Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980). For a retrospect on these decades, see Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (2003).

Influenced by these theoretical currents but not restricted to them, modern feminist literary criticism was fashioned by such works as Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (1975); Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1976; new ed., 1986); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977; expanded ed., 1999); and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). Subsequent

studies include Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1982); Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1977; trans. 1985); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987; new ed., 2006); Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (1987); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (3 vols., 1988–94); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; 2nd ed., 1999); and the critical views sampled in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (1985); *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Mary Eagleton (1986; 3rd ed., 2011); and *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (1991; rev. in 2009 as *Feminisms Redux: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*); *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (1994); *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*, ed. Ellen Rooney (2006); and *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism: A Norton Reader*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2007).

Just as feminist critics used poststructuralist and psychoanalytic methods to place literature in conversation with gender theory, a new school emerged placing literature in conversation with critical race theory. Comprehensive introductions include *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement,* ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (1995); and Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (3rd ed., 2017); and *The Routledge Companion to Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Stephen M. Caliendo and Charlton D. McIlwain (2nd ed., 2021). For an important precursor in cultural studies, see Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (1978; 2nd ed., 2013). Seminal works include Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1988; 25th anniversary ed., 2014); Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (1993; 25th anniversary ed., 2017); Gene Andrew Jarrett, *Representing the*

Race: A New Political History of African American Literature (2011); Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (2017); and Saidiya V. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (2019). Other important works include Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (2008; rpt. 2017); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014); Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016); and Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (2018). Helpful anthologies and collections of essays have emerged in recent decades, such as *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature,* ed. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (1997), and also their *Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (2001); *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Vincent Carretta (1996; updated 2003); *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature,* ed. Hana Wirth-Nesher and Michael P. Kramer (2003); *A Companion to African American Literature*, ed. Gene Andrew Jarrett (2010); *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature,* ed. Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell (2011); *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature,* ed. Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio (2013); *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature*, ed. Rachel C. Lee (2014); *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim (2015); and *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature*, *1945–2010*, ed. Deirdre Osborne (2016).

Gay literature and queer studies are represented in collections including *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (1991); *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David Halperin (1993); *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature: Readings from Western Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Byrne R. S. Fone (1998); *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, ed. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen

(2014); and *The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature*, ed. Jodie Medd (2015), and by such books as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985; 30th anniversary ed., 2015) and *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990; updated ed., 2008); Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (1989); Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (1993); Leo Bersani, *Homos* (1995); Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (1998); David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (2002); Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007); and Brian Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-garde: Modernism, Sexuality, and Queer Ekphrasis* (2016).

New Historicism is represented in Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990; new ed., 2007); *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (1993); *The New Historicism Reader*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (1994); and Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (2000). The related social and historical dimension of texts is discussed in Jerome McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983), and *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D. C. Greetham (1995). Characteristic of New Historicism is an expansion of the field of literary interpretation still further in cultural studies; for a broad sampling of the range of interests, see *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (1992); *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (1995); and *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (3rd ed., 2007).

This expansion of the field is similarly reflected in postcolonial studies: see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (cited above) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; trans. 1963, 60th anniversary ed. 2021); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha

(1990); *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2nd ed., 2006); and such influential books as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989; 2nd ed., 2002); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; new ed., 2004); Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995; 2nd ed., 2005); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000; new ed., 2008); and Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001; anniversary ed., 2016). Useful collections include *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, ed. Ato Quayson (2 vols., 2011–12); *The Cambridge Companion to the Postcolonial Novel*, ed. Ato Quayson (2016); and *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*, ed. Jahan Ramazani (2017).

In the wake of the theory revolution, critics have focused on a wide array of topics, which can be only briefly surveyed here. One current of work, focusing on the history of emotion, is represented in Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002); Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (2005); *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (2010); and Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject* (2015). A somewhat related current, examining the special role of traumatic memory in literature, is exemplified in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (1995), and Dominic LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001; new ed., 2014). Work on the literary implications of cognitive science may be glimpsed in *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*, ed. Lisa Zunshine (2010). Interest in quantitative approaches to literature was sparked by Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (2005). For the field of digital humanities, see Moretti, *Distant Reading* (2013); *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader*, ed. Melissa Terras, Julianne Nyhan, and Edward Vanhoutte (2013); and *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (2016). For ecocriticism, or studies of literature and the environment, see *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary*

Ecology, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996); *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (1998); Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (2000); Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005); Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010); Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011); *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. Greg Garrard (2014); and *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geologic Times*, ed. Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor (2017). Related are the fields of animal studies and posthumanism, whose key works include Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991; trans. 1993); Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (2000); Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003) and *What Is Posthumanism?* (2009); Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2006; trans. 2008); Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012); *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*, ed. Aaron Gross and Anne Vallely (2012); and *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable*, ed. John Sorenson (2014). The relationship between literature and law is central to such works as *Interpreting Law and Literature: A Hermeneutic Reader*, ed. Sanford Levinson and Steven Mailloux (1988); *Law's Stories: Narrative and Rhetoric in the Law*, ed. Peter Brooks and Paul Gewirtz (1996); *Literature and Legal Problem Solving: Law and Literature as Ethical Discourse*, ed. Paul J. Heald (1998); and *New Directions in Law and Literature*, ed. Elizabeth S. Anker and Bernadette Meyler (2017). Ethical questions in literature have been usefully explored by, among others, Geoffrey Galt Harpham in *Getting It Right: Language, Literature, and Ethics* (1992) and Derek Attridge in *The Singularity of Literature* (2004). Finally, some approaches to literature, such as formalism and literary biography, that seemed superseded in the theoretical ferment of the late twentieth century have had a resurgence. A renewed interest in form is evident in Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*

(2002); *Reading for Form*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown (2006); and Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (2015). Interest in the history of the book was spearheaded by D. F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1986), Jerome J. McGann's *The Textual Condition* (1991), and Roger Chartier's *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1992; trans. 1994). See also *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (1996); *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (7 vols., 1999–2019); *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (2nd ed., 2006); and *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Leslie Howsam (2015). For studies in new media and digital or electronic literature, see N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008); Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing* (2016); and Jessica Pressman's *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (2020).

Anthologies representing a range of recent approaches include *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. David Lodge with Nigel Wood (2nd ed., 2000); *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (4th ed., 1998); and *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (cited above).

Literary Terminology*

Using simple technical terms can sharpen our understanding and streamline our discussion of literary works. Some terms, such as the ones in section A, below, help us address the internal style, structure, form, and kind of works. Other terms, such as those in section B, provide insight into the material forms in which literary works have been produced.

In analyzing what they called "rhetoric," ancient Greek and Roman writers determined the elements of what we call "style" and "structure." Most of our literary terms are derived, via medieval and Renaissance intermediaries, from the Greek and Latin sources. In the definitions that follow, the etymology, or root, of the word is given when it helps illuminate the word's current usage.

Many of the examples are drawn from texts in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature.*

Words **boldfaced** within definitions are themselves defined in this appendix. Some terms are defined within definitions; such words are *italicized.*

A. Terms of Style, Structure, Form, and Kind

accent (synonym "stress"): a term of **rhythm.** The special force devoted to the voicing of one syllable in a word over others. In the noun "accent," for example, the accent, or stress, is on the first syllable.

act: the major subdivision of a play, usually divided into **scenes.**

aesthetics (from Greek, "to feel, apprehend by the senses"): the philosophy of artistic meaning as a distinct mode of apprehending

untranslatable truth, defined as an alternative to rational enquiry, which is purely abstract. Developed in the late eighteenth century by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant especially.

Alexandrine: a term of **meter.** In French verse a line of twelve syllables, and, by analogy, in English verse a line of six stresses. See **hexameter.**

a llegory (Greek "saying otherwise"): saying one thing (the "vehicle" of the allegory) and meaning another (the allegory's "tenor"). Allegories may be momentary aspects of a work, as in **metaphor** ("John is a lion"), or, through extended metaphor, may constitute the basis of narrative, as in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: this second meaning is the dominant one. See also **symbol** and **type.** Allegory is one of the most significant **figures of thought.**

a lliteration (from Latin "litera," alphabetic letter): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of an initial consonant sound or consonant cluster in consecutive or closely positioned words. This pattern is often an inseparable part of the meter in Germanic languages, where the tonic, or accented **syllable,** is usually the first syllable. Thus all Old English poetry and some varieties of Middle English poetry use alliteration as part of their basic metrical practice. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 1: "Once the siege and assault of Troy had ceased" (see vol. A, p. 415). Otherwise used for local effects; Stevie Smith, "Pretty," lines 4–5: "And in the pretty pool the pike stalks / He stalks his prey . . ." (see vol. F, p. 589).

allusion: Literary allusion is a passing but illuminating reference within a literary text to another, well-known text (often biblical or **classical**). Topical allusions are also, of course, common in certain modes, especially **satire.**

anagnorisis (Greek "recognition"): the moment of **protagonist's** recognition in a narrative, which is also often the moment of moral understanding.

anapest: a term of **rhythm.** A three-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of two unstressed (uu) syllables followed by one stressed (/). Thus, for example, "Illinois."

anaphora (Greek "carrying back"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of words or groups of words at the beginning of consecutive sentences, clauses, or phrases. Blake, "London," lines 5–8: "In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban . . ." (see vol. D, p. 137); Louise Bennett, "Jamaica Oman," lines 17–20: "Some backa man a push, some side-a / Man a hole him han, / Some a lick sense eena him head, / Some a guide him pon him plan!" (see vol. F, p. 724).

a nimal fable: a **genre.** A short narrative of speaking animals, followed by moralizing comment, written in a low style and gathered into a collection. Robert Henryson, "The Cock and the Jasper" (see vol. A, p. 679).

a ntithesis (Greek "placing against"): a **figure of thought.** The juxtaposition of opposed terms in clauses or sentences that are next to or near each other. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.777–80: "They but now who seemed / In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons / Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room / Throng numberless" (see vol. B, p. 1448).

a postrophe (from Greek "turning away"): a **figure of thought.** An address, often to an absent person, a force, or a quality. For example, a poet makes an apostrophe to a Muse when invoking her for inspiration.

apposition: a term of **syntax.** The repetition of elements serving an identical grammatical function in one sentence. The effect of this repetition is to arrest the flow of the sentence, but in doing so to add extra semantic nuance to repeated elements. This is an especially important feature of Old English poetic style. See, for example, Caedmon's *Hymn* (vol. A, p. 31), where the phrases

"heaven-kingdom's Guardian," "the Measurer's might," "his mind-plans," and "the work of the Glory-Father" each serve an identical syntactic function as the direct objects of "praise."

a ssonance (Latin "sounding to"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of identical or near identical stressed vowel sounds in words whose final consonants differ, producing half-rhyme. Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott," line 100: "His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed" (see vol. E, p. 210).

a ubade (originally from Spanish "alba," dawn): a **genre.** A lover's dawn song or lyric bewailing the arrival of the day and the necessary separation of the lovers; Donne, "The Sun Rising" (see vol. B, p. 888). Larkin recasts the genre in "Aubade" (see vol. F, p. 795).

a utobiography (Greek "self-life writing"): a **genre.** A narrative of a life written by the subject; Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (see vol. D, p. 391). There are subgenres, such as the spiritual autobiography, narrating the author's path to conversion and subsequent spiritual trials, as in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding.*

ballad stanza: a **verse form.** Usually a **quatrain** in alternating **iambic tetrameter** and **iambic trimeter** lines, rhyming abcb. See "Sir Patrick Spens" (vol. D, p. 38); Louise Bennett's poems (vol. F, pp. 719–24); Eliot, "Sweeney among the Nightingales" (vol. F, p. 501); Larkin, "This Be The Verse" (vol. F, p. 795).

ballade: a **verse form.** A form consisting usually of three stanzas followed by a four-line envoi (French, "send off"). The last line of the first stanza establishes a **refrain,** which is repeated, or subtly varied, as the last line of each stanza. The form was derived from French medieval poetry; English poets, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries especially, used it with varying stanza forms. Chaucer, "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse" (see vol. A, p. 575).

bathos (Greek "depth"): a **figure of thought.** A sudden and sometimes ridiculous descent of tone; Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* 3.157–58: "Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast, / When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last" (see vol. C, p. 549).

beast epic: a **genre.** A continuous, unmoralized narrative, in prose or verse, relating the victories of the wholly unscrupulous but brilliant strategist Reynard the Fox over all adversaries. Chaucer arouses, only to deflate, expectations of the genre in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (see vol. A, p. 556).

biography (Greek "life-writing"): a **genre.** A life as the subject of an extended narrative.

blank verse: a **verse form.** Unrhymed **iambic pentameter** lines. Blank verse has no stanzas, but is broken up into uneven units (verse paragraphs) determined by sense rather than form. First devised in English by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in his translation of two books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, this very flexible verse type became the standard form for dramatic poetry in the seventeenth century, as in most of Shakespeare's plays. Milton and Wordsworth, among many others, also used it to create an English equivalent to **classical epic.**

blazon: strictly, a heraldic shield; in rhetorical usage, a **topos** whereby the individual elements of a beloved's face and body are singled out for **hyperbolic** admiration. Spenser, *Epithalamion*, lines 167–84 (see vol. B, p. 459). For an inversion of the **topos,** see Shakespeare, Sonnet 130 (vol. B, p. 637).

burlesque (French and Italian "mocking"): a work that adopts the **conventions** of a genre with the aim less of comically mocking the genre than of satirically mocking the society so represented (see **satire**). Thus Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (see vol. C, p. 537) does not mock **classical epic** so much as contemporary mores.

caesura (Latin "cut") (plural "caesurae"): a term of **meter.** A pause or breathing space within a line of verse, generally occurring between syntactic units; Louise Bennett, "Colonization in Reverse," lines 5–8: "By de hundred, by de tousan, / From country an from town, / By de ship-load, by de plane-load, / Jamaica is Englan boun" (see vol. F, p. 722), where the caesurae occur in lines 5 and 7.

canon (Greek "rule"): the group of texts regarded as worthy of special respect or attention by a given institution. Also, the group of texts regarded as definitely having been written by a certain author.

catastrophe (Greek "overturning"): the decisive turn in **tragedy** by which the plot is resolved and, usually, the **protagonist** dies.

catharsis (Greek "cleansing"): According to Aristotle, the effect of **tragedy** on its audience, through their experience of pity and terror, was a kind of spiritual cleansing, or catharsis.

character (Greek "stamp, impression"): a person, personified animal, or other figure represented in a literary work, especially in narrative and drama. The more a character seems to generate the action of a narrative, and the less he or she seems merely to serve a preordained narrative pattern, the "fuller," or more "rounded," a character is said to be. A "stock" character, common particularly in many comic genres, will perform a predictable function in different works of a given genre.

chiasmus (Greek "crosswise"): a **figure of speech.** The inversion of an already established sequence. This can involve verbal echoes: Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard," line 104, "The crime was common, common be the pain" (see vol. C, p. 560); or it can be purely a matter of syntactic inversion: Pope, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, line 8: "They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide" (see vol. C, p. 575).

classical, classicism, classic: Each term can be widely applied, but in English literary discourse, "classical" primarily describes the

works of either Greek or Roman antiquity. "Classicism" denotes the practice of art forms inspired by classical antiquity, in particular the observance of rhetorical norms of **decorum** and balance, as opposed to following the dictates of untutored inspiration, as in Romanticism. "Classic" denotes an especially famous work within a given **canon.**

climax (Greek "ladder"): a moment of great intensity and structural change, especially in drama. Also a **figure of speech** whereby a sequence of verbally linked clauses is made, in which each successive clause is of greater consequence than its predecessor. Bacon, *Of Studies*: "Studies serve for pastimes, for ornaments, and for abilities. Their chief use for pastimes is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in judgement" (see vol. B, pp. 1167–68).

comedy: a **genre.** A term primarily applied to drama, and derived from ancient drama, in opposition to **tragedy.** Comedy deals with humorously confusing, sometimes ridiculous situations in which the ending is, nevertheless, happy. A comedy often ends in one or more marriages.

comic mode: Many genres (for example, **romance, fabliau, comedy**) involve a happy ending in which justice is done, the ravages of time are arrested, and that which is lost is found. Such genres participate in a comic mode.

connotation: To understand connotation, we need to understand **denotation.** While many words can denote the same concept—that is, have the same basic meaning—those words can evoke different associations, or connotations. Contrast, for example, the clinical-sounding term "depression" and the more colorful, musical, even poetic phrase "the blues."

consonance (Latin "sounding with"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of final consonants in words or stressed syllables whose

vowel sounds are different. Herbert, "Easter," line 13: "Consort, both heart and lute . . ." (see vol. B, p. 1183).

convention: a repeatedly recurring feature (in either form or content) of works, occurring in combination with other recurring formal features, which constitutes a convention of a particular genre.

couplet: a **verse form.** In English verse two consecutive, rhyming lines usually containing the same number of stresses. Chaucer first introduced the **iambic pentameter** couplet into English (*Canterbury Tales*); the form was later used in many types of writing, including drama; imitations and translations of **classical epic** (thus *heroic couplet*); essays; and **satire** (see Dryden and Pope). The *distich* (Greek "two lines") is a couplet usually making complete sense; Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, lines 5–6: "Read it fair queen, though it defective be, / Your excellence can grace both it and me" (see vol. B, p. 925).

dactyl (Greek "finger," because of the finger's three joints): a term of **rhythm.** A three-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of one stressed followed by two unstressed syllables. Thus, for example, "Oregon."

decorum (Latin "that which is fitting"): a rhetorical principle whereby each formal aspect of a work should be in keeping with its subject matter and/or audience.

deixis (Greek "pointing"): relevant to **point of view.** Every work has, implicitly or explicitly, a "here" and a "now" from which it is narrated. Words that refer to or imply this point from which the voice of the work is projected (such as "here," "there," "this," "that," "now," "then") are examples of deixis, or "deictics." This technique is especially important in drama, where it is used to create a sense of the events happening as the spectator witnesses them.

denotation: A word has a basic, "prosaic" (factual) meaning prior to the associations it connotes (see **connotation**). The word

"steed," for example, might call to mind a horse fitted with battle gear, to be ridden by a warrior, but its denotation is simply "horse."

denouement (French "unknotting"): the point at which a narrative can be resolved and so ended.

dialogue (Greek "conversation"): a **genre.** Dialogue is a feature of many genres, especially in both the **novel** and drama. As a genre itself, dialogue is used in philosophical traditions especially (most famously in Plato's *Dialogues*), as the representation of a conversation in which a philosophical question is pursued among various speakers.

diction, or **"lexis"** (from, respectively, Latin *dictio* and Greek *lexis*, each meaning "word"): the actual words used in any utterance—speech, writing, and, for our purposes here, literary works. The choice of words contributes significantly to the style of a given work.

didactic mode (Greek "teaching mode"): **Genres** in a didactic mode are designed to instruct or teach, sometimes explicitly (for example, sermons, philosophical **discourses, georgic**), and sometimes through the medium of fiction (for example, **animal fable, parable**).

diegesis (Greek for "narration"): a term that simply means "narration," but is used in literary criticism to distinguish one kind of story from another. In a *mimetic* story, the events are played out before us (see **mimesis**), whereas in diegesis someone recounts the story to us. Drama is for the most part *mimetic*, whereas the novel is for the most part diegetic. In novels the narrator is not, usually, part of the action of the narrative; s/he is therefore extradiegetic.

dimeter (Greek "two measure"): a term of **meter.** A two-stress line, rarely used as the meter of whole poems, though used with great frequency in single poems by Skelton, for example, "The Tunning of Elinour Rumming" (see vol. B, p. 41). Otherwise used for

single lines, as in Herbert, "Discipline," line 3: "O my God" (see vol. B, p. 1197).

discourse (Latin "running to and fro"): broadly, any nonfictional speech or writing; as a more specific genre, a philosophical meditation on a set theme.

dramatic irony: a feature of narrative and drama, whereby the audience knows that the outcome of an action will be the opposite of that intended by a **character.**

dramatic monologue (Greek "single speaking"): a **genre.** A poem in which the voice of a historical or fictional **character** speaks, unmediated by any narrator, to an implied though silent audience. See Tennyson, "Ulysses" (vol. E, p. 217); Browning, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb" (vol. E, p. 416); Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (vol. F, p. 498); Carol Ann Duffy, "Medusa" and "Mrs Lazarus" (vol. F).

ecphrasis (Greek "speaking out"): a **topos** whereby a work of visual art is represented in a literary work. Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts" (see vol. F, p. 677).

elegy: a **genre.** In **classical** literature elegy was a form written in elegiac **couplets** (a **hexameter** followed by a **pentameter**) devoted to many possible topics. In Ovidian elegy a lover meditates on the trials of erotic desire (for example, Ovid's *Amores*). The **sonnet** sequences of both Sidney and Shakespeare exploit this genre, and, while it was still practiced in classical tradition by Donne ("On His Mistress" [see vol. B, p. 903]), by the later seventeenth century the term came to denote the poetry of loss, especially through the death of a loved person. See Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (vol. E, p. 231); Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (see vol. F, p. 677); Heaney, "Clearances" (vol. F, p. 970).

emblem (Greek "an insertion"): a **figure of thought.** A picture allegorically expressing a moral, or a verbal picture open to such

interpretation.

end-stopping: the placement of a complete syntactic unit within a complete poetic line, fulfilling the metrical pattern; Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," line 42: "Earth, receive an honoured guest" (see vol. F, p. 679). Compare **enjambment.**

enjambment (French "striding," encroaching): The opposite of **end-stopping,** enjambment occurs when the syntactic unit does not end with the end of the poetic line and the fulfillment of the metrical pattern. When the sense of the line overflows its meter and, therefore, the line break, we have enjambment; Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," lines 44–45: "Let the Irish vessel lie / Emptied of its poetry" (see vol. F, p. 679).

epic (synonym, *heroic poetry*): a **genre.** An extended narrative poem celebrating martial heroes, invoking divine inspiration, beginning in medias res (see **order**), written in a high style (including the deployment of **epic similes;** on high style, see **register**), and divided into long narrative sequences. Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* were the prime models for English writers of epic verse. Thus Milton, *Paradise Lost* (see vol. B, p. 1427); Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (see vol. D, p. 391); and Walcott, *Omeros* (see vol. F, p. 808). With its precise repertoire of stylistic resources, epic lent itself easily to **parodic** and **burlesque** forms, known as **mock epic;** thus Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* (see vol. C, p. 537).

epigram: a **genre.** A short, pithy poem wittily expressed, often with wounding intent. See Jonson, *Epigrams* (see vol. B, p. 1049).

epigraph (Greek "inscription"): a **genre.** Any formal statement inscribed on stone; also the brief formulation on a book's title page, or a quotation at the beginning of a poem, introducing the work's themes in the most compressed form possible.

epistle (Latin "letter"): a **genre.** The letter can be shaped as a literary form, involving an intimate address often between equals.

The *Epistles* of Horace provided a model for English writers from the sixteenth century. Thus Wyatt, "Mine Own John Poins" (see vol. B, p. 131), or Leapor, "An Epistle to a Lady" (vol. C, p. 771). Letters can be shaped to form the matter of an extended fiction, as the eighteenth-century epistolary **novel** (for example, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*).

epitaph: a **genre.** A pithy formulation to be inscribed on a funeral monument. Thus Ralegh, "The Author's Epitaph, Made by Himself" (see vol. B, p. 479).

epithalamion (Greek "concerning the bridal chamber"): a **genre.** A wedding poem, celebrating the marriage and wishing the couple good fortune. Thus Spenser, *Epithalamion* (see vol. B, p. 455).

epyllion (plural "epyllia") (Greek: "little epic"): a **genre.** A relatively short poem in the meter of epic poetry. See, for example, Marlowe, *Hero and Leander* (vol. B, p. 562).

essay (French "trial, attempt"): a **genre.** An informal philosophical meditation, usually in prose and sometimes in verse. The journalistic periodical essay was developed in the early eighteenth century. Thus Addison and Steele, periodical essays (see vol. C, p. 281); Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (see vol. C, p. 521).

euphemism (Greek "sweet saying"): a **figure of thought.** The figure by which something distasteful is described in alternative, less repugnant terms (for example, "he passed away").

exegesis (Greek "leading out"): interpretation, traditionally of the biblical text, but, by transference, of any text.

exemplum (Latin "example"): an example inserted into a usually nonfictional writing (for example, sermon or **essay**) to give extra force to an abstract thesis.

fabliau (French "little story," plural *fabliaux*): a **genre.** A short, funny, often bawdy narrative in low style (see **register**) imitated and developed from French models, most subtly by Chaucer; see *The Miller's Prologue and Tale* (vol. A, p. 494).

farce (French "stuffing"): a **genre.** A play designed to provoke laughter through the often humiliating antics of stock **characters.** Congreve's *The Way of the World* (see vol. C, p. 221) draws on this tradition.

figures of speech: Literary language often employs patterns perceptible to the eye and/or to the ear. Such patterns are called "figures of speech"; in classical rhetoric they were called "schemes" (from Greek *schema*, meaning "form, figure").

figures of thought: Language can also be patterned conceptually, even outside the rules that normally govern it. Literary language in particular exploits this licensed linguistic irregularity. Synonyms for figures of thought are "trope" (Greek "twisting," referring to the irregularity of use) and "conceit" (Latin "concept," referring to the fact that these figures are perceptible only to the mind). Be careful not to confuse **trope** with **topos** (a common error).

first-person narration: relevant to **point of view,** a narrative in which the voice narrating refers to itself with forms of the first-person pronoun ("I," "me," "my," etc., or possibly "we," "us," "our"), and in which the narrative is determined by the limitations of that voice. Thus Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein.*

frame narrative: Some narratives, particularly collections of narratives, involve a frame narrative that explains the genesis of, and/or gives a perspective on, the main narrative or narratives to follow. Thus Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*; Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*; or Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.

free indirect style: relevant to **point of view,** a narratorial voice that manages, without explicit reference, to imply, and often

implicitly to comment on, the voice of a **character** in the narrative itself. Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," where the voice, although strictly that of the adult narrator, manages to convey the child's manner of perception: "—I begin: the first memory. This was of red and purple flowers on a black background—my mother's dress."

genre and mode: The **style,** structure, and, often, length of a work, when coupled with a certain subject matter, raise expectations that a literary work conforms to a certain **genre** (French "kind"). Good writers might upset these expectations, but they remain aware of the expectations and thwart them purposefully. Works in different genres may nevertheless participate in the same **mode,** a broader category designating the fundamental perspectives governing various genres of writing. For mode, see **tragic, comic, satiric,** and **didactic modes.** Genres are fluid, sometimes very fluid (for example, the **novel**); the word "usually" should be added to almost every account of the characteristics of a given genre!

georgic (Greek "farming"): a **genre.** Virgil's *Georgics* treat agricultural and occasionally scientific subjects, giving instructions on the proper management of farms. Unlike **pastoral,** which treats the countryside as a place of recreational idleness among shepherds, the georgic treats it as a place of productive labor.

hermeneutics (from the Greek god Hermes, messenger between the gods and humankind): the science of interpretation, first formulated as such by the German philosophical theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher in the early nineteenth century.

heroic poetry: see **epic.**

hexameter (Greek "six measure"): a term of **meter.** The hexameter line (a six-stress line) is the meter of **classical** Latin **epic;** while not imitated in that form for epic verse in English, some instances of the hexameter exist. See, for example, the last line of a

Spenserian stanza, *Faerie Queene* 1.1.2: "O help thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong" (vol. B, p. 269), or Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," line 1: "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree" (vol. F, p. 221).

homily (Greek "discourse"): a **genre.** A sermon, to be preached in church; *Book of Homilies* (see vol. B, p. 164). Writers of literary fiction sometimes exploit the homily, or sermon, as in Chaucer, *The Pardoner's Tale* (see vol. A, p. 540).

homophone (Greek "same sound"): a **figure of speech.** A word that sounds identical to another word but has a different meaning ("bear" / "bare").

hyperbaton (Greek "overstepping"): a term of **syntax.** The rearrangement, or inversion, of the expected word order in a sentence or clause. Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," line 38: "If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise" (vol. C, p. 899). Poets can suspend the expected syntax over many lines, as in the first sentences of the *Canterbury Tales* (vol. A, p. 474) and of *Paradise Lost* (vol. B, p. 1430).

hyperbole (Greek "throwing over"): a **figure of thought.** Overstatement, exaggeration; Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress," lines 11–12: "My vegetable love should grow / Vaster than empires, and more slow" (see vol. B, p. 1273); Auden, "As I Walked Out One Evening," lines 9–12: " 'I'll love you, dear, I'll love you / Till China and Africa meet / And the river jumps over the mountain / And the salmon sing in the street" (see vol. F, p. 675).

hypermetrical (adj.; Greek "over measured"): a term of **meter;** the word describes a breaking of the expected metrical pattern by at least one extra syllable.

hypotaxis, or **subordination** (respectively Greek and Latin "ordering under"): a term of **syntax.** The subordination, by the use of subordinate clauses, of different elements of a sentence to a

single main verb. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 9.513–15: "As when a ship by skillful steersman wrought / Nigh river's mouth or foreland, where the wind / Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her sail; So varied he" (vol. B, p. 1588). The contrary principle to **parataxis.**

iamb: a term of **rhythm.** The basic foot of English verse; two syllables following the rhythmic pattern of unstressed followed by stressed and producing a rising effect. Thus, for example, "Vermont."

imitation: the practice whereby writers strive ideally to reproduce and yet renew the **conventions** of an older form, often derived from **classical** civilization. Such a practice will be praised in periods of classicism (for example, the eighteenth century) and repudiated in periods dominated by a model of inspiration (for example, Romanticism).

irony (Greek "dissimulation"): a **figure of thought.** In broad usage, irony designates the result of inconsistency between a statement and a context that undermines the statement. "It's a beautiful day" is unironic if it's a beautiful day; if, however, the weather is terrible, then the inconsistency between statement and context is ironic. The effect is often amusing; the need to be ironic is sometimes produced by censorship of one kind or another. Strictly, irony is a subset of allegory: whereas allegory says one thing and means another, irony says one thing and means its opposite. For an extended example of irony, see Swift's "Modest Proposal" (vol. C, p. 511). See also **dramatic irony.**

journal (French "daily"): a **genre.** A diary, or daily record of ephemeral experience, whose perspectives are concentrated on, and limited by, the experiences of single days. Thus Pepys, *Diary* (see vol. C, p. 74).

lai: a **genre.** A short narrative, often characterized by images of great intensity; a French term, and a form practiced by Marie de France (see vol. A, p. 159).

legend (Latin "requiring to be read"): a **genre.** A narrative of a celebrated, possibly historical, but mortal **protagonist.** To be distinguished from **myth.** Thus the "Arthurian legend" but the "myth of Proserpine."

lexical set: Words that habitually recur together (for example, January, February, March, etc.; or red, white, and blue) form a lexical set.

litotes (from Greek "smooth"): a **figure of thought.** Strictly, understatement by denying the contrary; More, *Utopia*: "differences of no slight import" (see vol. B, p. 49). More loosely, understatement; Stevie Smith, "Sunt Leones," lines 11–12: "And if the Christians felt a little blue— / Well people being eaten often do" (see vol. F, p. 585).

lullaby: a **genre.** A bedtime, sleep-inducing song for children, in simple and regular meter. Adapted by Auden, "Lullaby" (see vol. F, p. 671).

lyric (from Greek "lyre"): Initially meaning a song, "lyric" refers to a short poetic form, without restriction of meter, in which the expression of personal emotion, often by a voice in the first person, is given primacy over narrative sequence. Thus "The Wife's Lament" (see vol. A, p. 126); Yeats, "The Wild Swans at Coole" (see vol. F, p. 229).

masque: a **genre.** Costly entertainments of the Stuart court, involving dance, song, speech, and elaborate stage effects, in which courtiers themselves participated.

metaphor (Greek "carrying across," etymologically parallel to Latin "translation"): One of the most significant **figures of thought,** metaphor designates identification or implicit identification of one thing with another with which it is not literally identifiable. Blake, "London," lines 11–12: "And the hapless Soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls" (see vol. D, p. 137).

meter: Verse (from Latin *versus*, turned) is distinguished from prose (from Latin *prorsus*, "straightforward") as a more compressed form of expression, shaped by metrical norms. **Meter** (Greek "measure") refers to the regularly recurring sound pattern of verse lines. The means of producing sound patterns across lines differ in different poetic traditions. Verse may be **quantitative,** or determined by the quantities of syllables (set patterns of long and short syllables), as in Latin and Greek poetry. It may be **syllabic,** determined by fixed numbers of syllables in the line, as in the verse of Romance languages (for example, French and Italian). It may be **accentual,** determined by the number of accents, or stresses in the line, with variable numbers of syllables, as in Old English and some varieties of Middle English alliterative verse. Or it may be **accentual-syllabic,** determined by the numbers of accents, but possessing a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, so as to produce regular numbers of syllables per line. Since Chaucer, English verse has worked primarily within the many possibilities of accentual-syllabic meter. The unit of meter is the **foot.** In English verse the number of feet per line corresponds to the number of accents in a line. For the types and examples of different meters, see **monometer, dimeter, trimester, tetrameter, pentameter,** and **hexameter.** In the definitions below, "u" designates one unstressed syllable, and "/" one stressed syllable.

metonymy (Greek "change of name"): one of the most significant **figures of thought.** Using a word to **denote** another concept or other concepts, by virtue of habitual association. Thus "The Press," designating printed news media. Fictional names often work by associations of this kind. Closely related to **synecdoche.**

mimesis (Greek for "imitation"): A central function of literature and drama has been to provide a plausible imitation of the reality of the world beyond the literary work; mimesis is the representation and imitation of what is taken to be reality.

mise-en-abyme (French for "cast into the abyss"): Some works of art represent themselves in themselves; if they do so effectively, the represented artifact also represents itself, and so ad infinitum. The effect achieved is called "*mise-en-abyme.*" Hoccleve's *Complaint*, for example, represents a depressed man reading about a depressed man. This sequence threatens to become a *mise-en-abyme.*

monometer (Greek "one measure"): a term of **meter.** An entire line with just one stress; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 15, "most (u) grand (/)" (see vol. A, p. 415).

myth: a **genre.** The narrative of **protagonists** with, or subject to, superhuman powers. A myth expresses some profound foundational truth, often by accounting for the origin of natural phenomena. To be distinguished from **legend.** Thus the "Arthurian legend" but the "myth of Proserpine."

novel: an extremely flexible **genre** in both form and subject matter. Usually in prose, giving high priority to narration of events, with a certain expectation of length, novels are preponderantly rooted in a specific, and often complex, social world; sensitive to the realities of material life; and often focused on one **character** or a small circle of central characters. By contrast with chivalric **romance** (the main European narrative genre prior to the novel), novels tend to eschew the marvelous in favor of a recognizable social world and credible action. The novel's openness allows it to participate in all modes, and to be co-opted for a huge variety of subgenres. In English literature the novel dates from the late seventeenth century and has been astonishingly successful in appealing to a huge readership, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The English and Irish tradition of the novel includes, for example, Fielding, Austen, the Brontë sisters, Dickens, George Eliot, Conrad, Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, to name but a few very great exponents of the genre.

novella: a **genre.** A short **novel,** often characterized by imagistic intensity. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (see vol. F, p. 70).

occupatio (Latin "taking possession"): a **figure of thought.** Denying that one will discuss a subject while actually discussing it; also known as "praeteritio" (Latin "passing by"). See Chaucer, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, lines 414–31 (see vol. A, p. 565).

ode (Greek "song"): a **genre.** A **lyric** poem in elevated, or high style (see **register**), often addressed to a natural force, a person, or an abstract quality. The Pindaric ode in English is made up of **stanzas** of unequal length, while the Horatian ode has stanzas of equal length. For examples of both types, see, respectively, Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (vol. D, p. 381); and Marvell, "An Horatian Ode" (vol. B, p. 1282), or Keats, "Ode on Melancholy" (vol. D, p. 973). For a fuller discussion, see the headnote to Jonson's "Ode on Cary and Morison" (vol. B, pp. 1058–59).

omniscient narrator (Latin "all-knowing narrator"): relevant to **point of view.** A narrator who, in the fiction of the narrative, has complete access to both the deeds and the thoughts of all **characters** in the narrative. Thus Thomas Hardy, "On the Western Circuit" (see vol. F, p. 36).

onomatopoeia (Greek "name making"): a **figure of speech.** Verbal sounds that imitate and evoke the sounds they denotate. Hopkins, "Binsey Poplars," lines 10–12 (about some felled trees): "O if we but knew what we do / When we delve [dig] or hew— / Hack and rack the growing green!" (see vol. E, p. 726).

order: A story may be told in different narrative orders. A narrator might use the sequence of events as they happened, and thereby follow what **classical** rhetoricians called the *natural order*; alternatively, the narrator might reorder the sequence of events, beginning the narration either in the middle or at the end of the

sequence of events, thereby following an *artificial order.* If a narrator begins in the middle of events, he or she is said to begin *in medias res* (Latin "in the middle of the matter"). For a brief discussion of these concepts, see Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, "A Letter of the Authors" (vol. B, p. 265). Modern narratology makes a related distinction, between *histoire* (French "story") for the natural order that readers mentally reconstruct, and *discours* (French, here "narration") for the narrative as presented. See also **plot** and **story.**

ottava rima: a **verse form.** An eight-line stanza form, rhyming abababcc, using **iambic pentameter;** Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" (see vol. F, p. 234). Derived from the Italian poet Boccaccio, an eight-line stanza was used by fifteenth-century English poets for inset passages (for example, Christ's speech from the Cross in Lydgate's *Testament*, lines 754–897). The form in this rhyme scheme was used in English poetry for long narrative by, for example, Byron (*Don Juan*; see vol. D, p. 690).

oxymoron (Greek "sharp blunt"): a **figure of thought.** The conjunction of normally incompatible terms; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.63: "darkness visible" (see vol. B, p. 1431).

panegyric: a **genre.** Demonstrative, or epideictic (Greek "showing"), rhetoric was a branch of **classical** rhetoric. Its own two main branches were the rhetoric of praise on the one hand and of vituperation on the other. Panegyric, or eulogy (Greek "sweet speaking"), or encomium (plural *encomia*), is the term used to describe the speeches or writings of praise.

parable: a **genre.** A simple story designed to provoke, and often accompanied by, **allegorical** interpretation, most famously by Christ as reported in the Gospels.

paradox (Greek "contrary to received opinion"): a **figure of thought.** An apparent contradiction that requires thought to reveal

an inner consistency. Chaucer, "Troilus's Song," line 12: "O sweete harm so quainte" (see vol. A, p. 574).

parataxis, or **coordination** (respectively Greek and Latin "ordering beside"): a term of **syntax.** The coordination, by the use of coordinating conjunctions, of different main clauses in a single sentence. Malory, *Morte Darthur*: "So Sir Lancelot departed and took his sword under his arm, and so he walked in his mantel, that noble knight, and put himself in great jeopardy" (see vol. A, p. 607). The opposite principle to **hypotaxis.**

parody: a work that uses the **conventions** of a particular genre with the aim of comically mocking a **topos,** a genre, or a particular exponent of a genre. Shakespeare parodies the topos of **blazon** in Sonnet 130 (see vol. B, p. 637).

pastoral (from Latin *pastor*, "shepherd"): a **genre.** Pastoral is set among shepherds, making often refined **allusion** to other apparently unconnected subjects (sometimes politics) from the potentially idyllic world of highly literary if illiterate shepherds. Pastoral is distinguished from **georgic** by representing recreational rural idleness, whereas the georgic offers instruction on how to manage rural labor. English writers had classical models in the *Idylls* of Theocritus in Greek and Virgil's *Eclogues* in Latin. Pastoral is also called bucolic (from the Greek word for "herdsman"). Thus Spenser, *Shepheardes Calender* (see vol. B, p. 257).

pathetic fallacy: the attribution of sentiment to natural phenomena, as if they were in sympathy with human feelings. Thus Milton, *Lycidas*, lines 146–47: "With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head, / And every flower that sad embroidery wears" (see vol. B, p. 1406). For critique of the practice, see Ruskin (who coined the term), "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" (vol. E, p. 467).

pentameter (Greek "five measure"): a term of **meter.** In English verse, a five-stress line. Between the late fourteenth and the

nineteenth centuries, this meter, frequently employing an iambic rhythm, was the basic line of English verse. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth each, for example, deployed this very flexible line as their primary resource; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.128: "O Prince, O Chief of many thronèd Powers" (see vol. B, p. 1433).

performative: Verbal expressions have many different functions. They can, for example, be descriptive, or constative (if they make an argument), or performative, for example. A performative utterance is one that makes something happen in the world by virtue of its utterance. "I hereby sentence you to ten years in prison," if uttered in the appropriate circumstances, itself performs an action; it makes something happen in the world. By virtue of its performing an action, it is called a "performative." See also **speech act.**

peripeteia (Greek "turning about"): the sudden reversal of fortune (in both directions) in a dramatic work.

periphrasis (Greek "declaring around"): a **figure of thought.** Circumlocution; the use of many words to express what could be expressed in few or one; Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 39.1–4.

persona (Latin "sound through"): originally the mask worn in the Roman theater to magnify an actor's voice; in literary discourse persona (plural *personae*) refers to the narrator or speaker of a text, whose voice is coherent and whose person need have no relation to the person of the actual author of a text. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (see vol. F, p. 498).

personification, or **prosopopoeia** (Greek "person making"): a **figure of thought.** The attribution of human qualities to nonhuman forces or objects; Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," lines 1–2: "Thou still unvanish'd bride of quietness, / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time" (see vol. D, p. 971).

plot: the sequence of events in a story as narrated, as distinct from **story,** which refers to the sequence of events as we reconstruct

them from the plot. See also **order.**

point of view: All of the many kinds of writing involve a point of view from which a text is, or seems to be, generated. The presence of such a point of view may be powerful and explicit, as in many novels, or deliberately invisible, as in much drama. In some genres, such as the **novel,** the narrator does not necessarily tell the story from a position we can predict; that is, the needs of a particular story, not the **conventions** of the genre, determine the narrator's position. In other genres, the narrator's position is fixed by convention; in certain kinds of love poetry, for example, the narrating voice is always that of a suffering lover. Not only does the point of view significantly inform the style of a work, but it also informs the structure of that work.

protagonist (Greek "first actor"): the hero or heroine of a drama or narrative.

pun: a **figure of thought.** A sometimes irresolvable doubleness of meaning in a single word or expression; Shakespeare, Sonnet 135, line 1: "Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*" (see vol. B, p. 637).

quatrain: a **verse form.** A stanza of four lines, usually rhyming abcb, abab, or abba. Of many possible examples, see Crashaw, "On the Wounds of Our Crucified Lord" (see vol. B, p. 1214).

refrain: usually a single line repeated as the last line of consecutive stanzas, sometimes with subtly different wording and ideally with subtly different meaning as the poem progresses.

register: The register of a word is its stylistic level, which can be distinguished by degree of technicality but also by degree of formality. We choose our words from different registers according to context, that is, audience and/or environment. Thus a chemist in a laboratory will say "sodium chloride," a cook in a kitchen "salt." A formal register designates the kind of language used in polite society

(for example, "Mr. President"), while an informal or colloquial register is used in less formal or more relaxed social situations (for example, "the boss"). In **classical** and medieval rhetoric, these registers of formality were called *high style* and *low style.* A *middle style* was defined as the style fit for narrative, not drawing attention to itself.

rhetoric: the art of verbal persuasion. **Classical** rhetoricians distinguished three areas of rhetoric: the forensic, to be used in law courts; the deliberative, to be used in political or philosophical deliberations; and the demonstrative, or epideictic, to be used for the purposes of public praise or blame. Rhetorical manuals covered all the skills required of a speaker, from the management of style and structure to delivery. These manuals powerfully influenced the theory of poetics as a separate branch of verbal practice, particularly in the matter of style.

rhyme: a **figure of speech.** The repetition of identical vowel sounds in stressed syllables whose initial consonants differ ("dead" / "head"). In poetry, rhyme often links the end of one line with another. *Masculine rhyme*: full rhyme on the final syllable of the line ("decays" / "days"). *Feminine rhyme*: full rhyme on syllables that are followed by unaccented syllables ("fountains" / "mountains"). *Internal rhyme*: full rhyme within a single line; Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, line 7: "The guests are met, the feast is set" (see vol. D, p. 475). *Rhyme riche*: rhyming on **homophones;** Chaucer, *General Prologue*, lines 17–18: "seeke" / "seke." *Off rhyme* (also known as *half rhyme*, *near rhyme*, or *slant rhyme*): differs from perfect rhyme in changing the vowel sound and/or the concluding consonants expected of perfect rhyme; Byron, "They say that Hope is Happiness," lines 5–7: "most" / "lost." *Pararhyme*: stressed vowel sounds differ but are flanked by identical or similar consonants; Owen, "Miners," lines 9–11: "simmer" / "summer" (see vol. F, p. 169).

rhyme royal: a **verse form.** A **stanza** of seven **iambic pentameter** lines, rhyming ababbcc; first introduced by Chaucer and called "royal" because the form was used by James I of Scotland for his *Kingis Quair* in the early fifteenth century. Chaucer, "Troilus's Song" (see vol. A, p. 574).

rhythm: Rhythm is not absolutely distinguishable from **meter.** One way of making a clear distinction between these terms is to say that rhythm (from the Greek "to flow") denotes the patterns of sound within the feet of verse lines and the combination of those feet. Very often a particular meter will raise expectations that a given rhythm will be used regularly through a whole line or a whole poem. Thus in English verse the pentameter regularly uses an iambic rhythm. Rhythm, however, is much more fluid than meter, and many lines within the same poem using a single meter will frequently exploit different rhythmic possibilities. For examples of different rhythms, see **iamb, trochee, anapest, spondee,** and **dactyl.**

romance: a **genre.** From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, the main form of European narrative, in either verse or prose, was that of chivalric romance. Romance, like the later **novel,** is a very fluid genre, but romances are often characterized by (i) a tripartite structure of social integration, followed by disintegration, involving moral tests and often marvelous events, itself the prelude to reintegration in a happy ending, frequently of marriage; and (ii) aristocratic social milieux. Thus *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (see vol. A, p. 415); Spenser's (unfinished) *Faerie Queene* (vol. B, p. 263). The immensely popular, fertile genre was absorbed, in both domesticated and undomesticated form, by the novel. For an adaptation of romance, see Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Tale* (vol. A, p. 512).

sarcasm (Greek "flesh tearing"): a **figure of thought.** A wounding expression, often expressed ironically; Boswell, *Life of Johnson*: Johnson [asked if any man of the modern age could have written the

epic poem *Fingal*] replied, "Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children" (see vol. C, p. 891).

satire (Latin for "a bowl of mixed fruits"): a **genre.** In Roman literature (for example, Juvenal), the communication, in the form of a letter between equals, complaining of the ills of contemporary society. The genre in this form is characterized by a first-person narrator exasperated by social ills; the letter form; a high frequency of contemporary reference; and the use of invective in **low-style** language. Pope practices the genre thus in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (see vol. C, p. 573). Wyatt's "Mine Own John Poins" (see vol. B, p. 131) draws ultimately on a gentler, Horatian model of the genre.

satiric mode: Works in a very large variety of genres are devoted to the more or less savage attack on social ills. Thus Swift's travel narrative *Gulliver's Travels* (see vol. C, p. 377), his **essay** "A Modest Proposal" (vol. C, p. 511), and Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (vol. C, p. 587), to look no further than the eighteenth century, are all within a satiric mode.

scene: a subdivision of an **act,** itself a subdivision of a dramatic performance and/or text. The action of a scene usually occurs in one place.

sensibility (from Latin, "capable of being perceived by the senses"): as a literary term, an eighteenth-century concept derived from moral philosophy that stressed the social importance of fellow feeling and particularly of sympathy in social relations. The concept generated a literature of "sensibility," such as the sentimental **novel** (the most famous of which was Goethe's *Sorrows of the Young Werther* [1774]), or sentimental poetry, such as Cowper's passage on the stricken deer in *The Task* (see vol. C, p. 1076).

short story: a **genre.** Generically similar to, though shorter and more concentrated than, the **novel;** often published as part of a

collection. Thus Mansfield, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" (see vol. F, p. 542).

simile (Latin "like"): a **figure of thought.** Comparison, usually using the word "like" or "as," of one thing with another so as to produce sometimes surprising analogies. Donne, "The Storm," lines 29–30: "Sooner than you read this line did the gale, / Like shot, not feared till felt, our sails assail." Frequently used, in extended form, in **epic** poetry; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.338–46 (see vol. B, p. 1438).

soliloquy (Latin "single speaking"): a **topos** of drama, in which a **character,** alone or thinking to be alone on stage, speaks so as to give the audience access to his or her private thoughts.

sonnet: a **verse form.** A form combining a variable number of units of rhymed lines to produce a fourteen-line poem, usually in rhyming **iambic pentameter** lines. In English there are two principal varieties: the Petrarchan sonnet, formed by an octave (an eight-line stanza, often broken into two **quatrains** having the same rhyme scheme, typically abba abba) and a sestet (a six-line stanza, typically cdecde or cdcdcd); and the Shakespearean sonnet, formed by three quatrains (abab cdcd efef) and a **couplet** (gg). The declaration of a sonnet can take a sharp turn, or "volta," often at the decisive formal shift from octave to sestet in the Petrarchan sonnet, or in the final couplet of a Shakespearean sonnet, introducing a trenchant counterstatement. Derived from Italian poetry, and especially from the poetry of Petrarch, the sonnet was first introduced to English poetry by Wyatt, and initially used principally for the expression of unrequited erotic love, though later poets used the form for many other purposes. See Wyatt, "Whoso List to Hunt" (vol. B, p. 123); Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (vol. B, p. 541); Shakespeare, Sonnets (vol. B, p. 624); Wordsworth, "London, 1802" (vol. D, p. 390); McKay, "If We Must Die" (vol. F, p. 576); Heaney, "Clearances" (vol. F, p. 970).

speech act: Words and deeds are often distinguished, but words are often (perhaps always) themselves deeds. Utterances can perform different speech acts, such as promising, declaring, casting a spell, encouraging, persuading, denying, lying, and so on. See also **performative.**

Spenserian stanza: a **verse form.** The stanza developed by Spenser for *The Faerie Queene*; nine **iambic** lines, the first eight of which are **pentameters,** followed by one **hexameter,** rhyming ababbcbcc. See also, for example, Shelley, *Adonais* (vol. D, p. 851), and Keats, *The Eve of St. Agnes* (vol. D, p. 953).

spondee: a term of **meter.** A two-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of two stressed syllables. Thus, for example, "Utah."

stanza (Italian "room"): groupings of two or more lines, though "stanza" is usually reserved for groupings of at least four lines. Stanzas are often joined by rhyme, often in sequence, where each group shares the same metrical pattern and, when rhymed, rhyme scheme. Stanzas can themselves be arranged into larger groupings. Poets often invent new **verse forms,** or they may work within established forms.

story: a narrative's sequence of events, which we reconstruct from those events as they have been recounted by the narrator (i.e., the **plot**). See also **order.**

stream of consciousness: usually a **first-person** narrative that seems to give the reader access to the narrator's mind as it perceives or reflects on events, prior to organizing those perceptions into a coherent narrative. Thus (though generated from a **third-person** narrative) Joyce, *Ulysses*, "Penelope" (see vol. F, p. 452).

style (from Latin for "writing instrument"): In literary works the manner in which something is expressed contributes substantially to its meaning. The expressions "sun," "mass of helium at the center of

the solar system," "heaven's golden orb" all designate "sun," but do so in different manners, or styles, which produce different meanings. The manner of a literary work is its "style," the effect of which is its "tone." We often can intuit the tone of a text; from that intuition of tone we can analyze the stylistic resources by which it was produced. We can analyze the style of literary works through consideration of different elements of style; for example, **diction, figures of thought, figures of speech, meter and rhythm, verse form, syntax, point of view.**

sublime: As a concept generating a literary movement, the sublime refers to the realm of experience beyond the measurable, and so beyond the rational, produced especially by the terrors and grandeur of natural phenomena. Derived especially from the first-century Greek treatise *On the Sublime*, sometimes attributed to Longinus, the notion of the sublime was in the later eighteenth century a spur to Romanticism.

syllable: the smallest unit of sound in a pronounced word. The syllable that receives the greatest stress is called the *tonic* syllable.

symbol (Greek "token"): a **figure of thought.** Something that stands for something else, and yet seems necessarily to evoke that other thing. In Neoplatonic, and therefore Romantic, theory, to be distinguished from **allegory** thus: whereas allegory involves connections between vehicle and tenor agreed by convention or made explicit, the meanings of a symbol are supposedly inherent to it.

synecdoche (Greek "to take with something else"): a **figure of thought.** Using a part to express the whole, or vice versa; for example, "all hands on deck." Closely related to **metonymy.**

syntax (Greek "ordering with"): Syntax designates the rules by which sentences are constructed in a given language. Discussion of meter is impossible without some reference to syntax, since the

overall effect of a poem is, in part, always the product of a subtle balance of meter and sentence construction. Syntax is also essential to the understanding of prose style, since prose writers, deprived of the full shaping possibilities of meter, rely all the more heavily on syntactic resources. A working command of syntactical practice requires an understanding of the parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions, and interjections), since writers exploit syntactic possibilities by using particular combinations and concentrations of the parts of speech.

taste (from Italian "touch"): Although medieval monastic traditions used eating and tasting as a metaphor for reading, the concept of taste as a personal ideal to be cultivated by, and applied to, the appreciation and judgment of works of art in general was developed in the eighteenth century.

tercet: a **verse form.** A stanza or group of three lines, used in larger forms such as **terza rima,** the **Petrarchan sonnet,** and the **villanelle.**

terza rima: a **verse form.** A sequence of rhymed **tercets** linked by rhyme thus: aba bcb cdc, etc. first used extensively by Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, the form was adapted in English **iambic pentameters** by Wyatt and revived in the nineteenth century. See Wyatt, "Mine Own John Poins" (vol. B, p. 131); Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind" (vol. D, p. 802); and Morris, "The Defence of Guinevere" (vol. E, p. 657). For modern adaptations see Eliot, lines 78–149 (though unrhymed) of "Little Gidding" (vol. F, pp. 523–25); Heaney, "Station Island" (vol. F, p. 968); Walcott, *Omeros* (vol. F, p. 801).

tetrameter (Greek "four measure"): a term of **meter.** A line with four stresses. Coleridge, *Christabel*, line 31: "She stole along, she nothing spoke" (see vol. D, p. 495).

theme (Greek "proposition"): In literary criticism the term designates what the work is about; the theme is the concept that

unifies a given work of literature.

third-person narration: relevant to **point of view.** A narration in which the narrator recounts a narrative of **characters** referred to explicitly or implicitly by third-person pronouns ("he," she," etc.), without the limitation of a **first-person narration.** Thus Johnson, *The History of Rasselas.*

topographical poem (Greek "place writing"): a **genre.** A poem devoted to the meditative description of particular places.

topos (Greek "place," plural *topoi*): a commonplace in the content of a given kind of literature. Originally, in **classical** rhetoric, the topoi were tried-and-tested stimuli to literary invention: lists of standard headings under which a subject might be investigated. In medieval narrative poems, for example, it was commonplace to begin with a description of spring. Writers did, of course, render the commonplace uncommon, as in Chaucer's spring scene at the opening of *The Canterbury Tales* (see vol. A, p. 474).

tradition (from Latin "passing on"): A literary tradition is whatever is passed on or revived from the past in a single literary culture, or drawn from others to enrich a writer's culture. "Tradition" is fluid in reference, ranging from small to large referents: thus it may refer to a relatively small aspect of texts (for example, the tradition of **iambic pentameter**), or it may, at the other extreme, refer to the body of texts that constitute a **canon.**

tragedy: a **genre.** A dramatic representation of the fall of kings or nobles, beginning in happiness and ending in catastrophe. Later transferred to other social milieux. The opposite of **comedy;** thus Shakespeare, *Othello* (see vol. B, p. 640).

tragic mode: Many genres (**epic** poetry, **legend**ary chronicles, **tragedy,** the **novel**) either do or can participate in a tragic mode, by representing the fall of noble **protagonists** and the irreparable ravages of human society and history.

tragicomedy: a **genre.** A play in which potentially tragic events turn out to have a happy, or **comic,** ending. Thus Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure.*

translation (Latin "carrying across"): the rendering of a text written in one language into another.

trimeter (Greek "three measure"): a term of **meter.** A line with three stresses. Herbert, "Discipline," line 1: "Throw away thy rod" (see vol. B, p. 1197).

triplet: a **verse form.** A **tercet** rhyming on the same sound. Pope inserts triplets among heroic **couplets** to emphasize a particular thought; see *Essay on Criticism*, 315–17 (vol. C, p. 521).

trochee: a term of **rhythm.** A two-syllable foot following the pattern, in English verse, of stressed followed by unstressed syllable, producing a falling effect. Thus, for example, "Texas."

type (Greek "impression, figure"): a **figure of thought**. In Christian allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament, pre-Christian figures were regarded as "types," or foreshadowings, of Christ or the Christian dispensation. *Typology* has been the source of much visual and literary art in which the parallelisms between old and new are extended to nonbiblical figures; thus the virtuous plowman in *Piers Plowman* becomes a type of Christ.

unities: According to a theory supposedly derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, the events represented in a play should have unity of time, place, and action: that the play take up no more time than the time of the play, or at most a day; that the space of action should be within a single city; and that there should be no subplot. See Johnson, *The Preface to Shakespeare* (vol. C, p. 876).

vernacular (from Latin *verna*, "servant"): the language of the people, as distinguished from learned and arcane languages. From the later Middle Ages especially, the "vernacular" languages and

literatures of Europe distinguished themselves from the learned languages and literatures of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

verse form: The terms related to **meter** and **rhythm** describe the shape of individual lines. Lines of verse are combined to produce larger groupings, called verse forms. These larger groupings are in the first instance **stanzas.** The combination of a certain meter and stanza shape constitutes the verse form, of which there are many standard kinds.

villanelle: a **verse form.** A fixed form of usually five **tercets** and a **quatrain** employing only two rhyme sounds altogether, rhyming aba for the tercets and abaa for the quatrain, with a complex pattern of two **refrains.** Derived from a French fixed form. Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (see vol. F, p. 693).

wit: Originally a synonym for "reason" in Old and Middle English, "wit" became a literary ideal in the Renaissance as brilliant play of the full range of mental resources. For eighteenth-century writers, the notion necessarily involved pleasing expression, as in Pope's definition of true wit as "Nature to advantage dressed, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" (*Essay on Criticism*, lines 297–98; see vol. C, p. 527). Romantic theory of the imagination deprived wit of its full range of apprehension, whence the word came to be restricted to its modern sense, as the clever play of mind that produces laughter.

zeugma (Greek "a yoking"): a **figure of thought.** A figure whereby one word applies to two or more words in a sentence, and in which the applications are surprising, either because one is unusual, or because the applications are made in very different ways; Pope, *Rape of the Lock* 3.7–8, in which the word "take" is used in two senses: "Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey, / Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea" (see vol. C, p. 546).

B: Publishing History, Censorship

By the time we read texts in published books, they have already been treated—that is, changed by authors, editors, and printers—in many ways. Although there are differences across history, in each period literary works are subject to pressures of many kinds, which apply before, while, and after an author writes. The pressures might be financial, as in the relations of author and patron; commercial, as in the marketing of books; and legal, as in, during some periods, the negotiation through official and unofficial censorship. In addition, texts in all periods undergo technological processes, as they move from the material forms in which an author produced them to the forms in which they are presented to readers. Some of the terms below designate important material forms in which books were produced, disseminated, and surveyed across the historical span of this anthology. Others designate the skills developed to understand these processes. The anthology's introductions to individual periods discuss the particular forms these phenomena took in different eras.

bookseller: In England, and particularly in London, commercial bookmaking and -selling enterprises came into being in the early fourteenth century. These were loose organizations of artisans who usually lived in the same neighborhoods (around St. Paul's Cathedral in London). A bookseller or dealer would coordinate the production of hand-copied books for wealthy patrons (see **patronage**), who would order books to be custom-made. After the introduction of **printing** in the late fifteenth century, authors generally sold the rights to their work to booksellers, without any further **royalties.** Booksellers, who often had their own shops, belonged to the **Stationers' Company.** This system lasted into the eighteenth century. In 1710, however, authors were for the first time granted **copyright,** which tipped the commercial balance in their favor, against booksellers.

censorship: The term applies to any mechanism for restricting what can be published. Historically, the reasons for imposing censorship are heresy, sedition, blasphemy, libel, or obscenity. External censorship is imposed by institutions having legislative sanctions at their disposal. Thus the pre-Reformation Church imposed the Constitutions of Archbishop Arundel of 1409, aimed at repressing the Lollard "heresy." After the Reformation, some key events in the history of censorship are as follows: 1547, when anti-Lollard legislation and legislation made by Henry VIII concerning treason by writing (1534) were abolished; the Licensing Order of 1643, which legislated that works be licensed, through the Stationers' Company, prior to publication; and 1695, when the last such Act stipulating prepublication licensing lapsed. Postpublication censorship continued in different periods for different reasons. Thus, for example, British publication of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) was obstructed (though unsuccessfully) in 1960, under the Obscene Publications Act of 1959. Censorship can also be international: although not published in Iran, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988) was censored in that country, where the leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, proclaimed a fatwa (religious decree) promising the author's execution. Very often censorship is not imposed externally, however: authors or publishers can censor work in anticipation of what will incur the wrath of readers or the penalties of the law. Victorian and Edwardian publishers of **novels,** for example, urged authors to remove potentially offensive material, especially for serial publication in popular magazines.

codex: the physical format of most modern books and medieval manuscripts, consisting of a series of separate leaves gathered into quires and bound together, often with a cover. In late antiquity, the codex largely replaced the scroll, the standard form of written documents in Roman culture.

copy text: the particular text of a work used by a textual editor as the basis of an edition of that work.

copyright: the legal protection afforded to authors for control of their work's publication, in an attempt to ensure due financial reward. Some key dates in the history of copyright in the United Kingdom are as follows: 1710, when a statute gave authors the exclusive right to publish their work for fourteen years, and fourteen years more if the author were still alive when the first term had expired; 1842, when the period of authorial control was extended to forty-two years; and 1911, when the term was extended yet further, to fifty years after the author's death. In 1995 the period of protection was harmonized with the laws in other European countries to be the life of the author plus seventy years. In the United States no works first published before 1923 are in copyright. Works published since 1978 are, as in the United Kingdom, protected for the life of the author plus seventy years.

folio: the leaf formed by both sides of a single page. Each folio has two sides: a *recto* (the front side of the leaf, on the right side of a double-page spread in an open codex), and a *verso* (the back side of the leaf, on the left side of a double-page spread). Modern book pagination follows the pattern 1, 2, 3, 4, while medieval manuscript pagination follows the pattern 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v. "Folio" can also designate the size of a printed book. Books come in different shapes, depending originally on the number of times a standard sheet of paper is folded. One fold produces a large volume, a *folio* book; two folds produce a *quarto*, four an *octavo*, and six a very small *duodecimo.* Generally speaking, the larger the book, the grander and more expensive. Shakespeare's plays were, for example, first printed in quartos, but were gathered into a folio edition in 1623.

foul papers: versions of a work before an author has produced, if she or he has, a final copy (a "fair copy") with all corrections removed.

incunabulum (plural "incunabula"): any printed book produced in Europe before 1501. Famous incunabula include the Gutenberg Bible, printed in 1455.

manuscript (Latin, "written by hand"): Any text written physically by hand is a manuscript. Before the introduction of **printing** with moveable type in 1476, all texts in England were produced and reproduced by hand, in manuscript. This is an extremely labor-intensive task, using expensive materials (for example, **vellum,** or **parchment**); the cost of books produced thereby was, accordingly, very high. Even after the introduction of printing, many texts continued to be produced in manuscript. This is obviously true of letters, for example, but until the eighteenth century, poetry written within aristocratic circles was often transmitted in manuscript copies.

paleography (Greek "ancient writing"): the art of deciphering, describing, and dating forms of handwriting.

parchment: animal skin, used as the material for handwritten books before the introduction of paper. See also **vellum.**

patronage, patron (Latin "protector"): Many technological, legal, and commercial supports were necessary before professional authorship became possible. Although some playwrights (for example, Shakespeare) made a living by writing for the theater, other authors needed, principally, the large-scale reproductive capacities of **printing** and the security of **copyright** to make a living from writing. Before these conditions obtained, many authors had another main occupation, and most authors had to rely on patronage. In different periods, institutions or individuals offered material support, or patronage, to authors. Thus in Anglo-Saxon England, monasteries afforded the conditions of writing to monastic authors. Between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries, the main source of patronage was the royal court. Authors offered patrons prestige and ideological support in return for financial support. Even as the conditions of professional authorship came into being at the beginning of the eighteenth century, older forms of direct patronage were not altogether displaced until the middle of the century.

periodical: Whereas journalism, strictly, applies to daily writing (from French *jour*, "day"), periodical writing appears at larger, but still frequent, intervals, characteristically in the form of the **essay.** Periodicals were developed especially in the eighteenth century.

printing: Printing, or the mechanical reproduction of books using moveable type, was invented in Germany in the mid-fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg; it quickly spread throughout Europe. William Caxton brought printing into England from the Low Countries in 1476. Much greater powers of reproduction at much lower prices transformed every aspect of literary culture.

publisher: the person or company responsible for the commissioning and publicizing of printed matter. In the early period of **printing,** publisher, printer, and bookseller were often the same person. This trend continued in the ascendancy of the **Stationers' Company,** between the middle of the sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth centuries. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, these three functions began to separate, leading to their modern distinctions.

quire: When medieval manuscripts were assembled, a few loose sheets of parchment or paper would first be folded together and sewn along the fold. This formed a quire (also known as a "gathering" or "signature"). Folded in this way, four large sheets of parchment would produce eight smaller manuscript leaves. Multiple quires could then be bound together to form a codex.

royalties: an agreed-upon proportion of the price of each copy of a work sold, paid by the publisher to the author, or an agreed-upon fee paid to the playwright for each performance of a play.

scribe: In **manuscript** culture, the scribe is the copyist who reproduces a text by hand.

scriptorium (plural "scriptoria"): a place for producing written documents and manuscripts.

serial publication: generally referring to the practice, especially common in the nineteenth century, of publishing novels a few chapters at a time, in periodicals.

Stationers' Company: The Stationers' Company was an English guild incorporating various tradesmen, including printers, publishers, and booksellers, skilled in the production and selling of books. It was formed in 1403, received its royal charter in 1557, and served as a means both of producing and of regulating books. Authors would sell the manuscripts of their books to individual stationers, who incurred the risks and took the profits of producing and selling the books. The stationers entered their rights over given books in the Stationers' Register. They also regulated the book trade and held their monopoly by licensing books and by being empowered to seize unauthorized books and imprison resisters. This system of licensing broke down in the social unrest of the Civil War and Interregnum (1640–60), and it ended in 1695. Even after the end of licensing, the Stationers' Company continued to be an intrinsic part of the **copyright** process, since the 1710 copyright statute directed that copyright had to be registered at Stationers' Hall.

subscription: An eighteenth-century system of bookselling somewhere between direct **patronage** and impersonal sales. A subscriber paid half the cost of a book before publication and half on delivery. The author received these payments directly. The subscriber's name appeared in the prefatory pages.

textual criticism: Works in all periods often exist in many subtly or not so subtly different forms. This is especially true with regard to manuscript textual reproduction, but it also applies to printed texts. Textual criticism is the art, developed from the fifteenth century in Italy but raised to new levels of sophistication from the eighteenth century, of deciphering different historical states of texts. This art involves the analysis of textual **variants,** often with the aim of distinguishing authorial from scribal forms.

variants: differences that appear among different manuscripts or printed editions of the same text.

vellum: animal skin, used as the material for handwritten books before the introduction of paper. See also **parchment.**

watermark: the trademark of a paper manufacturer, impressed into the paper but largely invisible unless held up to light.

Endnotes

- Note *: This appendix was devised and compiled by James Simpson with the collaboration of all the editors. We especially thank Professor Lara Bovilsky of the University of Oregon at Eugene for her help.Return to reference *

Geographic Nomenclature

The British Isles refers to the prominent group of islands off the northwest coast of Europe, especially to the two largest, **Great Britain** and **Ireland**. At present these comprise two sovereign states: **the Republic of Ireland**, and **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**—known for short as the **United Kingdom** or the **U.K.** Most of the smaller islands are part of the **U.K.** but a few, like the **Isle of Man** and the tiny **Channel Islands,** are largely independent. The **U.K.** is often loosely referred to as **"Britain"** or **"Great Britain"** and is sometimes called simply, if inaccurately, **"England."** For obvious reasons, the latter usage is rarely heard among the inhabitants of the other countries of the **U.K.—Scotland, Wales,** and **Northern Ireland** (sometimes called **Ulster**). England is by far the most populous part of the kingdom, as well as the seat of its capital, London.

From the first to the fifth century C.E. most of what is now **England** and **Wales** was a province of the Roman Empire called **Britain** (in Latin, **Britannia**). After the fall of Rome, much of the island was invaded and settled by peoples from northern Germany and Denmark speaking what we now call Old English. These peoples are known as the Angles and the Saxons (the word **England** is related to **Angles**). By the time of the Norman Conquest (1066) most of the kingdoms founded by the Angles, the Saxons, and the subsequent Viking invaders had coalesced into the kingdom of **England,** which, in the latter Middle Ages, conquered and largely absorbed the neighboring Celtic kingdom of **Wales.** In 1603 James VI of **Scotland** inherited the island's other throne as James I of **England,** and for the next hundred years—except for the two decades of Puritan rule—**Scotland** (both its English-speaking **Lowlands** and its Gaelic-speaking **Highlands**) and **England** (with **Wales**) were two kingdoms under a single king. In 1707 the Act of Union brought them together as **the United Kingdom of Great**

Britain. Ireland, where English rule had begun in the twelfth century and been tightened in the sixteenth, was incorporated by the 1800–1801 Act of Union into **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**. With the division of Ireland and the establishment of **the Irish Free State** after World War I, this name was modified to its present form, and in 1949 **the Irish Free State** became **the Republic of Ireland,** or **Éire**. In 1999 **Scotland** elected a separate parliament it had relinquished in 1707, and **Wales** elected an assembly it lost in 1409; neither Scotland nor Wales ceased to be part of the **United Kingdom**.

The **British Isles** are further divided into counties, which in **Great Britain** are also known as shires. This word, with its vowel shortened in pronunciation, forms the suffix in the names of many counties, such as **Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Somersetshire**.

The Latin names **Britannia (Britain), Caledonia (Scotland)**, and **Hibernia (Ireland)** are sometimes used in poetic diction; so too is **Britain**'s ancient Celtic name, **Albion**. Because of its accidental resemblance to *albus* (Latin for "white"), **Albion** is especially associated with the chalk cliffs that seem to gird much of the English coast like defensive walls.

The British Empire took its name from **the British Isles** because it was created not only by the **English** but also by the **Irish, Scots,** and **Welsh**, as well as by civilians and servicemen from other constituent countries of the empire. Some of the empire's **overseas colonies**, or **crown colonies**, were populated largely by settlers of European origin and their descendants. These predominantly White **settler col onies**, such as **Canada**, **Australia**, and **New Zealand**, were allowed significant self-government in the nineteenth century and recognized as **dominions** in the early twentieth century. The **White dominions** became members of **the Commonwealth of Nations**, also called **the Commonwealth, the British Commonwealth**, and "**the Old Commonwealth"** at different times, an association of sovereign states under the symbolic leadership of the British monarch.

Other **overseas colonies** of the empire had mostly Indigenous populations (or, in the Caribbean, the descendants of enslaved people, indentured servants, and others). These **colonies** were granted political independence after World War II, later than the **dominions**, and have often been referred to since as **postcolonial** nations. In South and Southeast Asia, **India** and **Pakistan** gained independence in 1947, followed by other countries including **Sri Lanka** (formerly **Ceylon**), **Burma** (now **Myanmar**), **Malaya** (now **Malaysia**), and **Singapore**. In West and East Africa, the **Gold Coast** was decolonized as **Ghana** in 1957, **Nigeria** in 1960, **Sierra Leone** in 1961, **Uganda** in 1962, **Kenya** in 1963, and so forth, while in southern Africa, the White minority government of **South Africa** was already independent in 1931, though majority rule did not come until 1994. In the Caribbean, **Jamaica** and **Trinidad and Tobago** became independent in 1962, followed by **Barbados** in 1966, and other islands of the British West Indies in the 1970s and ’80s. Other regions from which nations emerged out of British colonial rule included Central America (**British Honduras**, now **Belize**), South America (**British Guiana**, now **Guyana),** the Pacific islands (**Fiji**), and Europe (**Cyprus**, **Malta**). After decolonization, many of these nations chose to remain within a newly conceived **Commonwealth** and are sometimes referred to as "**New Commonwealth**" countries. Some nations, such as **Ireland**, **Pakistan**, and **South Africa,** withdrew from the **Commonwealth**, though **South Africa** and **Paki stan** eventually rejoined, and others, such as **Burma** (now **Myanmar**), gained independence outside the **Commonwealth**. Britain’s last major overseas colony, **Hong Kong**, was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, but while Britain retains only a handful of dependent territories, such as **Bermuda** and **Montserrat**, the scope of the **Commonwealth** remains vast, with approximately 30 percent of the world’s population.

British Money

One of the most dramatic changes to the system of British money came in 1971. In the system previously in place, the pound consisted of 20 shillings, each containing 12 pence, making 240 pence to the pound. Since 1971, British money has been calculated on the decimal system, with 100 pence to the pound. Britons' experience of paper money did not change very drastically: as before, 5- and 10-pound notes constitute the majority of bills passing through their hands (in addition, 20- and 50-pound notes have been added). But the shift necessitated a whole new way of thinking about and exchanging coins and marked the demise of the shilling, one of the fundamental units of British monetary history. Many other coins, still frequently encountered in literature, had already passed. These include the groat, worth 4 pence (the word "groat" is often used to signify a trifling sum); the angel (which depicted the archangel Michael triumphing over a dragon), valued at 10 shillings; the mark, worth in its day two-thirds of a pound or 13 shillings 4 pence; and the sovereign, a gold coin initially worth 22 shillings 6 pence, later valued at 1 pound, last circulated in 1932. One prominent older coin, the guinea, was worth a pound and a shilling; though it has not been minted since 1813, a very few quality items or prestige awards (like the purse in a horse race) may still be quoted in guineas. (The table below includes some other obsolete coins.) Colloquially, a pound was (and is) called a quid; a shilling a bob; sixpence, a tanner; a copper could refer to a penny, a half-penny, or a farthing (1/4 penny).

Old Currency	*New Currency*
1 pound note	1 pound coin (or note in Scotland)
10 shilling (half-pound note)	50 pence
5 shilling (crown)	
21/2 shilling (half crown)	20 pence
2 shilling (florin)	10 pence
1 shilling	5 pence
6 pence	
21/2 pence	1 penny
2 pence	

1 penny	
1/2 penny	
1/4 penny (farthing)	

Throughout its tenure as a member of the European Union (1973–2020), Britain contemplated but did not make the change to the EU's common currency, the Euro, reflecting many Britons' strong identification of their country with its rich commercial history and view of their currency as a national symbol.

Even more challenging than sorting out the values of obsolete coins is calculating for any given period the purchasing power of money, which fluctuates over time by its very nature. As difficult as it is to generalize, it is clear that money used to be worth much more than it is currently. During the early Middle Ages, the most valuable circulating coin was the silver penny: four would buy a sheep. Beyond long-term inflationary trends, prices varied from times of plenty to those marked by poor harvests; from peacetime to wartime; from the country to the metropolis (life in London has always been very expensive); and wages varied according to the availability of labor (wages would sharply rise, for instance, during the devastating Black Death in the fourteenth century). The following chart provides a glimpse of some actual prices of given periods and their changes across time, though all the variables mentioned above prevent them from being definitive. Even from one year to the next, an added tax on gin or tea could drastically raise prices, and a lottery ticket could cost much more the night before the drawing than just a month earlier. Still, the prices quoted below do indicate important trends, such as the disparity of incomes in British society and the costs of basic commodities. In the chart on the following pages, the symbol £ is used for pound, s. for shilling, d. for a penny (from Latin *denarius*); a sum would normally be written £2.19.3—that is 2 pounds, 19 shillings, 3 pence. (This is Leopold Bloom's budget for the day depicted in Joyce's novel *Ulysses* [1922]; in the new currency, it would be about £2.96.)

circa	1390	1590	1650	1750	1815	1875
food and drink	gallon (8 pints) of ale, 1.5d.	tankard of beer, .5d.	coffee, 1d. a dish	"drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two-pence" (gin shop sign in Hogarth print)	ounce of laudanum, 3d.	pint of beer, 3d.
	gallon (8 pints) of wine, 3 to 4d.	pound of beef, 2s. 5d.	chicken, 1s. 4d.	dinner at a steakhouse, 1s.	ham and potato dinner for two, 7s.	dinner in a good hotel, 5s.
	pound of cinnamon, 1	pound of cinnamon,	pound of tea, £3	pound of tea, 16s.	bottle of French	pound of tea, 2s.

	to 3s.	10s. 6d.	10s.		claret, 12s.	
entertainment	no cost to watch a cycle play	admission to public theater, 1 to 3d.	falcon, £11 5s.	theater tickets, 1 to 5s.	admission to Covent Garden theater, 1 to 7s.	theater tickets, 6d. to 7s.
	contributory admission to professional troupe theater	cheap seat in private theater, 6d.	billiard table, £25	admission to Vauxhall Gardens, 1s.	annual subscription to Almack's (exclusive club), 10 guineas	admission to Madam Tussaud's waxworks, 1s.
	maintenance for royal hounds at Windsor, .75d. a day	"to see a dead Indian" (*The Tempest* 2.2.32), 1.25d. (ten "doits")	three-quarter length portrait painting, £31	lottery ticket, £20 (shares were sold)	Jane Austen's piano, 30 guineas	annual fees at a gentleman's club, 7 to 10 guineas
reading	cheap romance, 1s.	play quarto, 6d.	pamphlet, 1 to 6d.	issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 6d.	issue of *Edinburgh Review*, 6s.	copy of the *Times*, 3d.
	a Latin Bible, 2 to £4	Shakespeare's *First Folio* (1623), £1	student Bible, 6s.	cheap edition of Milton, 2s.	membership in circulating library (3rd class), £1 4s. a year	illustrated edition of *Through the Looking-glass*, 6s.
	payment for illuminating a liturgical book, £22 9s.	Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, 24s.	Hobbes's *Leviathan*, 8s.	Johnson's *Dictionary*, folio, 2 vols., £4 10s.	1st edition of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, 18s.	1st edition of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, 2 vols., £1 1s.
transportation	night's supply of hay for horse, 2d.	wherry (whole boat) across Thames, 1d.	day's journey, coach, 10s.	boat across Thames, 4d.	coach ride, outside, 2 to 3d. a mile; inside,	15-minute journey in a London cab, 1s. 6d.

					4 to 5d. a mile	
	coach, £8	hiring a horse for a day, 12d.	coach horse, £30	coach fare, London to Edinburgh, £4 10s.	palanquin transport in Madras, 5s. a day	railway, 3rd class, Londor to Plymouth, 18s. 8d. (about 1d. a mile)
	quality horse, £10	hiring a coach for a day, 10s.	fancy carriage, £170	transport to America, £5	passage, Liverpool to New York, £10	passage to India, 1st class, £50
clothes	clothing allowance for peasant, 3s. a year	shoes with buckles, 8d.	footman's frieze coat, 15s.	working woman's gown, 6s. 6d.	checked muslin, 7s. per yard	flannel for a cheap petticoat, 1s. 3d. a yard
	shoes for gentry wearer, 4d.	woman's gloves, £1 5s.	falconer's hat, 10s.	gentleman's suit, £8	hiring a dressmaker for a pelisse, 8s.	overcoat for an Eton schoolboy, £1 1s.
	hat for gentry wearer, 10d.	fine cloak, £16	black cloth for mourning household of an earl, £100	very fine wig, £30	ladies silk stockings, 12s.	set of false teeth, £2 10s.
labor/incomes	hiring a skilled building worker, 4d. a day	actor's daily wage during playing season, 1s.	agricultural laborer, 6s. 5d. a week	price of enslaved boy, £32	lowest-paid sailor on Royal Navy ship, 10s. 9d. a month	seasonal agricultural laborer, 14s. a week
	wage for professional scribe, £2	household servant 2 to £5 a year + food, clothing	tutor to nobleman's children, £30 a year	housemaid's wage, £6 to£8 a year	contributor to *Quarterly Review*, 10	housemaid's wage, £10 to £25 a year

	3s. 4d. a year + cloak				guineas per sheet	
	minimum income to be called gentleman, £10 a year; for knighthood, 40 to £400	minimum income for eligibility for knighthood, £30 a year	Milton's salary as Secretary of Foreign Tongues, £288 a year	Boswell's allowance, £200 a year	minimum income for a "genteel" family, £100 a year	income of the "comfortable" classes, £800 and up a year
	income from land of richest magnates, £3,500 a year	income from land of average earl, £4,000 a year	Earl of Bedford's income, £8,000 a year	Duke of Newcastle's income, £40,000 a year	Mr. Darcy's income, *Pride and Prejudice*, £10,000	Trollope's income, £4,000 a year

The British Baronage

The English monarchy is in principle hereditary, though at times during the Middle Ages the rules were subject to dispute. As it stands now, authority passes from parent to eldest surviving child, to siblings in order of seniority if there are no children, and in default of direct descendants to collateral lines (cousins, nephews, nieces) in order of closeness. There have been breaks in the order of succession (1066, 1399, 1688), but so far as possible the usurpers have always sought to paper over the break with a legitimate, that is, hereditary, claim. When a queen succeeds to the throne and takes a husband, he does not become king unless he is in the line of blood succession; rather, he is named prince consort, as Albert was to Victoria. He may be the father of kings, but he is not one himself.

The original Saxon nobles were the king's thanes, ealdormen, or earls, who provided the king with military service and counsel in return for booty, gifts, or landed estates. William the Conqueror, arriving from France, where feudalism was fully developed, considerably expanded this group. In addition, as the king distributed the lands of his new kingdom, he also distributed dignities to men who became known collectively as "the baronage." "Baron" in its root meaning signifies simply "man," and barons were the king's men. As the title was common, a distinction was early made between greater and lesser barons, the former gradually assuming loftier and more impressive titles. The first English "duke" was created in 1337; the title of "marquess," or "marquis" (pronounced "markwis"), followed in 1385, and "viscount" ("vyekount") in 1440. Though "earl" is the oldest title of all, an earl now comes between a marquess and a viscount in order of dignity and precedence, and the old term "baron" now designates a rank just below viscount. "Baronets" were created in 1611 as a means of raising revenue for the crown (the title could be purchased for about

£1,000); they are marginal nobility and have never sat in the House of Lords.

Kings and queens are addressed as "Your Majesty," princes and princesses as "Your Highness," the other hereditary nobility as "My Lord" or "Your Lordship." Peers receive their titles either by inheritance (like Lord Byron, the sixth baron of that line) or from the monarch (like Alfred, Lord Tennyson, created 1st Baron Tennyson by Victoria). The children, even of a duke, are commoners unless they are specifically granted some other title or inherit their father's title from him. A peerage can be forfeited by act of attainder, as for example when a lord is convicted of treason; and, when forfeited, or lapsed for lack of a successor, can be bestowed on another family. Thus in 1605 Robert Cecil was made first Earl of Salisbury in the third creation, the first creation dating from 1149, the second from 1337, the title having been in abeyance since 1539. Titles descend by right of succession and do not depend on tenure of land; thus, a title does not always indicate where a lord dwells or holds power. Indeed, noble titles do not always refer to a real place at all. At Prince Edward's marriage in 1999, the queen created him Earl of Wessex, although the old kingdom of Wessex has had no political existence since 1066, and the name was all but forgotten until it was resurrected by Thomas Hardy as the setting of his novels. (This is perhaps but one of many ways in which the world of the aristocracy increasingly resembles the realm of literature.)

The king and queen	(These are all of the royal line.)
Prince and princess	

Duke and duchess	(These may or may not be of the royal line, but are ordinarily remote from the succession.)
Marquess and marchioness	
Earl and countess	
Viscount and viscountess	
Baron and baroness	
Baronet and lady	

Scottish peers sat in the parliament of Scotland, as English peers did in the parliament of England, till at the Act of Union (1707) Scottish peers were granted sixteen seats in the English House of Lords, to be filled by election. (In 1963, all Scottish lords were allowed to sit.) Similarly, Irish peers, when the Irish parliament was abolished in 1801, were granted the right to elect twenty-eight of their number to the House of Lords in Westminster. (Now that the Republic of Ireland is a separate nation, this no longer applies.) Women members (peeresses) were first allowed to sit in the House as nonhereditary Life Peers in 1958 (when that status was created for members of both genders); women first sat by their own hereditary right in 1963. Today the House of Lords still retains some power to influence or delay legislation, but its future is uncertain. In 1999, the hereditary peers (then amounting to 750) were reduced to 92

temporary members elected by their fellow peers. Holders of Life Peerages remain, as do senior bishops of the Church of England and high-court judges (the "Law Lords").

Below the peerage the chief title of honor is "knight." Knighthood, which is not hereditary, is generally a reward for services rendered. A knight (Sir John Black) is addressed, using his first name, as "Sir John"; his wife, using the last name, is "Lady Black"—unless she is the daughter of an earl or nobleman of higher rank, in which case she will be "Lady Arabella." The female equivalent of a knight bears the title of "Dame." Though the word *knight* itself comes from the Old English *cniht*, there is some doubt as to whether knighthood amounted to much before the arrival of the Normans. The feudal system required military service as a condition of land tenure, and a man who came to serve his king at the head of an army of tenants required a title of authority and badges of identity—hence the title of knighthood and the coat of arms. During the Crusades, when men were far removed from their land (or even sold it in order to go on crusade), more elaborate forms of fealty sprang up that soon expanded into orders of knighthood. The Templars, Hospitallers, Knights of the Teutonic Order, Knights of Malta, and Knights of the Golden Fleece were but a few of these companionships; not all of them were available at all times in England.

Gradually, with the rise of centralized government and the decline of feudal tenures, military knighthood became obsolete, and the rank largely honorific; sometimes, as under James I, it degenerated into a scheme of the royal government for making money. For hundreds of years after its establishment in the fourteenth century, the Order of the Garter was the only English order of knighthood, an exclusive courtly companionship. Then, during the late seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the nineteenth centuries, a number of additional orders were created, with names such as the Thistle, Saint Patrick, the Bath, Saint Michael, and Saint George, plus a number of special Victorian and Indian orders. They retain the terminology, ceremony, and dignity of knighthood, but the military implications are vestigial.

Although the British Empire now belongs to history, appointments to the Order of the British Empire continue to be conferred for services to that empire at home or abroad. Such honors (commonly referred to as “gongs”) are granted by the monarch in New Year’s and Birthday lists, but the decisions are now made by the government in power. In recent years there have been efforts to popularize and democratize the dispensation of honors, with recipients including celebrities of all types. But this does not prevent large sectors of British society from regarding both knighthood and the peerage as largely irrelevant to modern life.

The Royal Lines of England and Great Britain

England

SAXONS AND DANES

Egbert, king of Wessex802–839

Ethelwulf, son of Egbert839–858

Ethelbald, second son of Ethelwulf858–860

Ethelbert, third son of Ethelwulf860–866

Ethelred I, fourth son of Ethelwulf866–871

Alfred the Great, fifth son of Ethelwulf871–899

Edward the Elder, son of Alfred899–924

Athelstan the Glorious, son of Edward924–940

Edmund I, third son of Edward940–946

Edred, fourth son of Edward946–955

Edwy the Fair, son of Edmund955–959

Edgar the Peaceful, second son of Edmund959–975

Edward the Martyr, son of Edgar975–978 (murdered)

Ethelred II, the Unready, second son of Edgar978–1016

Edmund II, Ironside, son of Ethelred II1016–1016

Canute the Dane1016–1035

Harold I, Harefoot, natural son of Canute1035–1040

Hardecanute, son of Canute1040–1042

Edward the Confessor, son of Ethelred II1042–1066

Harold II, brother-in-law of Edward1066–1066 (died in battle)

HOUSE OF NORMANDY

William I, the Conqueror1066–1087

William II, Rufus, third son of William I1087–1100 (shot from ambush)

Henry I, Beauclerc, youngest son of William I1100–1135

HOUSE OF BLOIS

Stephen, son of Adela, daughter of William I1135–1154

HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET

Henry II, son of Geoffrey Plantagenet by Matilda, daughter of Henry I1154–1189

Richard I, Coeur de Lion, son of Henry II1189–1199

John Lackland, son of Henry II1199–1216

Henry III, son of John1216–1272

Edward I, Longshanks, son of Henry III1272–1307

Edward II, son of Edward I1307–1327 (deposed)

Edward III of Windsor, son of Edward II1327–1377

Richard II, grandson of Edward III1377–1399 (deposed)

HOUSE OF LANCASTER

Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt, son of Edward III1399–1413

Henry V, Prince Hal, son of Henry IV1413–1422

Henry VI, son of Henry V1422–1461 (deposed),

1470–1471 (deposed)

HOUSE OF YORK

Edward IV, great-great-grandson of Edward III1461–1470 (deposed),

1471–1483

Edward V, son of Edward IV1483–1483 (murdered)

Richard III, Crookback1483–1485 (died in battle)

HOUSE OF TUDOR

Henry VII, married daughter of Edward IV1485–1509

Henry VIII, son of Henry VII1509–1547

Edward VI, son of Henry VIII1547–1553

Mary I, "Bloody," daughter of Henry VIII1553–1558

Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII1558–1603

HOUSE OF STUART

James I (James VI of Scotland)1603–1625

Charles I, son of James I1625–1649 (executed)

COMMONWEALTH & PROTECTORATE

Council of State1649–1653

Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector1653–1658

Richard Cromwell, son of Oliver1658–1660 (resigned)

HOUSE OF STUART (RESTORED)

Charles II, son of Charles I1660–1685

James II, second son of Charles I1685–1688

(INTERREGNUM, 11 DECEMBER 1688 TO 13 FEBRUARY 1689)

HOUSE OF ORANGE-NASSAU

William III of Orange, by

Mary, daughter of Charles I1689–1701

and Mary II, daughter of James II –1694

Anne, second daughter of James II1702–1714

Great Britain

HOUSE OF HANOVER

George I, son of Elector of Hanover and Sophia, granddaughter of James I1714–1727

George II, son of George I1727–1760

George III, grandson of George II1760–1820

George IV, son of George III1820–1830

William IV, third son of George III1830–1837

Victoria, daughter of Edward, fourth son of George III1837–1901

HOUSE OF SAXE-COBURG AND GOTHA

Edward VII, son of Victoria1901–1910

HOUSE OF WINDSOR (NAME ADOPTED 17 JULY 1917)

George V, second son of Edward VII1910–1936

Edward VIII, eldest son of George V1936–1936 (abdicated)

George VI, second son of George V1936–1952

Elizabeth II, daughter of George VI1952–2022

Charles III, son of Elizabeth II2022–

Religions in Great Britain

In the late sixth century C.E., missionaries from Rome introduced Christianity to Britons—actually, reintroduced it, since it had briefly flourished in the southern parts of the British Isles during the Roman occupation, and even after the Roman withdrawal had persisted in the Celtic regions of Scotland and Wales. By the time the earliest poems included in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* were composed (the seventh century), therefore, there had been a Christian presence in the British Isles for hundreds of years. The conversion of the Germanic occupiers of England can, however, be dated only from 597. Our knowledge of the religion of pre-Christian Britain is sketchy, but it is likely that vestiges of Germanic polytheism assimilated into, or coexisted with, the practice of Christianity: fertility rites were incorporated into the celebration of Easter resurrection, rituals commemorating the dead into All-Hallows Eve and All Saints Day, and elements of winter solstice festivals into the celebration of Christmas. The most durable polytheistic remains are the days of the week, each of which except "Saturday" derives from the name of a Germanic pagan god, and the word "Easter," deriving, according to the great monastic scholar Bede (ca. 673–735), from the name of a Germanic pagan goddess, Eostre. In English literature such "folkloric" elements sometimes elicit romantic nostalgia. Geoffrey Chaucer's "Wife of Bath" looks back to a magical time before the arrival of Christianity in which the land was "fulfild of fairye." Hundreds of years later, the seventeenth-century writer Robert Herrick honors the amalgamation of Christian and pagan elements in agrarian British culture in such poems as "Corinna's Gone A-Maying" and "The Hock Cart."

Medieval Christianity was fairly uniform, if complex, across Western Europe—hence called "catholic," or universally shared. The Church was composed of the so-called "regular" and "secular" orders, the regular orders being those who followed a rule in a

community under an abbot or an abbess (that is, monks, nuns, friars, and canons), while the secular clergy of priests served parish communities under the governance of a bishop. In the unstable period from the sixth until the twelfth century, monasteries were the intellectual powerhouse of the Church. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, with the development of an urban Christian spirituality in Europe, friars dominated the recently invented institution of universities, as well as devoting themselves, in theory at least, to the urban poor.

The Catholic Church was also an international power structure. With its hierarchy of pope, cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, it offered a model of the centralized, bureaucratic state from the late eleventh century. That ecclesiastical power structure coexisted alongside a separate, often less centralized and feudal structure of lay authorities, with theoretically different and often competing spheres of social responsibilities. The sharing of lay and ecclesiastical authority in medieval England was sometimes a source of conflict. Chaucer's pilgrims are on their way to visit the memorial shrine to one victim of such exemplary struggle: Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, who opposed the policies of King Henry II, was assassinated by indirect suggestion of the king in 1170, and later made a saint. The Church, in turn, produced its own victims: Jews were subject to persecution in the late twelfth century in England, before being expelled in 1290. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the English Church targeted Lollard heretics (see below) with capital punishment, for the first time.

As an international organization, the Church conducted its business in the universal language of Latin. Thus although in the period the largest segment of literate persons was made up of clerics, the clerical contribution to great literary writing in vernacular languages (for example, French and English) was, so far as we know, relatively modest, with some great exceptions in the later Middle Ages (for example, William Langland). Lay, vernacular writers of the period certainly reflect the importance of the Church as an institution and the pervasiveness of religion in the rituals that

marked everyday life, as well as contesting institutional authority. From the late fourteenth century, indeed, England witnessed an active and articulate, proto-Protestant movement known as Lollardy, which attacked clerical hierarchy and promoted vernacular scriptures.

Beginning in 1517 the German monk Martin Luther, in Wittenberg, Germany, openly challenged many aspects of Catholic practice and by 1520 had completely repudiated the authority of the pope, setting in motion the Protestant Reformation. Luther argued that the Roman Catholic Church had strayed far from the pattern of Christianity laid out in scripture. He rejected Catholic doctrines for which no biblical authority was to be found, such as the belief in Purgatory, and translated the Bible into German, on the grounds that the importance of scripture for all Christians made its translation into the vernacular tongue essential. Luther was not the first to advance such views—Lollard followers of the Englishman John Wycliffe had translated the Bible in the late fourteenth century. But Luther, protected by powerful German rulers, was able to speak out without fear of punishment and convert others to his views, rather than suffer the persecution usually meted out to heretics. Soon other reformers were following in Luther's footsteps: of these, the Swiss Ulrich Zwingli and the French Jean Calvin would be especially influential for English religious thought.

At first England remained staunchly Catholic. Its king, Henry VIII, was so severe to heretics that the pope awarded him the title "Defender of the Faith," which British monarchs have retained to this day. In 1534, however, Henry rejected the authority of the pope to prevent his divorce from his queen, Catherine of Aragon, and his marriage to his mistress, Ann Boleyn. In doing so, Henry appropriated to himself ecclesiastical as well as secular authority. Thomas More, author of *Utopia*, was executed in 1535 for refusing to endorse Henry's right to govern the English church. Over the following six years, Henry consolidated his grip on the ecclesiastical establishment by dissolving the powerful, populous Catholic monasteries and redistributing their massive landholdings to his own

lay followers. Yet Henry's church largely retained Catholic doctrine and liturgy. When Henry died and his young son, Edward, came to the throne in 1547, the English church embarked on a more Protestant path, a direction abruptly reversed when Edward died and his older sister Mary, the daughter of Catherine of Aragon, took the throne in 1553 and attempted to reintroduce Roman Catholicism. Mary's reign was also short, however, and her successor, Elizabeth I, the daughter of Ann Boleyn, was a Protestant. Elizabeth attempted to establish a "middle way" Christianity, compromising between Roman Catholic practices and beliefs and reformed ones.

The Church of England, though it laid claim to a national rather than pan-European authority, aspired like its predecessor to be the universal church of all English subjects. It retained the Catholic structure of parishes and dioceses and the Catholic hierarchy of bishops, though the ecclesiastical authority was now the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church's "Supreme Governor" was the monarch. Yet disagreement and controversy persisted. Some members of the Church of England wanted to retain many of the ritual and liturgical elements of Catholicism. Others, the Puritans, advocated a more thoroughgoing reformation. Most Puritans remained within the Church of England, but a minority, the "Separatists" or "Congregationalists," split from the established church altogether. These dissenters no longer thought of the ideal church as an organization to which everybody belonged; instead, they conceived it as a more exclusive group of likeminded people, one not necessarily attached to a larger body of believers.

In the seventeenth century, the succession of the Scottish king James to the English throne produced another problem. England and Scotland were separate nations, and in the sixteenth century Scotland had developed its own national Presbyterian church, or "kirk," under the leadership of the reformer John Knox. The kirk retained fewer Catholic liturgical elements than did the Church of England, and its authorities, or "presbyters," were elected by assemblies of their fellow clerics, rather than appointed by the king. James I and his son Charles I, especially the latter, wanted to bring

the Scottish kirk into conformity with Church of England practices. The Scots violently resisted these efforts, with the collaboration of many English Puritans, in a conflict that eventually developed into the English Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century. The effect of these disputes is visible in the poetry of such writers as John Milton, Robert Herrick, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne, and in the prose of Thomas Browne, Lucy Hutchinson, and Dorothy Waugh. Just as in the mid-sixteenth century, when a succession of monarchs with different religious commitments destabilized the church, so the seventeenth century endured spiritual whiplash. King Charles I's highly ritualistic Church of England was violently overturned by the Puritan victors in the Civil War—until 1660, after the death of the Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell, when the Church of England was restored along with the monarchy.

The religious and political upheavals of the seventeenth century produced Christian sects that de-emphasized the ceremony of the established church and rejected as well its top-down authority structure. Some of these groups were ephemeral, but the Baptists (founded in 1608 in Amsterdam by the English expatriate John Smyth) and Quakers, or Society of Friends (founded by George Fox in the 1640s), flourished outside the established church, sometimes despite cruel persecution. John Bunyan, a Baptist, wrote the Christian allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison. Some dissenters, like the Baptists, shared the reformed reverence for the absolute authority of scripture but interpreted the scriptural texts differently from their fellow Protestants. Others, like the Quakers, favored, even over the authority of the Bible, the "inner light" or voice of individual conscience, which they took to be the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals.

The Protestant dissenters were not England's only religious minorities. Despite crushing fines and the threat of imprisonment, a minority of Catholics under Elizabeth and James openly refused to give their allegiance to the new church, and others remained secret adherents to the old ways. John Donne was brought up in an ardently Catholic family, and several other writers converted to

Catholicism as adults—Ben Jonson for a considerable part of his career, Elizabeth Carey and Richard Crashaw permanently, and at profound personal cost. In the eighteenth century, Catholics remained objects of suspicion as possible agents of sedition, especially after the "Glorious Revolution" in 1688 deposed the Catholic James II in favor of the Protestant William and Mary. Anti-Catholic prejudice affected John Dryden, a Catholic convert, as well as the lifelong Catholic Alexander Pope. By contrast, the English colony of Ireland remained overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, the fervor of its religious commitment at least partly inspired by resistance to English occupation. Starting in the reign of Elizabeth, England shored up its own authority in Ireland by encouraging Protestant immigrants from Scotland to settle in the north of Ireland, producing a virulent religious divide the effects of which are still felt today.

A small community of Jews had moved from France to London after 1066, when the Norman William the Conqueror came to the English throne. Although despised and persecuted by many Christians, they were allowed to remain as moneylenders to the Crown, until the thirteenth century, when the king developed alternative sources of credit. At this point, in 1290, the Jews were expelled from England. In 1655 Oliver Cromwell permitted a few to return, and in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the Jewish population slowly increased, mainly by immigration from Germany. In the mid-eighteenth century some prominent Jews had their children brought up as Christians so as to facilitate their full integration into English society: thus the nineteenth-century writer and politician Benjamin Disraeli, although he and his father were members of the Church of England, was widely considered a Jew insofar as his ancestry was Jewish.

In the late seventeenth century, as the Church of England reasserted itself, Catholics, Jews, and dissenting Protestants found themselves subject to significant legal restrictions. The Corporation Act, passed in 1661, and the Test Act, passed in 1673, excluded all who refused to take communion in the Church of England from

voting, attending university, or working in government or in the professions. Members of religious minorities, as well as Church of England communicants, paid mandatory taxes in support of Church of England ministers and buildings. In 1689 the dissenters gained the right to worship in public, but Jews and Catholics were not permitted to do so.

During the eighteenth century, political, intellectual, and religious history remained closely intertwined. The Church of England came to accommodate a good deal of variety. "Low church" services resembled those of the dissenting Protestant churches, minimizing ritual and emphasizing the sermon; the "high church" retained more elaborate ritual elements, yet its prestige was under attack on several fronts. Many Enlightenment thinkers subjected the Bible to rational critique and found it wanting: the philosopher David Hume, for instance, argued that the "miracles" described therein were more probably lies or errors than real breaches of the laws of nature. Within the Church of England, the "broad church" Latitudinarians welcomed this rationalism, advocating theological openness and an emphasis on ethics rather than dogma. More radically, the Unitarian movement rejected the divinity of Christ while professing to accept his ethical teachings. Taking a different tack, the preacher John Wesley, founder of Methodism, responded to the rationalists' challenge with a newly fervent call to evangelism and personal discipline; his movement was particularly successful in Wales. Revolutions in America and France at the end of the century generated considerable millenarian excitement and fostered more new religious ideas, often in conjunction with a radical social agenda. Many important writers of the Romantic period were indebted to traditions of protestant dissent: Unitarian and rationalist protestant ideas influenced William Hazlitt, Anna Barbauld, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the young Samuel Taylor Coleridge. William Blake created a highly idiosyncratic poetic mythology loosely indebted to radical strains of Christian mysticism. Others were even more heterodox: Lord Byron and Robert Burns, brought up as Scots

Presbyterians, rebelled fiercely, and Percy Shelley's writing of an atheistic pamphlet resulted in his expulsion from Oxford.

Great Britain never erected an American-style "wall of separation" between church and state, but in practice religion and secular affairs grew more and more distinct during the nineteenth century. In consequence, members of religious minorities no longer seemed to pose a threat to the commonweal. A movement to repeal the Test Act failed in the 1790s, but a renewed effort resulted in the extension of the franchise to dissenting Protestants in 1828 and to Catholics in 1829. The numbers of Roman Catholics in England were swelled by immigration from Ireland, but there were also some prominent English adherents. Among writers, the converts John Newman and Gerard Manley Hopkins are especially important. The political participation and social integration of Jews presented a thornier challenge. Lionel de Rothschild, repeatedly elected to represent London in Parliament during the 1840s and 1850s, was not permitted to take his seat there because he refused to take his oath of office "on the true faith of a Christian"; finally, in 1858, the Jewish Disabilities Act allowed him to omit these words. Only in 1871, however, were Oxford and Cambridge opened to non-Anglicans.

Meanwhile geological discoveries and Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories increasingly cast doubt on the literal truth of the Creation story, and close philological analysis of the biblical text suggested that its origins were human rather than divine. By the end of the nineteenth century, many writers were bearing witness to a world in which Christianity no longer seemed fundamentally plausible. In his poetry and prose, Thomas Hardy depicts a world devoid of benevolent providence. Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach" is in part an elegy to lost spiritual assurance, as the "Sea of Faith" goes out like the tide: "But now I only hear / Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar / Retreating." For Arnold, literature must replace religion as a source of spiritual truth, and intimacy between individuals substitute for the lost communal solidarity of the universal church.

The work of many twentieth-century writers shows the influence of a religious upbringing or a religious conversion in adulthood. T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden embrace Anglicanism, William Butler Yeats spiritualism. James Joyce repudiates Irish Catholicism but remains obsessed with it. Yet religion, or lack of it, is a matter of individual choice and conscience, not social or legal mandate. Over the past several decades, church attendance has plummeted in Great Britain. Only about 46 percent of the population identified itself as "Christian" on the 2021 census. Meanwhile, immigration from former British colonies as well as other countries has swelled the ranks of religions once uncommon in the British Isles—Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist—though the numbers of adherents remain small relative to the total population.

APPENDICES

General Bibliography

This bibliography consists of a list of suggested general readings on English literature. Bibliographies for the authors and topical clusters in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* are available online at the NAEL student site.

Histories of England and of English Literature

Even the most distinguished of the comprehensive general histories written in past generations have come to seem outmoded. Innovative research in social, cultural, and political history has made it difficult to write a single coherent account of England from the Middle Ages to the present, let alone to accommodate in a unified narrative the complex histories of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and the other nations where writing in English has flourished. Readers who wish to explore the historical matrix out of which the works of literature collected in this anthology emerged are advised to consult the studies of particular periods listed in the appropriate sections of this bibliography. The multivolume *Oxford History of England* (1934–65) and *New Oxford History of England* (1992–2009) are useful, as are the three-volume *Peoples of the British Isles: A New History*, by Stanford E. Lehmberg, Samantha A. Meigs, and Thomas William Heyck (3rd ed., 1992); the nine-volume *Cambridge Cultural History of Britain*, ed. Boris Ford (1992); the three-volume *Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750–1950*, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (1990); and the multivolume *Penguin History of Britain*, gen. ed. David Cannadine (1996–). For Britain's imperial history, readers can consult the five-volume *Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis (1998–99), as well as *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine (2004). Also of interest is Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four*

Continents (2015). Given the cultural centrality of London, readers may find particular interest in *The London Encyclopaedia*, ed. Ben Weinreb et al. (3rd ed., 2008); Roy Porter, *London: A Social History* (1994); and Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: "A Human Awful Wonder of God"* (2007) and *London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People* (2001).

Similar observations may be made about literary history. In the light of such initiatives as women's studies, New Historicism, and postcolonialism, the range of authors deemed significant has expanded, along with the geographical and conceptual boundaries of literature in English. Attempts to capture in a unified account the great sweep of literature from *Beowulf* to the early twenty-first century have largely given way to studies of individual genres, carefully delimited time periods, and specific authors. Among the large-scale literary surveys, *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, ed. Dominic Head (3rd ed., 2006), is useful, as is the nine-volume *Penguin History of Literature* (1987–94) and the multivolume *Oxford History of Poetry in English* (2022–). *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy, and Patricia Clements (1990), is an important resource, and the editorial materials in the two-volume *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (3rd ed., 2007), constitute a concise history and set of biographies of women authors since the Middle Ages. *Annals of English Literature, 1475–1950* (2nd ed., 1961), lists important publications year by year, together with the significant literary events for each year. Seven volumes have been published in *The Oxford English Literary History*, gen. eds. Jonathan Bate and Colin Burrow (2002–): Laura Ashe, *1000–1350: Conquest and Transformation*; James Simpson, *1350–1547: Reform and Cultural Revolution*; Margaret J. M. Ezell, *1645–1714: The Later Seventeenth Century*; Philip Davis, *1830–1880: The Victorians*; Chris Baldick, *1830–1880: The Modern Movement (1910–1940)*; Randall Stevenson, *1960–2000: The Last of England?*; and Bruce King, *1948–2000: The Internationalization of English*

Literature. See also *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (1999); *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare E. Lees (2013); *The Cambridge History of Early Modern English Literature*, ed. David Loewenstein and Janel Mueller (2002); *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660–1780*, ed. John Richetti (2005); *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler (2009); *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, ed. Kate Flint (2012); and *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls (2004).

Helpful treatments and surveys of English meter, rhyme, and stanza forms are Paul Fussell Jr., *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (rev. ed., 1979); Donald Wesling, *The Chances of Rhyme: Device and Modernity* (1980); Charles O. Hartman, *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody* (1980); Derek Attridge, *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction* (1995); Robert Pinsky, *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide* (1998); *The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms*, ed. Mark Strand and Eavan Boland (2000); John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* (3rd ed., 2001); *Poems, Poets, Poetry: An Introduction and Anthology*, ed. Helen Vendler (3rd ed., 2010); *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (2014); and Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (2015).

On the development and functioning of the novel as a form, see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957); Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1970; trans. 1980); *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. Michael McKeon (2000); *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti (2 vols.; 2001–03, trans. 2006); McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600–1740* (15th anniversary ed., 2002); *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, ed. Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (2012); *A Companion to the English Novel*, ed. Stephen Arata et al. (2015); and the ten volumes to date of *The Oxford History of the Novel in English* (2012–). On women novelists and readers, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of*

the Novel (1987), and Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (1994).

On the history of playhouse design, see Richard Leacroft, *The Development of the English Playhouse: An Illustrated Survey of Theatre Building in England from Medieval to Modern Times* (1988). For a survey of the plays that have appeared on these and other stages, see Allardyce Nicoll, *British Drama*, rev. J. C. Trewin (6th ed., 1978); the eight-volume *The Revels History of Drama in English*, gen. eds. Clifford Leech and T. W. Craik (1975–83); Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975–1700*, rev. S. Schoenbaum and Sylvia Wagonheim (3rd ed., 1989); and the three volumes of *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, ed. Jane Milling, Peter Thomson, Joseph Donohue, and Baz Kershaw (2004).

On some of the key intellectual currents that are at once reflected in and shaped by literature and contemporary literary criticism, Arthur O. Lovejoy's classic studies *The Great Chain of Being* (1936) and *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1948) remain valuable, along with such works as Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (1900; trans. 1907; 3rd enl. ed., 2004); Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (4 vols., 1923–95; trans. 1953–96); Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (1935); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (2 vols., 1939; trans. 1979–82); Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (2 vols., 1949; trans. 1953, new trans. 2009); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952; trans. 1957, new trans. 2008); Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (1957; new eds. 1997, 2016); Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958; 2nd ed., 1998); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1958; trans. 1969, new ed. 1994); Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* (1960; rev. ed., 1964; rev. and expanded as *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*, 2003); Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966; trans. 1983); M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*

(1971); Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1964; trans. 1965) and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; trans. 1970); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967; trans. 1976, 40th anniversary ed. 2016) and *Dissemination* (1972; trans. 1981); Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950* (1973); Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973); Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973; trans. 1975); Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976; new ed., 2015); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979; trans. 1984); Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979; 39th anniversary ed., 2009); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980; trans. 1987); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (2 vols., 1980; trans. 1984–98); Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (1985; trans. 1987); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; new ed., 2004); Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997); Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature*, ed. Neil Hertz (1997); and N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999).

Reference Works

The single most important tool for the study of literature in English is the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1884–1924; 2nd ed., 1989; 3rd ed. in process). The most current edition, updated quarterly, is available online to subscribers. The *OED* is written on historical principles: that is, it attempts not only to describe current word use but also to record the history and development of the language from its origins before the Norman Conquest to the present. It thus provides, for familiar as well as archaic and obscure words, the widest possible

range of meanings and uses, organized chronologically and illustrated with quotations. The *OED* can be searched as a conventional dictionary arranged a–z and also by subject, usage, region, origin, and timeline (the first appearance of a word). Resources available for early forms of English include the online Old English and Middle English dictionaries at Lexilogos (https://www.lexilogos.com/english/english_old.htm and https://www.lexilogos.com/english/english_middle.htm); also valuable are the *Dictionary of Old English* (1986–) and the *Middle English Dictionary* (1952; digitized 2008). Beyond the *OED* there are many other valuable dictionaries, such as *The American Heritage Dictionary* (5th ed., 50th anniversary printing, 2018); *The Oxford Dictionary of Abbreviations* (1992); T. F. Hoad, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* (1993); Bas Aarts, Sylvia Chalker, and Edmund Weiner, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* (2nd ed., 2014); Morton S. Freeman, *A New Dictionary of Eponyms* (1997); *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English* (1999); *The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*, ed. Judith Siefring (2nd ed., 2004); P. H. Matthews, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (3rd ed., 2014); Tom McArthur, *The Oxford Guide to World English* (2002); and *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, ed. Jennifer Speake (4th ed., 2003). Other valuable reference works include *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, ed. David Crystal (3rd ed., 2018); *The Concise Oxford Companion to the English Language*, ed. Tom McArthur (1998); *Fowler's Concise Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, ed. Jeremy Butterfield (3rd ed., 2016); and the numerous guides to specialized vocabularies, slang, regional dialects, and the like.

There is a steady flow of new editions of most major and many minor writers in English, along with the publication of critical appraisals and scholarship. James L. Harner's *Literary Research Guide: An Annotated List of Reference Sources in English Literary Studies* (6th ed., 2014; available online at www.mlalrg.org/public) offers thorough, evaluative annotations of a wide range of sources. For the historical record of scholarship and critical discussion, *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. George

Watson (5 vols., 1969–77), and the third edition in process, *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. Joanne Shattock (1 vol. to date, 2000–), are useful. The *MLA International Bibliography* (also online) is a key resource for following critical discussion of literatures in English. Ranging from 1926 to the present, it includes journal articles, essays, chapters from collections, books, and dissertations, and covers folklore, linguistics, and film. The *Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* (*ABELL*), compiled by the Modern Humanities Research Association, lists monographs, periodical articles, critical editions of literary works, book reviews, and collections of essays published anywhere in the world; unpublished doctoral dissertations are covered for the period 1920–99 (available online to subscribers directly and as part of Literature Online, http://literature.proquest.com/marketing/index.jsp).

For compact biographies of English authors, see the multivolume *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*), ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (2004); since 2004 the *DNB* has been extended online with updates (now monthly). Handy reference books of authors, works, and various literary terms and allusions include many volumes in the *Cambridge Companion* and *Oxford Companion* series: e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (2007); *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Dinah Birch (7th ed., 2009); and *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Rita Copeland and Peter Struck (2010). *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, editor-in-chief Roland Greene (4th ed., 2012), is available online to subscribers in Oxford Reference. Handbooks that define and illustrate literary concepts and terms include *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, ed. J. A. Cuddon and M. A. R. Habib (5th ed., 2015); William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature* (12th ed., 2011); *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (2nd ed., 1995); and M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (11th ed., 2014). Also useful are Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (2nd ed., 1991); Arthur Quinn, *Figures of Speech: 60 Ways to Turn a Phrase* (1982); the

Barnhart Concise Dictionary of Etymology, ed. Robert K. Barnhart (1995); and George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (1994).

On Greek and Roman backgrounds, see *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*—vol. 1, *Greek Literature*, ed. P. E. Easterling and Bernard M. W. Knox (1985), and vol. 2, *Latin Literature*, ed. E. J. Kenney and W. V. Clausen (1982), both available to subscribers online; *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, ed. M. C. Howatson (3rd ed., 2011); Gian Biagio Conte, *Latin Literature: A History* (1987; trans. 1994); *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. Simon Hornblower, Antony Spawforth, and Esther Eidinow (4th ed., 2012); Richard Rutherford, *Classical Literature: A Concise History* (2005); and Mark P. O. Morford, Robert J. Lenardon, and Michael Sham, *Classical Mythology* (11th ed., 2018). The Loeb Classical Library of Greek and Roman texts with facing-page English translations is now available online to subscribers at www.loebclassics.com.

Digital resources in the humanities continue to grow rapidly. Among the many useful electronic resources for the study of English literature are enormous digital archives, available to subscribers: Early English Books Online (EEBO), http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home; Literature Online, http://literature.proquest.com/marketing/index.jsp; and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), www.gale.com/primary-sources/eighteenth-century-collections-online. There are also numerous free sites of variable quality. Many of the best of these are period- or author-specific and hence are listed in the period/author bibliographies on the NAEL website. Among the general sites, one of the most useful and wide-ranging is Voice of the Shuttle (http://vos.ucsb.edu), which includes links to Bartleby.com and Project Gutenberg.

Literary Criticism and Theory

The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism comprises nine volumes (1989–2013): *Classical Criticism*, ed. George A. Kennedy; *The Middle*

Ages, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson; *The Renaissance*, ed. Glyn P. Norton; *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson; *Romanticism*, ed. Marshall Brown; *The Nineteenth Century, c. 1830–1914*, ed. M. A. R. Habib; *Modernism and the New Criticism*, ed. A. Walton Litz, Louis Menand, and Lawrence Rainey; *From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, ed. Raman Selden; and *Twentieth-Century Historical, Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Christa Knellwolf and Christopher Norris. See also M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953); William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (1957); René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950* (8 vols., 1955–92); Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (1980); J. Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (2002); and John Frow, *Character and Person* (2014). Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson, and Peter Brooker have written *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (6th ed., 2017). Other useful resources include *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (2nd ed., 2005); *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (3rd ed., 2017); and *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, gen. ed. Vincent B. Leitch (3rd ed., 2018).

Modern approaches to English literature and literary theory were shaped by certain landmark works: William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930; 3rd ed., 1953), *Some Versions of Pastoral* (1935), and *The Structure of Complex Words* (1951; 3rd ed., 1977); T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (1932; 3rd ed., 1951) and *On Poetry and Poets* (1957); F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* (1936) and *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (1948); Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946; trans. 1953); Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (1950); William K. Wimsatt Jr., *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (1954); Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957); Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961; 2nd ed., 1983); and W. Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and*

the English Poet (1970). René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (3rd ed., 1963), is a useful introduction to the variety of scholarly and critical approaches to literature up to the time of its publication. Jonathan Culler's *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (2nd ed., 2011), discusses recurrent issues and debates. On the discipline of criticism, see John Guillory's *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study* (2022); Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* (2015) is a critical assessment of contemporary criticism.

Beginning in the late 1960s, interest in literary theory as a specific field markedly intensified. Certain forms of literary study had already been influenced by the work of the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson and the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky—and, still more, by conceptions that derived or claimed to derive from Marx and Engels—but the full impact of these theories was not felt until what became known as the "theory revolution" of the 1970s and '80s. For Marxist literary criticism, see Georg Lukács, *Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature* (1920; trans. 1971), *The Historical Novel* (1937; trans. 1962), and *Studies in European Realism: A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki, and Others* (trans. 1950); Walter Benjamin's essays from the 1920s and '30s, represented in *Illuminations* (1955; trans. 1968) and *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (1975; trans. 1978); Mikhail Bakhtin's essays from the 1930s represented in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (trans. 1981) and *Rabelais and His World* (1965; trans. 1968); *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971); Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (1977); Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (1979; 2nd ed., 2003); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981); and Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983; anniversary ed., 2008) and *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990).

Structural linguistics and anthropology gave rise to a flowering of structuralist literary criticism; convenient introductions include Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (1974), and Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (new ed., 2002). Poststructuralist challenges to this approach are epitomized in such influential works as Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (1967; trans. 1978), and Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (1971; 2nd ed., 1983). Poststructuralism is discussed in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (1982; 25th anniversary ed., 2007); Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991); John McGowan, *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (1991); and *Beyond Structuralism: The Speculations of Theory and the Experience of Reading*, ed. Wendell V. Harris (1996). A figure who greatly influenced both structuralism and poststructuralism is Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies* (1957; trans. 1972, new trans. 2012) and *S/Z* (1970; trans. 1974). Among other influential contributions to literary theory are the psychoanalytic approach in Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (1973; 2nd ed., 1997), and the reader-response approach in Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980). For a retrospect on these decades, see Terry Eagleton, *After Theory* (2003).

Influenced by these theoretical currents but not restricted to them, modern feminist literary criticism was fashioned by such works as Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (1975); Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1976; new ed., 1986); Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (1977; expanded ed., 1999); and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979). Subsequent studies include Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1982); Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*

(1977; trans. 1985); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987; new ed., 2006); Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (1987); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (3 vols., 1988–94); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; 2nd ed., 1999); and the critical views sampled in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (1985); *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*, ed. Mary Eagleton (1986; 3rd ed., 2011); and *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (1991; rev. in 2009 as *Feminisms Redux: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*); *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. Susan Sellers (1994); *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Literary Theory*, ed. Ellen Rooney (2006); and *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism: A Norton Reader*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (2007).

Just as feminist critics used poststructuralist and psychoanalytic methods to place literature in conversation with gender theory, a new school emerged placing literature in conversation with critical race theory. Comprehensive introductions include *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement,* ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (1995); and Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (3rd ed., 2017); and *The Routledge Companion to Race and Ethnicity*, ed. Stephen M. Caliendo and Charlton D. McIlwain (2nd ed., 2021). For an important precursor in cultural studies, see Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (1978; 2nd ed., 2013). Seminal works include Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (1988; 25th anniversary ed., 2014); Patricia Williams, *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1991); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (1993; 25th anniversary ed., 2017); Gene Andrew Jarrett, *Representing the Race: A New Political History of African American Literature* (2011); Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (2017); and Saidiya V. Hartman,

Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval (2019). Other important works include Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (2008; rpt. 2017); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014); Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016); and Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (2018). Helpful anthologies and collections of essays have emerged in recent decades, such as *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature,* ed. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster, and Trudier Harris (1997), and also their *Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature* (2001); *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Vincent Carretta (1996; updated 2003); *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature,* ed. Hana Wirth-Nesher and Michael P. Kramer (2003); *A Companion to African American Literature*, ed. Gene Andrew Jarrett (2010); *The Routledge Companion to Anglophone Caribbean Literature,* ed. Michael A. Bucknor and Alison Donnell (2011); *The Routledge Companion to Latino/a Literature,* ed. Suzanne Bost and Frances R. Aparicio (2013); *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature*, ed. Rachel C. Lee (2014); *The Cambridge Companion to Asian American Literature*, ed. Crystal Parikh and Daniel Y. Kim (2015); and *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature*, *1945–2010*, ed. Deirdre Osborne (2016).

Gay literature and queer studies are represented in collections including *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (1991); *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David Halperin (1993); *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature: Readings from Western Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Byrne R. S. Fone (1998); *The Cambridge History of Gay and Lesbian Literature*, ed. E. L. McCallum and Mikko Tuhkanen (2014); and *The Cambridge Companion to Lesbian Literature*, ed. Jodie Medd (2015), and by such books as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick,

Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire (1985; 30th anniversary ed., 2015) and *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990; updated ed., 2008); Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference* (1989); Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (1993); Leo Bersani, *Homos* (1995); Gregory Woods, *A History of Gay Literature: The Male Tradition* (1998); David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (2002); Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007); and Brian Glavey, *The Wallflower Avant-garde: Modernism, Sexuality, and Queer Ekphrasis* (2016).

New Historicism is represented in Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990; new ed., 2007); *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (1993); *The New Historicism Reader*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (1994); and Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (2000). The related social and historical dimension of texts is discussed in Jerome McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983), and *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D. C. Greetham (1995). Characteristic of New Historicism is an expansion of the field of literary interpretation still further in cultural studies; for a broad sampling of the range of interests, see *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (1992); *A Cultural Studies Reader: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (1995); and *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (3rd ed., 2007).

This expansion of the field is similarly reflected in postcolonial studies: see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (cited above) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961; trans. 1963, 60th anniversary ed. 2021); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (1990); *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2nd ed., 2006); and such influential books

as Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989; 2nd ed., 2002); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994; new ed., 2004); Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (1995; 2nd ed., 2005); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (2000; new ed., 2008); and Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (2001; anniversary ed., 2016). Useful collections include *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, ed. Ato Quayson (2 vols., 2011–12); *The Cambridge Companion to the Postcolonial Novel*, ed. Ato Quayson (2016); and *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Poetry*, ed. Jahan Ramazani (2017).

In the wake of the theory revolution, critics have focused on a wide array of topics, which can be only briefly surveyed here. One current of work, focusing on the history of emotion, is represented in Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (2002); Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (2005); *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (2010); and Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject* (2015). A somewhat related current, examining the special role of traumatic memory in literature, is exemplified in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (1995), and Dominic LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001; new ed., 2014). Work on the literary implications of cognitive science may be glimpsed in *Introduction to Cognitive Cultural Studies*, ed. Lisa Zunshine (2010). Interest in quantitative approaches to literature was sparked by Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (2005). For the field of digital humanities, see Moretti, *Distant Reading* (2013); *Defining Digital Humanities: A Reader*, ed. Melissa Terras, Julianne Nyhan, and Edward Vanhoutte (2013); and *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. Susan Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth (2016). For ecocriticism, or studies of literature and the environment, see *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, ed. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm (1996); *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, ed. Richard Kerridge and

Neil Sammells (1998); Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the Earth* (2000); Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005); Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (2007); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (2010); Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011); *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. Greg Garrard (2014); and *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geologic Times*, ed. Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor (2017). Related are the fields of animal studies and posthumanism, whose key works include Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991; trans. 1993); Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (2000); Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003) and *What Is Posthumanism?* (2009); Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2006; trans. 2008); Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012); *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*, ed. Aaron Gross and Anne Vallely (2012); and *Critical Animal Studies: Thinking the Unthinkable*, ed. John Sorenson (2014). The relationship between literature and law is central to such works as *Interpreting Law and Literature: A Hermeneutic Reader*, ed. Sanford Levinson and Steven Mailloux (1988); *Law's Stories: Narrative and Rhetoric in the Law*, ed. Peter Brooks and Paul Gewirtz (1996); *Literature and Legal Problem Solving: Law and Literature as Ethical Discourse*, ed. Paul J. Heald (1998); and *New Directions in Law and Literature*, ed. Elizabeth S. Anker and Bernadette Meyler (2017). Ethical questions in literature have been usefully explored by, among others, Geoffrey Galt Harpham in *Getting It Right: Language, Literature, and Ethics* (1992) and Derek Attridge in *The Singularity of Literature* (2004). Finally, some approaches to literature, such as formalism and literary biography, that seemed superseded in the theoretical ferment of the late twentieth century have had a resurgence. A renewed interest in form is evident in Susan Stewart, *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (2002); *Reading for Form*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Marshall Brown (2006); and Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy,*

Network (2015). Interest in the history of the book was spearheaded by D. F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1986), Jerome J. McGann's *The Textual Condition* (1991), and Roger Chartier's *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1992; trans. 1994). See also *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (1996); *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (7 vols., 1999–2019); *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (2nd ed., 2006); and *The Cambridge Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Leslie Howsam (2015). For studies in new media and digital or electronic literature, see N. Katherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (2008); Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing* (2016); and Jessica Pressman's *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (2020).

Anthologies representing a range of recent approaches include *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. David Lodge with Nigel Wood (2nd ed., 2000); *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, ed. Robert Con Davis and Ronald Schleifer (4th ed., 1998); and *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (cited above).

Literary Terminology*

Using simple technical terms can sharpen our understanding and streamline our discussion of literary works. Some terms, such as the ones in section A, below, help us address the internal style, structure, form, and kind of works. Other terms, such as those in section B, provide insight into the material forms in which literary works have been produced.

In analyzing what they called "rhetoric," ancient Greek and Roman writers determined the elements of what we call "style" and "structure." Most of our literary terms are derived, via medieval and Renaissance intermediaries, from the Greek and Latin sources. In the definitions that follow, the etymology, or root, of the word is given when it helps illuminate the word's current usage.

Many of the examples are drawn from texts in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature.*

Words **boldfaced** within definitions are themselves defined in this appendix. Some terms are defined within definitions; such words are *italicized.*

A. Terms of Style, Structure, Form, and Kind

accent (synonym "stress"): a term of **rhythm.** The special force devoted to the voicing of one syllable in a word over others. In the noun "accent," for example, the accent, or stress, is on the first syllable.

act: the major subdivision of a play, usually divided into **scenes.**

aesthetics (from Greek, "to feel, apprehend by the senses"): the philosophy of artistic meaning as a distinct mode of apprehending

untranslatable truth, defined as an alternative to rational enquiry, which is purely abstract. Developed in the late eighteenth century by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant especially.

Alexandrine: a term of **meter.** In French verse a line of twelve syllables, and, by analogy, in English verse a line of six stresses. See **hexameter.**

a llegory (Greek "saying otherwise"): saying one thing (the "vehicle" of the allegory) and meaning another (the allegory's "tenor"). Allegories may be momentary aspects of a work, as in **metaphor** ("John is a lion"), or, through extended metaphor, may constitute the basis of narrative, as in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: this second meaning is the dominant one. See also **symbol** and **type.** Allegory is one of the most significant **figures of thought.**

a lliteration (from Latin "litera," alphabetic letter): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of an initial consonant sound or consonant cluster in consecutive or closely positioned words. This pattern is often an inseparable part of the meter in Germanic languages, where the tonic, or accented **syllable,** is usually the first syllable. Thus all Old English poetry and some varieties of Middle English poetry use alliteration as part of their basic metrical practice. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 1: "Once the siege and assault of Troy had ceased" (see vol. A, p. 415). Otherwise used for local effects; Stevie Smith, "Pretty," lines 4–5: "And in the pretty pool the pike stalks / He stalks his prey . . ." (see vol. F, p. 589).

allusion: Literary allusion is a passing but illuminating reference within a literary text to another, well-known text (often biblical or **classical**). Topical allusions are also, of course, common in certain modes, especially **satire.**

anagnorisis (Greek "recognition"): the moment of **protagonist's** recognition in a narrative, which is also often the moment of moral understanding.

anapest: a term of **rhythm.** A three-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of two unstressed (uu) syllables followed by one stressed (/). Thus, for example, "Illinois."

anaphora (Greek "carrying back"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of words or groups of words at the beginning of consecutive sentences, clauses, or phrases. Blake, "London," lines 5–8: "In every cry of every Man, / In every Infant's cry of fear, / In every voice, in every ban . . ." (see vol. D, p. 137); Louise Bennett, "Jamaica Oman," lines 17–20: "Some backa man a push, some side-a / Man a hole him han, / Some a lick sense eena him head, / Some a guide him pon him plan!" (see vol. F, p. 724).

a nimal fable: a **genre.** A short narrative of speaking animals, followed by moralizing comment, written in a low style and gathered into a collection. Robert Henryson, "The Cock and the Jasper" (see vol. A, p. 679).

a ntithesis (Greek "placing against"): a **figure of thought.** The juxtaposition of opposed terms in clauses or sentences that are next to or near each other. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.777–80: "They but now who seemed / In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons / Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room / Throng numberless" (see vol. B, p. 1448).

a postrophe (from Greek "turning away"): a **figure of thought.** An address, often to an absent person, a force, or a quality. For example, a poet makes an apostrophe to a Muse when invoking her for inspiration.

apposition: a term of **syntax.** The repetition of elements serving an identical grammatical function in one sentence. The effect of this repetition is to arrest the flow of the sentence, but in doing so to add extra semantic nuance to repeated elements. This is an especially important feature of Old English poetic style. See, for example, Caedmon's *Hymn* (vol. A, p. 31), where the phrases

"heaven-kingdom's Guardian," "the Measurer's might," "his mind-plans," and "the work of the Glory-Father" each serve an identical syntactic function as the direct objects of "praise."

a ssonance (Latin "sounding to"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of identical or near identical stressed vowel sounds in words whose final consonants differ, producing half-rhyme. Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott," line 100: "His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed" (see vol. E, p. 210).

a ubade (originally from Spanish "alba," dawn): a **genre.** A lover's dawn song or lyric bewailing the arrival of the day and the necessary separation of the lovers; Donne, "The Sun Rising" (see vol. B, p. 888). Larkin recasts the genre in "Aubade" (see vol. F, p. 795).

a utobiography (Greek "self-life writing"): a **genre.** A narrative of a life written by the subject; Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (see vol. D, p. 391). There are subgenres, such as the spiritual autobiography, narrating the author's path to conversion and subsequent spiritual trials, as in Bunyan's *Grace Abounding.*

ballad stanza: a **verse form.** Usually a **quatrain** in alternating **iambic tetrameter** and **iambic trimeter** lines, rhyming abcb. See "Sir Patrick Spens" (vol. D, p. 38); Louise Bennett's poems (vol. F, pp. 719–24); Eliot, "Sweeney among the Nightingales" (vol. F, p. 501); Larkin, "This Be The Verse" (vol. F, p. 795).

ballade: a **verse form.** A form consisting usually of three stanzas followed by a four-line envoi (French, "send off"). The last line of the first stanza establishes a **refrain,** which is repeated, or subtly varied, as the last line of each stanza. The form was derived from French medieval poetry; English poets, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries especially, used it with varying stanza forms. Chaucer, "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse" (see vol. A, p. 575).

bathos (Greek "depth"): a **figure of thought.** A sudden and sometimes ridiculous descent of tone; Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* 3.157–58: "Not louder shrieks to pitying heaven are cast, / When husbands, or when lapdogs breathe their last" (see vol. C, p. 549).

beast epic: a **genre.** A continuous, unmoralized narrative, in prose or verse, relating the victories of the wholly unscrupulous but brilliant strategist Reynard the Fox over all adversaries. Chaucer arouses, only to deflate, expectations of the genre in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (see vol. A, p. 556).

biography (Greek "life-writing"): a **genre.** A life as the subject of an extended narrative.

blank verse: a **verse form.** Unrhymed **iambic pentameter** lines. Blank verse has no stanzas, but is broken up into uneven units (verse paragraphs) determined by sense rather than form. First devised in English by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, in his translation of two books of Virgil's *Aeneid*, this very flexible verse type became the standard form for dramatic poetry in the seventeenth century, as in most of Shakespeare's plays. Milton and Wordsworth, among many others, also used it to create an English equivalent to **classical epic.**

blazon: strictly, a heraldic shield; in rhetorical usage, a **topos** whereby the individual elements of a beloved's face and body are singled out for **hyperbolic** admiration. Spenser, *Epithalamion*, lines 167–84 (see vol. B, p. 459). For an inversion of the **topos,** see Shakespeare, Sonnet 130 (vol. B, p. 637).

burlesque (French and Italian "mocking"): a work that adopts the **conventions** of a genre with the aim less of comically mocking the genre than of satirically mocking the society so represented (see **satire**). Thus Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (see vol. C, p. 537) does not mock **classical epic** so much as contemporary mores.

caesura (Latin "cut") (plural "caesurae"): a term of **meter.** A pause or breathing space within a line of verse, generally occurring between syntactic units; Louise Bennett, "Colonization in Reverse," lines 5–8: "By de hundred, by de tousan, / From country an from town, / By de ship-load, by de plane-load, / Jamaica is Englan boun" (see vol. F, p. 722), where the caesurae occur in lines 5 and 7.

canon (Greek "rule"): the group of texts regarded as worthy of special respect or attention by a given institution. Also, the group of texts regarded as definitely having been written by a certain author.

catastrophe (Greek "overturning"): the decisive turn in **tragedy** by which the plot is resolved and, usually, the **protagonist** dies.

catharsis (Greek "cleansing"): According to Aristotle, the effect of **tragedy** on its audience, through their experience of pity and terror, was a kind of spiritual cleansing, or catharsis.

character (Greek "stamp, impression"): a person, personified animal, or other figure represented in a literary work, especially in narrative and drama. The more a character seems to generate the action of a narrative, and the less he or she seems merely to serve a preordained narrative pattern, the "fuller," or more "rounded," a character is said to be. A "stock" character, common particularly in many comic genres, will perform a predictable function in different works of a given genre.

chiasmus (Greek "crosswise"): a **figure of speech.** The inversion of an already established sequence. This can involve verbal echoes: Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard," line 104, "The crime was common, common be the pain" (see vol. C, p. 560); or it can be purely a matter of syntactic inversion: Pope, *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, line 8: "They pierce my thickets, through my grot they glide" (see vol. C, p. 575).

classical, classicism, classic: Each term can be widely applied, but in English literary discourse, "classical" primarily describes the

works of either Greek or Roman antiquity. "Classicism" denotes the practice of art forms inspired by classical antiquity, in particular the observance of rhetorical norms of **decorum** and balance, as opposed to following the dictates of untutored inspiration, as in Romanticism. "Classic" denotes an especially famous work within a given **canon.**

climax (Greek "ladder"): a moment of great intensity and structural change, especially in drama. Also a **figure of speech** whereby a sequence of verbally linked clauses is made, in which each successive clause is of greater consequence than its predecessor. Bacon, *Of Studies*: "Studies serve for pastimes, for ornaments, and for abilities. Their chief use for pastimes is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in judgement" (see vol. B, pp. 1167–68).

comedy: a **genre.** A term primarily applied to drama, and derived from ancient drama, in opposition to **tragedy.** Comedy deals with humorously confusing, sometimes ridiculous situations in which the ending is, nevertheless, happy. A comedy often ends in one or more marriages.

comic mode: Many genres (for example, **romance, fabliau, comedy**) involve a happy ending in which justice is done, the ravages of time are arrested, and that which is lost is found. Such genres participate in a comic mode.

connotation: To understand connotation, we need to understand **denotation.** While many words can denote the same concept—that is, have the same basic meaning—those words can evoke different associations, or connotations. Contrast, for example, the clinical-sounding term "depression" and the more colorful, musical, even poetic phrase "the blues."

consonance (Latin "sounding with"): a **figure of speech.** The repetition of final consonants in words or stressed syllables whose

vowel sounds are different. Herbert, "Easter," line 13: "Consort, both heart and lute . . ." (see vol. B, p. 1183).

convention: a repeatedly recurring feature (in either form or content) of works, occurring in combination with other recurring formal features, which constitutes a convention of a particular genre.

couplet: a **verse form.** In English verse two consecutive, rhyming lines usually containing the same number of stresses. Chaucer first introduced the **iambic pentameter** couplet into English (*Canterbury Tales*); the form was later used in many types of writing, including drama; imitations and translations of **classical epic** (thus *heroic couplet*); essays; and **satire** (see Dryden and Pope). The *distich* (Greek "two lines") is a couplet usually making complete sense; Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, lines 5–6: "Read it fair queen, though it defective be, / Your excellence can grace both it and me" (see vol. B, p. 925).

dactyl (Greek "finger," because of the finger's three joints): a term of **rhythm.** A three-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of one stressed followed by two unstressed syllables. Thus, for example, "Oregon."

decorum (Latin "that which is fitting"): a rhetorical principle whereby each formal aspect of a work should be in keeping with its subject matter and/or audience.

deixis (Greek "pointing"): relevant to **point of view.** Every work has, implicitly or explicitly, a "here" and a "now" from which it is narrated. Words that refer to or imply this point from which the voice of the work is projected (such as "here," "there," "this," "that," "now," "then") are examples of deixis, or "deictics." This technique is especially important in drama, where it is used to create a sense of the events happening as the spectator witnesses them.

denotation: A word has a basic, "prosaic" (factual) meaning prior to the associations it connotes (see **connotation**). The word

"steed," for example, might call to mind a horse fitted with battle gear, to be ridden by a warrior, but its denotation is simply "horse."

d enouement (French "unknotting"): the point at which a narrative can be resolved and so ended.

dialogue (Greek "conversation"): a **genre.** Dialogue is a feature of many genres, especially in both the **novel** and drama. As a genre itself, dialogue is used in philosophical traditions especially (most famously in Plato's *Dialogues*), as the representation of a conversation in which a philosophical question is pursued among various speakers.

d iction, or **"lexis"** (from, respectively, Latin *dictio* and Greek *lexis*, each meaning "word"): the actual words used in any utterance—speech, writing, and, for our purposes here, literary works. The choice of words contributes significantly to the style of a given work.

d idactic mode (Greek "teaching mode"): **Genres** in a didactic mode are designed to instruct or teach, sometimes explicitly (for example, sermons, philosophical **discourses, georgic**), and sometimes through the medium of fiction (for example, **animal fable, parable**).

d iegesis (Greek for "narration"): a term that simply means "narration," but is used in literary criticism to distinguish one kind of story from another. In a *mimetic* story, the events are played out before us (see **mimesis**), whereas in diegesis someone recounts the story to us. Drama is for the most part *mimetic*, whereas the novel is for the most part diegetic. In novels the narrator is not, usually, part of the action of the narrative; s/he is therefore extradiegetic.

dimeter (Greek "two measure"): a term of **meter.** A two-stress line, rarely used as the meter of whole poems, though used with great frequency in single poems by Skelton, for example, "The Tunning of Elinour Rumming" (see vol. B, p. 41). Otherwise used for

single lines, as in Herbert, "Discipline," line 3: "O my God" (see vol. B, p. 1197).

d iscourse (Latin "running to and fro"): broadly, any nonfictional speech or writing; as a more specific genre, a philosophical meditation on a set theme.

d ramatic irony: a feature of narrative and drama, whereby the audience knows that the outcome of an action will be the opposite of that intended by a **character.**

dramatic monologue (Greek "single speaking"): a **genre.** A poem in which the voice of a historical or fictional **character** speaks, unmediated by any narrator, to an implied though silent audience. See Tennyson, "Ulysses" (vol. E, p. 217); Browning, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb" (vol. E, p. 416); Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (vol. F, p. 498); Carol Ann Duffy, "Medusa" and "Mrs Lazarus" (vol. F).

ecphrasis (Greek "speaking out"): a **topos** whereby a work of visual art is represented in a literary work. Auden, "Musée des Beaux Arts" (see vol. F, p. 677).

elegy: a **genre.** In **classical** literature elegy was a form written in elegiac **couplets** (a **hexameter** followed by a **pentameter**) devoted to many possible topics. In Ovidian elegy a lover meditates on the trials of erotic desire (for example, Ovid's *Amores*). The **sonnet** sequences of both Sidney and Shakespeare exploit this genre, and, while it was still practiced in classical tradition by Donne ("On His Mistress" [see vol. B, p. 903]), by the later seventeenth century the term came to denote the poetry of loss, especially through the death of a loved person. See Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (vol. E, p. 231); Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" (see vol. F, p. 677); Heaney, "Clearances" (vol. F, p. 970).

emblem (Greek "an insertion"): a **figure of thought.** A picture allegorically expressing a moral, or a verbal picture open to such

interpretation.

end-stopping: the placement of a complete syntactic unit within a complete poetic line, fulfilling the metrical pattern; Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," line 42: "Earth, receive an honoured guest" (see vol. F, p. 679). Compare **enjambment.**

enjambment (French "striding," encroaching): The opposite of **end-stopping,** enjambment occurs when the syntactic unit does not end with the end of the poetic line and the fulfillment of the metrical pattern. When the sense of the line overflows its meter and, therefore, the line break, we have enjambment; Auden, "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," lines 44–45: "Let the Irish vessel lie / Emptied of its poetry" (see vol. F, p. 679).

epic (synonym, *heroic poetry*): a **genre.** An extended narrative poem celebrating martial heroes, invoking divine inspiration, beginning in medias res (see **order**), written in a high style (including the deployment of **epic similes;** on high style, see **register**), and divided into long narrative sequences. Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid* were the prime models for English writers of epic verse. Thus Milton, *Paradise Lost* (see vol. B, p. 1427); Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (see vol. D, p. 391); and Walcott, *Omeros* (see vol. F, p. 808). With its precise repertoire of stylistic resources, epic lent itself easily to **parodic** and **burlesque** forms, known as **mock epic;** thus Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* (see vol. C, p. 537).

epigram: a **genre.** A short, pithy poem wittily expressed, often with wounding intent. See Jonson, *Epigrams* (see vol. B, p. 1049).

epigraph (Greek "inscription"): a **genre.** Any formal statement inscribed on stone; also the brief formulation on a book's title page, or a quotation at the beginning of a poem, introducing the work's themes in the most compressed form possible.

epistle (Latin "letter"): a **genre.** The letter can be shaped as a literary form, involving an intimate address often between equals.

The *Epistles* of Horace provided a model for English writers from the sixteenth century. Thus Wyatt, "Mine Own John Poins" (see vol. B, p. 131), or Leapor, "An Epistle to a Lady" (vol. C, p. 771). Letters can be shaped to form the matter of an extended fiction, as the eighteenth-century epistolary **novel** (for example, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*).

epitaph: a **genre.** A pithy formulation to be inscribed on a funeral monument. Thus Ralegh, "The Author's Epitaph, Made by Himself" (see vol. B, p. 479).

epithalamion (Greek "concerning the bridal chamber"): a **genre.** A wedding poem, celebrating the marriage and wishing the couple good fortune. Thus Spenser, *Epithalamion* (see vol. B, p. 455).

epyllion (plural "epyllia") (Greek: "little epic"): a **genre.** A relatively short poem in the meter of epic poetry. See, for example, Marlowe, *Hero and Leander* (vol. B, p. 562).

essay (French "trial, attempt"): a **genre.** An informal philosophical meditation, usually in prose and sometimes in verse. The journalistic periodical essay was developed in the early eighteenth century. Thus Addison and Steele, periodical essays (see vol. C, p. 281); Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (see vol. C, p. 521).

euphemism (Greek "sweet saying"): a **figure of thought.** The figure by which something distasteful is described in alternative, less repugnant terms (for example, "he passed away").

exegesis (Greek "leading out"): interpretation, traditionally of the biblical text, but, by transference, of any text.

exemplum (Latin "example"): an example inserted into a usually nonfictional writing (for example, sermon or **essay**) to give extra force to an abstract thesis.

fabliau (French "little story," plural *fabliaux*): a **genre.** A short, funny, often bawdy narrative in low style (see **register**) imitated and developed from French models, most subtly by Chaucer; see *The Miller's Prologue and Tale* (vol. A, p. 494).

farce (French "stuffing"): a **genre.** A play designed to provoke laughter through the often humiliating antics of stock **characters.** Congreve's *The Way of the World* (see vol. C, p. 221) draws on this tradition.

figures of speech: Literary language often employs patterns perceptible to the eye and/or to the ear. Such patterns are called "figures of speech"; in classical rhetoric they were called "schemes" (from Greek *schema*, meaning "form, figure").

figures of thought: Language can also be patterned conceptually, even outside the rules that normally govern it. Literary language in particular exploits this licensed linguistic irregularity. Synonyms for figures of thought are "trope" (Greek "twisting," referring to the irregularity of use) and "conceit" (Latin "concept," referring to the fact that these figures are perceptible only to the mind). Be careful not to confuse **trope** with **topos** (a common error).

first-person narration: relevant to **point of view,** a narrative in which the voice narrating refers to itself with forms of the first-person pronoun ("I," "me," "my," etc., or possibly "we," "us," "our"), and in which the narrative is determined by the limitations of that voice. Thus Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein.*

frame narrative: Some narratives, particularly collections of narratives, involve a frame narrative that explains the genesis of, and/or gives a perspective on, the main narrative or narratives to follow. Thus Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*; Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*; or Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.

free indirect style: relevant to **point of view,** a narratorial voice that manages, without explicit reference, to imply, and often

implicitly to comment on, the voice of a **character** in the narrative itself. Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past," where the voice, although strictly that of the adult narrator, manages to convey the child's manner of perception: "—I begin: the first memory. This was of red and purple flowers on a black background—my mother's dress."

genre and mode: The **style,** structure, and, often, length of a work, when coupled with a certain subject matter, raise expectations that a literary work conforms to a certain **genre** (French "kind"). Good writers might upset these expectations, but they remain aware of the expectations and thwart them purposefully. Works in different genres may nevertheless participate in the same **mode,** a broader category designating the fundamental perspectives governing various genres of writing. For mode, see **tragic, comic, satiric,** and **didactic modes.** Genres are fluid, sometimes very fluid (for example, the **novel**); the word "usually" should be added to almost every account of the characteristics of a given genre!

georgic (Greek "farming"): a **genre.** Virgil's *Georgics* treat agricultural and occasionally scientific subjects, giving instructions on the proper management of farms. Unlike **pastoral,** which treats the countryside as a place of recreational idleness among shepherds, the georgic treats it as a place of productive labor.

hermeneutics (from the Greek god Hermes, messenger between the gods and humankind): the science of interpretation, first formulated as such by the German philosophical theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher in the early nineteenth century.

heroic poetry: see **epic.**

hexameter (Greek "six measure"): a term of **meter.** The hexameter line (a six-stress line) is the meter of **classical** Latin **epic;** while not imitated in that form for epic verse in English, some instances of the hexameter exist. See, for example, the last line of a

Spenserian stanza, *Faerie Queene* 1.1.2: "O help thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong" (vol. B, p. 269), or Yeats, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," line 1: "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree" (vol. F, p. 221).

homily (Greek "discourse"): a **genre.** A sermon, to be preached in church; *Book of Homilies* (see vol. B, p. 164). Writers of literary fiction sometimes exploit the homily, or sermon, as in Chaucer, *The Pardoner's Tale* (see vol. A, p. 540).

homophone (Greek "same sound"): a **figure of speech.** A word that sounds identical to another word but has a different meaning ("bear" / "bare").

hyperbaton (Greek "overstepping"): a term of **syntax.** The rearrangement, or inversion, of the expected word order in a sentence or clause. Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," line 38: "If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise" (vol. C, p. 899). Poets can suspend the expected syntax over many lines, as in the first sentences of the *Canterbury Tales* (vol. A, p. 474) and of *Paradise Lost* (vol. B, p. 1430).

hyperbole (Greek "throwing over"): a **figure of thought.** Overstatement, exaggeration; Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress," lines 11–12: "My vegetable love should grow / Vaster than empires, and more slow" (see vol. B, p. 1273); Auden, "As I Walked Out One Evening," lines 9–12: " 'I'll love you, dear, I'll love you / Till China and Africa meet / And the river jumps over the mountain / And the salmon sing in the street" (see vol. F, p. 675).

hypermetrical (adj.; Greek "over measured"): a term of **meter;** the word describes a breaking of the expected metrical pattern by at least one extra syllable.

hypotaxis, or **subordination** (respectively Greek and Latin "ordering under"): a term of **syntax.** The subordination, by the use of subordinate clauses, of different elements of a sentence to a

single main verb. Milton, *Paradise Lost* 9.513–15: "As when a ship by skillful steersman wrought / Nigh river's mouth or foreland, where the wind / Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her sail; So varied he" (vol. B, p. 1588). The contrary principle to **parataxis.**

iamb: a term of **rhythm.** The basic foot of English verse; two syllables following the rhythmic pattern of unstressed followed by stressed and producing a rising effect. Thus, for example, "Vermont."

imitation: the practice whereby writers strive ideally to reproduce and yet renew the **conventions** of an older form, often derived from **classical** civilization. Such a practice will be praised in periods of classicism (for example, the eighteenth century) and repudiated in periods dominated by a model of inspiration (for example, Romanticism).

irony (Greek "dissimulation"): a **figure of thought.** In broad usage, irony designates the result of inconsistency between a statement and a context that undermines the statement. "It's a beautiful day" is unironic if it's a beautiful day; if, however, the weather is terrible, then the inconsistency between statement and context is ironic. The effect is often amusing; the need to be ironic is sometimes produced by censorship of one kind or another. Strictly, irony is a subset of allegory: whereas allegory says one thing and means another, irony says one thing and means its opposite. For an extended example of irony, see Swift's "Modest Proposal" (vol. C, p. 511). See also **dramatic irony.**

journal (French "daily"): a **genre.** A diary, or daily record of ephemeral experience, whose perspectives are concentrated on, and limited by, the experiences of single days. Thus Pepys, *Diary* (see vol. C, p. 74).

lai: a **genre.** A short narrative, often characterized by images of great intensity; a French term, and a form practiced by Marie de France (see vol. A, p. 159).

legend (Latin "requiring to be read"): a **genre.** A narrative of a celebrated, possibly historical, but mortal **protagonist.** To be distinguished from **myth.** Thus the "Arthurian legend" but the "myth of Proserpine."

lexical set: Words that habitually recur together (for example, January, February, March, etc.; or red, white, and blue) form a lexical set.

litotes (from Greek "smooth"): a **figure of thought.** Strictly, understatement by denying the contrary; More, *Utopia*: "differences of no slight import" (see vol. B, p. 49). More loosely, understatement; Stevie Smith, "Sunt Leones," lines 11–12: "And if the Christians felt a little blue— / Well people being eaten often do" (see vol. F, p. 585).

lullaby: a **genre.** A bedtime, sleep-inducing song for children, in simple and regular meter. Adapted by Auden, "Lullaby" (see vol. F, p. 671).

lyric (from Greek "lyre"): Initially meaning a song, "lyric" refers to a short poetic form, without restriction of meter, in which the expression of personal emotion, often by a voice in the first person, is given primacy over narrative sequence. Thus "The Wife's Lament" (see vol. A, p. 126); Yeats, "The Wild Swans at Coole" (see vol. F, p. 229).

masque: a **genre.** Costly entertainments of the Stuart court, involving dance, song, speech, and elaborate stage effects, in which courtiers themselves participated.

metaphor (Greek "carrying across," etymologically parallel to Latin "translation"): One of the most significant **figures of thought,** metaphor designates identification or implicit identification of one thing with another with which it is not literally identifiable. Blake, "London," lines 11–12: "And the hapless Soldier's sigh / Runs in blood down Palace walls" (see vol. D, p. 137).

meter: Verse (from Latin *versus*, turned) is distinguished from prose (from Latin *prorsus*, "straightforward") as a more compressed form of expression, shaped by metrical norms. **Meter** (Greek "measure") refers to the regularly recurring sound pattern of verse lines. The means of producing sound patterns across lines differ in different poetic traditions. Verse may be **quantitative,** or determined by the quantities of syllables (set patterns of long and short syllables), as in Latin and Greek poetry. It may be **syllabic,** determined by fixed numbers of syllables in the line, as in the verse of Romance languages (for example, French and Italian). It may be **accentual,** determined by the number of accents, or stresses in the line, with variable numbers of syllables, as in Old English and some varieties of Middle English alliterative verse. Or it may be **accentual-syllabic,** determined by the numbers of accents, but possessing a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, so as to produce regular numbers of syllables per line. Since Chaucer, English verse has worked primarily within the many possibilities of accentual-syllabic meter. The unit of meter is the **foot.** In English verse the number of feet per line corresponds to the number of accents in a line. For the types and examples of different meters, see **monometer, dimeter, trimester, tetrameter, pentameter,** and **hexameter.** In the definitions below, "u" designates one unstressed syllable, and "/" one stressed syllable.

metonymy (Greek "change of name"): one of the most significant **figures of thought.** Using a word to **denote** another concept or other concepts, by virtue of habitual association. Thus "The Press," designating printed news media. Fictional names often work by associations of this kind. Closely related to **synecdoche.**

mimesis (Greek for "imitation"): A central function of literature and drama has been to provide a plausible imitation of the reality of the world beyond the literary work; mimesis is the representation and imitation of what is taken to be reality.

mise-en-abyme (French for "cast into the abyss"): Some works of art represent themselves in themselves; if they do so effectively, the represented artifact also represents itself, and so ad infinitum. The effect achieved is called "*mise-en-abyme.*" Hoccleve's *Complaint*, for example, represents a depressed man reading about a depressed man. This sequence threatens to become a *mise-en-abyme.*

monometer (Greek "one measure"): a term of **meter.** An entire line with just one stress; *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, line 15, "most (u) grand (/)" (see vol. A, p. 415).

myth: a **genre.** The narrative of **protagonists** with, or subject to, superhuman powers. A myth expresses some profound foundational truth, often by accounting for the origin of natural phenomena. To be distinguished from **legend.** Thus the "Arthurian legend" but the "myth of Proserpine."

novel: an extremely flexible **genre** in both form and subject matter. Usually in prose, giving high priority to narration of events, with a certain expectation of length, novels are preponderantly rooted in a specific, and often complex, social world; sensitive to the realities of material life; and often focused on one **character** or a small circle of central characters. By contrast with chivalric **romance** (the main European narrative genre prior to the novel), novels tend to eschew the marvelous in favor of a recognizable social world and credible action. The novel's openness allows it to participate in all modes, and to be co-opted for a huge variety of subgenres. In English literature the novel dates from the late seventeenth century and has been astonishingly successful in appealing to a huge readership, particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The English and Irish tradition of the novel includes, for example, Fielding, Austen, the Brontë sisters, Dickens, George Eliot, Conrad, Woolf, Lawrence, and Joyce, to name but a few very great exponents of the genre.

novella: a **genre.** A short **novel,** often characterized by imagistic intensity. Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (see vol. F, p. 70).

occupatio (Latin "taking possession"): a **figure of thought.** Denying that one will discuss a subject while actually discussing it; also known as "praeteritio" (Latin "passing by"). See Chaucer, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, lines 414–31 (see vol. A, p. 565).

ode (Greek "song"): a **genre.** A **lyric** poem in elevated, or high style (see **register**), often addressed to a natural force, a person, or an abstract quality. The Pindaric ode in English is made up of **stanzas** of unequal length, while the Horatian ode has stanzas of equal length. For examples of both types, see, respectively, Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (vol. D, p. 381); and Marvell, "An Horatian Ode" (vol. B, p. 1282), or Keats, "Ode on Melancholy" (vol. D, p. 973). For a fuller discussion, see the headnote to Jonson's "Ode on Cary and Morison" (vol. B, p. 1058).

omniscient narrator (Latin "all-knowing narrator"): relevant to **point of view.** A narrator who, in the fiction of the narrative, has complete access to both the deeds and the thoughts of all **characters** in the narrative. Thus Thomas Hardy, "On the Western Circuit" (see vol. F, p. 36).

onomatopoeia (Greek "name making"): a **figure of speech.** Verbal sounds that imitate and evoke the sounds they denotate. Hopkins, "Binsey Poplars," lines 10–12 (about some felled trees): "O if we but knew what we do / When we delve [dig] or hew— / Hack and rack the growing green!" (see vol. E, p. 726).

order: A story may be told in different narrative orders. A narrator might use the sequence of events as they happened, and thereby follow what **classical** rhetoricians called the *natural order*; alternatively, the narrator might reorder the sequence of events, beginning the narration either in the middle or at the end of the sequence of events, thereby following an *artificial order.* If a narrator

begins in the middle of events, he or she is said to begin *in medias res* (Latin "in the middle of the matter"). For a brief discussion of these concepts, see Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, "A Letter of the Authors" (vol. B, p. 265). Modern narratology makes a related distinction, between *histoire* (French "story") for the natural order that readers mentally reconstruct, and *discours* (French, here "narration") for the narrative as presented. See also **plot** and **story.**

ottava rima: a **verse form.** An eight-line stanza form, rhyming abababcc, using **iambic pentameter;** Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium" (see vol. F, p. 234). Derived from the Italian poet Boccaccio, an eight-line stanza was used by fifteenth-century English poets for inset passages (for example, Christ's speech from the Cross in Lydgate's *Testament*, lines 754–897). The form in this rhyme scheme was used in English poetry for long narrative by, for example, Byron (*Don Juan*; see vol. D, p. 690).

oxymoron (Greek "sharp blunt"): a **figure of thought.** The conjunction of normally incompatible terms; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.63: "darkness visible" (see vol. B, p. 1431).

panegyric: a **genre.** Demonstrative, or epideictic (Greek "showing"), rhetoric was a branch of **classical** rhetoric. Its own two main branches were the rhetoric of praise on the one hand and of vituperation on the other. Panegyric, or eulogy (Greek "sweet speaking"), or encomium (plural *encomia*), is the term used to describe the speeches or writings of praise.

parable: a **genre.** A simple story designed to provoke, and often accompanied by, **allegorical** interpretation, most famously by Christ as reported in the Gospels.

paradox (Greek "contrary to received opinion"): a **figure of thought.** An apparent contradiction that requires thought to reveal an inner consistency. Chaucer, "Troilus's Song," line 12: "O sweete harm so quainte" (see vol. A, p. 574).

parataxis, or **coordination** (respectively Greek and Latin "ordering beside"): a term of **syntax.** The coordination, by the use of coordinating conjunctions, of different main clauses in a single sentence. Malory, *Morte Darthur*: "So Sir Lancelot departed and took his sword under his arm, and so he walked in his mantel, that noble knight, and put himself in great jeopardy" (see vol. A, p. 607). The opposite principle to **hypotaxis.**

parody: a work that uses the **conventions** of a particular genre with the aim of comically mocking a **topos,** a genre, or a particular exponent of a genre. Shakespeare parodies the topos of **blazon** in Sonnet 130 (see vol. B, p. 637).

pastoral (from Latin *pastor*, "shepherd"): a **genre.** Pastoral is set among shepherds, making often refined **allusion** to other apparently unconnected subjects (sometimes politics) from the potentially idyllic world of highly literary if illiterate shepherds. Pastoral is distinguished from **georgic** by representing recreational rural idleness, whereas the georgic offers instruction on how to manage rural labor. English writers had classical models in the *Idylls* of Theocritus in Greek and Virgil's *Eclogues* in Latin. Pastoral is also called bucolic (from the Greek word for "herdsman"). Thus Spenser, *Shepheardes Calender* (see vol. B, p. 257).

pathetic fallacy: the attribution of sentiment to natural phenomena, as if they were in sympathy with human feelings. Thus Milton, *Lycidas*, lines 146–47: "With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head, / And every flower that sad embroidery wears" (see vol. B, p. 1406). For critique of the practice, see Ruskin (who coined the term), "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" (vol. E, p. 467).

pentameter (Greek "five measure"): a term of **meter.** In English verse, a five-stress line. Between the late fourteenth and the nineteenth centuries, this meter, frequently employing an iambic rhythm, was the basic line of English verse. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth each, for example, deployed this very

flexible line as their primary resource; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.128: "O Prince, O Chief of many thronèd Powers" (see vol. B, p. 1433).

performative: Verbal expressions have many different functions. They can, for example, be descriptive, or constative (if they make an argument), or performative, for example. A performative utterance is one that makes something happen in the world by virtue of its utterance. "I hereby sentence you to ten years in prison," if uttered in the appropriate circumstances, itself performs an action; it makes something happen in the world. By virtue of its performing an action, it is called a "performative." See also **speech act.**

peripeteia (Greek "turning about"): the sudden reversal of fortune (in both directions) in a dramatic work.

periphrasis (Greek "declaring around"): a **figure of thought.** Circumlocution; the use of many words to express what could be expressed in few or one; Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 39.1–4.

persona (Latin "sound through"): originally the mask worn in the Roman theater to magnify an actor's voice; in literary discourse persona (plural *personae*) refers to the narrator or speaker of a text, whose voice is coherent and whose person need have no relation to the person of the actual author of a text. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (see vol. F, p. 498).

personification, or **prosopopoeia** (Greek "person making"): a **figure of thought.** The attribution of human qualities to nonhuman forces or objects; Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," lines 1–2: "Thou still unvanish'd bride of quietness, / Thou foster-child of silence and slow time" (see vol. D, p. 971).

plot: the sequence of events in a story as narrated, as distinct from **story,** which refers to the sequence of events as we reconstruct them from the plot. See also **order.**

point of view: All of the many kinds of writing involve a point of view from which a text is, or seems to be, generated. The presence of such a point of view may be powerful and explicit, as in many novels, or deliberately invisible, as in much drama. In some genres, such as the **novel,** the narrator does not necessarily tell the story from a position we can predict; that is, the needs of a particular story, not the **conventions** of the genre, determine the narrator's position. In other genres, the narrator's position is fixed by convention; in certain kinds of love poetry, for example, the narrating voice is always that of a suffering lover. Not only does the point of view significantly inform the style of a work, but it also informs the structure of that work.

protagonist (Greek "first actor"): the hero or heroine of a drama or narrative.

pun: a **figure of thought.** A sometimes irresolvable doubleness of meaning in a single word or expression; Shakespeare, Sonnet 135, line 1: "Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*" (see vol. B, p. 637).

quatrain: a **verse form.** A stanza of four lines, usually rhyming abcb, abab, or abba. Of many possible examples, see Crashaw, "On the Wounds of Our Crucified Lord" (see vol. B, p. 1214).

refrain: usually a single line repeated as the last line of consecutive stanzas, sometimes with subtly different wording and ideally with subtly different meaning as the poem progresses.

register: The register of a word is its stylistic level, which can be distinguished by degree of technicality but also by degree of formality. We choose our words from different registers according to context, that is, audience and/or environment. Thus a chemist in a laboratory will say "sodium chloride," a cook in a kitchen "salt." A formal register designates the kind of language used in polite society (for example, "Mr. President"), while an informal or colloquial

register is used in less formal or more relaxed social situations (for example, "the boss"). In **classical** and medieval rhetoric, these registers of formality were called *high style* and *low style.* A *middle style* was defined as the style fit for narrative, not drawing attention to itself.

rhetoric: the art of verbal persuasion. **Classical** rhetoricians distinguished three areas of rhetoric: the forensic, to be used in law courts; the deliberative, to be used in political or philosophical deliberations; and the demonstrative, or epideictic, to be used for the purposes of public praise or blame. Rhetorical manuals covered all the skills required of a speaker, from the management of style and structure to delivery. These manuals powerfully influenced the theory of poetics as a separate branch of verbal practice, particularly in the matter of style.

rhyme: a **figure of speech.** The repetition of identical vowel sounds in stressed syllables whose initial consonants differ ("dead" / "head"). In poetry, rhyme often links the end of one line with another. *Masculine rhyme*: full rhyme on the final syllable of the line ("decays" / "days"). *Feminine rhyme*: full rhyme on syllables that are followed by unaccented syllables ("fountains" / "mountains"). *Internal rhyme*: full rhyme within a single line; Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, line 7: "The guests are met, the feast is set" (see vol. D, p. 475). *Rhyme riche*: rhyming on **homophones;** Chaucer, *General Prologue*, lines 17–18: "seeke" / "seke." *Off rhyme* (also known as *half rhyme*, *near rhyme*, or *slant rhyme*): differs from perfect rhyme in changing the vowel sound and/or the concluding consonants expected of perfect rhyme; Byron, "They say that Hope is Happiness," lines 5–7: "most" / "lost." *Pararhyme*: stressed vowel sounds differ but are flanked by identical or similar consonants; Owen, "Miners," lines 9–11: "simmer" / "summer" (see vol. F, p. 169).

rhyme royal: a **verse form.** A **stanza** of seven **iambic pentameter** lines, rhyming ababbcc; first introduced by Chaucer

and called "royal" because the form was used by James I of Scotland for his *Kingis Quair* in the early fifteenth century. Chaucer, "Troilus's Song" (see vol. A, p. 574).

rhythm: Rhythm is not absolutely distinguishable from **meter.** One way of making a clear distinction between these terms is to say that rhythm (from the Greek "to flow") denotes the patterns of sound within the feet of verse lines and the combination of those feet. Very often a particular meter will raise expectations that a given rhythm will be used regularly through a whole line or a whole poem. Thus in English verse the pentameter regularly uses an iambic rhythm. Rhythm, however, is much more fluid than meter, and many lines within the same poem using a single meter will frequently exploit different rhythmic possibilities. For examples of different rhythms, see **iamb, trochee, anapest, spondee,** and **dactyl.**

romance: a **genre.** From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, the main form of European narrative, in either verse or prose, was that of chivalric romance. Romance, like the later **novel,** is a very fluid genre, but romances are often characterized by (i) a tripartite structure of social integration, followed by disintegration, involving moral tests and often marvelous events, itself the prelude to reintegration in a happy ending, frequently of marriage; and (ii) aristocratic social milieux. Thus *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (see vol. A, p. 415); Spenser's (unfinished) *Faerie Queene* (vol. B, p. 263). The immensely popular, fertile genre was absorbed, in both domesticated and undomesticated form, by the novel. For an adaptation of romance, see Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Tale* (vol. A, p. 512).

sarcasm (Greek "flesh tearing"): a **figure of thought.** A wounding expression, often expressed ironically; Boswell, *Life of Johnson*: Johnson [asked if any man of the modern age could have written the **epic** poem *Fingal*] replied, "Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children" (see vol. C, p. 891).

satire (Latin for "a bowl of mixed fruits"): a **genre.** In Roman literature (for example, Juvenal), the communication, in the form of a letter between equals, complaining of the ills of contemporary society. The genre in this form is characterized by a first-person narrator exasperated by social ills; the letter form; a high frequency of contemporary reference; and the use of invective in **low-style** language. Pope practices the genre thus in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (see vol. C, p. 573). Wyatt's "Mine Own John Poins" (see vol. B, p. 131) draws ultimately on a gentler, Horatian model of the genre.

satiric mode: Works in a very large variety of genres are devoted to the more or less savage attack on social ills. Thus Swift's travel narrative *Gulliver's Travels* (see vol. C, p. 377), his **essay** "A Modest Proposal" (vol. C, p. 511), and Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (vol. C, p. 587), to look no further than the eighteenth century, are all within a satiric mode.

scene: a subdivision of an **act,** itself a subdivision of a dramatic performance and/or text. The action of a scene usually occurs in one place.

sensibility (from Latin, "capable of being perceived by the senses"): as a literary term, an eighteenth-century concept derived from moral philosophy that stressed the social importance of fellow feeling and particularly of sympathy in social relations. The concept generated a literature of "sensibility," such as the sentimental **novel** (the most famous of which was Goethe's *Sorrows of the Young Werther* [1774]), or sentimental poetry, such as Cowper's passage on the stricken deer in *The Task* (see vol. C, p. 1076).

short story: a **genre.** Generically similar to, though shorter and more concentrated than, the **novel;** often published as part of a collection. Thus Mansfield, "The Daughters of the Late Colonel" (see vol. F, p. 542).

simile (Latin "like"): a **figure of thought.** Comparison, usually using the word "like" or "as," of one thing with another so as to produce sometimes surprising analogies. Donne, "The Storm," lines 29–30: "Sooner than you read this line did the gale, / Like shot, not feared till felt, our sails assail." Frequently used, in extended form, in **epic** poetry; Milton, *Paradise Lost* 1.338–46 (see vol. B, p. 1438).

soliloquy (Latin "single speaking"): a **topos** of drama, in which a **character,** alone or thinking to be alone on stage, speaks so as to give the audience access to his or her private thoughts.

sonnet: a **verse form.** A form combining a variable number of units of rhymed lines to produce a fourteen-line poem, usually in rhyming **iambic pentameter** lines. In English there are two principal varieties: the Petrarchan sonnet, formed by an octave (an eight-line stanza, often broken into two **quatrains** having the same rhyme scheme, typically abba abba) and a sestet (a six-line stanza, typically cdecde or cdcdcd); and the Shakespearean sonnet, formed by three quatrains (abab cdcd efef) and a **couplet** (gg). The declaration of a sonnet can take a sharp turn, or "volta," often at the decisive formal shift from octave to sestet in the Petrarchan sonnet, or in the final couplet of a Shakespearean sonnet, introducing a trenchant counterstatement. Derived from Italian poetry, and especially from the poetry of Petrarch, the sonnet was first introduced to English poetry by Wyatt, and initially used principally for the expression of unrequited erotic love, though later poets used the form for many other purposes. See Wyatt, "Whoso List to Hunt" (vol. B, p. 123); Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (vol. B, p. 541); Shakespeare, Sonnets (vol. B, p. 624); Wordsworth, "London, 1802" (vol. D, p. 390); McKay, "If We Must Die" (vol. F, p. 576); Heaney, "Clearances" (vol. F, p. 970).

speech act: Words and deeds are often distinguished, but words are often (perhaps always) themselves deeds. Utterances can perform different speech acts, such as promising, declaring, casting

a spell, encouraging, persuading, denying, lying, and so on. See also **performative.**

Spenserian stanza: a **verse form.** The stanza developed by Spenser for *The Faerie Queene*; nine **iambic** lines, the first eight of which are **pentameters,** followed by one **hexameter,** rhyming ababbcbcc. See also, for example, Shelley, *Adonais* (vol. D, p. 851), and Keats, *The Eve of St. Agnes* (vol. D, p. 953).

spondee: a term of **meter.** A two-syllable foot following the rhythmic pattern, in English verse, of two stressed syllables. Thus, for example, "Utah."

stanza (Italian "room"): groupings of two or more lines, though "stanza" is usually reserved for groupings of at least four lines. Stanzas are often joined by rhyme, often in sequence, where each group shares the same metrical pattern and, when rhymed, rhyme scheme. Stanzas can themselves be arranged into larger groupings. Poets often invent new **verse forms,** or they may work within established forms.

story: a narrative's sequence of events, which we reconstruct from those events as they have been recounted by the narrator (i.e., the **plot**). See also **order.**

stream of consciousness: usually a **first-person** narrative that seems to give the reader access to the narrator's mind as it perceives or reflects on events, prior to organizing those perceptions into a coherent narrative. Thus (though generated from a **third-person** narrative) Joyce, *Ulysses*, "Penelope" (see vol. F, p. 452).

style (from Latin for "writing instrument"): In literary works the manner in which something is expressed contributes substantially to its meaning. The expressions "sun," "mass of helium at the center of the solar system," "heaven's golden orb" all designate "sun," but do so in different manners, or styles, which produce different meanings. The manner of a literary work is its "style," the effect of which is its

"tone." We often can intuit the tone of a text; from that intuition of tone we can analyze the stylistic resources by which it was produced. We can analyze the style of literary works through consideration of different elements of style; for example, **diction, figures of thought, figures of speech, meter and rhythm, verse form, syntax, point of view.**

sublime: As a concept generating a literary movement, the sublime refers to the realm of experience beyond the measurable, and so beyond the rational, produced especially by the terrors and grandeur of natural phenomena. Derived especially from the first-century Greek treatise *On the Sublime*, sometimes attributed to Longinus, the notion of the sublime was in the later eighteenth century a spur to Romanticism.

syllable: the smallest unit of sound in a pronounced word. The syllable that receives the greatest stress is called the *tonic* syllable.

symbol (Greek "token"): a **figure of thought.** Something that stands for something else, and yet seems necessarily to evoke that other thing. In Neoplatonic, and therefore Romantic, theory, to be distinguished from **allegory** thus: whereas allegory involves connections between vehicle and tenor agreed by convention or made explicit, the meanings of a symbol are supposedly inherent to it.

synecdoche (Greek "to take with something else"): a **figure of thought.** Using a part to express the whole, or vice versa; for example, "all hands on deck." Closely related to **metonymy.**

syntax (Greek "ordering with"): Syntax designates the rules by which sentences are constructed in a given language. Discussion of meter is impossible without some reference to syntax, since the overall effect of a poem is, in part, always the product of a subtle balance of meter and sentence construction. Syntax is also essential to the understanding of prose style, since prose writers, deprived of

the full shaping possibilities of meter, rely all the more heavily on syntactic resources. A working command of syntactical practice requires an understanding of the parts of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions, and interjections), since writers exploit syntactic possibilities by using particular combinations and concentrations of the parts of speech.

taste (from Italian "touch"): Although medieval monastic traditions used eating and tasting as a metaphor for reading, the concept of taste as a personal ideal to be cultivated by, and applied to, the appreciation and judgment of works of art in general was developed in the eighteenth century.

tercet: a **verse form.** A stanza or group of three lines, used in larger forms such as **terza rima,** the **Petrarchan sonnet,** and the **villanelle.**

terza rima: a **verse form.** A sequence of rhymed **tercets** linked by rhyme thus: aba bcb cdc, etc. first used extensively by Dante in *The Divine Comedy*, the form was adapted in English **iambic pentameters** by Wyatt and revived in the nineteenth century. See Wyatt, "Mine Own John Poins" (vol. B, p. 131); Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind" (vol. D, p. 802); and Morris, "The Defence of Guinevere" (vol. E, p. 657). For modern adaptations see Eliot, lines 78–149 (though unrhymed) of "Little Gidding" (vol. F, pp. 523–25); Heaney, "Station Island" (vol. F, p. 968); Walcott, *Omeros* (vol. F, p. 806).

tetrameter (Greek "four measure"): a term of **meter.** A line with four stresses. Coleridge, *Christabel*, line 31: "She stole along, she nothing spoke" (see vol. D, p. 495).

theme (Greek "proposition"): In literary criticism the term designates what the work is about; the theme is the concept that unifies a given work of literature.

third-person narration: relevant to **point of view.** A narration in which the narrator recounts a narrative of **characters** referred to

explicitly or implicitly by third-person pronouns ("he," she," etc.), without the limitation of a **first-person narration.** Thus Johnson, *The History of Rasselas.*

topographical poem (Greek "place writing"): a **genre.** A poem devoted to the meditative description of particular places.

topos (Greek "place," plural *topoi*): a commonplace in the content of a given kind of literature. Originally, in **classical** rhetoric, the topoi were tried-and-tested stimuli to literary invention: lists of standard headings under which a subject might be investigated. In medieval narrative poems, for example, it was commonplace to begin with a description of spring. Writers did, of course, render the commonplace uncommon, as in Chaucer's spring scene at the opening of *The Canterbury Tales* (see vol. A, p. 474).

tradition (from Latin "passing on"): A literary tradition is whatever is passed on or revived from the past in a single literary culture, or drawn from others to enrich a writer's culture. "Tradition" is fluid in reference, ranging from small to large referents: thus it may refer to a relatively small aspect of texts (for example, the tradition of **iambic pentameter**), or it may, at the other extreme, refer to the body of texts that constitute a **canon.**

tragedy: a **genre.** A dramatic representation of the fall of kings or nobles, beginning in happiness and ending in catastrophe. Later transferred to other social milieux. The opposite of **comedy;** thus Shakespeare, *Othello* (see vol. B, p. 640).

tragic mode: Many genres (**epic** poetry, **legend**ary chronicles, **tragedy,** the **novel**) either do or can participate in a tragic mode, by representing the fall of noble **protagonists** and the irreparable ravages of human society and history.

tragicomedy: a **genre.** A play in which potentially tragic events turn out to have a happy, or **comic,** ending. Thus Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure.*

translation (Latin "carrying across"): the rendering of a text written in one language into another.

trimeter (Greek "three measure"): a term of **meter.** A line with three stresses. Herbert, "Discipline," line 1: "Throw away thy rod" (see vol. B, p. 1197).

triplet: a **verse form.** A **tercet** rhyming on the same sound. Pope inserts triplets among heroic **couplets** to emphasize a particular thought; see *Essay on Criticism*, 315–17 (vol. C, p. 521).

trochee: a term of **rhythm.** A two-syllable foot following the pattern, in English verse, of stressed followed by unstressed syllable, producing a falling effect. Thus, for example, "Texas."

type (Greek "impression, figure"): a **figure of thought**. In Christian allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament, pre-Christian figures were regarded as "types," or foreshadowings, of Christ or the Christian dispensation. *Typology* has been the source of much visual and literary art in which the parallelisms between old and new are extended to nonbiblical figures; thus the virtuous plowman in *Piers Plowman* becomes a type of Christ.

unities: According to a theory supposedly derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*, the events represented in a play should have unity of time, place, and action: that the play take up no more time than the time of the play, or at most a day; that the space of action should be within a single city; and that there should be no subplot. See Johnson, *The Preface to Shakespeare* (vol. C, p. 876).

vernacular (from Latin *verna*, "servant"): the language of the people, as distinguished from learned and arcane languages. From the later Middle Ages especially, the "vernacular" languages and literatures of Europe distinguished themselves from the learned languages and literatures of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

verse form: The terms related to **meter** and **rhythm** describe the shape of individual lines. Lines of verse are combined to produce larger groupings, called verse forms. These larger groupings are in the first instance **stanzas.** The combination of a certain meter and stanza shape constitutes the verse form, of which there are many standard kinds.

villanelle: a **verse form.** A fixed form of usually five **tercets** and a **quatrain** employing only two rhyme sounds altogether, rhyming aba for the tercets and abaa for the quatrain, with a complex pattern of two **refrains.** Derived from a French fixed form. Thomas, "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (see vol. F, p. 693).

wit: Originally a synonym for "reason" in Old and Middle English, "wit" became a literary ideal in the Renaissance as brilliant play of the full range of mental resources. For eighteenth-century writers, the notion necessarily involved pleasing expression, as in Pope's definition of true wit as "Nature to advantage dressed, / What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" (*Essay on Criticism*, lines 297–98; see vol. C, p. 527). Romantic theory of the imagination deprived wit of its full range of apprehension, whence the word came to be restricted to its modern sense, as the clever play of mind that produces laughter.

zeugma (Greek "a yoking"): a **figure of thought.** A figure whereby one word applies to two or more words in a sentence, and in which the applications are surprising, either because one is unusual, or because the applications are made in very different ways; Pope, *Rape of the Lock* 3.7–8, in which the word "take" is used in two senses: "Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey, / Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea" (see vol. C, p. 546). section#b-publishing-history-censorship.doc-section

B: Publishing History, Censorship

By the time we read texts in published books, they have already been treated—that is, changed by authors, editors, and printers—in many ways. Although there are differences across history, in each period literary works are subject to pressures of many kinds, which apply before, while, and after an author writes. The pressures might be financial, as in the relations of author and patron; commercial, as in the marketing of books; and legal, as in, during some periods, the negotiation through official and unofficial censorship. In addition, texts in all periods undergo technological processes, as they move from the material forms in which an author produced them to the forms in which they are presented to readers. Some of the terms below designate important material forms in which books were produced, disseminated, and surveyed across the historical span of this anthology. Others designate the skills developed to understand these processes. The anthology's introductions to individual periods discuss the particular forms these phenomena took in different eras.

bookseller: In England, and particularly in London, commercial bookmaking and -selling enterprises came into being in the early fourteenth century. These were loose organizations of artisans who usually lived in the same neighborhoods (around St. Paul's Cathedral in London). A bookseller or dealer would coordinate the production of hand-copied books for wealthy patrons (see **patronage**), who would order books to be custom-made. After the introduction of **printing** in the late fifteenth century, authors generally sold the rights to their work to booksellers, without any further **royalties.** Booksellers, who often had their own shops, belonged to the **Stationers' Company.** This system lasted into the eighteenth century. In 1710, however, authors were for the first time granted **copyright,** which tipped the commercial balance in their favor, against booksellers.

censorship: The term applies to any mechanism for restricting what can be published. Historically, the reasons for imposing censorship are heresy, sedition, blasphemy, libel, or obscenity. External censorship is imposed by institutions having legislative

sanctions at their disposal. Thus the pre-Reformation Church imposed the Constitutions of Archbishop Arundel of 1409, aimed at repressing the Lollard "heresy." After the Reformation, some key events in the history of censorship are as follows: 1547, when anti-Lollard legislation and legislation made by Henry VIII concerning treason by writing (1534) were abolished; the Licensing Order of 1643, which legislated that works be licensed, through the Stationers' Company, prior to publication; and 1695, when the last such Act stipulating prepublication licensing lapsed. Postpublication censorship continued in different periods for different reasons. Thus, for example, British publication of D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) was obstructed (though unsuccessfully) in 1960, under the Obscene Publications Act of 1959. Censorship can also be international: although not published in Iran, Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (1988) was censored in that country, where the leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, proclaimed a fatwa (religious decree) promising the author's execution. Very often censorship is not imposed externally, however: authors or publishers can censor work in anticipation of what will incur the wrath of readers or the penalties of the law. Victorian and Edwardian publishers of **novels,** for example, urged authors to remove potentially offensive material, especially for serial publication in popular magazines.

codex: the physical format of most modern books and medieval manuscripts, consisting of a series of separate leaves gathered into quires and bound together, often with a cover. In late antiquity, the codex largely replaced the scroll, the standard form of written documents in Roman culture.

copy text: the particular text of a work used by a textual editor as the basis of an edition of that work.

copyright: the legal protection afforded to authors for control of their work's publication, in an attempt to ensure due financial reward. Some key dates in the history of copyright in the United Kingdom are as follows: 1710, when a statute gave authors the

exclusive right to publish their work for fourteen years, and fourteen years more if the author were still alive when the first term had expired; 1842, when the period of authorial control was extended to forty-two years; and 1911, when the term was extended yet further, to fifty years after the author's death. In 1995 the period of protection was harmonized with the laws in other European countries to be the life of the author plus seventy years. In the United States no works first published before 1923 are in copyright. Works published since 1978 are, as in the United Kingdom, protected for the life of the author plus seventy years.

folio: the leaf formed by both sides of a single page. Each folio has two sides: a *recto* (the front side of the leaf, on the right side of a double-page spread in an open codex), and a *verso* (the back side of the leaf, on the left side of a double-page spread). Modern book pagination follows the pattern 1, 2, 3, 4, while medieval manuscript pagination follows the pattern 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v. "Folio" can also designate the size of a printed book. Books come in different shapes, depending originally on the number of times a standard sheet of paper is folded. One fold produces a large volume, a *folio* book; two folds produce a *quarto*, four an *octavo*, and six a very small *duodecimo.* Generally speaking, the larger the book, the grander and more expensive. Shakespeare's plays were, for example, first printed in quartos, but were gathered into a folio edition in 1623.

foul papers: versions of a work before an author has produced, if she or he has, a final copy (a "fair copy") with all corrections removed.

incunabulum (plural "incunabula"): any printed book produced in Europe before 1501. Famous incunabula include the Gutenberg Bible, printed in 1455.

manuscript (Latin, "written by hand"): Any text written physically by hand is a manuscript. Before the introduction of **printing** with moveable type in 1476, all texts in England were produced and

reproduced by hand, in manuscript. This is an extremely labor-intensive task, using expensive materials (for example, **vellum,** or **parchment**); the cost of books produced thereby was, accordingly, very high. Even after the introduction of printing, many texts continued to be produced in manuscript. This is obviously true of letters, for example, but until the eighteenth century, poetry written within aristocratic circles was often transmitted in manuscript copies.

paleography (Greek "ancient writing"): the art of deciphering, describing, and dating forms of handwriting.

parchment: animal skin, used as the material for handwritten books before the introduction of paper. See also **vellum.**

patronage, patron (Latin "protector"): Many technological, legal, and commercial supports were necessary before professional authorship became possible. Although some playwrights (for example, Shakespeare) made a living by writing for the theater, other authors needed, principally, the large-scale reproductive capacities of **printing** and the security of **copyright** to make a living from writing. Before these conditions obtained, many authors had another main occupation, and most authors had to rely on patronage. In different periods, institutions or individuals offered material support, or patronage, to authors. Thus in Anglo-Saxon England, monasteries afforded the conditions of writing to monastic authors. Between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries, the main source of patronage was the royal court. Authors offered patrons prestige and ideological support in return for financial support. Even as the conditions of professional authorship came into being at the beginning of the eighteenth century, older forms of direct patronage were not altogether displaced until the middle of the century.

p eriodical: Whereas journalism, strictly, applies to daily writing (from French *jour*, "day"), periodical writing appears at larger, but

still frequent, intervals, characteristically in the form of the **essay.** Periodicals were developed especially in the eighteenth century.

p rinting: Printing, or the mechanical reproduction of books using moveable type, was invented in Germany in the mid-fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg; it quickly spread throughout Europe. William Caxton brought printing into England from the Low Countries in 1476. Much greater powers of reproduction at much lower prices transformed every aspect of literary culture.

p ublisher: the person or company responsible for the commissioning and publicizing of printed matter. In the early period of **printing,** publisher, printer, and bookseller were often the same person. This trend continued in the ascendancy of the **Stationers' Company,** between the middle of the sixteenth and the end of the seventeenth centuries. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, these three functions began to separate, leading to their modern distinctions.

quire: When medieval manuscripts were assembled, a few loose sheets of parchment or paper would first be folded together and sewn along the fold. This formed a quire (also known as a "gathering" or "signature"). Folded in this way, four large sheets of parchment would produce eight smaller manuscript leaves. Multiple quires could then be bound together to form a codex.

royalties: an agreed-upon proportion of the price of each copy of a work sold, paid by the publisher to the author, or an agreed-upon fee paid to the playwright for each performance of a play.

scribe: In **manuscript** culture, the scribe is the copyist who reproduces a text by hand.

s criptorium (plural "scriptoria"): a place for producing written documents and manuscripts.

serial publication: generally referring to the practice, especially common in the nineteenth century, of publishing novels a few chapters at a time, in periodicals.

S tationers' Company: The Stationers' Company was an English guild incorporating various tradesmen, including printers, publishers, and booksellers, skilled in the production and selling of books. It was formed in 1403, received its royal charter in 1557, and served as a means both of producing and of regulating books. Authors would sell the manuscripts of their books to individual stationers, who incurred the risks and took the profits of producing and selling the books. The stationers entered their rights over given books in the Stationers' Register. They also regulated the book trade and held their monopoly by licensing books and by being empowered to seize unauthorized books and imprison resisters. This system of licensing broke down in the social unrest of the Civil War and Interregnum (1640–60), and it ended in 1695. Even after the end of licensing, the Stationers' Company continued to be an intrinsic part of the **copyright** process, since the 1710 copyright statute directed that copyright had to be registered at Stationers' Hall.

subscription: An eighteenth-century system of bookselling somewhere between direct **patronage** and impersonal sales. A subscriber paid half the cost of a book before publication and half on delivery. The author received these payments directly. The subscriber's name appeared in the prefatory pages.

textual criticism: Works in all periods often exist in many subtly or not so subtly different forms. This is especially true with regard to manuscript textual reproduction, but it also applies to printed texts. Textual criticism is the art, developed from the fifteenth century in Italy but raised to new levels of sophistication from the eighteenth century, of deciphering different historical states of texts. This art involves the analysis of textual **variants,** often with the aim of distinguishing authorial from scribal forms.

variants: differences that appear among different manuscripts or printed editions of the same text.

vellum: animal skin, used as the material for handwritten books before the introduction of paper. See also **parchment.**

watermark: the trademark of a paper manufacturer, impressed into the paper but largely invisible unless held up to light.

Endnotes

- Note *: This appendix was devised and compiled by James Simpson with the collaboration of all the editors. We especially thank Professor Lara Bovilsky of the University of Oregon at Eugene for her help.Return to reference *

Geographic Nomenclature

The British Isles refers to the prominent group of islands off the northwest coast of Europe, especially to the two largest, **Great Britain** and **Ireland**. At present these comprise two sovereign states: **the Republic of Ireland**, and **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**—known for short as the **United Kingdom** or the **U.K.** Most of the smaller islands are part of the **U.K.** but a few, like the **Isle of Man** and the tiny **Channel Islands,** are largely independent. The **U.K.** is often loosely referred to as **"Britain"** or **"Great Britain"** and is sometimes called simply, if inaccurately, **"England."** For obvious reasons, the latter usage is rarely heard among the inhabitants of the other countries of the **U.K.—Scotland, Wales,** and **Northern Ireland** (sometimes called **Ulster**). England is by far the most populous part of the kingdom, as well as the seat of its capital, London.

From the first to the fifth century C.E. most of what is now **England** and **Wales** was a province of the Roman Empire called **Britain** (in Latin, **Britannia**). After the fall of Rome, much of the island was invaded and settled by peoples from northern Germany and Denmark speaking what we now call Old English. These peoples are known as the Angles and the Saxons (the word **England** is related to **Angles**). By the time of the Norman Conquest (1066) most of the kingdoms founded by the Angles, the Saxons, and the subsequent Viking invaders had coalesced into the kingdom of **England,** which, in the latter Middle Ages, conquered and largely absorbed the neighboring Celtic kingdom of **Wales.** In 1603 James VI of **Scotland** inherited the island's other throne as James I of **England,** and for the next hundred years—except for the two decades of Puritan rule—**Scotland** (both its English-speaking **Lowlands** and its Gaelic-speaking **Highlands**) and **England** (with **Wales**) were two kingdoms under a single king. In 1707 the Act of Union brought them together as **the United Kingdom of Great**

Britain. Ireland, where English rule had begun in the twelfth century and been tightened in the sixteenth, was incorporated by the 1800–1801 Act of Union into **the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland**. With the division of Ireland and the establishment of **the Irish Free State** after World War I, this name was modified to its present form, and in 1949 **the Irish Free State** became **the Republic of Ireland,** or **Éire**. In 1999 **Scotland** elected a separate parliament it had relinquished in 1707, and **Wales** elected an assembly it lost in 1409; neither Scotland nor Wales ceased to be part of the **United Kingdom**.

The **British Isles** are further divided into counties, which in **Great Britain** are also known as shires. This word, with its vowel shortened in pronunciation, forms the suffix in the names of many counties, such as **Yorkshire, Wiltshire, Somersetshire**.

The Latin names **Britannia (Britain), Caledonia (Scotland)**, and **Hibernia (Ireland)** are sometimes used in poetic diction; so too is **Britain**'s ancient Celtic name, **Albion**. Because of its accidental resemblance to *albus* (Latin for "white"), **Albion** is especially associated with the chalk cliffs that seem to gird much of the English coast like defensive walls.

The British Empire took its name from **the British Isles** because it was created not only by the **English** but also by the **Irish, Scots,** and **Welsh**, as well as by civilians and servicemen from other constituent countries of the empire. Some of the empire's **overseas colonies**, or **crown colonies**, were populated largely by settlers of European origin and their descendants. These predominantly White **settler col onies**, such as **Canada**, **Australia**, and **New Zealand**, were allowed significant self-government in the nineteenth century and recognized as **dominions** in the early twentieth century. The **White dominions** became members of **the Commonwealth of Nations**, also called **the Commonwealth, the British Commonwealth**, and "**the Old Commonwealth"** at different times, an association of sovereign states under the symbolic leadership of the British monarch.

Other **overseas colonies** of the empire had mostly Indigenous populations (or, in the Caribbean, the descendants of enslaved people, indentured servants, and others). These **colonies** were granted political independence after World War II, later than the **dominions**, and have often been referred to since as **postcolonial** nations. In South and Southeast Asia, **India** and **Pakistan** gained independence in 1947, followed by other countries including **Sri Lanka** (formerly **Ceylon**), **Burma** (now **Myanmar**), **Malaya** (now **Malaysia**), and **Singapore**. In West and East Africa, the **Gold Coast** was decolonized as **Ghana** in 1957, **Nigeria** in 1960, **Sierra Leone** in 1961, **Uganda** in 1962, **Kenya** in 1963, and so forth, while in southern Africa, the White minority government of **South Africa** was already independent in 1931, though majority rule did not come until 1994. In the Caribbean, **Jamaica** and **Trinidad and Tobago** became independent in 1962, followed by **Barbados** in 1966, and other islands of the British West Indies in the 1970s and ’80s. Other regions from which nations emerged out of British colonial rule included Central America (**British Honduras**, now **Belize**), South America (**British Guiana**, now **Guyana),** the Pacific islands (**Fiji**), and Europe (**Cyprus**, **Malta**). After decolonization, many of these nations chose to remain within a newly conceived **Commonwealth** and are sometimes referred to as "**New Commonwealth**" countries. Some nations, such as **Ireland**, **Pakistan**, and **South Africa,** withdrew from the **Commonwealth**, though **South Africa** and **Paki stan** eventually rejoined, and others, such as **Burma** (now **Myanmar**), gained independence outside the **Commonwealth**. Britain’s last major overseas colony, **Hong Kong**, was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, but while Britain retains only a handful of dependent territories, such as **Bermuda** and **Montserrat**, the scope of the **Commonwealth** remains vast, with approximately 30 percent of the world’s population.

London
in the 19th & 20th centuries
A Kitzinger
REGENTS PARK
ST. JOHN'S WOOD
HYDE PARK
GREEN PARK
ST. JAMES' PARK
BLOOMSBURY
WEST END
THE CITY
EAST END
SOUTH BANK
PIMLICO
River Thames
One Mile
660 FT.
One Kilometer
500 M
N
W
E
S
University College
Foundling Hospital
British Museum
Gray's Inn
Charterhouse School
Smithfield Market
St. Bartholomew's Hospital
Liverpool Street Railway Sta.
Lincoln's Inn Fields
Royal Opera House
Drury Lane Theatre
Newgate Prison
Christ's Hospital
Old Bailey
St. Paul's Cathedral
Bank of England
India House (East India Co.)
The Temple and gardens
St. Mary Woolnoth
St. Magnus Martyr
Tower of London
Royal Mint
London Docks
Oxford Circus
Marble Arch
Oxford St.
Regent St.
Bond St.
Dorchester Hotel
Café Royal
Royal Academy
Piccadilly Circus
St. Martin-in-the-Fields
Garrick Club
Savoy Hotel
Royal Haymarket Theatre
National Gallery
Trafalgar Sq.
Charing Cross
Athenæum Club
Reform Club
Horse Guards
10 Downing St.
St. James' Palace
Buckingham Palace
Houses of Parliament
Westminster Abbey
Westminster School
Victoria Railway Sta.
Tate Gallery
Lambeth Palace
Waterloo Railway Sta.
Royal National Theatre
The Old Vic Theatre
Guy's Hospital
Tottenham Court Road
Charing Cross Rd.
Holborn
Fleet St.
Strand
Embankment
Victoria
Whitehall
Millbank
Westminster Br.
Lambeth Br.
Waterloo Br.
Blackfriars Br.
Southwark Br.
London Br.
Tower Br.
Westminster Br. Rd.
Victoria St.
Lambeth Rd.
Waterloo Rd.
The Cut
Blackfriars Rd.
Borough High St.
Piccadilly
Park Lane
Knightsbridge
The Ring
Sloane St.
Buckingham Palace Rd.
Ebury St.
Chancery Ln
Queen Victoria St.
Bishopsgate
Whitechapel
Spitalfields
Wapping

British Money

One of the most dramatic changes to the system of British money came in 1971. In the system previously in place, the pound consisted of 20 shillings, each containing 12 pence, making 240 pence to the pound. Since 1971, British money has been calculated on the decimal system, with 100 pence to the pound. Britons' experience of paper money did not change very drastically: as before, 5- and 10-pound notes constitute the majority of bills passing through their hands (in addition, 20- and 50-pound notes have been added). But the shift necessitated a whole new way of thinking about and exchanging coins and marked the demise of the shilling, one of the fundamental units of British monetary history. Many other coins, still frequently encountered in literature, had already passed. These include the groat, worth 4 pence (the word "groat" is often used to signify a trifling sum); the angel (which depicted the archangel Michael triumphing over a dragon), valued at 10 shillings; the mark, worth in its day two-thirds of a pound or 13 shillings 4 pence; and the sovereign, a gold coin initially worth 22 shillings 6 pence, later valued at 1 pound, last circulated in 1932. One prominent older coin, the guinea, was worth a pound and a shilling; though it has not been minted since 1813, a very few quality items or prestige awards (like the purse in a horse race) may still be quoted in guineas. (The table below includes some other obsolete coins.) Colloquially, a pound was (and is) called a quid; a shilling a bob; sixpence, a tanner; a copper could refer to a penny, a half-penny, or a farthing (1/4 penny).

Old Currency	*New Currency*
1 pound note	1 pound coin (or note in Scotland)
10 shilling (half-pound note)	50 pence
5 shilling (crown)	
21/2 shilling (half crown)	20 pence
2 shilling (florin)	10 pence
1 shilling	5 pence
6 pence	
21/2 pence	1 penny
2 pence	

1 penny	
1/2 penny	
1/4 penny (farthing)	

Throughout its tenure as a member of the European Union (1973–2020), Britain contemplated but did not make the change to the EU's common currency, the Euro, reflecting many Britons' strong identification of their country with its rich commercial history and view of their currency as a national symbol.

Even more challenging than sorting out the values of obsolete coins is calculating for any given period the purchasing power of money, which fluctuates over time by its very nature. As difficult as it is to generalize, it is clear that money used to be worth much more than it is currently. During the early Middle Ages, the most valuable circulating coin was the silver penny: four would buy a sheep. Beyond long-term inflationary trends, prices varied from times of plenty to those marked by poor harvests; from peacetime to wartime; from the country to the metropolis (life in London has always been very expensive); and wages varied according to the availability of labor (wages would sharply rise, for instance, during the devastating Black Death in the fourteenth century). The following chart provides a glimpse of some actual prices of given periods and their changes across time, though all the variables mentioned above prevent them from being definitive. Even from one year to the next, an added tax on gin or tea could drastically raise prices, and a lottery ticket could cost much more the night before the drawing than just a month earlier. Still, the prices quoted below do indicate important trends, such as the disparity of incomes in British society and the costs of basic commodities. In the chart on the following pages, the symbol £ is used for pound, s. for shilling, d. for a penny (from Latin *denarius*); a sum would normally be written £2.19.3—that is 2 pounds, 19 shillings, 3 pence. (This is Leopold Bloom's budget for the day depicted in Joyce's novel *Ulysses* [1922]; in the new currency, it would be about £2.96.)

circa	1390	1590	1650	1750	1815	1875
food and drink	gallon (8 pints) of ale, 1.5d.	tankard of beer, .5d.	coffee, 1d. a dish	"drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two-pence" (gin shop sign in Hogarth print)	ounce of laudanum, 3d.	pint of beer, 3d.
	gallon (8 pints) of wine, 3 to 4d.	pound of beef, 2s. 5d.	chicken, 1s. 4d.	dinner at a steakhouse, 1s.	ham and potato dinner for two, 7s.	dinner in a good hotel, 5s.
	pound of cinnamon, 1	pound of cinnamon,	pound of tea, £3	pound of tea, 16s.	bottle of French	pound of tea, 2s.

	to 3s.	10s. 6d.	10s.		claret, 12s.	
entertainment	no cost to watch a cycle play	admission to public theater, 1 to 3d.	falcon, £11 5s.	theater tickets, 1 to 5s.	admission to Covent Garden theater, 1 to 7s.	theater tickets, 6d. to 7s.
	contributory admission to professional troupe theater	cheap seat in private theater, 6d.	billiard table, £25	admission to Vauxhall Gardens, 1s.	annual subscription to Almack's (exclusive club), 10 guineas	admission to Madam Tussaud's waxworks, 1s.
	maintenance for royal hounds at Windsor, .75d. a day	"to see a dead Indian" (*The Tempest* 2.2.32), 1.25d. (ten "doits")	three-quarter length portrait painting, £31	lottery ticket, £20 (shares were sold)	Jane Austen's piano, 30 guineas	annual fees at a gentleman's club, 7 to 10 guineas
reading	cheap romance, 1s.	play quarto, 6d.	pamphlet, 1 to 6d.	issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 6d.	issue of *Edinburgh Review*, 6s.	copy of the *Times*, 3d.
	a Latin Bible, 2 to £4	Shakespeare's *First Folio* (1623), £1	student Bible, 6s.	cheap edition of Milton, 2s.	membership in circulating library (3rd class), £1 4s. a year	illustrated edition of *Through the Looking-glass*, 6s.
	payment for illuminating a liturgical book, £22 9s.	Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, 24s.	Hobbes's *Leviathan*, 8s.	Johnson's *Dictionary*, folio, 2 vols., £4 10s.	1st edition of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, 18s.	1st edition of Trollope's *The Way We Live Now*, 2 vols., £1 1s.
transportation	night's supply of hay for horse, 2d.	wherry (whole boat) across Thames, 1d.	day's journey, coach, 10s.	boat across Thames, 4d.	coach ride, outside, 2 to 3d. a mile; inside,	15-minute journey in a London cab, 1s. 6d.

					4 to 5d. a mile	
	coach, £8	hiring a horse for a day, 12d.	coach horse, £30	coach fare, London to Edinburgh, £4 10s.	palanquin transport in Madras, 5s. a day	railway, 3rd class, Londor to Plymouth, 18s. 8d. (about 1d. a mile)
	quality horse, £10	hiring a coach for a day, 10s.	fancy carriage, £170	transport to America, £5	passage, Liverpool to New York, £10	passage to India, 1st class, £50
clothes	clothing allowance for peasant, 3s. a year	shoes with buckles, 8d.	footman's frieze coat, 15s.	working woman's gown, 6s. 6d.	checked muslin, 7s. per yard	flannel for a cheap petticoat, 1s. 3d. a yard
	shoes for gentry wearer, 4d.	woman's gloves, £1 5s.	falconer's hat, 10s.	gentleman's suit, £8	hiring a dressmaker for a pelisse, 8s.	overcoat for an Eton schoolboy, £1 1s.
	hat for gentry wearer, 10d.	fine cloak, £16	black cloth for mourning household of an earl, £100	very fine wig, £30	ladies silk stockings, 12s.	set of false teeth, £2 10s.
labor/incomes	hiring a skilled building worker, 4d. a day	actor's daily wage during playing season, 1s.	agricultural laborer, 6s. 5d. a week	price of enslaved boy, £32	lowest-paid sailor on Royal Navy ship, 10s. 9d. a month	seasonal agricultural laborer, 14s. a week
	wage for professional scribe, £2	household servant 2 to £5 a year + food, clothing	tutor to nobleman's children, £30 a year	housemaid's wage, £6 to£8 a year	contributor to *Quarterly Review*, 10	housemaid's wage, £10 to £25 a year

	3s. 4d. a year + cloak				guineas per sheet	
	minimum income to be called gentleman, £10 a year; for knighthood, 40 to £400	minimum income for eligibility for knighthood, £30 a year	Milton's salary as Secretary of Foreign Tongues, £288 a year	Boswell's allowance, £200 a year	minimum income for a "genteel" family, £100 a year	income of the "comfortable" classes, £800 and up a year
	income from land of richest magnates, £3,500 a year	income from land of average earl, £4,000 a year	Earl of Bedford's income, £8,000 a year	Duke of Newcastle's income, £40,000 a year	Mr. Darcy's income, *Pride and Prejudice*, £10,000	Trollope's income, £4,000 a year

The British Baronage

The English monarchy is in principle hereditary, though at times during the Middle Ages the rules were subject to dispute. As it stands now, authority passes from parent to eldest surviving child, to siblings in order of seniority if there are no children, and in default of direct descendants to collateral lines (cousins, nephews, nieces) in order of closeness. There have been breaks in the order of succession (1066, 1399, 1688), but so far as possible the usurpers have always sought to paper over the break with a legitimate, that is, hereditary, claim. When a queen succeeds to the throne and takes a husband, he does not become king unless he is in the line of blood succession; rather, he is named prince consort, as Albert was to Victoria. He may be the father of kings, but he is not one himself.

The original Saxon nobles were the king's thanes, ealdormen, or earls, who provided the king with military service and counsel in return for booty, gifts, or landed estates. William the Conqueror, arriving from France, where feudalism was fully developed, considerably expanded this group. In addition, as the king distributed the lands of his new kingdom, he also distributed dignities to men who became known collectively as "the baronage." "Baron" in its root meaning signifies simply "man," and barons were the king's men. As the title was common, a distinction was early made between greater and lesser barons, the former gradually assuming loftier and more impressive titles. The first English "duke" was created in 1337; the title of "marquess," or "marquis" (pronounced "markwis"), followed in 1385, and "viscount" ("vyekount") in 1440. Though "earl" is the oldest title of all, an earl now comes between a marquess and a viscount in order of dignity and precedence, and the old term "baron" now designates a rank just below viscount. "Baronets" were created in 1611 as a means of raising revenue for the crown (the title could be purchased for about

£1,000); they are marginal nobility and have never sat in the House of Lords.

Kings and queens are addressed as "Your Majesty," princes and princesses as "Your Highness," the other hereditary nobility as "My Lord" or "Your Lordship." Peers receive their titles either by inheritance (like Lord Byron, the sixth baron of that line) or from the monarch (like Alfred, Lord Tennyson, created 1st Baron Tennyson by Victoria). The children, even of a duke, are commoners unless they are specifically granted some other title or inherit their father's title from him. A peerage can be forfeited by act of attainder, as for example when a lord is convicted of treason; and, when forfeited, or lapsed for lack of a successor, can be bestowed on another family. Thus in 1605 Robert Cecil was made first Earl of Salisbury in the third creation, the first creation dating from 1149, the second from 1337, the title having been in abeyance since 1539. Titles descend by right of succession and do not depend on tenure of land; thus, a title does not always indicate where a lord dwells or holds power. Indeed, noble titles do not always refer to a real place at all. At Prince Edward's marriage in 1999, the queen created him Earl of Wessex, although the old kingdom of Wessex has had no political existence since 1066, and the name was all but forgotten until it was resurrected by Thomas Hardy as the setting of his novels. (This is perhaps but one of many ways in which the world of the aristocracy increasingly resembles the realm of literature.)

Scottish peers sat in the parliament of Scotland, as English peers did in the parliament of England, till at the Act of Union (1707) Scottish peers were granted sixteen seats in the English House of Lords, to be filled by election. (In 1963, all Scottish lords were allowed to sit.) Similarly, Irish peers, when the Irish parliament was abolished in 1801, were granted the right to elect twenty-eight of their number to the House of Lords in Westminster. (Now that the Republic of Ireland is a separate nation, this no longer applies.) Women members (peeresses) were first allowed to sit in the House as nonhereditary Life Peers in 1958 (when that status was created for members of both genders); women first sat by their own hereditary

right in 1963. Today the House of Lords still retains some power to influence or delay legislation, but its future is uncertain. In 1999, the hereditary peers (then amounting to 750) were reduced to 92 temporary members elected by their fellow peers. Holders of Life Peerages remain, as do senior bishops of the Church of England and high-court judges (the "Law Lords").

The king and queen	(These are all of the royal line.)
Prince and princess	
Duke and duchess	(These may or may not be of the royal line, but are ordinarily remote from the succession.)
Marquess and marchioness	
Earl and countess	
Viscount and viscountess	
Baron and baroness	
Baronet and lady	

Below the peerage the chief title of honor is "knight." Knighthood, which is not hereditary, is generally a reward for services rendered. A knight (Sir John Black) is addressed, using his first name, as "Sir John"; his wife, using the last name, is "Lady Black"—unless she is the daughter of an earl or nobleman of higher rank, in which case she will be "Lady Arabella." The female equivalent of a knight bears the title of "Dame." Though the word *knight* itself comes from the Old English *cniht*, there is some doubt as to whether knighthood amounted to much before the arrival of the Normans. The feudal system required military service as a condition of land tenure, and a man who came to serve his king at the head of an army of tenants required a title of authority and badges of identity—hence the title of knighthood and the coat of arms. During the Crusades, when men were far removed from their land (or even sold it in order to go on crusade), more elaborate forms of fealty sprang up that soon expanded into orders of knighthood. The Templars, Hospitallers, Knights of the Teutonic Order, Knights of Malta, and Knights of the Golden Fleece were but a few of these companionships; not all of them were available at all times in England.

Gradually, with the rise of centralized government and the decline of feudal tenures, military knighthood became obsolete, and the rank largely honorific; sometimes, as under James I, it degenerated into a scheme of the royal government for making money. For hundreds of years after its establishment in the fourteenth century, the Order of the Garter was the only English order of knighthood, an exclusive courtly companionship. Then, during the late seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the nineteenth centuries, a number of additional orders were created, with names such as the Thistle, Saint Patrick, the Bath, Saint Michael, and Saint George, plus a number of special Victorian and Indian orders. They retain the terminology, ceremony, and dignity of knighthood, but the military implications are vestigial.

Although the British Empire now belongs to history, appointments to the Order of the British Empire continue to be conferred for

services to that empire at home or abroad. Such honors (commonly referred to as “gongs”) are granted by the monarch in New Year’s and Birthday lists, but the decisions are now made by the government in power. In recent years there have been efforts to popularize and democratize the dispensation of honors, with recipients including celebrities of all types. But this does not prevent large sectors of British society from regarding both knighthood and the peerage as largely irrelevant to modern life.

The Royal Lines of England and Great Britain

England

SAXONS AND DANES

Egbert, king of Wessex802–839

Ethelwulf, son of Egbert839–858

Ethelbald, second son of Ethelwulf858–860

Ethelbert, third son of Ethelwulf860–866

Ethelred I, fourth son of Ethelwulf866–871

Alfred the Great, fifth son of Ethelwulf871–899

Edward the Elder, son of Alfred899–924

Athelstan the Glorious, son of Edward924–940

Edmund I, third son of Edward940–946

Edred, fourth son of Edward946–955

Edwy the Fair, son of Edmund955–959

Edgar the Peaceful, second son of Edmund959–975

Edward the Martyr, son of Edgar975–978 (murdered)

Ethelred II, the Unready, second son of Edgar978–1016

Edmund II, Ironside, son of Ethelred II1016–1016

Canute the Dane1016–1035

Harold I, Harefoot, natural son of Canute1035–1040

Hardecanute, son of Canute1040–1042

Edward the Confessor, son of Ethelred II1042–1066

Harold II, brother-in-law of Edward1066–1066 (died in battle)

HOUSE OF NORMANDY

William I, the Conqueror1066–1087

William II, Rufus, third son of William I1087–1100 (shot from ambush)

Henry I, Beauclerc, youngest son of William I1100–1135

HOUSE OF BLOIS

Stephen, son of Adela, daughter of William I1135–1154

HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET

Henry II, son of Geoffrey Plantagenet by Matilda, daughter of Henry I1154–1189

Richard I, Coeur de Lion, son of Henry II1189–1199

John Lackland, son of Henry II1199–1216

Henry III, son of John1216–1272

Edward I, Longshanks, son of Henry III1272–1307

Edward II, son of Edward I1307–1327 (deposed)

Edward III of Windsor, son of Edward II1327–1377

Richard II, grandson of Edward III1377–1399 (deposed)

HOUSE OF LANCASTER

Henry IV, son of John of Gaunt, son of Edward III1399–1413

Henry V, Prince Hal, son of Henry IV1413–1422

Henry VI, son of Henry V1422–1461 (deposed),

1470–1471 (deposed)

HOUSE OF YORK

Edward IV, great-great-grandson of Edward III1461–1470 (deposed), 1471–1483

Edward V, son of Edward IV1483–1483 (murdered)

Richard III, Crookback1483–1485 (died in battle)

HOUSE OF TUDOR

Henry VII, married daughter of Edward IV1485–1509

Henry VIII, son of Henry VII1509–1547

Edward VI, son of Henry VIII1547–1553

Mary I, "Bloody," daughter of Henry VIII1553–1558

Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII1558–1603

HOUSE OF STUART

James I (James VI of Scotland)1603–1625

Charles I, son of James I1625–1649 (executed)

COMMONWEALTH & PROTECTORATE

Council of State1649–1653

Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector1653–1658

Richard Cromwell, son of Oliver1658–1660 (resigned)

HOUSE OF STUART (RESTORED)

Charles II, son of Charles I1660–1685

James II, second son of Charles I1685–1688

(INTERREGNUM, 11 DECEMBER 1688 TO 13 FEBRUARY 1689)

HOUSE OF ORANGE-NASSAU

William III of Orange, by
Mary, daughter of Charles I
and Mary II, daughter of James II1689–1701

–1694

Anne, second daughter of James II1702–1714

Great Britain

HOUSE OF HANOVER

George I, son of Elector of Hanover and Sophia, granddaughter of James I1714–1727

George II, son of George I1727–1760

George III, grandson of George II1760–1820

George IV, son of George III1820–1830

William IV, third son of George III1830–1837

Victoria, daughter of Edward, fourth son of George III1837–1901

HOUSE OF SAXE-COBURG AND GOTHA

Edward VII, son of Victoria1901–1910

HOUSE OF WINDSOR (NAME ADOPTED 17 JULY 1917)

George V, second son of Edward VII1910–1936

Edward VIII, eldest son of George V1936–1936 (abdicated)

George VI, second son of George V1936–1952

Elizabeth II, daughter of George VI1952–2022

Charles III, son of Elizabeth II2022–

Religions in Great Britain

In the late sixth century C.E., missionaries from Rome introduced Christianity to Britons—actually, reintroduced it, since it had briefly flourished in the southern parts of the British Isles during the Roman occupation, and even after the Roman withdrawal had persisted in the Celtic regions of Scotland and Wales. By the time the earliest poems included in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* were composed (the seventh century), therefore, there had been a Christian presence in the British Isles for hundreds of years. The conversion of the Germanic occupiers of England can, however, be dated only from 597. Our knowledge of the religion of pre-Christian Britain is sketchy, but it is likely that vestiges of Germanic polytheism assimilated into, or coexisted with, the practice of Christianity: fertility rites were incorporated into the celebration of Easter resurrection, rituals commemorating the dead into All-Hallows Eve and All Saints Day, and elements of winter solstice festivals into the celebration of Christmas. The most durable polytheistic remains are the days of the week, each of which except "Saturday" derives from the name of a Germanic pagan god, and the word "Easter," deriving, according to the great monastic scholar Bede (ca. 673–735), from the name of a Germanic pagan goddess, Eostre. In English literature such "folkloric" elements sometimes elicit romantic nostalgia. Geoffrey Chaucer's "Wife of Bath" looks back to a magical time before the arrival of Christianity in which the land was "fulfild of fairye." Hundreds of years later, the seventeenth-century writer Robert Herrick honors the amalgamation of Christian and pagan elements in agrarian British culture in such poems as "Corinna's Gone A-Maying" and "The Hock Cart."

Medieval Christianity was fairly uniform, if complex, across Western Europe—hence called "catholic," or universally shared. The Church was composed of the so-called "regular" and "secular" orders, the regular orders being those who followed a rule in a

community under an abbot or an abbess (that is, monks, nuns, friars, and canons), while the secular clergy of priests served parish communities under the governance of a bishop. In the unstable period from the sixth until the twelfth century, monasteries were the intellectual powerhouse of the Church. From the beginning of the thirteenth century, with the development of an urban Christian spirituality in Europe, friars dominated the recently invented institution of universities, as well as devoting themselves, in theory at least, to the urban poor.

The Catholic Church was also an international power structure. With its hierarchy of pope, cardinals, archbishops, and bishops, it offered a model of the centralized, bureaucratic state from the late eleventh century. That ecclesiastical power structure coexisted alongside a separate, often less centralized and feudal structure of lay authorities, with theoretically different and often competing spheres of social responsibilities. The sharing of lay and ecclesiastical authority in medieval England was sometimes a source of conflict. Chaucer's pilgrims are on their way to visit the memorial shrine to one victim of such exemplary struggle: Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, who opposed the policies of King Henry II, was assassinated by indirect suggestion of the king in 1170, and later made a saint. The Church, in turn, produced its own victims: Jews were subject to persecution in the late twelfth century in England, before being expelled in 1290. From the beginning of the fifteenth century, the English Church targeted Lollard heretics (see below) with capital punishment, for the first time.

As an international organization, the Church conducted its business in the universal language of Latin. Thus although in the period the largest segment of literate persons was made up of clerics, the clerical contribution to great literary writing in vernacular languages (for example, French and English) was, so far as we know, relatively modest, with some great exceptions in the later Middle Ages (for example, William Langland). Lay, vernacular writers of the period certainly reflect the importance of the Church as an institution and the pervasiveness of religion in the rituals that

marked everyday life, as well as contesting institutional authority. From the late fourteenth century, indeed, England witnessed an active and articulate, proto-Protestant movement known as Lollardy, which attacked clerical hierarchy and promoted vernacular scriptures.

Beginning in 1517 the German monk Martin Luther, in Wittenberg, Germany, openly challenged many aspects of Catholic practice and by 1520 had completely repudiated the authority of the pope, setting in motion the Protestant Reformation. Luther argued that the Roman Catholic Church had strayed far from the pattern of Christianity laid out in scripture. He rejected Catholic doctrines for which no biblical authority was to be found, such as the belief in Purgatory, and translated the Bible into German, on the grounds that the importance of scripture for all Christians made its translation into the vernacular tongue essential. Luther was not the first to advance such views—Lollard followers of the Englishman John Wycliffe had translated the Bible in the late fourteenth century. But Luther, protected by powerful German rulers, was able to speak out without fear of punishment and convert others to his views, rather than suffer the persecution usually meted out to heretics. Soon other reformers were following in Luther's footsteps: of these, the Swiss Ulrich Zwingli and the French Jean Calvin would be especially influential for English religious thought.

At first England remained staunchly Catholic. Its king, Henry VIII, was so severe to heretics that the pope awarded him the title "Defender of the Faith," which British monarchs have retained to this day. In 1534, however, Henry rejected the authority of the pope to prevent his divorce from his queen, Catherine of Aragon, and his marriage to his mistress, Ann Boleyn. In doing so, Henry appropriated to himself ecclesiastical as well as secular authority. Thomas More, author of *Utopia*, was executed in 1535 for refusing to endorse Henry's right to govern the English church. Over the following six years, Henry consolidated his grip on the ecclesiastical establishment by dissolving the powerful, populous Catholic monasteries and redistributing their massive landholdings to his own

lay followers. Yet Henry's church largely retained Catholic doctrine and liturgy. When Henry died and his young son, Edward, came to the throne in 1547, the English church embarked on a more Protestant path, a direction abruptly reversed when Edward died and his older sister Mary, the daughter of Catherine of Aragon, took the throne in 1553 and attempted to reintroduce Roman Catholicism. Mary's reign was also short, however, and her successor, Elizabeth I, the daughter of Ann Boleyn, was a Protestant. Elizabeth attempted to establish a "middle way" Christianity, compromising between Roman Catholic practices and beliefs and reformed ones.

The Church of England, though it laid claim to a national rather than pan-European authority, aspired like its predecessor to be the universal church of all English subjects. It retained the Catholic structure of parishes and dioceses and the Catholic hierarchy of bishops, though the ecclesiastical authority was now the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Church's "Supreme Governor" was the monarch. Yet disagreement and controversy persisted. Some members of the Church of England wanted to retain many of the ritual and liturgical elements of Catholicism. Others, the Puritans, advocated a more thoroughgoing reformation. Most Puritans remained within the Church of England, but a minority, the "Separatists" or "Congregationalists," split from the established church altogether. These dissenters no longer thought of the ideal church as an organization to which everybody belonged; instead, they conceived it as a more exclusive group of likeminded people, one not necessarily attached to a larger body of believers.

In the seventeenth century, the succession of the Scottish king James to the English throne produced another problem. England and Scotland were separate nations, and in the sixteenth century Scotland had developed its own national Presbyterian church, or "kirk," under the leadership of the reformer John Knox. The kirk retained fewer Catholic liturgical elements than did the Church of England, and its authorities, or "presbyters," were elected by assemblies of their fellow clerics, rather than appointed by the king. James I and his son Charles I, especially the latter, wanted to bring

the Scottish kirk into conformity with Church of England practices. The Scots violently resisted these efforts, with the collaboration of many English Puritans, in a conflict that eventually developed into the English Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century. The effect of these disputes is visible in the poetry of such writers as John Milton, Robert Herrick, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne, and in the prose of Thomas Browne, Lucy Hutchinson, and Dorothy Waugh. Just as in the mid-sixteenth century, when a succession of monarchs with different religious commitments destabilized the church, so the seventeenth century endured spiritual whiplash. King Charles I's highly ritualistic Church of England was violently overturned by the Puritan victors in the Civil War—until 1660, after the death of the Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell, when the Church of England was restored along with the monarchy.

The religious and political upheavals of the seventeenth century produced Christian sects that de-emphasized the ceremony of the established church and rejected as well its top-down authority structure. Some of these groups were ephemeral, but the Baptists (founded in 1608 in Amsterdam by the English expatriate John Smyth) and Quakers, or Society of Friends (founded by George Fox in the 1640s), flourished outside the established church, sometimes despite cruel persecution. John Bunyan, a Baptist, wrote the Christian allegory *Pilgrim's Progress* while in prison. Some dissenters, like the Baptists, shared the reformed reverence for the absolute authority of scripture but interpreted the scriptural texts differently from their fellow Protestants. Others, like the Quakers, favored, even over the authority of the Bible, the "inner light" or voice of individual conscience, which they took to be the working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of individuals.

The Protestant dissenters were not England's only religious minorities. Despite crushing fines and the threat of imprisonment, a minority of Catholics under Elizabeth and James openly refused to give their allegiance to the new church, and others remained secret adherents to the old ways. John Donne was brought up in an ardently Catholic family, and several other writers converted to

Catholicism as adults—Ben Jonson for a considerable part of his career, Elizabeth Carey and Richard Crashaw permanently, and at profound personal cost. In the eighteenth century, Catholics remained objects of suspicion as possible agents of sedition, especially after the "Glorious Revolution" in 1688 deposed the Catholic James II in favor of the Protestant William and Mary. Anti-Catholic prejudice affected John Dryden, a Catholic convert, as well as the lifelong Catholic Alexander Pope. By contrast, the English colony of Ireland remained overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, the fervor of its religious commitment at least partly inspired by resistance to English occupation. Starting in the reign of Elizabeth, England shored up its own authority in Ireland by encouraging Protestant immigrants from Scotland to settle in the north of Ireland, producing a virulent religious divide the effects of which are still felt today.

A small community of Jews had moved from France to London after 1066, when the Norman William the Conqueror came to the English throne. Although despised and persecuted by many Christians, they were allowed to remain as moneylenders to the Crown, until the thirteenth century, when the king developed alternative sources of credit. At this point, in 1290, the Jews were expelled from England. In 1655 Oliver Cromwell permitted a few to return, and in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the Jewish population slowly increased, mainly by immigration from Germany. In the mid-eighteenth century some prominent Jews had their children brought up as Christians so as to facilitate their full integration into English society: thus the nineteenth-century writer and politician Benjamin Disraeli, although he and his father were members of the Church of England, was widely considered a Jew insofar as his ancestry was Jewish.

In the late seventeenth century, as the Church of England reasserted itself, Catholics, Jews, and dissenting Protestants found themselves subject to significant legal restrictions. The Corporation Act, passed in 1661, and the Test Act, passed in 1673, excluded all who refused to take communion in the Church of England from

voting, attending university, or working in government or in the professions. Members of religious minorities, as well as Church of England communicants, paid mandatory taxes in support of Church of England ministers and buildings. In 1689 the dissenters gained the right to worship in public, but Jews and Catholics were not permitted to do so.

During the eighteenth century, political, intellectual, and religious history remained closely intertwined. The Church of England came to accommodate a good deal of variety. "Low church" services resembled those of the dissenting Protestant churches, minimizing ritual and emphasizing the sermon; the "high church" retained more elaborate ritual elements, yet its prestige was under attack on several fronts. Many Enlightenment thinkers subjected the Bible to rational critique and found it wanting: the philosopher David Hume, for instance, argued that the "miracles" described therein were more probably lies or errors than real breaches of the laws of nature. Within the Church of England, the "broad church" Latitudinarians welcomed this rationalism, advocating theological openness and an emphasis on ethics rather than dogma. More radically, the Unitarian movement rejected the divinity of Christ while professing to accept his ethical teachings. Taking a different tack, the preacher John Wesley, founder of Methodism, responded to the rationalists' challenge with a newly fervent call to evangelism and personal discipline; his movement was particularly successful in Wales. Revolutions in America and France at the end of the century generated considerable millenarian excitement and fostered more new religious ideas, often in conjunction with a radical social agenda. Many important writers of the Romantic period were indebted to traditions of protestant dissent: Unitarian and rationalist protestant ideas influenced William Hazlitt, Anna Barbauld, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the young Samuel Taylor Coleridge. William Blake created a highly idiosyncratic poetic mythology loosely indebted to radical strains of Christian mysticism. Others were even more heterodox: Lord Byron and Robert Burns, brought up as Scots

Presbyterians, rebelled fiercely, and Percy Shelley's writing of an atheistic pamphlet resulted in his expulsion from Oxford.

Great Britain never erected an American-style "wall of separation" between church and state, but in practice religion and secular affairs grew more and more distinct during the nineteenth century. In consequence, members of religious minorities no longer seemed to pose a threat to the commonweal. A movement to repeal the Test Act failed in the 1790s, but a renewed effort resulted in the extension of the franchise to dissenting Protestants in 1828 and to Catholics in 1829. The numbers of Roman Catholics in England were swelled by immigration from Ireland, but there were also some prominent English adherents. Among writers, the converts John Newman and Gerard Manley Hopkins are especially important. The political participation and social integration of Jews presented a thornier challenge. Lionel de Rothschild, repeatedly elected to represent London in Parliament during the 1840s and 1850s, was not permitted to take his seat there because he refused to take his oath of office "on the true faith of a Christian"; finally, in 1858, the Jewish Disabilities Act allowed him to omit these words. Only in 1871, however, were Oxford and Cambridge opened to non-Anglicans.

Meanwhile geological discoveries and Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories increasingly cast doubt on the literal truth of the Creation story, and close philological analysis of the biblical text suggested that its origins were human rather than divine. By the end of the nineteenth century, many writers were bearing witness to a world in which Christianity no longer seemed fundamentally plausible. In his poetry and prose, Thomas Hardy depicts a world devoid of benevolent providence. Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach" is in part an elegy to lost spiritual assurance, as the "Sea of Faith" goes out like the tide: "But now I only hear / Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar / Retreating." For Arnold, literature must replace religion as a source of spiritual truth, and intimacy between individuals substitute for the lost communal solidarity of the universal church.

The work of many twentieth-century writers shows the influence of a religious upbringing or a religious conversion in adulthood. T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden embrace Anglicanism, William Butler Yeats spiritualism. James Joyce repudiates Irish Catholicism but remains obsessed with it. Yet religion, or lack of it, is a matter of individual choice and conscience, not social or legal mandate. Over the past several decades, church attendance has plummeted in Great Britain. Only about 46 percent of the population identified itself as "Christian" on the 2021 census. Meanwhile, immigration from former British colonies as well as other countries has swelled the ranks of religions once uncommon in the British Isles—Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist—though the numbers of adherents remain small relative to the total population.

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Image Galleries

The Romantic Period 1785–1832

Sir Brooke Boothby, Joseph Wright of Derby, 1781

Many details combine here to portray Boothby, a Derbyshire landowner and intellectual, as a progressive man of his times: the soberly colored wool suit, one cuff casually unbuttoned, that he wears instead of the bright silks of court dress; the fact that he

has taken philosophical contemplation outdoors, into an untamed woodland scene. Boothby's left hand caresses a book by Jean—Jacques Rousseau, the French philosopher whom Boothby had recently edited: the portrait seems an endorsement of Rousseau's argument for a return to nature. Offsetting Boothby's modern guise, in the reclining attitude Wright has chosen for his depiction there is a recollection of statuary depicting classical river gods.

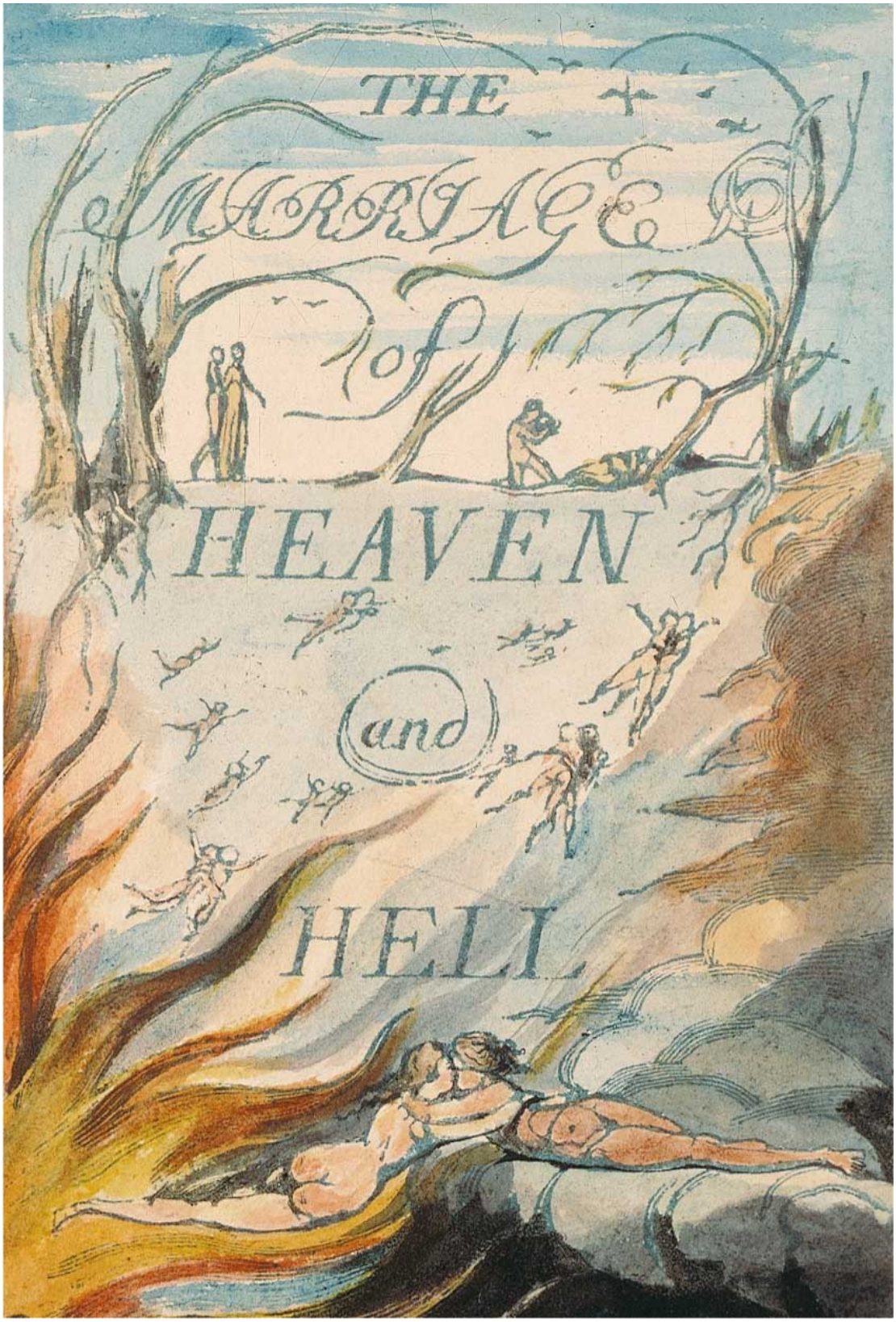

THE
MARRIAGE
of
HEAVEN
and
HELL

Plate 1, Copy D, of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* William Blake, 1790–93

This title page of a work composed in the early years of the French Revolution (p. 149) juxtaposes lighthearted activities (birds and humans soaring, strolling, playing music, dancing, embracing) with bleak and ominous surroundings (the leaflessness of the trees, the intensity of the flames). The larger reclining figures at the bottom of the page, sexy but genderless, are usually read as a devil and an angel whose embrace symbolizes the union ("marriage") of contraries running throughout the work.

The SICK ROSE
O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm.
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

The Sick Rose, William Blake, 1794

Blake's "illumination' (plate 39, copy C, of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience;* see p. 134) further complicates an already highly ambiguous poetic text. In the picture are two worms—one eating a leaf in the upper left corner, the other coming out of the fallen blossom at the bottom—and three female figures, two of which, situated on the thorny stems above the engraved text, appear to be in postures of despair. The third female figure, emerging from the blossom, has arms flung forward in an expression of either ecstasy or terror.

Glad Day, or *The Dance of Albion,* William Blake, ca. 1793

Blake kept returning to this image of liberation. He first designed it in 1780, shortly after finishing his apprenticeship as an engraver, when the vision of a rising sun and a radiant human body may have expressed his own youthful sense of freedom. But later, in an age of revolution, he identified the figure as Albion —"Albion rose from where he labourd at the Mill with Slaves." For Blake the giant Albion represents the ancient form of Britain, a universal man who has fallen on evil, repressive times but is destined to awake and unite all people in a dance of liberty, both political and spiritual. Eventually, in *Jerusalem* (ca. 1820), Blake's last great prophetic work, the figure of Albion merged with Jesus, risen from the tomb as an embodiment of "the human form divine"—immortal and perpetually creative.

Interior of Tintern Abbey, J. M. W. Turner, 1794

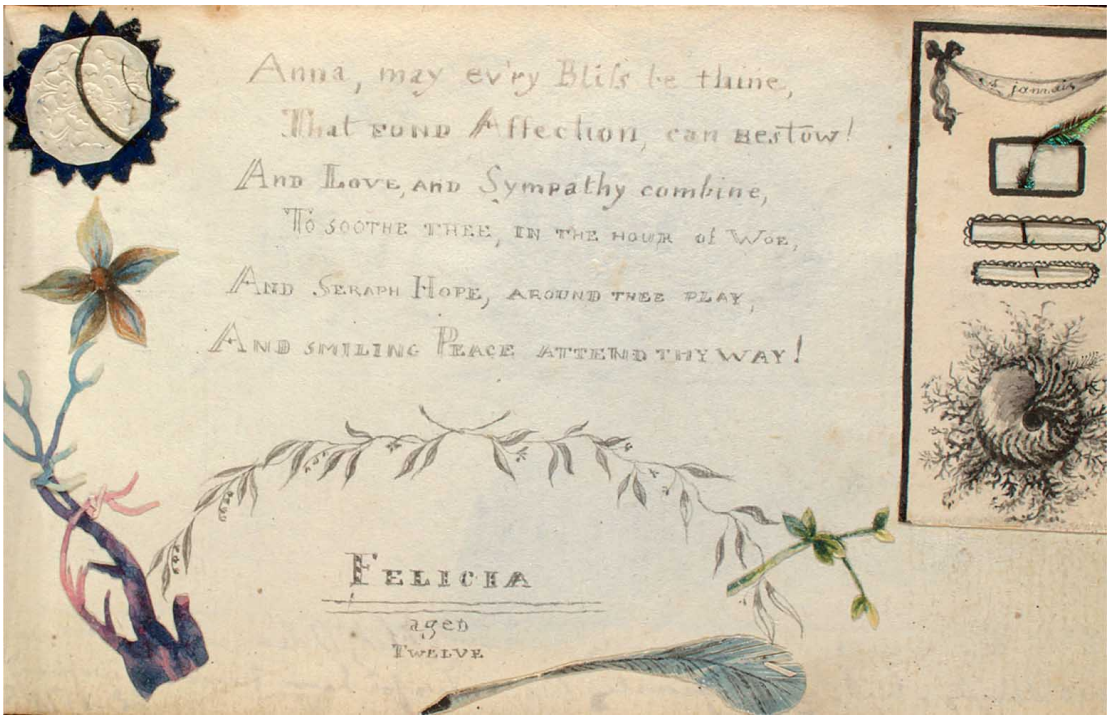
Turner painted this watercolor at the age of nineteen, a year after Wordsworth made his first visit to the abbey (1793) and four

years before the poet returned for a second visit (1798), as recorded in the famous "Lines" pondering the changes that have taken place in both the speaker and the scene (p. 333). In Turner's version—as, in a different way, in Wordsworth's—the ruined symbol of religion, towering above two tiny human figures, presumably tourists, in the lower left, is in the process of being taken over (allegorically superseded) by the more powerful force of nature.

Lord Byron, Thomas Phillips, 1835 (after an original of 1813)

Garbed theatrically in an Albanian soldier's dress that he had purchased while on his travels, Byron appears in this portrait as one of his own exotic heroes. The profits from his "Eastern" tales *Lara* and *The Corsair* in fact helped pay for the portrait, which Byron commissioned in 1813, choosing to be pictured not as a

member of the British establishment but as an outsider. The archives of London's National Portrait Gallery record more than forty portraits of Byron done during his lifetime, as well as a waxwork model from life made by Madame Tussaud in 1816: a statistic that suggests the poet's keen awareness of the magnetism and marketability of his image.



Page from an album of Anne Wagner, ca. 1795–1834

It was fashionable in the nineteenth century for middle-class and well-to-do women to own "albums," blank books in which friends and relatives could leave drawings, inscribe quoted or original verse, or paste in collages and cut-outs. On this page from an album kept by Anne Wagner, daughter of a Liverpool wine merchant, beginning in 1795, the poem and the delicate artwork are by Wagner's niece, Felicia Browne, "aged twelve," who would go on to literary fame under her married name, Felicia Hemans (see pp. 898–99). The writing is ornamented and carefully

lettered on the tiny page in imitation of a printed book (the album measures just 8.5 by 12 cm).

The Sleep of Endymion, Anne-Louis Girodet, 1791

For this otherworldly love scene, the French painter Girodet draws on Greek mythology's legends of the love the goddess of the moon bore for a mortal, the shepherd Endymion, whom she visited while he slept. Girodet adds to the story a figure sometimes identified as Eros, sometimes as Zephyr, the personification of the breeze, who is shown on the left half-smiling as he parts the surrounding foliage, the better to enable the moonbeams to embrace the sleeper. The unconscious Endymion is, by contrast, a gorgeously passive figure, though he does appear to stir in his sleep (dreaming perhaps) and turn his face toward the silvery light. In some versions of the legend, the goddess arranges for Endymion to sleep eternally, preserving his

physical perfection and making him immortal. "A thing of beauty is a joy for ever": in 1818, in his first long poem, which opens with this line, John Keats would also represent Endymion's story and, like Girodet, use it to think about pleasure, love, dream, arrested time, and their relations (pp. 947–51).

Miseries of London, Thomas Rowlandson, printed by R. Ackerman, 1807

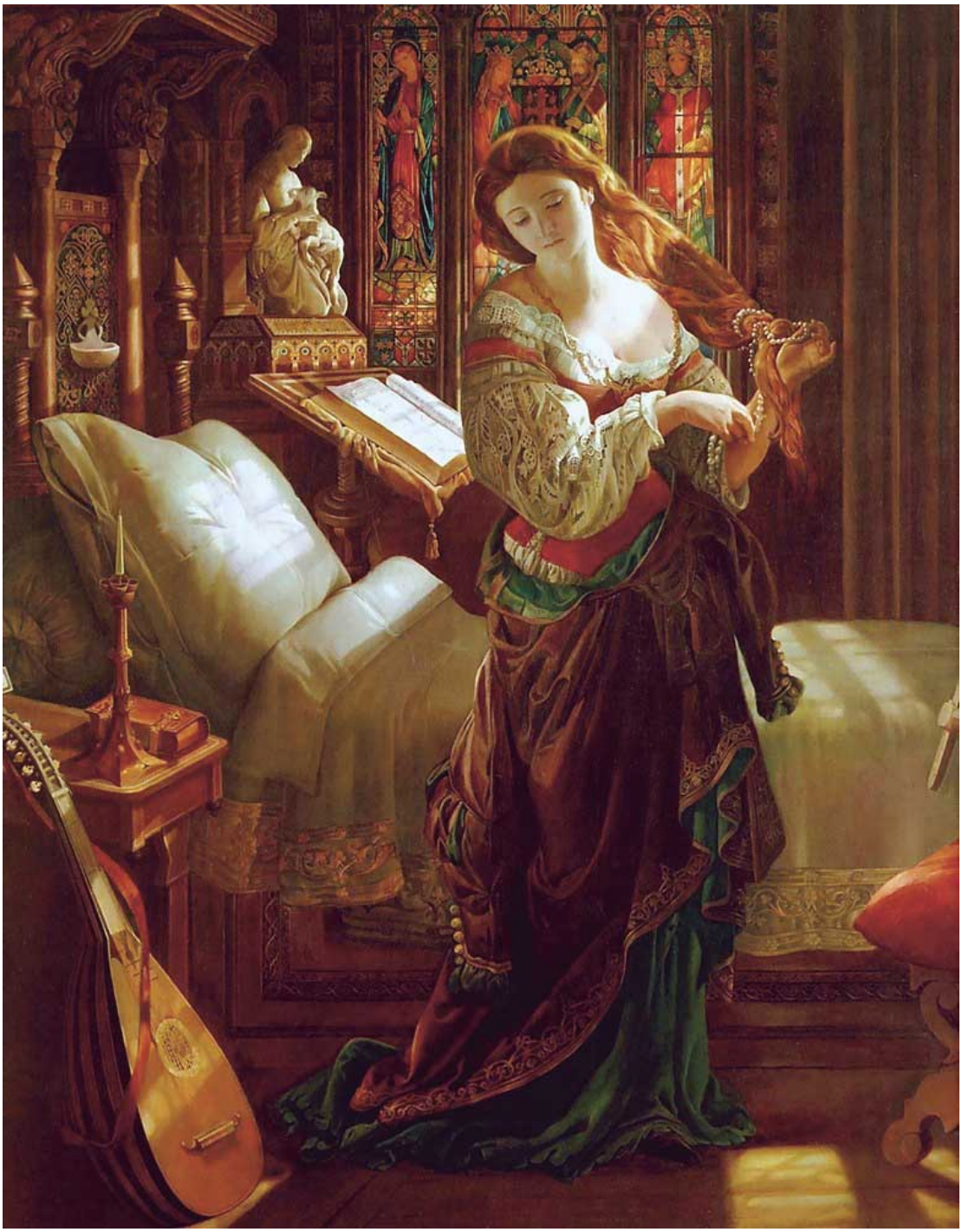
Evoking the potential for danger and disorder associated with the busy metropolis in the Romantic period—and reveling in the exciting spectacle of the city street—this lavishly jumbled scene of "road rage" in a London traffic jam was one of cartoonist Thomas Rowlandson's illustrations for James Beresford's popular satire on modern manners and fashions, *The Miseries of Human Life; or The Last Groans of Timothy Testy and Samuel Sensitive*, first published in 1806 and then frequently reprinted. Crowded into

the image are a number of distinct social groups, from elegant carriage riders to street performers accompanied by costumed animals. The physical chaos ricochets across social and even species divisions, as horses collide, women with market baskets go tumbling, and a hapless construction worker accidentally rains bricks from above. The quotation at the bottom of the print ("Breast against breast with ruinous assault / And deafening shock they come") is jokingly taken from a description of heroic battle in Virgil's epic *The Aeneid* (11.613–15).

The Nightmare, Henry Fuseli, ca. 1783–91

The first version of this painting created a sensation when the Swiss-born artist Fuseli exhibited it at London's Royal Academy in 1781. Even Horace Walpole, who had used his own nightmare of "a gigantic hand in armour" when composing his Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (p. 292), found Fuseli's trademark blend of

violence, eroticism, and the irrational excessively disturbing: “shockingly mad, madder than ever; quite mad” was Walpole’s verdict on the witchcraft scene that Fuseli exhibited four years later. It is no surprise to learn that during the 1920s Sigmund Freud kept an engraving of *The Nightmare* on display.



Madeline After Prayer, Daniel Maclise, 1868

Closely attending to Keats's words, Maclise pictures the moment when, "her vespers done," Madeline, the heroine of *The Eve of Saint Agnes,* frees her hair "of all its wreathed pearls," illuminated

all the while by the moonlight shining through the window that Keats had described in detail. Missing from the image is Porphyro, who in the poem spies on this scene of disrobing from his hiding place in Madeline's closet. Maclise is one of many nineteenth-century painters who took inspiration from the sumptuous sensory detail of Keats's romance (pp. 953–63).

Disappointed Love, Francis Danby, 1821

In this, the first work he exhibited at the Royal Academy, the Anglo-Irish, Bristol-based painter Francis Danby adopted an unprecedented approach to the combination of figure and landscape that was increasingly central to nineteenth-century painting. *Disappointed Love* owes its power to its fusion of the general and the particularized. The depiction of the young woman, her face and individuality concealed from the viewer,

allies her with allegorical representations of melancholy, mourning figures placed atop mortuary monuments, or even some of the female figures in Blake's illuminated books. The scene in which she is placed, by contrast, based on Danby's study of scenery along the River Frome on Bristol's outskirts, is rendered in minute, naturalistic detail. He depicts the plants around her with a botanist's eye.

The Victorian Age
1830–1901

Slave Ship (Slavers Throwing Overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhoon Coming On), J. M. W. Turner, 1840

The subject of Turner's painting is the infamous Zong massacre of 1781 in which more than one hundred and thirty enslaved people were thrown overboard by the crew of the British slave ship (detail at left). When the ship ran low on water, the captain

decided to murder the enslaved cargo in order to collect insurance on their lives—a decision ultimately deemed legal by a British court of law. In this painting, Turner uses this horrifying incident as the occasion for the apocalyptic use of light and color. John Ruskin owned this painting for several years, but he eventually sold it, finding the subject "too painful to live with." He praises it at length in *Modern Painters* (p. 466).

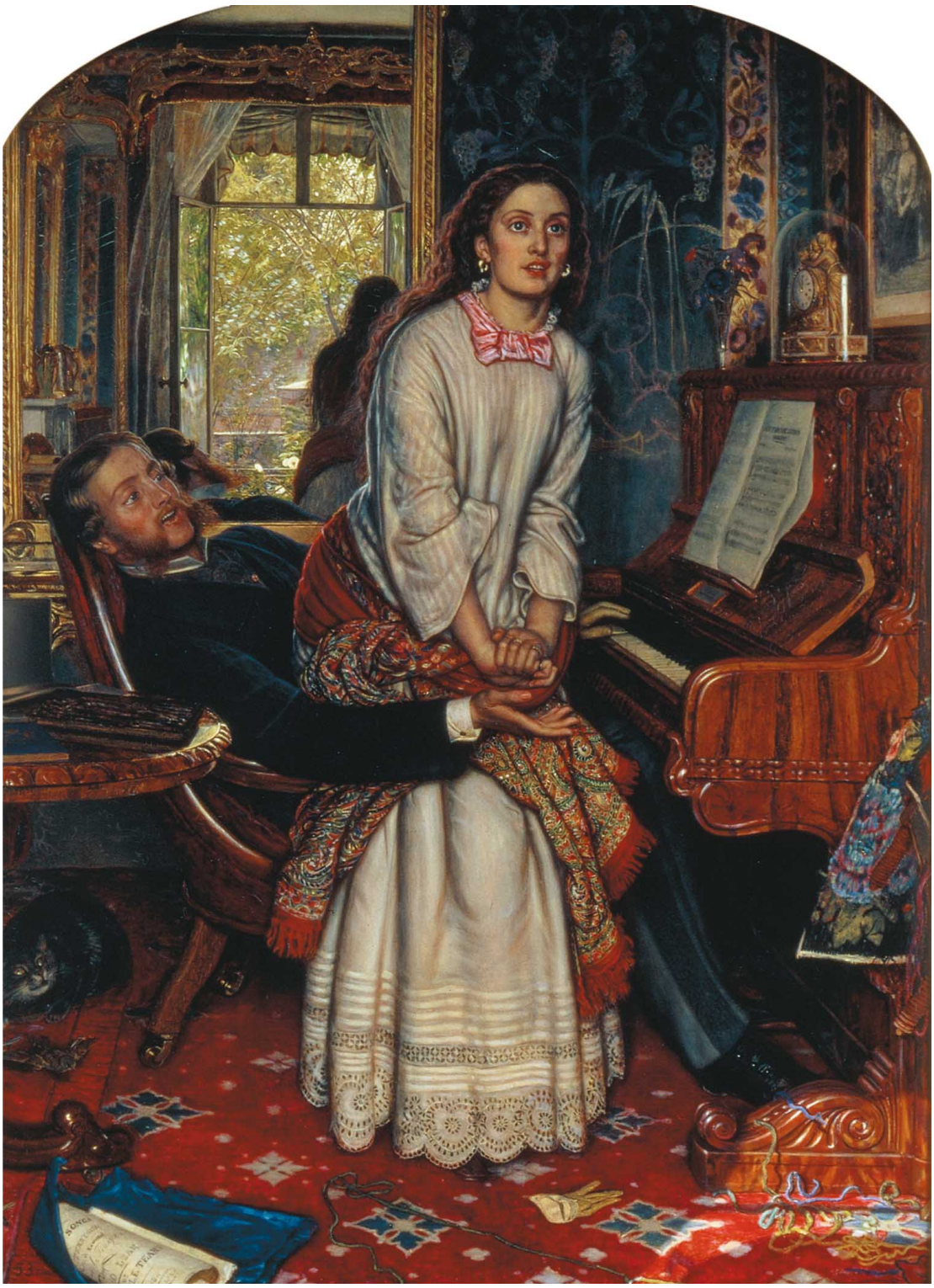
Ophelia, Sir John Everett Millais, 1851–52

Millais' famous painting of Shakespeare's heroine depicts Ophelia as she drifts to her death after being driven mad by her lover Hamlet's murder of her father. When the work was first exhibited at the Royal Academy, some viewers objected to the ordinariness of the surroundings. As Millais' friend John Ruskin asked the painter, "Why the mischief should you not paint pure nature, and not that rascally wirefenced garden-rolled- nursery- maid's paradise?" More recently, the painting has come to be regarded

as one of the great masterpieces of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (pp. 606–15).

Work, Ford Madox Brown, 1852, 1856–63

Brown's painting constructs a comprehensive picture of Victorian society through the relationships of various classes of the population to work. The excavators at the center represent work in its essential, physical form: the leisured gentry on horseback at the top of the painting have no need to work; the ragged girl in the foreground cares for her orphaned brothers and sisters. Under the trees are vagrants and distressed haymakers. Thomas Carlyle and F. D. Maurice, "brain workers" whose social ideas influenced the painting, stand on the right.



The Awakening Conscience, William Holman Hunt, 1853–54

As John Ruskin's letter to the *Times* (p. 609) points out, every detail of Hunt's painting of a fallen woman, hearing the voice of conscience while in the arms of her lover, has symbolic resonance —the soiled glove on the carpet, the bird that has escaped the cat, the songs on the piano ("Oft in the Stilly Night") and on the floor ("Tears, Idle Tears"), the window through which the woman gazes, reflected in the mirror behind the couple. Like Millais' *Ophelia*, the painting surrounds and interprets its subject with a crowded canvas of discrete, photographically rendered objects.

Soul's Beauty, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1864–70

Also titled *Sibylla Palmifera* (the palm-bearing sibyl), *Soul's Beauty* represents the unattainable ideal that inspires the artist. Painted as a companion to the sonnet of the same name, the picture strives to represent and evoke the erotic and aesthetic absorption the poem allegorizes. Rossetti devoted the last fifteen years of his painting career to these looming frontal portraits with

richly decorated backgrounds, the details of which carry symbolic significance (in this painting, the arch of life, the cupid, the poppies, the skull, the butterflies).

Body's Beauty, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1864–73

Also titled *Lady Lilith* (after Adam's first wife, who ran away to become a witch), *Body's Beauty* represents sensual absorption. Paired with the sonnet of the same name, the painting associates the sexual allure of the woman at the center with the golden hair that represents her value, and her narcissistic contemplation of herself with the art that she embodies. Like the Lady of Shalott, Lady Lilith is a weaver, but a deadly one—the poppies and roses surrounding her link death and sexuality.

Alice Liddell as "The Beggar-Child," Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1858

Dodgson is best known to us as "Lewis Carroll," the author of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), but he was also for many years a keen and prolific champion of photography, a new art form in the Victorian era. Alice, the six-year-old girl in this haunting image and the inspiration for those two famous books, was the daughter of Dean Liddell, the principal of Christ Church, Oxford, where Dodgson taught mathematics. The picture was first published in *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* in 1898, but had been shown by Dodgson to select individuals much earlier; Tennyson apparently considered it "the most beautiful photograph" he had ever seen.

The Passing of Arthur, Julia Margaret Cameron, 1875

Using photography in the way that earlier artists had used engravings to illustrate literary texts, Cameron produced a set of tableaux vivants for Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, posing family and friends in costume, in a combination of reality and fantasy that recalls the Pre-Raphaelites. This photograph illustrates a

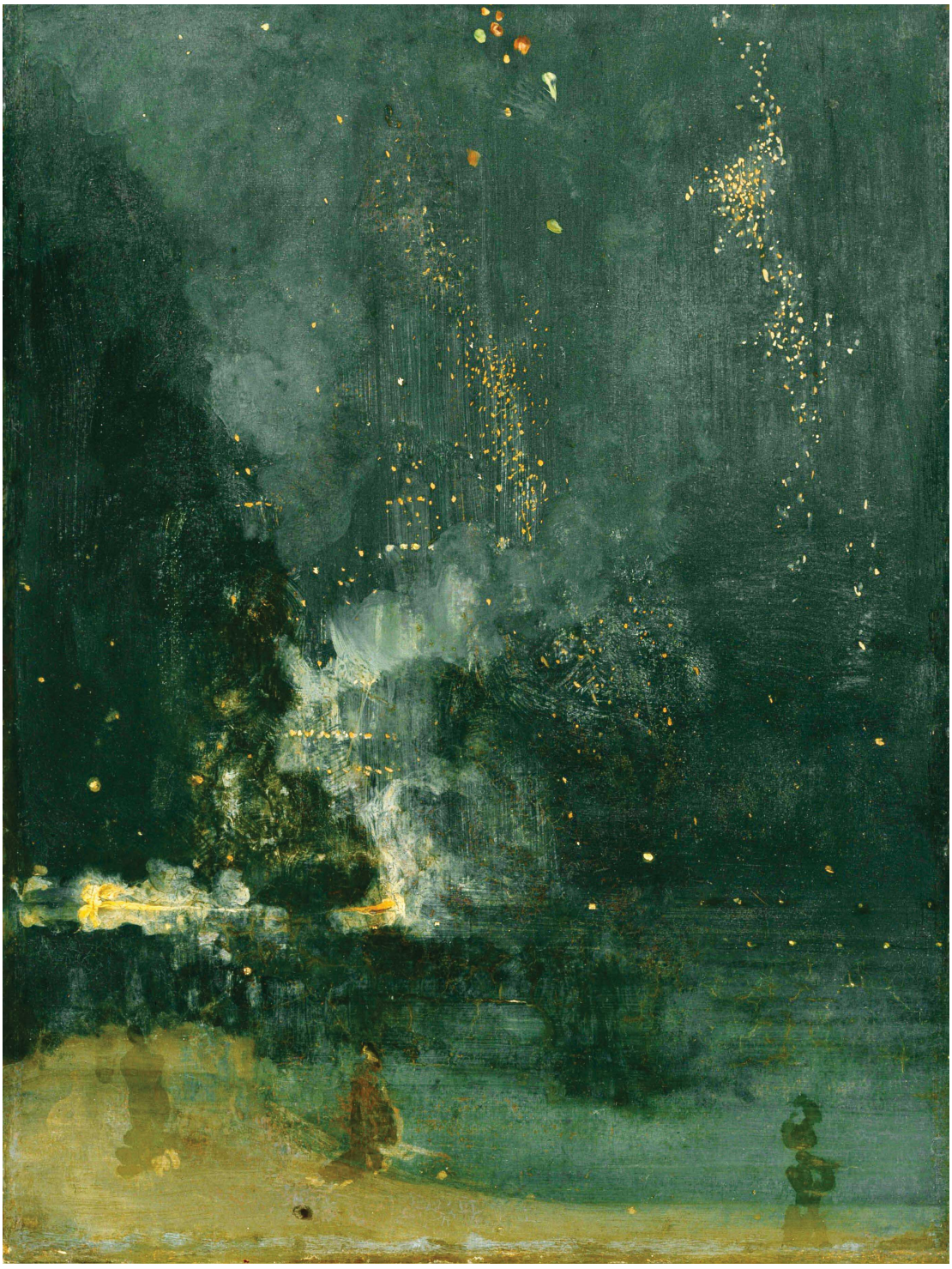
scene from *The Passing of Arthur*, where the three queens attend the dying king in the barge that takes him to Avalon.

The Roll Call, Elizabeth Butler, 1874

When *The Roll Call* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1874, it made its artist, Lady Elizabeth Southerden Thompson Butler, instantly famous. Its depiction of suffering British soldiers reinforced popular demand for reform in the wake of the disastrous Crimean War (1854–56), which many saw as having been lost due to administrative incompetence.

The Defence of Rorke's Drift, Elizabeth Butler, 1880

The Defence of Rorke's Drift depicts a battle in the Anglo-Zulu War in South Africa in 1879. "Rorke's Drift," a farm turned field hospital, was defended by 141 British soldiers against an attack by about four thousand Zulu warriors. This painting is much more celebratory of British warrior culture than *The Roll Call*.



Nocturne in Black and Gold, the Falling Rocket, James A. M. Whistler, 1875

Whistler's impressionist painting of fireworks approaches the abstraction suggested in his title. He emphatically rejected the precise depiction of objects in earlier Victorian painting. When the critic John Ruskin saw the painting in Grosvenor Gallery, he wrote in *Fors Clavigera* that he "never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." Whistler sued Ruskin for libel and won; but he was awarded damages of only one farthing, and the trial left him financially ruined.

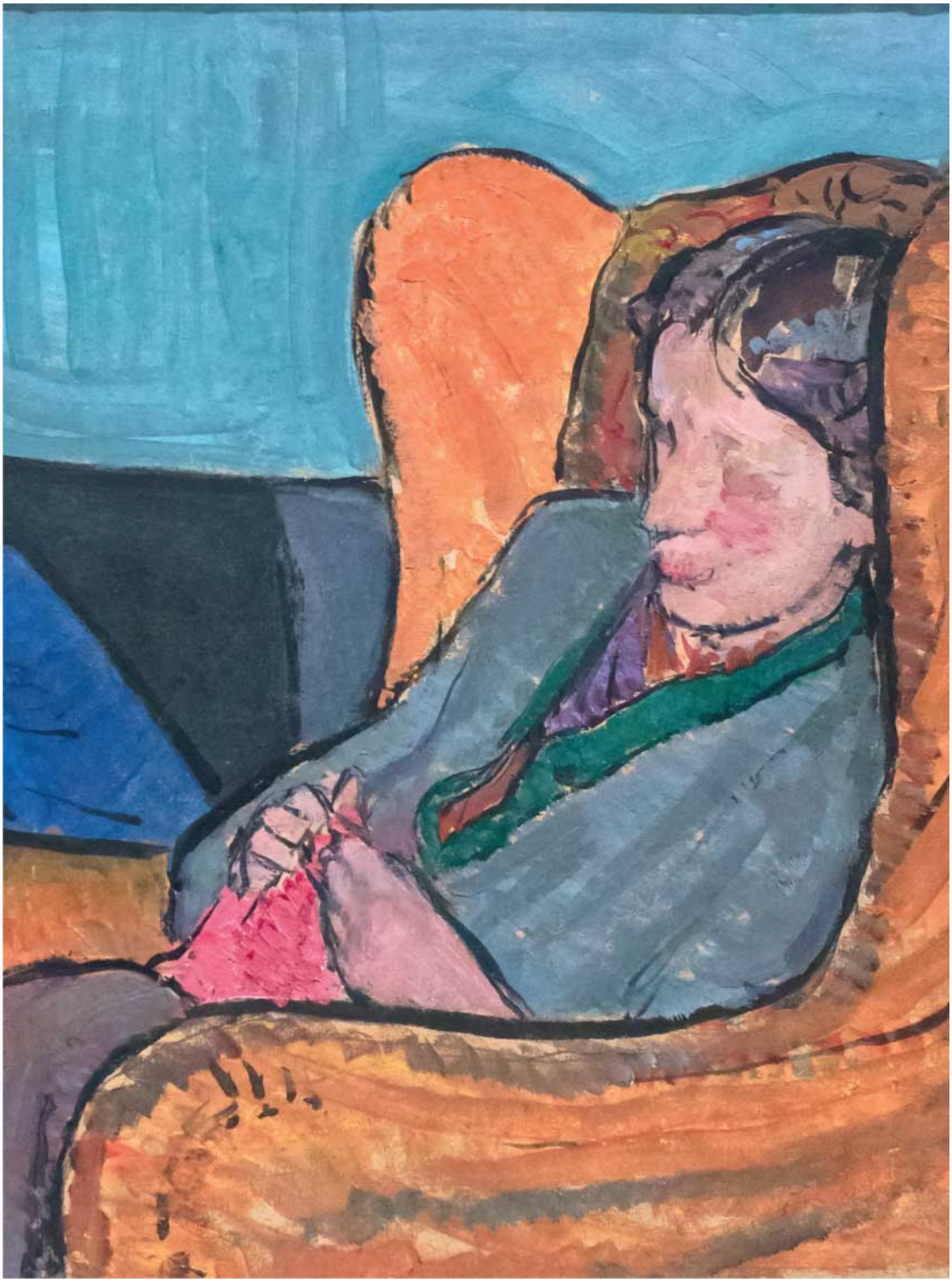
The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, Pablo Picasso, Paris, June–July 1907

Oil on canvas, 8′ × 7′ 8″ (243.9 × 233.7 cm). Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest. Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights

Society (ARS), New York. Location: The Museum of Modern Art/New York, NY/USA.

This masterpiece by Spanish expatriate Picasso helped unleash the experimental energies of modern art. The painting breaks with formal traditions of one-point perspective and human modeling, violently fracturing space in jagged planes. At the same time, it defies conventions of sexual decorum in the visual arts, confronting the viewer with five naked sex workers in a brothel. The masklike faces, particularly of the women to the right, echo African art; they suggest the crucial role non-Western art will play in the development of modernism. The abstract faces, angular forms, and formally fragmented bodies forecast the revolutionary techniques of analytic cubism that Picasso and his French collaborator Georges Braque would develop in Paris from 1907 to 1914.



Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell, 1912

Bell's portrait of her younger sister presents an ordinary moment in a quietly innovative way. Woolf sits in a relaxed, almost

slumped posture. The perspective of the painting, angled from the side rather than head-on, evokes a casual intimacy. However, the blurring of Woolf's features also suggests mystery, as if Bell declines to connect the exteriority of expression with the interiority of the mind. Bell's Post-Impressionist paintings, like Woolf's novels, contemplate the dissonance between outward appearance and private feeling while giving renewed attention to domestic life.

[*Portrait of a Seated Bird*], Rabindranath Tagore, ca. late 1920s

In 1913 Rabindranath Tagore became the first Asian person to win the Nobel Prize for Literature (see volume E). He sponsored an exhibition in 1922 in the city of Kolkata, which brought together the work of Bauhaus artists and Indian painters associated with the Bengali avant-garde. Tagore's painting of a

seated bird combines the distorted lines and scalar exaggerations of European abstraction with the totemic arts of Native American and Oceanic peoples. The red and yellow of the bird’s body against the dark background give the impression of a dreamlike space. Tagore valued spontaneity and the subconscious in his painting, and his turn toward the surreal extended modernist traditions of representation into the visual art of India.

The Merry-Go-Round, Mark Gertler, 1916

Painted in the midst of World War I, *The Merry-Go-Round* explores the insufferable condition of life on the home front and

on the battlefields. Its circularity describes the frustration of the deadlock on the Western Front, while its mingling of automatized soldiers and women conveys the sense of psychological menace pervading civilian society. The grinning puppetlike figures and the fun-fair setting convey an atmosphere of ghastly levity, in which war becomes a game. Glaring artificial colors contribute to the impression of a violent and confined world, where even nature is mechanical.

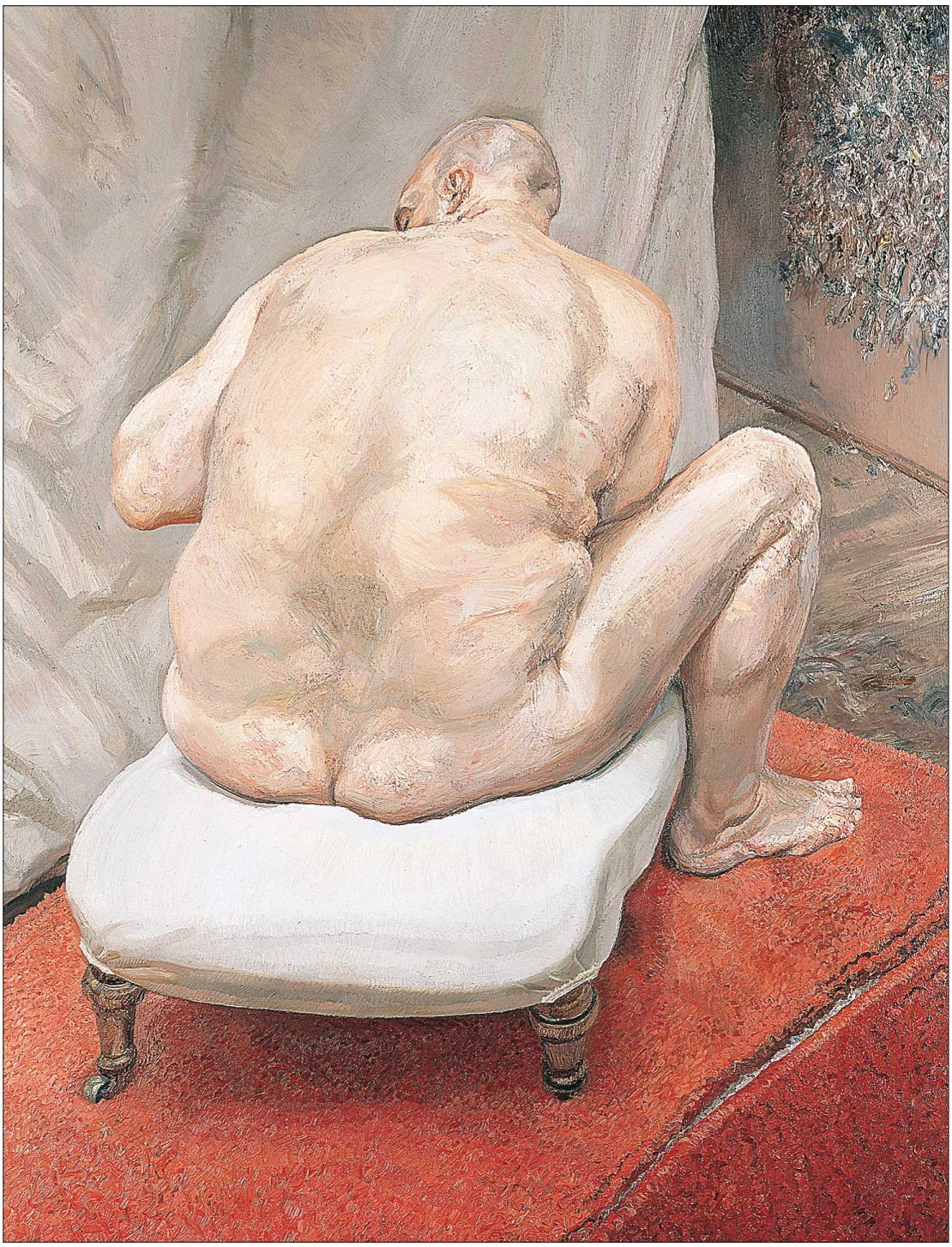
Tube Shelter Perspective, Henry Moore, 1941

Moore, a globally renowned sculptor, took up sketching during World War I because of the scarcity of sculpting material. This work, created with pen, chalk, watercolor, and gouache, offers his impressions of crowds sheltering in the London Underground during a World War II air raid. The people, arranged in parallel lines down a seemingly endless tunnel, resemble mummies or skeletons, blurring the lines between a bomb shelter and a mass grave. Despite the underworld atmosphere, Moore's subjects are absolutely alive. Forced into proximity, yet still isolated and anonymous, their claustrophobic depiction yields an involuntary kind of intimacy. *Tube Shelter Perspective* is one of a series of drawings that made Moore into a major artist of the British wartime effort. His work bears witness to the endurance and fortitude of everyday people.

Painting, Francis Bacon, 1946

Oil and pastel on linen, 6′ 5 7/8″ × 52″ (197.8 × 132.1 cm). Purchase. Artist: Francis Bacon (1909–1992), ARS, NY. Location: The Museum of Modern Art/New York, NY/USA.

Bacon's nightmarish association of the slaughterhouse with the emblems of political and religious power conjures both the suffering and the hypocrisy of the twentieth century. The bust of a man, his face overshadowed by an open umbrella, surrounded by microphones, the whole superimposed upon a butcher's display, evokes the discrepancy between rhetoric and means of power. While the umbrella offers a ludicrous symbol of respectability, the visual parallels between man and meat draw attention to the brutal foundations of political influence. The man's broad shoulders resemble the squared outline of the carcass behind him. The red and white of his face, and his exposed teeth, suggest the flesh and bone of the beef. Incongruous religious references, in the cruciform spread of the carcass and the churchlike decorations on the walls, augment the painting's insinuations of corruption.



Naked Man, Back View, Lucian Freud, 1993

Freud's nudes study the details of the human body with an unflinching fascination that is modern in its refusal to censor or sentimentalize. Bowery, Freud's model, was a two-hundred-pound

nightclub performer, famous for the gorgeous and outrageous costumes he used to reinvent himself in public. Yet Freud, recalling their first encounter, remembered the shape of his lower limbs rather than his outfit, observing that "his calves went right down to his feet, almost avoiding the whole business of ankles altogether." His depiction of Bowery in the nude strongly evokes the magnificence and the vulnerability of a body better known for its sartorial transformations.

Nelson's Ship in a Bottle, Yinka Shonibare, May 24, 2010–December 31, 2011

Commissioned as a temporary addition to London's Trafalgar Square, Anglo-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare's work is a scaled replica of the ship that carried Admiral Horatio Nelson (whose statue ascends nearby) to victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805—except that Shonibare playfully corks the ship in a massive bottle and refashions the sails out of brightly colored

cloth. This textile, frequently seen in his work, is often considered authentically African. But in the cross-cultural irony he relishes, its designs were originally Indonesian, its production English and Dutch, and it was sold to West Africans. Nelson's victory enabled the British colonization of Africa but also ultimately the reverse colonization of Britain's cultural landscape by people like Shonibare, a self-described "postcolonial hybrid."

Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan, Zaha Hadid, 2012

Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid is renowned for applying her curvilinear style to structures that seem to defy gravity. The Heydar Aliyev Center, named for a former president of Azerbaijan, houses a library, museum, and concert venues. The wavelike outer structure enfolds each of these interior spaces in a continuous line as if to suggest that the written word, visual art, and music all draw inspiration from one another and thus should flow together. The shell of the Center is made from a steel space frame and glass fiber–reinforced concrete panels that conceal the

vertical supports within the walls. The interior floors sweep gently into ramps, walls, and ceilings to give the appearance of one twisting surface, like a Möbius strip. Although Hadid's shapes may seem more mathematically than culturally located, the style of the Aliyev Center signifies a break with the austere vertical structures of Soviet architecture and a nod to the curving forms of traditional Islamic architecture. The design captures the spirit of a postcolonial nation, looking beyond its Soviet past to create its own future.